

Aachen und dem Lutheraner Heintz hin: im Januar 1603 hatte Heintz durch die Vermittlung Zacharias Geizkoflers mit seinen umfangreichen Arbeiten an den Bauvorhaben in Neuburg an der Donau begonnen. So weit sich sehen läßt, hatte Aachen sonst keine Beziehungen zum Neuburger Hof.

9. Oscar Doering (Hrsg.), *Des Augsburger Patriciers Philipp Hainhofer Beziehungen zum Herzog Philipp II. von Pommern-Stettin. Correspondenzen aus den Jahren 1610–1619* [= Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttechnik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit, N. F. 6] (Wien 1894), S. 40.

10. Joachim Jacoby, *Hans von Aachen 1552–1615* (München und Berlin 2000), S. 47.

SPRANGER'S ELEPHANT

LUBOMÍR KONEČNÝ

There can be no doubt that of all the areas of research into the art of the period of Rudolf II, the one that has developed in the most dynamic way in recent years is that of research into “Rudolfine” fauna and flora, which has produced some remarkable insights, primarily into the way they are depicted.¹ In the light of this fact it is perhaps worth making a few remarks about one of the depictions of Adam and Eve, which I have discussed in a previous issue of this magazine.² The subject considered in the present article will be *The Fall of Man*, a drawing by Bartholomäus Spranger (present whereabouts unknown) and a miniature painting made after the Spranger drawing by Daniel Fröschl in 1604.³ Specifically, the object of our attention will be the elephant that is to be found on the

right in the middle distance in this composition (Figs. 1 and 2). In the previously mentioned study in 2007 I rather prematurely stated that the interpretation of the animals depicted in Spranger’s drawing (including the elephant) does not present any difficulties, “primarily because it is not necessary to attribute any of them [...] any further specific significance beyond the fact that they constitute the animal extras in the Earthly Paradise.” However, at the same time I did add “[...] elephants tend to be exceptions on depictions of the Fall of Man [...]”, and also that “[...] the visual sources for the fauna depicted are worth devoting special attention to”. From which several questions necessarily follow. Is the appearance of the elephant in Spranger’s *Fall of Man* really so self-evident, although it is iconographically exceptional? Did the artist draw the elephant “after nature” or did he have some “visual sources” available? And if he did, then what were they?⁴

First of all it should be said that for a long time seeing a live elephant in Europe was not a common experience, but it cannot be entirely excluded, either. For example, we know that Haroun al-Raschid gave the emperor Charlemagne an elephant as a diplomatic present, and in the year 802 the animal entered Aix-la-Chapelle, where it also died eight years later. In a similar way, elephants from both West Africa and India started to arrive in the courts of European rulers and princes as diplomatic gifts from the Portuguese. On their journey to their destination they were displayed and shown off (people often had to pay to see them), and in this way, from around the mid-15th century, the process began of transforming the elephant from the fantastic creature of the mediaeval bestiaries into a widely known animal species. The most famous of these diplomat elephants was undoubtedly Hanno, who entered the Vatican as a gift from the Portuguese king Emanuel to Pope Leo X, with great pomp and to the general wonder of the people of Rome, on 14 March 1514. It is not surprising that Hanno became an object of interest and

a “model” for more than one artist. In 1516 Raphael painted an epitaph for him, which has not been preserved, and created a “portrait” of the famous elephant in a drawing which today is known only from several copies.⁵ In it, the artist portrayed Hanno in all his majestic might,



1. Bartholomäus Spranger), *The Fall of Man* (whereabouts unknown)

calmly turning towards the left. On his back sits a rider with an instrument for goading the pachyderm, and a similarly equipped oriental guard holds the elephant by the trunk.⁶ I will refer to this way of portraying elephants from the side, in profile, as “type Raphael I”.

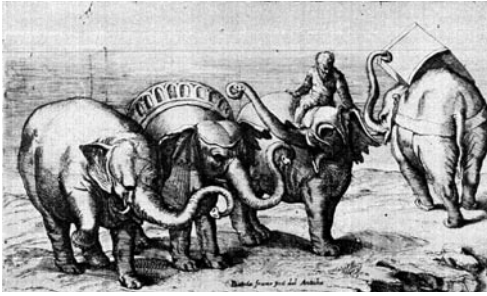
Raphael’s circle is also the origin for another way of portraying an elephant – more or less from in front (henceforth “type Raphael II”), as in Spranger’s drawing. This is how we see the elephant in two engravings by Cornelis Cort, mirror images of each other, the basis for which was the *Battle between Scipio and Hannibal* by Raphael and/or Giulio Romano (B. 178 and 180).⁷ This was the inspiration for Giovanni Battista Franco (B. 75, Fig. 3)⁸ and, in 1582, for Antonio Lafreri (Fig. 4).⁹

The type Raphael II then spread further in particular through illustrations for books. In 1567 Marcus Gheeraerts published in Bruges at his own expense and with his own illustrations the book *De warachtighe fabulen der dieren*; the author of the verses in it was Edewaerd de Dene. This landmark in the history of illustrated fables contains the title page and 107 illustrations, of which the one on page 90 (“Elephant ende Draecke”) depicts an elephant in the tradition of the type Raphael II.¹⁰ Gheerarts later made eighteen new illustrations, which were accompanied by verses by Pieter Heyns, and the resulting collection of 125 fables was given a new title page and published in Antwerp in 1578 under the title *Esbatement moral des animaux*. And it is this book which leads us to Prague, where Aegidius Sadeler



2. Daniel Fröschl (after Bartholomäus Spranger), *The Fall of Man*, 1604, detail (Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina)

re-engraved 124 engravings from *Esbatement moral* in a mirror image and added fifteen new illustrations. The entire collection was given a new title page and published by Paul Sesse in 1608 under the title *Theatrum morum: Artliche gesprach der thier mit wahren historien den menschen zur lehr*. An elephant is to be seen straight away on the title page, a variant on the type Raphael II (Fig. 5), as is the animal on the



3. Giovanni Battista Franco, *Four Elephants*



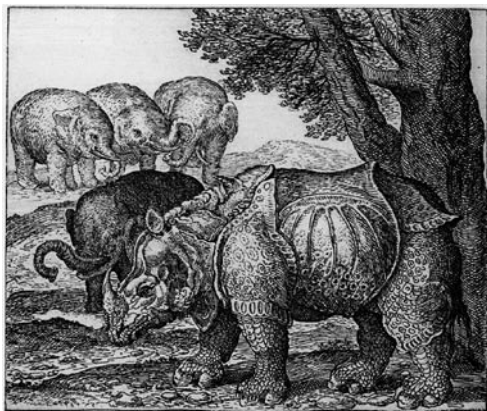
4. Antonio Lafreri, *Elephants and other Animals*, 1582



5. Aegidius Sadeler, *Title page of Theatrum morum* (Prague 1608)



6. Aegidius Sadeler, *Theatrum morum* (Prague 1608): („Vom Elephant und Drachen“)

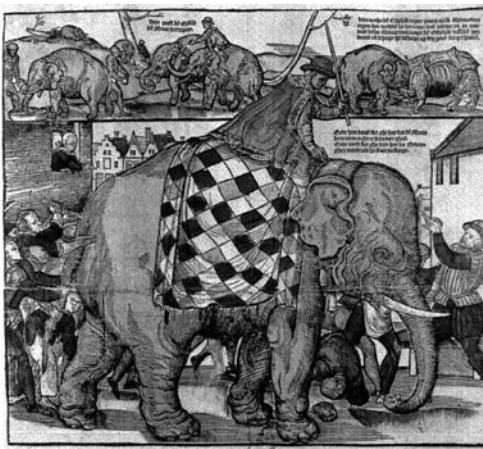


7. Aegidius Sadeler, *Theatrum morum* (Prague 1608): („Vom Rinocerot“)



8. Aegidius Sadeler, *Symbola Divina et Humana* (Prague 1603)

illustration already mentioned *supra* for the fable “Of the elephant and the dragon” (Fig. 6). Sadeler depicted no less than four elephants of this type in the illustration to the fable of the rhinoceros (“De Rinocerot”) (Fig. 7); the trio at the back bear a striking resemblance to the three elephants on the engraving by Giovanni Battista Franco. And to conclude this parade of elephants we should point out the impresa of Aloysius Mocenigo, Doge of Venice, in the third volume of the book *Symbola Divina* et



9. Bernaert van Rijckere, *Elephant seen on September 1563 in Antwerp*

Humana, published in Prague in 1603 with a text by Anselm de Boodt and engravings by Aegidius Sadeler (Fig. 8).¹¹ This elephant was also a member of the Raphael II group.

From all of this it can be inferred that Spranger did not draw his elephant “after nature”, but by drawing on the visual tradition that started with Raphael II and continued with prints by artists such as Giovanni Battista Franco, Antonio Lafreri, Marcus Gheeraerts, Aegidius Sadeler and others who have not been mentioned here. Together they created a formula for depicting an elephant *en face*, a formula which Bartholomäus Spranger also followed.¹²

It still remains to answer the question whether the elephant in Spranger’s *Fall of Man*

is no more than an animal extra in the Earthly Paradise. There are two reasons for thinking this is not the case. Firstly, although the presence of this animal on depictions of Adam and Eve is not exactly common, it does have a certain tradition. Perhaps the best-known representative of this tradition is the elephant on the inner side of the left (Paradise) wing of Hieronymus Bosch’s triptych depicting *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. The second reason is to be found in the symbolic interpretations of the elephant from antiquity up until the late Renaissance, which are to be found in dozens, if not hundreds of texts. Some of them saw the elephant *in malo*, as a symbol of evil, but most of them *in bono* as a symbol of chastity, moderation, or sovereign power. The starting-point for these interpretations was naturally to be found in texts from antiquity. According to Aristotle (*Historia animalium*, IX, 46, 630b), the elephant does not have a longing to mate, and if it does so, does so secretly, for it is chaste and remains so throughout the two years the she-elephant is pregnant. On the basis of this information, Pliny (*Naturalis Historia*, VIII, 5) writes that “owing to their modesty, elephants never mate except in secret”, and that “adultery is unknown among them”.¹³ The same author further informs us (*Nat. Hist.*, VIII, 1), that elephants are naturally pious beasts, since “when the new moon is shining [they] go down to a river named Amilo and there perform a ritual of purification, sprinkling themselves with water, and after thus paying their respects to the moon return to the woods”.¹⁴ To summarise, then, we can say that the elephant was interpreted as a symbol of virtue, piety, chastity and temperance (it only eats enough to assuage its hunger).¹⁵

Like the myths of antiquity, animal fables, too, were interpreted in the Middle Ages in a Christian way (*more christiano*). Thus in the book of Physiologus we read that when “the female [elephant] wishes to bear, she resorts to the far East near to Paradise” – a passage that one of the early editors commented on in the following way: “the pair of Elephants is like

to Adam and Eve. Adam and his wife, as long as they lived in the plenty of Paradise, were innocent of carnal desire; [...]”¹⁶ There can be no doubt that Bartholomäus Spranger followed on in this interpretative tradition.

1. For the most recent evidence of this trend, see at least Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, Arcimboldo as “Conterfetter” of Nature, in *Arcimboldo 1526–1593*, ed. S. Ferino-Pagden, exh. cat., Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (Milan 2007), pp. 103–111; Manfred Staudinger, Arcimboldo and Ulisse Aldrovandi, *ibidem*, pp. 113–118; Thea Vignau-Wilberg, *In minimis maxime conspicua*: Insektendartsellungen um 1600 und die Anfänge der Entomologie, in *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals, in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts*, eds. Karl A. E. Enenkel and Paul J. Smith (Leiden and Boston 2007), pp. 217–244.

2. Lubomír Konečný, Adam and Eve in Rudolfiner Art, *STUDIA RUDOLPHINA* 7 (2007), pp. 110–119 (111–112).

3. Kaufmann, pp. 38 (fig. 31) and 173, no. 3. 1; E. F. [Eliška Fučíková], in *Prag um 1600*, p. 340, cat. no. 196.

4. On elephants in European history and the ways they have been depicted and symbolically interpreted, see at least the following literature, which mostly includes further bibliographical references: G. C. Druce, The Elephant in Medieval Legend and Art, *The Archaeological Journal* 76 (1919), pp. 1–73; William S. Heckscher, Bernini’s Elephant and Obelisk, *The Art Bulletin* 29 (1947), pp. 155–182 (rpt. in Heckscher, *Art and Literature: Studies in Relationship*, ed. by Egon Verheyen [Baden-Baden 1985], pp. 65–92); Julius Baum and Karl Arndt, in *Reallexikon zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte* IV (1958), cols. 1221–1254; Dora and Erwin Panofsky, The Iconography of the Galerie Francois Ier at Fontainebleau, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 6th ser. 52 (1958), pp. 113–190; Matthias Winner, Raffael malt einen Elefanten, *Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 11 (1964), pp. 71–109; Miklós Boskovits, in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* I (Rome, Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna 1968), cols. 598–600; H. H. S. Scullard, *The Elephant in the Greek and Roman World* (Ithaca and New York 1974); Leonard J. Slatkes, Rembrandt’s Elephant, *Simiolus* 11 (1980), pp. 7–13; Stephan Oettermann, *Die Schaulust am Elefanten* (Frankfurt a. M. 1982); David Bright and Barbara Bowen, Emblems, Elephants and Alexander, *Studies in Philology*, ed. Jerry Mills (Chapel Hill 1983), pp. 17–28; Guy de Tervarent, *Attributs et symboles dans l’art profane: Dictionnaire d’un langage perdue (1450–1600)*, 2nd ed. (Geneva 1997), pp. 189–191; Sigrid and Lothar Dittrich, *Lexikon der Tiersymbole: Tiere als Sinnbilder in der Malerei des 15.–17. Jahrhunderts*, 2nd ed. (Petersberg 2005), pp. 89–94.

5. For more details, see the excellent study by Winner (note 4).

6. *Ibidem*, pp. 73 and 75, figs. 2 and 4.

7. *The Illustrated Bartsch, 52: Supplement: Netherlandish Artists: Cornelis Cort*, ed. Walter L. Strauss and Tomako Shimura (New York 1986), p. 227, no. 196-II (178), and p. 228, no. 197-II (180).

8. *The Illustrated Bartsch, 32* (formerly volume 16 [part 1]: *Italian Artists of the Sixteenth Century / School of Fontainebleau*, ed. Henri Zerner (New York 1979), p. 231, no. 75-II (144).

9. Winner (note 4), p. 103, fig. 29.

10. This has been pointed out in my review of Edward Hodnett’s *Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder, of Bruges, London, and Antwerp* (Utrecht 1971), published in *Umění* 33 (1975), pp. 82–91 (90, note 28). This review includes nearly all the older literature on Gheeraerts and his fables; a more recent bibliography – including publications relating to the collections of fables that will be mentioned *infra* – is given by Sylva Dobalová, *Theatrum morum*: tygr, lev a divadlo na Pražském hradě, in *Pictura Verba Cupit: Sborník příspěvků pro Lubomíra Konečného / Essays for Lubomír Konečný*, ed. Bekt Bukovinská and Lubomír Slaviček (Prague 2006), pp. 207–220. See also Marc Van Vaeck, Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Dutch “Emblematic” Fable Books from the Gheeraerts Filiation, *Emblematica* 7 (1993), pp. 25–38.

11. Anselmus Boetius de Boodt, *Symbola varia diversorum principum* (Prague 1603), p. XX, pl. 13, no. 85.

12. He may have seen a live elephant as a seventeen-year-old apprentice painter in Antwerp on 24 September 1563. This was an animal that the Portuguese king Joao III gave as a present to the Bohemian king Maximilian II, and which was displayed in various European cities on its way to Vienna (Fig. 9). On this event see K. G. Boon, De Antwerpse schilder Bernaert van Rijkere en zijn tekeningen-oeuvre, *Oud Holland* 91 (1977), pp. 109–131 (116 and 119, fig. 18). See also Winner (note 4), p. 76; and Slatkes (note 4), p. 10, note 18.

13. Pliny the Elder, *Natural history*, ed. and transl. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass. and London 1956), III, p. 11.

14. *Ibidem*, p. 3.

15. For an extensive list of symbolic interpretations of elephants, see Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica* (Basilae 1604), II, pp. 15–21. Also Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (Padua 1611), pp. 456–457 (Religione).

16. *Physiologus*, trans. James Cahill, in *The Epic of the beast*, ed. William Rose (London and New York n. d.), pp. 201 and 203; here quoted after Slatkes (note 4), p. 12.