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The Representation of Philosophers in the Art of Salvator Rosa

Fig. 1: Salvator Rosa, *The Philosophers' Wood,* c. 1641 – 43, Oil on canvas, 147 x 221 cm, Florence, Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti (Luigi Salerno, *L'Opera completa di Salvator Rosa,* Milan 1975, fig. XXII).

In his *Life of Salvator Rosa* Filippo Baldinucci, who knew the painter well, included this memorable description – "An overriding love and thirst for glory created in him, from his early years, a passionate desire to appear in all his words and deeds a true philosopher. His thoughts were always full of dreams of walking beneath the spacious porticoes of Athens in the company of the ancient Stoics".[1] Scenes from the lives of the ancient philosophers, rare subjects before the 17th century, form a major part of Rosa's production. In this essay I shall concentrate primarily on those from Rosa's final years, from 1660 to his death in 1673, when he responded to strains of contemporary thought and feeling very different from those which had inspired him in his early career.

A brief look at these early philosopher paintings, however, will serve to heighten this difference. Rosa was born in Naples in 1615, and trained in the studio of the Spanish artist Juseppe de Ribera, at precisely the moment, in the mid 1630s, when the Spanish artist was making a speciality of galleries of half length portraits of philosophers. Ribera's are learned works, full of details culled from classical and antiquarian sources, yet astonishingly vital; he shows the ancient philosophers as beggars, in torn and ragged clothing, bizarrely patched together, and utterly absorbed in the world of the mind. They have much of the humour of Lucian's dialogues, one of the most popular 17th century sources for lively descriptions of the ancient philosophers.

Ribera's philosophers remain, throughout Rosa's career, a constant presence in his art. In the 1640s he was court painter to the Medici in Florence, and here he encountered fresh sources of inspiration. The mood of much Florentine Seicento painting is witty and irreverent, and when Rosa arrived in Florence Giovanni da San Giovanni's decorations of the summer apartments of the Palazzo Pitti had just been completed. Here, in one fresco, blind Homer totters forth from Mount Parnassus, whilst on the opposite wall Lorenzo, at the feet of Plato, volumes of philosophy piled up beside him, enjoys the company of poets and scholars at the academy of Careggi.[2] There is more than a hint of mockery of Raphael's stately fresco of the *School of Athens* (Rome, Vatican, Stanza della Segnatura) and Rosa picked up some-

thing of Giovanni da San Giovanni's light hearted yet learned tone.

More important than the Medici court was the world of the Florentine literary academies. Rosa himself founded an academy, the Accademia dei Percossi, which attracted many of the most brilliant Florentine literary men, scholars, high churchmen and scientists. Here Rosa nurtured his ambitions as satirical poet as well as painter, and swiftly became the centre of the Florentine literary world, whose double laurels made him celebrated. Of especial importance in this world were two writers whose works often read like a rich source for Rosa's iconography, the Jesuit scholar Daniello Bartoli, and the moral philosopher Paganino Gaudenzio. They shared an interest in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Ancient Philosophers*, (3rd century AD) whose popularity grew in the 17th century, and especially in the novel eccentricities of the Cynics and Stoics. In 1645 Bartoli published his immensely successful *Man of Letters* (*Uomo di Lettere*), whose fame rapidly spread throughout Europe, and Queen Christina of Sweden was to ask for a copy.[3] The Florentine edition of this work was dedicated to Rosa, who in his letters expresses his interest in Bartoli's writings.[4] The book is a passionate defence of the intellectual life, and of the joy which the study of letters brings to humankind. Bartoli does, however, believe that this study must be undertaken in solitude, far from the corruption of the court, and his heroes are the early philosophers, Socrates, Diogenes, Crates, and Pythagoras; the melancholic headings of many of his chapters, the *Wise Man Ill*, the *Wise Man in Prison,* the *Wise Man in Exile*, the *Wise Man in Poverty*, convey his gloom about the place of the literary man in contemporary society. His writings are rich in echoes of Seneca and anecdotes from Diogenes Laertius, and he describes with comic relish the best loved antics of those ancient philosophers who had so spectacularly resisted the lures of worldly success and wealth.

> Wonder at the ancient philosophers […]. One who throws his riches into the sea, making himself a beggar, in order not to avoid poverty [...], one who lives in a barrel, like a dog in its kennel, rather than man in his residence. One who throws himself into Mongibello (Etna) and one into the sea, the first because he could not understand the movement of the tides, and the next to seek out the origins of the volcanic flames. Pythagoras turns into a hundred beasts […]. Xenocrates is of marble, without sense, Diogenes a dog, Epicurus an animal, Democritus a madman who always laughs, Heraclitus desperate, and always weeping.[5]

Bartoli encourages the intellectual to furnish his mind with knowledge, with history, literature, and the sayings of ancient sages. He was interested in Rosa and, as we shall see, provided a brilliant description of one of his most unusual philosopher paintings.

Paganino Gaudenzio gives a contrary view. In 1640 Gaudenzio had moved from Barberini Rome to take up a post as professor of eloquence at the university of Pisa; his *Del Seguitar la Corte o no* preaches that the intellectual has a duty fully to participate in the world of the court.[6] Indeed Gaudenzio' s works illuminate the concerns of the élite intellectual and courtly circles for which Rosa painted; he was an immensely prolific and successful author, who experimented with many genres and wrote on many themes, amongst them poetry, philosophy, theology, history, political science, and eulogies in both Latin and Italian. He wrote histories of both patristic and Roman philosophy, and lamented the dominance of Aristotle in the universities, recommending that Plato, the Stoics and the Pythagoreans should also be studied. His ground breaking history of Roman philosophy argued for a new method of study, in which not only the thought of the ancients should be studied, but also their lives and deeds, and the historical contexts in which they worked, and he encouraged an interest in the lives of the philosophers generally.[7] As in the writings of Bartoli, they spring to vivid life in his prose and both may have encouraged painters to take up similar themes. One of Gaudenzio's first works had been a small treatise on the transmigration of souls, the *De Pythagorea animarum transmigratione* (1640), in which he paid homage to Galileo; there followed the *Della peregrinazione filosofica* (1643), where he discusses the legends and superstitions which had accumulated around the earliest philosophers. Both

these works were accompanied with letters in their praise by the French libertin writer Gabriel Naudé, and they are very much in his spirit. In 1648 Gaudenzio added a commentary on the poet Giovan Battista Marino's *La Galleria,* entitled *La Galleria dell'Inclito Marino (The Gallery of the Illustrious Marino*), which includes much discussion of ancient philosophers, Archimedes, Xenocrates, Plato, Aristotle, and their heirs in the modern world. In the same year, his *Nuovo Poema in Sonnetti*, a collection of poems addressed to the earliest of philosophers, Thales, Pythagoras and Empedocles was published. *La Galleria dell'Inclito Marino* concludes with a poem addressed to Salvator Rosa, whom he praises as the great light of Painting, who with his brushes creates a universe,

Fig. 2: Salvator Rosa, *Crates throwing his Riches into the Sea,* c. 1641 – 1643, Oil on canvas, 146 x 216 cm, Skipton, Boughton Hall. (Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa - Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2010, fig. 12).

of earth, sea and sky.[8] Rosa spent a lot of time in Pisa, and it seems likely that he discussed such subjects with Gaudenzio, whose writings throughout his life read like a rich source of Rosa's iconography.[9]

Rosa's choice of philosophers reflects the interest of these circles, and a pair of paintings, *Diogenes throwing away his bowl*, now known as the *Philosopher's Wood*, and *Crates throwing his riches into the sea*, illustrates this point (figs. 1 and 2). These are Cynic philosophers, who preached the virtues of poverty and self sufficiency, and lived according to nature; Diogenes throws away his drinking bowl, his final useless possession, and Crates all his worldly goods, to live in greater freedom.[10] The topic, of whether the wiseman or intellectual could live with integrity at the court, or should, like the early Cynics or Stoics, cultivate wisdom in seclusion, suggests the theme which so fascinated Bartoli and Gaudenzio and other Florentine literary men, and Rosa's pair of paintings preserved the atmosphere of debate. To some the Cynics seemed exemplars of virtue, and Bartoli called Diogenes and Crates "relics of the Golden Age"[11] while to others they were vain and ridiculous buffoons. In Traiano Boccalini's *I Ragguagli di Parnaso* Crates humbly refuses to inherit Diogenes' Chair of Private Tranquillity,[12] in order to avoid the violent perturbations of ambition, whilst in Antonio Santacroce's *La Secretaria di Apollo* he stands accused of overweening and shameless pride.[13] Rosa himself wrote a Lucianic dialogue on Crates, in which the philosopher is initially accused of folly, but Rosa, in a series of trite stanzas extolling the simple life, comes down overwhelmingly on the side of the Cynic, as Bartoli had done before him. It is easy to imagine Rosa reading this poem at the Percossi as he displayed his paintings.[14] In the *Philosopher's Wood* the figures are engaged in lively discussion, like the members of the Percossi, and perhaps the philosopher standing on the left, with long black hair, is a self portrait; the painting seems a light hearted tribute to Raphael's *School of Athens*. The Crates too is humorous, and the philosopher appears more ridiculous than noble. Dressed in sombre black, he scatters a shower of gold from both hands, encircled by a group of comically characterised sailors and scantily clad swimmers who lunge forwards to scrabble and dive for the coins. Crates' black cloak flutters against a swimmer's inelegant bare haunches, whilst to the left a sequence of slightly more refined figures marvel at his gesture. The paintings were commissioned by Marchese Carlo Gerini, who had ascended dramatically from poverty to riches whilst still very young, his fortune made by Cardinal Carlo de' Medici.

Gerini also commissioned from Rosa a large painting of *Fortuna*[15] (fig. 3) and the association of Fortune with philosophy was a common one. Rosa would have known the 15th century mosaic floor in Siena cathedral, where a group of philosophers ascend the Mount of Virtue, at the summit of which is Socrates, while beside him is Crates, freeing himself from worldly goods so that he may seek virtue and tranquillity and so attain Socrates' ideal virtue. At the

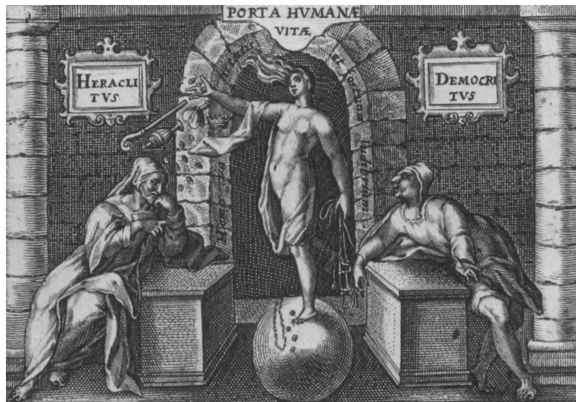

Fig. 3: Crispijn van de Passe, *Homo Vanitatis et Fortuna ludibrium*, in: *Stirpium, insignium nobilitatis,* Basel 1602? (Leslie Thomson, Washington DC, Shakespeare Library, January 18th – June 10th 2000,, p. 30).

foot of the mount is the allegorical figure of Fortune, her sail billowing in the wind, who balances unstably, one foot on a sphere, the other on a boat. The same association occurs in a treatise published in Basle in 1602. This opens with an engraving showing Fortune on a sphere, with the bridle of Nemesis and the forelock of Occasion, at the entrance to the gateway of human life, between Heraclitus and Democritus, who represent alternative responses to this life (fig. 3).[16] Such groupings, of Fortune and philosophers, perhaps influenced Rosa, and his three paintings, Fortune and the two Cynics, together suggested that the courtier's life was desperately insecure, but that the self sufficient individual, who is in control of himself and who, owning nothing, lives free from hope and fear, can control his Fortune.

In 1649 Rosa left Florence, and went to work in Rome, and here his philosopher subjects initially became graver and he was newly concerned to create historical tableaux which at least in part evoke the ancient world. He now competed with the serious prints of Pietro Testa, such as the *Death of Cato*, in which Testa created a carefully researched historical tableau. Rosa's *Death of Socrates* (priv. Coll.) is particularly close to Testa, and Rosa evoked the ancient world through his relief like composition, with its balance of horizontals and verticals, and his emphasis falls on gesture and expression.[17] In Florence his mood had often been witty and irreverent, but in his first years in Rome the harsh voice of the satirist rings out, as in his celebrated *Democritus in Meditation* (1650-1651; Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst) where the philosopher pours scorn on all the doings of mankind.[18]

Fig. 4: Salvator Rosa, *Fortuna*; 1640 – 42, Oil on canvas, 254 x 144,8 cm, Private collection (Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa - Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2010, fig. 35).

In the later 1650s Rosa painted fewer philosophers, but approached the theme once more with renewed interest in the early 1660s. This was a period of intense economic hardship, and painters struggled to find commissions. Between 1661-1664 Rosa attempted to attract new patrons with a series of large and impressive etchings, and some of these, *Democritus Omnium Derisor, Diogenes throwing away his bowl, Diogenes before Alexander,* looked back to his earlier philosopher subjects.[19] A new subject, *The Academy of Plato*, is in a sense a graver version of the philosophers engaged in lively debate at the centre of the *Philosopher's Wood* (fig. 1)[20] and conveys Rosa's nostalgia for a way of life which he had en-

joyed with his friends in Tuscany, when they had gathered at country villas to enjoy reading and philosophical speculation. Plato sits with his disciples in a leafy grove, and this motif was a well worn topos; many years before, in his treatise on the wanderings of philosophers, Gaudenzio had described how Plato's academy was far from the city, away from the clamour of the city, and beneath thick and shady trees, so that it could survive the summer and the heat of midday.[21]

The *Academy of Plato* was a brief backwards look, and, increasingly, in this decade Rosa turned away from Cynics and Stoics and began to paint a new range of philosophers which both suggest his passion for *novità* and reflect the changing interests of the Roman scientific world of the 1660s. Since the condemnation of Galileo in 1633, the new science had fallen silent, but in the 1660s the natural sciences were again the focus of discussions, centred above all on the relationship between experience and speculation. In 1655 Queen Christina of Sweden, famous convert to Catholicism and equally famous pupil of Descartes, had moved to Rome, and her presence widened the scientific interests of Roman intellectuals and stimulated debates on both Cartesianism and English empiricism. She had been welcomed to Rome by Athanasius Kircher, who had taken her around his celebrated museum in the Collegio Romano, and encouraged her interest in experimentation. The museum, crammed with antiquities, curiosities and technical artefacts, was one of the unmissable sights of Rome, and Kircher's fame grew steadily through the 1660s; Christina shared Kircher's interest in the secrets of the ancients and in the origins of human knowledge.

At the same time Daniello Bartoli, whom Rosa had long admired, was turning his attention to the popularisation of science. Bartoli was an admirer of Galileo, though he never accepted the heliocentric universe, and in this decade he became known as the champion of the empirical method. He did not do experiments himself, but collected and analysed immense amounts of data on scientific questions, and constantly debated the relationship between speculation and experience in the search for knowledge. Rosa's new subjects, pre-Socratic philosophers and natural magicians, rather than the Cynics and Stoics of the 1640s, reflect this changing intellectual climate in the scientific world.

Most closely related to the science of Bartoli was his *Democritus and Protagoras* (fig. 5), which was presented by Cardinal Chigi to Louis XIV of France in 1664, but which may have been painted a few years earlier than this.[22] This was an exceptionally rare, indeed unprecedented, subject drawn from the *Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*.[23] Democritus saw the porter, Protagoras, tying up a bundle of sticks, and was so impressed by the mathematical nicety with which an unlearned man performed this task that he invited him to become his pupil. Bartoli, whose writing is intensely visual, admired this painting, and opened his treatise, *La Tensione e La Pressione,* with a remarkable description of it which makes it clear that it was

Fig. 5: Salvator Rosa, *Democritus and Protagoras,* c. 1660 – 1663, Oil on canvas, 185 x 128 cm, St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa - Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2010, fig. 76).

read as a celebration of empirical science, a science rooted, like that of Galileo, in the sensible world.[24] Bartoli describes first Democritus "a venerable old

man" with the carriage of the ancients, in philosophical dress: of great presence, and a majestic aspect, but mild and sweet, with much joyousness: and above all with two eagle like eyes in his head, so lively, and spirited, that they spoke: he stretched out his arm, his hand, his finger to command a peasant, who a little distant from the gates of a city had stopped before him. At his feet he put a bundle of wood.[25]

The peasant, proceeds Bartoli, was Protagoras, a man condemned to poverty, who had to gather wood to sell in Abdera, his home. He was carrying such a bundle when Democritus saw him, and

> [all] the branches that made up that bundle were stalks, or barbs, or roots of wild plants: therefore twisting and curving; full of tangles, and needles, and crooked joints, knotted and distorted but with such skill combined and ordered, so tightly bound together, and stowed, so that the defects of one became the excesses of another, and all obeyed one another in welcoming, and adapting to the harmonious creation of a whole.[26]

So solid was the bundle, and as small as possible, that a very small length of rope served to tie it.

Bartoli then tells the story of Democritus inviting Protagoras to be his follower. This, he concludes, is the history of that action, and draws this meaning from it; "Here I have shown to you what Nature is, and what it means to be a natural philosopher."[27] Protagoras' bundle of sticks becomes for Bartoli an image of the world and all the discordant materials of which it is made. Through reason, and through geometry, the harmony of these parts may be perceived, and become a variety which gives pleasure. These perceptions however are not granted to all men, and many fall into the traps of abstract speculation, creating fantasies which corrupt the truth. Bartoli proceeds to praise the empirical methods of the new science, "this new style of knowledge"[28] practised at the academies of Bologna, Florence and London. This new natural philosophy depends on ceaseless observation, which leads to a knowledge of causes: "the one establishes the facts, the other the causes".[29]

Fig. 6: Salvator Rosa, *Pythagoras instructing the Fishermen,* 1662, Oil on canvas, 132 x 188 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (Luigi Salerno, *L'Opera completa di Salvator Rosa,* Milan 1975, fig. LI).

Close in date Rosa was painting two pendants of scenes from the life of Pythagoras, *Pythagoras instructing the Fishermen* and *Pythagoras emerging from the Underworld* (figs. 6 and 7). At first sight these subjects, so rare in painting, are mystifying, and Rosa's own remarks do not help; he writes to his friend, Giovan Battista Ricciardi, that he has

> finished the two subjects I was working on, the subjects of which are entirely novel, never touched on before. I have painted on one canvas […] Pythagoras by the seashore surrounded by his sect, paying some fishermen for the net which they are pulling in, so as to set the fish free again, a theme taken from one of the essays of Plutarch. The other is when the same man, after spending a year living underground, at the end of it emerged, awaited by his sect, men and women alike, and said he had come from the Underworld and had seen there the soul of Homer and Hesiod and other deceptive rubbish of those simple minded times.[30]

Rosa's remarks are flippant, but the painting is grave and ambitious, and a key to the motive behind it is given by the recent discovery that the subjects were suggested by Queen Christina of Sweden.[31] Together they suggest the Queen's interests in the earliest philosophers, above all Pythagoras, who was known as an expert on what happened to the human

Fig. 7: Salvator Rosa, *Pythagoras emerging from the Underworld,* 1662, Oil on canvas, 131,1 x 189 cm, Texas, Fort Worth, Kimbell Art Museum (Photograph by Robert La Prelle).

soul after death, whilst a famous anecdote about his hiding in an underground cavern contributed to the contemporary discourse about how far religion, and the idea of the soul, had been created as tools of political and social control. The two pictures brilliantly contrast these themes, and so illuminate a debate central to 17th century philosophy; they suggest Pythagoras' double reputation, as sage and as the greatest of all Greek teachers, but also as conjuror, magician, cheat and imposter. Both these views had a long history, and as early as the 3rd century BC admiration had been balanced by an undercurrent of suspicion, which saw in the miracle stories, such as his display of a golden thigh, nothing but a charlatan's tricks.

The *Pythagoras instructing the Fishermen* (fig. 6) shows him in the first majestic role. Pythagoras was a vegetarian, who believed that we should show compassion to animals; here Rosa shows him instructing the fishermen to return their catch to the sea. Rosa wrote that he had taken the subject from a work by Plutarch, and Plutarch, in the *Moralia*, describes how Pythagoras once bought a netful of fish and then ordered them to be cast off. He saw them as friends and relatives who had been captured, and who did no harm, so that eating them seemed an unnecessary luxury.[32] Plutarch refers to this story more than once, and often mentions Pythagoras' diet, and why his followers abstained from eating fish and from sacrificing them to the gods.[33] For Plutarch the philosopher was humane and benevolent, and passionately against cruelty to animals. Rosa may also have known the *Pythagorean Life* by Iamblichus, which adds a new element to the story. Iamblichus tells how Pythagoras, on his arrival in Croton, appeared to some fishermen who were drawing from the sea nets heavily laden with fish. Pythagoras miraculously guessed the number of fishes in their catch, and then ordered them to be returned to the sea, a feat accomplished without the death of a single fish. The miracle won him fame and followers, who rushed to see his god like countenance. The story suggests a parallel with the Christian story of the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke 5: 1-11) and Rosa was aware of this. His composition has the deliberate weight and gravity of Raphael's tapestry cartoon (London, Victoria and Albert Museum) of this subject, and his Pythagoras, a noble figure in his white robes, seems a precursor of Jesus on the shores of the sea of Galilee, whilst the starkly elemental landscape itself evokes a remote age and place.

Pythagoras' diet had fascinated writers since the 3rd century, and often his vegetarianism was seen as a corollary to his belief in immortality and the transmigration of souls. His pupil, Empedocles, connected his abstention from eating living creatures with his belief that their bodies may contain human souls, and this belief finds its most splendid expression in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The poem concludes with Pythagoras' exposition of his philosophy. The philosopher preaches against the eating of slaughtered animals, praising instead the fertility of the Golden Age; he warns that "All things are changing; nothing dies. The spirit wanders, comes now here, now there, and occupies whatever frame it pleases. From beasts it passes into human bodies, and from our bodies into beasts, but never perishes […]. Therefore, lest your piety be overcome by appetite, I warn you as a seer, do not drive out by impious slaughter what may be kindred souls, and let not life be fed on life".[34] Rosa's subject seems unprecedented in painting, but earlier in the century Rubens had painted *Pythagoras advocating Vegetarianism* (1618-1620; London, Buckingham Palace, coll. of H.M. the Queen), where the philosopher points to a glorious still life beside him, showing in abundance all fruits of the earth, proffered as "kindly sustenance […] without bloodshed and slaughter".[35]

Plutarch only insinuates Pythagoras' belief in metempsychosis, but it was a subject much debated by Rosa's learned contemporaries, and the painting would have stimulated debate on this subject and on all the famed oddities of Pythagoras' diet. It was a subject that fascinated Queen Christina, who, a passionate admirer of Lucretius, was deeply interested in atomism, and the doctrine of the World Soul. In 1650 she had read Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, his great poem on atomism, in the new edition by Michel de Marolles, which was dedicated to her.[36] Marolles had argued that Lucretius' primary aim was to refute Pythagoras' belief in the transmigration of the soul. Her interest was sparked by this and other works, and in 1652 she had commissioned Johannes Schaeffer to write a commentary on the Pythagoreans in the tradition of Diogenes Laertius and this appeared as *De Natura et Constitutione Philosophicae Italicae seu Pythagoricae* in 1664, very close in date to Rosa's painting. Schaeffer pays great attention to the doctrine of metempsychosis, and to the inclusion of women in the fundamental doctrines of the Pythagorean academies.[37] So fascinated was the Queen in these subjects that later, in 1676, Leibniz, planned a dialogue in which Christina was to argue with Descartes on the Soul of the World, a dialogue which was to include Pythagorean arguments on the transmigration of souls.[38]

The pendant shows Pythagoras' other persona, in which, as the sceptic Timon of Philiasos wrote in the third century, "Down to a juggler's level he sinks with his cheating devices, laying his nets for men, Pythagoras, lover of bombast".[39] Its subject is Pythagoras' supposed descent into Hades, an anecdote related by Diogenes Laertius. Pythagoras, he tells us, hid below ground for a long period, employing his mother to keep him informed about events above. He then ascended, "withered and looking like a skeleton […]. And declared he had been down to Hades". His followers wept and wailed, and called him divine; they sent their wives to him for instruction, and they became know as the Pythagorean Women.[40] Here he emerges from the cave with a truly wicked grin on his face, in sharp contrast to the grand figure in the companion piece.

This ruse, the claiming of divinity by a trick, was often mentioned by libertin philosophers, and religion as imposture or deceit is a traditional topos in libertin writing. It recurs obsessively in the writings of Gabriel Naudé, who had been Christina's librarian in 1650-1651, and who in 1624 had published his *Apologie pour les Grand Hommes Soupçonnez de Magie*, an attempt to peel away many of the legends of spells and magic that had blackened the reputations of many of the early philosophers. In 1639 Naudé had followed this with his *Considerations Politiques,* many times republished in the 17th century, in which he explores the theme of religion and fear, and the role of secrecy and deceit in maintaining power. He sums up a long passage on this with the comment that all princes treat religion in the manner of charlatans, and make use of it as of a drug to ensure the splendour of their role.[41] In the *Apologie* he had likened Pythagoras to other great religious tricksters, such as Mahomet, who was reputed to have hidden one of his companions down a well, and then, through a sarbacane, have caused him to yell "Mahomet is the great prophet sent by God on earth".[42] Rosa may first have known the story through Paganino Gaudenzio, who in his *Della Peregrinazione Filosofica* of 1643 had recounted Ermippo's telling of Pythagoras' stay in an underground grotto. But, he concludes, this was probably an invention of Ermippo; Pythagoras, in the account of Ovid, absolutely denies the realms of Pluto, so surely he would not claim to have been in hell, and in the realms of the underworld?[43] Here Gaudenzio clearly reveals himself as a disciple of Gabriel Naudé, who, as we have seen, wrote in support of his work. Probably around 1659 the anonymous tract *Theophrastus Redivivus* was published, which similarly attacks the deceits of religion, whilst defending absolutism as the only way in which the wiseman could live according to nature. The author, who recounts the Pythagoras' story at length, sees its implications, and the way in which the idea of a feigned resurrection had implications for the resurrection of Christ. He concludes his narration with a passage debunking the very concept of resurrection, and adds this comment: "Thus it is clear that all legislators and princes are cheats and dissimulators, religion is nothing other than a way of dominating a credulous people."[44]

In another group of paintings Rosa was inspired more by the science of Kircher than that of Bartoli. Rosa was an artist, not a scientist, and he was on the search for striking images; the theatricality of Kircher, with his aim of forging a grand compromise between the new science and an older legacy of magic and alchemy, especially appealed to him. Kircher remade science as an examination of the marvellous, a pleasurable activity; in a series of sumptuous publications, which united ancient and medieval texts with gripping firsthand observations and bounteous illustrations he enthralled an elite public. His *Mundus Subterraneus*, perhaps the most popular of his scientific volumes, reveals a strange and fascinating subterranean world. His treatment of the hidden places of the internal earth, and the medieval monsters and dragons which populate it, was immensely influential on the literary and artistic imagination of the period. This volume, with *Magnes, sive de Arte Magnetica* (1641) which illustrates his interest in mathematics and experimental science united with his pleasure in magnetic tricks and toys, and *Latium* (1669) all left their mark on Rosa's art.

Fig. 8: Salvator Rosa, *Thales causing the river to flow on both sides of the Lydian army*, c. 1663 – 1664, Oil on canvas, 73,5 x 97 cm, Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia (Gift of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide).

Two paintings from the mid to late 1660s suggest Rosa's response to Kircher's fascination with mathematical or artificial magic. The practitioners of natural magic used optical, hydraulic or mechanical techniques to create devices which rivalled the creative powers of nature herself. Amongst its most famed practitioners were Thales, Daedalus, Archytas and Archimedes. In the first of these two paintings, *Thales causing the river to flow on both sides of the Lydian army* (fig. 8), Rosa shows Thales of Miletus, renowned as the father of all philosophy, in a scene extremely rare in painting. Thales, to aid the King of Lydia, Croesus, in his attack on the Persians, divides the river Halys in two so that the Lydian army may pass over. The story is from Herodotus' *Histories*, and Herodotus' account suggests how fascinating he found it; Thales, he writes

> began digging a deep channel at a point upstream of the army and led it semicircular so as to take the encampment in the rear, and at that point he diverted water from the river-bed along the artificial channel and made it run out again into the river after by-passing the encampment. The river, thus divided, became fordable in both parts (some say that he quite dried up the old course of the river; but I cannot assent to that: for if so, how could the army have crossed the river on its way back?).[45]

Fig. 9: Athanasius Kircher, *Origin of Rivers, Mundus Subterraneus* 1664, vol. 1, p. 254.

Here we seem to hear prophetically the questing voice of Kircher, and this story of a technical feat so spectacular that it seemed magical would have fascinated the circles around the Jesuit scientist, enthralled as they were by the power of engineers. Domenico Fontana's feat of raising the obelisk before

the Vatican was celebrated, and in 1650 the Pope and all Rome had gathered in the theatre at the centre of Rome, the Piazza Navona, and marvelled at the displays of hydraulic machinery which caused the water to gush through the hollowed rocks of Bernini's *Fountain of the Four Rivers*. Kircher was particularly interested in hydrology, and had imagined, at the beginning of the world, numerous and large hydropyglacia (fig. 9) in the major mountain ranges, which gave rise to rivers and were in their turn fed from the sea.[46] In *Latium,* he describes, at the falls of Tivoli, how the River Aniene "passes beneath a bridge into a deep whirlpool, a horrid spectacle you would think to be the mouth of hell, and the part outside the city falls from a high rock into a deep abyss, and goes through various underground channels to join all the other cataracts".[47] He included two views of Tivoli, which emphasise the turbulence of the waters.[48] Kircher was fascinated by hydraulic machines, such as the Nilometer, which calculated the level of the annual Nile flood, and an apparatus for draining the Pontine marshes, a pressing concern of his times.[49] The deeds of the legendary Thales seemed the remote origin of the interests of 17th century hydrologists and of the knowledge and skill of 17th century engineers.

Gaspar Schott, a colleague of Kircher, in his *Ioco Seriorum Naturae et artist sive magiae Naturalis Centuriatres*,[50] tells the story of a learned scientist at the court of Queen Christina laying a wager with the Queen about raising a river over a mountain, and I am tempted to think this subject too comes from the Queen's circles. Its pendant was *The Deaf Mute Son of King Croesus prevents the Persians from killing his Father* (Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia). This story occurs a little later in Herodotus' account, and tells how Croesus, about to be killed by a Persian soldier, was saved by his hitherto dumb son calling out "Man, kill not Croesus".[51] The figure of Croesus is based on the Laocoön (Vatican Museum) and Rosa here implicitly contrasted the tragic death of Laocoön and his sons with Croesus' miraculous salvation. This mixture, of science and technology with the unseen world of the spirit and prophecy, was characteristic of Kircher's science, and an interest in prophecy runs through Rosa's work of the 1660s.

Fig. 10: Salvator Rosa, A*rchytas of Tarentum*, 1668, Oil on canvas, 134 x 97cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado (Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa - Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2010, p. 125).

There followed *Archytas of Tarentum* (fig.10), with his mechanical dove, delivered to Antonio Ruffo, the distinguished Sicilian collector, in 1668. The only literary source for this is the *Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*, which tells how Archytas, the Pythagorean philosopher, made a wooden dove, which flew.[52] This it did through a balance of weights and air hidden in the hollow cavity of its body. But, the author adds with some scepticism, Favorinus himself, the source of this anecdote, comments that had the dove ever settled it would not have risen again. In modern times the dove had been imitated by the 15th century astrologer Johannes Regiomontanus, reputed to have made in the laboratories of Nuremberg an iron fly and wooden eagle, the latter intended to welcome the Holy Roman Emperor to Nuremberg.

The dove of Archytas had long been famed, but in the 1650s and 1660s reached new heights of celebrity, as part of a baroque culture of special effects which lay at the centre of Athanasius Kircher's

museum.[53] In 1678 Giorgio de Sepibus, Kircher's "assistant in making machines", published a summary list of the machines present in Kircher's museum. Number 15 is "the dove of Archytas reaching towards a crystalline rotunda and indicating the hours by its free flight". Other machines included Archimedes' screw, and "a large crystalline globe full of water representing the resurrection of the saviour in the midst of waters".[54] The vast array of magical machines in Kircher's museum was truly overwhelming, and some of them were aimed, like contemporary discussions of the Pythagoras' story, at stripping away ruse and imposture. There was an international élite who enjoyed such devices, and very many books multiplied throughout the era on secrets, such as Domenico Auda's *Breve Compendio di Maravigliosi Secreti* (1655) which by 1663 was in its fifth edition. Kircher's assistant, Gaspar Schott, had published his *Mechanica hydraulico-pneumatica* in 1657, and here he described the dove of Archytas, but was forced to conclude, a little sadly, and aware that he could not satisfy the demands of his readers, that he could not find out how it had worked.[55] Kircher illustrated a design for miniature version of the dove displayed in his museum in his *Magnes, sive de Arte Magnetica* (1654). Here he shows a tiny Archytas, turning on a needle to follow the progress of his dove, which, drawn by a magnet, wheels in the air above him.[56]

Only Aulus Gellius tells us of Archytas' dove, but Horace's ode to Archytas, *Te maris et Terrae,* written when Archytas was at the height of his fame in the ancient world, was equally well known, and a source for the 17th century conception of the philosopher. Archytas, writes Horace, "measured/the sea, the land, the innumerable sands"; he "attempted the mansions of heaven and traversed/with a mind born to die the polar rotund". Horace's ode is difficult, its meaning much debated, but his praise for an heroic mental journey, with its clear echoes of Lucretius, and yet a journey darkened by a sense of mortality, would have appealed to Rosa. The ode celebrates Archytas as a cosmologist and astronomer, who believed in an unlimited universe; his mind was fearless, and intrepidly he braved the secrets of the universe. And yet he could not avoid death, for "a common night awaits us, and we all must walk death's path".[57] Anthony Grafton has written that Archytas "made a natural hero for moderns dreaming that philosophy could give men power",[58] and Rosa's Archytas, his expression intense, his midnight blue drapery swirling around him, poised to launch his dove, creates a sense of mystery and magic. He is the forerunner of the daring scientists of the modern era, whose ambitions were infinite, and this heroic image of the philosopher scientist recurs in other of these late works. Rosa's likeness is based on a Tarentine coin in the collection of Fulvio Orsini, which was thought to represent the philosopher, but which was actually a Renaissance forgery. This was well known, and Rosa may have

Fig.11: Theodoor Galle, *Illustrium Imagines, ex antiquis marmoribus, numismatibus, et gemmae expressae,* Antwerp 1606, ill. no 2.

used the engraving of it in Theodoor Galle's *Illustrium Imagines* (1606), which shows Archytas' long beard and turban like headdress.[59] (fig.11) The Archytas was commissioned by the Sicilian collector Don Antonio Ruffo, who was building up a gallery of philosophers, amongst them Rembrandt's *Aristotle with the Bust of Homer* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of

Art) and a cosmographer by Guercino (untraced).[60] If we look back from them to Ribera's early galleries of philosophers it is at once apparent how different is the mood, and how the aura of mystery and romance contrasts with Ribera's ragged array of Stoics and Cynics from earlier in the century.

Rosa follows his *Archytas* with his *Death of Empedocles* (fig. 12) which shows the philosopher's leap into the volcano Etna. Etna was the archetype of a smoking mountain, geographically close and well known for its frequent eruptions. It had long fascinated poets, and become the centre of a mythological landscape, associated with Vulcan and the Cyclops, the rape of Proserpine, and the death of Empedocles. [61] For both the ancient world and the baroque Etna

Fig. 12: Salvator Rosa, *The Death of Empedocles,* c. 1665 – 1670, Oil on canvas, 135 x 99 cm, Private collection (Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa - Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2010, p. 213).

was a *meraviglia.* Pindar, whom Rosa was painting at much the same date (Ariccia, Villa Chigi) had written of the wonder of Etna, "from whose inmost caves burst forth the purest founts of unapproachable fire, […] amid the gloom of night, the ruddy flame, as it sweepeth along, with crashing din whirleth rocks to the deep sea far below".[62] The volcano was a subject entirely new in painting, but it was a *topos,* a favourite set piece for many academic discourses, and recommended as such by Paganino Gaudenzio.[63] In his *Il Cannochiale Aristotelico* (*Aristotle's Telescope*), a discourse on the wit and invention of ingenious metaphors, Emanuele Tesauro sets the dove of Archytas against Etna, as two kinds of marvels, the artificial and the natural. The dove of Archytas, which is not alive and yet flies, which does not eat and yet does not die, is a marvel of art, whilst Etna, which burns and freezes at the same time, is a natural marvel.[64]

With Athanasius Kircher a new note enters. He had travelled extensively in the seismic zones of southern Italy, and perhaps saw himself as the heir to Empedocles, engaged in an intrepid quest for the secrets of nature. In the preface to *Mundus Subterraneus* he described his descent into the crater of Vesuvius: "When I reached the crater, horrible to relate, I saw it all lit up by fire, with an intolerable exhalation of sulphur and burning bitumen. Thunderstruck by the unheard-of spectacle, I believed I was peering into the realm of the dead, and seeing the horrid phantasms of demons, no less. I perceived the groaning and shaking of the dreadful mountain, the inexplicable stench, the dark smoke mixed with globes of fire which the bottom and the sides of the mountain continuously vomited forth from eleven different places, forcing me at times to vomit it out myself." He illustrated his text with a dramatic illustration drawn from his own sketches.[65] Kircher travelled too to Etna, which he observed from a safer distance, and included a long description of the gigantic stones which made the crater, and of its awe-inspiring depth. [66] Rosa's painting may well suggest a response to this book with its compelling blend of first hand observation and illustration (fig.13). In 1669 Etna erupted, and Giovanni Alfonso Borelli published a scientific account of this, his *Historiae et meteorologia incendii Aetnaei anno 1669*; he had studied the volcano first hand. Already well known in Rome, Borelli was to become a favourite of Queen Christina's in the 1670s, and in 1675 he discussed the eruption of Etna at the Queen's Accademia Reale. Rosa had died two years

earlier, but his painting does suggest the interest in vulcanology of this circle. Queen Christina owned some preparatory drawings for the painting, and it is just possible that the picture postdates the 1669 eruption, and that she herself suggested the subject, as she had for the Pythagoras paintings.

Empedocles (fl. 444 BC) was a philosopher and poet, a disciple of Pythagoras; he taught that the world is composed of four elements, earth, air, fire and water. Here Rosa paints his mystifying leap into Etna, a death explained in various ways. Diogenes Laertius writes that Empedocles was thought to be a god, and plunged into the fiery craters “to confirm the report that he had become a god”.[67] But the truth became known, for one of his bronze slippers was thrown up in the flames, revealing his mortal death.

Fig.13: Athanasius Kircher, *Mount Vesuvius in Eruption (Mundus Subterraneus* 1664, vol. 1, opposite p. 200).

Diogenes Laertius mocked him, saying that he had fallen in rather than leapt. The death of Empedocles was sometimes treated with irony, or as an example of folly, but in the 17th century he was rehabilitated, and Gabriel Naudé, in his *Apologie pour les grands hommes soupçonnez de Magie*, defended Empedocles as he had defended Pythagoras, claiming that he had wished to examine too closely the marvellous effects of nature, rather than indulged a hazardous wish to be numbered amongst the gods.[68]

The deaths of philosophers formed a special category in 17th century art and literature. It was widely believed that Aristotle, like Empedocles, had died as a result of his research into the causes of things; he was believed to have drowned himself in the straits of Euripus, waters renowned for their turbulence and for their frequent reversals of flow; Aristotle was tormented by his failure to resolve the cause of this ebb and flow. Gaudenzio, in his *Gallery of the Illustrious Marino*, rejected this legend, but earlier had written a short essay on man’s overruling passion for knowledge, which can sometimes be harmful; he mentions here “Pliny, the author of the Natural Histories, who, to observe the flames of Mount Vesuvius, brought about his own death. Aristotle, not finding why the Euripus ebbed and flowed, threw himself into it.”[69] Empedocles was clearly the precursor of Pliny, who had died whilst courageously studying the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79. Pliny’s death, by the 1660s, had become a topos and Federico Cesi, founder of the Academy of the Lynx, had written of the passion aroused by studying the great book of nature, a passion so intense that the death of Pliny should not surprise nor shock us.[70] Kircher no doubt had Pliny in mind as well as Empedocles as he plunged into the volcano’s crater, and the daring deaths of natural philosophers formed a special category in both 17th art and literature.

In his *Della Filosofica Peregrinazione* Gaudenzio had condemned Empedocles’ leap into Etna, as an act of astounding vanity, but had defended him from accusations of demonic magic.[71] In his *Nuovo Poema in Sonnetti* Gaudenzio addressed three poems to Empedocles which together suggest the ambiguities of his reception. In the first he celebrates Empedocles as a god amongst the wisemen of old, who had sought for truth and studied the internal workings of nature. It would have been better, he concludes, to enjoy this profitable way of life, than to burn from insane ambition. A second praises Empedocles as a poet, drawing a parallel with Lucretius; elsewhere Gaudenzio passionately defends Lucretius against the frequently expressed view that he is scientist first and only secondarily a poet.[72] A final poem, entitled *Of Empedocles, wishing to be thought a god,* is a com-

ment on the overweening folly of the philosopher's desire, rooted in Tertullian's negative remarks on him in *De Anima*. Here Tertullian makes merciless fun of the philosopher, laughing at his belief in transmigration, and his claim to have once been a fish (why not a tasty melon, mocks Tertullian); he chose Etna for his grave, where he truly roasted like a fish.[73] These three poems together capture the spirit of the debates that clustered around Empedocles.[74]

And perhaps Rosa's painting, too, was intended to be ambiguous, and to provoke this kind of discourse. Here Rosa abandons the classical structure that had characterised even his wildest landscapes of the 1650s and early 1660s. Sky, rocks and fiery crater are brought close to the frontal plane, and the entire surface seems shifting, unstable, threatening to engulf the spectator. It may be that Rosa saw not only Kircher's illustrations but also the drawings and watercolours which Kircher took from nature, and the vertical shaft, with the pools of flame at its base, is close to these sources; the painting seems to be the first painted representation of a volcano in eruption.[75] Against the crater the tiny figure of Empedocles seems heroic, and the painter evokes the wonder and mystery of this legendary figure from the earliest era of human knowledge. But he does include the golden slipper, evidence of Empedocles' cheating, a device which links him to Pythagoras the trickster with a golden thigh, and provokes a kind of lingering unease in the mind of the viewer; it is possible to see the bat-like, sprawling figure of Empedocles as comic, as Crates before him had been.

It is these ambiguities, the ways in which this deeply read painter reflects so many strains of thought and feeling that provides the lasting fascination of Rosa's philosopher subjects. He suggests a 17th century passion for *novità* and *meraviglia*, yet looks forward to the 18th century sublime, with its passion for the awesome grandeur of nature.

Endnotes

1. Filippo Baldinucci*, Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua,* ed. Ferdinando Ranalli, 6 vols., Florence 1671-1728, repr. Paola Barocchi, Florence 1974-1975, p. 497: "Da tale suo soverchio amore e appetito di gloria era ancora nato in lui fin da un gran tempo un fervente desio d'apparire in ogni suo fatto e detto un vero filosofo: e pare che il passeggiare per gli spaziosi portici d'Atene in compagnia degli antichi Stoici fosse continova occupazione de'suoi pensieri".
2. On these frescoes see Elizabeth McGrath*, From Parnassus to Careggi: a seventeenth celebration of Plato and Renaissance Florence*, in: *Sight and insight: essays on art and culture in honour of E.H. Gombrich at 85*, ed. John Onians, London 1994, pp. 191-220.
3. John Renaldo, *Daniello Bartoli: a Letterato of the Seicento*, Naples 1979, p. 41.
4. On this dedication see Floriana Conte*, Salvator Rosa tra Roma e Firenze. Vecchie questioni e nuovi materiali*, in: *Metodo di ricerca e ricerca del metodo: storia, arte, musica a confronto*, Atti del convegno di studi Lecce 21-23 May 2007, ed. Benedetto Vetere, Congedo 2009, p. 247.
5. Daniello Bartoli, *L'Uomo di Lettere*, Bologna 1646, pp. 112-113: "Mirate gli antichi filosofi…Chi butta le ricchezze in mare, e si fà mendico, per non diventare povero. […] Chi vive in una botte, più come un cane nel suo nido, come che un' huomo nel suo albergo. Chi si butta nel Mongibello, e chi nel mare, l'uno perche non intende la cagione di que'movimenti, l'altro perche non rintraccia l'origine di quelle fiamme. Pitagora si trasforma in cento bestie. […] Senocrate è un marmo sensa senso, [...] Diogene un cane, Epicuro un'animale, Democrito un pazzo, che sempre ride, Eraclito un disperato, che sempre piange."
6. Paganino Gaudenzio, *Del seguitar la corte o no*, Pisa 1645. On Gaudenzio see Caroline Callard, *Le Prince et la République*, Paris 2007, pp. 98-99 and 164-171.
7. Paganino Gaudenzio*, De Philosophiae apud Romanos initio e progressu volumen,* Pisa 1643. On this see Ilario Tolomio, *Il Genere 'Historia Philosophica' tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, in: *Storia delle Storie Generali della Filosofia*, ed. Giovanni Santinello, Brescia 1981, vol. 1, pp. 119-123.
8. Paganino Gaudenzio, *La Galleria dell'Inclito Marino Considerata vien dal Paganino Con alcune composizioni dell'istesso Paganino*, Pisa 1648, p. 183.
9. For recent research on Rosa in Pisa see Franco Paliaga*, Pittori, incisori e architetti pisani nel secolo di Galileo*, Pisa 2009.
10. For *Diogenes throwing away his bowl* see Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, with an English translation by Robert Drew Hicks, London 1970, II, p. 39, VI.37, and for *Crates throwing his Money into the sea* ibidem, p. 91, VI.87.
11. Bartoli 1646, *L'Uomo di Lettere*, p. 39; "reliquie del secol d'oro", on this passage in Bartoli see Helen Langdon, *Relics of the Golden Age: the Vagabond Philosopher*, in: *Others and Outcasts in early Modern Europe: Picturing the Social Margins*, ed. Tom Nichols, Burlington VT 2007, pp. 157-178.
12. Traino Boccalini, *I Ragguagli di Parnaso*, with an English translation by Henry, Earl of Monmouth, London 1649, p. 100.
13. Antonio Santacroce, *La Secretaria di Apollo*, Venice 1653, pp. 438-439. For Rosa's admiration of Santacroce see Salvator Rosa, *Lettere,* ed. Gian Giotto Borelli, Naples 2003, p. 170. The book was first published in 1650.
14. For the poem see Leandro Ozzola, *Vita e Opere di Salvator Rosa*, Strasburg 1908, pp. 225-228.
15. For this painting see *Salvator Rosa, Bandits, Wilderness and Magic,* ed. Helen Langdon, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery and Fort Worth, Kimbell Art Museum, 15 September 2010 – 27 March 2011, pp. 218-219.
16. For this engraving by Crispijn van Passe see*: Fortune: "All is but Fortune"*, ed. Leslie Thomson, Washington DC, Shakespeare Library, January 18th – June 10th 2000, p. 30, cat. no. 43.
17. Christies, London, King St; *Old Master and 19th century Art, sale* December 8th 2009 lot 27.
18. Luigi Salerno, *L'Opera completa di Salvator Rosa,* Milan 1975, Tav. XXXIX.

19. For these etchings see Richard Wallace, *The Etchings of Salvator Rosa,* Princeton, New Jersey 1979, cats. 104, 103 and 108.
20. Wallace 1979, *The Etchings*, cat. 109.
21. Paganino Gaudenzio, *Della Peregrinazione filosofica Tratatello di Paganini*, Pisa 1643, p.10.
22. Rosa 2003, *Lettere*, p. 326.
23. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, V 3.
24. Daniello Bartoli, *La Tensione e la Pressione,* Rome 1677, pp. 1-14. I am grateful to Floriana Conte for this reference.
25. Bartoli 1677, *La Tensione e la Pressione*, p. 1: "un venerando vecchio, in portamento all'antica, e in abito alla filosofale: di gran persona, e di maestoso aspetto, ma temperato soave, con altrettanta giocondità; e sopra tutto con due occhi d'aquila in capo, sì vivi, e spiritosi, che parlano: tener disteso il braccio, la mano, il dito in atto di comandare ad un villanello, che pochi passi fuor della porta d'una città gli si tien fermo inanzi, e a'suoi piedi ha disposto un fascio di legna".
26. Bartoli 1677, *La Tensione e la Pressione*, p. 1: "Tutti erano fusti, ò barbi, e radici di piante salvatiche, i rami che componevan quel fascio: perció bistorti, e curui; pieni di groppi, e di sproni, e di giunture storpie, nodose, stravolte: ma con tanta maestria d'ingegno accoppiati e commessi, così strettamente raggiunti, e stivati, col far che ne' difetti dell'uno entrasser gli eccessi dell'altro, e tutti scambieuolmente si ubbidissero al riceversi, all'adatarsi, a ben formare un tutto".
27. Bartoli 1677, *La Tensione e la Pressione*, p. 3: "v'ho figuralmente rappresentato qul ch'è la Natura, e quel che de'essere il Filosofo naturale intorno ad essa".
28. Bartoli 1677, *La Tensione e la Pressione*, p. 13: "questo nuovo stil di sapere".
29. Bartoli 1677, *La Tensione e la Pressione*, p. 14: "Quella propone il fatto, questa ne rinviene il perche".
30. Rosa 2003, *Lettere*, p. 294: "Ho concluso i due quadri che stavo lavorando, i sogetti de'quali sono del tutto e per tutto nuovi, nè tocchi mai da nessuno. Ho dipinto in una tela […] Pitagora lungo la riva del mare cortegiato dall sua setta, in atto di pagare ad alcuni pescatori una rete che stanno tiranno, a ciò si ridia libertà ai pesci, motivo tolto da un opuscolo di Plutarco. L'altro è quando il medesimo, doppo esser stato un anno in una sotterranea abitazione, alla fine d'esso, aspettato dalla sua setta, cosi d'uomini come di donne, uscì fuori e disse venire dagl'Inferi e d'haver veduto colà l'anima d'Homero, d'Esiodo, et altre coglionarie appettatorie di quei tempi così dolcissimi di sale". Letter of 29 July 1662. As translated Eckhard Leuschner, *The Pythagorean Inscription on Rosa's London Self Portrait*, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, LVII, 1994, p. 280.
31. Rosanna De Gennaro, *Per il collezionismo del Seicento in Sicilia: l'inventario di Antonio Ruffo Principe della Scaletta*, Pisa 2003, pp. 93, 111, 140. For a full history of the painting see Langdon 2010, *Salvator Rosa*, p. 206.
32. For this anecdote see Plutarch's *Moralia,* with an English translation by Edwin Minar Jr., Francis Henry Sandbach and William C. Helmbold, London / New York 1961, IX 729D.
33. Plutarch, *Moralia* VIII.8, IX, 173, 185.
34. Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* with an English translation by Frank Justus Miller, Cambridge / London, repr.1994, vol. IV, XV.165-175, p. 377.
35. Ovid 1994, XV.81-82. For a comparison of Rosa and Rubens see: Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa: his Ideas and his development as an artist,* unpublished PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, London 1974, p. 345. For Rubens' iconography see Elizabeth McGrath, *Rubens: Subjects from History*, London 1997, vol. II, pp. 48-52.
36. Susanna Akerman, *Queen Christina of Sweden and her Circle*, Leiden / New York / Kǿbenhaven / Kőln 1991, pp. 73-74; Michel de Marolles, *Le Poete Lucrèce*, Paris 1650.
37. Akerman 1991, *Queen Christina of Sweden*, p. 97.
38. Akerman 1991, *Queen Christina of Sweden*, p. 84.
39. As given in Christiane L. Joost-Gaugier, *Measuring Heaven. Pythagoras and his Thought and Art in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Ithaca / London 2006, p. 21.
40. Diogenes Laertius 1970, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, II, p. 357, VIII 41.
41. Gabriel Naudé, *Considerations sur les Coups d'Estat*, Rome 1667, p. 275.
42. Gabriel Naudé, *Apologie pour les grands hommes soupçonnez par magie,* Amsterdam 1712, pp. 160-162. For a discussion of this theme see Lorenzo Bianchi, *Rinascimento e Libertinismo,* Naples 1996, pp. 127-136.
43. Paganino Gaudenzio, *Della Peregrinazion filosofica*, Pisa 1643, pp. 42-43; "il che forsi tutto fù inventato, e finto da Ermippo. Certamente Pitagora appresso Oviddio, pare che neghi assolutamente i regni di Plutone. Come dunque s'asserisce che Pitagora disse di venir da gl'infernali, e sotterranei regni?"
44. "Unde manifestum est omnes legislatores et principes esse deceptores ac simulatores, religionemque qua populos trahunt nihil esse quam astutiam et commentum ad dominatus utilitatem." As cited in Tullio Gregory*, Theophrastus Redivivus: erudizione e ateismo nel Seicento,* Naples 1979, p. 106.
45. Herodotus of Halicarnassus, *Histories,* with an English translation by Harry Carter, London 1962, I.75, p. 33.
46. Athanasius Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus*, Amsterdam 1665, vol. I, pp. 233-234 for description and illustrations.
47. Athanasius Kircher, *Latium,* Amsterdam 1671, p. 140: "sub ponte profundissima voragine, quam ex horrendo spectaculo inferni fauces diceres, partim extra urbe per altissimam rupem in communem aquae voraginis abyssum dilapsus, per alios aliosque subterraneos cuniculos totidem aliis *Catarractis* committitur", as given in Joscelyn Godwin, *Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World*, London 2009, p. 136.
48. Kircher 1671, *Latium*, pp. 141-142.
49. Godwin 2009, *Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World*, p. 187.
50. Aspasius Caramuelius*, Ioco seriorum naturae et artis, sive magiae centuriae tres*, Frankfurt 1667, p. 226.
51. Herodotus 1962, *Histories*, I.85, p. 38.
52. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, X, 12.8 -10.
53. For the reception of Archytas in the Renaissance see Anthony Grafton, *Conflict and Harmony in the Collegium Gellianum,* in: *The Worlds of Aulus Gellius*, eds. Leofranc Holford Stevens and Amiel Vardi, Oxford 2004, pp. 318-342.
54. Giorgio De Sepibus, *Romani Societatis Jesu Musaeum Celeberrimum etc*, Amsterdam 1678, pp. 2-3 lists Kircher's machines. The dove of Archytas is no.15.
55. Gaspar Schott, *Mechanica hydraulico-pneumatica,* Frankfurt 1657, p. 243; Grafton 2004, *Conflict and Harmony*, p. 342.
56. Athanasius Kircher, *Magnes: sive de arte mechanica opus tripartitum,* Rome 1654, p. 264, fig. 23. For a description of this model see *Athanasius Kircher: Il Museo del Mondo, ed. Eugenio del Sardo*, Rome, Palazzo Venezia, 28th Feb – 22 April 2001, pp. 253-255 and Grafton 2004, *Conflict and Harmony*, p. 341. For an illustration, p. 254.
57. Horace, *The Complete Odes and Epodes: with the centennial Hymn*, with an English translation by William G. Shepherd, London 1983, Book I, p. 28.
58. Grafton 2004, *Conflict and Harmony*, p. 339.
59. Theodoor Galle, *Illustrium Imagines, ex antiquis marmoribus, numismatibus, et gemmae expressae,* Antwerp 1606, illus no 27. For a discussion of the sources on Archytas, including Horace's ode, see p. 17. For a discussion of likenesses of Archytas see Gisela Richter, *Portraits of the Greeks,* London, 1965, II, p. 179.
60. Guercino's painting is known through a drawing in Princeton University Art Museum. For a fuller discussion of Rosa and Ruffo see Xavier Salomon and Helen Langdon*, Of Men and Mechanical Doves: Salvator Rosa's Archytas for Don Antonio Ruffo*, in: *Boletin del Museo del Prado*, forthcoming.
61. For Etna in ancient and Renaissance literature see Dominique Bertrand, *Mythologies de l'Etna,* Clermont-Ferrand 2004.
62. Pindar, *The Odes of Pindar,* Cambridge / London 1978, p. 157.
63. Paganino Gaudenzio, *Della Filosofica Peregrinazione*, Pisa 1643, pp. 62-64.
64. Emanuele Tesauro, *Il Cannochiale Aristotelico*, Turin 1655, p. 449.
65. Athanasius Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus*, Amsterdam 1665, preface, chap. III, unpaginated; "craterem cum jam obtinuissem, horrendum dictu, totem igne illuminatum vidi cum intolerabili sulphuris & bituminis ardentis mephiti. Hic prorsus ad inusitatum rei spectaculum attonitus, inferorum domicilium me intueri cre-

debam, in quo praeter daemonum horrenda phasmata, nil adeò aliud deesse videbatur. Horrendi percipiebantur montis mugitus & fremitus, putor inexplicabilis, fumi subfuscis ignium globis mixti, quos ex undecim diversis locis, tam fundus, tam latera montis continuò eructabant, identidem me illud eructare cogebant", as given in Godwin 2009, *Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World*, p. 133. For the illustration see preface.

66. Kircher 1665, *Mundus Subterraneus*, vol. I, pp. 186-188.
67. Diogenes Laertius 1970, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, pp. 383-384, VIII. 69.
68. Naudé 1712, p. 193.
69. Paganino Gaudenzio, *Considerazioni Accademiche*, Florence 1631, p. 87: "Plinio l'autor della storia naturale, per osservare l'incendio del monte Vesuvio, a se cagiona la morte. Aristotile, non ritrovando perche s'aggiri l'Euripo, si getto in esso. La cagione della morte d'Omero fu il non sapere sciorre un'enigma."
70. Irene Baldriga, *Lo sgomento della morte di Plinio*, in: *Rome et la science moderne: entre Renaissance et Lumières*, ed. Antonella Romano, Rome 2008, pp. 418-421.
71. Gaudenzio 1643, *Della Filosofica Peregrinazione*, p. 43.
72. Paganino Gaudenzio, *De Pythagorea Animarum Transmigratione,* Pisa 1642, pp. 298-299.
73. Tertullian, *De Anima*, XXXII. I.
74. Paganino Gaudenzio, *Nuovo Poema in Sonnetti*, Pisa 1648, pp. 26-28.
75. For these drawings see del Sardo, *Athanasius Kircher* 2001, figs. 78, 79 and 80. The originals are owned by the Museo di Geologia Università degli Studi di Roma 'La Sapienza'.

Figures

Fig. 1: Salvator Rosa, *The Philosophers' Wood,* c. 1641 – 1643, Oil on canvas, 147 x 221 cm, Florence, Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti (Luigi Salerno, *L'Opera completa di Salvator Rosa,* Milan 1975, fig. XXII).

Fig. 2: Salvator Rosa, *Crates throwing his Riches into the Sea,* c. 1641 – 1643, Oil on canvas, 146 x 216 cm; Skipton, Boughton Hall (Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa - Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2010, fig.12).

Fig. 3: Crispijn van de Passe, *Homo Vanitatis et Fortuna ludibrium*, in *Stirpium, insignium nobilitatis*, Basel 1602? (Leslie Thomson, Washington DC, Shakespeare Library, January 18th – June 10th 2000, p. 30).

Fig. 4: Salvator Rosa, *Fortuna,* 1640 – 1642, Oil on canvas, 254 x 144,8 cm, Private collection (Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa - Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2010, fig. 35).

Fig. 5: Salvator Rosa, *Democritus and Protagoras,* c. 1660 – 1663, Oil on canvas, 185 x 128 cm, St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa - Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2010, fig. 76).

Fig. 6: Salvator Rosa, *Pythagoras instructing the Fishermen,* 1662, Oil on canvas, 132 x 188 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (Luigi Salerno, *L'Opera completa di Salvator Rosa,* Milan 1975, fig. LI).

Fig. 7: Salvator Rosa, *Pythagoras emerging from the Underworld*; 1662, Oil on canvas, 131,1 x 189 cm, Texas, Fort Worth, Kimbell Art Museum (Photograph by Robert La Prelle).

Fig. 8: Salvator Rosa, *Thales causing the river to flow on both sides of the Lydian army,* c. 1663 – 1664, Oil on canvas, 73,5 x 97 cm, Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia (Gift of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide).

Fig. 9: Athanasius Kircher, *Origin of Rivers, Mundus Subterraneus* 1664, vol. 1, p. 254.

Fig. 10: Salvator Rosa, *Archytas of Tarentum,* 1668, Oil on canvas, 134 x 97 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado (Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa - Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2010, p. 125).

Fig.11: Theodoor Galle, *Illustrium Imagines, ex antiquis marmoribus, numismatibus, et gemmae expressae,* Antwerp 1606, ill. no 2.
Fig. 12: Salvator Rosa, *The Death of Empedocles,* c. 1665 – 1670, Oil on canvas, 135 x 99 cm, Private collection (Helen Langdon, *Salvator Rosa - Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2010, p. 213).

Fig.13: Athanasius Kircher, *Mount Vesuvius in Eruption* (*Mundus Subterraneus,* 1664, vol.1, opposite p. 200).

Summary

Salvator Rosa longed to be considered a philosopher-painter, and to win a reputation for his learned representation of novel subjects. This essay traces the development of this kind of subject matter in his art, from the satirical paintings of Cynics and Stoics which date from his years in Florence (1640 – 1649) to philosopher paintings of the 1660s, when he chose instead the pre-Socratics, such as Pythagoras and Empedocles, and natural philosophers and magicians. It sets these paintings in their intellectual contexts, in Florence in the world of the literary academies, in which Rosa played a key role, and in Rome in the scientific world of Athanasius Kircher, Daniello Bartoli and Queen Christina of Sweden. The essay aims to illuminate the strains of contemporary thought and feeling to which these paintings so deeply appealed, and, by studying the treatment of such subjects in contemporary poetry and literature, to suggest how they may have been read. It argues that much of their appeal may have lain in their ambiguity, and in the power that they had to stimulate discussion. Several of Rosa's subjects are extremely rare in painting, but, as in the case of two paintings of Pythagoras, they are subjects common in literature. They would not have been seen as odd and eccentric, as now they seem, but as subjects central to 17th century philosophical debates.

Author

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Title

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