



FAKULTA
HUMANITNÍCH STUDIÍ
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Zadání cizojazyčného textu:

Michelangelo's Dream

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When Tommaso de' Cavalieri and Vittoria Colonna received one of Michelangelo's gift drawings, they were getting something novel. The highly finished drawing conceived as an end in itself and presented as a token of affection or esteem had no real precedent in artistic practice, belonging instead to other modes of social exchange and communication, such as gift giving and letter writing. As Alexander Nagel has observed, the ostensible privacy and intimacy of this new form allowed for a unique degree of freedom of invention and interpretation. The drawings that Michelangelo produced in the mid-1530s in particular represent an exercise of artistic license that encourages an equally flexible interpretative response. They tend to be allegorical in nature, treating familiar myths or evoking a classicizing fantasy world whose outlines seem familiar from the work of an earlier generation of artists such as Andrea Mantegna, even if their precise meaning has eluded art historians.

Il Sogno (or *The Dream*), generally dated to about 1533, traditionally has been viewed as an allegory of virtue and vice, an interpretation that seems somewhat limiting in light of the complex imagery of the work and the circumstances of its production and reception. Letters from both Cavalieri and Colonna to the artist testify to their intense engagement with Michelangelo's drawings, reporting hours spent gazing at the works and the use of mirrors and magnifying glasses for their closer examination. Taking such evidence as my guide, I want to look at the *Sogno* not as an instantly apprehensible allegory of virtue and vice but as an image to be meditated upon, a work whose pleasure derives from its endless unfolding of meaning, affording the viewer delight in returning to it again and again.

While it is impossible to recover the intimate, subjective experience of the drawing's original recipient, the *Sogno's* iconography makes its meaning accessible to the less initiated viewer. The traditional interpretation of the work responds to that iconography, but I believe it falls short of the multifaceted nature of the image. In the pages that follow, I will argue that the Virtues and Vices are certainly at play in the *Sogno*, but as part of a more complex program that alludes to melancholia, dreams, love, desire, and creation. In blending these themes together, Michelangelo provides pictorial form for contemporary ideas about artistic inspiration and creation by inventing a visual language that complements and enhances a textual discourse on

divine inspiration. The image challenges its viewer to untangle multiple threads of meaning and reweave them into a coherent whole, joining the artist in the making of meaning.

At the center of Michelangelo's *Sogno*, a male nude perches precariously on an open box filled with masks. His upper torso twists to his left as he leans on a sphere for support. He turns his head in the opposite direction, looking upward and over his right shoulder to watch a winged creature descend from above. Considerably smaller in scale, the body of this heavenly visitor is silhouetted against the empty upper zone of the sheet as he floats down, head first, toward the nude. He extends his right arm to direct a trumpet at the nude's forehead, inflating his cheeks to sound the instrument. The trumpet pierces through an arc of smaller figures, many of them fragmentary, that encircle the nude. This arc of forms is rendered with a lighter touch, producing a sketchy effect that contrasts with the heavily worked body of the nude, yet the figures remain legible. Among assorted disembodied heads, we find figures that embrace and kiss while others do battle, drink, or sleep.

Despite its relatively complex imagery, the *Sogno* seems to have presented few challenges to its readers. Since the seventeenth century, the drawing has been understood as an allegory of the human soul awakened to virtue from vice. This reading originates with Hieronymus Tetius, a seventeenth-century visitor to the Palazzo Barberini. Viewing painted copy of the *Sogno*, Tetius identified its central seated youth as the human mind, his winged counterpart as an angel, and the cloud of figures surrounding the pair as representations of the Vices. His interpretation was endorsed, expanded, and applied to the original by Erwin Panofsky in the twentieth century. Subsequent readings have amplified and refined Panofsky's analysis, and few, if any, have challenged it. [...]

Because of his idealized form and contact with the heavenly creature above him, the seated youth generally is believed to represent the human soul. But the presence of a recognizable attribute and the pose of the figure imply a more precise identity. The youth leans on a large sphere bisected by a line, a detail that suggests it represents the Earth. Some copies of the *Sogno*, in fact, depict the sphere as a globe, complete with continents. This prominent prop, originally an attribute of the geometer, is familiar from the iconography of melancholy. Traditionally signifying the melancholic's aptitude for geometry, in the *Sogno* the globe has other potential meanings. Simultaneously representing Earth and instability, it may signal both the melancholic's elemental affiliation and the emotional volatility that characterizes the temperament. The dependence of the *Sogno*'s central nude on the globe strongly suggests that the figure is a melancholic. [...]

(Shrnutí: 0 až 10 bodů)

Otázky k textu:

1. Jakou jinou úlohu, než alegorickou by zmíněný obraz, podle textu, mohl mít? (0 až 5 bodů)
2. S jakými podobnými a souvisejícími myšlenkami jste se již někdy setkali? (0 až 5 bodů)
3. Vyjmenujte pět knih z beletrie nebo humanitní vzdělanosti a pět filmů libovolného žánru, které jsou pro Vás významné (odpověď na tuto otázku sama nebude bodovaná, ale pomůže nám porozumět Vaším odpovědím na předchozí otázky).