PIUS LIPSIUS OR LIPSIUS PROTEUS?*

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Quando hic [Mediolani] sum, non ieiuno Sabbato; 
quando Romae sum ieiuno Sabbato.1

In 1605, Theodore Galle (1571–1633) engraved a portrait of Lipsius at the age of 58 to be inserted in the humanist’s famous edition of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, dedicated to Pope Paul V and published in Antwerp in September of that same year. [Fig. 17] Underneath, a distich composed by Henricus d’Oultremannus resounds with Lipsius’s praise:

Lipsiadas velum est Timantis imago. Videri  
Sol quoque sub picea non nisi nube potest.

Lipsius’s portrait wears the veil of Timanthes. Under a pine tree even the Sun can only be seen through its cloud-like crown.

In the first verse the author alludes to a painter of Antiquity, Timanthes (late 5th century B.C.), who represented Agamemnon with his head covered by a veil because unable to express the grief of the king when he had to sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia. With this reference, the humanist poet uses a very popular topos found in verses accompanying humanist portraits: no representation whatsoever, belonging to either the visual arts or the written world, could sufficiently express the real significance of Lipsius for the scholarly world.2 With his right hand Lipsius is holding a book, while his left one is resting on the head of one of his beloved dogs, Saphyrus. The dog, a spaniel, was given to him by Theodorus Leeuwius (1548–1596), one of his former students and later councillor at the Court of Holland, in March–April 1590.

* I am indebted to Brenda Hosington for correcting my English.
1 Ambrose quoted in Augustine, Letters, 36, 32: ’When here [in Milan], I do not fast on Saturday; but when in Rome I fast on Saturday.’
Fig. 17. Theodore Galle, *Portrait of Justus Lipsius*, engraving 1605. Catholic University Leuven, Central Library / Prentenkabinet, inv.nr. PA 81