Five of Julius Held’s articles on Rembrandt were collected into a monograph in 1969, *Rembrandt’s Aristotle and Other Rembrandt Studies*, and re-issued with three additional essays in 1991. These essays are regarded as canonical in Dutch art history, as authoritative measures of documentation and interpretation of their subjects. Even as recent scholarship reexamines these essays, they remain central to Rembrandt studies, for they serve as touchstones for critiques and further investigations of Held’s arguments and those of others as well. Held’s profound affection for Rembrandt was formed in his youth, for a sojourn in Holland in 1923 was decisive in shaping his interest in Dutch art: “The taste for the Dutch masters had come naturally; that for Rubens had to be acquired.” Yet in his scholarly pursuits, Held devoted far more attention to Rubens. Indeed, Held’s persistent, systematic, and comprehensive examination of Rubens and his circle contrasts markedly with his selective approach to Rembrandt. This contrast in attentiveness is physically manifest in the shelf-space of the publications generated by his varying interests in these artists: Held’s principal writings on Rubens fill four hefty volumes; *Selected Drawings* fills four centimeters of shelf space, and *Oil Sketches* takes up nine centimeters on the shelf. The 1982 volume of fifteen essays on Rubens and his circle, which represents a very select reprinting of his articles on Rubens and his associates add another two-and-a-half centimeters. In contrast, his collected yet selected reprinting of articles on Rembrandt occupy less than three centimeters. Shelf-space is in no way the most accurate measure of the importance of these works, but it reveals Held’s inclination and productivity.

The characters of these very different artists may also have reinforced his inclinations. Held’s attachment to the diplomatic and gracious Rubens was not matched by his affinity for the undiplomatic and contrary Rembrandt. Many qualities of Rubens’ art and life appealed to Held: Rubens was intellectually brilliant, physically vigorous, and socially adept; he was methodical in his creative process, well-organized in his workshop and business affairs, and skilled at negotiations his commissions; he was optimistic in his concern for humanity, punning and joyous in interpreting narrative, and devoted to his family and friends. Clearly, the well-adjusted, prosperous Rubens was also more appealing to him than the financially unstable Rembrandt, whose domestic life was messy at times. Held’s own scholarly rigor, personal graciousness, and habitual organization had obvious affinity with Rubens, rather than Rembrandt. An early visit to The Netherlands fostered Held’s interest in Dutch genre painting, and may have kindled his fascination with Jordaens. Tellingly, Held published on Jordaens, a foremost artist associated with Rubens and whose art bespeaks an earthiness and human warmth, before he even undertook research on Rembrandt (1933). From his student years, Held would have become familiar with the issues involved in Rubens and Rembrandt studies and the scholars, both established and young, who were directly concerned with them. He had heard Carl Neumann’s lectures at Heidelberg; studied with Werner Weisbach in Berlin and knew Kurt Bauch. Thus, he was familiar with the field, and may not have seen a need to pursue that direction in his own early career. By nature, Held was inclined to examine topics overlooked...
by others, and to follow paths less trodden. To some extent, this may have influenced his preference for Rubens over Rembrandt. Around 1930, there were fewer scholars working on Rubens than on Rembrandt. In the decades following 1900, Rembrandt had become big business, in Germany as well as in the emerging collections in the United States.\textsuperscript{8} Coming out of Berlin in 1933 (having been fired under the Nazi regime from his position at the Kaiser Friederich Museum as assistant to Max J. Friedländer), Held would have been at the epicenter of Rembrandt controversies about attributions made by Wilhelm von Bode, and he may well have thought that the field of Rembrandt studies was then a bit crowded and contentious. The \textit{catalogues raisonnés} of Rembrandt’s work proliferated (as the oeuvre swelled rapidly under the energetic identification of newly found paintings by Bode and Bredius).\textsuperscript{9}

Despite the formidable writings by Max Rooses, Ludwig Burchard, Gustav Glück, Rudolf Oldenbourg and others, Held realized the need for systematic investigation of Rubens, with focus on how he conceived and developed his ideas. Although there were several substantial \textit{catalogues raisonnés} of Rubens’ paintings, there was little on the drawings and oil sketches — precisely those works which were closest to the artist’s invention and execution.

Held’s publications on Rembrandt developed largely from his teaching at New York University (1935-1941) and at Barnard College, Columbia University (until 1970), where he taught the range of Northern European art, including Rembrandt and Rubens. As visiting professor at Pittsburgh (1972-1973), he taught a seminar on Rembrandt. At Williams College-Clark Art Institute, Held taught graduate seminars on Dürrer (spring 1974), Rubens (spring 1975; fall 1976), connoisseurship (spring 1976 and fall 1979), and iconography (fall 1977). In the fall of 1978 and 1980, he finally gave seminars on Rembrandt.\textsuperscript{10} By the time he had retired from teaching, the number of classes he taught on Dürrer, Early Netherlandish Painting, Rubens, and non-Rembrandt topics seems to have been significantly greater than the number of classes that concentrated on Rembrandt and Dutch art.

His choice of Rembrandt paintings for focused analysis was serendipitous and convenient: grand paintings, on view in New York City, that had been treated superficially in the literature. These paintings were the \textit{Polish Rider} (The Frick Collection), the \textit{Aristotle} (Metropolitan Museum of Art) and the \textit{Juno} (then on loan to the Metropolitan; now in Los Angeles, Hammer Museum). The 1969 publication of the collected Rembrandt essays made widely accessible the five essays that had been previously published in journals or a limited edition monograph (\textit{Tobit}). These essays were first published between 1944 and 1966. In the title article (1966), Held demonstrated how both conception and design of the 1653 \textit{Aristotle and the Bust of Homer} were the artist’s own, yet rooted in cultural and pictorial traditions (1966). In the second essay (1944), Held suggested that the \textit{Polish Rider}, depicting a young man in military costume of eastern Europe, represented an idealized \textit{Miles Christianus}. Held analyzed the \textit{Juno} as the unfinished canvas for Rembrandt’s loyal admirer, Harmen Becker, in the third study (1967). Held related themes of blindness, divine intervention, and filial duty to Rembrandt’s depiction of events from the Book of Tobit, in the fourth (1964); and in the fifth, ‘Rembrandt: Truth and Legend’ (1950), he separated Rembrandt’s reputation from accrued myths of the unappreciated artist and the purported reluctant acceptance of the \textit{Night Watch}.

The two main additions to the 1991 volume, ‘Rembrandt’s Interest in Beggars’ (1984) and ‘Rembrandt and the Spoken Word’ (1970) developed from lectures, in keeping with the rest of his Rembrandt publications that grew out of participation in events.\textsuperscript{11} In ‘Beggars’, he explored the contrasting psychological expressions and religious and social contexts of Rembrandt’s images of the indigent. In ‘Rembrandt and the Spoken Word’, Held, through close looking, examined how the artist may have chosen and composed subjects to imply verbal discourse through gesture.