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THE IMAGE OF ILLNESS IN VEIT STOSS'S WORKS OF ART

The article takes up the issue of ideological connections between the philosophy of man developed in the 15th century by the Cracovian masters from the *Universitatis Cracoviensis* and Cracovian Gothic art, above all the sculptures created by Veit Stoss in his Cracovian period. The German master-carver showed in his Cracovian Altarpiece a vast range of individual portrait-studies, realistic and naturalistic in character. During the Cracovian period some essential transformations took place in Veit Stoss's oeuvre. He created naturalistic portrait-studies unknown in the European art of the time, depicting even pathological changes, such as cancerous skin lesions, which Stoss perceived on the human body. We have known – on the basis of archival sources – that Veit Stoss maintained friendly contacts with Jan of Głogów, author of the treatise *Physionomia hincinde ex illustribus scriptoribus per venerabilem virum magistrum Joannem Glogoviensem diligentissime recollecta*, printed in Kraków in 1518. I wish to prove that the content of this treatise – including the issue of skin diseases – found its reflection in the art of one of the leading sculptors of the late medieval Europe.

Keywords: sculpture, gothic style, gothic altar, the Middle Ages, physiognomy, illness, the fine arts.

The issue of depicting illness and human suffering in visual arts did not emerge in the Middle Ages, but much earlier, as it had been already tackled by ancient artists. The most exquisite painters did not avoid visualising these problems through art, as proved by a canvas painting done in 1654 by Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, *Bathsheba at Her Bath*, exhibited in the Louvre in Paris. The old-testament figure of Bathsheba (II Sam 11, 2–17), married to Uriah the Hittite first and then to King David, constitutes, without doubt, an excellent example of a female act, a genre so frequent in the oeuvre of the great Dutch painter (Monkiewicz 1994: 137–159; Bockemühl 2005). Bathsheba, with her face shown in profile and the body positioned at three-quarters, is sitting at the edge of a bed. Such a posture taken by the model, allegedly Rembrandt's partner, Hendrickje Stoffels, enabled the artist to show Bathsheba's left side with an uncovered significant swelling in her armpit and a bruise on her left breast. Such a blue colouring of the tissue occurs when a tumour has formed a few millimetres under the skin. It is not the only such case. Various illnesses may be identified in number of paintings by Rembrandt – and not only by this outstanding Dutch artist.

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Thus, attempting to discuss the issue of depicting illness in Veit Stoss' works of art, I do not intend to limit myself to a description of such a rare, in the history of European sculpture, artistic phenomenon of depicting medical complaints, but, taking into consideration the complex, multi-layered semantic content of Krakow's St. Mary's Altar – I will try to answer the question whether such a creative approach is only a reflection of late medieval realism, or any ideological inspirations were involved. Therefore, I will begin with refreshing facts on how Veit Stoss depicted illness in his sculptures.

The first researcher to note skin diseases depicted by the German sculptor was Tadeusz Szydłowski (Szydłowski 1929). The problem was studied more thoroughly in Poland in the inter-war period and discussed relatively exhaustively by a surgeon, Franciszek Walter, who, in 1932, had a chance to analyse the sculptures in a conservation studio when the first professional restoration and conservation of Stoss' altar was being executed (Walter 1933: 3–31; Walczy 1983: 193–210). Walter assumed that the artist's detailed observation of a model resulted from realistic premises of his concept of art. That led to faithful representation of characteristic features of the depicted figures, laying the basis for depicting defects of the human form, such as skin deformations, folds, or warts. The Apostle to the left of Mary, identified as St. Peter, has, on the right side of his nose, a visible wart, a so-called senile wart or *verruca senilis* that usually appears on the face as a symptom of skin deformation processes. The artist, as Walter noted, sculpted this defect masterfully well and reproduced its pathological form in detail (Walter 1933: 7–8).

All kinds of pathological skin lesions are present in the altar in great numbers, especially in such scenes as *The Taking of Christ*, *Harrowing of Hell*, and *Resurrection*. In *The Taking of Christ*, which features as many as twelve figures, various skin diseases may be found in three of them. The soldier who is grabbing Christ's hair with two hands has a round wart-type lesion situated in a well-visible recess on his right cheek. The artist placed a similar wart, yet without the above-described recess, on the soldier's nose. According to Franciszek Walter, the wart on the nose is a regular wart, while the one in dimple on the cheek is undoubtedly a depiction of skin cancer (*basalioma*, *epithelioma*), basal cell carcinoma or *ulcus rodens*, which would evolve from a senile wart or seborrheic keratosis (Walter 1933: 9). Next to this figure, there is another soldier holding a torch, whose skin lesions appear especially drastic. On his neck is a sack-like formation identified as *fibroma pendulum*. These fibroma, divided into soft (*fibroma molluscum*) and hard, are quite frequent skin cancers. The Kraków soldier also suffers from this classic form of soft fibroma, which develops in lower layers of the skin, forms a bump and becomes visible as a sack-like formation, sometimes quite significant in size. The third figure in this scene, whose face is visible only partly in the upper-right corner of the frame, was given signs of numerous illnesses. The sculpture features a distinct, wide and square skull, large bulging forehead, and visible baldness. Deep sockets and protruding eyes suggest *exophthalmus*, completed with *strabismus convergens*. The shape of the nose is as characteristic and points to significant degradation of the bone tissue and cartilage which made the skin on the bridge of the nose collapse, lifting the tip of the nose and revealing the nostrils. According to Franciszek Walter, such a skull shape and a classic saddle nose deformation are symptoms of late congenital syphilis or acquired syphilis (Walter 1933: 11).

Similar is the nose of a scholar in the scene *The Boy Jesus at the Temple*. The man standing next to Mary is pointing with his right hand to excerpts from the Bible. The structure of his nose also has typical features of the saddle nose deformed, as we know, by congenital syphilis. Symptoms of illness are exhibited by the nose of a soldier who guards Christ in his tomb in the scene of *Resurrection*. He is covering his face with his hands, showing only a portion of the face and the nose, with visibly thicker skin and greyish-red discolouration. Franciszek Walter believed that this depicts clinical symptoms of *acne rosacea*, a condition that results from exposure of the nose tissues to atmospheric changes (Walter 1933: 12). A number of figures in St. Mary's Altar exhibits various deformations of blood vessels, which proves Veit Stoss' excellent knowledge of human anatomy, since he was able to correctly reproduce vessels in the exposed parts of legs such as *asvena saphena magna* or *vena saphena parva*.

Figures shown in St. Mary's Altar present not only a variety of skin diseases, but also diversity of physiognomy unknown to the art of that age. It was first noted by Tadeusz Dobrowolski, stating: 'Heads were shaped correctly in every way; what is more, they expose such a level of knowledge of human physiognomy that they are worlds apart from figural canons of the soft style period. This includes usually most expressive faces of old people experienced by life. They are cut with numerous lines and concaves, while flabby skin frequently emphasises bony parts of the skull. [...] With extraordinary plastic sensitivity, the artist defines the contour of the face and skull, as sharp as hard chiselled stone. The shape of each head is sophisticated and exhibits unusual commitment to personalization, taking the subtlest concavities and convexities into consideration, with infallible precision of observations, which may be compared to absolute pitch' (Dobrowolski 1985: 73–74). Dobrowolski did not, however, confer such a creative approach upon the sources of Veit Stoss, which was so unusual for late medieval art, because Stoss is the only artist of that age who, in his oeuvre, portrayed, so to speak, a typology of all kinds of physiognomies, not only with regard to faces, but also head shapes, types of hair, forearms, shoulders, forms of the belly or neck, which may be, for example, elongated and slender or thick and short, almost invisible, giving an impression as if their heads protruded directly from their shoulders. In a word, it must be assumed that Veit Stoss was familiar with the medieval science of physiognomy, which was, as we will see, popular within Krakow's academic circles.

In the Middle Ages, *De natura corporis humani* treatises were written as parts of medical treatises, or as contemplations on physiognomy (Kozłowska 1992: 83–91). They include descriptions of the human body, some of them being very thorough illustrations of the *natura corporis humani*, and a chapter called *de physiognomia*, in which the authors analysed the problem of relations between a person's character and physical appearance. Authors of treatises on physiognomy – both in ancient and medieval times – usually pointed to Aristotle (apocryphas: *Physiognomonica* and *Secra secretorum*), although such a treaty was never written by the Greek philosopher or at least no such work has survived (Reale 2002: 297–298). Authors of such works also referred to Adamantius (Foerster 1893: 295; Porter 2005: 49–50), Antonius Polemon (Foerster 1893: 93; Porter 2005: 49–50), and Rhazes (Sarton 1953: I, 609; Porter 2005: 62–65, 77, 98). Much space is devoted to these issues in Thomas of Cantimpré's (Cantimpratensis, died c. 1270) Encyclopaedia. He published a text solely on *natura corporis hominis* and completely omitted problems of physiognomy studies (Steenberghen 2005: 145).

In the Middle Ages, a work by Hugh Ripelin (1268–1296), *Compendium theologiae veritatis*, played an important role (Boner 1954: 269–286). Thomas of England was credited as its author every so often, but it is most commonly believed to be written by Albert the Great or Bonaventure (Kozłowska 1992: 83–91). It includes as many as three chapters devoted to subjects of our interest: *De natura corporis humani*, *De physiognomia hominis*, and *De regulis generalis physiognomiae*. Another work, *Speculum Physiognomiae*, was written by Michele Savonarola, Jerome's grandfather, who discussed in detail the meaning of colours, forms, and shapes, as well as individual body parts and their relation to a person's character (Porter 2005: 73–4, 246, 281).

As determined by Maria Kowalczyk, the study of physiognomy was known in Poland as early as in the late 14th century, as Bartłomiej of Jasło mentioned it already in 1384 (Kowalczyk 1963: 24–32). Circa 1425 a general scope of this science was known in Kraków, as indicated by a commentary to Aristotle's treaty *On the Soul* made by Paweł of Worczyn. Paweł made the commentary in writing and as a lecture given at Kraków's Facultas Artium (Rebeta 1970: 95). The philosopher then edited further commentaries to Aristotle's *Parva naturalia*, that is *Short Treaties on nature*, to *Meteor*; and to *De generatione et corruptione*, preserved at the Jagiellonian Library (reg. no BJ 2073) in manuscripts written on paper circa 1422–23 (Rebeta 1970: 95–96; Markowski 1971: 437–439). This work by master Paweł of Worczyna includes a commentary on *Physiognomia* (k. 103v–115v) opening with a traditional question on whether physiognomy is rightly considered a science. The answer to that question was positive, which is worth noting as it was not a generally accepted opinion, since academic circles raising physiognomy to scientific status were in the minority back then. Nonetheless, Paweł of Worczyn wrote *Circa incipit Phizonomie Aristotelis queritur, utrum ars phizynomozandi sit possibilis. Ex litera elicitur, quod sic* (Rebeta 1970: 233–235). This statement as the end of the commentary on *Physiognomia* informs us that this work – as a constituent of *Parva naturalia* – was discussed in a seminar run at Kraków University, which is mentioned explicitly: *expliciunt disputata reverendi magistri Pauli: de Worczin super Parva naturalia fideliter per ipsum disputata in Studio Cracoviensis et conscripta per Nicolaum Spiczmer* (Rebeta 1970: 233–235). It is widely known that the *Statutes* of Kraków's Facultatis Artium required *Parva naturalia* to be taught within the scope of the faculty's advanced course (Muczowski 1849: XIII). However, the fact did not mean that *Physiognomia* alone was taught there because it was rarely considered to be a part of the cycle called *Short Treaties on nature* (Birkenmajer 1932: 10; Markowski 1970: 206). But a piece of information included in Paweł of Worczyn's commentary proves that Aristotle's *Physiognomy* was taught in Kraków within the scope of the advanced course at least since 1422. Other manuscripts preserved in the Jagiellonian Library confirm the fact that such a practice continued throughout the fifteenth century, because comments to Aristotle's *Physiognomy* were preserved in manuscripts BJ 2086: *Parva naturalia*, k.200ra–312ra, *Physiognomia*, k.299ra–312ra (Markowski 1965: 186, 226; Szelińska 1966: 55–61; Wielgus 1992: 82–83), BJ 2097: *Parva naturalia*, k.1r–102v; *Physiognomia*, k.87v–102v, BJ 1903: *Parva naturalia*, k.145r–219v; *Physiognomia*, k.207v–219v, and BJ 2100: *Parva naturalia*, k.221r–286r; *Physiognomia*, k.276v–286r. These compilations of commentaries were written under a strong influence of a treaty by Mikołaj of Brzeg and are entirely content-dependent on Mikołaj's work (Garbaczowa 1978: 127–164). The next two

commentaries of unknown origin were taught and interpreted at Krakow's Faculty of Arts as well: manuscripts BJ 1898, *Parva naturalia*, k.1r–125v and BJ 1982, *Parva naturalia*, k.3rb–83vb (Markowski 1978: 206). These commentaries to Aristotle's *Parva naturalia* include a small treatise on Physiognomy, which might suggest that manuscripts BJ 1898 and BJ 1982 were edited in Kraków.

Nicolaus of Brzeg, drawing a great deal of inspiration from the above-mentioned treatise by Paweł of Worczyn, wrote *Quaestiones disputatae super de Physionomia Pseudo-Aristotelis*, which belonged to the most popular commentaries on *Physionomia* in 15th century Kraków. First of all, he included a definition of physiognomy: *Physiognomia est ars vel scientia, per quam mores naturales vel dispositiones in anima cognoscimus per dispositiones corporis*. (Garbaczowa 1978: 131). Thus, according to Nicolaus, Physiognomy is an art. That, or a science which enables us to learn natural habits or inclinations of the soul by studying the appearance of the body. Based on the problem posed at the beginning of this statement: *Utrum ars physiognomiandi sit possibilis*, Nicolaus, answered positively, it is possible to cultivate such a science, because the Philosopher was not the only one to pass on the art of Physiognomy, but so did a number of other authors, Avicenna, Rhazes, or Philemon amongst them. It is proven reasonably, because states of the soul reflect the states of the body and body systems,¹ so distortion of one's ways corresponds to improper appearance of the face, and vice versa, a beautiful face signifies noble and beautiful ways. Nicolaus of Brzeg quoted St. Thomas of Aquinas '*Qualis es in corpore, talis es in mente*'² – what your body is, your thoughts are. He also noted that man needs the art of physiognomy because it enables him to learn about natural inclinations of another human to act either ethically or knavishly. Nicolaus of Brzeg's commentary also included short characteristics of human appearance and personal traits respective to individual physical features, although it must be noted that – both in their scope and depth of analysis, as well as the number of physiognomic varieties – they fall short of the descriptions by Jan of Głogów.

Jan of Głogów, one of the most outstanding Kraków-based scholars of the late Middle Ages, wrote a substantial work on Physiognomy: *Physionomia hincinde ex illustribus scriptoribus per venerabilem virum magistrum Joannem Glogoviensem diligentissime recollecta* printed in Kraków in 1518 by Marcus Scharpfenberger (Wąsik: 1959: 48–53; Seńko 1961: 11–12; Domański 1978: 382–383). This book includes numerous descriptions of physiognomies, since Jan analysed almost all the most important body parts, which he then related to particular personal traits. He also repeatedly pointed to the fact that physiognomic forms may suggest specific predispositions for illness in a given person. Jan of Głogów began his physiognomic

¹ Nicolai de Brega, *Quaestiones disputatae super „De Physionomia” Pseudo-Aristotelis*, f. 305r: *Utrum corpus patitur ab anima. Ex littera elicitur, quod sic. Et hoc patet signis quibusdam, scilicet in timore et amore, quae sunt passiones animae, et igitur patitur corpus, ut manifeste apparet in facie, quia tunc facies maxime discoloratur. Unde quando anima timet per speciem apprehensam vel imaginativam, tunc redditur facies pallida, quia tunc sanquis currit ipsum ad cor.*

² Nicolai de Brega, *Quaestiones disputatae super „De Physionomia” Pseudo-Aristotelis*, f. 299r: *Et ratione sic probatur, quia animae sequuntur corpora et dispositiones corporis, sic quod ad distortam faciem sequitur distortio morum, et per oppositum pulchra facies est signum bonorum pulchrorum morum. Unde Porphyrius: species Priami est digna imperio. Unde sanctus Thomas dicit: qualis es in corpore, talis es in mente.*

analysis of man with a typology of heads, which was a classic approach. It is worth mentioning several examples of such analyses to show the source of Veit Stoss's interest in diseases.

Jan of Głogów notes that a huge head proves only the amount and weight of brain matter, not the scale and power shaping incorrect structure of the brain. It also portends numerous sufferings and diseases, like apoplexy, epilepsy, or dizziness, because such a big head – as Constantine claims – cools down easily and is prone to coldness. As he noted, its excess cannot be used and this causes severe complaints destructive to the man, such as heaviness, forgetfulness, as well as deficiency in animal and cognitive capabilities.³ According to this philosopher, a big head is something completely different – thanks to the size of brain matter and the shaping power, it is a sign of good brain properties when the matter is sufficient and the shaping power strives to achieve what it had been created for by nature, because nature always aims for the better and the good.⁴

In his description of a small head, Jan of Głogów noted at the beginning that a small head is an easily identifiable sign of the brain's vulnerability to all sorts of bad moods, because „a small head may easily be confused due to heat, because such a head has too sparse brain, and there is no proper evaporation in a small brain, nor emission of incoming hot fluids, therefore, for no reason, a man with a small head suffers from severe headaches”.⁵ These are not, however, all the misfortunes that can happen to a small-headed man, because – as Jan claimed – such a head cools down easily, because it has too little heat, and when such cooling occurs, a man with a small head suffocates easily and absorbs excessive moisture, because humid vapours incoming to such a head mix with the head's moisture and merge into one. A man with such a head is prone to excessive dryness, because his brain obstructs the flow of moistening blood. Finally, Jan of Głogów noted that Constantine emphasised how a small head signifies numerous complaints and weaknesses and that such persons lack proper judgement.

Pointing to Rhazis, the Kraków scholar noted that people with wide nostrils are ruthless and lecherous, while a person with nostrils wide and open should be considered wrathful, harmful to others, and seeking revenge. A man with such a nose shape – who finds pleasure

³ Johannes de Glogovia, *Phisionomia*, D3-C1: Caput magnum multitudine tantum materiae et molis, et non amplitudine et fortitudine virtutis formative malam complexionem cerebri, et multorum accidentium malorum, et infirmitatum malarum est indicium, ut apoplexiae, epilevsiae, vertiginis, tale enim caput sic magnum inquit Constantinus, in frigidatur multum et lapsus est ad latus frigitatis, superfluitates eius consumi non possunt, generanturque inde infirmitates graues homique perniciose(?), ut litargia, obliuio, et virtutum animalium et cognituarum corruptio. Haec ille.

⁴ Johannes de Glogovia, *Phisionomia*, D3-C2: Caput magnum multitudine materiae et amplitudine virtutis formative est signum bonae complexionis cerebri cum materia est sufficiens, et virtus formativa fortis operatur ad hoc, quod a natura est instituta. Natura autem semper operatur hoc, quod melius est et bonum.

⁵ Johannes de Glogovia, *Phisionomia*, D3-C6: Caput parvum est signum facilis casus cerebri in omne genus male complexionis. Caput enim parvum faciliter potest discrasari calido, caput enim parvum parum habet de cerebro, in cerebro autem parvo non potest fieri bona eventatio, nec humorum calidorum advenientium expulsio, unde et tales ex facili causa dolores acutos incurrunt capitis. Caput etiam parvum facile labitur ad latus frigiditatis, eo quod in tali parvus est calor et frigidus adveniendr(?)e facile suffocatur. Caput etiam parvum facile inficitur humido superfluo, eo quod in tali vapores advenientes humidi colliguntur et in unum congregantur. Caput etiam parvum ad siccitatem excedentem facile inclinatur, eo quod per eius cerebrum sanguinis transitus humectantis perhibetur. Concludit Constantinus. Caput parvum esse signum multarum egritudinum et infirmitatum, et rectum iudicium in eis fieri non potest.

in wrongdoing others – does not love justice, but desires all matters to go according to his wishes, therefore associating with him is hardly useful or fruitful.⁶ A model example of such a nose type is also featured in St. Mary's Altar in the scene of *The Taking of Christ* in a strange figure with a square, flat, and wrinkled forehead visible between the heads of Malchus and a bravo wearing a helmet. Another nose type, as Jan of Głogów continued his deliberations, features short, small, and thickened nostrils, such as the artist gave to one of the guards of the Lord's Grave in the *Resurrection* scene, the one covering his face with his hands. Such nostrils mean the man is eager to argue, vain in his heart, proud in his mind, of poor insight and small talents, a man who talks more than he acts, and promises a lot but hardly ever finishes his tasks. Jan of Głogów recalled Constantine's opinion, who claimed that a narrow nose – such as the one featured by the king in an open crown sculpted into the frame of the main cabinet – is susceptible to heart diseases.⁷

A sharp nose or a long neck, as, according to Jan, Constantine claimed, signifies a brittle personality, therefore long-necked people are prone to tuberculosis and various other illnesses that consume the body.⁸ A sharp nose, on the other hand, characterises a talented person with high mental capabilities, cunning and crafty, who slanders and blames others. Such a person can speak beautifully, but thinks otherwise in his soul and, since he is envious and not particularly honest, he pretends to be friendly and kind while he insults others behind their backs and speaks ill of them.⁹ Such a nose type can be identified in the figure of Marie Madeleine in the *Noli me tangere* scene, in Christ in *Resurrection*, Caspar in *Adoration of the Magi*, and the apostle raising a cup with his right hand in the back row in *Dormition of Mary*.

While characterising other nose types and their respective types of human personality, Jan of Głogów noted that if one's nose has a tendency to go red, this person has a fierce temper, is mean and stubborn, and suffers from acute diseases, such as scleroderma and leprosy. A man with such a nose has a double personality and associating with him is neither profitable nor human.¹⁰ Such a red nose is depicted in the Krakow reredos twice. One is a feature of the soldier covering his face with both hands in the *Resurrection* scene, while the other can be

⁶ Johannes de Glogovia, *Phisionomia*, D8-C2: Cuius narium extremitas longa est, homo est festinus in rebus agendis, in consilio plus sequitur impetum quam rationem, unde et de factis suis saepius penitet. Inquit Rasis, cuius nares late sunt, inverecundus est et impudicus. Cuius foramina narium valde lata et aperta sunt, homo est iracundus, alios ledens et vindictam quaerens, est homo, qui aliis nocere cupit, et iustitiam non diligens, omnia pro voluntate sua fieri desiderat, eius conversatio parum utilis et fructuosa.

⁷ Johannes de Glogovia, *Phisionomia*, D8-C3: Cuius hominis nares curte sunt breves et grosse hominem rixosum signant, vani cordis, et elati animi, signat hominem pauce discretionis et ingenii, plura loquitur talis quam facit, multa promittit pauca implet. Concludit Constantinus, qui nares habet strictas inclinatur ad infirmitates pectoris.

⁸ Johannes de Glogovia, *Phisionomia*, D8-C7: Nasi autem acuitas, longum collum, vox acuta. Inquit Constantinus, complexionis signat siccitatem, unde ut postea dicitur, homines longum collum habentes inclinati sunt ad pthisim, et infirmitates consumptionis corporis.

⁹ Johannes de Glogovia, *Phisionomia*, D78-C8: Acutus nasus hominem ingeniosum signat boni ingenii et intellectus est callidus et astutus, est detractor et aliorum reprehensor. In verbis suis bene loquitur, et in corde aliud cogitat, est homo invidus, non est homo in toto fidelis, fingit se in praesentia socialem et humanam in absentia detrahit et mala loquitur de homine [...].

¹⁰ Johannes de Glogovia, *Phisionomia*, D8-C10: Cuius nasus ad ruborem vergit complexionis est calide, homo avarus et tenax, est homo declinatus ad infirmitates graves ad morpheam et lepram, est homo duplicis animi, eius conversatio non est fructuosa nec humana.

found in the disputant sitting by the stand with an open book on it in the scene *Christ among the Doctors*.

In *Consideratio undecima Differentiae septimae*, Jan of Głogów included a remark that whoever has big lips – such as several bravos featured in *the Taking of Christ* – is a shameless fool, who mocks other people, lacks wisdom and refinement, and often speaks out of control, sometimes using obscenities. Those whose lips lack sufficient colour – Głogowczyk continued after Constantine – suffer from internal diseases, and a dysfunctional and weak liver. Beautiful colour of the lips, on the other hand, means health and good disposition of the stomach.¹¹ Such “pale” lips can be found, for example, in a prophet with a sophisticated turban depicted in the St. Mary’s altar’s border, while beautiful bright red lips frequently accompany various physiognomic face types of characters sculpted in the Kraków reredos. The meaning of subtle lips was discussed in reference to Aristotle’s beliefs. He claimed that people with subtle and especially delicate lips – such as Mary’s in *Adoration of the Magi*, St. Anna’s and Mary’s in *Presentation of Jesus at the Temple*, Christ’s in *Resurrection*, as well as Mary’s in *Dormition* – are good-natured people who devote of lot of time to thinking and strive to gain deeper knowledge on the issues they contemplate upon. People with a protruding upper lip and gum make insults, cause disgust, and embarrass others. Such an upper lip can be seen in the prophet with a book in his right hand portrayed in the border of the St. Mary’s Altar, as well as the maid preparing a bath for baby Mary in the scene of *Nativity of Mary*. Subtly, yet clearly protruding is the upper lip of Eve in *Harrowing of Hell*. According to Constantine, as Jan of Głogów reported, people with chapped lips have strong acids in their stomachs, dryness, and are prone to feverish complaints.

In turn in *Consideratio sexta et septima Differentiae nonae*, Jan discussed various neck forms and their respective personality traits, suggesting that a slender and long neck reveals a thinker, cunning and skilled, sensible in his doings, jealous, thinking ill of others, mean and strict. According to the Krakow master, Constantine believed that a long-necked person should beware of acute illnesses, such as tuberculosis, hydrops, apoplexy, and consummation of the body. In his natural disposition, such a man is weak, because his digestive powers are poor and so he gets ill more often and suffers from headaches.¹²

These above-quoted selected examples of analysis of human appearance found in *Physiognomy* by Jan of Głogów prove explicitly that Veit Stoss, while sculpting the approximately two hundred portraits for St. Mary’s Altar, with each statue having distinctive physiognomic features unknown not only to medieval art, drew inspiration from the science of physiognomy cultivated in Kraków. A claim that the artist’s work was strongly based on philosophy is also

¹¹ Johannes de Glogovia, *Phisionomia*, D7-C11: Cuius labia magna sunt, stolidus est, inverecundus aliorum irrisor, homo pauce sapientiae et discretionis multa loquitur, et imoderate, et turpia. Cuius labia, inquit Constantinus, non bene colorata sunt, debilitatem habet in interioribus, et debilitatem et defectum in epate [...]. Coloris in labiis pulchritudo sanitatem et bonam dispositionem signat stomachi. Haec ille.

¹² Johannes de Glogovia, *Phisionomia*, D9-C6: Collum subtile et longum hominem multa cogitantem signat, est homo astutus callidus et in rebus suis prudens, est invidus, nec de aliis hominibus bene cogitans, est tenacis manus et avarus. Inquit Constantinus. Talis timeat infirmitates graves, ut est pthisis, ydropiis, paralis, et consumptionem corporis. In naturali enim dispositione talis est debilis, virtutem digestivam habet debilem, unde et saepius infirmatur et capitis dolores incurrit.

proven by the fact that physiognomic diversification applies to figures that cannot be seen from the church's floor level (e.g. an extraordinary study of an old man's face in St. Jerome) as well. This shows that the artist considered execution of particular philosophical and artistic concepts more important than whether the viewer would be able to see certain types of eyes, nose, lips etc. exhibited in his work. Depicting numerous skin diseases originates from the same ideological sources, that is physiognomy, because a man's appearance determines not only his character, but also his predispositions to certain health issues.

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WIZERUNEK CHOROBY W SZTUCE WITA STWOSZA

Artykuł podejmuje kwestię ideologicznych powiązań między filozofią człowieka rozwiniętą w XV wieku przez krakowskich mistrzów z Universitatis Cracoviensis i krakowskiej sztuki gotyckiej, przede wszystkim rzeźby stworzonej przez Wita Stwosza w tzw. krakowskim okresie jego twórczości. Niemiecki rzeźbiarz ukazał w krakowskim retabulum szeroką gamę indywidualnych studiów portretowych o charakterze realistycznym i naturalistycznym. W okresie krakowskim w twórczości Wita Stwosza zaszły istotne przemiany, stworzył on bowiem naturalistyczne portrety nieznanne w ówczesnej sztuce europejskiej, ukazujące nawet patologiczne zmiany skórne, takie jak różnego typu rakowe zmiany skórne, które artysta widział na ludzkim ciele. W krakowskich archiwach zachował się notarialny dokument, z którego wynika, że Wit Stwosz utrzymywał przyjazne kontakty z Janem z Głogowa, autorem traktatu *Physionomia hincinde ex illustribus scriptoribus per venerabilem virum magistrum Joannem Glogoviensem diligentissime recollecta*, wydrukowanego w Krakowie w 1518 r. W artykule pokazano, że treść tego traktatu – w tym problem chorób skóry – znalazła odzwierciedlenie w sztuce jednego z najsłynniejszych rzeźbiarzy późnośredniowiecznej Europy Środkowej.

Słowa kluczowe: rzeźba, styl gotycki, ołtarz gotycki, średniowiecze, fizjognomia, choroba, sztuki piękne