

EARLY TRACES OF KARL POLANYI’S “DISCOVERY OF SOCIETY”:

A Study of Sixteenth-Century Spirituality and Charity Through Caravaggio’s Paintings

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INTRODUCTION

Caravaggio's *Taking of Christ*—the masterpiece rediscovered in the early 1990s in a dining hall of the Jesuit Fathers in Dublin, Ireland¹—reproduces the convulsive, dramatic moments in which Jesus is being arrested. From the upper-right corner of the painting, a pale young man bends forward, holding a lantern, in an attempt to get a closer look at the scene. It is a self-portrait, through which Caravaggio aimed at revealing his understanding of himself and of the ideal artist: to be an explorer “of the world,” someone whose “curiosity has become a fatal, irresistible passion”²—to borrow the words that Charles Baudelaire used to describe a contemporary painter. Throughout his short and eventful life, Caravaggio was constantly inspired by this explorative urge—an urge that is also evoked by his symbolic use of light: sudden rays that plough into darkness and illuminate the most remote corners.³ His chief concern was to deliver what Martin Heidegger came to consider the essence of the great work of art, namely an act of disclosure or “un-concealment.”⁴ Indeed, in his artistic production Caravaggio “un-conceals” a wide array of objects and people: fruits and clothes, saints and noblemen; but also ordinary persons, of the sort he regularly met in the narrow alleys of Naples and the disreputable taverns of Rome. Caravaggio follows these persons in their everyday activities and through their variable states of mind; but contrary to Sartre's “regard,” which is judgmental and arouses shame,⁵ Caravaggio's look is delicate, discreet, oriented to understand and to help. Even so, his proximity to the people seldom translates into commiseration: Caravaggio refrains from edulcorating or stylizing the traits and expressions of the poor, as so often had happened in

¹ Sergio Benedetti, *Caravaggio's "Taking of Christ": A Masterpiece Rediscovered*, 135 THE BURLINGTON MAG. 731-41 (1993).

² Charles Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne*, FIGARO, Nov. 26, 1863 (“Homme du monde, c'est-à-dire homme du monde entier, homme qui comprend le monde et les raisons mystérieuses et légitimes de tous ses usages [...]. Il s'intéresse au monde entier; il veut savoir, comprendre, apprécier tout ce qui se passe à la surface de notre sphéroïde”; “la curiosité peut être considérée comme le point de départ de son génie. [...] Finalement, il se précipite à travers cette foule à la recherche d'un inconnu dont la physionomie entrevue l'a, en un clin d'œil, fasciné. La curiosité est devenue une passion fatale, irrésistible!”). This work by Baudelaire is briefly mentioned in Werner Gephart & Jure Leko, “Introduction,” in LAW AND THE ARTS: ELECTIVE AFFINITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS OF TENSION 7, 10 (2017). For a parallel between Caravaggio and Baudelaire, see ROBERTO LONGHI, *Fortuna Storica del Caravaggio*, in XI.1 EDIZIONE DELLE OPERE COMPLETE DI ROBERTO LONGHI: STUDI CARAVAGGESCHI 285, 289 (1999).

³ MAURIZIO CALVESI, LE REALTÀ DEL CARAVAGGIO 62 (1990).

⁴ MARTIN HEIDEGGER, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in OFF THE BEATEN TRACK 1, 16 (Julian Young & Kenneth Haynes eds. and transl., Cambridge Univ. Press 2002) (first German ed. 1950). For Heidegger, this “un-concealment” was not necessarily the disclosure of a specific thing that is “actually present,” but rather the disclosure of what he called the “general essence of things.” Commenting on Vincent van Gogh's *Shoes*, Heidegger believed to see in it “the toil of the worker's tread” as well as “the tenacity of the slow trudge through the far-stretching and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind”; the shoes evoked “uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread, wordless joy at having once more withstood want, trembling before the impending birth, and shivering at the surrounding menace of death”: *id.* at 14.

⁵ JEAN PAUL SARTRE, L'ÊTRE ET LE NÉANT: ESSAI D'ONTOLOGIE PHÉNOMÉNOLOGIQUE 305-7 (1943).

the figurative arts before him; instead, he renders those details on the canvas with unusual realism. Centuries later, when social reformers set out to build modern welfare states, they too started with investigations into the actual conditions of the needy: they knew that in order to act, they first needed to observe and to listen.⁶

In this article, I use Caravaggio's paintings as a lens to study late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century Catholic spirituality and charity. I see this period as an important moment in the intellectual trajectory that led to the idea that one crucial function and *raison d'être* of the State is the provision of services and goods. Political scientists have extensively studied the power struggles behind the rise of welfare states.⁷ There is no doubt that the main actors in this battle—political parties, labor unions, business and bureaucrats—were partly driven by a rational calculus of personal costs and benefits.⁸ But the conduct of these actors was also influenced by broad cultural paradigms and specific ideologies.⁹ If this is true, as I assume in this paper, then the rise and development of welfare states can only be fully understood by looking, together with other variables, at the historical evolution of *the idea* of institutionalized solidarity.¹⁰

The usefulness of focusing on the early-modern period is not obvious, however. After all, solidarity is at the same time much younger and much older than Caravaggio and his contemporaries. Intellectual historians diverge in the choice of their favorite solidarity hero, but they agree on one point: a revolutionary understanding of the State's functions occurred

⁶ GARETH STEDMAN JONES, AN END TO POVERTY? A HISTORICAL DEBATE 26-36 (Columbia Univ. Press 2004). For an account of the first investigations into the conditions of Italian workers, see Gian Carlo Jocteau, *Le Origini della Legislazione Sociale in Italia: Problemi e Prospettive di Ricerca*, 2 MOVIMENTO OPERAIO E SOCIALISTA 289, 293, 298 (1982); Dora Marucco, "Luigi Luzzatti e gli Esordi della Legislazione Sociale," in LUIGI LUZZATTI E IL SUO TEMPO: ATTI DEL CONVEGNO INTERNAZIONALE DI STUDIO 409, 419 (2004). For an overview of "early investigators of social insurance" in the United States, see THEDA SKOCPOL, PROTECTING SOLDIERS AND MOTHERS: THE POLITICAL ORIGINS OF SOCIAL POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES 161-76 (1992).

⁷ E.g., Walter Korpi, *Power Resources Approach vs. Action and Conflict: On Causal and Intentional Explanations in the Study of Power*, 3 SOC. THEORY 31-45 (1985); THEDA SKOCPOL, *Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research*, in BRINGING THE STATE BACK IN 3 (Peter B. Evans et al. eds., 1985); Peter Swenson, *Bringing Capital Back in, or Social Democracy Reconsidered: Employer Power, Cross-Class Alliances, and Centralization of Industrial Relations in Denmark and Sweden*, 43 WORLD POL. 513-44 (1991).

⁸ Korpi, *supra* note 7, at 39. Cf., on the rational motives behind voter's preferences, Torben Iversen and David Soskice, *An Asset Theory of Social Policy Preferences*, 95 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 875, 883-5 (2001).

⁹ See, e.g., Peter A. Hall, *Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain*, 25 COMP. POL. 275 (1993); JILL QUADAGNO, THE COLOR OF WELFARE: HOW RACISM UNDERMINED THE WAR ON POVERTY (1994); SHERI BERMAN, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC MOMENT: IDEAS AND POLITICS IN THE MAKING OF INTERWAR EUROPE (1998); MARK BLYTH, GREAT TRANSFORMATIONS: ECONOMIC IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (2002).

¹⁰ By "institutionalized solidarity" I mean the idea that solidarity, instead of being a matter of individual ethics alone, should be carried out by public institutions.

sometime between the French Revolution and the early twentieth century. According to Samuel Fleischacker, the cultural revolution was sparked by Rousseau's idea that social evils are to some extent human artefacts and can thus be remedied; by Smith's redistributive proposals and compassionate view of the poor; and by Kant's contractualist justification of poverty relief—a justification that Fichte would take up and expand a few years later.¹¹ Somewhat similarly, Gareth Stedman Jones attributes to the Marquis de Condorcet and Thomas Paine—the first executed during the French Revolution, the second escaping by the skin of his teeth—the first attempts to design feasible and not-moralistic welfare plans.¹² During the nineteenth century, these ideas were suffocated in the streets and rebuked in the conservative press, but growing numbers of intellectuals reacted against the dominant liberal creed and started to attribute poverty to social defects rather than individual shortcomings. Karl Polanyi called this realization the “discovery of society,” and saw in Robert Owen—the English entrepreneur whom Frederick Engels had praised for allegedly anticipating socialism—the single man who contributed more than anyone else to the cultural revolution.¹³ Finally, shortly after Bismarck's pioneering experiments with social insurance in the 1880s, French scholars such as Émile Durkheim and Léon Bourgeois drew out of society's “natural” interconnectedness the theoretical justification to launch solidarity-enhancing policies.¹⁴

On the other hand, solidarity within a social group is an ancient ethical norm. “The ‘social’ as a juridical and ideological concept”—wrote medieval historian Jacques Le Goff, in a review of Jacques Donzelot's book *L'Invention du Social*—was not “actually ‘invented’ “ in the nineteenth century, being “probably less new than what a sensational title might

11. SAMUEL FLEISCHACKER, A SHORT HISTORY OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE 55-75 (2004); JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, DISCOURS SUR L'ORIGINE ET LES FONDEMENTS DE L'INÉGALITÉ PARMIS HOMMES 63-4 (Flammarion 2008) (1754); IMMANUEL KANT, THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS 136 (Cambridge Univ. Press 1991) (1797); JOHANN GOTTLIEB FICHTE, THE CLOSED COMMERCIAL STATE 93, 132 (State Univ. of New York Press 2012) (1800).

12. STEDMAN JONES, *supra* note 6, at 16-25.

13. According to Polanyi, Owen believed that societal arrangements led people to destitution and crime because of their “all-powerful formative influence upon character.” As a matter of fact, Owen still approached pauperism from a moral angle. But by attributing destitution to moral faults, and moral faults to the industrialized society, Owen had indirectly linked the first element of the equation (destitution) to the last one (society). Owen had thus “discovered” society, and on this basis he made calls for “legislative interference and direction” of the unbridled market. KARL POLANYI, THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION. THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORIGINS OF OUR TIME 133-5 (Beacon Press 2001) (1944); Friedrich Engels, *Socialisme Utopique et Socialisme Scientifique*, 3 LA REVUE SOCIALISTE 164, 170 (Paul Lafargue ed. and transl., Mar. 20, 1880), reprinted in FRIEDRICH ENGELS, SOCIALISME UTOPIQUE ET SOCIALISME SCIENTIFIQUE 14-16 (1880).

14. In his famous essay “Solidarité,” Léon Bourgeois argued that everyone is inevitably dependent upon others and bears a “debt” towards society since the moment of her birth. Positive law must ensure that this debt is paid back, said Bourgeois, and social-insurance contributions is one way to do so. Jacques Donzelot argued that by so reasoning Bourgeois had “invented the doctrine of solidarism”: JACQUES DONZELOT, L'INVENTION DU SOCIAL: ESSAI SUR LE DÉCLIN DES PASSIONS POLITIQUES 107 (1984); LÉON BOURGEOIS, SOLIDARITÉ (1896); ANDREA MUEHLEBACH, THE MORAL NEOLIBERAL: WELFARE AND CITIZENSHIP IN ITALY 40 (2012).

suggest.”¹⁵ A couple of millennia before Caravaggio was even born, norms of formal and material equality, as well as maxims demanding individual acts of solidarity, had been codified in the Jewish-Christian canon.¹⁶ To be sure, these precepts seldom extended to the State; and even within the Jewish and early Christian communities—relatively small religious groups at the margins of the Roman dominions—the Scriptures did not necessarily translate into practice.¹⁷ With the diffusion of Christianity in the fourth and subsequent centuries, however, care for the poor emerged as a distinctive institutional activity carried out by the Church with crucial support from the empire.¹⁸ The dissolution of the empire led to an increased role for the Church in assistance matters, but recurrent social emergencies throughout the Middle Ages often induced local secular authorities to intervene in the administration of relief.¹⁹ In short, neither solidarity as an ethical norm, nor the existence of massive social problems, nor the involvement of public authorities were something new when Caravaggio set to work in the late sixteenth century.

Given these historical trajectories, it seems that the choice of the early-modern period as my object of study misses both the profound roots of charity in ancient and medieval Christianity, as well as the decisive cultural revolution that took place in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

15. Jacques Le Goff, *Le Social, Une Idée Neuve*, 97 *ESPRIT* 101, 101 (1985). Lynn Hunt, who wrote on the origins of human rights in the eighteenth century, also acknowledged that “[a]utonomy and empathy did not materialize out of thin air in the eighteenth century; they had deep roots”: LYNN HUNT, *INVENTING HUMAN RIGHTS: A HISTORY* 29 (2007).

16. See SAMUEL MOYN, *NOT ENOUGH: HUMAN RIGHTS IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD* 15 (2018); PETER BROWN, *POVERTY AND LEADERSHIP IN THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE* 6 (2002); AUGUSTA SEGRE, *LA TUTELA DEI POVERI NELLA STORIA DEL DIRITTO ITALIANO* 5 (1907); *What does the Bible say about Charity?*, GotQuestions.org, <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-charity.html> (last visited Oct. 6, 2018). The Torah contained numerous passages commanding acts of generous giving. Every three years, one tenth of the harvest was to be given to strangers, widows and orphans; and every seven years, creditors were expected to relieve debtors of their obligations (Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and 15:1-3). More generally, the Torah prescribed to give and lend generously to everyone in need (Deuteronomy 15:7-11). The Jewish canon contained norms of material equality, too: land, for example, could be sold and bought; but every fifty years, it was returned to the original owner, thus preventing the perpetration of major material inequalities over an extended period of time (Leviticus 25:28). As for the New Testament, later in the article we will discuss Matthew’s eschatological discourse and its importance for the elaboration of the “works of mercy”: see *infra*, note 133 and accompanying text. In the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus invited the masses to “give to every man that asketh of thee” and to “lend, hoping for nothing again” (Luke 6:29-35; cf. also Matthew 5:42). The rich, in particular, were invited to sell their goods and distribute them to the poor (Luke 12:33, 18:22), consistently with the numerous passages against the accumulation of wealth and luxury (see, e.g., Matthew 6:19). We are also told that the early apostolic community hold goods in common (Acts 2:44), and that reciprocal financial help among the first Christian communities was encouraged (2 Corinthians 8:13).

17. MOYN, *supra* note 16, at 15.

18. BROWN, *supra* note 16, at 6-35.

19. MICHEL MOLLAT, *LES PAUVRES AU MOYEN AGE* 9 (Complexe 1984) (1978) (“la pauvreté fut permanente au long du Moyen Age”); SANDRA CAVALLO, *CHARITY AND POWER IN EARLY MODERN ITALY: BENEFACTORS AND THEIR MOTIVES IN TURIN 1541-1789*, at 25-7 (1995). Polanyi exaggerates when he argued that “it was in the first half of the sixteenth century that the poor first appeared in England”: POLANYI, *supra* note 13, at 109. I thank Elizabeth Papp Kamali for her helpful comment on this point.

And yet, we should not see the period that spans from Constantine's conversion to Bismark's social insurances as a continuum. The sixteenth century, in particular, was a moment of major intellectual and socio-economic changes. The internal efforts to reform the Church, which had been under way for some decades,²⁰ gained momentum in the wake of the Protestant Reformation: a lively discussion about individual and institutional ethics ensued, and spread throughout the continent. On the socio-economic front, a stream of exceptionally disruptive events—enclosures of previously common land,²¹ wars,²² famines, epidemics—triggered a further increase in the number and visibility of the poor, especially in urban centers.²³ Partly in response to these trends, a new social awareness arose—at times more compassionate towards the needy, at times more disparaging. These changes in public morality, in turn, contributed to define new institutional responses at the local, national and ecclesiastical level.²⁴ Because of these cultural and institutional changes and their long-lasting legacy, early-modern spirituality and charity emerge as a distinctive step in the history of institutionalized solidarity, and a step that is worth studying.²⁵

The question remains of whether it makes sense to use the figurative arts, together with more conventional sources such as religious and scholarly works, to conduct this inquiry. Max Weber's observations on the figurative arts help us address this point. Artists and religious authorities, Weber observes, need to rely on each other.²⁶ This mutual dependency, together with the artists' "thrownness" in the world (to use Heidegger's terminology), tends to make the work of art a mirror of the prevailing values in society—or, at least, of those values nurtured by the elites. Caravaggio's realism, for example, seems the perfect implementation of Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti's 1582 call for realistic, historically-accurate images that would "move the

20. See MOLLAT, *supra* note 19, at 307-8; MARIO BENDISCIOLI, LA RIFORMA CATTOLICA 10, 155, 166 (1958) (arguing that the Catholic Reformation consisted in a double movement: i) a sincere drive to moral and institutional regeneration, originating from within the Church several decades before the Protestant Reformation; and ii) a reform from above, orchestrated by the Papacy in response to the Protestant Reformation, and more repressive in nature); Robert Bireley, *Redefining Catholicism: Trent and Beyond*, in 6 THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY: REFORM AND EXPANSION 1500–1660, at 146 (Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia ed., 2007) ("Many developments in sixteenth-century Catholicism [. . .] had little to do with Protestantism, such as the rise of new religious orders and missionary endeavours across the seas"). The *Oratorio del Divino Amore*, for example, was established in 1497, well before the Reformation.

21. POLANYI, *supra* note 13, at 36-41.

22. For a brief discussion of the impact of religious wars in France, see MICHEL FOUCAULT, HISTOIRE DE LA FOLIE À L'ÂGE CLASSIQUE 75 (Gallimard 1972) (1961).

23. MARINA GARBELLOTTI, PER CARITÀ: POVERI E POLITICHE ASSISTENZIALI NELL'ITALIA MODERNA 16, 66-68, 72-3 (2013); CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at 337.

24. FOUCAULT, *supra* note 22, at 72-3.

25. CAVALLO, *supra* note 19, at 10-11.

26. MAX WEBER, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY: AN OUTLINE OF INTERPRETATIVE SOCIOLOGY 609 (Bedminster Press 1968) (first German ed. 1921-2).

hearts”—and help contain the wave of Protestantism.²⁷ Caravaggio’s naturalism also fitted well with the discoveries of Galileo, Keplero and other scientists, who were laying the ground for a greater knowledge of the natural (i.e., real) world.²⁸ Whether Caravaggio shared the spirituality of Filippo Neri, Carlo Borromeo or others from the socially-oriented wing of the Counter Reformation is a matter of debate among art historians,²⁹ but his paintings do reveal a similar attention for the poor.³⁰ Caravaggio’s not-judgmental look at poverty was not entirely unprecedented, either: writing in 1526, humanist Juan Luis Vives had argued that “vices [. . .] are to be imputed not so much to [‘beggars’ (sic)] as also at times to the magistrates, who do not make other provisions for the city.”³¹ Vives’ thought was not devoid of prejudices and ambiguities,³² but the *social* (as opposed to the *individual*) attribution of evil signaled the dawn of a new sensitivity. Caravaggio’s art was not immune from the stereotypes of his age, either.³³ His *Fortune Teller*, it is true, was too “humorous,”³⁴ “beautifully dressed

27. GABRIELE PALEOTTI, DISCORSO INTORNO ALLE IMMAGINI SACRE E PROFANE 120, 210, 215-6 (1582). See also FEDERICO BORROMEIO, SACRED PAINTING. MUSEUM (Harvard Univ. Press 2010) (1624). Some saw in Federico Borromeo’s call for historical accuracy and psychological introspection a posthumous endorsement of Caravaggio’s style: CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at 52; but others disagree: Simonetta Coppa, *Federico Borromeo Teorico d’Arte. Annotazioni in Margine al “De Pictura Sacra” ed al “Museum”*, 15 ARTE LOMBARDA 65, 70 (1970) (claiming that the type of realism praised by Cardinal Federico Borromeo is rather that of Jan Brueghel the Elder and Paul Bril, whose “naturalism [is] only apparent” and “artificial”).

28. Ferdinando Bologna, *Il Caravaggio al Pio Monte della Misericordia*, in *IL PIO MONTE DELLA MISERICORDIA DI NAPOLI NEL QUARTO CENTENARIO* 175, 180 (2003).

29. Some scholars prudently assert that reliable historical sources in support of this hypothesis are missing: VINCENZO PACELLI, CARAVAGGIO: LE SETTE OPERE DI MISERICORDIA 129 (Artstudiopaparo 2014) (1984); Todd P. Olson, *The Street has Its Masters: Caravaggio and the Socially Marginal*, in CARAVAGGIO: REALISM, REBELLION, RECEPTION 69, 70 (Genevieve Warwick ed., 2006); Irina Orlyshkevich, *Book Review: “San Filippo Neri: La Nascita dell’Oratorio e lo Sviluppo dell’Arte Cristiana al Tempo della Riforma” by Francesco Danieli*, 63 RENAISSANCE Q. 254, 255 (2010). Others give special weight to the fact that Caravaggio painted some works (the *Entombment of Christ*, the *Death of the Virgin*, possibly the *Madonna of the Rosary*) for private clients linked to mendicant orders and charitable organizations: HELEN LANGDON, CARAVAGGIO: A LIFE 242, 333 (1999). Some scholars have also shown the links between the Mattei family, who commissioned several works to Caravaggio, and the Oratorians: Helen Langdon, *Book Reviews: Caravaggio and His Two Cardinals by Creighton E. Gilbert, Caravaggio e la Collezione Mattei, Caravaggio Assassino by Riccardo Bassani and Fiora Bellini*, 137 THE BURLINGTON MAG. 621, 622 (1995).

30. On the overlap between Caravaggio’s spirituality and that of Federico Borromeo and Filippo Neri, see CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at xxxii, 331-2; MAURIZIO FAGIOLO DELL’ARCO, LE “OPERE DI MISERICORDIA”: CONTRIBUTO ALLA POETICA DEL CARAVAGGIO 19 (1969); LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 289 (with specific reference to the *Madonna of Loreto*).

31. JUAN LUIS VIVES, DE SUBVENTIONE PAUPERUM SIVE DE HUMANIS NECESSITATIBUS LIBRI II, at 93 (Brill 2002) (1526).

32. Vives devoted an entire chapter to “how the poor should conduct themselves,” thus showing an enduring ambiguity about whether poverty should be attributed to moral flaws or social obstacles. He was strongly committed to the work ethic, which he planned to enforce upon everybody through compulsory labour. Private charity—the traditional medieval remedy against indigence—still played a central role in Vives’ scheme. And his proposals remained confined at the municipal level—the essay being addressed to the magistrates of the city of Bruges, Belgium. For a brief critical discussion of Vives’ plan, see FOUCAULT, *supra* note 22, at 70-1.

33. Olson, *supra* note 29, at 69, 72.

34. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 85.

and carefully posed"³⁵ to fully conform to the prototype of the repugnant impostor, but the choice of the subject did reflect the traditional image of the gypsy—and the equation between gypsies and robbers, women and vice—frequently to be found in contemporary theatrical and juridical works.³⁶ In short, because Caravaggio's art reflected the culture of his time, with all its contradictions, it constitutes a good lens to carry out our inquiry into early seventeenth-century public morality.

Weber also noticed, however, that "art tends to acquire its own set of constitutive values, which are quite different from those obtaining in the religious and ethical domain."³⁷ Indeed, the arts are simultaneously a *mirror* of, and a *locus of resistance* to, the prevailing ethics in a given society. This tension is particularly evident in Caravaggio, who was close to the elites and their tastes, but daring enough to defy some of the artistic canons of his age. "In the manneristic and sanctimonious city of Sixtus V"—wrote art critic Roberto Longhi—"he must have appeared as an outcast, if not a heretic."³⁸ Many in the late sixteenth century professed compassion for the poor, but no one had shown the apostles dressed in rags or Mary's swollen corpse with such crude realism. In works like the *Madonna of Loreto* or the second *Supper at Emmaus*, Caravaggio abstained from equating poverty with sin or deviance; his brushstrokes were not judgmental and his empathy had nothing of the condescending pity of many of his contemporaries. In his *Seven Works of Mercy* Caravaggio even seemed to advocate a socially effective, spontaneous and non-hierarchical approach to poverty relief, in sharp contrast with the dominant approach to charity—moralizing, selective and mostly spiritual.³⁹ Caravaggio's art and his innovative way of looking at social questions were overlooked for a couple of centuries; then, in the midst of the twentieth century, those very European elites who were working towards the establishment of welfare states got back to this great painter and marveled at his precocious "discovery of society."

35. *Id.* at 87.

36. Willy Hirdt, *Fonti e Motivi Letterari della 'Buona Ventura' del Caravaggio*, 9 STUDI ITALIANI 49 (1997). On the tension between "conventionality" and innovation in this painting, see Olson, *supra* note 29, at 72-77. Prejudices against women were not uncommon: e.g., CARLO BORROMEO, MEMORIALE DI MONSIGNORE ILLUSTRISSIMO ET REVERENDISSIMO CARDINALE DI S. PRASSEDE, ARCIVESCOVO, AL SUO DILETTO POPOLO DELLA CITTÀ, ET DIOCESE DI MILANO 100 (1579) ("Vedi pure ò Milano, quanto è gràde hoggidi anco la vanità delle donne").

37. WEBER, *supra* note 26, at 608. See also HANNAH ARENDT, *THE HUMAN CONDITION* 167 (1958). On the antagonism between the arts and authority, see generally Anthony Julius, *Inaugural Lecture: Dedications*, London, UCL (March 15, 2018), video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfHPf6WPKYE&feature=youtu.be>.

38. ROBERTO LONGHI, *CARAVAGGIO* 12 (Editori Riuniti 1992) (1952) ("era prevedibile che, nella città tra manieristica e bigotta di Sisto V, egli dovesse sembrare un irregolare, se non proprio un eretico").

39. Even "progressive" voices like that of Vives continued to nurture a moralizing approach to poverty: see *supra* note 31.

I. A RISKY LIFE

“The wise”—writes sociologist Erving Goffman—are people who, by the simple act of “imagining [themselves] in the other’s shoes,”⁴⁰ are capable of empathy. Most people, however, need to pass through a “heart-changing personal experience”⁴¹ before they can understand another’s suffering. Sometimes, this heart-changing experience can be an ongoing contact with the other person, as it may happen in deep friendships, sentimental relationships or in the workplace. “What goes on within the confines of the body,” however, is particularly difficult to detect from the outside: hunger and physical pain, for example, are “securely shielded against the visibility and audibility of the public realm.”⁴² For this reason, it is the direct experience of suffering in one’s *own* life and body that many consider the best school of empathy.⁴³ A person with a disability, for example, finds herself in the condition of feeling what others can only imagine; she may thus be able to develop, as Randolph Bourne has put it, “a profound sympathy for all who are despised and ignored in the world.”⁴⁴

Following the view that recognizes a formative value to the direct experience of suffering, several art historians have attributed the empathy and melancholy that pervades some of Caravaggio’s paintings to a youth “spent in the shadow of plague, famine and desolation.”⁴⁵ A purely “biographically motivated reading”⁴⁶ of Caravaggio’s art, it is true, would erroneously diminish the imaginative capacity and originality of his innate genius.⁴⁷ All agree, however, that Caravaggio’s sensitivity to the condition of the outcasts can be at least partly explained by the vicissitudes of his own life. His *Sick Bacchus*, for example, was likely painted during or shortly after his hospitalization.⁴⁸ The *Seven Works of Mercy*, in turn, has been interpreted as conveying the hope for a new beginning after the killing of Ranuccio Tomassoni.⁴⁹ Deeply personal messages can be found in many

40. DANIEL C. BATSON, ALTRUISM IN HUMANS 34 (2001) (my emphasis).

41. ERVING GOFFMAN, STIGMA: NOTES ON THE MANAGEMENT OF SPOILED IDENTITY 28 (Touchstone 1986) (1963).

42. ARENDT, *supra* note 37, at 112.

43. GOFFMAN, *supra* note 41, at 11.

44. RANDOLPH BOURNE, *The Handicapped*, in THE RADICAL WILL: SELECTED WRITINGS 1911-1918, at 73, 79 (Univ. of California Press 1992). I thank Dominique F. Fernandes for sharing with me her knowledge of this essay.

45. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 30-2, 189; Carla Cerati, *Volti e Corpi di Caravaggio. La Natura dei Modelli*, in CARAVAGGIO A ROMA: UNA VITA DAL VERO 137, 141 (Michele di Sito & Orietta Verdi eds., 2011). Reference to this volume is also made in the documentaries by Tomaso Montanari, *La Vera Natura di Caravaggio*, RaiPlay, <https://www.raipaly.it/programmi/laveranaturadicaravaggio/puntate>.

46. Olson, *supra* note 29, at 70.

47. *Id.* at 70.

48. Cf. GIULIO MANCINI, I CONSIDERAZIONI SULLA PITTURA 224 (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 1956) (1617-21) (“nella convalescenza fece molti quadri per il priore”).

49. FAGIOLO DELL’ARCO, *supra* note 30, at 33 (“Parla Caravaggio in questo quadro, e parla di se stesso. Se ogni opera d’un artista è un frammento della sua autobiografia, questa di Caravaggio è solenne e programmatica: il manifesto di una redenzione futura”).

other paintings.⁵⁰ Caravaggio's style and iconography evolved during his short life, taking a more dramatic tone with the passing of time. But an underlying continuity links those variations,⁵¹ and this continuity allows us to make general considerations about his personal views.

Michelangelo Merisi was born in Milan into a "middle-class provincial family"⁵² from Caravaggio—a little town in the Duchy of Milan, not far from the border with the Republic of Venice. Michelangelo's father, Fermo, worked at the service of the Marquises of Caravaggio as an architect,⁵³ while his mother Lucia was the daughter of a respected land surveyor.⁵⁴ Despite his status at birth, Michelangelo could hardly fail to notice the endemic poverty around him, however. Harsh conditions in the countryside, exacerbated by wars and famines, induced many indigent persons to move to larger urban centers, where they often had no choice but to beg.⁵⁵ Cities like Milan, Rome and Naples—where Caravaggio spent most of his life—were afflicted by extreme destitution and stark inequality.⁵⁶ Nor was destitution simply the distant landscape of an otherwise cheerful childhood, for Fermo's premature death threw the numerous family—the mother Lucia and five children—into financial distress.⁵⁷

Caravaggio moved to Rome soon after completing his apprenticeship in Milan. There, he initially spent some months in the house of clergyman Pandolfo Pucci. Life was not easy for the young painter: early biographer Giulio Mancini tells us that Pucci fed Caravaggio with salads alone—a treat that Caravaggio reciprocated by nicknaming him "Monsignor Insalata."⁵⁸ It is only after taking service for Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte in 1595 that Caravaggio's fortune changed for the better: and with the favor of the Roman aristocracy came financial security, too.⁵⁹ While the *Fortune Teller*—one of his first paintings in Rome—was allegedly sold for only eight scudi,⁶⁰ a few years later Caravaggio was able to sell the first *Supper at Emmaus* for 150 scudi, and the *Taking of Christ* for 125.⁶¹ The end of the

50. According to Cerati, Caravaggio included at least fifteen self-portraits in his paintings: Cerati, *supra* note 45, at 140. Self-portraits can be found, e.g., in the *Sick Bacchus*, the *Martyrdom of St. Matthew* and the *David and Goliath* (Galleria Borghese).

51. FAGIOLO DELL'ARCO, *supra* note 30, at 21.

52. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 12.

53. LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 4, 10-13; CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at xxv (dismissing the idea of Caravaggio's poverty as a myth).

54. Giacomo Berra, "Il Caravaggio nel Ducato di Milano," in *GLI OCCHI DI CARAVAGGIO: GLI ANNI DELLA FORMAZIONE TRA VENEZIA E MILANO 27* (Vittorio Sgarbi ed., 2011).

55. GARBELLOTTI, *supra* note 23, at 72-3; LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 15.

56. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 15, 44, 322; FAGIOLO DELL'ARCO, *supra* note 30, at 41.

57. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 19.

58. MANCINI, *supra* note 48, at 224; LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 57.

59. LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 11; LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 104, 229.

60. LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 11, 145, 177 (n.20); Olson, *supra* note 29, at 78; LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 84, 399, n.22.

61. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 230.

century was thus a period of upward mobility for Caravaggio. But financial security would not last for long. Rome was a very competitive market: artists fled to the capital from all over Europe, and fought (sometimes coming to blows) to secure the few great commissions.⁶² Despite the success of the Cerasi and Contarelli chapels, Caravaggio soon found himself at the margins of this world of power and politics.⁶³ In the early months of 1605, the painter stopped paying his rent; six months later, an officer impounded his goods at the demand of his landlady, and drafted a rather meager inventory.⁶⁴

Caravaggio encountered illness, too. In the Summer of 1576, when Michelangelo had not even turned five, Northern Italy was struck by the plague. Sometime in the following months, the Merisi family fled Milan and sought refuge in Caravaggio, but to no avail: Michelangelo's father, uncle and maternal grandfather all lost their lives.⁶⁵ An additional encounter with illness occurred a short time after moving to Rome, when Michelangelo, now in his early twenties, was admitted to the *Ospedale della Consolazione*.⁶⁶ The circumstances that led to hospitalization are not entirely clear, but a handwritten note by Mancini suggests that Caravaggio had been injured in the leg by a horse,⁶⁷ probably during a fight with a groom.⁶⁸ Mancini also tells us that Caravaggio was "senza denari"⁶⁹ or penniless: and indeed, only the poor had to seek care in hospitals in those days, for affluent people could afford to be treated at home. After this episode, Caravaggio's frequent involvement in brawls continued to procure him serious injuries. In October 1605, he was "mysteriously wounded in the neck and ear."⁷⁰ The following May, during the fight with Ranuccio Tomassoni, Caravaggio himself remained "badly" wounded.⁷¹ In 1609, in Naples for the second time, he was "assaulted by four men" and so severely

62. *Id.* at 264.

63. *Id.* at 296.

64. Maurizio Marini & Sandro Corradini, "Inventarium omnium et singulorum bonorum mobilium" di Michelangelo da Caravaggio "pittore", 14 *ARTIBUS ET HISTORIAE* 161 (1993); Daniela Soggiu, *La Casa di Caravaggio: Il Contratto Inedito e Altri Documenti*, in *CARAVAGGIO A ROMA*, *supra* note 45, at 117.

65. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 19. On the likelihood that this early trauma left a permanent mark on Caravaggio, see CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at xxxii-xxxiii; Cerati, *supra* note 45, at 141.

66. For a history of the hospital—born out of the fusion, in 1506, of three ancient hospitals—see PIETRO PERICOLI, *L'OSPEDALE DI S. MARIA DELLA CONSOLAZIONE DI ROMA DALLE SUE ORIGINI AI GIORNI NOSTRI CON ALLEGATI* (1879).

67. Orsetta Baroncelli, *Caravaggio e l'Ospedale di Santa Maria della Consolazione*, in *CARAVAGGIO A ROMA*, *supra* note 45, at 60 ("Fra tanto un calcio di cavallo gonfia gamba, né [Giuseppe Cesari] menava cherurgo acciò non fusse visto. Et da un bottegaro siciliano amico [fu menato] alla Consolazione"); see also LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 68.

68. Baroncelli, *supra* note 67, at 61.

69. MANCINI, *supra* note 48, at 224.

70. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 304.

71. Daniele Balduzzi, *Via da Roma. L'Omicidio e la Fuga*, in *CARAVAGGIO A ROMA*, *supra* note 45, at 143 ("Caravaggio rimase 'malamente' ferito, quando non addirittura 'mortalmente', per aver ricevuto un colpo in testa"); LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 309.

"scarred" that rumors spread about his possible death.⁷² Caravaggio did not die on that occasion, but a few months later, probably because of a fever, shortly before his fortieth birthday. He never really entered "old age," but he knew how precarious life could be.

On multiple occasions Caravaggio was arrested and imprisoned, for crimes such as aggression, libel, street fighting and carrying arms at night.⁷³ The killing of Ranuccio Tomassoni, while probably a case of manslaughter, occurred during what seems to be a premeditated fight.⁷⁴ To avoid punishment, the young painter was always on the run: in the Summer of 1605, after assaulting a young notary in Piazza Navona, he left Rome to spend a short time in Genoa;⁷⁵ the following year—after the killing of Tomassoni and possibly being sentenced to death—Caravaggio sought asylum in the feuds of the Colonna;⁷⁶ in 1608 he somehow managed to escape from Malta's prison—where he had been jailed for assaulting a nobleman⁷⁷—and sailed for Sicily.⁷⁸ In addition to public authorities, private individuals could retaliate against his violent actions at any moment. Art historian Helen Langdon—author of one of the most thorough and enjoyable biographies of the great baroque painter—concludes that Caravaggio lived in a state of "constant fear."⁷⁹

II. THE REALITY OF DESTITUTION

Caravaggio's approach to poverty and need, as it appears from his paintings, was in many respects unique. Originality, however, is never simply the fruit of a single individual's mind. Caravaggio was no exception, and drew the ingredients for his original soup from the lush garden of early-modern Italian culture. Thus, for example, we cannot understand Caravaggio's stance to poverty without taking into account the contemporary dispute on the value of religious vows. Protestants had condemned the luxurious life of Roman cardinals, but had no particular regard for counsels, including for the counsel of poverty.⁸⁰ Martin Luther, it is true, looked at commercial profits with great suspicion;⁸¹ but he did not

72. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 382 (quoting a letter by Giulio Mancini to his brother).

73. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 138, 229, 256, 276-7. The early biographer Karel van Mander writes that he was "very inclined to fight and be involved in brawls": quoted in Bologna, *supra* note 28, at 176 ("molto incline a duellare e a far baruffe").

74. Balduzzi, *supra* note 71, at 146.

75. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 298-9.

76. *Id.* at 314-5.

77. Montanari, *supra* note 45, episode 11; LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 359-61.

78. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 359-63.

79. *Id.* at 170, 314.

80. *E.g.*, MARTIN LUTHER, *The Gospel for the Festival of the Epiphany, Matthew 2[:1-12]*, in 52 LUTHER'S WORKS: SERMONS II, at 159, 267-69 (Hans J. Hillerbrand & Helmut T. Lehmann eds., S. P. Hebart transl., Fortress Press 1974).

81. Martin Luther, *On Trade and Usury*, 11 OPEN COURT 16, 16 (W.H.Carruth transl., 1897) (1524)

consider “material poverty” as something to be coveted: what mattered was “poverty in spirit.”⁸² In reality, the distinction between material and spiritual poverty preceded Luther, and was thus not exclusive of the Protestant world.⁸³ Even after the Reformation, Catholic theologians did not abandon the view that wealth per se was morally acceptable: “there is a difference between possessing poison and being poisoned,” argued François de Sales in this regard.⁸⁴ All the same, Catholic authorities responded to Protestant accusations of lust and luxury by strengthening the calls for material poverty *within the clergy*. The early apostolic community, of which the Pope claimed to be the only legitimate successor, was often cited as a model to follow.⁸⁵ Of course, one thing was the rhetoric of material poverty, another its implementation. But while many bishops and cardinals continued to live sumptuous lives, a few high-ranking prelates did take the counsel of poverty seriously. Upon his return to Milan, for example, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo started to live a frugal life, severely enforcing the evangelical counsels upon himself and his subordinates.⁸⁶ More importantly, some religious orders embraced the rule of material poverty with great zeal: the Capuchins, for example—possibly facilitated in this choice by the humble origins of many of their members.⁸⁷

While friars and prelates were expected to shun luxury, the lay population

(“merchants can scarcely live without sin”), 18 (“the merchants have a common rule among them, it is their motto and bottom of all their practices: I shall sell my ware as dear as I can. This they hold to be their right. But it means making room for greed, and opening the door and window for hell. What else is this than saying: I will give no heed to my neighbor, if only I may have my profit and greed full; what do I care if it brings my neighbor ten ills at once?”). Luther conceded, however, that “it must be that certain are still found among merchants, as well as among other men, who cleave to Christ and would rather be poor with God than rich with the Devil”: *id.* at 17.

82. LUTHER, *supra* note 80, at 266 (“Of spiritual poverty Christ says, Matthew 5[:3]: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit,’ by which he means that we should be detached, and ready to do without all possessions, with no desire for them in our hearts, even though we have and exercise control over many riches [. . .]. Physical poverty means that we have no external possessions. This is impossible, and Christ has neither commanded nor observed it himself, for man cannot live on this earth without food and clothes”) (my emphasis).

83. *E.g.*, JEAN DE GERSON, *La Mendicité Spirituelle*, in INITIATION À LA VIE MYSTIQUE 109, 120 (Gallimard 1943) (early fifteenth century) (“Si est la diversité grande entre mendicité corporelle et contrainte, que l’on juge honteuse, et celle spirituelle de quoi je parle, laquelle ont eue tous saints et saintes qui onques furent nés, et même Jésus-Christ, comme dit est”).

84. FRANÇOIS DE SALES, “Introduction à la Vie Dévote,” in ŒUVRES 1, 170 (Gallimard 1969) (1609): “Il y a différence entre avoir du poison et être empoisonné [. . .]; ainsi pouvez-vous avoir des richesses sans être empoisonnée par icelles: ce sera si vous les avez en votre maison ou en votre bourse, et non pas en votre cœur”).

85. Acts 4:34-35 (“Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need”), quoted in Sixtus V., *Quamvis Infirma*, in BULLARUM DIPLOMATUM ET PRIVILEGIORUM SANCTORUM ROMANORUM PONTIFICUM TAURINENSIS EDITIO 847, 847 (Dalmazzo ed., 1863) (1587); *cf. supra* note 16.

86. On the cardinal’s “conversion” and his ordination as priest, see M. De Certeau, *Carlo Borromeo, Santo*, in DIZIONARIO BIOGRAFICO DEGLI ITALIANI 260, 262 (1977); LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 15.

87. John Patrick Donnelly, *New Religious Orders for Men*, in THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY, *supra* note 20, at 163; CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at 335.

was instructed to be humble and repent. Filippo Neri, in particular, conceived his Oratory as “a school of humility”: his teaching method, we are told, consisted in “original, extravagant and cheerful expedients, devised to mortify himself and his followers.”⁸⁸ Meanwhile, in Milan, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo insistently warned the Milanese that they should repent, for sins had made them “similar to beasts.”⁸⁹ These calls, however, took a different meaning depending on the status of the recipient.⁹⁰ Aristocrats and wealthy bourgeois tended to interpret humility as a call to prove their faith through rituals and acts of charity. Not all preachers put such an emphasis on exteriority, of course: François de Sales, for example, recommended to change the heart before appearances, and expressed skepticism about too rigid forms of fasting, wearing hair shirts and other mortifications exercises.⁹¹ But preachers did hasten to reassure their wealthy audience that “each one can maintain his or her rank without violating [the maxim of] humility”⁹²—to use again De Sales’ words. Social hierarchies were never put into question, and this allowed many among the elites to overlook the material and social implications descending from the maxim of humility. By contrast, humility took a very different meaning when preached to people from the lower classes: in this case, the faithful were instructed to patiently endure their condition and shun all aspirations of upward mobility. The masses were told to follow the example of Jesus, whose life the successful treatise *Imitatio Christi* had reinterpreted to emphasize its frugality.⁹³

88. ANTONIO CISTELLINI, I SAN FILIPPO NERI: L’ORATORIO E LA CONGREGAZIONE ORATORIANA: STORIA E SPIRITUALITÀ 110 (1989) (“L’Oratorio è anzitutto scuola di umiltà e Filippo ne è il geniale maestro con trovate curiose, bizzarre e allegre, fatte per mortificare se stesso e i suoi”). The sincerity of Filippo Neri’s commitment to poverty in his private life has been questioned: Oryshkevich, *supra* note 29, at 255-6.

89. BORROMEIO, *supra* note 36, at 116 (“chi siamo noi? non diremo solamente ombra, fumo, vil polvere, vapore, che svanisce, cenere infruttuosa, ombra di sogno, schiuma, ma carne, et sangue, huomini insensati, et per non intendere la nostra vera nobiltà fatti simili alle bestie, che siamo noi?”).

90. *E.g.*, DE SALES, *supra* note 84, at 36 (“Dieu commanda en la création aux plantes de porter leurs fruits, chacune *selon son genre*: ainsi commande-t-il aux Chrétiens, qui sont les plantes vivantes de son Église, qu’ils produisent des fruits de dévotion, un chacun selon sa qualité et vacation. La dévotion doit être différemment exercée par le gentilhomme, par l’artisan, par le valet, par le prince, par la veuve, par la fille, par la mariée; et non seulement cela, mais il faut accommoder la pratique de la dévotion aux forces, aux affaires et aux devoirs de chaque particulier”).

91. *Id.* at 194-9.

92. DE SALES, *supra* note 84, at 139-40 (“Certes, chacun peut entrer en son rang et s’y tenir sans violer l’humilité, pourvu que cela se fasse négligemment et sans contention. [. . .] ceux qui prétendent à la vertu ne laissent pas de prendre leurs rangs et les honneurs qui leur sont dus, pourvu toutefois que cela ne leur coûte pas beaucoup de soin et d’attention, et que ce soit sans en être chargés de trouble, d’inquiétude, de disputes et contentions”).

93. IMITATIO CHRISTI (William Benham transl.), available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1653/pg1653-images.html>. The *Imitatio Christi*, written in first half of the fifteenth century, enjoyed an incredible success among Catholics and Protestants alike during the following couple of centuries: with its “639 editions [. . .] published between 1500 and 1650,” it became the most popular Christian text after the Bible: MAXIMILIAN VON HABSBURG, CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT TRANSLATIONS OF THE IMITATIO CHRISTI, 1425-1650. FROM LATE MEDIEVAL CLASSIC TO EARLY MODERN BESTSELLER 1, 17-18 (2011).

Caravaggio's choice of subjects and style echoed this renewed attention to poverty and humility, but it also reveals an original approach to social questions. Aside from young musicians, the recurring subjects of his early paintings were tavern-goers and gypsies. Later on, Caravaggio opted for more conventional subjects drawn from pagan mythology and the Christian tradition, but behind the apparent conventionality of this choice laid a penchant for transgression.⁹⁴ Bacchus, the god of exuberance and vitality, is sick. The St. Peter of the *Crucifixion* is "the simple fisherman from Bethsaida,"⁹⁵ and the first *St. Matthew* looks like a dull and "uneducated" man.⁹⁶ Jesus is often poor or in pain;⁹⁷ in works such as the *Calling of St. Matthew* and the two *Suppers at Emmaus*, he "mingles with an ordinary mankind of tavern goers and plagued beggars."⁹⁸ To Caravaggio, divinity was truly the incarnated God who descends from heaven to meet women and men in their everyday existence, share their condition and their sorrow.⁹⁹

Poor people, pilgrims, and mothers with children are recurring subjects in Caravaggio's mature production.¹⁰⁰ The mere fact of representing the poor was not a novelty: medieval representations, for example, frequently showed a saint attending to a poor or sick person; even in renaissance works of art, one can occasionally find representations of crippled or indigent people.¹⁰¹ But while in the past the poor had often been stylized, "idealised"¹⁰² or caricatured, Caravaggio portrayed them in an unembellished and realistic way.¹⁰³ The frequency of the poor in Caravaggio's paintings marked a return to medieval art,¹⁰⁴ but their naturalism was new. To increase the realistic outlook of his subjects, Caravaggio deliberately chose his models "from his small group of

94. LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 15.

95. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 187.

96. LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 17 ("questo semplice di pelle spessa, questo analfabeta, che al solo pensiero di metter penna in carta ha fatto le rughe più profonde di un tanto").

97. *E.g.*, the two Sicilian *Adorations*, the *Flagellation*, the two *Crowning of Thorns*.

98. LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 43 ("si confonde nella comune umanità di commensale d'osteria o di mendicante piagato"); Olson, *supra* note 29, at 72.

99. Olson, *supra* note 29, at 70; CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at 374.

100. *E.g.*, the *Seven Works of Mercy*, the *Madonna of the Rosary*, the *Madonna dei Palafrenieri*.

101. Examples include Domenico di Bartolo's cycle of frescos in the hospital of *Santa Maria della Scala* in Siena, and in particular: *Caring for the Sick* (1440-1), *Almsgiving* (1441) and *Almsgiving in the Small Courtyard or the Paupers' Supper* (1443-4). Fra Angelico's fresco *The Charity of St. Laurence* (1447-8) in the Niccolina Chapel, Vatican City, is another example: Livio Pestilli, "Disabled Bodies: The (Mis)representation of the Lame in Antiquity and their Reappearance in Early Christian and Medieval Art," in *ROMAN BODIES. ANTIQUITY TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY* 85, 91-3 (Andrew Hopkins & Maria Woke eds., The British School at Rome 2005).

102. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 224.

103. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 335 ("These poor are not devotionally idealised"). On the contrast between Raphael and Caravaggio, see GIOVAN PIETRO BELLORI, *I LE VITE DE' PITTORI SCULTORI E ARCHITETTI MODERNI* 214, 230 (Einaudi 2009) (1672); LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 226, 292 (quoting Federico Borromeo).

104. Pestilli, *supra* note 101; LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 226, 235.

friends—painters, soldiers, whores,” recounts early biographer Giovan Pietro Bellori.¹⁰⁵ When these ordinary people looked at Caravaggio's paintings, then, they could see themselves as in a mirror.

Caravaggio's poor enjoyed an unusually dignified status. In works such as the *Madonna of Loreto* and the *Madonna of the Rosary*, the crowd of ordinary believers even “entered” the painting—and not as marginal figures, but as the protagonists: “[i]t was entirely new for the humble poor to appear centre stage in a public altarpiece.”¹⁰⁶ The distance between the divinity and the faithful, but also among the faithful themselves, was thus reduced. To be sure, a few of Caravaggio's works, such as the *Madonna of the Rosary*, do show the masses in separated classes. But in many other paintings—including the *Seven Works of Mercy*—poverty seems to hold all humanity together: it is common to both saints and sinners, benefactors and beneficiaries, victims and executioners.¹⁰⁷

Caravaggio reveals poverty and suffering through facial expressions, posture, physical traits and clothes. Starting from the *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, a series of highly-symbolic dirty feet make their appearance on Caravaggio's canvases.¹⁰⁸ Wrinkles, such as those of the female pilgrim in the *Madonna of Loreto*, are another expression of this uncensored realism and function to identify old people. Some of Caravaggio's subjects—like the young John the Baptist, or the man in the foreground of the *Seven Works of Mercy*—are half-naked or covered by rags; many others are humbly dressed.¹⁰⁹ Holes can be found not only in St. Francis's robe, but also in a disciple's sleeve at Emmaus¹¹⁰ and in the glove of a cardsharp. Thomas' sleeve, in turn, seems to be precariously attached to the shirt.

If we think about these details, we could conclude that Caravaggio nurtured a simplified and stigmatizing view of the poor. After all, what is a detail if not a “sign,” a “stigma”?¹¹¹ In reality, Caravaggio's signs of poverty

105. BELLORI, *supra* note 103, at 144. Bellori tells us that in order to paint the *Fortune Teller* Caravaggio “called a gypsy who happened to pass by in the street and, taking her to his lodgings, he portrayed her”: *id.*, at 214 (“chiamò una zingana che passava a caso per istrada, e condottala all'albergo la ritrasse”). This episode was probably romanticized, but we do know that Caravaggio drew his models from humble Roman people: actual prostitutes, for instance, served as models for Mary Magdalene: Cerati, *supra* note 45, at 138; LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 149.

106. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 289.

107. CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at 62. Consider, for example, the *Flagellation of Christ* and the *Crucifixion of St. Peter*. On the poverty of the executioners in the *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, see LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 56.

108. Naked feet are shown, for example, in the *Death of the Virgin*, the *Madonna of the Rosary* and the *Madonna of Loreto*. On the meaning of these representations, see Calvesi, *supra* note 3, at 50-51 (arguing that the naked feet stand for apostolic poverty, the need of purification, obedience and the bearing of good news).

109. CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at 55; LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 292.

110. I am referring to the first version, now at the National Gallery in London.

111. GOFFMAN, *supra* note 41, at 1 (“The Greeks, who were apparently strong on visual aids, originated the term stigma to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier”).

are revealing, but not exaggerated. They are revealing, for Caravaggio uses these signs to “un-conceal” (to say it with Heidegger¹¹²) ordinary people in their everyday lives—lives to the which suffering and deprivations were not extraneous. At the same time, Caravaggio refrained from exaggerating the signs of poverty. Bellori was thus wrong when he wrote that Caravaggio and his followers took pleasure in “the imitation of mean things, looking for filth and deformity,” and “indulged with all their attention upon wrinkles and defects of the skin and other bodily parts, and formed knotty fingers and deformed limbs.”¹¹³ In fact, as more lucid commentators have observed, Caravaggio always shunned the “stylization [. . .] of psychophysical traits” and kept away from that “expressionism that he highly abhorred.”¹¹⁴ He looked at suffering in the eyes, but “without tears, without pietism.”¹¹⁵

Caravaggio was clearly not *attracted* by poverty. In several paintings he embellished his subjects with the most exquisite fabrics.¹¹⁶ But while poverty is not exalted, it is not morally condemned, either. The poor are identified by their wrinkles and rags, but above all they are *revealed* by those traits, acquiring a degree of visibility and dignity they had seldom enjoyed in the figurative arts. Besides, Caravaggio’s early biographers tell us that he saw nothing disgraceful in torn clothes.¹¹⁷ Bellori recounts that Caravaggio chose “drapes and refined velvets to adorn himself; but when he wore a cloth, he would never leave it, until it turned into rags.”¹¹⁸ In

112. See *supra* note 4 and accompanying text.

113. BELLORI, *supra* note 103, at 230 (“Allora cominciò l’imitazione delle cose vili, ricercandosi le sozzure e le deformità [. . .]; nell’imitare li corpi si fermano con tutto lo studio sopra le rughe e i difetti della pelle e dintorni, formano le dita nodose, le membra alterate da morbi”).

114. LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 22 (“E il Caravaggio, penso, avrebbe annuito osservando che proprio così stanno le cose e che non si può andar oltre certi limiti senza cadere nella stilizzazione, sempre arbitraria, dei riflessi psicofisici; cioè nell’espressionismo ch’egli sommamente aborrisce”).

115. Dario Micacchi, *Nel Buio con Caravaggio*, L’UNITÀ, Dec. 15, 1984, at 13 (“Deve crearvi una emozione mai provata un pittore che dialoga in questo modo con la morte, con l’occhio sbarrato, senza lacrime, senza pietismo”).

116. See, e.g., the two *Fortune Tellers* and the *Knight of Malta*. Caravaggio’s numerous renditions of Mary Magdalene, on the other hand, do not belong to this group of paintings. It is true that, in a couple of works, Magdalene wears luxurious clothes. But those signs of luxury are juxtaposed to the unpretentious dress of her sister Martha (*Martha and Mary Magdalene*) and to the discarded jewelry laying on the floor (*Penitent Magdalene*). In both paintings, then, the message that the artist wanted to deliver was a warning *against* the temptation of wealth and vanity. The same message we find in the *Ecstasy*, which portrays Magdalene *after* her conversion, dressing in a much soberer attire.

117. GIOVANNI BAGLIONE, LE VITE DE’ PITTORI SCULTORI ET ARCHITETTI 136 (1642) (“pessimamente vestito”); Antonella Cesarini, *Il Musico, Il Barbiere, il Ferraiolo. Una Testimonianza Inedita sui Primi Anni di Caravaggio a Roma*, in CARAVAGGIO A ROMA, *supra* note 45, at 55 (reporting the words of two barbers who met Caravaggio: “non troppo bene in ordine”, “calzette negre un poco stracciate”); Bologna, *supra* note 28, at 175 (quoting Federico Borromeo: “Nei miei di’ conobbi un dipintore in Roma, il quale era di sozzi costumi, et andava sempre co’ panni stracciati, e lordi a maraviglia”). The few clothes mentioned in the inventory of 1605 were also in bad condition: Marini & Corradini, *supra* note 64, at 162 (mentioning “un par de calzoni et un giuppone stracciati” and “un par de calzonacci verdi”); LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 295-6.

118. BELLORI, *supra* note 103, at 232 (“Non lasceremo di annotare li modi stessi nel portamento e vestir suo, usando egli drappi e velluti nobili per adornarsi; ma quando poi si era messo un abito, mai lo tralasciava finché non gli cadeva in cenci”).

painting, Caravaggio manifested the same ambivalence that he showed in dressing, oscillating between longing for luxury and respect of the poor, irreverence towards the elites and an enduring commitment to social hierarchies. But while ambiguous in his acts of social transgression, he never allowed judgmental, moralizing or melodramatic elements to taint his art.

The theme of the frailty of our earthly life, already implicit in representations of poor people, is manifest in Caravaggio's many renditions of old age.¹¹⁹ Allusions to the ephemerality of life were not something new in the arts: "the image of the skull [frequently] accompan[ied] several iconographies of the saints,"¹²⁰ and Leonardo had extensively studied and caricatured the anatomy of the elderly.¹²¹ In Caravaggio's works, however, that sense of precariousness is especially frequent and troubling. He often portrayed young subjects standing next to old people, as if the artist wanted to stress the transience of youth and beauty.¹²² The contrast between the extreme beauty of Judith and the wrinkles of her old maid—but also between Mary and her mother Anne in the *Madonna dei Palafrenieri*, between Isaac and Abraham in the *Sacrifice*, between Salome and her maid—seem to deliver just that message.

In other paintings Caravaggio indulged in lifeless corpses.¹²³ These are works set at a moment that follows the dramatic apex, when the action is over and the victim already dead. For the bystanders, little can be done at this point, except burial, mourning and melancholic meditation. The corpses are pale, weighty in their desolation. The mouth of Jesus in the *Entombment of Christ* and the mouth of the saint in the *Burial of St. Lucy* are both open: death does not come in personalized form, as the traditional phantom holding the sickle, but takes the much more realistic—hence, scarier—form of *rigor mortis*. The death of the Virgin had been a recurrent topos in medieval and renaissance art, but the crude image of death had always been defused by means of references to heaven and other stylizations.¹²⁴ In

119. As can be found, for example, in the *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, the *Inspiration of St. Matthew*, the two versions of the *St. Jerome*, the *Sacrifice of Isaac*, the *Madonna dei Palafrenieri*, *Judith and Holofernes*, and the second *Supper at Emmaus*.

120. Antonella Pampalone, *Caravaggio "Virtuoso". Una Leggenda?*, in *CARAVAGGIO A ROMA*, *supra* note 45, at 49 ("La consapevolezza della precarietà della sorte e della vita era propria della società di quegli anni; lo mostrano le varie rappresentazioni allegoriche sul tema della Fortuna, o i dipinti con la Vanitas in cui è ricorrente l'immagine del teschio, un memento mori che accompagna varie iconografie di santi").

121. Montanari, *supra* note 45, episode 5.

122. CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at 56-7.

123. The *Entombment of Christ*, the *Death of the Virgin*, the *Beheading of St. John the Baptist*, the *Burial of St. Lucy* and the *Raising of Lazarus*. Severed heads are shown in the two *Salome* and in the *David and Goliath*.

124. Among medieval representations of the death of the Virgin, Duccio's stained-glass rose window for Siena's Cathedral (1287-8), now at the *Museo dell'Opera della Metropolitana di Siena*, is perhaps one of the most beautiful. A more recent example is Taddeo di Bartolo's early fifteenth-century cycle of frescos in the chapel of Siena's *Palazzo Pubblico*.

Caravaggio's *Death of the Virgin*, by contrast, Mary's body is so livid and real, the faceless cry of Mary Magdalene so desperate, and the scene so devoid of any reference to ultramundane "transition" (as the contract required) that the Discalced Carmelites rejected the painting.¹²⁵ Even the *Raising of Lazarus*—an episode that in John's Gospel ends happily—in Caravaggio's interpretation remains imbued in an atmosphere of overwhelming despair. But is despair the end of the story, the only possible response to the crudeness of suffering?

III. THE "SEVEN WORKS OF MERCY"

The *Seven Works of Mercy* is a crucial work to understand Caravaggio's complex attitude towards social needs. If in other paintings he seems to indulge in desperation, in this work Caravaggio leaves space for hope and effective remedies. The painting was commissioned by the *Pio Monte della Misericordia*, a charitable organization established in Naples shortly after the year 1600.¹²⁶ Initially devoted to attending the infirm, the *Pio Monte* later expanded its activity to areas such as the visitation of prisoners, the ransom of slaves and assistance to the poor.¹²⁷ During its early years, the *Pio Monte* was relatively immune from the control of the Church,¹²⁸ in addition, the members of the *Pio Monte* imposed no particular "iconographic demands or restrictions"¹²⁹ on Caravaggio, except perhaps for the implicit request that Mary be present.

At first sight, the iconography of the *Seven Works of Mercy* seems rather conventional. The range of human needs represented on the canvas does not deviate from traditional representations of the acts of mercy: hunger, thirst, homelessness, nudity, sickness, incarceration and burial.¹³⁰ Moreover, and also in keeping with this tradition, social needs are addressed by private charity alone. The State is entirely absent as an agent of relief; in fact, the prison on the right evokes the State's repressive function—the only face of public authority that Caravaggio could think of. Helping the needy remains an individual responsibility. All the same, the painting represents a break against previous representations of the acts of mercy and the culture of its time, as we will now see in detail.

125. N. Randolph Parks, *On Caravaggio's "Dormition of the Virgin" and Its Setting*, 127 THE BURLINGTON MAG. 438, 443 (1985).

126. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 23.

127. *Id.* at 24-26, 77.

128. *Id.* at 29; Bologna, *supra* note 28, at 185.

129. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 37 ("una committenza cittadina, che lo lasciò operare senza porgli problemi iconografici o restrizioni sull'eccessivo naturalismo").

130. For an overview of pictorial representations of the acts of mercy before Caravaggio, see PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 55-64; Laura Fenley, *Confraternal Mercy and Federico Barocci's Madonna del Popolo: An Iconographic Study* 32-3, M.A. thesis, Texas Christian Univ. (2007).

A. *The Ultimate Purpose of Charity*

For sixteenth-century Catholics, virtuous activities—such as charity, prayer, ascetic practices and participation in the sacraments—solved at least three spiritual functions: secure personal salvation, placate God's ire and achieve moral perfection. The first two goals betrayed a contractualist conception of religion, a *quid-pro-quo* relationship with the divine: man offered something to God (virtue, repentance, prayers) with the expectation that God would reciprocate with some kind of reward (or by abstaining to inflict punishment). The third purpose, by contrast, took charity as a moral end in itself—but even so, the duty to love one's neighbor derived from the duty to love God, and thus occupied a somewhat subordinated place in the scale of ethical imperatives.

The main spiritual objective of Catholic charity—saving yourself—rested on the belief that men could not rely on faith alone to ascend to heaven, as Protestants believed, but needed to act justly.¹³¹ Jesus had told his disciples to love neighbors as well as enemies,¹³² but medieval theologians felt the need to provide the faithful with a more concrete manual of conduct. To this end, they drafted a series of recommended “works of mercy,” largely inspired by Matthew's Gospel.¹³³ What interests us is that medieval and early-modern discussions about the works of mercy turned on a common assumption, namely that suffering during one's earthly life is little thing when compared to eternal suffering.¹³⁴ It followed that the works of mercy were more helpful to the giver than to the recipient.¹³⁵ That such was the order of priorities can be seen, for example, in the ritual of admission to the congregation administering the *Ospedale della Consolazione* in Rome: the person seeking admission was formally asked “why do you [want to] join [the congregation]?” and the expected answer was: “For the health of my soul.”¹³⁶

The drive to save yourself through charitable activities partly derived from the idea of perpetual damnation, which deeply perturbed the sleep of sixteenth-century Catholics.¹³⁷ Jesus' eschatological discourses received in

131. *E.g.*, CATECHISMUS EX DECRETO CONCILII TRIDENTINII, AD PAROCHOS, PII QUINTI PONT. MAX. IUSSU EDITUS 316 (1566). James's epistle was often quoted in support of the thesis that faith alone could not lead to salvation: CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at 361. *See also* Bireley, *supra* note 20, at 148-9.

132. John 13:34 (“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another”). On Jesus' “new commandment,” see FERDINANDO LEVI, *IL GRANDE COMANDAMENTO* (2013).

133. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 55-6, 68-70. *Cf.* Matthew 25:35-44.

134. *E.g.*, IMITATIO CHRISTI, *supra* note 93, ch. XII (“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”), ch. XXV (“Now shalt thou labour a little, and thou shalt find great rest, yea everlasting joy”). *Cf.* 1 Corinthians 4:17 (“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”).

135. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 25.

136. PERICOLI, *supra* note 66, at 66 (“Che peti?” “Voglio essere adnesso a questa santa Compagnia.” “Perchè c'entri tu?” “Per la salute dell'anima mia”).

137. *E.g.*, BORROMEO, *supra* note 36, at 108 (“nó ho saputo [. . .] ricordarmi della morte,

this period great publicity. The Tridentine Catechism of 1566, for example, quoted a passage from Matthew's fifth discourse to remind the faithful of "the eternal fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels."¹³⁸ Interestingly, the Catechism linked the image of hell to the tradition of the works of mercy, by defining the "wicked" as those people who "neglected the acts of true piety: to the hungry and thirsty they did not minister food nor drink, they did not lodge the stranger, they did not clothe the naked, nor did they visit the prisoner and the infirm."¹³⁹ Failure to perform acts of charity was thus directly connected to the most terrible of sanctions. Emphasizing fear over joy,¹⁴⁰ Tridentine reformers instructed priests to "inculcate very frequently"¹⁴¹ (sic) the image of the eternal fire upon the faithful. Even François de Sales, despite his joyful approach to life, recommended to meditate upon the images of judgement, hell and paradise.¹⁴²

Charitable activities were also instrumental to soothing God's ire during one's earthly life—the second goal in our taxonomy.¹⁴³ The underlying idea was that God either inflicted or permitted human suffering. Carlo Borromeo, for example, saw in the plague of 1576 a divine retribution, a modern flood in response to men's sins.¹⁴⁴ In his *Memoriale*, the cardinal interpreted the events in this way: the Milanese had sinned by celebrating Carnival and indulging in various immoral acts; God punished them with the plague; but thanks to prayers, processions, sacraments and acts of repentance, God eventually saved the city from the curse; the danger of a new punishment, however, was always around the corner, and this is why the Milanese should persevere in virtue.¹⁴⁵ This account was consistent with Borromeo's broader theodicy. The cardinal did not think that the infirm, *as an individual*, was responsible for his or her own disgrace. In fact, contagion could also strike virtuous clergymen during their visits to the sick,¹⁴⁶ in those cases, the disease could not be ascribed to individual sin. But while in

dell'Inferno, delli divini giudittj, ne del paradiso").

138. CATECHISMUS, *supra* note 131, at 51; Matthew 25:41-43. This passage is also quoted in Fenley, *supra* note 130, at 30.

139. CATECHISMUS, *supra* note 131, at 52 ("ut, qui omnia verae pietatis opera neglexerint, & esurienti, ac sitiendi nec cibum, nec potum ministraverint, hospitem non exceperint, nudum non operuerint, aut in carcere inclusum, aegrumque non visiterint"). The 1566 Catechism is briefly discussed in PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 71.

140. What Tridentine reformers did not realize was that a state of existential terror was clearly at odds with the ultimate message of the Gospels, which—as the evangelist John had made clear—is one of joy and hope: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love," John 4:18.

141. CATECHISMUS, *supra* note 131, at 52 ("Haec sunt, quae Pastores fidelis populi auribus saepissime inculcare debent. nam huius articuli veritas fide concepta maximam vim habet ad frenandas pravas animi cupiditates, atque a peccatis homines abstrahendos").

142. DE SALES, *supra* note 84, at 57-63.

143. BORROMEO, *supra* note 36, at 92 ("oratione santa per diffendervi dall'ira di Dio").

144. *Id.* at 4, 29, 103.

145. *Id.* at 3-140.

146. ANDRÉ DEROO, SAINT CHARLES BORROMÉE: CARDINAL REFORMATEUR, DOCTEUR DE LA PASTORALE 377-8, 390 (1963) (quoting a 1592 work by Carlo Bascapé).

some circumstances the individual could escape responsibility, the notion of guilt remained: it was the community, the city of Milan as a whole, which had sinned and drawn God's punishment. Borromeo's understanding of evil was not isolated among Catholics: at that time, Augustine's view that "*omne quod dicitur malum, aut peccatum esse, aut poenam peccati*"¹⁴⁷ was almost universally accepted. It is not that Catholic thinkers thought lightly of Epicurus' dilemma, i.e., the difficulty of reconciling the divine infliction of punishment with the idea of a God of Love.¹⁴⁸ But in order to solve the dilemma, theologians either admitted that evil solved some positive function, such as stimulating self-perfection,¹⁴⁹ or they resorted, like Borromeo, to the notion of sin: it was sin, in this view, that forced the hand of an otherwise loving God, making inevitable the infliction or permission of pain.¹⁵⁰ Both explanations led to political inaction: the first conception ultimately negated the existence of evil as such; the second explanation regarded evil as a moral problem, whose solution had to be looked for in the spiritual realm.

Virtue was not merely an instrument to placate an irascible God or gain some personal advantage, however. It was also the corollary stemming from the faithful's spiritual communion with Jesus. The *Imitatio Christi* gave a vivid account of Jesus' poverty and urged the believer to follow Jesus' example.¹⁵¹ By reason of their similarity with the Son of Man, the poor, the elderly, the desperate were once again exalted. In this ethical system, however, loving Jesus enjoyed a logical precedence over loving one's neighbor. Not that brotherly love was unimportant; but it was considered a spontaneous outgrowth stemming from the warmth of Christ's love.¹⁵² "If a man know that he is beloved"—wrote François de Sales—"he is induced to love in his turn."¹⁵³ Such a derivative status did not necessarily limit the scope and incisiveness of charity. The *Oratorio del Divino Amore*, for example, after reiterating in its charter that the impetus to "charity comes from the gentle gaze of God,"¹⁵⁴ distinguished itself as one of the most active charitable organizations in the early sixteenth century, particularly in the field of assistance to the sick.¹⁵⁵ But for all the efforts of the *Divino*

147. Augustine of Hippo, quoted in JOHN HICK, *EVIL AND THE GOD OF LOVE* 59 (2010).

148. *Id.*

149. *E.g.*, FRANÇOIS DE SALES, "Traité de l'Amour de Dieu", in *ŒUVRES* 319, 766 (Gallimard 1969).

150. *Cf.* VITO MANCUSO, *IL DOLORE INNOCENTE: L'HANDICAP, LA NATURA E DIO* 55-62 (2011).

151. *IMITATIO CHRISTI*, *supra* note 93, ch. XVIII; Sixtus V, *supra* note 85, at 848.

152. CISTELLINI, *supra* note 88, at 71, 111.

153. DE SALES, *supra* note 149, at 687-8 ("Si un homme sait d'être aimé de qui que ce soit, il est pressé d'aimer réciproquement; [. . .] sachant que Jésus-Christ, vrai Dieu éternel, tout-puissant, nous a aimés jusques a vouloir souffrir pour nous *la mort, et la mort de la croix*, ô mon cher Théotime, n'est ce pas cela avoir nos cœurs sous le pressoir et les sentir presser de force, et en exprimer de l'amour par une violence et contrainte qui est d'autant plus violente qu'elle est toute aimable et amiable?").

154. BENDISCIOLI, *supra* note 20, at 36.

155. CISTELLINI, *supra* note 88, at 27, n. 41; BENDISCIOLI, *supra* note 20, at 35-37.

Amore, many other organizations remained oriented to contemplative or ritual activities.

For centuries, the figurative arts reflected the finalization of charity to ultramundane salvation. As art historian Vincenzo Pacelli has shown in his scrupulous studies, medieval representations of the acts of mercy never failed to include the figure of Jesus, most often in the act of judging.¹⁵⁶ On one of the portals of Parma's baptistery, for example, Benedetto Antelami sculpted the six acts of mercy (the seventh, the entombment of the dead, had not been included in the list, yet) and placed the judging Christ on top, dominating the entire scene.¹⁵⁷ The habit of linking the works of mercy to the final judgment continued uninterrupted for centuries. The Protestant world soon deviated from this canon—Pieter Brueghel the Elder and his son, for example, omitted any reference to the judgement in their renditions of the works of mercy.¹⁵⁸ But artists working in Catholic countries, pressured as they were by the austere spirituality of the Counter Reformation, took more time to depart from the tradition. As late as 1586, for example, Vatican official Giulio Roscio published a treatise on the works of mercy, embellished by several illustrations: one of them showed a large scene of the final judgment in the middle, surrounded by smaller representations of the acts of mercy at the sides.¹⁵⁹

Yet, things were slowly starting to change even within the Catholic world. In 1579, Federico Barocci delivered a *Madonna del Popolo* to the *Fraternità dei Laici* in Arezzo. The marvelous altarpiece contained a series of iconographic innovations: Jesus, in particular, “is no longer the punitive figure commonly seen in [previous representations]; instead he blesses the crowd.”¹⁶⁰ By stripping the acts of mercy of ultramundane references, Barocci made them more spontaneous: it was the dawn of a more authentic form of solidarity. The figure of Jesus, however, still dominated the scene.¹⁶¹ In addition, the needy are depicted in the midst of a neat and polished setting: the colors are bright, and the overall feeling that transpires from this work is one of transcendental harmony and grace. The poor are not portrayed in their reality—that would convey a troubling sense of insecurity: instead, everything is in order, and under the blessing of God,

156. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 53-72.

157. *Id.* at 53-55.

158. *Id.* at 58.

159. ICONES OPERUM MISERICORDIAE CUM IULIJ ROSCII HORTINI SENTENTIIS ET EXPLICATIONIBUS PARS PRIOR EORUMQUAE AD CORPUS PERTINENT (1586). For a short discussion, see PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 68 (fig. 41), 72-3.

160. Fenley, *supra* note 130, at 35.

161. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 57. Some commentators see in the figure of Mary, who occupies an intermediate position between Jesus and the crowd, an implicit “reference [to] the Last Judgment”: Fenley, *supra* note 130, at 35. I disagree with this interpretation, because the faithful could invoke the Virgin not only to ameliorate their position during the judgement, but also to alleviate their earthly suffering.

poverty and infirmity find a reassuring meaning.

With Caravaggio, Barroci's artificial sense of order evaporates, leaving space for a crude and tangible representation of material need. Long before Voltaire, Caravaggio had already done away with the "best of all possible worlds."¹⁶² There is no justification for the presence of evil in the world, no divine plan, no reassurance that suffering has some secret significance. In theory, this crude way of looking at poverty and pain could generate fear as well as empathy, repression as well as solidarity. Caravaggio's response, however, is clearly sympathetic to the sufferer. In his interpretation, charity is not a tool to secure personal salvation or God's benevolence. Of the three spiritual objectives outlined above, only the third—deepening one's communion with Jesus—comes close to Caravaggio's views. More important still, charity achieves a new purpose: it now consists in the sincere, uninterested effort to ameliorate the condition of real persons. In some paintings, Caravaggio's gloomy depiction of suffering leaves no space for effective action,¹⁶³ in the *Pio Monte* altarpiece, the message is that something can (and should) be done about it.

In the upper part of the painting, Caravaggio shows Jesus as a child in the arms of his mother. Jesus does not judge mankind,¹⁶⁴ as in medieval art; nor is he there to bless and reassure the faithful, as in Barocci's *Madonna*. Since there are no allusions to the judgment, one could surmise that Caravaggio was tilting towards Protestantism; but this was not the case.¹⁶⁵ In particular, no allusion is made to the lucrative activism that Max Weber described as a central feature of Calvinism.¹⁶⁶ In Caravaggio's painting, the benefactors do not seem concerned about *knowing* whether or not they are among the elect: they are too busy helping others. But at the same time that he rejected Calvinism, Caravaggio also departed from Catholic orthodoxy, for the givers are also unconcerned about *saving* themselves.¹⁶⁷ For Caravaggio, true solidarity does not stem out of common Catholic or Protestant concerns. What is it, then, that drives ordinary people to effectively assist others?

Part of the answer lies in the realism with which Caravaggio portrayed situations of need. True solidarity stems, first of all, out of one's realization of the existence and atrocity of *remediable* evil. Caravaggio thinks of

162. VOLTAIRE, *CANDIDE OU L'OPTIMISME* 28 (Gallimard 2007) (1759) ("dans ce meilleur des mondes possibles").

163. *E.g.*, the *Burial of St. Lucy*, the *Beheading of St. John the Baptist*.

164. *But see* FAGIOLLO DELL'ARCO, *supra* note 30, at 22 (reading in the quick, furtive actions of the protagonists the "fear of a possible and imminent repression, of a judgement," the "fear for the end of the world") ("vivo in tutti è il timore d'una eventuale e incombente repressione, d'un Giudizio. Riusciamo ad avvertire l'ansia per la fine del mondo, un impaurito clima 'millenaristico'").

165. CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at 65; Bologna, *supra* note 28, at 187; PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 91.

166. MAX WEBER, *THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM* 18 (Routledge 2005) (first German editions 1904-20).

167. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 91.

himself as a social observer: this is the message conveyed by the self-portraits in the *Taking of Christ* and in the *Martyrdom of Matthew*. In the *Seven Works of Mercy*, he goes a step further and makes of such a “discovery of society” the starting point of all efforts to help the needy. The presence of evil is as real as the weight of the corpse carried by the deacon and the layman; as strong as the grating of the prison widow. Suffering is discovered as it is, without embellishments. And yet, the very realization of evil as a real force makes solidarity possible: social evils are neither something to dread, nor something to be reassured of: instead, they are a call for action. Aware of the darkness around them—like Dr. Rieux in Albert Camus’ *La Peste*—Caravaggio’s benefactors find the moral force to resist adverse fate and set to work to assist the destitute.¹⁶⁸

Unlike Dr. Rieux, however, St. Martin, Pero and the other benefactors in the painting are not driven to charity by the reality of pain *alone*. Another force is nudging them towards solidarity: it is divine grace, symbolized by the angel’s vertical arm—muscular, hit by light and in a central position.¹⁶⁹ The crowd does not notice it, but the Spirit is silently at work. It is therefore incorrect to see in Caravaggio a precocious existentialist;¹⁷⁰ or to infer from the small dimensions of Mary and the Child a “removal of the divine.”¹⁷¹ God is not portrayed in the act of judging mankind, and certainly does not inflict or permit suffering; but he is not absent or indifferent to the human condition either. In fact, Providence is changing the world, even though this action is accomplished through the free will of single individuals. In the iconography of the painting, then, *two* elements lead people to perform acts of mercy: the acknowledgement of evil *and* divine illumination, mixed together like flour and yeast. No existentialist would ever believe in such a transcendental force.

What is more, unlike *La Peste* (and unlike other paintings by Caravaggio), the *Seven Works of Mercy* does not convey a feeling of impotence—quite the contrary: the expressions and gestures of the givers betray not pessimism (with the possible exception of St. Martin’s saddened gaze), but dedication. Seen in person, the painting appears less dark than in pictures: the realistic brown of the earth at night, not a symbolic black, dominates it.¹⁷² Dr. Rieux’s face, writes Camus, was marked by “tears of

168. ALBERT CAMUS, *LA PESTE* (Gallimard 2005) (1947).

169. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 126.

170. FAGIOLO DELL’ARCO, *supra* note 30, at 22, 28, 38 (quoting Argan); LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 7 (“an extraordinarily direct and tragic sense of the human condition and the fate of man”).

171. As argued, for example, by Alessandro Giardino, *The Seven Works of Mercy*, 17 *ARIES* 161 (2017) (“Christ is not only reduced to the naïve and whimsical infant Jesus, but he is also separated from the action of the lower section of the painting”). I take the expression “removal of the divine” from PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 125.

172. *But see* BELLORI, *supra* note 103, at 229 (insisting on Caravaggio’s alleged abuse of the color black).

impotence" because he "could do nothing against [the] wreck."¹⁷³ Caravaggio's givers, by contrast, may not be as "cheerful" as St. Paul would like them to be,¹⁷⁴ but they are more busy than sad: the goal of effective relief is at hand.

B. The Range of Possible Responses elicited by Suffering

Pauperism had been on the rise since at least the fourteenth century.¹⁷⁵ But while exact quantitative estimates are difficult, during the sixteenth century the phenomenon became more serious and more widespread.¹⁷⁶ Simultaneously, and partly as a result of these trends, people's *perception* of pauperism as a massive social problem also grew. Nothing like social surveys existed during Caravaggio's lifetime, but the diffusion of inquiries and trips from the part of secular and religious authorities contributed to this realization. At a time when many bishops and priests did not even reside in their diocese or parish,¹⁷⁷ for example, Carlo Borromeo inaugurated the practice of pastoral visits.¹⁷⁸ Visits and inquiries allowed authorities to get "a precise knowledge of the needs of [the] people,"¹⁷⁹ and that knowledge was the basis for a double-edged activity of assistance *and* repression.¹⁸⁰

While the elites responded to the perceived growth of pauperism with a mix of repression, indolence, spiritual relief and material assistance, the repressive side prevailed. Regulatory measures against "deviance" became harsher during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and culminated with the physical segregation of the poor.¹⁸¹ As a matter of fact, the "vogue of great hospitals"¹⁸² started to circulate in Europe during the fifteenth century.

173. CAMUS, *supra* note 168, at 261, 262 ("il pouvait rien contre ce naufrage. Il devait rester sur le rivage, les main vides et le cœur tordu, sans armes et sans recours, une fois de plus, contre ce désastre. Et à la fin, ce furent bien les larmes de l'impuissance qui empêchèrent Rieux de voir Tarrou se tourner brusquement contre le mur, et expirer dans une plainte creuse").

174. 2 Corinthians 9:7 ("Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver").

175. MOLLAT, *supra* note 19, at 281-2, 297.

176. See *supra* notes 21-23 and accompanying text.

177. CAVALLO, *supra* note 19, at 19, 31.

178. E.g., Carlo Borromeo, *Edictum de Visitatione* (June 22, 1566), in ACTA ECCLESIAE MEDIOLANENSIS 343-4 (1582 ed.); Concilium Provinciale Mediolanense IIII, *Constitutionum Pars Tertia: De Episcopis: De Visitatione* (1573), in ACTA ECCLESIAE MEDIOLANENSIS 75 (1582 ed.); De Certeau, *supra* note 86, at 263, 266.

179. John Paul II, *Visita Pastorale in Lombardia e in Piemonte. Santa Messa in onore di San Carlo Borromeo nel IV Centenario della Morte*, Milano, Piazza del Duomo (Nov. 4, 1984) ("Aveva poi acquistato una conoscenza precisa dei bisogni del suo popolo mediante un gran numero di visite pastorali").

180. Carlo Borromeo was severe against "sinners," and even harsher against anyone suspected of "heresy": *Edictum de Haereticis* (Dec. 20, 1570), in ACTA ECCLESIAE MEDIOLANENSIS 344-5 (1582 ed.); Carlo Borromeo, *Editto: Che si denucino Heretici, sospetti d'Heresia & quelli ancora che leggono, ò hanno presso di loro libri d'Heretici* (Oct. 14, 1572), in 1 ACTA ECCLESIAE MEDIOLANENSIS 430 (1599 ed.).

181. CAVALLO, *supra* note 19, at 16.

182. MOLLAT, *supra* note 19, at 343 ("La vogue des grands hôpitaux allait s'établir").

But, as the central location and elegant design of the *Ospedale Maggiore* in Milan illustrates, the hospital of the Renaissance could still be, to some extent, an instrument of medical care and social inclusion.¹⁸³ It is only in the late sixteenth century, and especially during the seventeenth, that hospitals became places of moral and physical segregation, devoid—as Foucault has noted—of any medical function.¹⁸⁴ The change from outdoor to indoor “relief” occurred at different speeds depending on the local political context. In Turin, for example, the indoor activity of the *Ospedale di San Giovanni* remained relatively marginal throughout the seventeenth century, especially if compared to the persisting vitality of municipal outdoor activities.¹⁸⁵ In Rome, on the other hand, the process of internalization started sooner: an unsuccessful attempt to segregate the poor in a hospital along the Via Appia had already been made by Gregory XIII in 1581.¹⁸⁶ A few years later, Sixtus V had a hospital built on the banks of the Tiber, with the intent of confining there all indigent people, and beggars in particular.¹⁸⁷ In any event, and apart from the different timing in different places, the general trend throughout Europe was towards increasing segregation. As for the poor and sick who were not locked up in hospitals, they were frequently expelled from town, coercively put to work, imprisoned or subjected to other forms of punishment, such as flagellation.¹⁸⁸

For all these segregating and repressive measures, the activism of Caravaggio’s contemporaries in the field of assistance is also noteworthy.¹⁸⁹ The main subjects administering material relief were the Church, old and new religious orders, lay confraternities with various degrees of autonomy and, increasingly, secular authorities. Religious orders still played the lead role in providing assistance. During the plague that struck Milan in 1576, for example, it was the Capuchins, not the Spanish municipal administration, that ran the lazaretto.¹⁹⁰ New orders were established and specialized in distinct types of social service: the Caracciolini concentrated on assisting prisoners, the Somascans focused on the orphans, the Camillians on the sick, the Piarists on poor youngsters in need of

183. *Id.* at 343 (“Le pauvre prenait place dans la cité idéale de la Renaissance”). On the other hand, Mollat caught the ambiguity of those early hospitals, admitting that the idea of segregation was not absent from the movement that led to their establishment: *id.* at 352 (“l’idée du ‘renfermement des pauvres’ participait au courant en faveur de la création de grands hospices”).

184. FOUCAULT, *supra* note 22, at 56 et ff.

185. CAVALLO, *supra* note 19, at 43.

186. Paola Carla Verde, “L’Ospedale dei Poveri Mendicanti a Ponte Sisto. Un’Analisi Preliminare dell’Impresa di Domenico Fontana Attraverso il ‘Libro di Tutta la Spesa,’” in 66 QUADERNI DELL’ISTITUTO DI STORIA DELL’ARCHITETTURA 41, 42-3 (2017).

187. Sixtus V, *supra* note 85.

188. GARBELLOTTI, *supra* note 23, at 44-50; MOLLAT, *supra* note 19, at 350-1.

189. See, e.g., Brian Pullan, *Catholics and the Poor in Early Modern Europe*, 26 TRANSACTIONS OF THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY 15, 21-2 (1976).

190. DEROO, *supra* note 146, at 387-89.

education.¹⁹¹ A few cardinals and bishops also distinguished themselves in the fight against social distress. Carlo Borromeo, for example, coordinated fundraising campaigns, distributed prime necessities and helped establish charitable institutions¹⁹²—including that *Casa Pia* for penitent prostitutes of which attorney Laerzio Cherubini, one of Caravaggio's clients, was an administrator.¹⁹³ Outside the Church, but often connected to it, there was the heterogeneous universe of lay confraternities. These entities were not only witnessing an "expansion in number and membership," but were also placing "new emphasis on works of charity."¹⁹⁴ The *Confraternita della SS. Trinità*, for example—established in Rome in 1548 around Filippo Neri and Persiano Rosa—soon added "to the original purpose of the congregation, [which was] entirely devotional" those other activities "that would later be preeminent, i.e., lodging pilgrims and assisting the infirm."¹⁹⁵ Sixtus V turned to this organization to administer his new hospital for the poor¹⁹⁶—a choice that speaks to the prestige and experience that the confraternity had achieved. The *Pio Monte della Misericordia*, one of Caravaggio's employers in Naples, is another example of a charity-oriented confraternity. In the face of this religious activism, secular authorities tried to carve out a larger sphere for themselves. The history of the *Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala* in Siena—which, starting from the fourteenth century, gradually passed under the control of municipal authorities—is emblematic of the attempt made by European municipalities, princes and dukes to monitor, patronize or even directly administer charitable institutions.¹⁹⁷

Despite some achievements, early-modern assistance measures had many limitations. Perhaps the most significant of those limits was the lack of any "capacity for generalization."¹⁹⁸ The recipients of acts of charity were invariably single, carefully-selected individuals, not the public at large. Financial reasons contributed to the limited scope of material relief. Lay confraternities, unsupported by the power of taxation, mainly funded themselves through alms and occasional donations. Huge military expenses, on the other hand, drained governments' finances—a circumstance that can explain why secular activism in the field of social assistance was mainly confined at the local level. Meanwhile, as a result of socio-economic and

191. Donnelly, *supra* note 87, at 164-70.

192. BENDISCIOLI, *supra* note 20, at 113-14; DEROO, *supra* note 146, at 374-377, 384, 388, 391. See also Danilo Zardin, *Carlo Borromeo e la Cultura Religiosa della Controriforma*, 103 SCHWEIZERISCHE ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR RELIGIONS- UND KULTURGESCHICHTE 41, 52 (2009).

193. Parks, *supra* note 125, at 441.

194. Bireley, *supra* note 20, at 158. See also CISTELLINI, *supra* note 88, at 71.

195. CISTELLINI, *supra* note 88, at 31-2.

196. Verde, *supra* note 186, at 43.

197. DANIELA GALLAVOTTI CAVALLERO, LO SPEDALE DI SANTA MARIA DELLA SCALA IN SIENA 69, 137 (Pacini 1985); MOLLAT, *supra* note 19, at 328-52.

198. HANNAH ARENDT, ON REVOLUTION 85 (Penguin 1990) (1963). This is indeed the charge that Arendt makes against "compassion."

intellectual pressures, the urge of separating the “deserving” from the “undeserving” poor—which had been simmering for centuries in European consciousness¹⁹⁹—became even stronger.²⁰⁰ People were ready to help the needy, but only those who were “really” in need. Sixtus V, in the act of establishing his hospital for the poor, ordered all inmates to go through a physical examination, in order to sniff out “that unspeakable, malicious and deceitful skill of faking an illness.”²⁰¹ Likewise, several Italian towns began to demand a “license” to allow a poor person to beg or to benefit from monetary or in-kind relief; the license was usually released by a local priest or municipal official upon an inquiry into one’s means, habits and morality.²⁰² Residency, too, emerged as selective criterion for the allocation of relief²⁰³: only locals were eligible for assistance, while indigent people coming from out of town were expelled—as both Erasmus²⁰⁴ and Luther²⁰⁵ had recommended. Oftentimes, selectivity leaned towards clientelism: in Turin, for example, the city council granted monetary relief almost exclusively to *poveri vergognosi*—i.e., impoverished nobles or bourgeois—or to persons employed by (or in a commercial relationship with) the municipality.²⁰⁶ In short, the idea of a mass-scale, universal welfare state was completely extraneous to the minds and actions of sixteenth-century benefactors.

The motives that led organizations and individuals to perform acts of charity were many, but most of the times they were unsuitable to stimulate

199. MOLLAT, *supra* note 19, at 26, 303-10; CAVALLO, *supra* note 19, at 25.

200. GARBELLOTTI, *supra* note 23, at 15, 54-8. Martin Luther’s words exemplify this new attitude: MARTIN LUTHER, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Improvement of the Christian Estate*, in THE ANNOTATED LUTHER. THE ROOTS OF REFORM 376, 438 (T. J. Wengert ed., Augsburg Fortress 2015) (“In this way, too, it could be known who was really poor and who was not”).

201. Sixtus V, *supra* note 85, at 849 (“Postremo, ut eadem opera, cunctis, quos in publicum quaestum incerta mendicitas vocaverit, inspectis, exploretur, in singulis integritas corporum et robor annorum, atque inertes quidam et sine ulla debilitate internoscantur, eorumque ignaviae et nequitiae via praecludatur, qui, simulate infirmitate seu pretexto fictae aut per socordiam, et otium affectatae paupertatis, alimoniam vere infirmis ac pauperises paeripiant, ac simulandi morbi infamem quandam, dolosam et fraudolentam artem facitiant, mor bene valentes, robusta et valida totius corporais firmitate, ludis, commessionibus aut illicitis aliis rebus vacant, cum salutes sure dispendio, multorumque scandalo et offensione”).

202. GARBELLOTTI, *supra* note 23, at 54-8; CAVALLO, *supra* note 19, at 78.

203. CAVALLO, *supra* note 19, at 78.

204. DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, *The Godly Feast*, in 39 COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS: COLLOQUIES 171, 199 (Craig R. Thompson transl., Univ. of Toronto Press 1997) (1518) (“Something ought to be given them, too, at times, yet with discrimination. I should think it wise for each city to look after its own and not to tolerate vagabonds roaming hither and yon—particularly the able-bodied ones, who I imagine, need a job rather than a dole”); DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, *Beggar Talk*, in 39 COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS: COLLOQUIES, *supra*, at 562, 567 (“citizens are already muttering that beggars shouldn’t be allowed to roam about at will, but that each city should support its own beggars and all the able-bodied ones forced to work”).

205. LUTHER, *supra* note 200, at 438 (“No beggar from outside should be allowed into the city, whether he call himself pilgrim or mendicant monk”), 439 (“It is enough if the poor are decently cared for so that they do not die of hunger or cold. It is not fitting that one person should live in idleness on another’s labor”).

206. CAVALLO, *supra* note 19, at 69.

effective action. Self-interest and power politics certainly played an important role. Wealthy individuals found in ostentatious acts of charity a way to preserve or increase their social status.²⁰⁷ Local governments, in turn, were driven by a mix of political motives (prevent social unrest, compete with the Church), economic objectives (contain unemployment and pauperism, exploit forced labor) and an aversion to moral laxity.²⁰⁸ Some people, of course, were animated by a sincere desire to help.²⁰⁹ François de Sales, for example, made it clear that almsgiving was of little value if not accompanied by tender and sincere feelings towards the recipient.²¹⁰ Empathy, however, does not always translate into action; and even when early-modern men and women deviated from Hannah Arendt's ideal-typical model of *inert* compassion,²¹¹ many benefactors still thought that what the poor truly needed was spiritual support. Despite the growing commitment to material assistance, the administration of sacraments and the visitation—not the treatment—of the infirm remained the most diffuse forms of relief. Following the lead of Filippo Neri and the participants in his Oratory, distinguished individuals started to pay frequent visits to local hospitals: administrators tolerated these visits because of the donations that often accompanied them, but from the point of view of the inmate, the value of meeting a mass of strangers was dubious to say the least.²¹²

The little social incisiveness of early-modern charity also derived from a sort of fatalist surrender to what was thought to be God's inscrutable will. A de-contextualized reading of Matthew's Gospel ("ye have the poor always with you"²¹³) reassured many in their belief that social inaction was morally acceptable. Sixtus V quoted this very passage in the opening paragraph of his bull *Quamvis Infirmis*, arguing that inequality and poverty were the result of a mysterious divine plan—a plan that man should accept

207. CAVALLO, *supra* note 19, at 108, 112.

208. FOUCAULT, *supra* note 22, at 75-91; MOLLAT, *supra* note 19, at 342-3.

209. MOLLAT, *supra* note 19, at 349.

210. DE SALES, *supra* note 84, at 32.

211. Arendt distinguished between "compassion," "pity" and "solidarity." The etymological meaning of the word "compassion" (from the Latin *cum-pati*)—not dissimilar from the Greek origins of the word "empathy"—is "to suffer or endure something together." For Arendt, however, this "co-suffering" "remains, politically speaking, irrelevant and without consequence." "Solidarity", by contrast, "can inspire and guide action." Arendt's distinctions may seem too sharp, but they do correspond to varying degrees of emotional and behavioral responses to need: ARENDT, *supra* note 198, at 85-9.

212. On the visits paid to local hospitals by Neri's followers, see CISTELLINI, *supra* note 88, at 71-2. Visiting the infirm remained a diffuse practice in the following centuries: *see, e.g.*, PERICOLI, *supra* note 66, at 35 (quoting a 1698 work by Carlo Bartolomeo Piazza: the sick "are often visited by pious people in town, either noble, or of any condition") ("sono spesso visitati da diverse persone pie della Città, tanto nobili, quanto d'ogni condizione"). An interesting and poignant testimony of how the visitation of the infirm from the part of common people could not only disturb patients but also hamper the work of medical practitioners can be found in NICOLA MARCONE, *LO SPEDALE DI SANTA MARIA DELLA SCALA IN SIENA 32-6* (Tipografia all'Insegna dell'Ancora 1887).

213. Matthew 26:11.

as given.²¹⁴ By so doing, the Pope was addressing a warning to both secular authorities and the lower classes: the former were expected not to invade the domain of charity, reserved to the Church; the latter were admonished to endure their afflictions with patience, without ceding to the temptation of social unrest.²¹⁵ Even François de Sales, who certainly was less concerned with social order than Sixtus V, invited the faithful to adopt an attitude of “holy resignation or very holy indifference”²¹⁶ in the face of adversities: “tribulations in themselves certainly cannot be loved”—he conceded; but when they are “considered in their origin—that is, in the providence and divine will that decrees them—they are infinitely pleasant.”²¹⁷ Even when social evils were seen as they were—that is, as evils—no one thought they could be solved once and for all. “The poor should be frequently exhorted to be patient,” Carlo Borromeo told to his priests, for social needs were there to stay.²¹⁸ Besides, the medical, statistical and bureaucratic instruments then available were so rudimentary that early-modern men and women found it pointless to resist social evils. In the face of the plague, physicians were at their wits’ end.²¹⁹ As for pious organizations and public authorities, they could do little more than provide some basic hygienic measures and necessities. Social historians have pointed out that the idea of public welfare can only emerge out of a certain degree of confidence “in the control over chance.”²²⁰ Clearly, this was *not* a diffuse state of mind among early-modern European people, resigned as they were to the perpetual existence of social distress.

The modalities of administering relief that Caravaggio seems to recommend in the *Seven Works of Mercy* break in several ways with the prevailing responses set up by his contemporaries against extreme need. He too, like Carlo Borromeo, was an observer of the world; but his gaze had a

214. Sixtus V, *supra* note 85, at 847. The idea that inequality is inevitable remained for a long time in Catholic social thought, even after Rousseau’s famous rebuttal. I can be found, for example, in Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) (“the condition of things inherent in human affairs must be borne with, for it is impossible to reduce civil society to one dead level. Socialists may in that intent do their utmost, but all striving against nature is in vain”).

215. Sixtus V, *supra* note 85, at 847 (“pauperes [. . .] per virtutem patientiae coronati, digna mercede honorentur”); IMITATIO CHRISTI, *supra* note 93, ch. XIII.4 (“Little by little, through patience and longsuffering, thou shalt conquer by the help of God, rather than by violence and thine own strength of will”).

216. DE SALES, *supra* note 149, at 767 (“Cette union et conformité au bon plaisir divin se fait ou par la sainte resignation ou par la très sainte indifference”), 768 (“La resignation préfère la volonté de Dieu a toutes choses, mais elle ne laisse pas d’aimer beaucoup d’autres choses outre la volonté de Dieu. Or l’indifference est au-dessus de la resignation, car elle n’aime rien sinon pour l’amour de la volonté de Dieu; si que aucune chose ne touche le cœur indifferant, en la presence de la volonté de Dieu”).

217. DE SALES, *supra* note 149, at 762 (“Les peines considérées en elles-mêmes ne peuvent certes être aimées, mais regardées en leur origine, c’est-à-dire en la providence et volonté divine qui les ordonne, elles sont infiniment aimables”).

218. Carlo Borromeo, *Instructiones Predicationis Verbi Dei*, in ACTA ECCLESIAE MEDIOLANENSIS 212 (1582 ed.), at 219 (“Pauperes frequenter ad patientiam cohortabitur”).

219. See, e.g., PERICOLI, *supra* note 66, at 89-90; MOLLAT, *supra* note 19, at 347-8.

220. STEDMAN JONES, *supra* note 6, at 26-27. See also FLEISCHACKER, *supra* note 11, at 7.

special delicacy, which was rare among Tridentine reformers. By setting the scene in an anonymous Neapolitan alley, Caravaggio also resisted the “grand renferment,” expressing instead a persisting confidence in the effectiveness of outdoor relief.²²¹ The poor are helped in their social context, not hidden out of sight. In fact, Pero’s gesture—offering her breast milk to the prisoner through the grating of the window—seems an attempt to overcome physical barriers. The social status of the subjects is also revealing. The benefactors are the kind of people that one could have met in Naples on a random day during Caravaggio’s lifetime: an ordinary woman (Pero), an innkeeper, a simply-dressed man (perhaps an undertaker), a deacon; only the central figure with velvet clothes and a feathered hat (St. Martin) seems to belong to a higher class.²²² Everyone “here and now”²²³—Caravaggio seems to say—is called to and is capable of acts of solidarity. There is no need to establish charitable organizations and be ostentatious about one’s generosity. As Pacelli put it, Caravaggio condemns charity as an “instrument of power” in the hands of the elites, and calls instead for mutual help as a collective exercise.²²⁴ Because the benefactors are ordinary people, the sense of hierarchy usually associated with charity between unequals is obliterated: the innkeeper and the pilgrim, the woman and the prisoner, belong to the same class.²²⁵ To be sure, Caravaggio did not harbor an egalitarian view of society: he was attracted by—and actively demanded for himself—the exterior signs of respect due to the upper classes.²²⁶ But as it often happens in our incoherent minds, next to this penchant for honor laid a non-hierarchical understanding of charitable activities.

EPILOGUE

The elites looked at Caravaggio’s art with suspicious fascination. Caravaggio highly valued his liberty, and while he sought to appease the tastes of his influential patrons,²²⁷ he frequently let his own views prevail.²²⁸

221. FOUCAULT, *supra* note 22, at 56 et ff.

222. *But see* PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 81 (arguing instead that the youth, an allusion to St. Martin of Tours, is a “popular” figure).

223. Bologna, *supra* note 28, at 187 (“vere e proprie tranches de vie colte sul farsi, agite come momenti di esistenza quotidiana—di notte, hic et nunc, in un vero vicolo di città, all’angolo di una prigione”).

224. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 131.

225. *Id.* at 81.

226. Caravaggio’s words to a waiter serving him artichokes in 1604, for example, testify to his touchiness, sense of honor and longing for social recognition: “If I am not mistaken, you damned cuckold, you think you are serving some damned bum”, quoted in LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 276.

227. CALVESI, *supra* note 3, at 59 (“Ma dietro al discorso per la massa, c’è il discorso per i pochi, l’allegoria teologica, la disquisizione dotta”).

228. According to Pacelli, for example, the *Seven Works of Mercy* did not faithfully reflect the activities carried out by the organisation that commissioned the work: the *Pio Monte* devoted most its activities to helping out impoverished aristocrats, but Caravaggio chose to represent humble persons

Pacelli observed that this liberty did not fade “even in the most difficult moments of his life, and despite the characteristics—secular or religious—of his clients.”²²⁹ Some clients perceived Caravaggio’s freedom as a form of irreverence, and rejected his paintings.²³⁰ But overall, Caravaggio’s success among the elites “far outweighed the potentially disruptive effects to decorum.”²³¹ Contemporary Italian noblemen and members of the high clergy all “longed for a work from his hand, for he [had become] Italy’s most famous painter.”²³² The cases of rejection should not be overemphasized, either: the *Death of the Virgin* was quickly bought by Vincenzo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua,²³³ the *Madonna dei Palafrenieri*, in turn, was taken down from St. Peter’s Cathedral only to be bought by Cardinal Scipione Borghese, nephew of the newly-elected Pope, Paul V.²³⁴ Marquises and cardinals remained committed to the moral values of the age, of course, and this made them unsympathetic to radical artistic innovations; at the same time, they were allured by the originality of Caravaggio’s art and eager to exploit the celebrity of his name.

In the artistic world, Caravaggio’s style did not remain unnoticed, but it solicited contrasting responses. During his life, Caravaggio treated many of his colleagues with contempt, and they reciprocated the feeling.²³⁵ After his death, his realism and his use of light and darkness was widely imitated, especially outside of Italy,²³⁶ but his iconographic innovations were followed to a much lesser degree.²³⁷ Pacelli recounts an interesting story as evidence of this oblivion: only a few decades after Caravaggio’s *Seven Works of Mercy* had been completed, the Neapolitan painter Aniello Falcone set to work on a similar topic.²³⁸ Falcone’s painting shows a woman, perhaps a saint, in a sumptuous palace, giving instructions to her servants on how to assist the needy, and supervising the administration of care from her balcony: the distance and hierarchy between benefactor and

instead as the recipients of the acts of benevolence; in addition, the *Pio Monte* ransomed slaves, but this activity is absent from the painting: PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 77, 80.

229. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 135.

230. This was the case of the *Death of the Virgin*, for example; and the *Madonna dei Palafrenieri* remained in St. Peter’s Cathedral only a few days, before it was taken down: Luigi Spezzaferro, *La Pala dei Palafrenieri*, in CARAVAGGIO E I CARAVAGGESCHI 125, 132-37 (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 1974); LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 61-3. An account of the various rejections can be found in LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 182, 186, 240, 250, 306, 335.

231. Olson, *supra* note 29, at 72.

232. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 4; LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 49-51; Ennio Francia, *L’Omaggio degli Ecclesiastici Romani del Seicento all’Arte del Caravaggio*, L’OSSERVATORE ROMANO, Aug. 14, 1985, at 3.

233. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 317-18.

234. Montanari, *supra* note 45, episode 8.

235. BAGLIONE, *supra* note 117, at 138.

236. Evelina Borea, footnotes, in BELLORI, *supra* note 103, at 231-2, n.7.

237. PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 135.

238. *Elemosina di Santa Lucia*, or *Elemosina di Santa Elisabetta*: PACELLI, *supra* note 29, at 135.

beneficiary, which Caravaggio had significantly reduced,²³⁹ was thus reasserted. The history of ideas is not a linear progression, but an irregular path: in the seventeenth century—when the interest in social questions faded²⁴⁰—Caravaggio's dignified understanding of poverty seemed largely forgotten.

Intellectuals and critics, too, reacted in opposite ways to Caravaggio's art. Some were fascinated, but many others—starting with the early biographers²⁴¹—remained disapproving for a long time. French seventeenth-century painter Nicolas Poussin believed that Caravaggio had “come to the world to destroy painting.”²⁴² Stendhal thought that some of Caravaggio's works were rejected because “the kingdom of ugliness had not come, yet.”²⁴³ Some voices dissented: in 1834, for example, French critic and painter Gabriel Laviron proffered words of great appreciation for Caravaggio,²⁴⁴ but enthusiastic comments like these were rare.²⁴⁵ Most intellectuals ignored Caravaggio altogether: in his *Italian Journey*, Goethe spent words of praise for his beloved “Guido” (Reni), but he did not even mention Caravaggio.²⁴⁶ The Lombard painter is equally absent from the 1913 illustrated edition of Giovanni Bosco's *Storia Sacra*, printed after Don Bosco's death by the Salesian publisher.²⁴⁷

Things were starting to change, however. Appreciation for Caravaggio's works, already growing during the first decades of the twentieth century, reached new highs immediately after World War Two.²⁴⁸ Many of these sympathies came from the left. In 1946, from the columns of the Italian communist newspaper *L'Unità*, movie critic Umberto Barbaro declared Caravaggio “the first great modern painter,” and his work “revolutionary.”²⁴⁹ In 1968, *Editori Riuniti*—a publisher “historically linked to the [Italian] Communist Party”²⁵⁰—gave to the press the second

239. MOLLAT, *supra* note 19, at 282.

240. POLANYI, *supra* note 13, at 109.

241. *E.g.*, BAGLIONE, *supra* note 117, at 138; BELLORI, *supra* note 103, at 223, 230-1.

242. L'OPERA COMPLETA DEL CARAVAGGIO 11 (1967).

243. *Id.*, at 12.

244. GABRIEL LAVIRON, LE SALON DE 1834, at 20 (1834).

245. Borea, *in* BELLORI, *supra* note 103, at 211, n.2.

246. JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE, *Italian Journey*, *in* 6 THE COLLECTED WORKS (Princeton Univ. Press 1994) (1816-17).

247. GIOVANNI BOSCO, STORIA SACRA (Libreria Editrice internazionale della S.A.I.D. Buona Stampa, 1913) (1847). This illustrated edition included thirty-six engravings inspired to Reni, Rubens, Poussin and several other painters, but not a single one by Caravaggio. This absence is notable, for not only did François de Sales and Caravaggio live at about the same time, but the painter had even been an unconscious propagator of some (though certainly not all) aspects of Sales' spirituality. It is also true, however, that Caravaggio's melancholy and darkness contrasted sharply with Don Bosco's insistence on joy, and this divergence can explain the omission.

248. LONGHI, *supra* note 2, at 289; Giovanni Previtali, “Introduzione,” *in* LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at XII.

249. Umberto Barbaro, *Ultimissime sul Caravaggio*, L'UNITÀ, Jan. 29, 1946, at 2.

250. Editori Riuniti, “Chi Siamo,” <https://editoririuniti.it/pages/chi-siamo> (“Editori Riuniti è una casa editrice fondata nel 1953 e storicamente vicina al Partito Comunista Italiano”).

Italian edition of Roberto Longhi's seminal book on Caravaggio.²⁵¹ Again on *L'Unità*, in 1984, left critic Dario Micacchi confessed that he had felt a "breathtaking emotion"²⁵² upon entering a room with Caravaggio's three Sicilian paintings.

The other major political force in post-World War Two Italy, the Catholics, condemned the man for his violent actions, but in growing numbers praised the artist for his genius. Already in 1922, the *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali*—the Catholic journal of social sciences founded by Giuseppe Toniolo—favorably reviewed an academic contribution which praised seventeenth-century culture in general, and Caravaggio's realism in particular.²⁵³ After the war, Catholics' interest in Caravaggio grew stronger. In 1951, the *Osservatore Romano*—the newspaper published by the Holy See—rejoiced for the success of the recent Milan exposition, while simultaneously defending the Catholicism of this "marvelous artist" against secular interpretations coming from the left.²⁵⁴ Some Catholics, it is true, remained skeptical. Writing in the same year on *La Civiltà Cattolica*—the authoritative Jesuit magazine—writer and philosopher Giuseppe Rovella did not partake in the general enthusiasm; in fact, while grudgingly conceding that Caravaggio was a "genius of painting,"²⁵⁵ Rovella considered his originality a mere byproduct of his "intolerance",²⁵⁶ "haughtiness and insolence."²⁵⁷ But these voices were isolated. As progressive forces within the Church gained more visibility at the time of the Second Vatican Council,²⁵⁸ more and more Catholics stood in awe of Caravaggio's art.²⁵⁹

This renewed interest in Caravaggio occurred at about the same time as when European welfare states were being built or consolidated. A "golden age of welfare"²⁶⁰ probably never existed anywhere, but for many European

251. ROBERTO LONGHI, *CARAVAGGIO* (Editori Riuniti 1968); Vittorio Sgarbi, lecture at Salsomaggiore Terme (June 11, 2010), video available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gwz5PQ_d3YY ("Guarda caso la monografia di Roberto Longhi, il grande critico, è pubblicata dalla casa editrice del partito comunista, Editori Riuniti").

252. Micacchi, *supra* note 115, at 13 ("Quando ho parlato di emozione che strozza il respiro nella sala dei tre immensi Caravaggio non è per retorica: andate a Siracusa a verificarlo").

253. *Article Review: Il Seicento nella Storia della Civiltà e dell'Arte Italiana by Arduino Colasanti*, 94 *RIVISTA INTERNAZIONALE DI SCIENZE SOCIALI E DISCIPLINE AUSILIARIE* 50 (1922) ("contro il manierismo [. . .] il seicento reagì col ritorno alla realtà e con l'imitazione della natura").

254. *Una Tessera al Caravaggio?*, *L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO*, May 17, 1951, at 4.

255. G. Rovella, *Considerazioni sull'Arte a Proposito del Caravaggio*, 102 *LA CIVILTÀ CATTOLICA* 396, 403 (1951).

256. *Id.*, at 404 ("La stessa intolleranza, che modellò tutta la sua vita, vedremo modellare tutta la sua arte").

257. *Id.*, at 403 ("In mezzo agli schiavi dell'idolo cinquecentesco [. . .], si diporta con tanta alterigia e insolenza che finalmente i colleghi son ridotti a difendersi ricorrendo ai tribunali").

258. Enrico Segnana, *Dossetti, il Concilio e la "Chiesa dei Poveri"*, 33 *IL MARGINE* 20, 31 (2013).

259. *E.g.*, Valerio Mariani, *Caravaggio*, *L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO*, June 30-July 1, 1973, at 3; Lorenzo Brancaloni, *Un Capolavoro del Caravaggio di Prossima Attualità*, *L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO*, Aug. 29, 1973, at 3.

260. JEAN FOURASTIE, *LES TRENTE GLORIEUSES. OU, LA REVOLUTION INVISIBLE DE 1946 A 1975*

countries the period that immediately preceded and followed World War Two was nevertheless one of expansion in social policies. Even in Italy, where Christian-Democratic coalition governments forestalled significant welfare reforms for at least two decades, ambitious reform plans were being drafted, preparing the way for subsequent policy changes.²⁶¹ It is perhaps not a coincidence that the art of Caravaggio, so attentive to the needy, received almost unanimous approval in this moment of political ferment. His universal message of active compassion, equality and human worth tugged at the heartstrings of mid twentieth-century men and women: they had possibly realized that Caravaggio, like the modern welfare state, had followed ordinary people "from cradle to grave."²⁶²

The revival of Caravaggio has not always been historically accurate. Gabriel Laviron was not just a painter, but a revolutionary socialist who fought in the 1848 revolution and in defense of Garibaldi's Roman Republic.²⁶³ His political ideology drove his interpretation. Claiming, as he did, that Caravaggio "invented the painting of the people, the painting that can be understood and judged easily by everybody"²⁶⁴ is an imprecise account of the learned allusions and hidden meanings that abound in Caravaggio's art. Nor was Laviron alone in his effort to attribute Caravaggio's legacy to one particular school. Overlooking the profound religiosity of his art, some commentators took Caravaggio for a precocious existentialist. Even today, adjectives borrowed from other epochs and contexts—"plebeian,"²⁶⁵ "proletarian,"²⁶⁶ "communist"²⁶⁷—are too often used to describe Caravaggio's subjects and sensitivities. We should be careful not to make the mistake of projecting upon Caravaggio ideas that were not his own. But with this caveat in mind, I think we can safely say that Caravaggio in some respects anticipated the social thought of centuries

(1979).

261. MAURIZIO FERRERA ET AL., ALLE RADICI DEL WELFARE ALL'ITALIANA: ORIGINI E FUTURO DI UN MODELLO SOCIALE SQUILIBRATO 234-5, 330 (2012).

262. Winston Churchill, Address of March 21, 1943 (committing to the implementation of the Beveridge plan: "you must rank me and my colleagues as strong partisans of national compulsory insurance for all classes for all purposes from the cradle to the grave").

263. Béatrice Bouvier, *Laviron, Gabriel*, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, <https://www.inha.fr/fr/ressources/publications/publications-numeriques/dictionnaire-critique-des-historiens-de-l-art/laviron-gabriel.html> (updated July 12, 2010).

264. GABRIEL LAVIRON, LE SALON DE 1834, at 20 (1834) ("Ses ouvrages fixèrent puissamment l'attention de toutes les classes de la société, et de celles-là surtout qui d'ordinaire sont le plus indifférentes au succès d'une œuvre d'art. En effet il avait trouvé la peinture du peuple, la peinture qui peut être facilement comprise et jugée de tous"); also quoted in Italian by Bologna, *supra* note 28, at 177.

265. LONGHI, *supra* note 38, at 58, 61; LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 186, 247, 248.

266. LANGDON, *supra* note 29, at 176; FAGIOLO DELL'ARCO, *supra* note 30, at 37 ("Soltanto Ruzante è riuscito a unire in nome del gran tema della fraternità popolare tutte le passioni del sottoproletariato. La sua epica contrazione anticipa Caravaggio").

267. VITTORIO SGARBI, IL PUNTO DI VISTA DEL CAVALLO: CARAVAGGIO 11 (2014) ("Caravaggio è un pittore comunista: egli riscatta nell'arte i più umili perché è convinto che il regno dei cieli appartenga a loro").

to come. The dignified view of the downtrodden, the compassionate gaze with which he embraced all humanity, the call for a spontaneous and non-hierarchical way of administering relief: these are not ex-post projections. Understood in this light, Caravaggio's art—in conjunction with other cultural manifestations of the time, such as the societal attribution of “vices” in the writings of Juan Luis Vives—raises the question of whether the seeds of Polanyi's “discovery of society” were planted *before* the nineteenth century. My understanding is that they were—although of course, during Caravaggio's lifetime, this ethical view was still embryonic, uncommon and replete with ambiguities.

However compassionate towards the needy and innovative in his implicit proposals for social reform, Caravaggio did not imagine anything close to the modern welfare state. The subjects that Caravaggio charges with the task of carrying out relief are single persons, not public institutions. For this reason, Caravaggio's approach to social questions can be read as a return to medieval times, when poverty relief was the moral responsibility of individuals.²⁶⁸ On the other hand, the odd mix, in Caravaggio's paintings, of a compassionate gaze and an absent State seems to anticipate our own age. Caravaggio remains today more popular than ever: expositions, documentaries and books about his life and artistic production are incessantly placed on the market.²⁶⁹ Meanwhile many Western states, and perhaps Italy more than others,²⁷⁰ have been sliding towards unequal, bureaucratic and highly ineffective forms of welfare, thus leaving even greater space to market actors and private charities.²⁷¹ In response to this institutional process of erosion, more and more people have committed to voluntarism.²⁷² Such a reliance on individual acts of solidarity in the context of a withdrawing State strikes me as evocative of Caravaggio's approach to need, as expressed in the *Seven Works of Mercy*. Caravaggio's art is beautiful and, in his time, it even delivered a socially-progressive message. But for us—women and men of the twenty-first century—the resemblance between our society and a four-centuries-old painting should be a matter of concern.

268. FOUCAULT, *supra* note 22, at 71.

269. Montanari, *supra* note 45 (criticizing the commercialization and elitism of this pseudo-cultural production).

270. FERRERA ET AL., *supra* note 261, at 7-16; MUEHLEBACH, *supra* note 14, at 37.

271. KATHLEEN THELEN, HOW INSTITUTIONS EVOLVE: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SKILLS IN GERMANY, BRITAIN, THE UNITED STATES, AND JAPAN 13-4 (2004).

272. MUEHLEBACH, *supra* note 14, at 10. Voluntarism, writes Muehlebach, allows not only the needy to get goods and services that the State is unable or unwilling to provide; it also helps the volunteer reinforce his or her sense of belonging and fulfillment; and society as a whole to achieve some “collective meaning [. . .] at a moment when the social fabric is strained”: *id.* at 22.

APPENDIX OF PICTURES



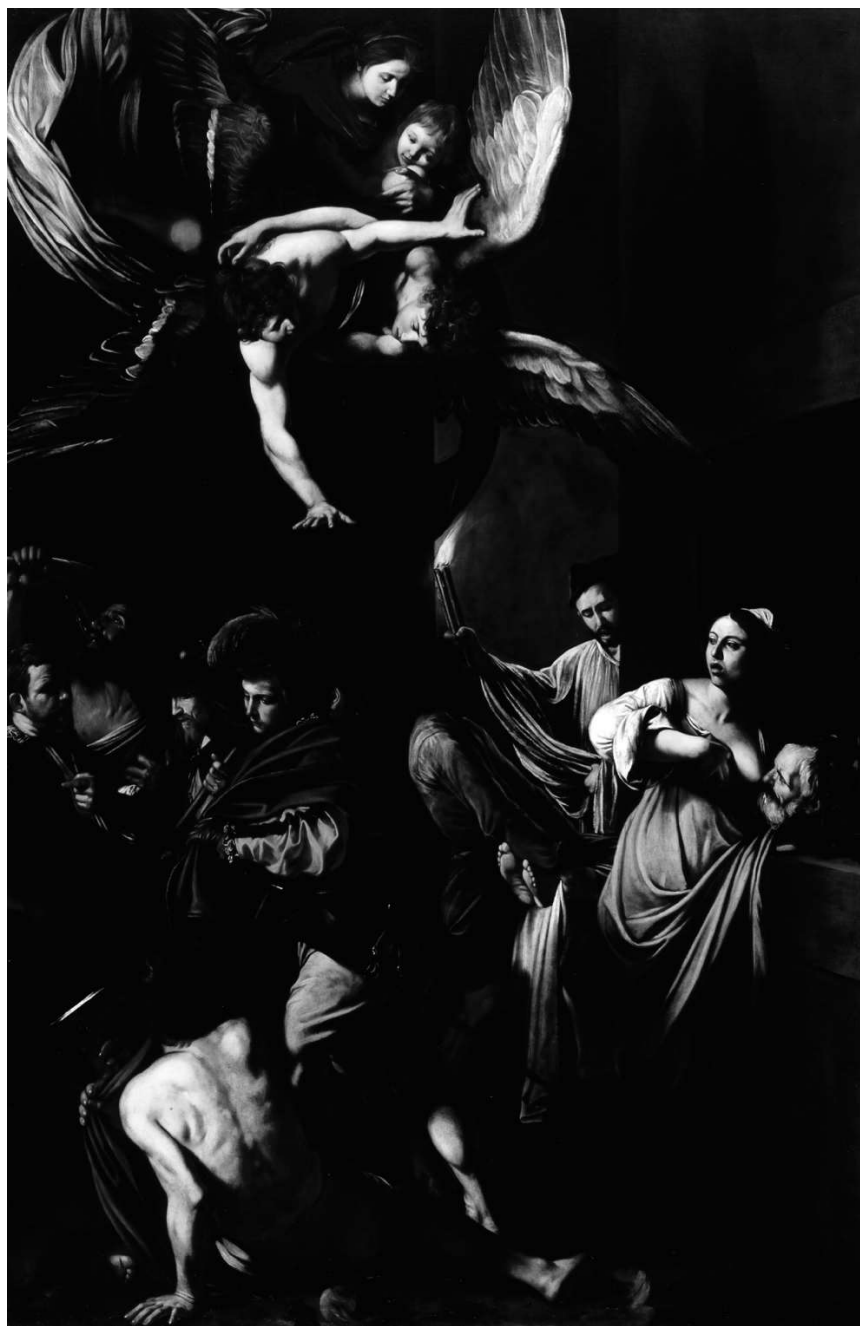
Michelangelo Merisi ("Caravaggio"), *Taking of Christ*, 1602, on indefinite loan to the National Gallery of Ireland from the Jesuit Community, Leeson St., Dublin, who acknowledge the kind generosity of the late Dr. Marie Lea-Wilson; photo © National Gallery of Ireland.



Michelangelo Merisi (“Caravaggio”), *Taking of Christ* (Detail), 1602, on indefinite loan to the National Gallery of Ireland from the Jesuit Community, Leeson St., Dublin, who acknowledge the kind generosity of the late Dr. Marie Lea-Wilson; photo © National Gallery of Ireland.



Michelangelo Merisi ("Caravaggio"), *Supper at Emmaus*, 1606, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, Italy; photo © Pinacoteca di Brera.



Michelangelo Merisi (“Caravaggio”), *The Works of Mercy*, 1607, Pio Monte della Misericordia, Naples, Italy; photo © Luciano Pedicini / Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia.



Michelangelo Merisi ("Caravaggio"), *The Works of Mercy* (Detail), 1607, Pio Monte della Misericordia, Napoli, Italy; photo © Luciano Pedicini / Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia.



Michelangelo Merisi ("Caravaggio"), *Madonna of the Rosary*, 1607, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria; photo © KHM-Museumsverband.



Michelangelo Merisi ("Caravaggio"), *Madonna of the Rosary* (Detail), 1607, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria; photo © KHM-Museumsverband.