

## Summary

Every face is structured in a symmetrical order. This research paper explores the consequences of this formal specificity on the construction of the portrait in the particular context of the European Renaissance. It starts with a critique of the neuropsychological approach that makes the asymmetry and the distinction between the two sides of the face in the portrait the mere expression of a particular physiognomy. Through a reflection on the aesthetic categories of symmetry and asymmetry in the order of representation, the research demonstrates the interest of these concepts for the understanding of the formal and philosophical issues specific to the construction of portraits. It also reveals the richness and complexity of meanings assigned to symmetry and asymmetry in the cultural cosmos of the Renaissance, these ones sometimes going against the grain of contemporary representations. The final section is devoted to the secular theological symbolism distinguishing between the right side and the left side of the face.