# POGGIO BRACCIOLINI AND THE PROBLEM OF HUMANISM

Michael Terrence Jennings

A THESIS

in

The Department

of

History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Sir George Williams University
Montreal, Canada

September, 1971

TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Prefatory remarks

The consistently problematic nature of Poggio's thought, in addition to the sparsity of work done in the field on the problem of nobility, made of this thesis principally an exercise in the finding of "things that one can do nothing about at this stage." There is clearly more work needed on Italian rural nobility than has been accorded it. This is particularly true, however, in any attempt to relate the concept of nobility to the developing social structures of Florence and the rural areas in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The clear need for a general economic history, even by an economist, of the period 1350 to 1450 in Florence cannot be too heavily underscored. One finds oneself running about in a maze of haphazard and incomplete figures, whose relevance is at best unclear, and even whose trustworthiness is open to serious question. The effect, for example, of the dramatic population decline of the early fifteenth century has been for no very apparent reason, ignored by historians in this field. And yet, the developing society of the early fifteenth century was undergoing profound change, and a part of this change was predicated on the short supply of labor in the cities, which in turn was in part a function of the decline in population.

The problem of the transference of commercial activities from the sphere of international trade to that of local exploitation of the contado, both in terms of natural and of human resources, is a problem which remains not only not clearly resolved, but almost untouched.

My acknowledgements are few, because I have always found them tedious when reading other prefaces. My thanks to Professors F. Krantz and J. Laffey for their guidance in this and other work in the past eighteen months. Their incessant haggling over details has hopefully resulted in the completion of a piece of work that much clearer and more complete than would otherwise have been the case. My thanks especially to my wife whose aid, both in labor power and in patience, was indispensable (as it assumedly always is).

## Abstract

This thesis concerns itself with three main problems, which in terms of the paper can be seen as interrelated themes. The development of the concept of nobilitas from medieval to Renaissance societies has been treated as a case of that often seen historical problem of the retention of a formal concept while the matter has been entirely changed. In essence, the feudal noble was aristocratic, military, and religious, while the Renaissance noble was bourgeois, commercial, and lived in cities. The other themes of civic humanism and of the developing Florentine territorial State have been interwoven with this, such that the causative force of social change has been shown to have been at the root of the redefinition of nobilitas.

# I

## Introduction

The development of a "nobility", both as a social rank, and as an iconographic referent,that is, as a broad concept which serves to organize and validate other concepts within the total context of the social ideology, is not peculiar to medieval Europe. Rather, apart from the Roman nobiles and senatorial order and the alemanni of the invading Germanic tribes, this development has been seen in the histories of China, notably in the period of the Warring States, in Japan, where it led to the institution of the shogunate, and in some African tribes. The group of men referred to as "noble" is usually an internally heterogeneous group, but is nonetheless definable in broad terms, as a hereditary rank whose original and principal social function is military. At the same time, it is true that their military activities are usually on behalf of some central authority, that is, the "nobles" themselves are rarely seen to hold central authority, de iure.

The military activities of the nobles are often rewarded by administrative jurisdictions, land, or a combination of both; these originally secondary aspects tend to take on progressively more and more importance. In this way, the truly central attribute of "nobility" can be expressed in terms of the relationship of

nobles to the land, and to the subordinate persons who work that land.

Initially the social position and privileges of the "nobles" are clearly a function of their military activities, and subsequently of their administrative responsibilities; this position and these privileges are, moreover, revocable. With time, however, a hereditary succession to the position becomes customary, and this hereditary aspect is sometimes ratified by law. It is this last aspect which is most often associated with genuine noble status, that is, a "noble" person is one born of noble lineage with a legally defined social position which accords him certain privileges by comparison with those born into non-noble status. That this is the case should not obscure the historically demonstrable parameters of nobility which are visible in its economic position and its administrative-juridical responsibilities, although these are not necessarily ratified by law. Further, the social behavior of nobles and the ideology of nobilitas need close investigation.

Particularly in medieval Europe, a second factor defines the historical development of nobility, that is, the relationship between the military-secular nobility and the authority of religion in society. This relationship is partially obscured by the presence of "nobles" , definable as secular by the criteria noted above, within the religious body. The thesis that a principal dynamic

of medieval society in western Europe, and other societies organized on similar structural principles, can be termed the power-struggle between the religious and military-secular powers seems, despite this confusion of areas, worthy of close attention.[1] This is clearly at issue, in pragmatic terms, in the influence of religious sensibility on the early medieval nobility, in the subordination of its military and violent code to certain ends deemed acceptable by the church, and in the producing from this subordination of the phenomenon of chivalry. Again, this struggle would seem clearly to be at the root of two important "events" of the medieval period, the Crusades and the Investiture Conflict.

The struggle between the religious and military powers in medieval society transformed both, such that nobility was no longer definable in the first instance solely in terms of its military functions, but also by its religious and cultural affiliations, while the church itself took on an increasingly important secular dimension which must be considered as an integral part of the church of the high and late middle ages (c. 1100- c. 1600). It is within this broad tradition that the cultural concept of nobility developed and reached the Renaissance thinkers treated here.

---

[1]This thesis is discussed in the abstract by J. Le Goff: La Civilization de l'Occident Médiéval (Paris, 1964), pp. 319-324; this work is hereafter cited as Le Goff, La Civilization... .

Thus, the formerly clear social basis of nobility becomes more and more dissociated conceptually from nobilitas. In In social terms, late medieval nobility is principally definable as a landlord class.[2] The position of the nobles depends on the rents they receive from their lands, and their leisure is therefore predicated on their economic position. This being the case, we must link the noble culture of the chivalric order, the code of courtly love, with the social realities of serf surplus production and of aristocratic tenure. This kind of relationship is also true of ecclesiastical culture, and, with some modifications which will become clear in the course of the discussion, of scholasticism with which we are here concerned. The dissociation of noble culture and social fact does not, however, represent a simple case of hypocrisy and cannot be usefully analyzed from such a point of view. The power of the religious (what Le Goff terms "la force chamanique") is a real power, particularly in medieval society it is a power which is, in its own right, causative. For our purposes in this work, it is suggested that no meaningful synthetic view of medieval society in general, and of aristocratic "noble" culture in particular, can

---

[2]This thesis was developed by many historians, but perhaps most exhaustively and articulately by Marc Bloch in several works, and principally Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française, 2 vols., (Paris, 1956, revised after Bloch's death by R. Dauvergne); "Sur le passé de la noblesse française: quelques jalons de recherche" in Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale, VIII (1936) 366-78; and Feudal Society. trans. L.A. Manyon, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1968). More recently, the work of Georges Duby follows the line of

be arrived at without considering this religious sensibility.

The problem of the relationship between the social conditions of living and the cultural expression of certain ideals is central here, because we are considering the transformation of a social idea, nobilitas, and this transformation is predicated, in the last instance, on certain kinds of change in the social conditions. The basic argument here involves the tracing of the persistance of the formal concept of "noble" into the mid-fifteenth century, when the actual facts which determined noble status were widely disparate from the medieval situation. Thus, a medieval and aristocratic noble is a very different thing from a Renaissance and bourgeois noble. The term continues to be used, and with reason, because both instances are concerned with the same formal concept of nobilitas.

One of the chief bases of differentiation between the "medieval-aristocratic" and the "Renaissance-bourgeois" nobilities must be seen in the historical process, the rise of commerce and of

---

development noted by Bloch, but is more detailed in its analysis. See in particular, La Société aux XI$^{e}$ et XII$^{e}$ siècles dans la région Mâconnaise (Paris, 1953) and his mature piece, L'Economie Rurale et la Vie des Campagnes dans l'Occident Médiéval (Paris, 1962). Duby's insistence on the exclusive centrality of economic factors represents a significant digression from Bloch's thesis, at least in emphasis. These works hereafter cited as: Bloch, Les caractères originaux..., "Sur le passé...", and Feudal Society; and Duby, Société...mâconnaise, and L'économie rurale... .

urban centers and their impact on men's sensibilities. Further, the development of urban centers is in turn predicated on a transformation in the means of producing goods, that is, on social production. In this sense, if we must consider as essential the link between the chivalric code and serf production of surplus in the medieval setting, we must also link humanist concepts of nobility with the commercial production of surplus wealth in the Renaissance-bourgeois setting. Here, it is clear that the difference between these methods of producing surplus wealth, which alone makes leisure possible, must be seen as one of the causes of the redefinition of nobilitas.

Thus far, two broad historical processes have been outlined, which necessitated the redefinition of the concept under discussion here: the impact of religious sensibilities and the transformation in the method of producing a social surplus of wealth. Both of these, however, represent large-scale social facts which often stand in an unclear relationship to any individual instance. Indeed, in themselves, as historical processes they remain the subject of continuing debate and disagreement among medieval and Renaissance historians. When, however, we begin to analyze them, not on this macrocosmic level as historical processes, but also in their effects, that is, in the manner in which they alter power in society, in their impinging on the development of the "State", in their relationship to each other and to the total body of cultural expression in a society this lack of clarity and consensus becomes endemic.

It is not proposed here to attempt such a synthetic treatment.

The first part of this essay presents a historical analysis of the development and transformation of the concept of nobilitas from the chivalric to the early Quattrocento humanist definitions. It does this by presenting five essential "moments" in the transformation of the concept: 1) chivalric nobility, as it was defined by Andreas Capellanus; 2) the scholastic concept of nobility in Thomas Aquinas; 3) the beginnings of a Renaissance orientation in Dante's expression of the cor gentile; 4) the internalization of nobility as a moral value in Petrarch; 5) the humanist expression of nobility, principally in Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni. The articulations of the changing ideal by these men are the primary focus of the argument in this section, while the social factors upon which they are based are presented in an essentially illustrative capacity.

This analysis is followed by a discussion of the social structure and dynamics of early Renaissance Florence (when Florence becomes "Renaissance" and ceases to be "medieval" is a matter of much dispute; this essay locates the transitional period in the fourteenth century). Here it is argued that the transformation of Florentine society in this period forms the basis for the development of humanist culture. The difference between "Renaissance" and "medieval", then, has to do with the growth of commerce and of the relative power of

urban over rural centers, with their consequent social impact. Florence can, by the second decade of the fifteenth century, be reasonably seen as a "territorial State", one whose social structure is qualitatively different from that of medieval society in general and of the northern "feudal" monarchies in particular, and is predicated upon a certain and necessary transformation in the relationships between men. The transformation is clear when the relationship between the individual and the social group with which he is affiliated is analyzed: thus, the medieval individual identified with and has historically been considered as a part of a relatively small corporate body, in the case of the noble, with his family and his social peers, that is, his class (because as has been seen, his peer-group is defined in part by its relationship to the production of surplus wealth).

The Florentine "individual" of the emerging Renaissance will be defined in this work by the relationship existing between himself and the "city", as that "city" was expressed through its economic and political structures. This "individual" becomes, in one sense, more "Burckhardtian", that is, more readily distinct and separate from his family, his peers, and indeed this heightened individuality is one of the fundamental bases upon which the civic humanists rest their praise of Florentine republicanism. At the same time, it should be noted that he begins to lose progressively more and more of his social "identity", because of his increasing

weakness within the larger framework. In this sense, the city becomes progressively more and more impersonal and arbitrary. This impersonality of the city had not existed in 1100, nor by 1403-04 was it yet recognizable as such, although it was developing more and more clearly even as Bruni was writing his eulogy on Florence. It was not until the mid-century that the process of impersonalization became recognizable. Further, the recognition of it, and of the new relationship it established between the individual and the city, was at first only dimly apparent and poorly articulated. What became more and more apparent was the ideological character of the earlier writings of the period of "civic" humanism, that is, the process of writing to justify morally what was happening in actual fact. There had always been tension between civic humanist ideological representation of Florentine republicanism and the more mundane, less morally idealistic, political and economic reality; however, because both the society and the cultural expression had been simultaneously changing, and because it was felt that what was, was better than what had been before, there was a tendency to idealize the new structures and ideals, and to be intolerant of criticism of them during their period of early development. Eventually, however, this tension became too great, and a reevaluation of the tenets of civic humanism was seen to be necessary, not in order to return to medieval notions, but in order to maintain greater relevance to social fact.

The role of Poggio Bracciolini is central to this

reevaluation, precisely because he grew to maturity in the civic humanist tradition and was among the first to perceive its ideological character. Further, because his writings were widely known in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, his recognition was implicitly of importance for others as well.

The place of Poggio, his work. and the nature of his understanding of the problems we have been discussing constitute the essential "problématique" of this essay. His treatise, Ad Insignem Laude Praestantissimum Virum Gerardum Cumanum de Nobilitate Liber[3] (1439-40) is presented in an edited form, with commentary which places it, in its relationship to the earlier concepts discussed, to the problems of Florentine society, and to the remainder of his work generally (but particularly to the later work). The concept of nobilitas, as it had been redefined by Poggio's predecessors, had become virtually meaningless in mid-fifteenth century Florence. Poggio undertook to redefine it anew, outside of the civic humanist tradition, thus beginning the challenge to that civic spirit from within the urban and civic context which had formerly nourished it. His treatise is analyzed in the concluding part of this essay.

---

[3]This treatise is contained in the Opera Omnia, ed. R. Fubini, 4 vols. (Turin, 1964), I, pp. 64-83; it will hereafter be cited as De Nobilitate All citations of Poggio are from this edition, which incorporates previous editions of his works, without being a critical edition. Such a critical edition is needed.

II

## Nobilitas as a developing concept

The social background of medieval nobility is intimately connected with the decline of the western Roman Empire and the relative strength of "barbarian" invaders of western Europe until well into the tenth century. In the seventh and eighth centuries particularly, the largest volume of trade and therefore of gold and silver currencies, in the Mediterranean world was concentrated in the Arab lands and in Byzantium, where a much higher degree of enterprise and complexity of social structure, than existed in western Europe, made trade more feasible and profitable.[1] The shift in trade away from Rome resulted in a decline of urban civilization in western Europe, and a growing localization of economic and political life.[2] Because of the weakened structure of western society, the centralization of land-holding into a relatively few hands became more

---

[1] Lombard, M.: "Les bases monétaires d'une suprématie économique : L'or musulman du VII^e au XI^e siècles" in Annales E.S.C. (1947), 2, pp.143-160; and see the first chapter of Lopez, R.S. and Raymond, I.: Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World (New York,1955), for some illustrative documents, and particularly the excerpt from The Investigation of Commerce by al-Jahiz (d.864 or 869), pp.27-29 which shows the probable extent of the Muslim trade network. These works hereafter cited as Lombard, "Les bases monétaires..." and Lopez and Raymond, Medieval Trade... .

[2] Volpe, G.: Il Medioevo (Florence,1926), pp.129,130.

commonplace, particularly as one moved further from the urban centers.[3]

The nature of tenure in this process is central to medieval history and to our consideration of nobility. Tenure was basically defined in terms of fief-holding or benefices, accorded either to a man or to the church by a king or lord in return for specific kinds of "service", usually, fighting in the lord's host, and sometimes, administering an area in his name. Church benefices were frequently accorded as well for reasons of conscience and penitence, that is, as pious donations for which no service was exacted.[4]

The concept of service implied the right to temporary usage of the land rather than legal ownership. When the right to such usage was made legally hereditary by the Kiersy capitulary of 877 and its revocability ended, the shift toward localization of power and the establishment of a permanent landholding class was heightened. Localization was still more important because of the confusion of public and private right, because landholding and legal

---

[3]Volpe, Il Medioevo (Florence,1926), p.130 : "La proprietà fondiaria ha subìto un processo di concentramento che, variamente intenso nei varî paesi, in tabeno di essi raccoglie in poche mani tutta o quasi tutta la terra."

[4]Bloch, Feudal Society, I, pp.163-76; Heer, F.: The Medieval World, trans. J. Sondheimer (New York,1962), p.42 ff; Volpe, Il Medioevo, p.134.

jurisdiction were identified with one another.[5]

The group thus defined as possessing a hereditary right to certain lands and labor services from the subordinate men on them in return for military service, simultaneously with jurisdictional rights and privileges over the region, can be termed the noble class of medieval society. This class does not represent an internally homogeneous group; on the contrary, there is a gradation in rank which reflects chiefly the size of the benefice and the rents drawn from it. Further, noble rank is a function of the number of vassals a given lord had thus invested, that is, the number of men owing him military service.

A feudal aristocracy is generally associated with northern Europe (north of the Alps) rather than with Italy, but there was a feudal Italian aristocracy whose organizing principles were entirely similar. This is particularly so after the gradual Carolingian conquest of the Lombard states, and the subsequent investment as

---

[5]Volpe, Il Medioevo : "Diritto pubblico e diritto privato, così, si fondono. Proprietà e giurisdizione coincidono. A questo punto, è pienamente formato quello che si dice feudo. Ogni proprietario e signore si è assimilato ad un pubblico funzionario." (p.137). See also, Bloch, Feudal Society, II, 285-88. Adams, J. du Quesnay: Patterns of Medieval Society (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey,1969), pp.187-90 gives a sample document from a later period, 1351, where the granting of a benefice simultaneously includes expressed jurisdictional powers. Hereafter cited as Adams, Patterns... .

Imperial vassals of the already existing local lords.[6] The extent of localization of power can be seen from the career of Ugo of Provence who, after trying to establish a central, royal house for Italy throughout his lifetime (d. 944 A.D.), was finally forced to accept a position of primus inter pares. The local powers were, moreover, widely spread throughout the former Lombard kingdom, for example, the marquis and duke of Tuscany, the marquis of Ivrea, of Friuli, and the duke of Spoleto. These lords were sufficiently powerful to depose pretenders to an Italian throne throughout the tenth century.[7] In Tuscany, there is reason to believe that the inland areas were dominated by a rural, feudal aristocracy until the mid-twelfth century.[8]

The role of the church in the structure of feudal society has long been noted as crucial, both in terms of imposing certain concepts of "goodness" and "justice", and in its temporal role as the largest feudal landholding noble. The church was, in many senses, a vassal of the Holy Roman Empire during the reign of Otto III (d.1004) and the papacy of Sylvester II, Otto's personal secretary.[9] Coincident with the reformation of the church in this period and the cont-

---

[6] Volpe, Il Medioevo, p. 144

[7] Volpe, Il Medioevo, pp. 143-146

[8] Schevill, F.: Medieval and Renaissance Florence, 2 vols. (New York, 1963), pp. 67-69; hereafter, Schevill, Medieval...Florence.

[9] Volpe, Il Medioevo, pp. 161,162

inuing pious donations, the church became gradually more powerful, such that the investiture struggle can from one point of view be seen as a conflict between feudal vassal and overlord.[10] The ecclesiastical nobility in Italy, however, broke the medieval pattern of a "rural" aristocracy by allying itself with the growing cities against the Imperial magnates.[11] The church in fact pursued this course, easily visible in the reorganization of the monastic orders in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; new monasteries were founded generally on a trade route, or near an urban center.[12]

Central to the establishment of the feudal system as here depicted are the rise of castellanies and the relative weakness of urban centers. The position of the lord dominating the local region from within his fortified castle is crucial: so long as relatively few could afford such establishments, the power of the lord was unchallenge-

---

[10] Le Goff, La Civilization..., pp.130,131. Le Goff periodizes this struggle by the convenient events of the humiliation of the emperor at Canossa (1077) and the arrest of Boniface VIII at Anagni (1303). It should be noted, however, that the investiture struggle represents more than this struggle from a purely secular view. Henry IV went to Canossa because the pope represented the power of a spiritual overlord. Ultimately, the investiture struggle represents chiefly the ascending spiritual authority over the purely secular empire. This is nonetheless inseparable from the rise of the church as a temporal power.

[11] Volpe, Il Medioevo, p.147.

[12] Le Goff,J.: "Apostolats Mendiants et fait urbain dans la France médiévale: L'implantation des Ordres Mendiants" in Annales E.S.C. (1968), 2, pp.335-52; hereafter, Le Goff, "Apostolats Mendiants...".

able because he could not be forced out except by a long siege.[13] Ultimately this also proved to be one of the causes of the decline of feudalism, when the lesser gentry began to build their own fortified places and were able to resist the greater lords.

If the feudal noble is definable by his home, his fief-holding and his jurisdictional authority, he is so more to us than to contemporary observers. By contemporary observation, noble status was chiefly definable by its violent manner of living.[14] The chief role of the noble was warfare, and when there was no longer so desperate a need for incessant warfare, when the Norman, Arab, and Hungarian invasions ended, then the nobles fought amongst themselves until a new external enemy could be found (the Crusades). It is moreover precisely this violence about which we are best informed, because it impressed itself on the minds of contemporary poets and minstrels, and fills their work.

Noble violence did not, however, confine itself to direct warfare. On the contrary, it filled their lives and was the truest expression of their private rights of justice. The beating of the daughters of the Cid is an example of such extra-military violence.[15]

---

[13] Le Goff, J.: La Civilization..., pp.126,127; Bloch, Feudal Society, II, pp.400,401.

[14] Volpe, Il Medioevo, p.189; Bloch, Feudal Society, I, p.125 ff.

[15] Poem of the Cid, trans. W.S.Merwin, in Medieval Epics (New York,1963), pp.559-67.

One could achieve quasi-noble status in society without hereditary right to such status, chiefly by the use of violence. James van Artevelde, a bourgeois merchant and gangster-type, rose to rule much of Flanders throughout many years, despite the fact that there was a genuine aristocracy in the area. It was noted at the time that the chief reason for van Artevelde's rise was his violent and rapacious character.[16] Further, one could rise to higher status by virtue of one's prowess in military combat than the rank within nobility accorded by birth. Bertrand du Guesclin, son of a minor rural noble, whose lands were too small to support his family and who therefore became an adventurer, rose to become Constable of France and Duke of Molina, perhaps the most powerful man in France in the period 1350-1380. His chief attribute was that he was an indomitable warrior.[17] The entire theme of Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" revolves around the problem of accepting the ultimate validity of physical violence.[18]

---

[16] Froissart, J.: The Chronicles of Jean Froissart, trans. Lord Berner, ed. G. and W. Anderson (London,1963), pp.18,19 et passim; hereafter cited as Froissart, Chronicles... .

[17] Adams, Patterns..., pp.173 ff.

[18] Chaucer, G.: "The Knight's Tale" in The Canterbury Tales, in F.N.R. Robinson's edition, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston, 1961); see 11.875-947; 975-1000; and particularly the long battle scene between the brothers Arcite and Palamon, 11.2484-2966.

It seems likely, moreover, that the violent and heroic picture of the feudal aristocracy can be largely accepted as factual.[19] This would seem more easily acceptable only if the emphasis on the centrality of violence is maintained. The noble was educated chiefly in the arts of warfare and hand-to-hand combat, and this education occupied most of his early years. Every noble was expected to be proficient in warfare, with the really outstanding individuals receiving rewards and royal favor.[20] It is perhaps this last connection which justifies the emphasis on war-training by nobles, that they could maintain and increase their holdings and therefore rise in their society.

One of the most clearly dramatic evidences of this dominance of violence can be seen in the universality in noble ranks of the commitment to private vengeance, the blood feud.[21] Under the accepted customary rules of vengeance, satisfaction did not require that the actual murderer of one's kin be slain, but rather any member of his family was deemed sufficient. Justice was considered the private responsibility of the clan or individual wronged, and exactions might

---

[19] Bloch, "Sur le passé...", pp.368-73; Feudal Society, II, pp.294,295.

[20] Adams, Patterns..., pp.187-90; the Earl of Lancaster received the title of Duke for his military feats, together with increased revenues and fiefs from the king.

[21] Bloch, Feudal Society, II, pp.125 ff.

be made back and forth for years. This habit was ultimately one of the primary reasons for the decline of the feudal aristocracy.

The concept of private vengeance was an expression of the idea of "honor", thought to be typically noble, and typically reflected in the clan's private right of hereditary fiefholding, military life, justice, and private financial responsibilities. It is the concept of "honor", moreover, which brings together many of the disparate actions and attributes of nobilitas into a coherent pattern. Honor was a reflection of birth after the twelfth century and was accessible only, or primarily, to those born into a noble family.[22] Through the thirteenth century, more and more prerogatives were legally defined as noble and hereditary; ultimately, there was a whole body of law relating to noble status and differing from laws relating to non-noble status which clearly distinguished them from one another.[23]

Aristocratic honor remains, however, a difficult term to define with any precision. Economically, it is based on the noble's

---

[22]Cases noted by Adams, Patterns..., pp.194 ff indicate the exception rather than the rule.

[23]Bloch, Feudal Society, II,pp.320-329: a peace ordinance of Frederick Barbarossa in 1152 forbade peasants to carry the lance and sword, and named as knights those whose fathers had been knights; in 1187, peasants were forbidden to have themselves knighted; during the 13th century, monarchs arrogated to themselves a monopoly for creation of new knighthoods.

privileged position, in that he receives surplus goods from the agricultural produce without any personal responsibility to aid in the cultivation; at the same time, large parts of noble income are clearly related more to booty and looting than to exactions from serfs. In either case, "income" is principally a function of his birth and military education. It is therefore not surprising to see one of its chief reflections in the vendetta, and another in the tournament.[24] Even when it ultimately came under attack in Europe, the concept of private justice survived in the form of duelling until very late; indeed, affaires d'honneurs have been known in the twentieth century, demonstrating the tenacity of the concept.

We have tried to define early medieval nobility thus far in terms of the nobles' relationship to their society. Nobility was a hereditary, legally defined position in society, dependent on military activities as a functional basis, and land tenure and serf production of surplus agricultural goods as an economic basis; their social behavior was demonstrably violent, and this violence formed the core of nobiliar honor. That which most clearly demonstrates the stratification of nobilitas, however, is the class consciousness of the aristocratic group, that is, their creation of a separate cultural expression suited to their vision of themselves and what they perceived

---

[24] Heer, The Medieval World, p.47; 157 ff; Stenton, D.M.: English Society in the Early Middle Ages (Middlesex, England, 1965), pp.81 ff.

as their role, and capable of distinguishing them qualitatively from the lower orders of their society. There are two aspects of this culture which developed separately and seem to have had quite different import: the concept of chivalry, and the "art of courtly love". There is nonetheless a clear alliance between them, in their intent to ratify the noble way of life.

Chivalry connoted certain inter-related concepts, most notably courtoisie, and a little later, prudhommie. It was associated with courtly manners, which were at once more polite and more extravagant than was demanded in normal personal intercourse; it attached to itself the idea of "Woman" as gentle, fair, honorable, and generally beyond reproach. Its source however, seems to have been in a union of military and religious sensibility, and it therefore involved as well attendance at church ceremonies, strict observance of religious ritual, prayer, and reception of the sacraments.[25] The religious bias of chivalry can be seen in the imposition by the church of rules over the conduct of war and later over the savagery of the tournaments. The ascendancy of religious over simply noble sentiment,

> is represented as a victory of the Church over the violence of the feudal epoch, which became a little modified, somewhat turned towards specific goals of a much higher sort; at the

---

[25] Bloch, Feudal Society, II, pp. 306-09; Heer, Medieval World, pp. 157 ff; Myers, A.R.: England in the Late Middle Ages (Middlesex, England, 1969), pp. 154-55 et passim, hereafter, Myers, England... .

> very time when even the Church was yielding to the knightly and warlike spirit, it added to chivalry the path of the soul's salvation; and of the enjoyment of the land, preached pilgrimages and crusades, encouraged and rewarded the monastic-knightly Orders which were added to the higher, more exclusively religious, Orders...[26]

It is in this sense that the influence of the church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries must be seen, apart from the church's increasingly powerful position as a feudal landlord. The Investiture Struggles represent equally a real drive on the part of the church to revive the Christian element in Christendom, an element informed by the Christian ethics of the gospel of St. Matthew, as well as the already noted struggle between feudal vassal and overlord. It is the rise of the great monastic orders of the eleventh and twelfth centuries which forms the foundation for the subsequent rejuvenation of "culture" on a broad scale in the west.[27] Chivalry then registers this integration

---

[26] Volpe, Il Medioevo, pp. 189-90: "Essa rappresenta come una vittoria della Chiesa su la violenza dell'età feudale, che viene po'attenuata, un po'rivolta verso fini determinati e più altri; nel tempo stesso che anche la Chiesa indulge allo spirito cavalleresco e guerriero, addita ai cavallieri la via della salvezza dell'anima e dei godimenti terreni, predica pellegrinaggi e crociate, incoraggia e riconosce Ordini monastico-cavallereschi che si aggiungono agli altri Ordini più propriamente religiosi..." .

[27] Le Goff, La Civilization..., p. 113. He notes, in particular, the Cluniacs; it is in the twelfth century as well that the Dominican and Franciscan orders rise, and ally themselves with the universities in the urban centers.

of religious sentiment into the feudal ethos, the rise of church investiture and the kind of monastico-chivalric orders, for example, the Teutonic knights, noted by Volpe, whose aims are not clearly definable in the secular terms noted in the first part of this chapter.

The second order of noble culture mentioned is that of "courtly love". This is a development similar to chivalry in its effect of civilizing the barbarous feudal order of western Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries, and it too partakes of a religious orientation. The rise of the cult of the Woman in feudal Europe is remarkable and unexplainable other than by invoking the religious sentiment of devotion to the Virgin Mary, the "Mother of God", who becomes the mystical symbol of the goal of the noble life, its source and inspiration.[28] The love-lyrics of Provence are the first representation of this spirit, and they create a genre which is received everywhere, unexplainably unless the ascendency of religious sentiment is accepted. It is in fact the rise of women in this particular sense which became the truest iconographic referent of nobility in official court society.

An aspect of this courtly culture which needs much emphasis is its class consciousness, its clear expression of the inseparability of social class and moral values. In this connection, a useful treatise

---

[28]Auerbach, E.: Dante: Poet of the Secular World, trans. R. Manheim (Chicago,1961), p.25. This work is hereafter cited as Auerbach, Dante... .

is The Art of Courtly Love, by Andreas Capellanus, of whom little is known except that he was a court chaplain, probably not of noble birth, to Eleanor of Aquitaine ( wife of Louis VII of France and subsequently of Henry II of England ).[29] In this work, there are a series of eight dialogues which are given as examples of typical courtly love problems. The content of these dialogues shows a clearly class-structured orientation. In the second dialogue, a bourgeois proposes love to a noblewoman. He admits that it is generally hopeless to attempt such love across the class barrier of birth, but suggests that nobility is most truly a function of personal worth and good acts, and that he himself is therefore noble in that friends will give testimony to his good character. The noblewoman refuses his love precisely over the issue of noble versus non-noble birth, arguing that it makes no difference

---

[29]The book is therefore to be used here as a model. It dates from c.1184 which is still the height of the chivalric order, although it is already beginning to cede its primacy to the rising ,but not yet developed, urban culture of scholasticism (Le Goff, La Civilization..., p.113). At the same time, the work has the advantage of presenting contradictory evidence internally, making it useful also as a criticism of the tradition. Further, Capellanus was not, from this work at least, a peculiarly profound or obscure thinker, and his accessibility, together with the obviously practical intent of the work (written for a nephew) makes it fairly reliable historical evidence concerning the thought patterns of his age and class. The edition used is Capellanus, A., The Art of Courtly Love, trans. J.J. Parry (New York, 1959); hereafter cited as Capellanus, Courtly Love.

whether his character is good or not, because a good bourgeois is still lower than, and therefore unfit to love, a good noblewoman.[30] In the fourth dialogue, it is true, a nobleman proposes love to a woman of bourgeois rank, and justifies his action to her (here the bourgeoise brings up the question of class) by noting a historical example of marriage into a lower rank within the same class, that is, Eleanor of Aquitaine's divorce from King Louis VII to marry Prince Henry of England (later Henry II) solely on the basis of good character which cancelled the question of birth.[31] This represents, however, an isolated contradiction within the text, and is probably a reflection of the necessity of maintaining at least superficially a Christain point of view which is contrary to such rigid class structure. Indeed, such use of Christian doctrine is clearly at issue in the eighth dialogue, between higher nobles, the man being a prince of the church. In his defense, the churchman argues that the faithful must attend the words of the minister and not his actions which, being human,must be imperfect, and he refers to the gospel in his support.[32] In fact,

---

[30]Capellanus, Courtly Love, pp.45-53.

[31]Capellanus, Courtly Love, p.66. It is notable that the example is within a class, such that the gradations of rank within the class are portrayed as singularly important.

[32]He does not specify which gospel and I assume Matthew 23: 2,3 is meant : "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (although the intent of the passage is not according to the churchman's interpretations, since this is followed by Matthew 23: 13-29, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!...). Biblical citations are to King James edition. For this dialogue, see pp.108-41.

the social hierarchy has nothing whatever to do with real accomplishments. Rather, class in the courtly code began with birth; once born nobly, one had to act accordingly and thus fulfill one's destiny virtuously; but no one was expected to be noble unless he were born so. Class structure was, moreover, rigidly defined : 1) great noblemen, princes of the church, and peers of the realm, 2) nobles of a lower level, 3) clerics, 4) bourgeois.[33]

The class consciousness of the code is, moreover, intimately connected to the inner argument concerning the nature of true love, that is, courtly love : the commands of love reflect the aristocratic intent of the concept because they demand a manner of living governed by an aristocratic code of morality.[34] Liberality is a prime requirement on both sides, because it must be demonstrated that no taint of worldliness mars the lover's character. Love is forbidden when it

---

[33]Capellanus, Courtly Love, p.35; at a later point, he re-orders the classification: "a clerk is considered to be the most noble class by virtue of his sacred calling, a nobility which we agree comes from God's bosom and is granted to him by the Divine Will" (p.142); he cites Zechariah 3:8 as his authority for this.

[34]Capellanus, Courtly Love, pp.81,82: The rules of love as given by Eros to a lover: "I, Thou shalt avoid avarice like the deadly pestilence and shalt embrace its opposite; II, Thou shalt keep thyself chaste for the sake of her whom thou lovest; III, Thou shalt not knowingly strive to break up a correct love-affair that someone else is engaged in; IV, Thou shalt not choose for thy love anyone with whom a natural sense of shame forbids thee to marry; V, Be mindful completely to avoid falsehood; VI, Thou shalt not have many who know of thy love-affair; VII, Being obedient in all things to the commands of ladies, thou shalt ever strive to ally thyself to the service of Love; VIII, In giving and receiving love's solaces let modesty be ever present; IX, Thou shalt speak no evil; X, Thou shalt not be a

causes shame, clearly a reference to class structure and solidarity. The ascendency of the female is at its height, and one had to be willing to die for her according to the convention of courtly love poetry. Her will is unchallengeable. The male role is given as that of warrior-provider, servant, and courtier.[35]

The minute regulation of conduct (lovers cannot see each other often, both to avoid scandal and to increase the suffering associated with true love) approaches the Christian code at many points and is, as we have seen, partially explained by sophisticated manipulation of biblical texts. The connection is clearer when it is remembered that the code is allied to that of chivalry, and therefore to the Christianization of the noble way of life. Indeed, the woman as the object of love, despite the clearly sexual implications, is ultimately a surrogate Virgin Mary, the uniting symbol of the noble virtues and the divine life.

---

revealer of love-affairs; XI, Thou shalt be in all things polite and curteous; XII, In practicing the solaces of love, thou shalt not exceed the desires of the lover." ; a longer list, given by "the golden parrot" in King Arthur's court, whose import is similar, is found on pp.184-86.

[35]Capellanus, Courtly Love, pp.151-53. The stress on courage is clearly noble; the importance of secrecy attested to throughout seems to suggest the defensive hiding of the facts from the woman's husband, but this motive was probably subordinate to secrecy for its own sake, that is, to heighten the mystery of the affair. It must be remembered that the tradition ideally represents the mystic reality of noble life.

The very peculiar third book of The Art of Courtly Love is a revealing document for the clerical pattern of thought in this period.[36] Thus, the book presents two diametrically opposed opinions, neither of which should necessarily be dismissed outright, since the fact of opposition provides a good basis for interpretation. Capellanus lists objections to the courtly code in this third book: that it is anti-social, alienating a man from his neighbors and potential supporters; that it impoverishes men by their practice of largesse and thus prevents further practice; that it destroys a man's reputation among wise men, causes personal embarrassment, leads to un-Christian practices (citing Solomon's idols in I Kings, 11:1-10), and that it is more often than not mere lechery, having nothing whatever to do with either love or nobility.[37] Further,

> Love, moreover, regularly leads men to deadly, inescapable warfare and does away with treaties of perpetual peace.

---

[36] In the sense in which Marc Bloch argues we should consider historical evidence: we must examine unintentional evidence, that is, evidence which is not primarily formal, or whose formality is not self-intended to be historical. Thus, for example, we would rather have a few chancery papers directing officials than all the newspapers of 1938 and 1939, in order to come to an appreciation of the origins of the second world war. Moreover, unintentional evidences, when carefully examined, reveal what official interpretations cannot reveal, that is, the mind at work within and the reasons behind social conventions, not perceivable in their formal enactments. See M. Bloch: The Historian's Craft, trans. P. Putnam (New York, 1953), pp. 62,63; 89; 103,104

[37] Capellanus, Courtly Love, pp. 188-195

> Often, too, it overthrows great cities and mighty fortresses and the safest of castles, and changes the good fortune of wealth into the evil fortune of poverty, even though a man may not give away everything that he has; and it drives many to commit crimes which they must atone for...[38]

There are social commitments inherent in these criticisms, commitments to social solidarity, to the value of wealth by comparison with the Christian poverty of a St. Francis of Assisi, to a conservatism based on a sense of communal responsibility. Moreover, Capellanus indicates Cicero's De Amicitia as his inspiration for these criticisms, and his reliance on Cicero is indeed quite marked.[39] In fact. the only criticism which is not from Cicero is the religious one, implicating love in the elevation of false idols.[40]

---

[38] Capellanus, Courtly Love, p. 196

[39] In references to Capellanus' criticisms above, cf. De Amicitia, IX, 32: "Ab his qui pecudum ritu ad voluptatem omnia referunt longe dissentiunt: nec mirum. Nihil enim altum, nihil magnificum ac divinum suspicere possunt, qui suas omnes cogitationes abiecerunt in rem tam humilem tamque contemptam." And again, De Amicitia, IX, 32: "Nam si utilitas amicitias conglutinaret, eadem comutata dissolveret." See further, De Amicitia, X, 35, on this theme, and the seventh chapter entire. References to the De Amicitia are to the E.S. Shuckburgh edition (London, 1961).

[40] Even this is based, in Capellanus, on a concrete situation, that is, Solomon's pride. Relevant to this is Cicero's discussion of the difficulties of friendship between social unequals, in De Amicitia, XV, 52; XXIV, 89 ff. Further, Cicero, too, relates the genuine amicitia to heaven (De Amicitia, XXVII, 104), and thus, Solomon's procedure would doubtless have been condemned by Cicero as well. There seems to be no reason for assuming that Capellanus would have missed this.

Capellanus' critique of the courtly-love tradition represents precisely an attack on its ideological character. His criticisms are directed against the key appendages of the code, and particularly its use of Christian doctrinal texts merely as an excuse for lechery. His rejection of its violence challenges a central concept of the ethos of medieval nobilitas. Particularly revealing is his attack on largesse and his assumption of some kind of broad social commitment in a human community. His invocation of Cicero is significant in this regard, as it is Cicero who would later become the spokesman for civic sentiment, in the writings of the fifteenth century civic-humanists.

Interpreting the inner contradictions of the work, Capellanus may simply have been expressing a caveat to the official moral position of the church; it might represent the personal opinion of the author based on his own experiences at court, or what he knew of others; or it might be an example of medieval casuistry, attempting to reconcile irreconcilable opposites, or even merely to oppose them with no attempt at reconciliation. It does not seem possible to judge from the text itself which is meant, and not enough is known of Capellanus to enable us to judge on the basis of biographical information. In any case, one fact seems clearly established, that Capellanus recognized the rationalizing technique of the tradition, and some at least of its social effects; nor is there any reason to suppose

that Capellanus was alone in this recognition.[41]

Shortly after Capellanus, and even during his lifetime, the social world of medieval Europe was undergoing dramatic change; this change was most rapid in the period 1150 to 1250, a period which is noted for the "commercial revolution" and for the re-emergence of urban civilization in western Europe.[42] The rise of the importance of

---

[41] It seems logical to me that if Capellanus, a priest and reporter of conventional thoughts, could realize this, that is, that the courtly tradition was at least in part rationalization, then it must have been a fairly widespread opinion. None of Capellanus' opinions elsewhere are either original or startling, and there therefore seems no reason to assume that this section should be original, while the remainder is not.

[42] An exact periodizing of this phenomenon would be quite difficult and not especially relevant to the problems of this particular essay. The rise of cities is generally noted first in Italy, and is dated c. 1100, see Rörig,F.: The Medieval Town,trans. D. Bryant (London, 1967), p. 16. This date is somewhat later than most estimates. Renouard,Y.: Les Hommes d'Affaires Italiens du Moyen Age (Paris, 1949) stresses the tenth century generally in this connection, although he argues that Venice might be so considered from some point in the ninth century (pp 14 ff). G. Luzzatto: An Economic History of Italy from the fall of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, trans. P. Jones (London, 1961), notes commercial legislation as early as 715 and dates the general revival in the late tenth century (pp. 27,28; 47,48). R. Cessi: "Venice to the eve of the fourth crusade" in The Cambridge Medieval History (Cambridge, England, 1966), IV, pp. 250-274, dates the revival of the Venetian trade network from the beginning of the ninth century. Le Goff, La Civilization..., pp. 102 ff tends to argue that while one can view this process as a revival, any notion which sees medieval social structure and urbanization as mutually exclusive would be highly misleading; he suggests rather that we should see urban centers as becoming merely proportionally more significant from the twelfth century; he further does not accord Italy a separate periodization.

urban centers as sources of revenues, by creating an alternative to the exclusively feudal method of production of surplus, undermined the structure of feudal society. In fact "pure" feudalism had largely disappeared in western Europe by the mid-thirteenth century.[43] The rise of "urban culture" has been noted as receiving its main impetus in this period, 1200-1250;[44] the alliance of this movement with the episcopal and monastic centers is particularly important, not only in cultural terms as forming the basis for scholasticism, but in political terms as well. A fundamental referent of urban culture is its predominantly bourgeois character, differing from the properly "noble" culture discussed above.[45]

The development of urban society under ecclesiastical patronage is, then, seen as the dominant development of the thirteenth century, and it is out of this environment that the mature thought of scholasticism grows. When one speaks of mature scholasticism, however, one is speaking almost inevitably of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who has, perhaps with good reason, traditionally been seen as the dominant thinker of his age.

---

[43] Le Goff, La Civilization..., pp. 128,129; 326.

[44] Le Goff, La Civilization..., p. 113; Le Goff sees the church as being historically associated with urban centers. See further "Apostolats Mendiants..." pp. 342 ff, and "Ordres Mendiants et urbanisation" in Annales E.S.C. (1970) 4, pp. 924-946

[45] Rörig, The Medieval Town, p. 19 ff.

Aquinas was himself the son of a rural Italian noble and a vassal of Frederick II.[46] Through his family, he was familiar with medieval aristocratic traditions. Thomas basically accepted a hierarchical ordering of society, and obedience to legitimately constituted authority, because in his view, men were unequal both in environmental opportunity and in innate abilities, making such an ordering a practical necessity.[47] Further, power in society was

---

[46] Heer, The Medieval World, p. 71. I will be relying, in the following discussion of Thomas, on two books by T. Gilby: Between Community and Society (London, 1953) and The Political Thought of Thomas Aquinas (Chicago, 1958) (published in England under the title Principality and Polity, without difference in text); and also on the relevant sections in Gilson, E.: La Philosophie au Moyen Age (Paris, 1947). These works are hereafter cited as Gilby, Between Community... and Political Thought...; Gilson, La Philosophie.... Citations of Thomas' writings are from the selection edited by A.C. Pegis, Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas (new York, 1948).

[47] Gilby, Political Thought..., pp. 147-151; N. Cohn: The Pursuit of the Millennium (New York, 1961), p. 90, suggests that Thomas' formulation of the hierarchical argument was instrumental in its wide acceptance. Concerning the inequality of things, Thomas says: "Therefore it must be said that just as the wisdom of God is the cause of the distinction of things, so the same wisdom is the cause of their inequality. ... Hence in natural things, species seem to be arranged in a hierarchy; as the mixed things are more perfect than the elements, and plants than minerals, and animals than plants, and men than other animals; and in each of these one species is more perfect than others." Summa Theologia, Q. 47, art. 2; see also, Q. 47, art. 3, where the separate parts are ordered into a harmonious whole.

ultimately the will of God, because all power ultimately derives from God. It is this question of "ultimate" which becomes very important with Thomas: ultimately, the only truth is God's truth, the only reality, God's reality, and the only true human relationship, man's relationship to God. God for Thomas is definable as ipsum bonum subsistens, and is therefore, by definition, the universal origin and télos.[48]

Prior to this ultimate resolution of all things into God, however, there exists a lesser reality, that of God's creation, the terrestrial universe, to which must be applied the rules and procedures of human reason and philosophic logic.[49] For Thomas, moreover, this lesser reality was in fact real, and in fact worthy of attention. Indeed, law, apart from the Bible, is fundamentally human, that is, it is predicated upon human understanding of the Natural Law which understanding is in turn predicated upon political realities, which change. Men are, in this sense, naturally committed to a manner of

---

[48]Gilby, Political Thought..., p. 155; 243-245. And cf. Romans, xiii:1,2: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the powers, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

[49]Gilson, La Philosophie..., p. 528

"social contract", in that they are dependent on one another, and therefore responsible to one another.[50] Law, in fact, is "nothing else than an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by him who has the care of the community."[51] It is important to stress the reality of the communal awareness in Thomas; despite the fact that he never supported civic disobedience, Thomas did argue that the power of the ruler in human communities was from the people, and that the people did not forfeit that position of sovereignity by their support of the ruler.[52] Moreover, for a law to be

---

[50] Gilby, Political Thought..., pp. 153,154. It is in this sense that we understand, for example, the following: "Two things belong to providence namely, the exemplar of the order of things foreordained towards an end, and the execution of this order, which is called government. As regards the first of these, God has an immediate providence over everything, because he has in His intellect the exemplars of everything, even the smallest; and whatsoever causes He assigns to certain effects, He gives them the power to produce those effects. ... As to the second, there are certain intermediaries of God's providence, for He governs things inferior by superior, not because of any defect in His power, but by reason of the abundance of his goods; so that the dignity of causality is imparted even to creatures." (Summa Theologia, Q. 22, art. 3)

[51] Summa Theologia, Q. 90, art. 4. Even laws which have long been in existence are merely measures, once necessary, and now sanctified by custom, that is, they are contingent and revocable. (Q. 91, art.3)

[52] Gilby, Political Thought..., pp. 200,201; Between Community..., pp. 59-61. Gilby argues that Thomas relies on the one hand on human reason interpreting Natural Law, which is silent on this question, and on the other hand on his knowledge of the reviving Roman Law, which expresses this sentiment. The importance of Roman Law in Thomas is clear from his own treatment of law. Gilby, Political Thought..., p. 161, suggests that "the influence on him of Roman Law was not to be compared with that of Aristotle", but on the other hand, it could not be ignored.

valid, it had to be promulgated, that is, a person arrested under a statute had to have had ample opportunity to be aware of its existence for the charge to be morally valid. Indeed, if law in society were to function at all on the basis of ius, of right, it required the voluntas, that is, the "willing" to obey, of the individual citizen.[53]

It is clear, then, that Thomas entertained a vision of human society which insisted on an inner cohesion and a mutual dependence; moreover, while he related this to a religious cosmology, he nonetheless must be seen as having entertained the validity and importance of earthly affairs. In this society, law followed practical politics, that is, it was fundamentally utilitarian. Thomas was, however, not a republican theorist; on the contrary he grew progressively further and further from republican political ideals as he grew older.[54] There was, rather, a coherence in human society which provided its own validity, which Thomas argued from Aristotle.[55] This coherence was hierarchical, because only in this

---

[53] Gilby, Political Thought..., pp. 123-133

[54] Gilby, Political Thought..., p. 132

[55] Gilby, Political Thought..., p. 85: "The justice described in the seventh book of the Ethics was a dynamic virtue going beyond obedience to the Tables of the Law or conformity to a code. The humana civilitas was no artificially contrived institution but sprang from man's social nature; it was no mere instrument but the end purpose of virtue, no mere remedy for sin but a noble object."

could it reasonably be seen as proceeding from God.

With Thomas, then, nobilitas undergoes a conceptual change, in that it is no longer associated primarily with its medieval parameters, but rather, is a problem having to do with rank in a pre-ordained and just social hierarchy, and is inseparable from one's real relationship with God. Thomas never accepted, as did the young Dante, the Averroist principle of double-truth. On the contrary, with Thomas everything is ultimately referable to God and God's truth.[56]

Christian nobility, the only nobility which ultimately interested Thomas, was in one sense a function of the individual's relationship to the "other world", and this should not be ignored, or glossed over, in order to force an exclusive worldliness on Thomas. Ultimately, human life, at all levels, is to be measured principally by its success in preparing men for the Beatific Vision, and in this, there is an inherent anti-hierarchical vision.[57] The mature works

---

[56] Gilby, Political Thought..., pp. 250,251; Between Community..., pp. 67-71, where he argues that Thomas' insistence on this principle probably limited his immediate influence. On Dante's early acceptance of the principle of double-truth, see Garin, E.: Medioevo e Rinascimento (Bari, 1966), pp. 32-36; Gilson, La Philosophie..., p. 578

[57] Gilby, Political Thought..., p. 251

which best demonstrate this, apart from the Summa Theologia, are the two relatively short pieces written in response to an attack on the mendicant orders by Gerard of Abbéville, the de Perfectione and the Contra Retrahentes, written in 1269 and 1270 respectively. In these works, Thomas argues a specifically anti-hierarchical (in ultimate terms) vision: rather, human society is to be measured chiefly by the Christian virtue of "charity". This virtue is not synonymous with liberality, and does not require wealth for its exercise; it is the kind of virtue cited in connection with Christ's Sermon on the Mount, a virtue of the "heart", a commitment on a broad scale rather than any specific act of giving.[58]

Generally speaking, however, this is not Thomas' most frequent attitude. He is rather associated with articulating the social hierarchy, in conformity with a Christian hierarchical cosmology, which is chiefly definable as a reflection of the divine plan's constant unfolding.[59]

---

[58] Gilby, Political Thought..., pp. 246,247. The argument is clearly different both from Capellanus' acceptance of wealth, as discussed above, and that of the humanists of fifteenth century Florence, for whom wealth was a clear and essential concomitant of civic virtue. It also seems to be Thomas at his most "Christian" and least "Aristotelian".

[59] Gilson, La Philosophie..., pp. 530-533; Gilby, Political Thought..., p. 243. There are numerous references to this kind of relationship in Thomas: Summa Theologia, Q. 6 entire; Q. 14, art. 6; Q. 14, art. 9; Q. 19, art. 4; Q. 44, art. 4; Summa Contra Gentiles, Chapters XVII, XVIII, XXV, XXXVII, XLVIII.

Thomas effectively justified the earthly order by subordinating men to the existing social hierarchy, and in this sense, he supported the aristocratic order. His support is, however, clouded and obscure, to the extent that he subordinated all earthly powers to religious truth, and posited the consent, indeed, the voluntas, of the lower orders as a prerequisite to the effective functioning of the hierarchy. With Thomas, the concept of nobility, like all worldly realities, became radically contingent: nobility as a social ranking rested not on birth but on its ultimate relationship to the divine plan. In this sense, Thomas' concern for the validity of the noble is an implicit challenge to that order, and especially to its amoral manner of life. Where Capellanus had supported the proposition that nobility was predicated on birth, violence and "living nobly", Thomas would support it as one element in an established authority, with its "nobility" contingent on its actions in behalf of the communal good and in respect of the principles of Christian charity.

The existence of an Italian rural and feudal nobility has already been discussed; and its role in Italian literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was not radically different from that of the northern nobilities in the French and Provençal traditions. The court of Frederick II produced love-lyrics quite similar, and in some parts largely deriving from, the Provençal

tradition.[60] This tradition rested on an integrated, scholastic cosmological view, one however, being challenged by the fourteenth century through the work of William of Ockham and his followers, a challenge which ultimately was one element enabling the Renaissance humanists to separately validate both the natural and supernatural realities.[61]

Prior to this a separate, and largely independent, set of traditions had already developed in Italy regarding the nature and validity of worldly realities, particularly in legal thought, and in poetry. In poetry, the role of Guido Guinizelli (c. 1230-c.1275) is crucial in the developmentof the concept of the cor gentile, which he substituted for the chivalric code.[62] Guinizelli's importance is heightened by the fact that his "circle" included the young poets Guido Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoia, and Dante Alighieri; in fact Dante's own, important formulation of the concept of the cor gentile probably owes a good deal to Guinizelli. The fundamental concept at issue here is the internalization of nobilitas. Guinizelli

---

[60] Auerbach, Dante..., p. 25

[61] Garin, Medioevo e Rinascimento, pp. 37-39. On Ockham and his doctrines, the essay by Gilson, La Philosophie..., pp. 638-686 is good; for his treatment of the problem of the proliferation of the concepts into Italy, especially through the work of Peter of Abano and Angelo d'Arezzo, see pp. 690 ff.

[62] Auerbach, Dante..., p. 26; Whitfield, J.H. A Short History of Italian Literature (Middlesex, England, 1960), p. 21.

portrays the love relationship as dependent on inner goodness, such that the Woman takes command of the spheres, rather than remains subject to the influence of the stars.[63] The remoteness of Guinizelli's concepts and metaphoric structures have been interpreted as an essential aspect of his concept of the cor gentile.[64] The concept of a mystical union through love, common in Provençal poetry, was retained; but its internalization, as a projection of an inner quality, fashioned it into a kind of dynamic, one which operated from within the person, rather than from heaven, or the stars.

Thus from a relatively early stage, there was a significant difference in the expression of Italian nobilitas. This difference mirrors a very real difference in the social conditions of the Italian feudal aristocracy. The geographical situation in Italy militated against any radical feudal and rural decentralization of power.[65] In the southern part of the country, there were far fewer

---

[63]Guinizelli, from the crucial poem for this concept, "Al cor gentil ripara sempre amore": "Foco d'amore in gentil cor s'apprende,/ Come vertute in pietra preziosa;/ Chè de la stella valor non discende/ Anti che'l sol la faccia gentil cosa./ Poi che n'ha tratto fore/ Per sua forza lo sol ciò che lì è vile,/ Stella li dà valore." This, and other Italian lyrics cited, are from the anthology, The Oxford Book of Italian Verse, ed. St. John Lucas, rev. ed. C. Dionisotti (Oxford,1910-1966), p. 27.

[64]Auerbach, Dante..., p. 27: "...the community of the cor gentile was an aristocracy based on a common spirit a spirit which unmistakably encompassed certain secret conceptions and rules." And see pp. 26-28, where he argues that this secrecy is essential to the poetic structure.

[65]Luzzatto, An Economic History..., pp. 81-85. In Italy the contado

inland urban centers, and it was in this area, especially after the Norman conquest, that the feudal system became most fully (though not fully) ensconced. In Northern Italy, from an early date, the rural nobility was attacked and forced inside the city walls.[66] This does not mean that they ceased to exist, but only that their activities must be interpreted in terms of a very peculiar social formation, that is, an urban nobility. The nobility in Northern Italy was incorporated into the commercial and political life of the cities,

---

or area surrounding the urban center was initially only c. 10 miles in radius; especially in the north, there were sufficient numbers of such urban centers to maintain almost a continuous chain, thereby facilitating inter-urban transfers of commodities and communication. There was, therefore, little left in terms of resources upon which to construct a solid rural power-base. In France by comparison, urban centers were fewer and much more widely dispersed, offering large areas to rural organization. It was in these rural areas that feudal power was strongest.

[66] Volpe, Il Medioevo, p. 319; the extension of urban control over a surrounding contado occurred at different rates: Cessi, "Venice to the eve...", pp. 260 ff, places the extension of Venetian control over the Po Basin in the early ninth century, when formal recognition was extended by the Lombard king (824 A.D.). The commercial Po network had a system of controlled markets and legislation concerning agricultural production and sale (Luzzatto, An Economic History..., pp. 57,58); the establishment of permanent rather than transitory markets suggests that the contado was already viewed as an appendage of the urban center in the tenth century in Milan (Lopez and Raymond, Medieval Trade..., pp. 54 ff). Luzzatto, An Economic History..., pp. 80,81, suggests that the period 1100-1250 be seen as indicating primarily this progressive ascendance of the urban over the rural areas, and the rise of the power of commercial traders over the feudatories.

in which they themselves came to participate.[67]

In this transference of the feudal noble class into the city and their ultimate alliance with the highest layer of the "borghesia arricchita" of the towns, there is the basis for a broad Italian phenomenon, that of the noble urban and commercial patriciate active in political affairs, which is the dominant theme of Renaissance urban nobility. In Florence, this process is particularly well documented: the Buondelmonti family, for example, traced their origins back to the first half of the tenth century, at which time they had been rural feudatories; the Castellani dated from 1197 in the city, and they too were originally from the rural area. Many families retained in this way a measure of the concept of "noble birth", while subordinating it in the city environment to success in commercial and political activities.[68] Florence had been dominated

---

[67] Volpe, Il Medioevo, pp. 311 ff, suggests that the podestà and eventually the signore traditions should clearly be seen as continuations of the aristocratic way of life, in an urban environment, thus establishing a continuum throughout the period we have been discussing: "In tal modo, non v'è quasi città ove, a cavaliere dei due secoli, non sia apparso, ben visibile o malamente dissimulato, il volte di un signore, solo o in gara con altri." (p.318) The Genoese Campagna (1099) is an alliance of this kind for political and economic hegemony (Renouard, Les Hommes d'Affaires..., pp. 24,25). Lopez and Raymond, Medieval Trade..., p. 92 ff, has an illustrative document in this connection, showing the commercial activities of Guglielmino Malfiliastro, a descendant of the family of the viscount of Genoa (1240 A.D.).

[68] Martines,L.: The Social World of the Florentine Humanists (Princeton, New Jersey, 1963) pp. 200,201; 210; 214 ff et passim; hereafter, Martines, Social World... .

by a rural feudal aristocracy until the middle of the twelfth century and, during periods of peace, these nobles occupied themselves with family feuds, as in the north.[69] There was little behavioral difference between this nobility and that of the early feudal period in the north.

The rural and feudal society does not entirely disappear, however, even in the north of Italy. In Savoy, a rural aristocracy allied with the trans-alpine feudatories in an attempt to resist the power of the urban centers, and the Romagna was really a feudal state with power decentralized in the hands of local lords.[70]

The concept of the cor gentile, then, can be construed as a redefinition of nobility which was more suitable to the new social situation. It was as possible to be a member of this aristocracy in a city as in a country environment. With Dante, moreover, the concept

---

[69] Schevill, Medieval...Florence, I, pp.67-69; Enriques, A.M.: "La vendetta nella vita e nella legislazione fiorentina" in Archivio Storico Italiano, XIX (1933), pp.85-146; 181-223; see the first part in particular for the early period; hereafter, Enriques, "La vendetta...".

[70] Volpe, Il Medioevo, p.311; p.321 ff. Indeed, it is likely that the formal nature of authority had not yet become a serious question: "Non si giudica più il governo della forma repubblicana o monarchica, ma dalla sostanza sua, dal modo come è esercitato, dalla rispondenza o meno ai bisogni del popolo. E accade in tal modo che si giudichino tiranni anche certi capi elettivi, di Repubbliche e si invoche un signore per distruggere un governo di molti tiranni..." (p.329).

of the cor gentile becomes still more central in Italian poetry and, at the same time, the formal nature of government becomes a matter of dispute.[71] Dante's personal career in republican Florence, his exile in 1302, and his pro-monarchical writings in De Monarchia and in the Divine Comedy formed the central issue of a real ideological dispute among humanists later, at the turn of the fifteenth century.[72]

---

[71] For the following discussion of Dante, (1265-1321), I have relied on Auerbach, Dante...; Gilson, La Philosophie..., and Becker,M.: Florence In Transition, 2 vols. (Baltimore,1967), hereafter cited as Becker, Florence... . Citations of Dante's minor poems is from the anthology noted earlier, and of the Divine Comedy, from D.L. Sayers' translation, 3 vols., (Middlesex, England, 1968) unless another source is indicated.

[72] For the dispute, see Baron, H.: The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1955), I, pp.54,55; hereafter cited as Baron, The Crisis..., and below, Chapter IV. For Dante as a source of republican values, Becker, Florence..., I, p.36-37. Most important in terms of monarchical support in the Comedy are the visions of Virgil, Inferno, i, 94 ff. And of Beatrice, Purgatorio, xxxiii, 42 ff. Auerbach, Dante..., pp.128-30 notes the obscurity of Dante's sources in this regard, and the presence of the world-renewal myth, the "Age of the Phoenix", at this point. The vision is eastern, and focuses on the opposition of the city of Satan and the city of God, and suggests that this is in the mainstream of the millenarian vision. That Dante's successors misunderstood his emphasis indicates that his sources (still untraced) were not widely known. It is an interesting problem, beyond the scope of this work.

The shift from Thomas to Dante is a subtle one in some ways, and their similarities often cloud their differences. A necessary distinction arises from the fact that the one is a philosopher and theologian primarily, while the other is first and foremost a poet. The creative experience of Dante is in fact central not only to any real understanding of him, but also to an application of his influence, and should therefore not be entirely disregarded. The point has been made that Dante is, in many ways, a Thomist, particularly in his metaphysical framework.[73]

The roots of the concept of the cor gentile have been seen with Guinizelli, but the alterations, both in the meaning and intent

---

[73] Auerbach, Dante..., p.175 : "The Comedy represented the physical, ethical and political unity of the Scholastic cosmos at a time when it was beginning to lose its ideological integrity...". Non-Scholastic concepts were emerging, but "...those ideas and movements have only certain superficial characteristics in common with Dante's view of the world; they originated and grew independently of it...But none possessed the depth and universal unity of Dante's Thomist world view, and their consequence was not the worldwide humana civilitas for which Dante hoped, but an increasing fragmentation of cultural forces; it is only after the imperial ideology and the Christian-medieval conception of the world, shaken by intestine struggles, were swept away by the rationalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that a new practical view of the unity of human society began to take form."

of the concept wrought by Dante in the course of the Vita Nuova, make it almost a different concept. The mysticism which cloaks the concept of the cor gentile remains in Dante, but in a different form. Dante makes the situation of his poem concrete, that is, it revolves on an action which is moral rather than simply abstract, and which is imaginable. That Dante thus focuses clearly on action rather than on knowing or understanding seems clearly to suggest the primacy of the will over the intellect in human affairs.[74] This is already dissimilar from Thomas in its emphasis, because where Thomas had spoken of free will, nonetheless, choice in Thomas precedes desire, that is, we want God because we intellectually recognize Him as the supreme good. Thus, with Thomas, the limitations on choice are predicated on reason, primarily, in that men reasonably choose to act in accordance with the dynamic reality which God created and foreordained.[75] The essential problem is to understand that general foreordinance of the Divine Plan and, this understanding, once achieved, will be followed by choosing this "good". Thus, the human will acts, and is "free", but it is so because it has been so predestined, that is, its very freedom is caused. For Thomas, the will moves the intellect because the general object of the will is the

---

[74] Auerbach, Dante..., p.71.

[75] See note 50, above.

good, that is, God; but it is the intellect which properly makes the will a workable concept, because it understands the notion of being which contains the notion of good.[76]

With Dante, however, the ranking of the dynamic order is different : the god of Thomas is essentially "being", whereas the god of the cor gentile is taken from the Augustinian and neo-platonist teachings and is, therefore, essentially "dynamic".[77] It is different, however, not because Dante chooses the one rather than the other, but precisely because his work represents an effort to unite the two.[78] It is from this development that the cor gentile of Dante

---

[76] On the movement of the intellect by the will, see Summa Theologia, Q.82, Art. 4, reply obj. 1; Q.78, Art. 1 on the intellect as perceiver of reality. And cf. Q.82, Art. 4, reply obj. 3.

[77] These are not meant to be mutually exclusive. Rather, the distinction being made here is primarily a question of emphasis, thus: Thomas' God is also dynamic, and the God of the neo-platonists is also "being", but one thinks of the neo-platonic god primarily as manifested in the effusion of love, that is, primarily as the creative and redemptive acts, whereas one thinks of the scholastic god as primarily "that-which-is".

[78] Auerbach, Dante..., p.71. Thus, the cor gentile of Dante represents the fusion of the Thomist intellectus with the mystic love of the earlier cor gentile of Guinizelli.

acquires its tremendous power because, expressed in this way, it becomes itself predicated directly on that fusion. Thus, the internalization of the creative and redemptive process, within the man, enable him in turn to create, and forms the substance of his creative power.[79]

The earliest representation of the new dimensions of the cor gentile have been traced to even the early Dante, to the canzone at the end of the Vita Nuova.[80] The sigh (sospiro) which is the expression of the love of Dante and Beatrice, proceeds beyond the poet (ch'esce del mio core:) to the Empyrean sphere of reality, that is, beyond the realm of change to the last part of the journey preceding the arrival at the vision of God. Love gives the sospiro a new intelligence which enables it to rise above the turbulence of loving, such that seeing the beauty of the woman, it is able to wander as a

---

[79] In this sense, Beatrice is both human and supernatural, like Christ (Auerbach, Dante..., pp.62-63), while the cor gentile becomes the dynamic source by which Dante projects his poetic creative personality into a universal frame of reference (p.64).

[80] By Auerbach, Dante..., pp.62,63; 100.

spirit to its proper object.[81] The movement of the originally clearly human sospiro into the higher spirito expresses this new meaning of the cor gentile, in its early formulation.

But what this movement is, remains unclear at this point. It is, therefore, in the Comedia that we must seek its full articulation. The human experience involved is necessarily related to the neo-platonic mystical concept of the creative and redemptive acts being accessible to men. With Augustine, the imperative suggested by the redemption was that men must themselves undertake first the journey into humility in order to make the journey to God.[82]

---

[81] From Oxford Book of Italian Verse, p.69: "Oltre la spera, che più larga gira,/ Passa il sospiro ch'esce di mio core:/ Intelligenza nuova, che l'Amore/ Piangendo mette in lui, pur su lo tira./ Quand'egli è giunto là, dove desira,/ Vede una donna, che riceve onore,/ E luce sì, che per lo suo splendore/ Lo peregrino spirito la mira".

[82] Augustine, Confessions, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (Baltimore, 1969), IV, xii: "Our Life himself came down into this world and took away our death. He slew it with his own abounding life, and with thunder in his voice he called us from this world to return to him in heaven. From heaven he came down to us, entering first the Virgin's womb, where humanity, our mortal flesh, was wedded to him so that it might not be forever mortal. Then 'as a bridegroom coming from his bed, he exulted like some great runner who sees the track before him'. He did not linger on his way but ran, calling us to return to him, calling us by his words and deeds, by his life and death, by his descent into hell and his ascension into heaven. He departed from our sight, so that we should turn to our hearts and find him there. He departed, but he is here with us. He would not stay long with us, but he did not leave us. He went back to the place which he had never left because 'he, through whom the world was made, was in the world' and he 'came into the world to save sinners.' To him my soul confesses and he is its Healer,

Indeed, the whole poetic structure of the Comedia is based on this premise that the act of Christ could be experienced by the poet.[83] This personal journey, following Christ into hell before rising through purgatory to heaven, has to be understood as a real experience, made possible by the ultimate relationship of potentiality which inheres between men and the redemptive act, and which can become real by virtue of making real the cor gentile within us, that is, turning downward to rise as Beatrice had done, and as Dante does in the course of the Comedia. The divinity which animates the Comedia is the mystical god of Christian neo-platonists whose essential attribute is seen in the acts of creation and redemption.[84] But the

---

because the wrong it did was against him. 'Great ones of the world, will your hearts always be hardened?' Your life has come down from heaven: will you not now at last rise with him and live? But how can you rise who are in high places and whose 'clamor reaches heaven?' Come down from those heights, for then you may climb, and this time, climb to God. To climb against him was your fall."

[83] Singleton, C.: "In Exitu Israel de Aegypto" in Dante, ed. John Freccero, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965), pp.102-121.

[84] G. Poulet in a fascinating essy, "The Metamorphoses of the Circle" in Dante, pp.151-169, traces the concept of the God defined thus: "Deus est sphaera cuius centrum ubique" to Paradiso, xvi "From the center to the circumference, and likewise from the circumference to the center, the water moves in a round vase, according as it is smitten from without or from within".

mystical nature of the divinities universally active being is accessible in a limited way, through that which is actual. Thus, Dante describes his vision of God:

> So, I remember, did it prove to be,
> While I was gazing in the lovely eyes
> Wherewith Love made a noose to capture me;
>
> For as I turned, there greeted mine likewise
> What all behold who contemplate rightly
> That heaven's revolution through the skies.
>
> One Point I saw, so radiantly bright,
> So searing to the eyes it strikes upon,
> They must needs close before such piercing light.[85]

The metaphor of the white rose continues the tradition of God-as-Love, thus identifying the movement of cor gentile from the fundamentally unclear vision of the late Vita Nuova to the articulated vision of the redemptive pattern we have been tracing.

It should be stressed that the concept presented here depends far more clearly on the primacy of Will than had been the case with Thomas. Dante's vision involves the journey, an active seeking of the creative and redemptive path, where all real life originates

---

[85] Paradiso, xxviii, 11.10-18. He adds (11.41,42): "From this point/ heaven and all nature depend" (Da quel punto/ Depende il caelo, tutta la natura). Poulet comments: "This dependence is specifically ontological. Heaven, all nature, the whole of creation in its spatial and temporal unfolding, have existence only because everywhere and always the action from a creative center causes them to exist." (The Metamorphoses...", p.155).

and is maintained. The actus humanus of Dante is therefore clearly a departure from the, by comparison, static vision of Thomas, despite the fact that both retain the same essential metaphysical framework.[86] With Dante, however, the connection between the real world of men and the reality of the redemption is more clearly emphasized and omnipresent. If Thomas' God is describable as ipsum bonum subsistens, Dante's necessarily connotes the dynamism of the creative and the redemptive. It is this dynamism which we must therefore refer to when considering Dante's conception of his social world.[87]

---

[86] In fact, Thomas too has occasional references to the mystical, rather than the logical, method of knowing God: "Eternity is always present to whatever time or moment of time it may be. One can see an example of it in the circle: a given point of the circumference, even though indivisible, nevertheless cannot coexist with all the other points, because the order of succession constitutes the circumference; but the center that is outside the circumference is immediately connected with any given point of the circumference whatever." (Summa Contra Gentiles, I, chap. 46).

[87] The probability that the vision of the whore and the chariot of Paradiso, xxxii, refers to an apocalyptic world-renewal strikes me as clearly possible, although certainly a different orientation than one would have expected from Dante in his earlier period of political activity. This thesis is argued intelligently from the internal metaphoric structure of the Comedia by Kaske, R.E.: "Dante's DXV" in Dante, pp.122-40. His exegesis suffers from the perennial problem presented by this canto, that of the obscurity of the sources of the metaphors, discussed by Auerbach in Dante..., pp.128-30. Auerbach suggests the likelihood of an eastern world-renewal myth which would be secular, that is, the apocalypse as an earthly phenomenon. In any case, the contention of d'Entrèves, A.P.: "Civitas" (Dante, pp.141-50) that Dante's late work should be read as proceeding out of his experience as a Florentine citizen and political figure is certainly an overstatement which ignores the essential in Dante, that is, his Christianity.

With the Comedia in mind, we should return to the earlier Dante's cor gentile as the basis for his projection of his poetic creativity into the universal realm, that is, the Empyrean sphere. There is a basis for such a projection of human creativity, and that basis is to be sought precisely in the relationship between humanity and the creative and redemptive process which most clearly defines the Christian God for Dante. There is an inward movement of the self away from the vanities which are sought for as ends in themselves, such as political power and wealth, and a subsequent externalization of the creativity, now in conjunction with Providence, occurs. This is the essential dynamic meaning of the cor gentile, no longer mainly rhetorical or courtly or aimed at sublimation, but active and creative.

It is in this light that Dante's emphasis on the historical reality of the human act becomes comprehensible, because the act is precisely the central issue in living, that which unites men with the redemptive process. But men's acts are obviously not, as are God's, on a cosmic level; they are therefore focused on the largest scope available to man, the creation of a universal society, human in the truest sense. There is "free will" in Thomas and Dante; with Thomas, it remains an abstraction applicable, as the general to the specific, only by a further process of logical argument; with Dante, the result of free will, the act, is in the concrete instance

and requires no further explanation.[88]

Dante equated nobility with living in and with the cor gentile.[89] In this sense, with Dante, nobility came to mean the extent to which one externalized one's creativity in the building of the human community. It was not a question of consent or even of voluntas, as it had been with Thomas, but one of creative work. With Dante, the real basis of the civic humanist arguments concerning the nature of man's relationship with his society can be seen. Nobilitas, predicated on the concept of the cor gentile, came to mean the creating of the new society, on the broadest possible earthly scale. It is in this light that Dante's preference for the Empire can be seen as reasonable, because it was not a question of choosing simply Henry VII or the Florentine commune, but of the possible scope of human creativity.

For Dante, the real "human society" is probably contained in the metaphors of the world-renewal theme noted above. Dante was not a republican and, in fact, was never comfortable with the rising bourgeois class in Florence. His values were those of an ideal,

---

[88]This is clearly the issue throughout the journey through hell, where characters explain their situation by one or two specific acts of their lives. Also, their punishments are set to accord with a specific and concrete act of sin.

[89]Whitfield, Short History..., p.21.

perhaps a visionary, social order, and this had little to do with the hard-headed, not even remotely ideal, reality of Florentine commerce and factious politics. Still, his legacy was crucial to the development of Florentine ideology precisely because his work had validated human society in its concrete form, its terrestrial reality. His writings in the volgare were a commitment to the actual, present existence such as the scholastic philosophers had not made, and was at the root of that rise of serious writings in the volgare thought to be one of the chief meanings of the Renaissance. Dante developed a positive dynamic out of Averroist dualism and applied it to human affairs:

> Dante...distinguishes two final ends for man, that is to say, two ends of which each is final in its own order... Insofar as he is corruptible, man tends, as toward his final end, to that happiness accessible in active life within the political sphere of the city; insofar as he is incorruptible, that is to say immortal, he tends, as toward his final end, to the contemplative bliss of eternal life.[90]

---

[90] Gilson, La Philosophie..., p.578: "Dante...distingue deux fins dernières de l'homme, c'est à dire deux fins dont chacune soit dernière dans son ordre propre...En tant que corruptible, l'homme tend, comme vers sa fin dernière, au bonheur accessible par la vie active dans le cadre politique de la cité; en tant qu'incorruptible, c'est à dire immortel, il tend, comme vers sa fin dernière, à la béatitude contemplative de la vie éternelle."

This perhaps ignores the theme of world-renewal and transcendence which have been posited as chief characteristics of Dante's Comedy, and underestimates the sophistication of his ideal social order; nonetheless, this justification is real, and was intended to be real by Dante, because he did not see the two orders as inevitably irreconcilable.[91]

The externalization of human creativity into an ideal social order represents one dominant theme of Renaissance humanism, and it finds its explicit source primarily in Dante. A contrary but related internalization of this creativity had begun with Cavalcanti, as noted earlier, but was unimportant until taken up by Petrarch (1304-74), in the mid-fourteenth century.[92] The two do

---

[91]Becker, Florence..., I, p.37: "Dante...concludes that not only was political man capable of civic unselfishness but that his actions and the very life of the polis could be ruled by reason. These ideals came to be incorporated into the gentle paideia of a communal society which asserted that men by their very nature were admirably qualified to make the choice between good and evil."

[92]The externalization theme proliferates into the related concepts of homo oeconomicus, homo faber, and homo politicus which are the principal bases of civic humanism. This is discussed in more detail below. Crucial conceptual works in this regard are Baron, Crisis...; Baron's two earlier articles, "Franciscan poverty and civic wealth as factors in the rise of humanist thought" in Speculum, XIII (1938), 1-39, and "Cicero and the Roman Civic Spirit in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance", in Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XXII (1938) 73-97, and his later From Petrarch to Bruni: Studies in Humanistic and Political Literature (Chicago, 1968); Becker's Florence...; Brucker, G.: Florentine Politics and Society 1343-1378 (Princeton, 1962); Rice, E.F.,Jr.: The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom (Cambridge, Mass., 1958). The theme of internalization which leads to a kind of individualism without a social

not mutually exclude each other and, in fact, impinge on each other throughout the fifteenth century, resulting in modifications in both positions, although it not proposed here to attempt to trace the development of this theme in its entirety. They emerge from a common source, the justification of human thought and emotion, indeed, of being "human", beyond an implied or expressed conviction that this humanity and its attributes are ultimately contingent, in their concrete as in their general reality, on God, this will, or His plan, a theme jointly established by Dante and Petrarch.[93] This is not to

---

referent is taken mainly from Garin, Medioevo e Rinascimento, the works of E.H. Wilkins on Petrarch (see bibliography), Trinkaus,C.: In Our Image and Likeness, 2 vols. (London, 1970), and Seznec, J.: The Survival of the Pagan Gods, trans. B.F. Sessions (New York, 1961); Wind, E.L.: Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (re. ed., London, 1967); Yates, F.A.: Giordano Bruni and the Hermetic Tradition (London, 1964). The development of the internalization theme similarly proliferates into the entire magico-religious movement of Renaissance neo-platonism.

[93]This theme has been argued as the very meaning of the Renaissance in Italy by Garin: "... e questo fu il Rinascimento; fra l'antico e il nuovo, dico, stanno quei secoli di meditazione in cui ogni termine del pensiero fu discusso, analizatto, esaurito. La Scolastica non si può raccogliere sotto il segno della tentata assimilazione della filosofia greca culminata nella disfatta di un disidio riconosciuto insanabile fra fede e ragione; e nepure sotto quello di una trasfigurazione ed integrazione, o, se si vuole, di una restaurazione del naturale attraverso il soprannaturale." Medioevo e Rinascimento, pp.18,19.

say that they denied either God or his importance for humanity; rather, they stressed human reality in relationship to God, and tried to confront the problems of such a relationship from a human point of view.

It is this theme which clearly preoccupied Petrarch through most of his mature writings. As a young man, he had espoused certain republican notions and had written the Africa (1330's), glorifying Rome under the republican government and Scipio Africanus as the ideal "type" of romanitas.[94] But this preoccupation was lost, probably during his personal crisis at Vaucluse in 1342-43 or at the latest in the year of the plague and Laura's death, 1348.[95] Petrarch's mature works are intensely introspective; their tone is generally one

---

[94] Baron, From Petrarch..., pp.29-34. Scipio was eclipsed by Caesar during the 1350's in the De Gestis Caesaris and the De Viris Illustribus.

[95] In fact, the genesis and development of Petrarch's opinions is a peculiarly thorny problem due to Petrarch's later revisions of much of his work. Baron, From Petrarch... suggests the first date as crucial noting that in this period he wrote the core of the Suum Secretum, the first statement of the vita solitaria theme in Petrarch. Wilkins, E.H.: Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), p.76 ff suggests that the later change, from the gloom of the 1340's to the relative stoicism of the 1350's is the more important, and cites the events of the death of Laura and the opportunity in 1351-53 for Petrarch to receive a cardinalate. His suggestion that Laura's death forced Petrarch to internalize his emotions and radically reexamine his presuppositions is well documented principally from the Triumphs and the Epistolae Seniles.

of Christian stoicism, an acceptance of the innate unsatisfactoriness of living in the world together with the impossibility of avoiding this. He attacks practically every tenet of the vita activa.[96] At the same time, however, he notes that man is able to live on his own, without anticipating or relying on the aid of heaven.[97] Thus, what had been implicit with Dante is quite explicit with the late Petrarch. However, rather than project this into a visionary social ideal, Petrarch becomes increasingly convinced that the extremity of human ignorance is such as to preclude everything but the most cautious and restrained reactions to tangible realities. "Nothing rises higher than deeds of humility" expresses the generalized concept.[98] While

---

[96]The only exception to this being the power of reason in men's lives; even this is problematic, however, because Petrarch saw in reason the means of countering the blows of fortune by explaining inevitability to oneself. In the De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae, written 1354-57, (using the partial text, I,i-xi, contained in Diekstra, F.N.M. (ed.): A Dialogue Between Reason and Adversity (Assen, Netherlands, 1968) ), Petrarch argues that reason, artibus suis et propria vi, is able to find a proper basis for living. He then demonstrates the worthlessness of wealth and poverty, high and low birth, beauty and ugliness, and so on, concluding that the accidents of human life cannot prevent a man from living virtuously.

[97]De Remediis, prologue: "Qui vero arci praesidet ratio: his omnibus una respondeat;...suisque artibus et propria vi: sed celesti magis auxilio arcum frementia hostium tela discutat."

[98]"Nihil altius ascendat quam humilitatis operosa", from the Rerum Memorandum, cited by Rice, Renaissance...Wisdom, p.85-87 where there is a discussion of this aspect of Petrarch's thought.

the ideal society which Dante envisioned is foreign to Petrarch's view of human affairs, it must be stressed that it is human affairs with which Petrarch is concerned. The problem of knowledge is not a significant problem for him because he accepts a radical Ockhamist position which denies even the possibility of certainty.[99] This condition of ignorance does not however deny man the possibility of acting; rather, it demands that he act, and that his actions be virtuous. The central concept of the docta pietas in Petrarch has to be stressed, as the mystic union of the cor gentile and scholastic logic has been in Dante.

Docta pietas as a concept refers to the necessity of acting morally while being confronted with one's own ignorance, even about the morality of a given action. For Petrarch, this moral life is the central, and only real, human problematic; further, a moral life demands learning and contemplation which can be undertaken only in relatively peaceful surroundings. It is this sense of the necessity of stability which lay at the root of his preference for Caesar over Scipio in his later life, and for principalities rather than the

---

[99] Wilkins, Studies in the Life..., pp.261-71.

factious and contentious republics.[100] Thus, where Dante had accepted the position of Caesar as ultimately the will of God, Petrarch accepted it because it brought social peace and an opportunity for the individual to fulfill his moral nature.

Petrarch's understanding of nobility is predictably altered and internalized. He notes that nobility cannot be simply a question of high birth.[101] Rather, "virtue alone ennobles", and virtue is a function of reason, of living according to the docta pietas. Indeed, he argues that "whoever lives well is well-born...And whoever shall have lived badly cannot have been well-born. What difference does it make to a blind man to have started out on the most shining of paths?"[102] In fact, Petrarch expressly contradicts the familial and

---

[100] His argument is not that empire qua empire is preferable, as Baron implies (From Petrarch..., p.29 ff): rather, he notes that the Roman republic had already declined, and it was a question of which single man should rule, Pompey or Caesar. Even this is not the real question: in De Remediis, II, cxvii, he notes the vainglory and jealousy which are the motives for Cato's suicide, not republican sentiment. The central argument of this section is that Caesar was generous and loved by the people, whereas those who assassinated him did so from base motives. And cf. Wilkins, Studies in the Life..., for Petrarch's desire for peace, for otium, in which to learn true morality (pp.270-76).

[101] Diekstra, A Dialogue..., p.46 notes his borrowing (in De Remediis, I, ii) from Plato, Thaetetus, 174,d,e, via Seneca, Epistolae Morales, 44,4: "Platon ait neminem regem non ex servis esse oriundum, neminem servum non ex regibus".

[102] De Remediis, I, vii: "Quis bene vivit bene nascitur...At qui male vixerit bene natus esse non potest. Nam quid refert quam fulgido tramite caecus incesserit..."

corporative ethos of medieval and contemporary society by denying the responsibility of the son for the father's crimes and vice versa.[103]

In this sense, the alliance of _virtus_ and _docta pietas_ in Petrarch marks the first clear break with medieval tradition. Where the _cor gentile_ had represented an internalization of nobility in the sense of according oneself with the divine plan, the Petrarchan notion dissociates itself from God, because God and His plan are not knowable in human affairs. Petrarchan nobility is, then, peculiarly human in its connotations.

This human-centeredness reflects two developments in Petrarch, his humanist reading, and his personal alienation from society. Since the alienation was in large part predicated on personal peculiarities, his situation is not exactly analagous to that of the mid-fifteenth century. Nonetheless, the fact of his separateness is analagous, and his retreat into the depths of his own personality is one of the responses which will become more typical. Petrarch lost the intimate connection with the supernatural, and lives before the civic humanist period when he might

---

[103] _De Remediis_, I,vi: "Et quamvis odio vage libidinis in immerentes filios ultio legum civilium extendatur; deus tamen quenquam suis finibus melitur; nec filii iniquitatem patri imputat; nec filio patris."

be defined by "Florence".

In Petrarch's reading, there is another link to humanist practice. His main inspiration at Vaucluse is St. Augustine, and in Augustine's works, the Confessions.[104] The shift in the estimate of Caesar from the Africa to the De Gestis Caesaris reflects in a clear way the results of his learning. Before writing the later work, Petrarch studied in Augustine, read Josephus' Antiquitates Judaicae, the Historia Augusta, Suetonius, Lucanus, and Caesar's Comentarii.[105] His returning directly to classical accounts is the origin of humanist philological method.

Petrarch's internalization of human will and creativity was too radical to be acceptable in the political and commercial circles of the early civic humanists, Salutati and Leonardo Bruni. Indeed, Petrarch's express criticism of Cicero (1344) for his excessive political spirit and civic zeal constituted an attitude uncongenial to Bruni and Salutati.[106]

---

[104] Wilkins, Making of the Canzoniere..., Introduction; Baron, From Petrarch..., pp. 30-31 where he reviews Martelotti's reconstruction of Petrarch's library.

[105] Diekstra, A Dialogue..., p. 46. And see note 101 where Petrarch in De Remediis, I, ii quotes directly from Seneca's Epistolae Morales, 44, 4.

[106] Baron, "Cicero and Roman Civic Spirit...", p. 87; Salutati later was to praise Cicero for precisely this, expressed as the use of otium to prepare oneself, better to serve the republic.

Of great use to them, however, was Petrarch's radical emphasis on the exclusive importance for men of this life in the world, and his restatement of nobility as exclusively an attribute of moral living. In a sense, this clarification by Petrarch of the role and duties of individual men as something moral, together with Dante's, (somewhat misinterpreted), conviction of the ideal society, forms the basis of much of the civic humanists' ideology. Here, the role of the developing tradition of Roman law in Italian universities and urban life, should also be stressed, particularly as so many early humanists, including Petrarch, were either lawyers or notaries.[107] The real achievement of the humanists collectively, that is, including non-Florentine humanists, was to justify human life and society as such, in their own right, precisely because they were human spheres.[108] This had not been possible in the middle ages, because the social conditions of living were so precariously balanced between the hard life of the peasantry, constant wars and feuding, and a chronic state of anarchy, that no vision of human existence which did not take into account its obvious contingency and the centrality of mutual dependence, would be accepted; at the same time,

---

[107] Some sense of it is offered by Emerton, Humanism and Tyranny (Gloucester, Mass., 1964), in his introduction.

[108] Renaudet, A.: Humanisme et Renaissance (Geneva, 1958), p.38; Garin, E.: Italian Humanism, trans. P. Munz (Oxford, 1965), p.4; 12; 16.

in the early middle ages, almost all educated persons were in orders so that the kind of secular awareness becoming real in the fourteenth century was foreign to them. Both of these conditions had changed by the fourteenth century in the urban centers in Italy.[109]

Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406) was the first man who can really be called an Italian humanist in the sense that he was the first who actually confined his attentions to examining the particular world about him. For Salutati, men must be active in the world, they must build their society for themselves and their children. He is no longer concerned, really, with either God or God's influence in the first instance, except to acknowledge its reality. In a letter to Pellegrino Zambeccari, who had queried Salutati about the possibility of entering a religious life, Salutati writes:

---

[109] It is not possible to trace the entire social development of Italian cities into a Renaissance reality, within the confines of this work. The argument is essentially economic and "socio-psychological", that is, that there was more wealth, a longer life span with better living conditions, more security from danger, afforded by the urban environment. See Luzzatto, An Economic History...; Becker, Florence...; Waley, D.: The Italian City Republics (New York, 1969). On the rise of secular education and a "secular consciousness", see Rashdall,H.: The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1936), with bibliography; Garin, Medioevo Rinascimento; Burckhardt, The Civilizaion...; Ferguson, W.K.: Europe in Transition 1300-1520 (Boston, 1962).

> Do not imagine, Pellegrino, that one can seek perfection by fleeing the crowd, shunning the sight of everything beautiful and locking oneself up in a monastery or a hermitage. Do you really believe that God prefers a solitary, inactive Paul to a creative Abraham? Do you not think that God looked with greater pleasure upon Jacob and his twelve sons, two wives, and large herds than upon the two Macarii, upon Theophilus and upon Hilarion? In an attempt to run away from the earth, you may well tumble down from heaven to earth. But I, while I am busily engaged on earthly things, can always raise my heart from earth to heaven. As long as you are serving, as long as you are striving for your family, children, relatives, friends, and for the fatherland which comprises them all, you cannot help lifting your heart heavenwards and thus please God.[110]

The message in this is very different from Petrarchan *docta pietas* and from Dante's mystical union of Thomist-Aristotelianism with the *cor gentile*. For Salutati, there begins to be no ideal apart from the Florence in which he lives; his primary concerns are with human morality, commerce and political success, which are interrelated.[111]

---

[110] Salutati, *Epistolario*, ed. F. Novati (Rome, 1891), II,pp.303-07, quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, p.28.

[111] The treatment of Salutati by Trinkaus, *In Our Image...*, I,pp.51 *ff* as a synthetic thinker whose Christianity should be taken seriously is an interesting one, quite different in emphasis from that offered here. He objects to the historical treatment of Salutati's *De seculo et religione* by Baron, *Crisis...*, I, p.93, where it is suggested that the work was written in place of a civic theme; for Trinkaus, it is legitimately "ascetic or semi-ascetic" (I, p.345); moreover, his point that we must at least begin with the texts and not reject them because they do not fit our theoretical position (I, p.52) seems valid enough. Baron, however, does not however really reject the work, but rather takes a disapproving look at Salutati's "medieval" thoughts (Crisis..., I, 93 *ff*). Trinkaus it seems to me goes equally far in trying to confine Salutati within a framework of orthodoxy. He quotes, for example,

This does not, however, make him a civic humanist because, for Salutati, the active life is itself God's creation, that is, the world in which we live is the one made by God and therefore presumably the one in which we are meant to live. And that world is fundamentally secular, a world of politics in which he himself was active, and of

---

a letter of Salutati's to Fra Giovanni da Samminiato: "It is safer, I admit, to be remote from worldly things as much as we are able, as you, with me not instigating, but urging, have done. For although God may be present every where, nevertheless we in whom that conjunction ought to be achieved may become more remote in the disposition of mind which we have engaged in other affairs... Do not ever think that I have toiled for the glory of inane fame, as I see you feel, but out of the desire of knowing and communicating what God has taught, so that I might benefit others and posterity, just as others in their time benefitted us...You, as is of the nature of holy rusticity, benefit only yourself; I attempt to be of aid to myself and others" (In Our Image..., I, pp.54,55). Trinkaus' assessment of this passage: "Salutati's pious respect for his narrow-minded monastic critic, and still friend, his sense of vocation as a Christian teacher, and his feeling of obligation to his fellows is potent here, as throughout his correspondence. All this is well-known. Less well known is how much he conceived the De vita associabili et operativa, the title of an early work,... as contained within the confines of Christian devotion." One can, in fact, agree that Salutati maintains a more Christian awareness than, for example, Bruni, without for this reason, refusing to see an obvious sarcasm. Giovanni's "holy rusticity" is not meant as pious respect for a man of the cloth, but as a slur against self-seeking and egotism. It was Salutati's conviction, as indeed the Trinkaus selection shows, that monastic life was not an ideal, and that it was morally an inferior way of living, because it was in effect "to seek perfection by fleeing the crowd". Still, one feels more comfortable with Trinkaus' religious Salutati than with Baron's Salutati, who seemingly is trying and failing to be a good civic humanist.

commerce in which he was also active.[112]

Nonetheless, it seems that Trinkaus' insistence on the importance of nominalist (broadly understood) and Augustinian factors in Salutati's thought needs more emphasis than is accorded it by more specifically social historians.[113] Salutati's justification of the studia humanitatis (1406), learning in the humanities, to Giovanni da Samminiato is on clearly nominalist grounds:

> In origin, indeed, all writing and speech is intellectual and conceptual before it is vocal or public; from this it happens that nothing can be voiced which does not first exist in the mind. Whence it follows as a corollary that the names which we use can signify nothing at all except what is tied together by an intellect, and which, indeed, we express through the congruity of grammar, we prove by the force of logic, we persuade by the flourishing of rhetoric. When however we wish to speak about God, since we do not know him, lacking a concept, words are also lacking by which we could say something in the proper way concerning His indescribable majesty...And they begin to speak of the manifestation of divinity as though it might be some man, since they have nothing more sublime than man, whom they know... .[114]

---

[112] Martines, The Social World..., pp.105-08 places Salutati's annual income of c. 600 florins as equivalent to a property income at the catasto rate of 7% on property valued at 8570 florins, that is, within the top 2% of Florence's incomes in this period.

[113] Trinkaus, In Our Image..., pp.55-64. Nominalism, broadly understood, represents adherence to two basic concepts: the absolute power of God to act within or without the system of natural regularity; and secondly, the epistemological awareness of Ockham, that is, that human knowledge, deriving in the first instance, from sense impressions, represents really the mental images (concepts) of impressions, "names" rather than real "things".

[114] Epistolario, IV, pp.176-77, in Trinkaus, In Our Image..., I, pp.62,63.

Salutati's response to the assertion of radical ignorance, which we have earlier noted in Petrarch, was clearly the beginning of a new concept of knowledge and of human society and of the inherent value of that society. Salutati, borrowing from some earlier thinkers, developed a synthetic concept of voluntas and related it to man and man's nobility, making the three concepts of God, man's ignorance, and voluntas, the center of his personal didactic position.[115] Certainly Salutati had been primarily concerned with secular and civic problems from an early period, even before he came to Florence.[116]

Clearly, the focus of Salutati's thought is the concept of voluntas, and its role in the creation of a situation in which men create their own social situation. Thus, he takes Hercules as the symbol of human endeavor and particularly the Herculean tasks as reflecting the actual problems of men living the "good life". Salutati envisions men as capable of so constructing the human

---

[115] Trinkaus, In Our Image..., pp.76 ff et passim, stresses the legacy of Augustine in the development of voluntas. The debt to nominalist logic and epistemology has been noted, and is stressed by Garin, Italian Humanism, p.37 who notes also the debt to the Franciscan tradition of urban commitment rather than to withdrawl in remote, rural monasteries. Emerton, Humanism and Tyranny, p.32 ff notes the large debt to notarial and legal training which oriented Salutati's thinking into practical and secular directions.

[116] Witt, R.G.: "Coluccio Salutati, Chancellor and Citizen of Lucca (1370-1372)" in Traditio, vol.25, 1969, pp.191-216. Salutati's debt to the simple fact of his personal life history, one in constant contact with political and commercial affairs, has received less attention than it deserves, especially in comparison with the work on his debt to the tradition of thought which preceded him.

community by commerce and law that that community can be seen as a desirable form, a meaningful way of living.[117] For Salutati, men were active, and creative. It is in particular to Salutati that we referred earlier on, suggesting that the humanists utilized Dante's externalization of human creativity by applying it to social reality.

With Salutati, nobility was predicated on precisely this political and commercial bias. In discussing the relative merits of law and medicine in the De nobilitate legum et medicinae (1399) he argues that law is more noble because it makes men more noble, that it enables them better to live in the human society of God's creation and men's execution.[118] Nobility is, for Salutati, a problem of moral action, but it is so principally because moral action itself had for him a fundamentally social orientation.[119]

---

[117] Garin, Italian Humanism, pp.33-35; Medioevo e Rinascimento, pp. 80,81: "Ora in Ercole, nelle sua opere come nella sua gloria, i poete hanno voluto trasfondere 'quicquid humanis viribus arduum, excellens, inaccessibile, vel intellectu vel actu reperici potest'. Molte più che non le faticose digressioni salutatiane, importa questo: la poesia vista come inno che trasfigura le impresse degli uomini eccellenti e dà sembianze divine ai 'fortissimi' eroi".

[118] Garin, Italian Humanism, pp.32-34; Trinkaus, In Our Image..., I, p.64. Trinkaus stresses exclusively the voluntarist basis of law in Salutati, and its reflection of the epistemological problem without drawing the seemingly inevitable conclusion that the relationship is clearly to life and not, strictly speaking, to salvation.

[119] Baron, "Cicero and Roman Civic Spirit...", p.91; Rice, Renaissance ...Wisdom, p.38.

The thought of Leonardo Bruni (c.1374-1444) is in some ways more difficult of analysis.[120] Further, he did not unite anything which specifically related to the theme of nobility.[121] However, since his work is seen as central in the development of the "civic" humanism in which Poggio developed and first was active, some consideration of him seems necessary; also, Bruni's wide personal fame and influence on his contemporaries demands some assessment.[122]

---

[120] The polemical character of Bruni's writings concerning Florence requires a careful assessment. Baron, Crisis..., I, pp.163 ff presents the very polemicism as a fundamental aspect of civic humanism. This does not however necessarily make it fundamental to humanism in its entirety, whose problems were of human living, not specifically within a republican concept.

[121] See the list of his works in Vespasiano da Bisticci, Vite de Uomini Illustri del secolo xv; ed. P. d'Ancona and E. Aeschlimann (Milan, 1951), pp.258-59. Baron, Crisis..., II, pp.536-37 notes that he did enter the discussion of Themistocles's definition of nobilitas, arguing that it derived entirely from the Patria; and see below, ch.4.

[122] Vespasiano, Vite..., p.256: "In questo tempo era messer Lionardo venuta in tanta riputazione, che in Italia e fuori era la fama sua; e del contivono erano in Firenze infiniti iscrittori, che scrivevano l'opere sua, parte per in Firenze, e parte per mandare fuori; in modo che messer Lionardo non andava in luozo, che non trovassi che delle opere sua si scrivessi. In tanta riputazione erano venute, che per tutta il mondo erano domandate." I have stressed this to indicate the essential, but circumspect, influence which Bruni has had in terms of this study.

Bruni, like Salutati, although not native to Florence, was an active politician and commercial investor. His personal commitment to the Florentine system of government and to the abstract "city of Florence" cannot be stressed too deeply. Much of his writing is concerned primarily with nothing else than defending and exalting the reputation of Florence and its republicanism against detractors, particularly during the period of polemics associated with and emerging from the political confrontation of the city with the Milanese prince, Giangaleazzo Visconti (1399-1402). It is therefore with this civic rootedness in mind that we must assess many of the philosophical arguments attributed to him.[123]

Indeed, for Bruni, human life, human morality, and human ends are meaningless unless they have some clearly demonstrable relationship to civic activity in a republic. If Salutati had struggled to justify some relationship between valid human activity and civic life, with Bruni this relationship becomes completely one-sided, in the sense that the "given" is no longer the individual's moral choices and personal history, but rather the city, its greatness and its history. He fits the individual into a city environment

---

[123] Vespasiano, Vite..., pp.248-56 on his political career; Martines, The Social World..., pp.117-23 on his economic situation (Bruni, like Salutati, was among the highest class in wealth in the city); Baron, Crisis..., I, pp.168-77; 218-245 on Bruni as the principal apologist and panegyrist of the Florentine social system.

which has no other referent than itself for its justification.[124] In his later work, Bruni suggests that the development of humanism itself, of the studia humanitatis, and indeed of all culture, is dependent on the free city.[125]

---

[124] Garin, Italian Humanism, p.41: "The civic life is made by man and is at the same time the full realization of the individual who, without it, fails to reach his highest perfection."

[125] Baron, Crisis..., I, p.363, II, pp.620-21, nn.15,16, citing Bruni's Vita di Dante (1436): "E puossi dire che le lettere e gli studi della lingua latina andassero parimente con lo stato della repubblica di Roma; perocchè insino all'età di Tullio ebbe accrescimento, di poì, perduta la libertà del popolo romano per la signoria degl'imperadori...,insieme col buono stato della città di Roma più la buona disposizione degli studi e delle lettere...A che proposito di dice questo da me? Solo per dimonstrare, che, come la città di Roma fu annichilata dagl'imperadori pervesi tiranni, così gli studi e le lettere latine riceverono simile ruina e diminuzione, intanto che all'estremo quasi non si trovava chi lettere latine con alcuna gentilezza sapesse...Ricuperata di poi la libertà de' popoli italici per la cacciata de' Longobardi..., le città di Toscana e altre cominciarono a riaversi ed a dare opera agli studi ed alquanto limare il grosso stile. E così a poco a poco vennero ripigliando vigore,...rivocò in luce l'antica leggiadria delle stile perduto e spento."

In this perspective, we can return to Bruni's concern with men and their completeness. Indeed, Bruni recognized the crucial value of philological-historical method, and perfected the curriculum of the studia humanitatis, and the central role within it of rhetoric.[126] But the "new studies" were merely a preparation, valueless in themselves, and gaining value only insofar as they contributed to the making of a good citizen. "For Bruni, culture is humanitas and therefore community".[127]

There is a social basis for the ascendancy of the city in Bruni's generation, which is examined in greater detail below.[128] What Bruni did accomplish was to posit the city and its social life, rather than God, as the final determinant of human morality, and as the raison d'être of human education in the studia humanitatis. Once this extreme position had been formulated, a reaction developed against it, a reaction which began with Poggio. Man was freed from the divine by Bruni, but only to be defined by the social; Bruni's

---

[126] See his short treatise De Studiis et Litteris, trans. by W.H. Woodward, in Vittorino da Feltre and other Humanist Educators (New York, 1963).

[127] Garin, Italian Humanism, p.41.

[128] In ChapterIII. We return later to Bruni after this discussion, which is necessary to an understanding of him and of Poggio.

man is no more free than Thomas', but rather is simply bound and defined by a different ultimate organizing principle. To be sure, however, the organizing principle is exclusively secular and therefore redefines the life of man, and, implicitly, of nobility itself. Thus, nobility is, for Bruni and later humanists, a function of living actively in cities, of participating in urban affairs, political and economic. The concept of private, personal "rights" disappears with Bruni more profoundly than with the medieval thinkers, because his organizing principle is a tangible one. In thus defining nobility within an urban context, Bruni implicitly justifies not only the concept of nobility, but also the concept of a bourgeois nobility, that is, one defined by the bourgeois values of republican political power, commerce, and formal education which itself was a justification of this way of life.

## III

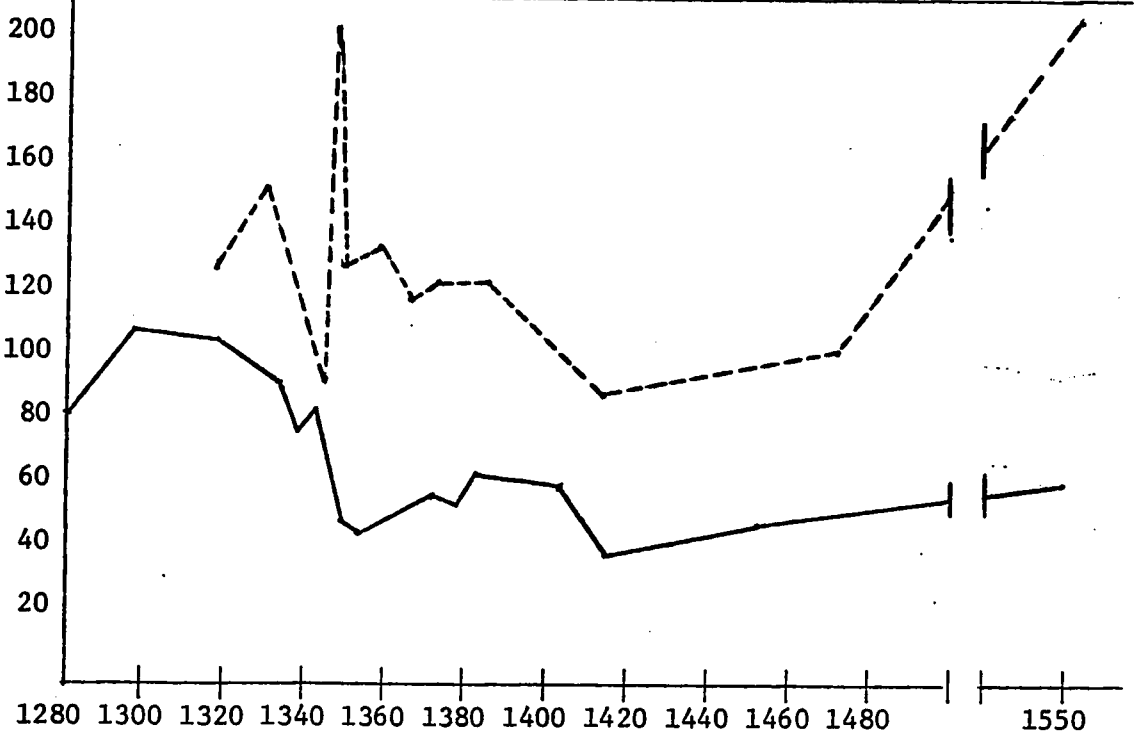
### A survey of social Florence, 1348-1440

While it is not the primary purpose of this essay to analyze Florentine social structure during the period of Poggio's lifetime (1380-1459), it is not possible to avoid a relatively brief discussion of the changing social context within which Poggio worked. Poggio's concern with social structure forms a central organizing pattern of his thought, and is of interest as well because his views are different from those of the most articulate observers who preceeded him, the "civic humanists", and in a certain sense are normative for late Florentine humanism generally. This being the case, we shall outline briefly the kinds of social change occurring in Florence which will be considered in this chapter.

The problem of demographic analysis is an important one for this period, more because of its wide repercussions than because Poggio himself was or was not aware of it. The movement of Florentine population is a much debated problem, both in gross outline and in detail. This is so particularly in its relationship to basic socio-economic patterns noted in Florentine economic development during the Trecento and first half of the Quattrocento. The population curve represented in figure I demonstrates certain erratic and peculiar directions. The rise in population before the plague interrupts a period of decline begun at the turn of the century, one

probably intensified by the plague and famine years of 1317-1320, as well as by the wars with Castruccio of Lucca (1315-1328), which destroyed some parts of the Florentine countryside. The population

FIGURE I : POPULATION of FLORENCE, 1280-1550 (in thousands)




Source: See Appendix B
———: urban
– – – – –: contado

was in a state of fairly rapid decline during the late thirties, a period noted as an economic high-point in the history of communal Florence. Between 1318 and 1430, Florentine population declined by some 23,000 persons, or about 25% of the total city population. While this does not equal the sudden drop of about 40,000, or 50%, occasioned by the Black Death in July to September 1348, it is nonetheless a steep decline, vitiating arguments which tend to

explain the change in social structure of Florence during the fourteenth century solely, or mainly, in demographic terms. The recovery after the 1348 plague is on a smaller scale, and is not at all a complete recovery, since the curve goes down again in 1417, reaching the lowest point of the entire period, c.35,000, or about one third of the population in 1300. Following this, the curve rises again and stabilizes at a level between fifty and sixty thousand in the second half of the fifteenth century.

During this period, the relationship between the city and the contado populations is undergoing some changes. The population of the contado is in some degree a function of Florentine imperialistic policies after 1350, so that new additions to its territory make the rise in general population seem more significant than it probably was.[1] In fact, the birth rate of 61-66 per thousand population suggested by Villani may be excessively high. What seems clear, however, is that the proportion is in gross terms undergoing change: in 1318, the ratio of city to contado was 1 to 1.2; in 1343,

---

[1]For a consideration of this aspect of the problem in more detail, see Fiumi, E.: "Fioritura e decadenza dell'economia fiorentina," in Archivio Storico Italiano, CXVI (1958), 445-510; see p.480 ff et passim. Hereafter, this article cited as Fiumi, "Fioritura e decadenza...".

still 1 to 1.2; in 1380, it is 1 to 2.2; in 1470, still 1 to 2.2; in 1550, it is 1 to c.3. The immediately post-plague figure of 1:3 can be taken as a temporary abberation registering the fact that the city population was more severely hit by the plague than the countryside. There remains however the pattern: in the period of Florence's greatest commercial dominance, the relationship of the city to administered area while quite close was not crucial to economic life, whereas already during the period of civic humanism (1380-1430), this is changing such that the administered area assumes ever-increasing importance.

For the purpose of this essay, there are two aspects of this discussion which need to be stressed: first, the dramatic population decline of the early fifteenth century which needs far more attention than it normally receives; and second, the changing relationship between the city and the contado. In terms of the contado both as a source of labor power, and of wealth in taxation, the changing relationship of the city to it was recognized by contemporary men, and is evidenced in the increasing degree to which the city relies on it for its tax revenues, and the greater degree to which Florentine investment capital came to be invested in local affairs, such as the city's growing public debt, and property rather than international trading.

This pattern of investments is itself, however, a matter which has received varying interpretations. It has been argued that

the later Trecento and early Quattrocento periods do not demonstrate a flight of Florentine investment capital into land,[2] and it has been argued that they do.[3] Moreover, the nature of capital investment in the countryside is itself a question still undergoing considerable discussion, during this period.[4] Jones notes, however, a simple fact of crucial importance in the discussion which must be considered by every explanation, that is, that only about 1/9th of invested Florentine capital in 1427 is in commercial trading companies, while the remainder was in land and government debentures,[5] both of which we are here interpreting as representing precisely the change towards a more locally directed economic activity.

---

[2]Molho, A.: "The Florentine 'Tassa dei traffichi' of 1451", in Studies in the Renaissance, 17 (1970), 73-118; hereafter cited as Molho, "Tassa dei traffichi..."; see pp.96-97 for this argument. Also, Sapori, A.: Le Marchand Italien au Moyen Age (Paris, 1952), pp.30 ff; hereafter cited as Sapori, Le Marchand... .

[3]For which, see Jones, P.J.: "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century", in Papers of the British School at Rome, XXIV (1956), 183-205; see p.198; hereafter cited as Jones, "Florentine Families...". Also, see Fiumi, E.: "Sui rapporti economici tra città e contado nell'età communale" in Archivio Storico Italiano, 114 (1956), 18-68; see pp.44-46, and his conclusions, pp.67-68; hereafter cited as Fiumi, "Sui rapporti...".

[4]Fiumi, "Sui rapporti..." cites the protectionist legislation of the latter fourteenth century as evidence of a genuine concern for the well-being of the countryside, although his general argument stresses the short-sightedness of the city policies in this regard; see pp. 45-46. Jones argues that the interest of the commercial investor was essentially of a capitalistic sort, "Florentine Families...", pp.199-204. We are arguing not that such investment was not "commercial", but that its focus was changing, and that the contado was increasingly seen as a primary source of revenues , both private and public.

[5]Jones, "Florentine Families...", p.197, n.113; and cf. Molho, "Tassa

Another factor which has received less consideration than it should be accorded is the decline of the urban labor force in Florence from 1330 to 1430; the population had declined by over 2/3rds making industrial production within the city more difficult, as well as forcing the producer to find new local markets. In this pattern, the role of the contado is clearly visible as, first, a new market area, and as a source of labor no longer available in the city.

It has, in fact, been documented that Florentine commercial and industrial production were declining in the second half of the fourteenth century.[6] A central reason for this, moreover, is seen in the decline of the urban labor force from 30,000 in 1338 to 14,000 in 1373, and this was certainly even lower in 1427, when the population had further declined. An indicator of declining production is the rising number of bankruptcies, from seven in the period from 1349-1357 to forty-three during the years 1371-76, despite the addition of territories and revenues which came under Florentine domination during these years.[7] Indeed, one of the demands of the rebellious

---

dei traffichi...", pp.96-97, where he notes that in 1458, a total of some 721,733 florins were invested in trade; taking Jones' calculations of Florentine assets in 1427 (which surely would have grown) of over 8,000,000 florins, the portion of capital invested in trade would have declined still further.

[6] Brucker, G.: Florentine Politics and Society, 1343-78 (Princeton, 1962), hereafter cited as Brucker, Florentine Politics... .

[7] The bankruptcy figures are from Brucker, Florentine Politics..., p.15; the increases in territories, from Fiumi, "Fioritura e decadenza...", p.480, citing for example, Pisa, Prato, and San Gimignano.

Ciompi in 1378 was that production be maintained above a certain minimal level.[8] A level only slightly higher than this minimum was maintained through the 1430's.[9]

There is, on the other hand, an argument which suggests that while traditional manufactures may have been declining, others were advancing, thereby taking up the slack and evidencing the continued strength of the economy.[10] The principal arguments in this regard are that the Florentine silk manufactures and alum-mines industries display a consistent and significant growth pattern in this period.[11] Florentine silk manufactures were well-enough established and reputed by 1422 that Filippo Maria Visconti imported a Florentine master, Ser Pietro di Bartolo, to establish a silk-works at Milan.[12] The

---

[8] Brucker, Florentine Politics..., p.15.

[9] Luzzatto, G.: An Economic History..., p.131 ff.

[10] The basic thesis is Cipolla's, although he is not talking exclusively of Florentine society. C.M. Cipolla, "The Economic Policies of Governments: The Italian and Iberian Peninsulas" in The Cambridge Economic History, ed. M. Postan, E.E. Rich and E. Miller (Cambridge, England, 1963), III, pp.397-429.

[11] Corti, G. & da Silva, J.G.: "Note sur la production de la soie à Florence, au XV$^{e}$ siècle" in Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilizations, XX (1965), 309-311; hereafter cited as Corti & Silva, "Note...".

[12] Cipolla, "The Economic Policies...", p.419.

volume of silk production and the amount of revenue it produced, however, do not seem to warrant the claim that it could be seen as generally picking up the slack from the declining wool industries.[13] The alum mines, on the other hand, were not directly a Florentine enterprise, but a joint Florentine-papal venture in which the Florentine share was essentially sales on commission.[14] Again, the continued fall in labor power is ignored by proponents of this argument, as is the proportional investment of capital already discussed.

Again, some account must be taken of the inflation which marks the Florentine economy in the second half of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It seems to me that the coincidence of both a high degree of inflation and lower volumes of production indicates a weaker rather than a stronger economy. The value of the

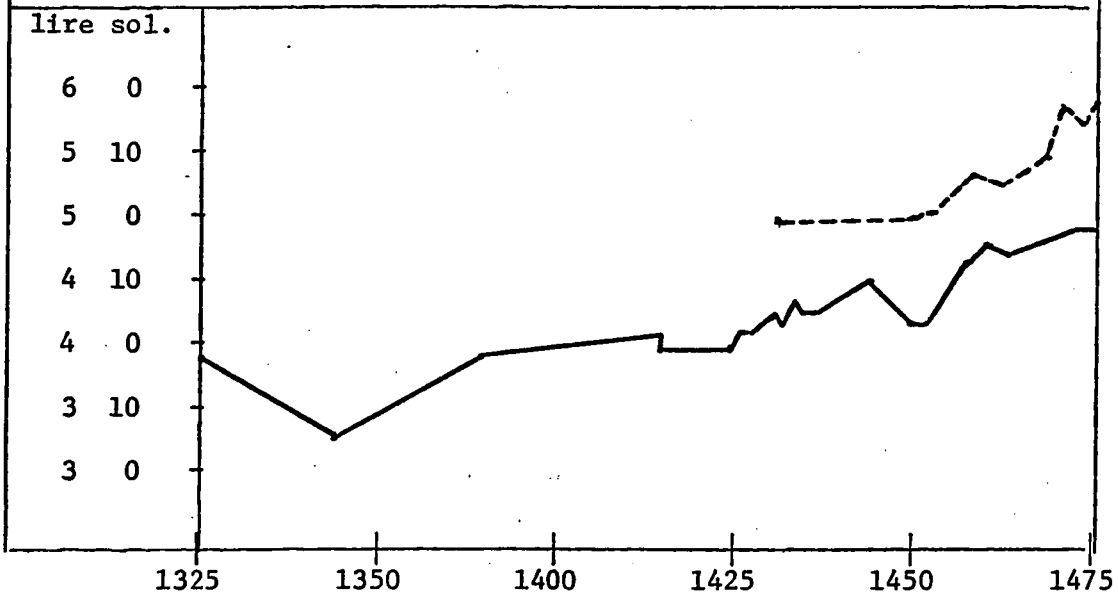
---

[13] Corti and da Silva give silk production in 1430 at 498 pieces, and in 1447 at 2,002 pieces, with revenues, including countryside, of 1,024 florins in 1436 and 1,158 florins in 1446; "Note...", pp.310, 311. Sapori, Le Marchand..., p.38, gives wool production for the 200 shops in 1336 at 70-80,000 pieces, with gross revenues of 1,200,000 florins. The minimal level of production demanded by the Ciompi was 24,000 pieces; Brucker, Florentine Politics..., p.15.

[14] The problem of the alum industry for our purposes is that its moment of great exploitation and profit-taking does not occur until a later period. The Medici only get the concession at Tolfa in 1446, and even then do not get the monopoly they seek for the sales. It is withdrawn from them in 1478, and given to the Doria and Centurioni of Genoa, and subsequently a Sienese firm, headed by Agnostini Chigi, receives the concession in 1500. This firm manages to turn over for Chigi a fortune of some 800,000 ducats. This is all, however, much later than our main period : see Renouard, Y.: Etudes d'Histoire Médiévale (Paris, 1968),pp.465; 470 ff; 501.

gold florin in terms of the smaller silver currencies (the broken line in figure II) denotes an increasingly serious problem in Florence's economy.[15] The treasury intake from the various gabelles does rise after the plague, considerably; this is, however, in part a function of the large increases in the rates, in 1350-51 and again in 1364. At the same time, the silver money which was collected was worth less and less, particularly as Florence was obliged to meet its governmental debts with gold florins.

FIGURE II : VALUE of GOLD FLORIN in LIRE & SOLDI




Source: Becker, Florence..., I, pp.79; 130.

De Roover, R.: "The Medici Bank" in The Journal of Economic History, vols. 6&7 (1946-47), 24-52; 153-72, at pp.69-82; see vol.7, ,947, p.77.

---

[15] De Roover, "The Medici Bank", in The Journal of Economic History, 7, (1947), pp.69-82, suggests that this was one reason for the collapse

The most serious problem perhaps with all discussions of Florentine economics of the first half of the fifteenth century is that there remains no general work on the problem.[16] For example, the catasto, a head tax on movable property, was levied sixty four and one third times between 1427 and 1431, and eighty nine times between 1431 and 1434.[17] At the same time, the public fisc was being heavily financed by the Monte and by still more prestanze, forced loans levied to support special expenditures.[18]

We do not have a systematic account of Florentine revenues during the period 1350-1450, although there are numerous isolated and fragmentary groups of figures which can and have been utilized.[19]

---

of the firm, that they accepted silver coin, progressively less valuable, on deposit, but were obliged to meet their commercial debts with gold. And cf. De Roover, The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank 1397-1494 (Cambridge,Mass., 1963), pp.364-75.

[16] As has been noted by, for example, Molho, Tassa dei traffichi...", p.73. The work of Barbadoro, B.: Le Finanze della Repubblica Fiorentina (Florence, 1929), only carries the problem up to the consolidation of debt in the 1345 Monte.

[17] Molho, "Tassa dei traffichi...", p.76.

[18] Becker, Florence..., II, pp.71-72; he notes that enabling legislation allowing the Monte to lend the treasury up to 200,000 florins per annum was passed in the late 1360's, and acted upon from time to time, for varying amounts after this.

[19] See Appendix C.

The only comprehensive figures which we have at this point are those for receipts from the customs gabelle; these are, of course, only more or less representative of the changes in the economy as a whole.

The customs toll itself demonstrates a convincing enough recovery in the immediate post-plague period. There are, however, some problems with this picture. Most significant, of course, is that the rise reflects a doubling of the rates in 1350, and a second raise of rates in 1364.[20] The global figures, moreover, do not account for the progressive devaluation of the silver currency in which it was collected. The tentative corrected line (broken in figure III) still indicates some recovery, but the recovery is much smaller, and follows far more closely the smaller pattern seen in the demographic curve. The recovery, then, while real, was quite modest. There seems, moreover, to be no other explanation for the continued and ever steeper rise of the public debt. Had revenues recovered as dramatically as the global figures indicated, there would have been no real need for the spectacular escalation of fiscal borrowing.

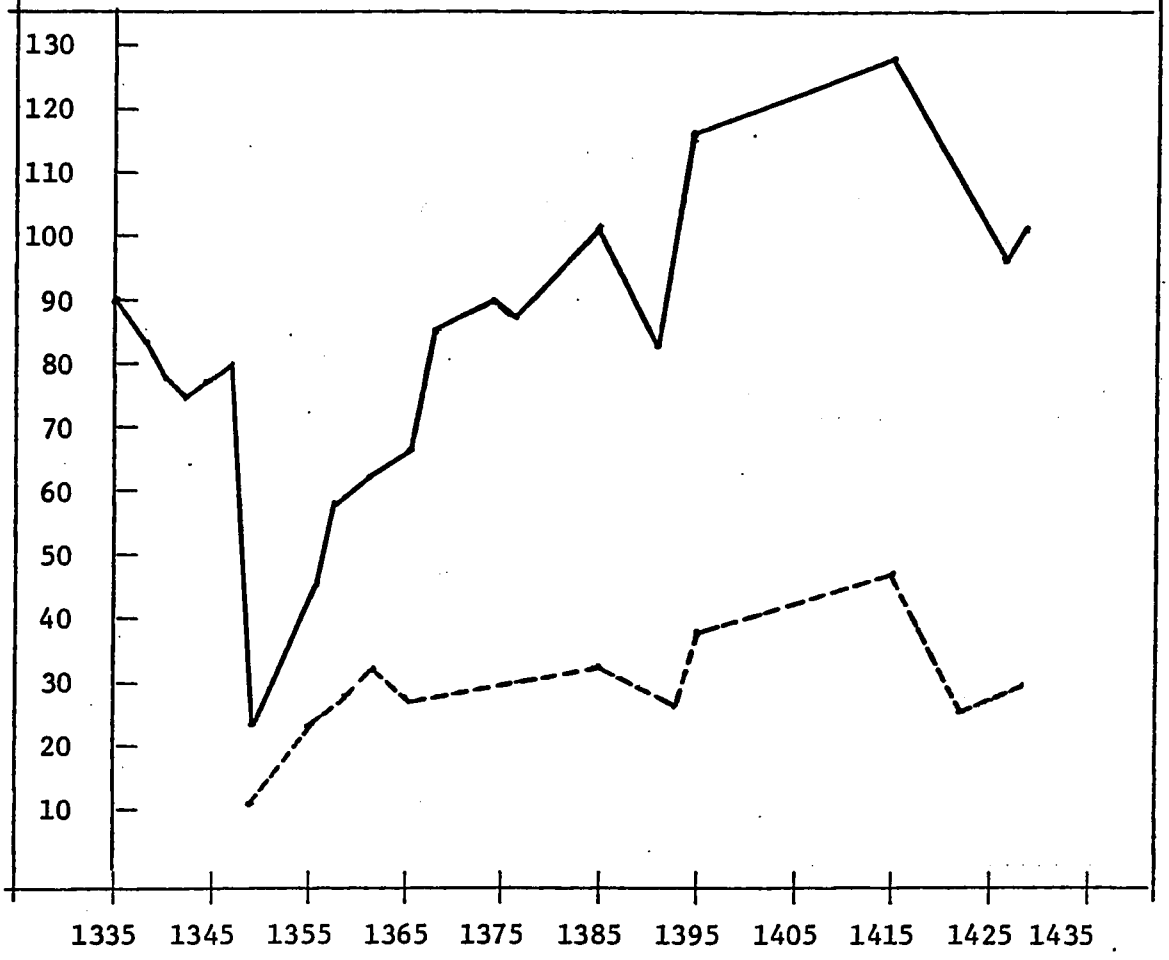
A glance at the movement of the public debt during this period seems to indicate that revenues were certainly lagging behind expenses. From a small debt which was easily manageable in the early Trecento, Florence's deficit financing took on a larger scale,

---

[20] Becker, Florence..., II, p.168.

growing initially out of the economic crisis of 1339-1343. The founding of the Monte, the funded public debt in 1345, initially scaled down the public debt substantially, and provisions were made

FIGURE III : CUSTOMS REVENUES of FLORENCE, 1336-1427 (in thousands of florins)




Source: See Appendix C.
———: actual revenues
– – – –: corrected revenues, accounting for rate increase and devaluation of silver

at this point for amortization of the remainder over a period of time by allocating to this purpose certain gabelle revenues. This plan

was, however, never carried out, with the result that the debt continued a steep rise until in 1427 it was equal to the combined assets of all Florentine taxpayers.[21] It is to be noted, moreover, that the period of fastest and most important growth coincides almost exactly with the period which has been described as that of civic humanism, from c. 1375 to c. 1430.

The concept of deficit financing of this kind involves an awareness of public prerogative over private assets of a kind which is qualitatively different from the awareness which preceded it, and which had a markedly different impact. It predicates a kind of indissoluble bond between the individual, his activities, and the society as a whole. In short, it reflects the kind of identification of the individual with the society which was urged by the proponents of civic humanism.

The well-known thesis of Hans Baron concerning the political origins of civic humanism seems, on one level, to be reconcilable with the causative pattern developed in this chapter.[22] Moreover,

---

[21]Jones, "Florentine Families...", p.197.

[22]For sources of Baron's thesis, see Chapter 2, note 92.

the crucial period which most clearly establishes this connection is precisely where Baron had placed it, in the wars with the Visconti, and particularly with Giangaleazzo Visconti. The role of military expenditures in the rise of the public debt should not be minimized.[23] It was not so much the simple political fact of war, because Florence had been at war almost constantly from the early Trecento. Rather, it was the combination of the declining population which could no longer fill out an army, and the rapid rise in the cost of mercenary armies. In 1325, Florence had fought against Castruccio at a cost of c. 315,000 florins in the most expensive year of the war. In 1426, against Filippo Maria Visconti, a Florence with 2/3 less population had to pay c. 888,000 florins in order to fight the war. The wars which Baron noted as crucial, those with the Giangaleazzo Visconti, cost Florence some 8,500,000 florins over the period 1388-1402. Also during this period, the public debt rose from under two to over three million florins; at the same time, the first large inflationary leap of the currency took place, the florin going from a value of three lire five soldi to four lire one soldi.

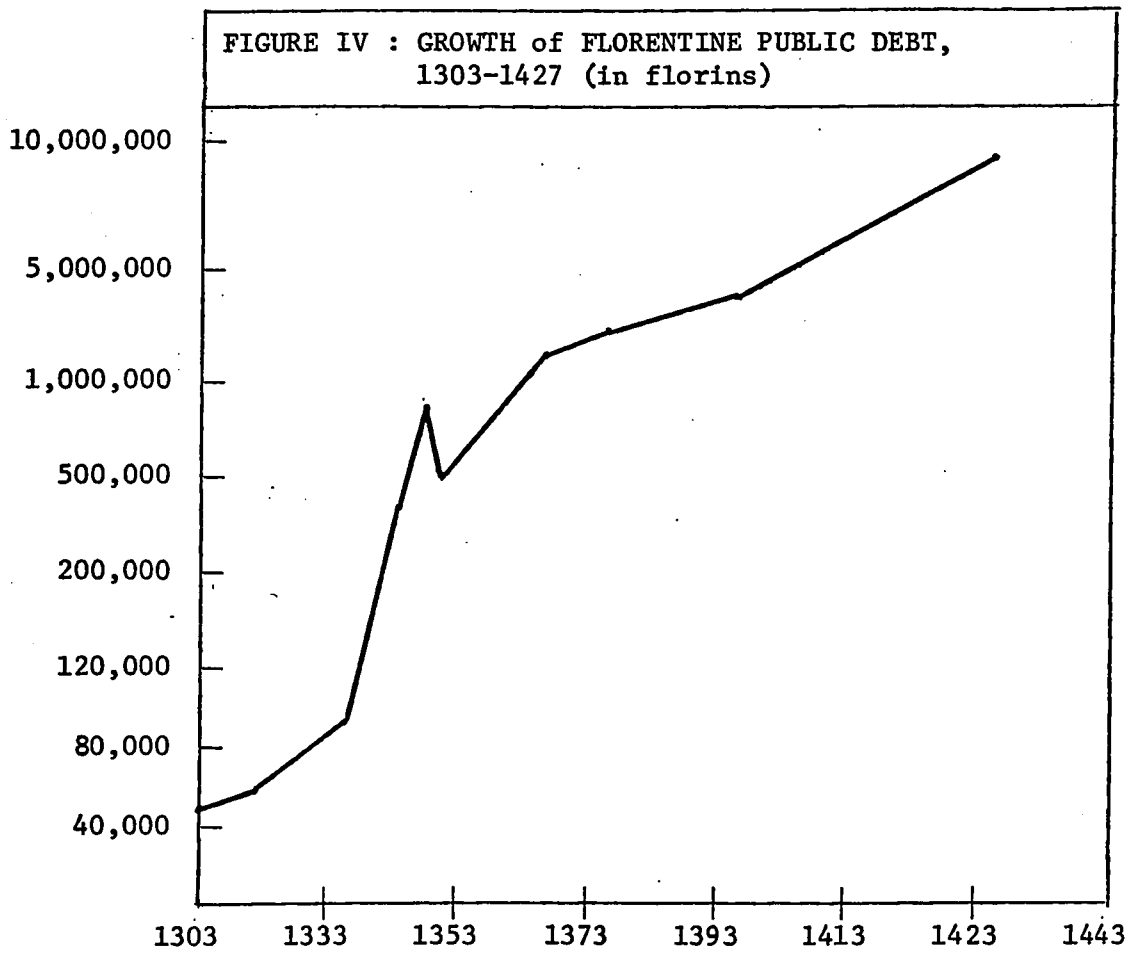
It is important, however, to put Baron's "moment" into a perspective. The critical moment would seem far more truly to come

---

[23]See Appendix E.

in the second decade of the fifteenth century, while the initial moment developed more or less quickly out of the collapse of the

FIGURE IV : GROWTH of FLORENTINE PUBLIC DEBT, 1303-1427 (in florins)




Source: See Appendix D

early 1340's which became disastrous when the pre-plague recovery was shattered in 1348. Throughout this chapter certain kinds of economic factors have been stressed as indicative of the social situation as a whole: the labor force, private investment capital, the ratio of city to contado population, and a currency stable enough to maintain its buying position. The currency and the question of investment capital

have been linked to the question of production of goods. It is these which we will again examine in order to consider the suitability of the third decade of the fifteenth century as the period of crisis.

The urban labor force in Florence was in decline from the 1320's, recovered briefly before the plague, and then dropped sharply off; the post-plague recovery was real, if modest, and another low was reached after the plague of 1417. The population of Florence in 1427 was a little over 37,000 and this would already represent a small recovery if the previous pattern of recovery was followed, and if the returns from the customs gabelle are really indicative. It would therefore have a labor force through the decade of about 11,000 or about 1/3 of the labor force in 1330.

The direction in which private capital was flowing has already been noted, but it would perhaps be worthwhile to dwell a little more on this question. Private capital was moving more and more after 1350 into public debt and land. This would explain the very peculiar growth of the public debt; it is important to note that this growth was especially rapid and large-scale during precisely this third decade of the fifteenth century, when it grew from over three million florins to more than eight million florins in 1427. The catasto of that year shows yet another aspect of this situation, which is that virtually every taxpayer with an assessment

of over 5000 florins owned shares in the public debt.[24] This can be compared with perhaps 1/12 of the population in 1380 and fifty families in 1330.[25] Further, while the catasto became law in 1427, this did not free the populace from prestanze exactions on an enormous scale, while they continued at the same time to buy Monte shares.[26] There was of course still private investment in Florence, and some of it on a really large scale. The fortune accumulated by Niccolo di Jacopo degli Alberti seems to have been the largest fortune ever seen in Florence up to his time, and larger by far than anyone's in the fifteenth century.[27] The career of Francesco Sassetti is similar, and he too, employed most of his funds in commercial banking and trading.[28] And indeed, many such cases and

---

[24] Becker, Florence..., II, p.234.

[25] Becker, Florence..., II, p.159.

[26] Becker, Florence..., II, pp.244-46; in 1431 the catasti mounted to over 700,000 florins, and the prestanze to over 500,000.

[27] Renouard, Y.: Les Hommes d'Affaires..., pp.157-59; his fortune is estimated at 340,000 florins. Niccolo died in 1377.

[28] Renouard, Les Hommes d'Affaires..., pp.216-219. Sassetti's fortune was in an important sense a paper fortune, built on employing the deposited capital of the Lyons branch of the Medici Bank. When his branch's debts were called in, Sassetti was ruined. (De Roover, The Medici Bank, pp. 368-73).

individuals could be noted. Nonetheless, it remains that in 1427 only 1/9 of Florence's investment capital was in commercial and private enterprises, and in 1458, still less.

The third factor, that of the relationship of the city population of Florence to its contado, is far more complex than appears from the simple comparative graph. Some of the cities which the Florentine contado included within its boundaries were in themselves large urban centers with their own history of trade and commerce, for example Pisa and Prato. The town of Volterra was slowly acquiring importance towards the end of our period as a source of alum and as a market for other capital investment.[29] There is, moreover, at present no real way of breaking down the global figures into a genuine urban/rural comparison. This however does not vitiate the main concept of the contado used in this essay, that is, that of an administered area, taking on comparatively more and more importance by reference to the center, in terms of population and as the source of revenues. There are, in this view, some patterns which emerge with relative clarity.

Between the years 1327 and 1339, there was a reduction in the estimo, a direct tax levied on real estate according to its assessed value, levied on the contado by the city of Florence which

---

[29] Schevill, F.: Medieval...Florence, pp.379-80 where he discusses the crisis created by the Volterra alum mines in Florence in 1471.

lowered its levies from 225,000 lire to 150,000 lire.[30] This more than anything else reflects the decline in rural population during this period, and the onset of the economic crisis of 1339-53.[31] When the economic crisis brought Brienne to Florence, he began to exercise a much tighter control over the areas than the earlier periods.[32] Brienne's policies, however, merely showed the way. The great "tavola" experiment of 1346-55, despite the fact that it was never brought into law, marks a new attitude towards the contado.[33] The tavola was to be a collected listing of all properties according to taxation rate assessment, which listing would have made a rational process of the estimo. From that point, it was considered as an adjunct of the city, such that its primary function came to be seen as providing the city with additional revenues. The higher rates imposed upon the contado, comparative to city rates, reflects this awareness of the growing willingness and need to exploit the contado.

---

[30] Fiumi, "Sui rapporti...", p.37.

[31] Fiumi, "Sui rapporti...", pp.36-38.

[32] Becker, Florence..., I, p.155 ff.

[33] Fiumi, E.: "L'imposta diretta nei communi medioevali della Toscana" in Studi in onore di Armando Sapori (Milan, 1957), pp.329-39; see pp.336-38; and cf., Fiumi, "Fioritura e decadenza...", p.492.

Revenues from the contado are themselves a difficult matter to judge, because a portion of the revenues of the late fourteenth century and early fifteenth century represents revenues from urban areas under Florentine administration. In 1336, the revenues from the city-contado into the public fisc had stood at 225,000 to 75,000 florins respectively; thus, the city, or 37.5% of the population had contributed 75% of the indirect revenues.[34] From 1352, the regulatores became an expanded administrative tool, charged with tightening the collection both of indirect taxes and, later, of estimi, in the contado, much of which was earmarked for amortization of the public debt.[35] In 1367, the contado was made responsible for the wine gabelle and for their own taxes on inns and taverns, with an estimated return being fixed by the Signoria in advance of collections.[36] The estimo rate, moreover, climbed rapidly from 10 soldi per lira in 1336 to between 30 and 40 per lira in the 1360's.[37] By the end of the century, the contado was contributing about 150,000 florins annually, from all sources, into the Florentine treasury, whose total receipts hovered about 300,000.[38] At the same time, the treasury receipts from all these indirect levies from the contado had, in 1379, been

---

[34]The population figures are in Appendix B.

[35]Becker, Florence..., II, p. 183.

[36]Becker, Florence..., II, p. 184.

[37]Becker, Florence..., II, pp. 184-85.

[38]Becker, Florence..., II, pp. 185; 242.

allocated directly to the repayment of Monte debts, particularly its annual interest payments.[39] Again, tribute, not included in the above figures, from the subject cities, soared.[40]

In the 1380's the wine gabelle yielded, from the contado alone, 15,000 florins annually.[41] In the early fifteenth century, the contributions of the contado into the treasury surpassed those of the city.[42] Again, in 1427, the catasto regulations fixed a rate of 18,594 florins per levy on the contado, and 25,341 florins on the city, but the countryside was charged more frequently than the city.[43]

These figures mask, however, a great degree of uncertainty concerning rural Tuscany in this period, and even concerning the precise relationship of the administered cities. Even the pattern

---

[39] Becker, Florence..., II, p.183.

[40] Fiumi, E.: Storia economica e sociale di San Gimignano (Florence, 1961), pp.189-91; hereafter cited as Fiumi, San Gimignano...; and Becker, Florence..., II, p.187.

[41] Becker, Florence..., II, p.241.

[42] Becker, Florence..., II, p.242; in 1405, the rural revenues totalled 150,000 florins, whereas total revenues were 250,000 florins.

[43] Becker, Florence..., II, p.242.

of the population movement is not agreed upon.[44] The extent to which the inflation affecting Florence had hit equally hard, or perhaps even harder, in the countryside is not really known, with the result that the high level of taxation might be deceptive in absolute terms, but still relevant in comparative terms.[45]

There seems then to be a general pattern of increasing dependence of the city on its administered area through the second half of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. As the citizenry of the city became less and less capable of supporting alone the government expenditures, a pattern of inflated currency, deficit financing on an increasing scale, and growing dependence on the *contado* for revenues, begins to emerge. Florence becomes, in effect, an administrative capital of a territorial state.

The city itself is thus cast in a different role. It had been a city-state in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, with a relatively small *contado* which had provided it mainly with

---

[44] Fiumi, *San Gimignano...*, p.174 shows the population still in decline in 1428, which would accord with the Florentine pattern, which reaches its lowest point in the early 1420's. Herlihy, "Rural Pistoia...", p.230, however, shows the rural areas recovering from the early Quattrocento.

[45] Herlihy, "*Rural Pistoia...*": the value of 1 *staia* of wheat had risen from 7 soldi in the 1270's to c. 22 soldi at the turn of the century; 1 florin converted for 1.4 lire in the 1270's, for 3 lire in the 1340's, and for almost 6 lire in the 1420's; pp.240-43.

foodstuffs. By the third decade of the fifteenth century, however, it had changed, and become, metaphorically, a large corporation, publicly owned, whose principal task was to administer its now larger and vital contado in the most efficient way. By the time of the crisis of the early fifteenth century, the government of Florence is in the hands of a new elite, different from the grandi who had preceded them in having no claim to authority except what they derived from their wealth and their political activity in the republic. Even within the families of this new group of maggiori, attitudes had changed considerably.[46]

It is the delineation of this pattern of change in precise terms which remains, however, a difficult task. In the general view, a variety of changes can be subsumed under a broad term, such as "the growth of public prerogative". The notion of prerogative is an important one in this phrase, registering the shift in initiative from the private to the public sphere, the shift in "rights" or

---

[46] Brucker, G.: The Medici in the Fourteenth Century" in Speculum, XXXII (1957) 1-26, demonstrates the division within the families during the fourteenth century, and their violent behavior both among themselves and in relationship to the general population. By the fifteenth century, however, the families seem internally united, and socially more responsible and aware of the mutually dependent relationship existing between themselves and the city as a whole.

"powers" in a similar direction. Florentine capital was, for the most part, coming to be invested in public shares and land in the administered area of the city. The Bardi of the early Trecento also had contributed substantially to prestanze, which were theoretically refundable and carried interest; the majority of the Bardi resources however were in private, commercial businesses, and it was here that their power lay. In the fifteenth century, on the other hand, it was commonplace for families to hold large-scale investments in the public debt, and for this to be their main financial operation. The source of Florence's power had shifted from the private wealth of its citizens on which it might call to the total wealth of the city with which it administered a territory and maintained a mercenary army.

The passage of the catasto legislation in 1427 registers precisely this new view of the relationship between the individual citizen and the society of which he formed a part. It was the right of the government to exact taxation from its citizens, and its prerogative to levy such taxation at its discretion. Moreover, the funds garnered in this way were not, even in theory, refundable, and carried no interest. Whereas before, the initiative had lain with the citizen "lending" his money to the government, now the distant Signoria claimed monies as its due, even from peasants in the Pisan contado.

In a sense, the private world of the individual is expanded by thus being absorbed into the larger body and having to deal directly with it, while the intermediate affiliations are weakened. The advent

to power of members of the arti minori between 1343 and 1373 reflect precisely this kind of change. Those men of the arti minori elected to high office in the republic were the same men whose social position as defined by their wealth and marriage alliances indicated that they had transcended the intermendiate affiliations, and could therefore be admitted into the last category which defined the new elite, political power.[47] The small gild associations came to be used primarily as a means of social control, in no sense representing a sort of "grass-roots" organizing mechanism which linked the lower orders of society into the political process.[48]

The identification of private and public interest occurs at different levels, all of which are in need of more thorough and detailed analysis than has so far been accorded them. Economically, the identification of interests seems to revolve around that union of private and public visible in the growing investment of private capital in the Monte, to the exclusion often of other forms of

---

[47] Brucker, Florentine Politics..., pp.90,91; 160. Also, Becker, M. and Brucker, G.: "The Arti Minori in Florentine Politics, 1342-1378" in Medieval Studies, XVIII (1956) 93-104; see particularly, pp.97-101.

[48] The progressive centralization of the Florentine government is traced by N. Rubenstein: The Government of Florence Under the Medici (1434 to 1494) (Oxford, 1966), pp.1-29; 53-67; 88 ff. The alienation of the most powerful class is a gradual process, involving principally the manipulation of the technique of electing public officials.

investment; juridically, it can be followed in the decline of private justice, the interjection of public authority into the private realm, for example in the form of sumptuary legislation, and in the growth of public prerogatives in the Florentine statutes; intellectually and morally, it can be traced in the civic and patriotic writings of the period, both in humanist and in volgare circles.

This identification of public and private, which becomes an integration of state and individual, seems to be one of the central referents of the "civicness" of civic humanism. Perhaps it might be more accurate to describe the group as humanist and civic, rather than as civic humanists. The reason for this distinction can be seen once the identification has become social fact, during the crisis of the 1420's: there develops an immediate reaction to it, which again begins to speak of the individual as something not entirely defined by society, and begins to look beneath the literature of civic humanism into the social facts which it reflects. There comes, thus, a reaction against the ideology of civic humanists. The pervasiveness of the laws, the wide powers of public authority, even the cult of identifying wealth and the right to political power, all come under attack. This culminates finally in a new separation of the individual and the society, not as in the medieval world by placing intermediate allegiances such as gild and family between the individual and the larger world, but by rejecting the social world as a whole, and celebrating man's alienation from it. In this regard, the role of Ficino is crucial and obvious; Ficino

however comes late when the realization of the ideological character of civic humanism had already been perceived and challenged. Initially, in the dawning of this realization, a central role is played by Poggio Bracciolini.

# IV

## Poggio Bracciolini in the Historiography of Humanism

The evolution of Florence as a state, discussed in the previous chapter, forms the basis of the revolution in thought which allied civic spirit with humanism, thereby creating the tradition of civic humanism. The role of Salutati in the formulation of the tenets of this humanism was discussed in the second chapter; that of Leonardo Bruni is in many ways more crucial, as it represents the most complete and articulate formulation of the tradition.[1]

There had grown up in Florence in the late Trecento a tradition of civic spirit which was originally independent of humanist theory and practice, as the latter has been presented in

---

[1]The work done by Baron in his Crisis... in this respect is central to the following discussion; see Baron, Crisis..., I, pp.38-42; 43-59; 163-248; 351-57; 364-78. Also, see Vespasiano, Vite..., pp.248-56; Garin, Italian Humanism, pp.37-43 et passim; Brucker, Renaissance Florence, pp.213-55.

this essay.[2] The dominance of the city of Florence in the lives of its commercial elite should be dated from the foundation of the Monte (1345) from which period there occurs a substantial transfer of wealth from the private to the public sector. The problem of wealth is, moreover, a central consideration in the rise humanistic thought, and its justification in the private sector does not occur until this transfer has been largely effected.[3] This seems to suggest that private wealth was justifiable insofar as it was identifiable with the common good of the society, rather than with private luxury. The epicurean philosophy which justified wealth and pleasure without

---

[2]Baron, Crisis..., I, pp.76-77 dates Rinuccini's Responsiva to Loschi's Invectiva in 1397, whereas Salutati's counter-invective dates from 1402-03 and Bruni's Laudatio from 1404, although Baron argues for dating its composition as early as 1400-01. He further argues: "The impact of the struggle of the Giangaleazzo era was felt most rapidly not by the humanistic literati and erudites, but by citizens in the political battle-line; the new experience was turned to account first of all by writers outside humanistic circles. The works of the Florentine humanists were the crest of the wave; below and before them went polemical pamphlets and chronicle-histories composed in, or quickly translated into, the Florentine mother-tongue." Crisis... I, p.250.

[3]Baron, "Franciscan Poverty...", pp.18-24 suggests that the real justification of wealth does not occur until the fifteenth century, with the De Re Uxoria of F. Barbaro (1408) and Bruni's translation of the Pseudo-Aristotle's Oeconomicus (1420).

any clear social connection was never completely accepted in Florence.[4] It did however become quite popular elsewhere, particularly in Rome.[5] The civic connotation attached to wealth by Bruni and Poggio is the basis for the justification of wealth; and further, the strength of Florence had been attributed precisely to its wealth by Gregorio Dati in his Istoria (1407-08).[6] Wealth came to be viewed as the necessary means of exercising the virtue of liberality and, most importantly, as the foundation of the power of the state.[7] Clearly,

---

[4]Despite the fact that it was Poggio who rediscovered the writings of Diogenes Laertius and the poetry of Lucretius in 1418 and returned them to Niccolo Niccoli. Poggio's own writing justifying wealth does so in social terms, in that wealth is necessary to the city's welfare: "Necessaria est enim pecunia veluti nervi quidam quibus sustinetur re publica, cuius cum copiosi existant avari, tanquam basis et fundamentum iudicandi sunt...Non solum utem divitiis nobis assunt, sed amplius consilio, prudentia, patrocinio, autoritate. Vidimus ipsi quidem permultus, qui cum avari haberentur, tamen et recte consulerent reipublicae, et in ea plurimum autoritate pollerent, quorum consilia profuere. Nulla in re nocuit avaritia." De Avaritia (1428-29), p.15 in Opera Omnia, I, pp.1-31.

[5]Garin, Italian Humanism, pp.48-53. He cites in this connection, the third book of Filipo's Commentationes Florentinae de Exilio, a letter of Cosimo Raimondi of Cremona, active in the circle of Pomponius Laetus at Rome, and Valla's De Voluptate, where it is associated with the sanctification of the natural order.

[6]Baron, Crisis..., I, pp.145-60; II, pp.506-08 (notes, with dating of writing). Dati's importance as a probable non-humanist source for Bruni's history is argued, II, pp.506-07.

[7]Baron, "Franciscan Poverty...", pp.21-23 traces this, citing in particular Manetti's Vita Boccaccii, and Palmieri's Della Vita Civile. The reviving interest in the social and political works of Aristotle, rather than his logical and metaphysical works, in this period is an important (and neglected) theme of early humanism. Bruni's translation of the Oeconomicus has been noted; the Politics and Nichomachean Ethics were also more widely read in this period.

there is a change in the articulation by literary men of the problem of wealth, one which reflects the changing relationship to the new pattern of organizing the resources of the city as well as to the particular incident of the Giangaleazzo period. Indeed, the defence of Florence was made possible precisely by the new social and political organization of wealth, that is, of the conception that the society as a whole had a right to draw on the total private wealth of the city when this became necessary. In this period it was made almost permanently necessary because of chronic warfare, such that the complicated pattern of making private financial resources available to the government on a regularized basis became the established state of affairs in Florence by the early Quattrocento. It was this gradual process which found its reflection in the literature of the period.

A second aspect of the civic humanist doctrine was the intimate relationship between private morality and civic participation. The role of Salutati is crucial in the development of this concept.[8] Salutati established the basic and fundamental link between the individual's private moral nature and his condition as

---

[8]See above, Chapter II,pp. 66 ff.

a man within a social body, in such a way that the two concepts could be seen as inseparable. The clearly articulated statement of this inseparability was made by his followers. Bruni, as early as 1401 in the Dialogi ad Petrum Histrum, argued that "great ahd high-minded intelligences do not need those tortures |of solitude|. And it is certain that things that are not apparent at once will be so later. Therefore, detachment and withdrawl are becoming only in those whose inferior abilities render them incapable of action."[9] In his Vita di Dante, Bruni employed the criterion of Dante's early involvement in the civic life of Florence and his service in the citizen army to show that Dante should be accepted by the civic humanists.[10] For Bruni, morality in men was thus determined precisely by the depth of their involvement in the affairs of the city, and this too is more narrowly focused, because Bruni thought of "city" in terms of the Florentine republic. It has been suggested that the complete identification of the individual and the city was not accepted until the early 1430's when Palmieri's Della Vita Civile (1432-36) established such a pervasive relationship, and was widely accepted in Florence.[11] In his later works, Bruni connects social structure and culture, arguing that it was the republicanism of

---

[9]Quoted in Garin, Italian Humanism, p.42.

[10]Baron, Crisis..., I, pp.295-96; II, pp.557-78. In this judgment, he is followed by Manetti and Landino.

[11]Baron, Crisis..., I, p.295; on the dating of the Della Vita Civile, Baron, Crisis..., II, p.583.

Florence, her humanly beneficial libertas, which made possible the rise of letters again in Italy.[12] Indeed, it is the city and its republican character which produced the great poets, Dante and Petrarch, and made possible the revival of culture after the long medieval night.[13] In the linking of private morality and culture with civic life lies the culmination of civic humanist theory, and this clearly reflected a society in which there was in fact a good deal of social mobility and political participation, and in which the individual's best interests had clearly become allied with those of the community, and were perceived as such. By the 1430's the individual was held to have no tangible moral destiny outside of a

---

[12] Bruni, "Oratio in funere Nannis Strozae Equitis Florentini", p.4, quoted in Baron, Crisis..., II, p.620: "Iam vero litterarum Graecarum cognitio, quae semptingentis amplius annis per Italiam obsolverat, a civitate nostra revocata est atque reducta, ut et summos philosophos et admirabiles oratores caeterosque praestantissimos disciplina homines, non per aenigmata interpretationum ineptarum sed de facie ad faciem, intueri valeremus. Dinique studia ipsa humanitatis, praestantissima quidem atque optima, generis humani maxima propria, privatim et publica ad vitam necessaria, ornata litterarum eruditione ingenua, a civitate nostra profecta per Italiam coalverunt."

[13] This is clearly the argument of his Vite di Dante e Petrarca (1436); see Baron, Crisis..., I, p.362-364; Garin, Italian Humanism, pp. 41-43.

civic context.[14] Indeed, Alberti, writing in this period, identifies the concept of *virtus* totally with the civic life, with industry and building, with good laws and their ordering of human activities :

> Good laws, virtuous rulers, prudent counsellors, energetic and determined deeds, the love of one's fatherland, faith, industry, the citizens' decorous and laudable obedience (to the laws) have always been able either to gain recognition without *fortuna* or to achieve even greater fame and enlarge this scope with the help of *fortuna*.[15]

With the writings of Alberti, the tenets of civic humanism receive their great amplification. Virtue becomes efficient action in the service of the society; moreover, this action is intended not for personal gain but for the benefit of the society which encompasses, which makes real, all personal benefit :

---

[14] This is the spirit of Alberti's maxim "Man is born in order to be useful to other men" from the *de Ichiarchia* (1340's), in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, p.61 *ff*.

[15] Alberti's main work in this regard is the *Della Famiglia* (1437-38), discussed by Garin, *Italian Humanism*, pp.62-64. Particularly, the preface to this work where Alberti argues the unimportance of *fortuna* as concerns *virtus*: "They complain about *fortuna* and allege that they are thrown hither and thither by her carelessly moving waves. Whereas in reality their stupidity alone is responsible for their having fallen prey to those waves." In fact, virtue always triumphs over fortune, where virtue means "the good and sacred discipline of life". Alberti, preface to the *Della Famiglia*, quoted by Garin, *Italian Humanism*, p.62.

> As long as we observe the oldest and most sacred order, as long as we endeavor to behave according to the example of our ancestors and as long as we endeavor to surpass the ancints in glory--as long as our fellow-citizens believed that all our activities, all our industry and skill and everything is devoted to the fatherland and is useful to the other citizens--as long as people were willing to risk their property and their lives in order to maintain the authority, the majesty and the renown of the Latin name--as long as people were prepared to do these things, was there a single nation, no matter how wild and barbarous, which did not respect and fear our decrees and laws?[16]

Civic humanism in Bruni, but more clearly and explicitly expressed by Alberti, defined the individual, his life, his morality, in terms of the society. The social body was both the creator of the individual's morality, because it nourished and educated him, and equally it was the beneficiary of the individual's externalized creativity, in terms of that commercial success and good government which sustained the Republic and those critical and intellectual activities which glorified the city and its inhabitants.[17]

---

[16] Alberti, preface to the Della Famiglia, quoted in Garin, Italian Humanism, pp.62-63.

[17] While a discussion of the development of Florentine law is beyond the scope of this paper, a particularly revealing set of figures involves the proportion of "new men" matriculated by the gilds in this period. A comparison of those matriculated by hereditary right and those who were not in this category shows that in the 1330's, 73% of those matriculated were new men, and the other 27% were by hereditary right; at the turn of the fifteenth century, the ratio was reversed, only 28% being new, while 72% were hereditary; in 1530, it was 89% hereditary and only 11% new. Becker, Florence..., II, pp.225,226.

While the civic humanists were constructing these arguments, the social situation in Florence was undergoing rapid and fundamental change. The change in the structure of the Florentine public economy together with larger-scale economic movements has already been noted, together with the related aspect of continuous war. In this light, the humanist arguments, coming after the social changes and arguing that their consequences were morally incumbent in individuals, coincided with the dismantling of the metaphysical referents of the medieval intellectuals. By denying the relevance of this metaphysic and substituting societas and patria as moral referents, the civic humanists elaborated a new and clearly ideological world-view. Civic humanism can in this light be defined as the social ideology of the bourgeois class in its rise to and exercise of sovereign power in the transformed state of early Renaissance Florence.

It was in the context of this socio-political and cultural-ideological development that Poggio lived much of his life, and the tenets of this "civic" humanism form a central referent of his thought in terms both of his own early participation in its development, and of his later reaction against it.

Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459) was not a Florentine by birth, having been born at Terra Nuova in rural Tuscany.[18] His

---

[18] The principal sources used for Poggio's life are Shepherd, W.: The Life of Poggio Bracciolini (London, 1837); Vespasiano, Vite...,

father had been a notary, and Poggio himself was matriculated in the notarial gild in Florence in 1402.[19] His education provided him with the opportunity to make the acquaintance of many men who would be his friends, allies, and literary and philosophical opponents throughout his life.[20] He studied under Giovanni Malpaghini and Salutati, and it was through Salutati that he obtained in 1403 his first position in Rome as secretary to Cardinal Rudolfo Maramori, Bishop of Bari.

---

pp.291-97; and Walser, E.: Poggius Florentinus: Leben und Werke (Leipzig, 1914) and the Documente included therein. Citations from Poggio's Opera Omnia require a note, there being no critical edition: in the third volume of Fubini's edition, the Epistolae as edited by Tonelli are collected; the first collection of the Epistolae, contained in the 1512 Strassbourg edition are in the first volume. Fubini's pagination, however, reproduces the Tonelli edition, and therefore must be cited by Epistolae VI, pp...; this leaves those letters cited from the earlier collection, which will be cited Opera, I, pp.... . Since there exists no good recent biography of Poggio, much of this argument is from portions of other works which deal with Poggio more or less well, considering that he is not their primary interest (frequently, this results in a kind of treatment using Poggio as an explanatory support or foil. This is a problem, since such treatment does not necessarily require extensive reading in and around Poggio who, however, is a complicated personality and prolific author. Much of the commentary from these secondary sources is therefore polemical and inadequate).

[19] Walser, Poggius..., p.327 for this document.

[20] Shepherd, Poggio..., pp.4,5 lists as fellow students, Bruni, Palla Strozzi, Pier Paolo Vergerio, Guarino Veronese, Carlo Aretino, Ambrogio Traversari and Francesco Barbaro among others.

In August of 1404 he acquired a position as apostolic letter-writer for Pope Boniface IX, thus beginning a long career with the papal Curia, which constitutes one of the most dominant and consistent aspects of Poggio's life.[21]

During the winter of 1405-06, a debate developed between Poggio, Bruni and Salutati over the role of Petrarch and his abilities as a poet and Latinist.[22] Taking this debate from Poggio's point of view, we have very little upon which to judge. Poggio's fundamental position in the debate was that the traditional placing

---

[21] Shepherd, Poggio..., p.6.

[22] Baron, Crisis..., I, pp.226-31, and notes II, pp.538-40, reconstructs the argument from Salutati's letters and Bruni's Dialogi. This seems a peculiar way to present an argument since they agreed and Poggio disagreed. Parts of Poggio's opinions are repeated by Salutati in his responses, but they are only parts. Thus, the entire "other side" is missing in Baron's presentation. Further, it is not accessible because it either has not survived or has not been found. The first letter of Poggio's available is that of May 15th, 1406 to Niccoli on Salutati's death, Epistolae, preface of Tonelli, p.xiii ff. Nothing else even closely connected with this period has survived to give a circumspect impression, as the next letters (Epistolae, I, pp.1 ff) are from 1415. For example, Baron's suggestion that Poggio's remarks were "obviously sneering and overbearing, as Niccoli's attacks against Petrarch and Dante had been" (Crisis..., I, p.227) comes without Baron's ever having seen Poggio's letter.

of Petrarch as superior to the ancients because of his Christianity, was no longer acceptable. He suggested that truth has not the criteria of literary excellence, and in this perspective, that Petrarch's position as a writer should not be seen as greater than the ancients.[23] The later letter of Poggio's (1424), in which he again briefly discusses Petrarch, links him to some central themes of humanism.[24] In this letter, he notes the honesty of Petrarch's life, where his poverty and flight from positions offered to him which could have afforded him power, represent a genuine desire not to be caught up in an official or religious position, and the cares which accompany such a position, when he was seeking philosophical understanding and a genuine moral life.[25] Poggio's concern was thus for Petrarch's

---

[23] Seigel, J.: Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism (Princeton, 1968), pp.88-98 for this debate generally.

[24] Baron misinterprets this letter in Crisis..., I, p.238 where he says it represents "an occasional admiring paragraph on Petrarch's retired life which is to be recommended as a model for the true 'vita contemplativa et studiosa'.". The most important aspect of the letter is its occasion, which is as a response to the Bishop of Aquensis concerning the religious life; Poggio is intent on attacking its pretended concern for repudiating wealth while it in reality is seeking luxuries. Further, his contention that Poggio does not again refer to Petrarch as founder of the studia humanitatis is false: cf., De Infelicitate Principum, in Opera Omnia, I, p.409 : "Petrarca...cuius ingenio haec nostra humanitatis studia...".

[25] Poggio, Epistolae, II, 16, pp.128 ff.: Poggio suggests that the repudiation of wealth is an old theme, and he cites Seneca in this regard. Petrarch is a recent example of the true meaning of this repudiation, "...qui magno animo spernens, atque abiiciens omnem curam opum, ac dignitatum, quae tunc ei a Pontifice offerebantur, fugiensque potentiorum limina, ad quae magnis praemiis invitabatur, vitam quietam, ac procul a strepitu rerum temporalium constitutam, et dicto, et facto comprobavit." (p.129).

moral integrity, not for his flight from wealth as such; this moral integrity he contrasts with those religious who say they desire holiness and poverty, the suffering of the ascetic life, but who in reality are most greedy and luxury-loving.[26] Poggio expressly denies that he is advocating the ascetic life; rather, he notes that active life and the pursuit of wealth are necessary in human affairs.[27] He suggests that Petrarch's argument has validity, that wealth does not necessarily bring happiness, unless it is allied with learning and morality, while those who have learning and yet err (such as the earlier-mentioned religious) are still more reprehensible.

Poggio's arguments in this letter are well within the bounds of humanist theory, indeed, even of civic humanism. His principal argument concerns moral integrity and hypocrisy; his chief tone is one of anti-clericalism. He expressly notes the value of wealth in human affairs and the desirability of the active life of civic humanism. Concerning Petrarch, Poggio portrays him as a man of profound

---

[26]Poggio, Epistolae, II, 16, pp.132-33.

[27]"Quod si opes, divitiae, dignitas iis adiiciantur, atque offerantur honeste, non arbitror ullo modo esse reiiciendas. Necessaria enim sunt multa nobis adminicula ad hanc vitam, quae laborando, vigilando, bene agendo quaerere, laudabile est." Epistolae, II, p.135.

insight and moral integrity, considerations which are as central to humanism as literary activity.

The period from 1406 to 1415 is one in which we know very little of what Poggio was doing, either because he wrote little or simply because nothing has survived. It is known that he stayed on at the Curia despite the frequent changes in popes in this stage of the great Schism, through to John XXII, when he went to Constance where a new General Council had been established to settle the situation.[28] It is really only from the Constance period that we can talk of Poggio's ideas and opinions, because only from this date are there adequate records to support such considerations.

The period of the Council of Constance, its aftermath, and the voyage to England are important in Poggio's life, because they offered him a wide range of experiences not available to the

---

[28] Shepherd, Poggio..., p.48 ff. For the intervening period, there are no letters in the Epistolae, I, pp.1 ff. Walser, Poggius..., pp.18-39. The period of Schism was, of course, of implicit importance for everyone in this period, but particularly for men in Poggio's official ecclesiastical position. The plurality of popes was not something that could be tolerated. The Council of Constance is important in this sense because it was really the last great council which accomplished something. Its deposition of the Pope registered a significant departure from the medieval hierarchical awareness, and an increased appreciation of the distinction to be made between the position and the individual in it.

more strictly Tuscan humanists, Salutati and Bruni, or the Italian ones, such as Filelfo and Panormità. The Council of Constance was the occasion for Poggio to become familiar with some strange customs and also to witness at first hand the clear abuse of judicial power. In a letter to Niccoli of May18, 1416 Poggio describes his progress with the Hebrew language, which he has dropped, and also the strange (to Poggio) customs he encountered at the baths at Baden.[29] The communal nudity particularly struck Poggio; the nudity was practiced even in the private baths where the wealthier and "better-class" persons were. Despite this practice, which he initially took to be sheer lasciviousness because of the restrictions on such behavior in Italy, there seemed to be nothing unnatural or prurient in the situation for those involved.[30] What is clear in this letter is

---

[29]Poggio, Epistolae, I, 1, pp. ff.

[30]Poggio, Epistolae, I, p. 5: "Nam cuius licet, visendi, colloquendi, jocandi ac laxandi animi gratia aliorum balnea adire, ac adstare, adeo ut, et cum exeunt, et cum ingrediuntur aquas foeminae, maiori parte corporis nudae conspiciantur. Nullae aditus custodiae observant: nulla ostia prohibent: nullo suspicio inhoneste: pluribus in locis quidem, qui viris et mulieribus quoque ad balnea est ingressus, ut saepissime accidat, et virum foeminae seminudae, et foeminam viro nudo obviam ire. Masculi campestribus tantummodo utuntur, foeminae vero linteis induuntur vestibus crura tenus, ab alto vel latere scissis, ita ut neque collum, neque pectus, neque bracchia, aut lacertos tegant. In ipsis aquis saepius de symbolis edunt, composita mensa desuper aquam natanti, quibus viros assistere consueverunt..."

that Poggio is learning that there is a whole world outside Italy which is not necessarily in all ways inferior.[31]

Shortly after his return to Constance from the baths, Poggio witnessed the trial there of the Hussite Jerome of Prague, having already missed that of Hus himself. This letter has been by some observers viewed in religious terms, as a suggestion that Poggio favored a kind of proto-protestantism.[32] More important in this letter is Poggio's obvious respect for Jerome's individuality which he interprets from his rhetorical power and his refusal to be cowed or awed by the assembled church dignitaries.[33] What is clearly evident is the action of Jerome's personality on his accusers and

---

[31] Epistolae, I, 1, pp. 9, 10: "Neque enim quisquam inventus est adhuc in istis, qui zelotypus esset. O mores dissimiles nostris, qui omnia semper accipimus in deteriores cogitationes, qui usque adeo calumniis delectamur, et obtrectationibus, ut si quid parvula vidimus coniectura, statim pro manifesto crimine attestemur!"

[32] This is Shepherd's emphasis, Poggio..., pp. 80 ff.

[33] Epistolae, I,2, p. 19: "Hoc modo vir, praeter fidem, egregius, consumptus est. Vidi hunc exitum, singulos actus inspexi. Sive perfidia, sive pertinacia id egerit, certe ex philosophiae schola interitum viri discripsisses. Longam tibi cantilenam narravi ocii causa, nihil agens aliquid agere volui, et res tibi narrare paulum similes historiis priscorum. Nam neque Mutius ille tam fidenti animo passus est membrum uri, quam iste universum corpus; neque Socrates tam sponte venerum bibit, quam iste ignem suscepit."

judges, who had really already prejudged him; had the trial been for any other crime than heresy, his learning and eloquence would have carried the judges.[34] Poggio was in fact so profoundly moved by Jerome that he thought it a serious state of affairs when a man of such learning and wisdom should come to heresy, if indeed he were heretical (which Poggio thought not all that certain: "...ad illa haeresis studia divertisse; si tamen vera sunt, quae sibi obiiciuntur.").[35] Poggio's outspoken letter, written to Bruni, was thought by Bruni to be particularly aggressive in Jerome's defence, and in a reply he carefully advised Poggio to write "upon such subjects in a more guarded manner" because he showed "too much affection for his cause."[36] Poggio's emphasis on Jerome's personality, and the force of that personality on his judges, is especially significant because it shows a tendency which later becomes a dominating theme in Poggio, to see the individual as distinct from the group and still not entirely without personal worth. This view was not pronounced in

---

[34] Epistolae, I, 2, p.16: "Haec diserte, et cum magna omnium expectatione disseruit. At cum omnes pondus causae in testibus situm esset, multis rationibus docuit, nullam his testimonibus fidem adhibendam, praesertim cum non ex veritate, sed ex odio, malivolentia, et invidia omnia dixissent. Tum odii causas ita explicavit, ut haud procul fuerit a persuadendo. Ita enim erant verisimiles, ut excepta fidei causa, parva illis testimoniis fides adhibenda esset. Commotae erant omnium mentes, et ad misericordiam flectabantur."

[35] Epistolae, I, 2, p. 11. Poggio avoided taking the responsibility of choice here, saying he would leave the judgment to those "qui sapientores habentur", and acquiesce.

[36] Shepherd, Poggio..., p.81.

Poggio's early letters and writings, and this instance is, in fact, relatively isolated.

Poggio's rediscovery of lost classical manuscripts is another, and the most frequently and universally cited, event of this early period. In his wide travels in Burgundy, Switzerland, and Germany, he located, among other works, a complete edition of Quintillian's De Oratore, a part of Valerius Flaccus' Argonauticus, and eight of Cicero's orations. In fact, his discoveries constitute an important chapter in the history of humanist philology.[37] Since it is already a widely explored story, no further treatment of it is included here.

The period 1418-1422 which was passed in England marks an important period in Poggio's life, although the "crisis" involved here had effects which were not really noticeable until a later period. During this time, Poggio suffered an acute depression, in part perhaps a function of his feeling of alienation in the midst of the English "barbarians". This depression led him to read

---

[37] Shepherd, Poggio..., p.94 ff; Vespasiano, Vite..., p.292; Bernard, S.: "The rape of books from the Abbey of St. Gallen" in Downside Review, LXXXV, 1967, pp.35-38 presents an interesting view from a rarely taken viewpoint, that of monastic holdings, on the activities of Poggio and others, in this regard.

extensively in the Patristic writers, and in the devotional and ascetic writings of Augustine, St. Paul, and St. John Chrysostom. There is the kind of attention to the more mystical and emotionally profound aspects of the Christian religion which Poggio had not before undertaken, and which he never pursued later in any direct form. Yet its effects should not be minimized, as they become important again once his period of success-seeking was over. The development from religious to moral awareness in this period, noted by Walser, is a crucial connection in view of some of his later writings.[38]

Before continuing directly with Poggio's work in his mature period, a brief recounting of the historiographical treatment of Poggio is needed. Burckhardt in his Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (1861) uses Poggio quite extensively, but in selected areas of Poggio's thought. In particular, he cites the Facetiae, a collection of humorous and semi-pornographic anecdotes by Poggio and others, appearing under Poggio's authorship, and those letters and treatises of Poggio animated by anti-clerical sentiment.[39] He places

---

[38]Walser, Poggius...,pp.71-83; Shepherd, Poggio..., pp.110-29; Vespasiano, Vite..., pp.296-7. Another characteristic of his letters from England is his low opinion of English culture, which was still almost exclusively ecclesiastical (Epistolae, I, 10, p.43) and his trying to arrange through Niccolo some way of leaving England from 1420-22.

[39]Poggio in his apology for the work, asserts that the Facetiae were composed during the reign of Martin V (1417-31) in Opera Omnia, I,

Poggio as a leader of the broad tradition of vicious satire and scandal-mongering which was then, in his view, a by-product of the "individual's" self-assertion. In his discussion of the role of Poggio's discoveries of old manuscripts in the development of humanist philology, Burckhardt, as ever when humanism was involved, remains somewhat ambivalent: he seems to waver between viewing humanism and its textual achievements as a slavish imitation of antiquity, and as an attempt to retain a useful literary-cultural form while redefining its content.[40] The philological method of

---

p.491. Since he was in England from 1418-22, we can assume that they were written between 1423 and 1431. Burckhardt's notable citations of Poggio The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy, 2 vols., trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (New York, 1958) at I, pp.37; 51; 168-71 et passim; II, p.450; hereafter, Burckhardt, Civilization... .

[40] Burckhardt, Civilization..., I, pp.206-07; 211-17: "But now, as competitor of the whole culture of the Middle Ages, which was essentially clerical and was fostered by the Church, there appeared a new civilization, founding itself on that which lay on the other side of the Middle Ages. Its active representatives became influential because they knew what the ancients knew, because they tried to write as the ancients wrote, because they began to think, and soon to feel, as the ancients thought and felt. The tradition to which they devoted themselves passed at a thousand points into genuine reproduction." (p.211). This reproduction had serious consequences: "The rapid progress of humanism after 1400 paralyzed native impulses. Henceforth men looked to antiquity only for the solution of every problem, and consequently allowed literature to sink into mere quotation. Nay, the very fall of civil freedom is partly to be ascribed to this, since the New Learning rested on obedience to authority, sacrificed municipal rights to Roman Law, and thereby both sought and found the favor of despots." pp.211-12. But on the other hand, he notes the work of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio as breaking out of the medieval tradition and legitimizing the study of the ancients. There was thus a new cause in the world (the new culture of secular life) and a new class of men to maintain it (the humanists). (p.214).

the humanists was directed precisely at redefining certain concepts of antiquity as they related to the contemporary age, and the use of antiquity's scholars, poets and philosophers was necessary because as yet there existed no conceptual language capable of defining the new needs and values.[41] An obvious example of this process of employing antiquity in relation to the needs and issues of contemporary society is in the great Caesar debate of the 1430's.[42] Thus, one could argue that Burckhardt's mistrust of the classicism of the humanists mirrors his lack of appreciation for the real sympathy and spiritual kinship which they felt allied them with the classical Roman world.[43]

The imitation of antiquity resulted, for Burckhardt, in a repudiation of an autonomously developing volgare tradition, an

---

[41]The generally noted, and thoroughly competent, analysis of the meaning and importance of humanist philological method is N.W. Gilbert: Renaissance Concepts of Method (New York, 1960).

[42]See below, pp.142 ff.

[43]Burckhardt, Civilization..., I, p. 247: "It was inevitable, too, that the humanistic spirit should control the writing of history. A superficial comparison of the histories of the period with the earlier chronicles, especially with works so full of life, color and brilliancy as those of Villani, will lead us loudly to deplore the change. How insipid and conventional appear by their side the best of the humanists, and particularly their immediate and most famous successors among the historians of Florence, Leonardo Aretino and Poggio!" And cf. I, pp. 250-51, for his preference for historians of the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

example of which can be seen in Poggio's maligning of Dante.[44] At the same time, he does recognize the humanists' awareness of the changed conditions of society, and their concern for a more relevant understanding of these changes. In this connection, he specifically notes the treatise of Poggio's which most concerns us, the De Nobilitate:

> And as time went on [after Dante's and Petrarch's attacks on medieval nobility of lineage] the greater the influence of humanism on the Italian mind, the firmer and more widespread became the conviction that birth decides nothing as to the goodness or badness of a man. In the fifteenth century this was the prevailing opinion. Poggio, in his dialogue On Nobility agrees with his interlocutors...that there is no other nobility than that of personal merit.[45]

Further, he notes Poggio's keen sarcasm concerning the knightly life of French, English and German chivalry:

> A man is all the farther removed from true nobility the longer his forefathers have plied the trade of brigands. The taste for hawking and hunting savours no more of nobility than the nests and lairs of the hunted creatures of spikenard. The cultivation of the soil, as practiced by the ancients, would be much nobler than this senseless

---

[44] Burckhardt, Civilization..., I, p. 254. He cites De Infelicitate Principum (in Opera Omnia, I, p. 409): "Dantes...cuius extat poema praeclarum, neque si literis latinis constaret ulla ex parte poetis superioribus postponendum."

[45] Burckhardt, Civilization..., II, pp. 354, 355.

> wandering through the hills and woods, by which men make themselves liker to brutes than to reasonable creatures. It may serve well enough as a recreation but not as the business of a lifetime.[46]

Rather, the new nobilitas was dependant on culture, on wealth, and on political power,[47] although at a later date, as Burckhardt notes, these nobles without lineage would engage in jousting, encouraged by Spanish dominance and culture.[48]

Burckhardt did not, however, formulate the key relationships between the humanism of his description and the changes in Florentine social structure. Subsequently, a basic element in this relationship was recognized by the German sociologist, Alfred von Martin:

> The artistic cult of the nude as we find it in Signorelli may be compared to the concept of humanitas and, for instance, with Poggio's polemic against nobilitas. Humanism has been represented as an ideology which played a closely defined part in the bourgeoisie's struggle for emancipation and power. The concept of a 'humanist' knowledge concerned with truths

---

[46] Poggio, De Nobilitate, in Opera Omnia, I, p. 71; quoted by Burckhardt, Civilization..., II, p. 355.

[47] Burckhardt, Civilization..., II, p. 356: "The decisive fact was that nearly everywhere in Italy even those who might be disposed to pride themselves on their birth could not make good the claims against the power of culture and of wealth, and that their privileges in politics and at Court were not sufficient to encourage any strong feeling of caste."

[48] Burckhardt, Civilization..., II, pp. 357-360.

> applicable to humanity in general, with an ethical system based on personal virtus...implies the negation of all privileges based upon birth and estate; it implies the negation of the belief in supra-natural powers which had been taught by the clergy, in favor of a 'natural philosophy'....[49]

Von Martin specifically notes that Poggio's perception of nobilitas is predicated upon the rise of the bourgeois as a political and economic class.[50]

At the same time, no thorough understanding of Poggio can be gleaned by approaching him and his works solely from the viewpoint of his social awareness. This is perhaps one of the reasons for his having been largely ignored, along with Niccolò Niccoli, by recent socio-economically orientated historians, for example Baron and Becker. This is potentially a serious mistake, however, not only because Poggio's reputation and influence in humanist circles, not only in Florence, but throughout Italy and parts of the north, was widespread in the fifteenth and first

---

[49] Martin, A. von: Sociology of the Renaissance, trans. W.L. Luetkens (New York, 1963), p.27; hereafter, von Martin, Sociology.... Whether or not the cult of nude can or cannot be compared with Poggio's treatise is not the point being made in this essay. It is von Martin's signalling of the bourgeois character, the class character, which is being cited.

[50] von Martin, Sociology..., p.36. It should be noted that von Martin's assessment is in part quite faulty. The treatise is not a polemic against nobilitas at all, but rather an attempt to redefine the term such that its relevant parameters can clearly be seen to have changed: see below, Chapter V, part 1.

half of the sixteenth centuries, but also because of the importance of his work precisely in "socio-economic" terms.[51] The excessively broad and usually impressionistic terms in which Poggio is treated by recent historiography may be based in a rather limited understanding of the dynamics of humanism in this period.[52] Yet if we exclude Petrarch from the developed humanist school, Poggio, by virtue of his travels and first-hand experience of foreign countries and customs, is the first international and cosmopolitan humanist scholar. Any independent assessment, moreover, will see the reflection of this wide experience of human affairs in Poggio's works.

---

[51] Vespasiano, Vite..., pp.295, 296; and cf. Fubini's discussion of the period of Poggio's influence in his "Introduction", Opera Omnia, I, p.viii.

[52] We have noted earlier how sketchy and, in part erroneous, is Baron's treatment of him in Crisis... (notes 23 and 24 of this chapter). Baron's long argument concerning the Petrarch crisis is really vitiated because the two main props of his argument, that Poggio's letters are written in a tone which does not suggest support for Petrarch, and that Poggio never again supported Petrarch in the same terms as in that winter of 1405-06, are both founded on a lack of hard evidence; we cannot know what tone letters which unfortunately do not exist are written in, while Poggio did not support Petrarch warmly later in his life. Garin, Italian Humanism, pp.43-46 discusses Poggio's place in the humanist movement, but his treatment is necessarily general because of the surveyish nature of his work.

As Eugenio Garin has noted, Poggio's writing

> are pervaded by a very positive assessment of every healthy and vital maifestation of life. We owe his famous descriptions of nature and of the perfect gracefulness of the human body to his fresh sensitivity to all forms of human life. We always find in him a lively (for that matter a very Christian) consciousness of the reincarnation of the spirit. To his mind, man is not exclusively a soul, but a man-- that is, a body which is animated by something spiritual.[53]

Garin notes Poggio elsewhere, but essentially in passing, as being part of the growing ability seen in the Renaissance to bring Man to the center of reality. He observes this in Poggio's description of the ruins of old Rome; there are, for Garin, two themes in the description, the one, a melancholy reflecting an awareness of the ephemeral nature of human creations, and the other, a renewed desire to rebuild the temples, to conquer the earth.[54]

---

[53]Garin, Italian Humanism, p.47.

[54]Garin, Medioevo e Rinascimento, p.70. His introduction to Poggio in the Prosatori Latini del Quattrocento (Milan, n.d.) in Vol. 13 in La Letteratura Italiana: Storia e Testi, as all introductions in this volume, is purely technical. His discussion of Poggio in the article "I Cancellieri umanisti della repubblica fiorentina da Coluccio Salutati a Bartolomeo Scala" in Rivesta Storica Italiana, 71 (1959), 85-208; pp.204 ff is essentially secondary to his discussion of Bruni. He notes that Poggio took the position chiefly as a literary sinecure (p.207), and that he was no longer desirous of political power.

The treatment of Poggio by Becker is basically inconsistent. Like Baron, he tends to use Poggio's works in connection with the theoretial development of his argument, and does not specifically assess Poggio in any other way. When he is discussing the rise of civic humanism, he notes Poggio's De Avaritia, and in discussing the reaction against the legalist insistence of Salutati, he notes Poggio's Historia Convivialis.[55]

Of recent writers who have directly concerned themselves with Poggio in one capacity or another, all are limited in their considerations. Wilcox's interesting discussion of the development of humanist historiography discusses Poggio only in connection with his historical writings and is therefore unnable to reflect the breadth of his learning or the depth of his problématique.[56] Rubenstein's treatment of Poggio as both chancellor and historian of Florence attempts to establish a link between the late political activities and his history, as a continuation of the earlier

---

[55] Becker, Florence..., II, pp.21-22; 230-232. Poggio is in no sense a primary concern of Becker's and does not enter his other writings.

[56] Wilcox, D.J.: The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography in the Fifteenth Century (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p.135 ff. The work done by Wilcox is discussed in more detail below (Chapter V, part 2), together with the discussion of Poggio as a historian.

tradition established by Bruni.[57] The work of Trinkaus on Poggio is similarly misrepresentative because Poggio's work is not an independent consideration of Trinkaus'. Trinkaus places Poggio on the basis, really , of one work, the De Miseria Humanae Conditionis (1455), in the stoic and moralistic tradition which, in its essentials, is inconsistent with "civic" humanism.[58]

Poggio's commitment to "civic humanism" has been variously assessed, and in some ways is problematical.[59] Becker's

---

[57]Rubenstein, N.: "Poggio Bracciolini, Chancelliere e storico di Firenze" in Atti e memorie dell'accademia Petrarca di lettre, arti, e scienze di Arezzo, n.s., vol. xxxvii (1965), pp.215-233. He does not consider Poggio at all in his Government of Florence, despite Poggio's having been chancellor (which on another level, indicates how little resposibility Poggio actually had). Rubenstein too will enter again below (Chapter V, part 2).

[58]Trinkaus, In Our Image..., I, pp.258 ff. His estimate of the work is discussed again in connection with the treatise (Chapter V, part 2).

[59]My principal sources in relating Poggio to civic humanism, other than Poggio himself, are: Baron, Crisis..., I, pp.54,55 et passim; Garin, Italian Humanism, pp.38-47; N. Rubenstein: "Poggio Bracciolini, Cancelliere e storico di Firenze" in Atti e memorie dell' accademia Petrarca di Lettre, Arti e Scienze di Arezzo, n.s., xxxvii (1965), 215-33; Becker, Florence..., II, pp.20-24; 230-36; Martines, The Social World..., pp.123-27 et passim.

rendering of Poggio suggests that he both did and did not belong within the mainstream of civic humanism.[60] The comparison of two treatises on law, the De nobilitate et medicinae of Salutati (1399) and the Historia Convivialis, utra artium medicinae an iuris civilis praestet (1450) of Poggio's forms the basis of his argument that Poggio's understanding of law was clearly not written within the civic humanist tradition.[61] Becker suggests that Poggio in this treatise has understood that the civic humanists' program concerning law, that is, that men in society are and should be governed by rule of law which is clearly articulated and describes the rules of social behavior in detail, was fundamentally repressive and, in this sense, the Poggio of 1450 is clearly outside of civic humanism. On the other hand, a comparison of Bruni's translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian Oeconomicus (1420) and Poggio's De Avaritia (1428-29) reveals close parallels.

---

[60] Becker, Florence..., II, p.231: "Civic humanists from Bruni and Poggio to Machiavelli and Guicciardini attempted to rescue primal desires from Stoic censure and Christian ambivalence in order to reinstate them untarnished in the new pantheon of civic virtues." He relies for Poggio's civic humanism on the De Avaritia. Earlier however (Florence..., II, p.21,22), he had already placed Poggio outside of civic humanism on the fundamental issue of law, its nature and role in society.

[61] This is discussed later, in connection with Poggio's later period, below (Chapter V, part 2).

This estimate is supported by Garin's observations, fundamentally from the same treatises. Poggio's justification of wealth in the De Avaritia is, however, not unilateral, but is on specifically civic humanist grounds. It is wealth which is the basis of civic well-being on a broad scale, that is, those citizens who enrich themselves also must enrich the city.[62] But it is clearly the social aspect of wealth which appeals to Poggio:

> All splendor would disappear from our cities, all beauty and charm would be born away, there would be no temples constructed, no monuments, all arts would die, the disruption of our life and of the state would follow, if everyone sought that which satisfied himself.[63]

Poggio further argues in favor of the seeking of wealth because it represents precisely the ambition and commitment to the permanence of the social structure on the part of those seeking it which is at

---

[62] Poggio, De Avaritia, in Opera Omnia, I, p.13: "Nullus enim fieret, nisi quantum sibi et familiae suae fuerit satis futurum. Vide rerum omnium sequatur confusio, si nihil habere velimus praeterquam quod sit nobis satis. Tolletur usus gratissimarum virtutum populo, misericordiae videlicet, et charitatis, nullus erit neque beneficus, neque liberalis. Quid enim dabit alteri, cui nihil addendum superest. Quomodo munificus esse poterit qui tantum possidet, quantum sibi soli sufficit?"

[63] De Avaritia, p. 13: "Auferetur magnificentia omnis civitatum, tolletur cultus atque ornatus, nulla aedificabuntur templa, nulli porticus, artes omnes cessabunt, perturbatio vitae nostrae et rerum publicarum sequetur, si quilibet eo quod sibi satis erit acquiescet."

the basis of the Florentine way of life.[64] The alliance between the seeking of profit and the pursuing of public political life was no more than a statement of the actual situation in Florence, but in terms of the Christian tradition of poverty which had preceded it and which ideologically was still extant, Poggio's formulation of the alliance as not only natural but necessary, was revolutionary.[65]

Poggio makes an interesting distinction in the De Avaritia after these justifications between avaritia and cupiditas : cupiditas reflects the desire for moderate gain in connection with the social sense described above, whereas real avaritia (a term much misused according to Poggio) represents the desire for immense personal gain, independent of and contrary to the best interests of the social

---

[64] De Avaritia, p. 15: "Privatim et pecunia geritur. Necessaria est enim pecunia veluti nervi quidam quibus sustinetur res publica, cuius cum copiosi existant avari, tanquam basis et fundamentum iudicandi sunt. ... Non solum autem divitiis nobis assunt, sed amplius consilio, prudentia, patrocinio, autoritate. Vidimus ipse quidem permultos, qui,avari haberentur, tamen et recte consulerant reipublicae, et in ea plurimum autoritate pollerent, quorum consilia profuere."

[65] On the tradition of poverty, see Baron, "Franciscan Poverty...", pp.1-26 mainly, although the entire article deals with the problem. On the survival of the ideal, and its reality, especially in the north, see Huizinga, J.: The Waning of the Middle Ages (London, 1955), p.136 ff and Rice, Renaissance...Wisdom, pp.1-30; 124-28.

body.[66] This distinction is a very clear instance of developed civic humanist philological method; the undesirable term in general use, connected with usury, is put aside in favor of a grammatically more acceptable term, but the actual practice of profit-taking is justified, which is the important thing. The dialogue goes on to disparage the avaritia thus distinguished as unnatural and anti-social. The actual social practice of Florentine commercial houses and individuals has however been morally vindicated, because of its rootedness in civic consciousness and practice. The liberality which Poggio noted is, moreover, not a euphemism, but reflected real practice.

In this period then, Poggio is clearly within the developmental pattern of civic humanism. At the same time, the bitter criticisms of luxury reflect his position in the Curia and his observations on the way of life of the truly "rich" as opposed to the

---

[66] De Avaritia, p.18: "Primum, an lapsus sis in significato verborum qui cupiditatem et avaritiam, duo verba sensu disiuncta ita copulare visus sis ac si idem significaret. ... Aliud sane exprimit avaritiae nomen, aliud cupiditatis. Omnis avarus ardet cupiditate, sed non omnis cupidus avaritia. Si quis me cupidum dixerit, si quis item bonos viros, non negaverim. Sunt enim, quaedam naturales cupiditates, ut philosophi volunt, quae absunt a culpa, sicuti habendi ea quae suppeditent ad vivendi rationem et decorem, ut cum quis victum et vestes necessarias concupiscit. Cupit quis pecuniam, sed ad usum vitae necessarium, ad beneficentiam, ad liberalitem, et inopum sustentionem."

"industrious wealthy". With the accession of Eugenius IV to the papacy in 1431, however, Poggio's life began to change somewhat. The conflict between Eugenius and the conciliar assembly at Basel resulted in the pope and Curia being forced to flee Rome. Poggio himself returned to Florence in early 1433, after being held in captivity by the condottiere, Piccinino's soldiers. Then, in September of that year, the arrest and banishment of Cosimo de' Medici to Venice threw Poggio into actual "political" conflict in Florence. His letter to Cosimo on this occasion is important in two respects, first because it provides a convenient link between the De Avaritia and the debates with Guarino of 1435, and secondly because it demonstrates the increasing tension between the ideological formulation of civic humanism and actual fact, a tension which ultimately would force Poggio to re-evaluate civic humanist ideology.[67]

In a letter to the exiled Cosimo, after noting the tragic nature of the misfortune and his own lack of ability to

---

[67] The letter is in Opera Omnia, I, pp.312-317. A translation of the letter is in Shepherd, Poggio..., pp.226-35. The nobility question is important here, because the party which attacked Cosimo is the nearest Florentine equivalent to an urban aristocracy. It is headed by Rinaldo degli Albizzi, a parvenu family by comparison with the others in the group which included the Guasconi, the Peruzzi, portions of the families of the Gianfigliazzi, Bardi, Cavalcanti, Rondinelli. (Rubenstein, Government of Florence..., pp.1-3). Further, Poggio's personal seeking of wealth, his Medici alliance, and his personal political activity might aggravate the tension.

console him on such an important matter, Poggio wonders whether he, (Cosimo), has been able to withstand this particularly disastrous turn of events with (stoic) equanimity. He reminds Cosimo that he has lost only what was never properly his originally, because dignities, political power and such, are ultimately contingent on fortune.[68] He still had his virtue, or his opportunity to be virtuous, that is, to be stoic.

His portrayal of Cosimo's past history is important, as a reflection of the tension noted above: he notes that Cosimo has always been independent of fortune, unlike others who depend on it; he suggests that despite his successes in commercial and political affairs, Cosimo had not become proud for this, but that he continued to seek for moral self-improvement; Cosimo had always been strictly honest when in positions of public responsibility, not abusing his position for his own benefit; he had always been generous to those in need; indeed, his fortune had seemed like nothing more than the just rewards of his virtues; lastly, he was a literary man of some

---

[68] Opera Omnia, I, p.313: "...nihil tibi quod quidem tuum dici possit esse sublatum. Nam dignitates, imperia, honores, divitiae, opes, valitudo sunt eiusmodi, ut in ea et vis fortunae, et inimicorum impetus plurimum possit."

excellence.[69]

Poggio reminds him that misfortune cannot afflict a man whose innocence is known and felt sincerely to be true. One who has served public and private interests well, who has helped the poor and needy, who has afflicted no one, not even when provoked, such a man will not suffer from the changes of fortune: moreover, Poggio suggests, Cosimo has been such a man.[70] Poggio then suggests that the memory of his good life, together with the present opportunity to further his learning, should prove of sufficient satisfaction to him in his period of trial.

---

[69] Opera Omnia, I, p. 313: " Neque vero te ex eorum numero esse novimus, qui totus penderes ex beneficio fortunae. Quae quamvis plurima in te sua indulgentia contulerit, et nescio an tantum hoc tempore in quempiam nostrae civitatis virum, cum multo maiora atque ampliora sint existimanda, quae tibi egregia virtute animi comparasti, in quibus nullum ius, nullam autoritatem sibi vendicari possit temeritas, aut libido fortunae. Tu publicis in rebus deliberandi prudentiam cum agendi sollertia coniungens, ea vitae integritate, ea fide semper fuisti, ut nihil praeter honorem et gloriam domum referres. Quod idem si omnes facerent, tranquilliori rerum statu nostra res publica uteretur. Tu pietatem in patriam, liberalitatem in amicos, in omnes benivolentiam exhibuisti. Tu egenorum praesidium, oppressorum refugium extitisti... Tu muneribus fortunae ea moderatione, ea modestia, humanitate usus es, ut non illius officia in te collocata, sed virtute et meritis attributa viderentur. Praeterea studia literarum, in quibus ab ineunte aetate deditus, magnum decus atque ornamentum doctis viris attulisti."

[70] Opera Omnia, I, p. 313,314: " Bene enim sensisse, tum publice, tum privatim honestatem servasse, reipulicae recte atque ex eius commodo consulisse, in ea administranda fidem ac pietatem praestisse amicos consilio, egentes opibus iuvisse, nocuisse nemini, ne iniuria quidem provocatum, magnum praesidium afferre debent ac ferendos

He argues that the turn of events has in fact restored to Cosimo his real liberty, that is, freedom from those public pressures which he had sought solely in order to serve the public good, not because he desired position and glory. It has given him the opportunity to exercise that equanimity in the face of misfortune which his birth and life had only permitted him to exercise in the face of good fortune. Further, his lot has many historical parallels, because good men are commonly the object of envy and attack. Poggio then cites examples, Furius Camillus who was exiled, Scipio Africanus, and Publius Rutilius, who chose for himself permanent exile, refusing to return to that city in which armed strength was more valued than laws.[71] A similar turn of events occurred with Cicero who, however, is said to have returned to Rome on the shoulders of all Italy, a return which Poggio later would compare with Cosimo's return to Florence in 1434.[72]

---

modice fortuitos casus. ... Haec veram et solidam in se continent dignitatem. Haec tu egregium virum et summum civem constituerunt. Haec tibi summam laudem et immortalem gloriam attulerunt."

[71] Opera Omnia, I, p.316: "perpetuum sibi exilium elegit, recusans in eam urbem reverti in qua plus arma, quam leges valerent.".

[72] In another letter to Cosimo on the occasion of his recall to Florence (Opera Omnia, I, pp.339-42).

The extent of the tension between civic theory and fact became most strained, however, when Poggio congratulated Cosimo on his willing submission to events when by using violence and initiating civic strife, he might have overcome his enemies. This was clearly a simple question of theory; civic theory held that the public good was preferable to the private good, and that therefore Cosimo should willingly have submitted.[73]

The development of tension between fact and theory at this point can be demonstrated in two ways. First, because Cosimo de' Medici was not the man described by Poggio, but rather was a ruthless political man who exacted a harsh and large-scale vengeance on his enemies upon his recall; and second, because of the tensions between the situation's realities and Poggio's statement of civic theory political submission as the alternative to the social chaos

---

[73] Opera Omnia, I,pp. 316,317: "Cum enim (ut plures ferunt) potuisses vel armis, vel favore populi vim paratam propellere, rectius esse putasti accipere quam propulsare iniuriam. Et quoniam civiles motus nequaquam eos quos nonnulli sibi proponunt exitus sortiuntur, more superiorum quos retuli, consulens quieti patriae, et civium tranquilitati, prudenti consilio possus es potius hanc repentinam procellam in te tuosque solos descendere, quam quempiam excitare tumultum, quo civitas in aliquod gravius discrimen possit adduci... Ea unica est virtus quae alias omnes exuperat, consulere communi ocio et pace, hoc boni viri et praestantis civis officium, publicum bonum anteponere privato. Hoc acceptissimum patrocinium, se unum pro patriae salute occumbere malle, quam multos perire. Hac duce virtute tum plures aliae crevere, tum vero maxime Romana respublica rerum potita est."

attendant upon resistance.[74] Further, that which most clearly characterizes the new régime from Cosimo's return in 1434 is precisely the attempt to manipulate the mechanisms of choosing the Signoria in order to maintain the political hegemony of Cosimo and his party.[75] Poggio was moreover close enough to Cosimo that he must have been aware of his desires for personal power and his willingness precisely to use his position of power to rid himself of political enemies.[76] There is in this letter, then,

---

[74]Cosimo did, of course, resist, and the picture drawn by Poggio is therefore clearly a false one. In his Ricordi, Cosimo registered the facts:"Niccolò da Tolentino sentito il caso di 8, venne la mattina con tutta la sua campagnia alla Lastia, e con animo di fare novità nella Terra, perchè io fussi lasciato; e cosè subito che si sentì il caso nell' Alpi di Romagna e di più altri luoghi, venne à Lorenzo gran quantità di fanti. Fu confortato il Capitano, e così Lorenzo à non fare novità, che poteva esser cagione di farmi fare novità nella persona, e così feciono; e benchè chi consigliò questo fussino parenti, e amici, e à buon fine, non fu buono consiglio;perchè se si fussino fatti inanzi, ero libero, e chi era stato cagione di questo restava disfatto." (quoted in Shepherd, Poggio..., p. 234). On Cosimo's revenge, see Rubenstein, The Government..., pp. 1-6.

[75]Rubenstein, The Government..., pp. 4-24.

[76]Vespasiano refers to Poggio as "amicissimo di Cosimo", and asserts that he ultimately received the post of chancellor through his Medici alliance (1453). Further, Cosimo was Poggio's chief creditor. In 1427, Poggio had reported net assets of 566 florins, without debt to the Medici; in 1433, his net assets were up to over 1000 florins, with his major working capital coming from a loan secured from Cosimo's bank, in the amount of 714 florins. The figures are from the catasto returns of 1427 and 1433 respectively, in Walser, Poggius ..., pp. 339-341; 346-348.

a clear tension between Poggio's writing, which accords with the theoretical positions of civic humanism regarding devotion to the public rather than the private interest, and a reality which was at once less laudatory and clearly reflected the private interests of Cosimo and his party. Moreover, it is likely that Poggio was aware of this tension.

The debates of this very period (to 1436) between Poggio and Guarino Veronese (1370-1460), a northern Humanist resident at this time in Ferrara under the protection of the Marquis d'Este, on the nature of Caesar's historical role, are evidence of Poggio's continuing use of the civic humanist position.[77] In the Defensiuncula (1435), Poggio develops an earlier theme of Bruni's, that Caesar, by destroying the civic liberty of republican Rome, destroyed the very spirit which had nourished Roman society and made possible that remarkable tradition of literature, poetry, and history, which for the humanists was the crowning glory of Roman culture. He accused Caesar of destroying that custom of senatorial freedom upon which the love of rhetoric and philosophy was based?[78] Poggio repeated as well earlier arguments about Caesar's disrespect for all laws,

---

[77] On this debate see Baron, Crisis..., I, pp. 52-60; 353 ff; Becker, Florence..., II, pp. 230-232. For Poggio's position, see Poggio, Defensiuncula Poggii Florentini Contra Guarinum Veronensem ad Fransiscum Barbarum, in Opera Omnia, I, pp. 365-390; hereafter cited as Defensiuncula.

[78] Defensiuncula, p. 371: " Ergo culpa Caesaris extincta republica

human or divine.[79]

The question of the relationship between polity and culture was the central issue of the debate. Guarino had argued that the Roman Empire had actually formed the social background of the golden age, citing as examples of this, the mature work of Livy, Seneca, Virgil, and Horace. Poggio's answer was that, in reality, these men were all born under and nourished by the Republic; Livy was sixteen when Caesar was killed, Seneca had heard Cicero declaim in court, while Virgil had been twenty-four and Horace, seventeen, when the Battle of Pharsalia was fought between Caesar's and Pompey's forces.[80] Baron wants to see

---

latinam eloquentiam et literarum studio dico excidisse. Cum eum exercitium fori Romanam eloquentiam in supremum culmen eduxisset, cum apud populum ius concionandi multos ad dicendi studium excitaret, cum honor dicendae sententiae in senatu ad artem oratoriam impelleret, postquam Romani imperii potestas ad unius arbitrium pervenit, cecidit nos patrius, ut pareum in foro, nihil apud populum, minimum ageretur in senatu quod eloquentiam requirere videretur." And cf. "Dixi Caesarem non magis patriae quam latinae linguae et bonarum artium fuisse parricidam, propterea quod, sublata republica, latina eloquentia corruisset."

[79] Defensiuncula, p. 369: "Declaravit|C̄icerō| id modo temeritas C. Caesaris qui omnium divina et humana iura pervertit, per eum quem sibiipse opinionis errore finxerat principatum."

[80] Defensiuncula, p. 371.

Poggio's attack on Caesar in this period as typically a product of civic humanism, that is, as a response to the political threat of renewed conflict with Milan under Filippo Maria Visconti.[81] If our presentation of the social origins of civic humanism has been well-founded, however, there must be other bases for Poggio's civic writings in this period, for example, his personal investments in the Florentine contado, his growing interest in the public fisc through Monte purchases, and his personal position of alliance with the ruling party of Florence.

During this period, in fact, Poggio's life reflects the precise pattern of civic humanist ideology: he was in fact investing more and more in the contado, and his investments were seen as commercial, in that he was charged (as were all large rural holdings in the hands of urban dwellers) not on the basis particularly of the worth of the land, but rather on what it produced for sale in the markets. Further, his writings defend a power élite with which he personally was more than merely acquainted, the Medici; his marriage at this time into an old and aristocratic family, the Buondelmonti, whose position in Florentine civic life was established, also reflects a growing commitment to the pattern of civic life which has been described as typically "civic humanist".[82] From

---

[81] Baron, Crisis..., I, pp. 353-354.

[82] Poggio's investments can be traced in his catasto returns from

1433, this son of a rural notary is referred to as Messer Poggio, a title which reflects his legal training on the one hand, and his new and exalted position in society on the other.[83] The civic humanist defense of Florence in virtue of her libertas, which underlies the Caesar-debate with Guarino and its affirmation of the nexus between the Republic and Roman culture coincides with the period when Cosimo de' Medici, creating an enlarged and secure power-base, was bypassing the traditional procedures for the

---

1427 to 1433 (Walser, Poggius..., pp. 339-348); his assets rose steadily from 566 florins in 1427 to 969 in 1430, 1060 in 1433. After this date, Poggio's returns may or may not be complete, since he secured a tax exemption in 1434, and was no longer required to list everything in his returns. Clearly, however, his practice does not radically change, and his assets continue to grow; in the 1457 catasto his assets amount to 8500 florins, which is within the first 150 families in the city. Of this, 3256 florins was in Monte shares together with back interests, yielding a real value of 970 florins (Walser, Poggius..., pp. 409-413). He held over 5000 florins on deposit in several banking houses, of which about half was deposited with the Medici. On the Buondelmonti family, see Martines, The Social World..., pp. 210 ff et passim. The Buondelmonti had been part of that feudal nobility whaich had been forced into the city in the communal period; they still possessed one of the great fortress-houses inside the city. In the course of the thirteenth century, they had allied with the Guelph aristocracy in Florence, and suffered substantial loss of authority in the general reaction against this group at the end of the thirteenth century.

[83] In fact, this occurs first in the catasto report of that year, which registers Poggio's assets as over 1000 florins for the first time. Despite his legal training, Poggio had never been referred to in this fashion earlier, which demonstrates that it was a function chiefly of his new-found position. He is also referred to as "Dominus" in this period (Walser, Poggius..., pp. 345-348).

election of the Signoria.[84] Since Bruni, one of Poggio's closest humanist friends, was chancellor at this time, while Poggio himself was close to Cosimo, it is unlikely that Poggio was not aware of the turn of events.

Here and there between 1436 and 1438, one begins to see a change taking place in Poggio's thinking. Given the highly formal and usually impersonal, nature of humanist literature, evidence of the change must be sought indirectly, or in the rare reference or allusion, rather than in systematic disquisition. In a letter to Benedicto of Arezzo of December, 1436, Poggio argues that the laws themselves, however just, are inadequate and require the persuasive eloquence of rhetoric in order to be socially effective. This, in itself, is not a particularly exceptional argument; he goes on however to argue that the laws can become the instrument of injustice, and that those who are professionally on them are not interested in justice, but rather, in personal gain.[85] In another letter, of October, 1438, Poggio writes to Francesco of Padua that he is seriously

---

[84] Rubenstein, The Government..., pp. 6-24. The basic procedure of the drawing up of lists, which were examined by Accopiatori, selected exclusively for this purpose, and put into bags by them to be chosen later by a separate group of men was being altered. The Signoria was coming to be appointed directly by the Accopiatori and the outgoing Signoria. A similar, but less thorough-going, procedure had been adopted by Maso degli Albizzi in 1382, and by Rinaldo in 1433; that there was substantially greater interference under Cosimo can be inferred from the fact that Rinaldo's Signoria was responsible for the recall of Cosimo.

[85] Epistolae, VI, p. 99: "Omnes ferme ad iuris doctrinam accedunt

thinking of abandoning the public life, the pursuit of success, in order to retire to a life of learning.[86] At this time, Poggio was still writing civic, pro-republican letters during the continuing wars with the Visconti, and this as late as 1438, such that Baron can still see him exclusively within a civic humanist framework.[87]

---

lucri cupiditate, et quaestus causa; quod cum sit tanquam praecipuus finis discentibus propositus, eam iustitiam veram esse ducunt, quae sit quaestuosissima. Itaque non aequitatis rationem ullam habent, sed nummositatis; cum ad id solum vacent, quod sit eis studiorum suorum et vitae finis constitutus: Ubi veri lucrum abest, tum domum ius habetur pro iniuria. Non quid iustitia requiret attenditur, sed quid emolumenti controversia possit afferre. Itaque melior ratio illa dicetur, quae fuerit ditior atque opulentior."

[86] Epistolae, VIII, p. 192: "Non autem ad Curiam redii, quoniam admodum exorresco non mortem (unam id stultissimum esset), sed genus mortis, quo homines derelicti, destituti, ac proiecti veluti pecora, nedum corpori, sed neque ipsi animal consulere possunt. Neque vero aut pecunias, aut quaestum illum, vel quamvis amplam dignitatem tantifacio, ut ea vitae periculo consequi velim. Et si vis essem divitiis, quibus multi existimant, mihi credas velim, mi Fransisce, consulerem otio et quieti, vacans lectiori, et me paulum componens ad futuram vitam." There are other such letters, all in a new tone, for Poggio: Epistolae, VIII, pp. 194-196 (November, 1438), pp. 197-200 (December, 1438), pp. 202-2-3 (February, 1439).

[87] Baron, Crisis..., I, p. 353.

The beginnings of a revaluation are implicit, however, in the letters of the period, which begin to look beyond the civic humanist position on important issues, such as working in public affairs and the centrality of law in society. In the period 1438-1439, Poggio wrote the first treatise, the De Nobilitate, which can be seen as beginning to challenge from within, the civic humanist tradition. While maintaining certain concepts and values of that tradition, it analyzes the civic awareness with a keen depth, and demonstrates the clearly ideological character of it; in this, a central concept at issue is nobilitas.

V

## "Vixi summa cum quiete animi vacuus omni..."[1]

### 1. The place of Poggio's De Nobilitate

The treatise De Nobilitate appeared first in 1440, but had probably been written in 1339.[2] In this treatise, Poggio is intent on subjecting contemporary practices and older definitions of nobility to scrutiny, while at the same time, offering a tentative redefinition, of his own. For our purposes, here, however, more emphasis will be placed on Poggio's insistence on a realistic appraisal of contemporary practice, on his refusal to follow a generally accepted estimation of nobility, which estimation no longer accorded with the actual situation. It is in the De Nobilitate that the tension between theory and practical reality is first seen by Poggio as irreconcilable, with the result that the theory itself is subjected to examination, and the beginnings of a reevaluation can be seen.

---

[1] Poggio, Epistolae, VIII, p. 203 (February, 1439)

[2] It is first mentioned in Poggio's correspondence in a letter of February 24, 1440 to the Archbishop Francesco of Milan (Epistolae, VIII, pp. 215-219), but Poggio does not mention the treatise in another letter which is consciously discussing his work, to Bartolomeo Guasco in April, 1439 (Epistolae, VIII, p. 209). The sparsity of letters in the intervening period indicate that he was probably engaged in other work at this time, presumably, the treatise.

In his introductory dedication, Poggio insists that there is no adequate understanding of the concept of nobility in this period:

> Indeed, since the name of nobility is so widely accessible, and since opinions concerning it are so varied, not only among men ignorant of letters, but even among the most learned men, I sometimes marvel that nothing has been written as an explanation of it, except a few words from the Latins and from the Greeks, nothing except Aristotle and Metrodorus, both of whom treated it in a single book.[3]

The occasion of the dialogue is a trip to one of Poggio's country places with Lorenzo de' Medici and Niccolò Niccoli, one of Poggio's humanist friends, noted for his iconoclastic ways and non-civic opinions. In Poggio's garden, he showed them some of his statues and works of art, of which he was a notorious collector, and Lorenzo promptly remarked that Poggio hoped to recover the lost glory and nobility of the ancestors whose habits were similarly decorative.[4]

---

[3] De Nobilitate, in Opera Omnia, I, p. 64; in my edition (see Appendix A), ll. 10-15; all citations of the treatise are so cited, first with the Opera location, and secondly by line in my edition, which is lined consecutively through the treatise. "Equidem miror aliquando, cum tam late pateat nobilitatis nomen, cumque de ea tam variae sint non solum inter rudes literarum, sed etiam inter doctissimos viros sententiae, nihil a latinis [sic] nisi paucis verbis, neque Graecis quoque praeter Aristotelem et Metrodorum, quorum uterque unico libro nobilitatem complexus est, hac de re explicatum."

[4] De Nobilitate, I, p. 65; ll. 53-59.

The serious basis of the discussion is then raised by Niccoli who suggests that Poggio would not find their nobility through collecting or studying their statues, but through the examination of their wisdom and virtue.[5]

Lorenzo argues that, however ideal this vision might be, nonetheless, in reality, it is true that

> ...we see nobility won with paintings, with various symbols, and with refinement, wealth, large stores of goods and above all, with high offices and authority; indeed, we read of these being admired and sought for by those in no way noted for any distinction of virtue as by those of most excellent and learned nature.[6]

Lorenzo continues in this vein, suggesting that the ancients as well as the moderns thought similarly, that Cicero and Varro advocated the collection of works of art as inspirations to men to seek glory and that they themselves collected such works for their own gardens and libraries.[7] Niccoli argues that whether they collected works

---

[5] De Nobilitate, I, p. 65; 11. 61-64: "... non ex signis et marmorum fragentis dirutis, et viro sapienti non admodum appetendis sed ex animo, hoc est, ex sapientia et virtute excutienda nobis est, quae sola erigit homines ad laudem nobilitatis."

[6] De Nobilitate, I, p. 65; 11. 67-71: "...tabulis, signorum varietate, atque elegantia, opibus, rerum copia, magistratibus insuper, atque imperiis parari nobilitatem videmus, etiam in eis qui non clarent alio ornamento virtutum, eaque egregius ab ingeniis et appetita et culta legimus."

[7] De Nobilitate, I, p. 65; 11. 72-77: "Cicero ipse, Varro, Aristoteles,

of art or not was not the essential question, that is, that their nobility rested on other grounds than simply their collections of art. Indeed, were this not the case, those rich merchants and successful robbers who had a taste for art, would necessarily be equally noble.[8] But this possibility does not discourage Lorenzo, himself the grandson of Cosimo, a rich merchant with a taste for art; it is at this point that a new understanding begins to be apparent in the treatise: Lorenzo argues that nobility is not predicated on virtue understood in the normal (Christian) sense, but on any kind of extraordinary achievement, be it learning or banditry.[9] This too was known to the ancients, for Cicero referred

---

caeterique tum Graeci tum latini insignes omnium doctrinarum genere viri, qui virtutum specie ad studia se contulerunt, eiusmodi rebus suas quoque bibliothecas et hortos excolebant; ad loca ipsa in quibus constituta erant nobilitanda, idque laudis et industriae esse volebant."

[8] De Nobilitate, I, p. 65; ll. 82-86.

[9] De Nobilitate, I, p. 66; ll. 87-92: "Et statuarios, inquit, et pictores quas ars sua celebres atque insignes reddit, opulentes insuper ex re undecunque contracta, maximis quoque facinoribus notos, si verbum inspexeritis, recte nobiles dicemus. Itaque et plurimum studiis literarum praestantum et famosem latronem nobilem dici licet, alterum ob insigne flagitium, alterum ob doctrinam et sapientiam singularem."

to his rivals, Antonius and Catiline, as "not so much notable by their ancestry, as noble by their corruption." [10]

In this speech of Lorenzo's, Poggio lays the basis for a realistic portrayal of contemporary social realities. The question of morality had always been important in civic humanist ideology, and Poggio is portraying Lorenzo (who ultimately argues the civic humanist position) as being, in the first instance, unconcerned with the goodness of the man, but rather with his success. The issue here is Poggio's portrayal of the reality of economic power rather than its idealized formulation.

Lorenzo proceeds to offer a definition of nobility: he is called noble whose family is ancient, whose wealth is great, and who receives honor in his republic. Moreover, this is the opinion of the majority of men, and not merely a reflection of the state of affairs in Florence, and by implication, of Lorenzo's personal position.[11] It is to be noted that Lorenzo, by referring

---

[10] De Nobilitate, I, p. 66; 11. 94-95: "Nequaquam sint...tam genere insignes quam vitiis nobiles." And cf. 11. 95-97, where he notes that the ancients called him noble who was famous for any unusual achievement.

[11] De Nobilitate, I, p. 66; 11. 109-114: "Omnes enim illum dici et esse nobilem affirmant, qui antiqua familia, opulentis maioribus, cum honore ac dignitate in sua republica versatis originem trahant. Quamobrem si nostris moribus, et inveterate hominum extimationi |sic| assentiendum putas, si id verum existimas quod vulgus tenet, qui in eiusmodi rebus plurimum autoritas possidet, mecum de nobilitate sentias oportet."

to "our customs", and by appealing for support to the "people", is clearly arguing on civic humanist grounds. That he has cited Cicero and Aristotle seems clearly meant to establish him as the spokesman for that tradition.

Niccoli on the contrary refuses the support of the "common people", on the grounds that such opinion is of no particular value in a discussion among learned men. His response establishes him as Poggio's spokesman in the dialogue, because he practically repeats Poggio's words from the deicatory introduction, that opinions are varied and there is no firm basis for judgment at this point.[12]

> Indeed, the name is agreed on by all; the matter is wholly disparate; so that often no one, I believe, less deserves the name of nobility than he who most often uses the name. For if that which is nobility proceeded from a sure standard and reason, as obviously it should be conceded, then surely it would be one and the same among all.[13]

---

[12] De Nobilitate, I, p. 66; 11. 115-119: "Doctissimorumne hominum, inquit Nicolaus, an vulgi et plebis iudicio disputatum censes? Nam si opinionibus et moribus hominum ducaris, intellego nullam sedem esse nobilitatis in qua possit consistere. Cum enim varii sint interque se admodum repugnantes, non intellego quae certa ex his nobilitatis norma eligi possit."

[13] De Nobilitate, I, p. 66; 11. 120-124: "Nomen quidem apud omnes convenit, res admodum discrepat, ut nihil minus persaepe credam nobilis nomen mereri quam eum qui id nomen usurpet. Si qua enim est nobilitas, atque ea a certa re et ratione, prout concedendum est, proficiscitur, unam apud omnes atque eandem esse decet."

But, says Niccoli, this is not the case. Rather, disagreement is rampant, and particularly among the lower classes who do not associate nobility at all with virtue. Niccoli seems prepared to argue in an almost reductionist fashion that the term has no real meaning at all. Pressed by Lorenzo and Poggio to elaborate on this theme of universal disharmony in the concept, describes the nobility of various areas of Italy and foreign countries in order to demonstrate their discordance.

Among the Italians themselves, there is a large regional discrepancy. In the kingdom of Naples, nobility is associated with idlesness, with having nothing in particular to do. The Neapolitan nobility pass their time sitting in the house or riding; their personal accomplishments, or lack of them, are unimportant, as only noble birth is considered relevant; their class consciousness is such that they would rather rob than accept a large dowry from a rich merchant in return for their daughters in marriage.[14] Venetian

---

[14] De Nobilitate, I, p. 67; ll. 160-170: "Neapolitani qui prae caeteris nobilitatem prae se ferunt, eam in desidia atque ignavia collocare videntur, nulli enim praeterquam inerti ocio intenti, sedendo atque oscitando ex suis possesionibus vitam degunt. Nefas est nobili, rei rusticae, aut suis rationibus cognoscendis operam dare. Sedentes in atriis, aut equitando tempus terunt. Etiam si improbi absurdique fuerint, dummodo priscis domibus orti, se nobiles profitentur. Mercaturum ut rem turpissimam vilissimamque exhorrent, adeo fastu nobilitates tumentes, ut quantumvis egenus atque inops citius fame interiret quam filiam vel opulentissimo mercatori matrimonio collocaret, mavultque furtis et latrocinio, quam honesto quaestui vacare."

nobility is very different from this, but is scarcely less admirable. Among the Venetians, nobility is still a function of birth, but of birth into a commercial and political oligarchy. He terms the nobles a "faction" within the social body.[15] In Venice, there is no vertical social mobility into the select group, no matter how wise or accomplished a man might be, or what deeds he might do. Indeed, the essential factor among the Venetians is political power: once a man had served at a high enough level in the official state bureaucratic organization, he was noble, and no evil action on his part could change this status.[16] Roman nobility seems to be simply an honest rural gentry. There, the criteria are rural residence, animal-raising, agriculture, and an avoidance of commercial dealings.[17]

---

[15] De Nobilitate, I, p. 67; 11. 176-181: "Huic absurditati contraria est Venetorum consuetudo, inter quos nobilitas veluti factio quaedam ab reliquo populo distincta, mercaturam omnis exercet, ea quoque quae equestris ordinis insignio potitur. Omnis enim qui reipublicae muner ibus funguntur, quique ut aiunt ex ordine senatorio, nascuntur atque appellantur nobiles."

[16] De Nobilitate, I, p. 68; 11.188-192: "Quod autem nusquam gentium reperitur, ipse persaepe nobilem reddunt ex ignobili. Nam qui ob aliquod in eorum rem publicarum insigne facinus admissum, etiam si scelere aliquo profuerit asciscitur ad munia civitatis, nobilium numero adscribitur."

[17] De Nobilitate, I, p. 68; 11. 195-200.

Concerning Florentine nobility, Poggio says:

> We seem to think more correctly concerning nobility. Those who come from ancient stock are held to be nobles, many of whom were employed in executing the offices of the state, in administering the republic. One part of these gives themselves to commerce, the other part, rejoicing in the title of noble, and given over to doing nothing, pass their time with hunting and hawking.[18]

It is important to note that Poggio does not confine his sarcasm to non-Florentines, as would have been customary in civic humanist practice, but turns it onto the Florentine situation as well. The Florentine nobility is moreover identified by Poggio, as those of old lineage who serve in political office, while others of their families waste their time, living in a manner not discernibly different from the northern nobility. Niccoli notes the Florentine tradition of self-satisfaction, and his sarcastic "more correctly" seems an intentional jibe at the practice of the civic humanists of indiscriminately praising Florence and her way of life.

---

[18] De Nobilitate, I, p. 68; ll. 202-206: "Nos rectius de nobilitate sentire videmur. Habentur enim nobiles orti antiqua stirpe, quorum maiores functi officiis civitatis in rei publicae administratione versati sint. Horum pars se ad mercaturam confert, pars titulo nobilium gaudens, nulli exercitio dedita, venatu et aucupio oblectatur." Poggio does not seem to be confining himself, however strictly to those of ancient lineage in this description, because he argues that no one in Florence can trace their ancestry back very far. He may be referring mainly to the surviving grandi families, like the Peruzzi, who combined old wealth and political power. The emphasis on political power however, together with the earlier reference to rich merchants, seems to indicate that the new

After noting the nobilities of Genoa and the mountain areas of Lombardy, Niccoli turns his attention to the northern nations, and describes their nobilities. The German nobility is chiefly determined by landholding; whether a man lives in the city or in the country is less important than elsewhere. Mercenaries for the most part, they attach themselves to a powerful prince and live at Court.[19] Among the Gauls, nobility is defined by its rural setting; French nobles flee the cities and their commerce. In Italy, they would be considered only semi-civilized, but there, they are noble.[20] The British nobility is characterized by its landed quality, with internal gradations determined by the extent of the landholding. In England, a merchant who accepts noble values, that is, retires to the country and abandons city commerce, can have a chance to be accepted into the lesser nobility.[21] In Spain, there is a double nobility: in the cities, those of oldest stock are considered noble, while those who maintain a luxurious manner of living on their rural estates are also considered noble, and in the last analysis, are felt to be more distinguished. In

---

elite group, for example the Medici, are also in his mind.

[19] De Nobilitate, I, p. 68; 11. 215-220.

[20] De Nobilitate, I, p. 68.69; 11. 231-234: "Itaque plus illis rura et nemus conferunt quam urbes atque ocii atque negotii ratio ad consequandam nobilitatem. Eos certe qui apud nos semirustici censentur villarum incolae, illi nobilitatis laude commendant."

[21] De Nobilitate, I, p. 69; 11.239-244. This represents one of the earliest observations of this important fact of English social history.

all countries, the knightly rank is the first order of nobility.[22]

Niccoli continues in this way, noting the rise of titles and charters of nobility, and of the fact that only the favor of the prince is required for one to be called noble. In Egypt and Syria, on the contrary, there is no nobility, although there is a military-class hegemony of power in society. The Turkish nobility is essentially military.[23]

Lorenzo's response is that while there is a discrepancy of customs and usage, this does not negate the nobility of those men so defined in their own social circumstances. In this, he likens nobility to law: the laws of different areas are different, and favor different social groups, but are everywhere laws, for all that, and everywhere have the same general end of supporting public authority. Thus, the disparity itself is not a crucial objection. Rather, there is some nobility in all of them, according to their own customs.

---

[22] De Nobilitate, I, p. 69; ll. 244-248: "Hispania duplici nobilitate utitur. Nam et qui in suis civitatibus antiquo genere orti caeteris praesunt divitiis praediti et qui in campis commorantes nutriuntur ex praediorum censu, cum ornatiore quodam vivendi ritu, quae caeteris praestent, nobilium nomen tenet. Hos inter omnes equester ordo primum nobilitatis locum habet."

[23] De Nobilitate, I, p. 69; ll. 249,250.

It is Niccoli's answer to this which is clearly an attempt to isolate the ideological character of civic humanism:

> For that custom should be respected and accepted which is not far removed from right reason, while the other will be termed an abuse. For the laws serve the needs and utility of those to whom they are given; because they are not the same among all and for all peoples, it is fitting that the laws too differ according to the variety of the needs.[24]

Niccoli argues in a civic humanist context when he argues that all laws <u>should</u> have the same foundation in equity and justice. But, he argues, a similar concept can not be found to be at the root of all nobility.

Since nobility connotes something desireable, it should be attached firmly to virtue, rather than to such obviously external attributes as rural surroundings, leisure, or commercial activity, which in fact is not considered to constitute a desireable way of living, even by Cicero.[25] Niccoli becomes progressively

---

[24] <u>De Nobilitate</u>, I, p. 70; 11. 293-297: "Nam et ea consuetudo probanda est, et accipienda est, quae non procul absit a recte ratione, altera enim abusus nomine appellabitur. Et leges ad eorum quibus dantur utilitatem et commoda referuntur, quae cum non sint ubique gentium atque omnibus eaedem, pro varietate commodorum et leges quoque variari oportet."

[25] <u>De Nobilitate</u>, I, p. 70; 11. 304-315: "Quapropter fatebor ingenue, neminem eorum iure appellari nobilem posse. Qui enim fieri potest ut vir ocio marcens, nullo honesto negotio intentus, nulla praeditus virtute, nulla sapientia, nulla doctrina, maioribus tantum ac stirpis

more reductionist as he continues on: it is the great rarity when official position is completely devoid of personal gain; rather, as Jerome says, "the rich man is either unjust, or is the heir of an unjust man".[26] Niccoli concludes that riches "are least of all able to ennoble us. Nor indeed are power, honors, reputation, or authority to rule."[27]

Concerning ancestry, Niccoli attacks those whose ancestors though long famous, were vicious and oppressive; at the same time, even a long history of honorable and illustrious ancestors would not ennoble a person who was himself immoral. Those who do nothing at all, but pass their time hunting and hawking "smack no more of nobility than the dens of the beasts to which they are drawn."[28] But the taste for nobility had come to all, even in Florence, where common soldiers were called knights, and golden buckles were worn

---

origine fisus possit ullo esse pacto nobilis? ... At vero ex mercatura non video quae nobilitas acquiratur, aut quomodo cum illius venetur exercitio quod vile atque abiectum sapientes arbitrati sunt. Cicero eam non admodum vituperandum scribit, si fuerit opulentia, illam in sordido quaestus genere ponens."

[26] De Nobilitate, I, p. 70; 11. 323-326: "Sane raro cum virtute, cuius aliud munus est quam parandis divitiis vacare, relictae vero nihil nobis laudis afferunt aliena opera parte. Auream beatus Hieronymus sententiam profert, divitem aut inqiuum esse, aut iniqui haeredem."

[27] De Nobilitate, I, p. 70; 11. 328-330: "...nobilitare ergo nos minime possunt. At ne magistratus, quidem dignitates, honores imperia."

[28] De Nobilitate, I, p. 71; 11. 345-347 : " Sed haec ociosorum atque inertia studia aves aut feras sectandi. non magis nobilitatem

as signs of knighthood. Indeed, the whole accomplishment of these city-knights was in their fine dress.[29] Yet according to the ancients, knighthood was not held to be a noble rank; only patricians were nobiles, that is, those drawn from the families of senatorial rank, triumphant generals, and consuls. Rather, among the Romans, one could acquire noble status for one's descendants, through deeds.[30]

An important qualification of the reductionism of Niccoli's argument comes in his preference for the city to the country, for interaction over lonely isolation.[31] But this should

---

redolent, quam bene oleant ferarum quibus oblectantur cubiliae."

[29] De Nobilitate, I, p. 71; 11. 356-361: "Auream gestant fibulam togati nonnulli imbellesque tanquam, equestris ordinis notam, ipsi sine equo quandoque atque omnis militiae muneris expertes. Horum opera cum sint longe ab ornatu vestium diversa, ficticia quaedam res et ab inani pompa proficiscens, nihilo magis nobilitare deferentem potest quam timidum in bello fortem facere."

[30] De Nobilitate, I, p. 72; 11. 373-375.

[31] De Nobilitate, I, p. 72; 11. 387-390: "Non enim solitudine, aut ocio ignavo, vel opum magnitudine, sed virtutis studio comparandam sapientes censent, quam magis in urbibus et hominum coetu exercere possumus, quam inter feras in solitudine et agrestium commercio."

not be understood as an acceptance of the civic humanist concept of the vita activa, which is far from Niccoli's general argument; rather it registers precisely the new understanding, still from within the city environment, which is that Poggio argues against the concept from within the urban framework which had nourished it, rather than from a tyrant court.

Niccoli then attacks the problem using Aristotelian logic: if there is any such thing as nobility, it is either good, bad or indifferent. It cannot be evil, because what is honorable and desireable is inconsistent with evil. If it is good, it is so either by internal or external causes: but goods of the body, that is, wealth, beauty, health, do not confer nobility. Moreover, it is not one of the virtues, because no specific virtue can be demonstrated to coexist with nobility, or to necessarily confer nobility when it is present. He concludes that, if all this is so, there seems to be no nobility.[32] It is equally not "the mean" because then all men, being partially good and partially bad, would equally be noble. In fact, true nobility is not, properly speaking, generally desireable, because it is unconnected with specific virtues, nor is it conducive to health or wealth.[33]

---

[32] De Nobilitate, I, p. 72,73; ll. 400-423.

[33] De Nobilitate, I, p. 73; ll.454-469.

At this point, Lorenzo appeals to Aristotle, citing his definition of nobility from the Politics, that is, that nobility is virtue and ancient wealth.[34] Niccoli's reply to Lorenzo is to cite Aristotle from the Ethics, that he is noble in whom there exists from birth a desire to seek the true good, that is, virtue. This suggests that Poggio was simply anticipating an obvious objection from a well-known source, and trying to counter it before it could be made. Moreover, Lorenzo's actual response was logically poor, since it meant that virtue without wealth was not noble, and that wealth is a necessary adjunct to virtue, truly perceived (a clearly civic humanist perspective).[35] He then cites cases which demolish this position, particularly that of Aristides, who though poor, was "among Athenian leaders, ... the equal of Themistocles." Also, if riches are a deciding factor, then nobility is a function of fortune, which is by defintion inadmissable. Rather, Niccoli argues, it is of virtue, and since "virtue consists in action, |while| action is a function of the doer, it must follow that nobility is in him who exercises virtue in the office."[36]

---

[34] De Nobilitate, I, p. 74; ll. 492-494: "Sed ut ad Aristotelem redeamus, is in quinto Politicorum scribit nobilitatem esse virtutes, et antiquas divitias."

[35] De Nobilitate, I, p. 74; ll. 515-518.

[36] De Nobilitate, I, p. 75; ll. 555-557: "...virtus enim in actione consistit, actio autem cum sit operantis, sequitur ut in eo sit qui exercuit officia virtutum."

At this point Niccoli, by relating virtue and nobility to a function in society hearkens back again to a central theme of civic humanism, reflecting Poggio's long participation in that tradition, which he was only beginning to be able to challenge. Poggio does not deny totally the city's position as a primary determinant of human values and affairs. On the contrary, he retains the city, but attacks the city's absorption of the person; thus for Bruni, the virtuous man was so in the first instance because he lived in a free city; for Poggio a man is virtuous and can therefore make of the city a worthwhile place to live. Thus, the city itself is no longer the "referent"; rather, a good man makes the city good, a bad man, bad.

Continuing against the Aristotelian definition, Niccoli argues against the concept of an inherited nobility of virtue, since it often happens that good men have bad children, or that within one lifetime both fortune and virtue could be gained or lost, as was the case with Themistocles.[37] In fact, the affairs of men are so constantly changing that no judgment whatever can be made on this basis.[38]

---

[37] De Nobilitate, I, p.76; 11.592-605.

[38] De Nobilitate, I, pp.76; 11.615-618: "Sed cum res hominum saepius varientur, nec in eodem stat diutius perserverent, continget ut nepotes fortunae donis spoliati, longe distent a vita superioris, ad hos nulla descendet nobilitas." Fifty years later, this attitude of indeterminacy would develop into Pyrhonnism and Scepticism. However, it is a perspective crucial to understanding Poggio.

Lorenzo then tries a philosophical tack, making a typically humanist distinction between the Greek and Latin words: what the Latins call nobilitas, the Greeks call eugenia, "noble birth". Actually, the Latins, when referring to such a birth, do not call it noble, but "insignis" (signal, singular). He wants to maintain that the questions of place of birth, wealth, family, are important determinants of nobility, because 1) wealth makes virtue more pleasing; 2) fortune and wealth are needed in war, which is the chief occasion for the doing of glorious deeds; 3) the place of birth can either restrict or facilitate the doing of deeds which would earn the title of noble; 4) lineage has a role in the proferment of civil duties and posts which are the chief means of acquiring nobility.[39] Lorenzo is arguing clearly on civic humanist grounds. He continues: wealth is in itself indifferent, and dependent on the virtue of the user. Indeed, he asks, of what use is that Stoic liberality in the supporting of the common life?[40] Indeed, those who have supported civic life have also sought for and supported wealth.

Niccoli's answer, attacking Aristotle, equally attacks

---

[39] De Nobilitate, I, p.77; 11.643-663.

[40] De Nobilitate, I, p.78; 11.671-672. Civic life on the other hand needs such results of fortune. Lorenzo is here clearly representative of Poggio's earlier period, as this is the central theme of the De Avaritia.

the central tenets of civic humanism and, by implication, contradicts Poggio's earlier humanism :

> This happens not because of its guilt, but because of the general wickedness of men, who, corrupted with Aristotle's learning, praise riches; and those corrupted and depraved by the stupidity of their nature then place poverty as the lowest in extreme evils, and they crave wealth more than is seemly, thinking there is no other way to virtue and good living without it. But we, in this place, do not care for what vulgar opinion pronounces, but rather for what truth decrees, which in my own opinion is a long way from Aristotle's description. ...And he himself...in Politics says that nobility and virtue exist in few men, when riches are added. So that, if riches ennobled anything, the money chest and the wallet would be more noble than their possessor. Generally, I will maintain this, that no honors, no acknowledgments, no deeds, no official position, no authority, no triumphs carry with them real nobility; unless it be mixed and joined as the essential controlling element.[41]

---

[41] De Nobilitate, I, p.78; 11.680-699: "Haec non illius culpa, sed vitio hominum contingit, qui cum doctrina Aritotelis depravati divitias laudant, tum naturae imbecillitate corrupti depravatique paupertatem tanquam abiectissimam in extremis malis ponunt, et cum plus aequo divitias appetant, nullam sine eis ad virtutem et bene vivendi viam credunt. Sed nos hoc loco non quid corrupta opinio loquatur quaerimus, sed quid pronunciet veritas, quae mea quidem sententia longe est ab Aristotelis descriptione... Hoc...in Politicis fatetur, dicens nobilitatem et virtutem in paucis esse, addens divitias. Quae si quid nobilitarent arca et sacculus nobiliores essent possessore. Illud insuper asserverabo, nullas dignitates, nullos honores, nullas res gestas, nullos magistratus, nulla imperia, nullos triumphos veram nobilitatem secum importare; nisi fuerit admixta et tanquam rerum moderatrix adiuncta virtus."

Virtue is its own means of conferring nobility, and does not require lineage, the native land, or wealth.[42] Niccoli asserts the Stoic position that true virtue is a product of seeking truth, and that therefore, only the philosopher can be virtuous, and implicitly, noble.[43] Thus, nobility is permanent, as virtue, rather than transient, as fortune. Further, it is entirely personal, rather than dependent on either God or the city, and is not necessarily transmitted from father to son.[44]

It should be noted that Niccoli's citing of Plato is not likely a direct citation, but through some intermediary. Indeed, Niccoli's conclusion: "In fact, we ourselves earn praise and nobility through our own merits, not those of others, and through those

---

[42] De Nobilitate, I, p.78; 11.700-706: "Famam quidem et veluti gloriae umbram secum in vulgus ferunt, sed nobilitatis laus petitur a virtute. Ista vero tria, genus, patria, maiores et caetera quae modo retulisti, absque virtute sunt tanquam cauponularum insignia, quae denotant ubi vendantur vina, nihil tamen ad eius suavitatem conferentia. Virtus enim ex seipsa subsistens, etiam absque istis adminiculus nobis patet ad nobilitatem."

[43] De Nobilitate, I, p.79; 11.725-728.

[44] De Nobilitate, I, p.79; 11.731-735.

actions which come from our own willed choice."[45] Niccoli, here clearly speaking for Poggio, maintains the centrality of will, of action, but dissociates it, in the first instance, from a civic, indeed, from any communal, environment. Niccoli cites historical examples of men who had risen from humble birth to gain nobility through their own efforts and virtue, without appeal to external attributes, that is, to attributes not clearly predicated on the human soul. The private nature of this virtue should be stressed, because it is in such clear contradistinction to the civic humanist tradition.[46]

Lorenzo, nonetheless, persists in associating virtue with family. In fact, he goes so far as to argue that he

> |should| more swiftly call him noble who is able to bring, as evidences for himself parents of excellence, even if he himself is but little adorned with virtue, than he who, excelling in every kind of virtue, comes from obscure parents. For the path to the

---

[45] De Nobilitate, I, p. 79; ll. 754-756: "Nos vero laudem et nobilitatem meremur nostris meritis, non alienis, et his actionibus quae ex nostra prodeunt voluntate." This is probably from Seneca. It is now clearer why Niccoli maintained the centrality of action earlier, cf. pp. 164,165 above.

[46] De Nobilitate, I, p. 80; ll. 803-810: "Nam rerum gestarum gloriae multi existunt participes, socii, milites, fortuna, sine quibus ulla clareret eorum virtus. At philosophiae quae sola nos ad sapientiam virtutumque omnium quibus vita nostra servatur et colitur, cognitionem perducit, is solus est particeps qui illis insudavit. Nam prudenter, sapienterque vivens non aliunde, sed a seipso bona vitae refert, accepta eius sunt propriae laudes non ab alio mutuatae."

light has been thrown open to the first...[47]

Lorenzo then clearly argues in the fashion of the early civic humanists when they argues aginst the monastic life: the Stoic ideal is inhuman, and however admirable, is not accessible to most men, who must find their virtue in ordinary civic life, riches and the happiness of living in a free city. Indeed such virtuous men as Niccoli describes generally flee civic life and participation in ordinary affairs. Lorenzo admits that Niccoli's seeker of virtue is virtuous, but he is not noble, and indeed, "he who is eager for virtue, I would not call noble." The dissociation which Poggio clearly establishes between the civic life and genuine virtue is as frontal an attack as could be made on that particular tradition, whose internal moral integrity had always been founded on its active association,and demonstration of the link, of virtue and civic participation.

By this outcome, then, Poggio demonstrates the clearly untenable position in which the ideology of civic humanism had been placed by the development of Florentine social structures. The tenets of that tradition were no longer consistent with genuine morality.

---

[47] De Nobilitate, I, p. 81; ll. 843-847: "...citius appellabo nobilem qui excellentis parentes potest referre ipse vel paululum virtute ornatus, quam qui obscuris maioribus extiterit omni virtute genere excellens. Priori patefactus est aditus ad lucem..."

Niccoli does not let the matter drop at this point, but continues to press his assault. The "city", like "nature", brightens the path equally for everyone, but not everyone is equally noble or virtuous. The example of the ancestors is open to all, not only to their blood descendants. On the other hand, the virtuous man needs nothing else than his continued virtue. Indeed, if men were to be convinced that each man must seek his own nobility in virtuous living, then real nobility would certainly be found.[48]

## 2. The Development of a Personal Moralism

Poggio begins from the late 1430's to focus his ethical philosophy on the individual, rather than emphasizing the relationship existing either between him and God or between him and Society. In this emphasis, there is something of a rapprochement with the later Petrarch, and indeed, one can discern phrases which were clearly written with some of Petrarch's works in mind.[49] The

---

[48] De Nobilitate, I, p. 82; ll. 930-936.

[49] There are clearly problems in the relationship of Poggio to Petrarch. Baron suggests that Poggio was neither impressed with Petrarch's work personally, nor especially concerned to promote his reputation (Crisis...,I,pp.226-239), and cf. "We may hope to solve the problem of intellectual authorship by comparing the attitudes of Bruni and Poggio toward Petrarch in their later years. As to Poggio there does not seem to be in all his later writings any further concern with the vindication of Petrarch, except an occasional admiring paragraph on Petrarch's retired life, which is to be reccomended as a model for the true 'vita contemplativa et studiosa'. This silence is significant because it shows

entire De Miseria Humanae Conditionis (1455) is patterned after Petrarch's De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae, although there is in some ways a different conclusion, which will be examined in more detail below.[50] One of the most important parallels between Poggio and Petrarch can be seen in their preference, in later life, for a quieter life, not driven by the madness of striving after ephemeral successes (another is the fact that they both perceived worldly successes as ephemeral in essence).[51]

---

how uncharactaristic of Poggio's true interest was the theme he once alluded to in his apology of 1406." (Crisis, I, p. 238). Trinkaus, In Our Image..., I, pp. 259; 262-266, argues that there are close parallels between the late work of Poggio and that of Petrarch, in style, form, and inspiration.

[50] Trinkaus, In Our Image..., I, p. 264.

[51] On Petrarch's realization of this, see above, ch. II, pp. 60,61. Poggio's adherence to this position is more difficult to establish with any clarity, because of his return to active work in the Curia in 1443, after having spent the largest part of his time from 1434 in Florence and the surrounding areas. All his letters in this period are from Florence, but after 1443, they once again are from Rome. Again, his acceptance of the position of chancellor in Florence in 1453 militates against viewing his later years as contrary to the tenets of the vita activa. It will become clear, however, that Poggio viewed these positions essentially as sinecures, which were due him because of his international fame as a humanist scholar and literary personality, and indeed, expected to have only light and scattered responsibilities which would not overly interfere with his writing. That this did not happen with the chancellorship was one of the principal reasons for his being "forced out" in 1457-1458.

In a letter of February, 1439, to Ricardo, an episcopal secretary, Poggio says that his two years in the Florentine contado have been passed with a peaceful and an empty soul. He describes with considerable feeling the pleasures of the rural atmosphere, the intimacy of living in a house which he himself had had a hand in the building. Poggio seems in fact, after a long and hard life, finally to have found in these years (1438-1442) some measure of spiritual repose, and he seems satisfied with this peace, because he is convinced that only through it can true virtue be found.[52]

Why Poggio, who throughout his life had been a careerist, gathering properties, maintaining a political and personal alliance with the Medici, working and rising in the papal bureaucracy, should now begin to turn away from the pursuit of such a life is a difficult question, but one which must receive consideration. The answer can be found, in part, in his reaction to the tenets of that civic humanism with which he was becoming increasingly disenchanted. We have already seen a clear tension building in Poggio's writings between civic humanist ideology and actual fact. With the De Nobilitate the first clear example of an abandonment of that ideology becomes apparent.

---

[52] Epistolae, VIII, p. 203: "Vixi summa cum quiete animi vacuus omni, praeterquam domestica, quae et ipsa perlevis erat, cura. Eram enim in patria tum fertili, tum amoena, quodque plurimum ad

From the early period, while still a civic humanist, Poggio had delighted in demonstrating the hypocrisy of many men of the church, and particularly of the mendicant orders.[53] In fact, his attacks on the hypocrisies of the official ministers of the church

---

jucunditatem confert, inhabitatem domum a me ipso aedificatam vacabam animo et virtuti ipse procul ab omni quaestus cupiditate. Nihil erat tanti, quod censerem vitae meae et huic tranquilitati mentis praeponendum."

[53] See above discussions of the De Avaritia and the Facetiae (ch. II). This aspect of Poggio never really changed. In 1448, he is still attacking the hypocrisy of the mendicants: "Adde quod ex eis, qui confessionibus se dedunt, sanctitatem verborum ostentant, mulieres interrogant occultiora quaedam, quae potius libidinem provacent, quam extinguant...Multas tentant, quasdam seducunt ad veneris templum, quae postmodum illos Patres spirituales appellant." (Contra Hypocritas, in Opera Omnia, II, pp. 45-80; p. 66). Poggio suggests that the situation had become so bad that women now contented themselves with their conscience, avoiding the sacrament. There are other attacks on the hypocrisy of prelates and religious, some directly on their spiritual roles, as considered from the condition (sometimes presumed) of their own souls. This, on prelates in particular: "Magna pars horum in sublevandis ditandisque suae stirpis hominibus occupata fuit, quorum cogitationes quam evaserint inanes, multorum quos novimus extant exempla. Rarum apud eos studium viguit doctrinae vel religionis, rarius virtus est in precio habita, ut nisi dei providentia ea fieri arbitrarer, aliquando quererer minimam ille inesse aut mortalium, aut suae fidei curam." (De Miseria Humanae Conditionis, in Opera Omnia, I, pp. 88-131; p. 114). In fact, Poggio's anti-clericalism, not only pronounced and consistent, but also, indicative of a deeper anti-hypocrisy theme of his thought, is at once more generally significant and more important than is often thought.

was so violent in the dialogue Contra Hypocritas that he later refers to an unfavorable reaction from that quarter, in which there was a veiled threat to exact retaliation; this, of course, the prelates were eminently able to do, by virtue of their exalted position in society.[54]

His barbs were not however confined to ecclesiastics. Rather, Poggio's sarcastic wit was one of his most noted and respected accomplishments.[55] In his later period, he began to turn this sarcasm, and the sense of realism which underlies it, against Florence, and against civic humanism.[56]

There is in the later Poggio an increasing awareness of private morality which is separable from oublic and from divine referents. In 1439, he writes to Panormita criticizing his recent work, Hermaphroditus, for its frivolity, and arguing that it is principally evidence of a vacuity of spirit to have only something of such little consequence with which to occupy one's mind.[57] In 1440, the De Infelicitatem Principum appeared as well as the De

---

[54] De Miseria, p. 100

[55] Burckhardt, Civilization..., I, pp. 272, 273.

[56] cf. De Nobilitate, ch. V, n. 18, above.

[57] Opera Omnia, I, pp. 349-355, contains this correspondence.

Nobilitate, and it too contains an attack on the assumed link between position in society and the "good life". Being written for the accession of Nicholas V to the papacy, however, it reflects a concern essentially with this problem in its ecclesiastical perspective, and is therefore less indicative than the De Nobilitate for purposes of considering Poggio's development from within the secular perspective of Florentine humanism. Even here, however, Poggio's essential argument is that happiness is more easily found among private persons than among those who have the responsibility of power.[58]

His letters of the early 1440's reveal a consistent tendency to place personal peace and morality in the first rank of importance, and to relegate the problems of the active civic life to the background. He argues that, by their turbulence and ephemeral quality, civic activities divert the soul from the pursuit of true virtue. In this period, he comes very close to the mature Petrarch.[59]

---

[58] Epistolae, VIII, pp. 231-235. In this letter to Cardinal Richard Pettewort, he is discussing the book he has just sent to Nicholas (May 24, 1440): "Felicitatem vero, de ea autem loquor; quae inter homines versatur, magis in privatis viris esse, quam in eis qui caeteros dominantur."

[59] In a letter of September, 1440, Poggio writes to the Cardinal of Aquilea: "Postea enim quam lucri facultas adempta est, malui rusticus, quam urbanus esse, ubi et minus curarum, et plus consolationis adest; et ea locum ad veram philosophiam et

The whole period presents a consistent impression of disenchantment with the tension of the active life, and the discrepancy between theory and fact. Rather, Poggio's personal peace in this period seems more than merely congenial to his advancing age; it represents the first real opportunity in Poggio's lifetime to make a choice between the pursuit of the active and contemplative lives, and he chooses that life of learning which is most conducive to the pursuit of virtue.[60] His disenchantment with the

---

literarum studia sunt aptiora, quieti quoque mentis magis accomodata. ...neque ego itidem ab illius sciscitur quid agatur, neque de statu rerum publicarum ultra portiunculam laboro; libellos quoque meos aliquando consulo, quid mihi agendum sit, cupiditatibus modum poenas, qua vita nihil quietius, nihil dulcius esse potest. Ad hanc ego te vitam vocarem..." (Epistolae, VIII, p. 236). Later, in October, 1442, he writes to Scipio, Bishop of Modena: "Ego omni negotio publico ac omni lucro vacuus, tum rure tum maxime, tum paulo vaco litteris. Neque enim animus perturbatus ratione temporum, cum utriusque reipublicae molestias et anxieta tes videat, quiete ea fruitur, quam appetunt studia literarum. ... Ut autem nostri. non est locis musis ubi rei privatae solicitudo mentem occupavit; quiete animi et ocio opus est, si quis velit scribere. Nihil ne litterae, inquies, proficiunt, et ante acta vita? Multum illae quidem i sed res durissima est egere tum omni aetate et tempori, tum praesertim senectuti, et eo maxime tempore, quo nulla nos spes sustentat." (Epistolae, VIII, pp. 254,255).

[60] In a letter to Cosimo de' Medici of November, 1442, Poggio writes: "Plures excellentes doctrina viri, ut philosophandi studio, et bonarum artium pervestigationi facilius penitusque possent vacare relictis urbibus se rus in vitam privatam contulerunt; ubi dies suos summa in quiete et honesto otio transegere. Multos vero civitatum gubernaculis inhaerentes civilis tempestas ad scopulos allisit." (Epistolae, VIII, p. 258)

central referent of civic humanism, the republican city-state, had become quite profound: it makes for constant anxiety and refuses to allow any peace; its people are hectic and self-seeking, generally evil and malicious. Moreover, Poggio has discovered a new freedom, "the liberty of the soul", which is not found in cities, but in the country.[61] His sense of personal morality remains, even after he leaves Florence to return to the Curia in 1443. In July, 1445, he writes again to secretary Ricardo to urge him to pay more attention to his moral well-being, and less to the pusuit of wealth and power.[62]

---

[61] From the same letter to Cosimo, on the superiority of country to city, life, he writes: "Non enim illic degentem rerum urbanorum strepitus, et solicitudo anxia premit; non curiositas supervacua noscendi mentem sollicitat; an quicquid ubique terrarum agitur indagamus; non cuius superfluis abrumpitur somnus; non pestilens invidia, non livor edax fraudem proximo machinatur; non scelerem officinae, quae errant |sic| urbibus, ad mala facinora impellunt; non sexcenta alia, quae civilis et occupata vita nequit effugere, sed dulcis ac secura quies, vita frugi, et ocium officio plenum, omnibus honoribus ac dignitatibus praeferandum." (p. 260) And further, "Attamen si frequenter hos, quibus necessario implicaris, civiles tumultus lenieris iucunditate, atque amoenitate ruris, et te in libertatem animi, quod etiam legendo ociosus acquires, queandoque vindicaris..." (p. 261).

[62] Epistolae, IX, pp. 293-297. Ricardo is the same episcopal secretary who received the earlier letter (n. 53, above).

The most important moralistic work of this sort from Poggio's mature period is the De Miseria Humanae Conditionis of 1454-1455.[63] The early part of the treatise is a discussion between Matteo Palmieri, Cosimo de' Medici and Poggio. Palmieri offers the essentially Christian view that life is a journey of hardships and he cites Heraclitus in support of his contention.[64]

---

[63] The treatise is in Opera Omnia, I, pp. 88-131; hereafter cited as De Miseria. In the sense that it is the dominant work of the freshest theme in the writing of the later Poggio, Trinkaus is right to stress it. To stress to the exclusion of Poggio's other work (Trinkaus' bibliography lists only it and the Contra Hypocritas (1448), In Our Image..., II, p.895) seems not only needlessly perverse, but easily leads to misinterpretation. Thus, while noting the enormous debt that the De Miseria owes to Petrarch's De Remediis, he argues that the treatise presents a far blacker view of human affairs, more in tune with the spirit of the Suum Secretum of Petrarch's most ascetic period in the early 1340's (In Our Image..., I, p. 264). He emphasizes the harsh, anti-clerical note of the work, a note however, that was very old in Poggio and of no particular significance in this treatise (I, p. 266). He argues that the work is "strongly negative" in tone, such that "the result is a pessimistic outlook of his own which is truly Renaissance in its historical realism." (In Our Image..., I, pp. 269, 270) Trinkaus notes three important aspects of this treatise, that Poggio became less optimistic ( he was never really pessimistic) in his later years, that his realism became more significant than his earlier idealism, and that he was not a civic humanist. Unfortunately, Trinkaus does not note this as a development because he seems not to be familiar with Poggio's early work; also he overstates Poggio's negative sentiments on the whole because he is not familiar with the other works and because he does not take sufficiently into account the purely rhetorical and literary element in Poggio, which tends to lead him to exploit a theme in a given work, while redressing this by exploiting a different, and often contradictory one, elsewhere.

[64] De Miseria, I, p. 90: "Quid est enim vita nostra nisi peregrinatio quaedam laboris, erroris et stulticiae plena? ... Haec Heraclitus ille Philosophus mente versans, contintuo fletu stulticiam hominum miseriamque prosequabatur."

Cosimo's response to Palmieri, in the treatise, is interesting in view of what we have been saying about Poggio. He suggests that human miseries can be lightened, and in any event, are less miserable to him who is armed with virtue, that is, right reason, citing Democritus in his support. Moreover, our evil fortune is generally our own fault, because humans are most frequently depraved, serving evil rather than seeking virtue. In short, we get, by and large, what we deserve.[65] Cosimo is clearly being established as the essentially "Poggian" spokesman against Palmieri.[66] Moreover, Poggio's own intervention at this point seems to support this, because Poggio agrees with Cosimo that the real problem is that of evil, and that men serve evil rather than good.[67] He then adds the by now typically Poggian

---

[65] De Miseria, I, p. 91: "Quare haud mirum debet videri, si multis miseriis implicita videtur humana conditio? Culpa id certe accidit nostra, non naturae, qui dotes illius nobis ad bene vivendum dates, nobisque dapravatas moribus, vertimus in perniciem nostram, servi fortunae facti, cum liberi esse possemus."

[66] Which seems to me to be at the root of Trinkaus' misunderstanding of the treatise, that is, he doesn't appear to realize that it is Cosimo who is the more representative of Poggio's opinions. This does not argue that Cosimo is meant to be Poggio, or that Poggio never shares Palmieri's opinions in the treatise. It is a question of emphasis, but the emphasis should be placed on Cosimo's words, not Palmieri's.

[67] De Miseria, I, pp. 92.93.

awareness of the transiency of human affairs, arguing that even those things we think bring us happiness ultimately might very well change and bring us misery.

Cosimo again cites examples, and presents the argument that those who seek virtue overcome fortune, and therefore misery.[68] The response of Poggio clearly from the same inspiration indicates that the Poggio-Cosimo debates are written as fundamentally similar views which can bee seen differently. Poggio notes that virtue is in fact not respected (the Romans exiled Coriolanus), and that fortune does rule in human affairs, making men's assumed power of reasoning meaningless.[69] The attack on the religious orders and their pretended happiness, their hypocrisies, and their real miseries by Palmieri is in part rhetorical, and in part germane to the treatise. Insofar as it is relevant, it is so precisely because the priests refuse to live virtuously and therefore are the causes of their own unhappiness.[70]

---

[68] De Miseria, I, p. 95: "Iusti enim sapientes sunt habiti, et cum virtute quae procul a se miseriam repellit vixisse. Non igitur omnibus hominibus haec tua imperat miseria conditio vitae..." .

[69] De Miseria, I, pp. 96,97.

[70] De Miseria, I, pp. 99-102; together with the long exposé of the similar situation to be found in the Curia in the second book of the De Miseria (pp. 113-115) by Poggio, they may be read in part as a reflection of Poggio's having recently left the papal service for the last time in 1453 and wanting to register the continuation of his earlier views, confirmed by recent experience.

Palmieri's historical justifications of his view concerning the universality of unhappiness express, too, an aspect of Poggio's thought. Historically it happens that men have not really been happy. In all countries and in all periods when men have written, they can be shown to be intimately involved with the question of misery, of frustration, of the ephemeral.[71]

It is however Cosimo's speech which (predictably) ends the treatise, and ends it on a different note. He defends the power of human reason, as he has throughout the treatise, and argues that the pursuit of virtue would be meaningless were it not for the individual's ability to overcome unhappiness.[72] In thus invoking the validity of individual experience in contradistinction to the general human situation described in Palmieri's earlier historical section, Poggio registers a new view of human affairs, different from and antagonistic to that of civic humanism on the central issues of the nature of happiness, of human involvement, and of the relationship between individual and society. Moreover, by specifically justifying the individual experience, he seems to demonstrate precisely a reaction to the

---

[71] De Miseria, I, pp. 106-109; 116-129.

[72] De Miseria, I, pp. 130, 131.

change in Florentine social structure decribed above which tended precisely to invalidate that experience, or at least to subordinate it to the experience of the social body as a whole.

This aspect of Poggio's thought, which developed quite slowly, can also be traced through his legal thought and writings although with less clarity because of the lack of such writing in the earlier period.[73] There are three works which deal principally

---

[73]Poggio had had legal training, it should be remembered, and was matriculated from the notarial gild in 1402. There are inferences to be made concerning the rule of law from his earlier writings in the period of civic humanism, for which see above, chapter IV. And there is the short treatise, Oratio in Laudem Legum written in 1436 (Opera Omnia, II, pp. 825-828) and the In Laudem Reipublicae Venetorum, concerning whose date there is some dispute. Walser dates it in 1459 (Poggius..., p. 291), but Rubenstein ("Poggio...", pp. 222; 235, n. 40) dates it in 1450, basically from a letter of Poggio's written in 1454 to Pietro Tomassi noting that Poggio was considering retiring to Venice and had thought of writing a history of the city. Rubenstein suggests that the In Laudem was probably some preliminary work for this. The Walser view hangs on the revocation of Poggio's Florentine tax privilege in 1457, which it is argued, embittered him and accounts for both In Laudem and the Contra Fidei Violatores (1458). Given our reconstruction of Poggio's development, it seems unlikely that the 1459 date could be correct, because it would mean that Poggio, after justifying the individual experience progressively more and more, wrote a praise of the Venetian constitution which is in exactly a contrary spirit. Further, the legalist attitude of the In Laudem has far more in common with the earlier work on law than with the Historia Convivialis, also of 1450, or with the Contra Fidei Violatores in addition to the letters and treatises already discussed. Also cf. two letters of Poggio's from August 1449 which clearly show him thinking of retiring, although not specifically to Venice (Epistolae, X, pp. 5-7; 7-9). The dating though is important, and for these reasons, Rubenstein's dating of 1450 is accepted here.

with Poggio's legal thought, the Oratio in Laudem Legum (1436), the In Laudem Reipublicae Venetorum (1450), and the Historia Convivialis (1450). These reveal an internal developmental pattern corresponding to that which we have been tracing.

The earliest of the three reveals an estimation of law which clearly reflects the influence of Poggio's civic humanist thought in general, and of Salutati's treatise on law (the De Nobilitate Legum et Medicinae), in particular. The laws are admirable, says Poggio, because they regulate conduct and maintain peace among the citizens on a just basis. Indeed, the laws were the very foundation of republican government, in ancient Rome whose glory was built on this basis, and in Florence.[74] Laws are the foundation of social life and therefore the essence of the human community.[75] Apart from the ordering of human affairs, Poggio at this point even saw laws as protecting the weak against the strong.

---

[74] Oratio, II, p. 826: "Rectissime enim iudicabant nullam dici debere aut esse posse rempublicam cui legem gubernacula deesunt."

[75] Oratio, II, p. 828: On law as the foundation of justice, Poggio says: "Qui sunt ergo eius operarii et ministri? nempe leges, et iuris scientia civilis, quae qualis sit iustitia, quatenus observanda, quid iubeat, quid prohibeat, quid sit appetendum, quid fugiendum, hominibus designat. Ut nisi iustitiae assisterent leges, infirma ac inutilis quaedam res esset iustitia, nullo ministerio, nullis praesidiis fulta vita certe hominum, tanquam caeca atque errabunda sine legibus possim diffluerit ac collaberetur, omni auxilio dstitua."

The In Laudem, however, presents a different picture of society, and of law.[76] In this treatise, Poggio is intent on praising the Venetian society, and this has traditionally been understood as a reaction to personal treachery against Poggio in Florence. The praise of Venice revolves, however, essentially on the question of maintenance of peace in society, which the Venetians had been able to accomplish by virtue of their oligarchical governmental structure. It is not the laws so much as the peace which impresses Poggio, and this reading would accord with the progressive development of Poggio's thought through the 1440's.

In the larger Historia Convivialis of 1450, Poggio demonstrates two important changes in perspective: that the laws are now clearly divorced from any notion of justice, and rather rest exclusively on force; and that the individual who becomes great does so by ignoring and breaking the laws.[77] The laws are essentially

---

[76]The oration is in Opera Omnia, II, pp. 925-935.

[77]Historia Convivialis, in Opera Omnia, I, pp. 37-51. On the laws as a reflection of power in society, p. 48; on the individual who breaks the law: "Omnia enim praeclara et memoratu digna ab iniuria atque iniustitia contemptis sunt legibus profecta." (p. 49).

repressive, and are largely repugnant to men.[78]

When Poggio returned to Florence as chancellor in 1453, Florence was again at war. The earlier situation of a humanist as chancellor during a period when his literary abilities were needed by the commune has been invoked in Poggio's situation.[79] The analogy is somewhat strained: Bruni writing polemics against Filippo Maria Visconti, a tyrant seeking personal power, upheld Florentine republicanism; Poggio on the other hand could not write on this basis, because the Venetians with whom Florence was now at war, could also claim a republicanism, and certainly with as much "realism" as the Florentines.[80]

---

[78] Historia Convivialis, pp. 47,48. The dating of the In Laudem in 1450 is further strengthened by the closeness of thought concerning the mysterious aura which should surround power in society: "... ut primi earum latores semper ab aliquo numine illas se, quo eas obiecto decorum metu suaderent populis, finxerint accepisse." (Historia Convivialis, p. 48) And cf., In Laudem, p. 934, where he praises the Venetian secret councils because the secrecy awes the people.

[79] Rubenstein, "Poggio...", pp. 215-217.

[80] It is surprising that Rubenstein would bring up this argument, inspired no doubt by the universal "acceptance" of Baron's work regarding Bruni. Rubenstein himself demonstrated with convincing clarity the narrowing of Florentine political freedom in the period from 1434, such that Florentine "republicanism" in 1453 was not an arguable proposition. The Venetian oligarchy, moreover, was equally more "republican" than Milan under the Visconti. Particularly in the case of Poggio, however, who in 1450 had praised Venice, was the analogy inconceivable.

More likely than any "civic" proposition, it is likely that Poggio accepted the position as a sinecure, and that it was offered to him because of his Medici connections.[81] And indeed, Poggio was unable to perform his duties, with the result that the post of chancellor was reformed and became virtually titulary, that is, a sinecure.[82]

From 1455, Poggio was suffering from gout. In partial retirement at this point, he worked less and less as chancellor as his literary activities took up more and more of his time.[83]

Poggio's writings of this late period are important in evidencing a continuation of the development we have been outlining. The Contra Fidei Violatores (1457) demonstrates this

---

[81]Vespasiano, Vite..., p. 296 argues that it was principally this close friendship with Cosimo that secured the position as chancellor. Poggio's letters from the 1440's indicate a desire to retire, as we have seen, to a life of contemplation away from the problems of the active life. He was, after all, seventy three years old in 1453. Rubenstein also supports this, although he emphasizes the civic aspect ("Poggio...", p. 218).

[82]Rubenstein, "Poggio...", pp. 218,219. The reform had been begun under Marsupini, Poggio's predecessor, but was far more clearly reorganized under Poggio. The real power and the responsability passed to Benedetto Accolti. By 1458, Accolti had succeeded Poggio as chancellor altogether.

[83]Epistolae, XII, p. 225; XI, p. 218.

clearly, despite its being a polemical piece.[84] In this piece, Poggio argues that law and social living are themselves basically contingent on human morality, that is, any society will function only so long as men continue to live "in good faith".[85] Poggio demonstrates that historically this has been the case, citing Rome as the example of greatness built on such a personal basis.[86] His closing remarks seem clearly aimed at the new Signoria: some officials have learned how to pervert the laws and customs of cities such that they work only to the advantage of the persons in pwer: this constitutes, for Poggio, a violation of the trust put in their office, and a perversion of justice ("legum omnium abusio ac perversio iudicanda").[87]

---

[84] Poggio lost his tax privilege in 1457, and this piece was written probably for the express purpose of registering his anger. The Contra Fidei is in Opera Omnia, II, pp. 888-902.

[85] Contra Fidei, II, p. 892: "Is certe eorum verborum senus est, nullam societam, nullum conventum, nullam civitatem, nullam rem publicam esse posse, a qua absit fides."

[86] Contra Fidei, II, p. 893: "Romani quanti e publice et privatim exisimarint fidem, satis constat ex gestis eorum, quae leguntur. Tantum certe autoritatis et religionis a priscis illis fidei tributum est, ut ei tanquam virtuti necessariae ac sanctissimae aedem in Capitolio aedificarint iuxta templum Iovis Optimi Maximi, veluti re dignae quae summo deo sociaretur...Nullus enim legibus aut aequitate aut bonis moribus est locus in ea civitate, in qua fides aboleatur."

[87] Contra Fidei, II, p. 902.

The last large work by Poggio was the Historia Florentina written in his last years and not quite finished at his death in 1459.[88] One important aspect of the work is Poggio's consistent attempt to personalize that characters of the Historia, such that they have a personal dimension independant of their political situation.[89]

---

[88]The Historia is problematic. No thorough study of it has been done to this point, and such a study is surely needed, given the historicist nature of many of Poggio's arguments. The only analysis purporting to be systematic at this juncture is Wilcox, The Development..., and in this it is less successful than might have been hoped, principally because of the author's insistence on confining himself to a few, selected texts. He has missed the interconnection between the development of the humanists and that of Florence itself, a connection which is essential to a thorough understanding of both. Baudi de Vesme, C.: Brevi considerazioni sulla storiografica fiorentina e sul pensiero politico nel XV secolo (Turin, 1953), has a similar literary bias in his sources and argument, although the author notes perceptively enough that Poggio's political commitments in the Historia are so contradictory as to make him seem almost apolitical (p.9). The tendency to see him simply as an inferior successor to Bruni in historiography is unfortunate, and indicates, it seems to me, a basic misunderstanding both of Poggio's development and that of Florence, as discussed in this work. (for this, see in particular Rubenstein, "Poggio...", pp. 230-232).

[89]Wilcox, The Development..., pp. 150-153.

The later years of Poggio's life in Florence reveal an increasing alienation from Florence and the concept of the "nourishing" city which Bruni had developed and which Poggio himself had earlier argued. The personal quality of Poggio's later writings has been noted as, in some sense, similar to that of the mature Petrarch, although the distinct difference of the "city" makes an exact analogy impossible. Indeed, the extreme internalization of human creativity seen in connection with Petrarch found a true developmental following in the circle of Ficino and the religious neo-platonists, beginning to be active in the mid-fifteenth century.

The development of Florence into a territorial State resulted, thus, in two kinds of "personal" reaction. Poggio, born into its period of development, was himself a part of that change, a part of the "becoming" a State, which process remained throughout, an organizing pattern of his thought. Rather than accept the growing public prerogative, however, Poggio reacted against it. This reaction led him to construct a system of private morality and responsibility to be lived by city-men. The first level of responsibility, however, changed: with the civic humanists, the city was generative and nourishing; with Poggio, men nourished the communal life because they continued to desire the comparatively advanced manner of living, while reacting against the growing impersonality. But that community depended on the continuing

and individual moral commitment. The religious neo-platonists, on the other hand, rejected the new State altogether, and sought the true life of man outside a worldly community of any sort, in communion with a magical God, and His reality.

Poggio's equation of nobilitas with personal virtue which is essentially independant of social referent marked a stage in the development of Florentine humanism which would have been foreign to Bruni. It marked, on the other hand, the development of that vision of human freedom closely associated with bourgeois liberalism. At the end of the De Nobilitate, Poggio says "Everyone is free to think what he wants", and a new vision of man, and indeed, of all human society, is launched.

## APPENDIX A

### POGGII FLORENTINI

### Ad Insignem Omnique Laude Praestantissimum Virum Gerardum Cumanum de Nobilitate liber.[1]

Non dubito, praestantissime Pater, nonnullos esse futuros qui hunc meum laborem non quidem aperte reprehendant, quis enim tam iniquus est iudex, qui honestum ocium culparetur sed imparem dicant viribus meis, qui nequiverim onus suscepti muneris sustinere. Quibus ego forsan assentior et opus ab me inchoatum maiori dignum ingenio et eloquentia profitebor. Sed et illud etiam addam, exercitii gratia potius quam dicendi studio descendisse me in hoc veluti certamen nobilitatis in quo postmodum reliqui maiori cum laude et dicendi copia versarentur.

Equidem miror aliquando cum late pateat nobilitatis nomen

---

[1]This text is edited from the Fubini edition of the Opera Omnia, I,pp. 64-83. It is actually a copy of the Basel, 1532 edition, without change. I have punctuated, made paragraphs, and modernized spelling for the sake of clarity; actual errors in the text, however, have been noted, but not changed.

cumque de ea tam variae sint, non solum inter rudes literarum, sed etiam inter doctissimos viros, sententiae, nihil a latinis nisi paucis verbis, neque Graecis quoque praeter Aristotelem et Metrodorum, quorum unico libro nobilitatem complexus est, hac de re explicatum. Itaque posteaquam nostra deesse, et carere nos alienis prospexi, haud absurdum visum est mihi, aliquod veluti principium eius rei disputandae afferre in medium, quam postmodum doctiores a nobis excitati, politiorem exquisitioremque sua sapientia queant reddere. In omni enim facultate primi rerum scriptores ut plurimum tardiores rudioresque sunt habiti. Neque quicquam a principio simul ita inventum traditumque extitit, ut non multa posteriores tum addiderint, tum etiam in melius immutarint. Quod et ipsa Philosophia, quae parens est sapientiae, et in his artibus quas appellant liberales scimus contigisse, cum omnes additamento ad summum culmen pervenerint, satis fuit prioribus illis incitamenta quaedam et veluti calcar indidisse reliquis perfectiora inquirendi.

Eodem pacto, hunc meum libellum existimo alicuius ingenium erecturum, qui ea quae a nobis aut praetermissa, aut errata cognoverit, reddat sua diligentia meliora. Quod ut conentur qui id per doctrinam eloquentiam possunt vehementer hortor, ob utilitatem communem. Hoc enim maxime modo latinae linguae splendorum ac decus augebit differentium industria, mihique in primis gratias agent, quod meis ineptiis illos ad scribendi studium et laudem provocarim. A lectoribus autem, veniam peto, si non eam quam vel rei dignitas,

aut opinio eorum inquirit scientiam et elegantiam praestiti, malui enim ruditer atque indocte, quam nihil scribere, praesertim ociosus, et ea de re in cuius existimatione pauci videntur recta sentire.

Ad te vero virum haec nostra aetate omnium virtutum et literarum genere maioribus comparandum, libellum hunc destinavi veluti testem amoris erga te mei, ut in tua autoritate et nomine conquiescat. Adiicietur ei non parum favoris ac dignitatis ex tua excellenti virtute, cum omnes existimaturi sint, quicquid ad te deferatur, emendatum ac perfectum esse debere. Suscipe igitur hunc libellum, in quo de vera nobilitate disputatur.

De qua cum alias saepius multos disputantes audivi, tum, vel maxime dudum disertissimos, mihique summa familiaritate coniunctos. Nam, cum olim ex Urbe in patriam secessissem aeris mutandi gratia, venerunt eodem rogatu meo doctissimi mihique amicissimi viri, Nicolaus Nicolus ac Laurentius de Medicis, quos ad id pellexeram praecipue nonnullorum quae ex Urbe advexeram signorum ostentatione. Hi, cum essent in hortulo, quem peregrinis quibusdam marmoribus celebrem reddere cupiebam parvulae supellectilis indico, ridens cum ocellos circumtulisset Laurentius: Hic hospes noster, inquit, cum legerit esse moris antiqui apud priscos illos excellentes viros, ut domos, villas, hortos, porticus, gymnasia variis signis tabulisque, maiorum quodque statuis exornarent ad gloriam et nobilitandum genus, voluit cum progenitorum imagines deessent, hunc locum et se insuper his pusillis et confractis marmorum reliquis nobilem reddere, ut rei novitate, aliqua eius ad posteros illis gloria manaret.

Si hoc appetit, Nicolaus inquit, aliunde ervenda materia nobilitatis erit, non ex signis et marmorum fragmentis dirutis, et viro sapienti non admodum appetendis, sed ex animo, hoc est, ex sapientia et virtute excutienda nobis est, quae sola erigit homines ad laudem nobilitatis.

Licet, Laurentius inquit, ea plurimum ad largiendam nobilitatem putem conferre, divina enim quaedam res virtus habetur, et omnibus appetenda, tamen tabulis, signorum varietate, atque elegantia, opibus, rerum copia, magistratibus insuper atque imperiis parari nobilitatem videmus; etiam in eis qui non clarent alio ornamento virtutum, eaque ab egregiis ingeniis, et appetita et culta legimus. Nam constat priscos etiam doctissimos viros in signis et tabulis comparandis plurimum opere studiique posuisse. Cicero ipse, Varro, Aristoteles, caeterique tum Graeci, tum Latini insignes omnium doctrinarum genere viri, qui virtutum specie ad studia se contulerunt, eiusmodi rebus suas quoque bibliothecas et hortos excolebant, ad loca ipsa in quibus constituta erant nobilitanda, idque laudis et industriae esse volebant. Multum enim ad nobibilitandum [sic] excitandumque animum conferre existimaverunt, imagines eorum qui gloriae et sapientiae studiis floruissent ante oculos positos.

At qui, Nicolaus inquit, si qui signa et tabulas domi habent nobilitatem consequuntur, multo magis sculptores pictoresque nobilitatis insignibus caeteros anteirent. Foeneratores quoque si essent ditissimi, ac in magistratu imperiisque constituti, quantumvis

improbi nefariique nobiles evaderent, quo nihil indignus dici potest, quam flagitiis aut rapinis, vel aliquo turpi quaestu aditum sibi quempiam patefacere ad nobilitatem.

Tum Laurentius: Et statuarios, inquit, ac pictores quos ars sua celebres atque insignes reddit, opulentos insuper ex re undecunque contracta, maximis quoque facinoribus notos, si verbum inspexeritis, recte nobiles dicemus. Itaque et plurimum studiis literarum praestantum et famosum latronem nobilem dici licet, alterum ob insigne flagitium, alterum ob doctrinam et sapientiam singularem. Q. Cicero scribens ad fratrem, de petitione Consulatus, cum de Antonio et Catilina competitoribus loqueretur: nequaquam sint, inquit, tam genere insignis, quam vitiis nobiles. Nobilem enim antiqui appellabant eum qui ob aliquam praecipuam rem notus, vulgatus, et aliquo facto arteque insignis erat, et sermone hominum celebris. Cicero noster inquit, illis in conspectu praestanti sapientia et nobilitate Pythagoras. Alio in loco de eodem: Philosophus nobilis, a quo non solum Graecia et Italia, sed omnis barbaries commota est. Pro archia item: de philosophis in eoipso in quo praedicationem nobilitatemque despiciunt praedicari de se, ac nominari volunt. Livius quoque: Haes pugna, inquit, Alliensi cladi nobilitate prope par. Et alibi: Cum antea ferocibus dictis rem nobilitassent. Quibus verbis rem nobilem appellari constat, sermone et fama hominum vulgatum. Verum non de ea nobilitate quaerimus quae in vitio posita turpitudinem affert, sed ea quae non respuit virtutis societatem, quam si neges ex his quas modo retuli rebus comparari, pervulgatae de ea opinione et communi omnium sensui repugnas.

Omnes enim illum dici et esse nobilem affirmant, qui antiqua familia, opulentis maioribus, cum honore ac dignitate in sua republica versatis originem trahant. Quamobrem si nostris moribus, et inveterate hominum extimationi [sic] assentiendum putas, si id verum existimas quod vulgus tenet, qui in eiusmodi rebus plurimum autoritatis possidet, mecum de nobilitate sentias oportet.

Doctissimorumne hominum, inquit Nicolaus, an vulgi et plebis iudicio disputatum censes? Nam si opinionibus et moribus hominum ducaris, intellegero nullam sedem esse nobilitatis in qua possit consistere. Cum enim varii sint interque se admodum repugnantes, non intelligo quae certa ex his nobilitatis norma eligi possit. Nomen quidem apud omnes convenit, res admodum discrepat, ut nihil persaepe credam nobilis nomen mereri quam eum qui id nomen usurpet. Si qua est enim nobilitas, atque ea a certa re et ratione, prout concedendum est, proficiscitur, unam apud omnes atque eandem esse decet. Sed cum nihil minus vulgi opinio respiciat quam virtutem aut rationem in appellationem nobilis, ac propterea varietur admodum pro cuiusque generis usu et opinione, quae admodum sibi invicem repugnant, non a certa ac determinata re, sed a quadam consuetudine hominum inconsulta videtur duci, atque ob eam rem an haec decantata sermone omnium nobilitas aliquid praeter inane nomen existat, aliquando dubitare cogor.

Nam si quid ea est, aut a vitio aut a virtute proficiscitur. Ex vitio nobilitatem oriri stultum est credere. Virtus si nobilitatem parit, cum ea sit una atque eadem semper, nec usu hominum varietur,

ita sit et nobilitas necesse est. Sed haec ita apud nos non tantum, sed diversa est et in vicem contraria, ut nullam certam radicem habere videatur ex qua possit oriri.

Propter hanc diversitatem, Laurentius inquit, quid sentias non satis intelligo, ob eamque causam a te id lucidius explanare vellim, et simul scire quid maxime probes.

Minime, inquit Nicolaus, huius loci et temporis haec est disceptatio, et huic forsan, me intuens, non iucunda.

Nequaquam Nicolae aio, quin pergratum mihi erit si hanc dubitationem nobis exolveris,quae scitu iucundaest et cognitione dignissima. Ego quidem non sum adeo demens atque insulsus, ut ex his collecticiis marboribus aliquam nobilitatem aucupere vellim. Alia ad illam via ascendi puto. Haec autem voluptatis et ornamenti causa a me quaesita et comparata sunt. Sed hic noster Laurentius iocatur mecum libens, existimatque, si horum contemptum mihi persuaserit, se mairorem partem ablaturum. Postea vero quam in hunc sermonem incidimus, narra quaeso quae modo Laurentius postulabat. Non enim miror, si parum de illa apud populos convenit cum inter Philosophos quoque hac de re sit adeo magna dissensio, ut dubitarem cui potissimum sententiae sit inhaerendum.

Tum Nicolaus: Quam multiplex et varia sit, inquit, illius observatio haud opinor ignotum est vobis, cum quod aliis nobile videatur, alii specimen ignobilitatis velint. Ut enim ab Italis incipiam, a quibus humanitas virtus ac omnis vivendi ratio, et disciplina ad reliquas nationes defluxit, quid tam inter se doffert quam Neapolitanorum, Venetorum, Romanorumque, nobilitatis

opinio. Neapolitani qui prae caeteris nobilitatem prae se ferunt, eam in desidia atque ignavia collocare videntur, nulli enim praeterquam inerti ocio intenti, sedendo atque oscitando ex suis possessionibus vitam degunt. Nefas est nobili, re rusticae, aut suis rationibus cognoscendis operam dare. Sedentes in atriis, aut equitando tempus terunt. etiam si improbi absurdique fuerint, dummodo priscis domibus orti, se nobiles profitentur. Mercaturum ut rem turpissimam vilissimamque exhorrent, adeo fastu nobilitatis tumentes, ut quantumvis egenus atque inops, citius fame interiret quam filiam vel opulentissimo mercatori matrimonio collocaret, mavultque furtis et latrocinio, quam honesto quaestui vacare. Scio viro quendam equestris ordinis, genere atque opibus praeclarum, quod aliquando ut patrem familias decet, vina ex variis praediis collecta simul vendere esse solitus, pro mercatore velut infamem habitum, filiam etiam grandi dote vix nuptui dare potuisse, adeo mercaturae nomen apud ignaros atque inertes turpe atque obscoenum putatur. Huic absurditati contraria est Venetorum consuetudo, inter quos nobilitas veluti factio quaedam ab relicto populo distincta, mercaturam omnis exercet, ea quoque quae equestris ordinis insignio potitur. Omnes enim qui reipublicae muneribus funguntur, quique ut aiunt ex ordine senatorio, nascuntur atque appellantur nobiles. Adeoque hac vulgare aura inflantur nonnulli, ut etiam si quis parente absurdo, stulto, insulso, inopi, ipse quoque haud dissimilis patri fuerit, tamen si in popularem virum inciderit quamvis doctum et sapientem, eum praese contemnet tumore nobilitatis. At ego mallem Apulei me asinum, quam aut talis essem,

aut ortus ex eo cui minus quam asello sensus aut prudentiae inest. Atqui hae omnes praecipue mercaturae dnat operam, neque eam a nobilium exercitio existimant alienam. Quod autem nusquam gentium reperitur, ipse persaepe nobilem reddunt ex ignobili. Nam qui ob aliquod in eorum rempublicam insigne facinus admissum, etiam si scelere aliquo profuerit asciscitur ad munia civitatis, nobilium numero ascribitur. Sed nihil stultius quam aliquam ignobilem propter navatam rei publicae operam civitati donatum nobilem dici, aut quod virtute et recte factis acquiri sapientes volunt, id credere aliquando malis artibus parari posse. Romani qui appellantur nobiles, mercaturam ut rem vilem atque abiectam contemnunt, cultui agrorum et re rusticiae vacare, gregis atque armentorum curam gerere, re pecuaria opes quaerere quaestum honestum et viro nobili dignum putant, idque eis qui possunt agere, etiam si recenti sint familia, hoc lucri genere patefit aditus ad nobilitatem. Est apud hos honesta licet rusticana nobilitas, longe distans a Neapolitana. Nos rectius de nobilitate sentire videmur. Habentur enim nobiles orti antiqua stirpe, quorum maiores functi officiis civitatis in reipublicae administrationi versati sint. Horum pars se ad mercaturam confert, pars titulo nobilium gaudens, nulli exercitio dedita, venatu et aucupio oblectatur. Ianvensibus idem quod Venetis usu venit, negotiationi deduntur, omnes praesertim maritimae nobiles atque innobiles, qui nulla alia re nisi origine distinguuntur. Sunt ex his quidam in castellis montanis dispersi Caci more itineribus infesti, qui nobiles habentur Lombardi. Et item tractus omnis Venetorum qui dicuntur nobiles vivunt ex praediorum fructu et paterna haereditate, nullo praeterquam venandi aucupandique studio ducti.

His sola origo et negotiorum vacatio nobilitatem largitur.

Quid loquar de reliquis nationibus, horum usus paulum differt a moribus nostris? Germani atque Alemanni quibus census patrimonii ad victum suppetit, et his qui procul urbibus, aut qui castellis et oppidulis dominantur, quorum magna pars latrocinio deditur, nobiles censent. Quibus humanius ingenium natura dedit, haerent principibus, quorum in aula assuescunt cultiori vitae, rudes tamen et moribus asperi. Galliae omnis una est nobilium norma. Nam rura et praedia sua incolentes, urbes fugiunt in quibus habitare nobilem turpissimum ducitur, qui in illis degunt rustici habentur atque ignobiles. Mercatores aspernantur ut vile atque abiectum hominum genus. Praediis suis contentum ac prodigum esse, neque futura quicquam pensi habere signum nobilitatis volunt. Ea quotidie augetur vel pecunia, vel famulatu. Nam mercatorum aut quorumvis opificum filii qui divitiis praestant, aut empto praedio rus se conferunt urbe relicta, atque eius fructu contenti semi-nobiles evadunt, suisque posteris nobilitatem praebent, aut famulantes principibus aliquo praedio collato, pro nobilibus honorantur. Itaque plus illis rura et nemus conferunt quam urbes atque ocii atque negotii ratio ad consequendam nobilitatem. Eos certe qui apud nos semirustici censentur villarum incolae, illi nobilitatis laude commendant. Hos Britanni sequuntur Angli hodie vocitati, qui nobiles in civitatibus morari ignominiae loco putant, rura, sylvis ac pascuis seclusa inhabitant, nobiliorem ex censu iudicant, rem rusticam currant, vendentes lenam et armentorum foetus, neque turpe existimant admisceri quaestui rusticano. Vidi ego hominem relicta mercandi cura,

cum praedia preciosiora emisset, atque in ea cum familia urbe posthabita se contulisset, autorem nobilitatis filiis existisse et ipsum haud reiectum a nobilium coetu. Multos quoque ignobilis generis, aliquod praestans in bello facinus, acceptis a principe donis nobilitavit. Hispania duplicii nobilitate utitur. Nam et qui in suis civitatibus antiquo genere orti caeterispraesunt divitiis praediti et qui in campis commorantes nutriuntur ex praediorum censu, eum ornatiore quodam vivendi vitu, quae caeteris praestent, nobilium nomen tenent. Hos inter omnes equester ordo primum nobilitatis locum habet. Apud Graecos quicunque ad imperatoris aulam vocati servitio eius insistunt, quantumvis abiecti generis ob principis consuetudinem ac famulatum, nobilitatis titulo potiuntur appellanturque deinceps nobiles. Apud nostros vero principes is mos in olevit, ut Pontifex, Imperator, Reges, Principes, privilegio et literis faciunt nobiles, nulla habita virtutis ratione. Ita illi, quod risu dignum est, usu et obsequio, isti scriptura et cera nobilitatem adipiscuntur. Barbaris quoque gentibus diversi sunt nobilitatis mores. Aegyptiis ac Siris nulla habetur, nisi eorum qui militiae deduntur, qui soli excellunt et dominantur, reliquis servorum loco habitis. At hos omnes constat esse empticios servos, qui postmodum praefecturas equitum provinciamque sortiti, usque adeo fortunae beneficio efferuntur, ut ex eis potentior regnum occupet, viribus armorum fretus. Teucros insuper et superiores Sarmatas arma nobilitant. Nam qui ordines ducunt, ditati praediis nobiles dicuntur, et ipsi quoque ex servitio maiori ex parte ad

militiam asciti, pueri enim empti precio militiam condiscunt, in qua excellere parit nobilitatem.

Tanta ergo ut de reliquis sileam varietas, tantaque morum inter homines dissensio, numquid non cogit nos fateri quia tam disparibus modis abservatur,nullam esse certamen tanquam nobilitatis formulam quam possis amplecti, quoniam si quid ea est, originem aliquam habere, fundamentumque stabile ac firmum, e quo prodeat oportet.

Tum Laurentius: Licet ea, inquit, pro gentium varietate multiplex videatur, omnes tamen quos modo recensuisti, et esse, et recte dici nobiles arbitror posse. Nam sicut non omnes leges omnibus civitatibus sunt accomodate, sed variantur pro rerum publicarum commodis et utilitate, cunque aliis prosunt, aliis obesse videantur, et tamen legum vim autoritatemque conservant, neque propterea non habentur leges, quia non omnibus eaedem conservuntur. Sic ego Italos, Gallos, Germanos, Britannos, Barbaros existimo, qui a suis dicuntur nobiles esse. Neque ego nobiliores appellabo cives quam rusticanos, neque mercatores qui in sua Republica administranda cum laude versantur, quam illos desidiosos qui se conspici in atriis sedentes atque ociosos pulchrum ducunt. Consuetudinem enim quae quasi morum magistra vim maximam in hominum moribus tenet, tanquam ducem sequi debemus, quae licet parum inter se dissentire pro varietate diversarum gentium dicatur, tamen id nobilitatis indicium omnes putant, aut patrimonio ampliori, aut honestiori vitae rattione |sic|, aut vacatione quaestus, aut armorum laudibus, aut victu splendidiore, aut dignitate caeteros

anteire.

Longe, inquit Nicolaus, opinione laberis Laurenti. Nam et ea consuetudo probanda et accipienda est, quae non procul absit a recta ratione, altera enim abusus nomine appellabitur. Et leges ad eorum quibus dantur utilitatem et commoda referuntur, quae cum non sint ubique gentium atque omnibus eaedem, pro varietate commodorum et leges quoque variari oportet. Sed tamen omnes eandem originem habent, cum ab aequitatis et iusticiae fontis descendant, ut quod cuique honestum est, et utile, suadere et praecipere videantur. At istae quas modo explicavi nobilium species ita inter se variantur, contrariae ac diversae, ut nullam certam stirpem, nullum certum genus praeferant quod ratione aliqua nitatur, sed a sola opinioneinstitutosque quodam voluntario, cuius nulla vera causa reddi possit videntur prodire. Quapropter fatebor ingenue, neminem eorum iure appellari nobilem posse. Qui enim fieri potest, ut vir ocio marcens, nullo honesto negotio intentus, nulla praeditus virtute, nulla sapientia, nulla doctrina, maioribus tantum ac stirpis origine fisus possit ullo esse pacto nobilis? Ego vero istos vilissimi iumenti loco habeo. Neque etiam fatebor unquam civem, aut alium quemvis improbum, abiectum, contemptum, flagitiosum, aut nulla re clarum, sed tantum maiore virtute et dignitate fidentem nobilis nomen mereri.

At vero, ex mercatura non video quae nobilitas acquiratur, aut quomodo cum illius venetur exercitio quod vile atque abiectum sapientes arbitrati sunt. Cicero eam non admodum vituperandam scribit, si fuerit opulenta, illam in sordido quaestus genere ponens. Sed quod aliquo modo vituperari potest, nunquam admiscebitur cum nobilitate,

a cuius officio longissime is quaestus abest. Opifices item artificesque omnes expertes illius erunt, cum in illo exercitio versentur cui nulla est virtus adiuncta, turpe quidem omne genus eiusmodi hominum extimatur |sic|. Sed nec ex divitiis quoque ulla nobilitas elicietur, sive eas nobis ipsi comparavimus, sive accepimus relictas, quibus enim acquirantur artibus constat. Sane raro cum virtute, cuius aliud munus est quam parandis divitiis vacare, relictae vero nihil nobis laudis afferunt aliena opera parte. Auream beatus Hieronymus sententiam profert, divitem aut iniquum esse, aut iniqui haeredem. Neque hoc in te Laurenti existimes dictum, cuius patri viro optimo atque humanissimo, tum prudentia atque industria, tum fortuna in comparandis opibus favit. Nobilitare ergo nos minime possunt. At ne magistratus quidem, dignitates, honores, imperia. Nam si his perniciosi, scelesti, nefarii, perditi, dementes, insani fugantur, procul erunt ab omni laude nobilitatis, quae nulli vitio aut sceleri potest esse communis. Neque vero antiquam familiam et quamvis longam parentemenumerationem, si idem audaces, facinorosi et sceleribus iniquitati fuerint, conferre ad filiorum nobilitatem iudicamus, sed eo dicentur a nobilitate remotiores, quo fuerit diuturnior parentum scelus et turpitudo. Ab honestis autem atque antiquis maioribus manantes ignavos, somnolentes ac reprobos, parentumque virtutibuscarentes omni nobilitate vacuos esse dicam. Si enim ea antiquitate pararetur, omnes aeque nobiles evaderent, cum cuiusque origo aequo grado a superioribus numeretur, nullusque existat cuius progenitores ante millesimum annum possent recenseri. Sunt qui acceptam, ut aiunt, a maioribus nobilitatem aucupio

venatuque conersvari putent, seque nullo negotio et rerum vacatione nobiles dicant, maiorum tantum nobilitatem et generis insignia commemorantes. Sed haec ociosorum atque inertium studia aves aut feras sectandi, non magis nobilitatem redolent, quam bene oleant ferarum quibus oblectantur cubiliae. Praestaret certe opus rusticum facere more priscorum quorundam atque optimorumvirorum, quam velut insanos ac fanaticos discurrere per nemora et faltus ferarum ritu. Non sunt haec vituperanda nobilibus, si laxandi animi causa, non dissolvendi fiant. Sed in eis ut plures videmus curam omnem vitamque consumere, quae non nobilitatis indicia existimantur, sed signa opprssa clementiae.

Iam vero equestris dignitatem nostri militiam vocant, quae multis veluti officina quaedam ac theatrum nobilitatis videatur, quid ad eam decoris aut ornamenti conferat ignoro. Auream gestant fibulam togati nonnulli imbellesque, tanquam equestris ordinis notam, ipsi sine equo quandoque atque omnis militiae muneris expertes. Horum opera cum sint longe ab ornatu vestium diversa, ficticia quaedam res et ab inani pompa proficiscens, nihilo magis nobilitare deferentem potest quam timidum in bello fortem facere. Quanquam videmus aliquos ex eis mercatura quaestum facere, tantum a nobilitatis splendore remoti, quantum obscuritati exercitus propinqui. Nonnulli tamen iactantes avorum proavorumque equestrem numerum, suam nobilitatem eiusmodi commemoratione extollunt, inscii quam parvi ea sit nobilitas existimanda. Nunquam enim is ordo apud priscos locum nobilitatis aut nomen tenuit, ut admodum mirer nos tantum ab eorum opinione differre. Equester nanque ordo apud Romanos non

censebatur inter nobiles, quippe quo maiori ex parte a publicanis emendis exigendisque vectigalibus vili officio exercebantur. Nobiles dicebantur patriciorum familiae, et quique ex triumphalibus, consularibus, senatoriisque viris longa stirpe originem trahebant. Equester ordo habebatur popularium loco. Multi tamen ex eo ob res vel pace vel bello egregie gestas, erant suis posteris principium generis nobilitandi. C. Marium et M. Tullium non nobilitavir genus, at hi suis filiis si paternam virtutem imitari voluissent insignem nobilitatem reliquere. Nos econtra ex hoc ordine nobilitatem trahimus, iactarique maxime videmus eos qui longa serie maiores suos equestri dignitate functos ferant. Assentirer forsan aliquando eos nobilitatis gradum adeptos, si qui bellis immixti quod susceptum nomen requirit praeclarum facinus aedidissent, ociosis vero ac procul ab omni equestri munere constitutis, nihil auream calcar magis quam aereum aut aureus baltheus magis quam argenteus nobilitatis importat. Ea siquidem magis divitum quam nobilium videntur insignia. Nam Gallicam Britannicamque nobilitatem villis rusticis ac nemoribus insertam, et item Alemannicam montanam et latrocinio intentam a vera nobilitate reiicio. Non enim solitudine, aut ocio ignavo, vel opum magnitudine, sed virtutis studio comparandam sapientes censent, quam magis in urbibus et himinum coetu exercere possumus, quam inter feras in solitudine et agrestium commercio. Illud vero absurdissimum est habendum, dona, aut concessiones, principum, nobilitatem largiri, aut nobiles esse qui in imperatoria aula versantur. Possunt principes eiusmodi homines divites reddere, aut extollere aliquo principatu, nobilem vero nihilo magis quam prudentem honestum, sapientem possunt efficere.

Siquidem non extrinsecus nobilitas provenit, sed a propria descendit virtute quae inter principum munera non admiscetur. Haec igitur tanta tamque pervagata rerum varietas mihi persuadet, nihil hanc vestram nobilitatem esse praeter pompam quandam ac inanem fastum ab stulticia hominum et vanitate confictum. Verum ut missas paulum faciamus vulgares opiniones, me quidem ratio ipsa recte considerantem hortari atque admonere videtur, nullam esse hanc decantatam nobilitatem, quamobrem quid mihi persuadem accipere: Ea quae sunt aut bona, aut mala, aut eorum media, quae indifferentia Graeci appellant, dicuntur. In malis nobilitatem nullus unquam posuit. Absurdum enim esset rem adeo laudatam atque appetitam malam censeri. Sin eam bonum quid dixeris, id vel in animi bonis, vel externis, aut corporis situm erit. Nam in fortunae bonus minime constitit, quae qui adipiscuntur non nobiles, sed divites appellantur. Sed ne corporis quidem bona, quae sunt valitudo, et forma egregia illam largiuntur. Nam si qua in ullo horum bonorum inesset, deficientibus opibus, forma et valitudine, nobilitas quoque cessaret. Ita ex ignobili nobilis, rursus ex nobili ignobilis redderentur.

In bonis ergo animi quae virtutes dicuntur, eas autem intellectualibus et moralibus distinguunt, an ulla sit inquirenda. Sed prudentia prudentem, sapientia sapientem, iustum iusticia, temperantia temperantem, item ex rellquis virtuosum, non nobilem fieri certum est. Nulla quippe est una virtus quae ex se nobilitatem producat, neque omnes quoque illam generabunt, sed felicitatem. Ita nec virtus ea, nec vitium. Nec videtur esse in his quae media dicuntur, cum nunc bona nonnumquam mala ferantur pro varietate utentium, si

nobilitas ita esset, ea et bona et mala haberetur. Ex quo sequeretur ut boni malique pariter nobilitate potirentur, quod cum sit absurdissimum, videtur ex his nihil nobilitatis comparari posse. Hoc et alia ratione videtur esse probabile.

Nam si quid ea est. id aut in expetendis aut in fugiendis rebus constitit. In his sitam dicere ridiculum sane videtur, cum nullus sane mentis appetat fugienda. In expetendis vero multo minus, ea nanque appetere debemus, quae ratio praescribit et spaientia, haec sunt honesta et quaecunque nos beatos ac felices praestant. Sed nobilitas cum neque virtutes aliquas, neque bonum quid afferat nobis quo meliores, ditiores, aut beatiores efficiamur, cur appetenda sit non intelligo. Ergo ea nihil esse videtur.

Eodem modo neque in laudibilium, neque vituperabilium numero adscribetur. Non enim vituperatur quod laudatur, atque expetitur etiam a bonis. Ergo in illis nulla inest nobilitas, ac multo minus in reliquis. Laudabile enim omne a virtute progreditur. Siquidem bene, hoc est virtuose agere laudabile est, et id secundum aliquam virtutem. Sed nulla est virtus quae vocetur nobilitas, aut ex qua illa oriatur, neque etiam ex nobilitate laus aliqua, cuiuspiam honesti operis descendit. Ergo in laudibilium consortio non erit.

Preaterea si qua est nobilitas, ea aut in homine aut in ipsa re collocabitur. Si in homine aut natura, aut acquisitione comparatur. Si natura venit nobilitas, tunc omnes similiter nascentur nobiles, quod nullus vel mediocriter doctus concedat. Si acquiritur, id agendo, vel operando continget. At ex actionibus operationibusque

boni, mali, prudentes, docti, industrii, et similia redduntur non nobiles; neques est aliquod opus proprium ex quo veluti ex officina aliqua nobilitas excludatur. In rebus vero si esset posita, hae absque studio nostro in quemcunque inciderent, nobilem veluti divitiae divitem redderent; his absentibus ignobiles fieremus, quo pacto saepius cum ipsis rebusa nobis migraret nobilitas, et iterum tanquam in antiquum hospitium sua sponte rediret. Ex quibus apparet, nihil esse hanc praeter iactantiam quandam quae nos deliros efficiat. Etenim absque illa affectione cogitans non video cur haec inanis fabella adeo exoleverit, aut quid boni vel utilitatis habeat haec quae dicitur nobilitas, cur tanti ab hominibus pendi mereatur. Non enim sapientes efficit, non doctos, non prudentes, non iustos, non fortunatos, nihil confert ad corporis valitudinem, nihil ad formam, nihil ad vitae honestatem, umbra nescio quae sub obscura mentes nostras versat somniis similis, quae cum dormientes falsis imaginibus satis exagitarint, inania redduntur excitatis. Stomachor autem persaepe cum in aliquos praedicatores suae nobilitatis in curro viros ineptos, rudes, ociosos, quos non pluris facio quam quempiam ex his cantoribus qui in triviis Heroum gesta decantant, ipsi nullius rei usui praeterquam recensendis aliorum laudibus accomodati. Sed iam satis confabulati summus, et tempus admonet ut hunc nostrum hospitem loquendi molestia liberemus.

Nequaquam, Laurentius inquit, tanquam apes abibis aculeo relicto, sed feres aequo animo paulum respondentem, nisi velis esse nimium morosus, quod idem huic, me intuens, intelligo videri.

Equidem non miror, Nicolae, qui tuus mos est adversari te

opinionibus, tu nullam vis esse nobilitatem, neque eam quae est in usu gentium, neque quam describunt sapientes.

Nihil adhuc de sapientibus, inquit Nicolaus, sum locutus, tantum dixi adversus opinionem vulgarem et iactantiam horum nobilium mentibus infinxam, qui nulla praeterquam inani pompa, et populari levitate suffulti, nos quotidie nobilitatis commemoratione obtundunt, inscii quibus ex rebus aut quibus artibus paretur.

Si, inquit Laurentius, vocibus doctissimorum virorum assentiris, aut nisi eis repugnes, causa decidas oportet. Nam contra te insurgit Aristoteles nobilitatem diffiniens, et aliquid esse ostendens, cuius acumen ingenii omnibus Philosophis antecellit. Sapientia vero tanta est omnibus in rebus, ut ei contrarie stultum esse videatur.

Fateor, Nicolaus inquit, istum principem appellari Philosophorum, sed tamen nulla me cuiusvis impediet autoritas, quin quod mihi simile vero videatur et loquar, et sentiam.

Ut iubet, inquit Laurentius, morem tuum omnibus, adversandi sicutcoepisti per me observes licebit, non impediam quo minus tibi obsequaris, ne verteri tuo instituto repugnes. Sed ut ad Aristotelem redeamus, is in quinto Politicorum scribit nobilitatem esse virtutes, et antiquas divitias. Et alio in loco nobiles videri dixit quibus existerent virtutes et divitiae progenitorum. Vides igitur quam sapienter, quam graviter tibi Aristoteles nobilitatem designarit, non tanquam umbram, ut putas inanem, sed veluti rem certam, et definitam, ut iam nulla dubitatio residere debeat, et esse nobilitatem, et eos dici nobiles qui a Philosopho describuntur.

Atqui, Nicolaus inquit, haec me verba nihil dimovent a

sententia. Ego Aristotelem arbitror non ex animi iudicio, sed ex communi opinione locutum. Nam in Ethicis ubi ex veritate quod sentit exprimit, illum appellat generosum cui a natura exsistit ut discernat quae vera sunt, et appetat verum bonum, eamque rem pulcherrimam dicit, quoniam nec accipiatur ab alio, nec discatur, hacque natura aliquem natum esse, veram et perfectam nobilitatem appellat. Denique eum generosum videtur velle sentire, qui ad virtutem a natura institutus hanc usu et exercitatione perficit. Qui enim a tanto Philosopho probari opinio posset quam retulisti? Dicit afferre nobilitatem virtutes cum divitiis coniunctas. Ergo virtus absque bonorum fortuitorum copia nobilitate carebit? Quod nullus mediocriter doctus concedat: Aristotelis nomine et autoritate remota. Valerii Publicolae, Fabricii Coruncanii, Nasicae et Asiatici Scipionum et tali familia, ex tam claris parentibus, quorum alter propter paupertatem publico funere elatus est, alterius filiae et aerario nupserunt, multorumque praeterea excellentium virorum, qui cum summis imperiis pauperes vixerunt, non solum Urbem, sed terrarum quoque orbem rebus ab se gestis illustrarunt, filii nepotesque paternam virtutem et paupertatem imitati, ut ipsos omittamus parentes secundus Aristotelis descriptionem, nobilitatis lumine privabuntur? Aristidem inter principes Athenienses aequalem Themistocli qui solus propter eximiam virtutem iustus est cognominatus, cum ita pauper excessisset e vita, ut vix unde efferretur reliquisset, nemo neque fuisse nobilem diceret, neque suis nobilitatem reliquisse, quamvis et in civitate princeps et virtute praeclarus fuerit. Quo quid insulsius dici potest, quam Aristidem, Scipionem, reliquosque summos in sua

Republica. Imperatores quia praestare virtute quam divitiis maluerunt, vel nobilitate caruisse, vel praeclusisse suis posteris nobilitatis iter. Sed sit nobilis secundum Aristotelem, qui ex parentibus virtuosis oriatur ac divitibus, ipse quoque paternam virtutem et opes consecutus, attende quae ex Aristotelis diffinitione absurditas subsequatur. Cum divitiae sunt bona fortuita, quae dari et afferri queunt, erit in fortunae arbitrio sita nobilitas, quoniam abeuntibus copiis, abibit et illa simul cum divitiis, et rursus illis redeuntibus reintegrabitur. Quod si salvis fortunis fieri potest ut vitia pro virtutibus succedent, amittetur quoque nobilitatis pars, ita nobilitas descendens ac revertens puerorum more vagabunda quaedam res fiet, nullius in arbitrio sita. At si ex foenere, rapinis, spoliis, civium proscriptione et scaelere fortunae proveniant, nunquid nobilitare possidentem queunt? Nihilo magis quam honestum ac bonum reddere. Quare facessant ad dandam nobilitatem divitiae, et earum possessorem divitem et opulentum, non nobilem dicamus.

Sed divitiis inquies, virtutem addidit Aristoteles, ac hae illum nobilitant in quo existunt. Filios autem nullo modo, siquidem sapientis sententia est, quae ante nos fuerunt, nihil ad nos spectare sicut neque post nos futura, neque enim magis ad nos parentum virtus, quam nostra ad parentes redundat. Ego autem non credo Aristotelem voluisse nobilitatem in nos transferre progenitorum. Nam si nobilitas virtute et divitiis comparatur ut illi placet, divitiae quidem filiis relinqui possunt, virtutes vero minime. Virtus enim in actione consistit, actio autem cum sit operantis, sequitur ut nobilitas in eo sit qui exercuit officia virtutum. Sicut enim equum fortem, pulchrum,

acrem dicimus non cui eiusmodi genitor fuit, sed quem membrorum convenienta spectandum fecit, qui vires adsint ad ferendum sessorem, quem bucinae cantus excitat. Ita non eum qui parentes praeclaros enumeret, sed qui suis virtutibus resplendet nobilem appellabo. Itidem domum pulchram non quam formosus faber aedificaverit, sed quae splendida et suis parietibus fuerat composita. Rem quidem militarem, equitandi disciplinam, artesque eas quae doctrina traduntur possumus filios edocere, virtus nulla parentum eruditione sed divino quodam numine favoremque percipitur, ac serie occulta fatorum.

Licet enim videre perniciosos ac nepharios viros procreasse filios omni laude et virtute praestantes. Similiter illos qui fama illustri et summa gloria claruerunt, genuisse eos qui suis flagitiis paternam laudem labefacterunt. His neque parentum institutio profuit ad virtutem, neque illis quo minus clari evaderent, paterna scelere oblitere. Itaque cum neque in vitiorum, neque in virtutum hae reditatem filii succedant parentibus, sed sicutvirtutis, ita et nobilitas sibi quisque existit autor et opifex. Si enim nobilitas successione traderetur, servus nequissimus, ascitus in aliquam amplam gentem, haeresque institutus bonorum nobilis evaderet, quod nemo sane mentis affirmaverit.

Generatio insuper medium est quo filii in lucem educuntur, ea si turpis aut obscoena fuerit, ut puta adulterio, incestu, stupro quaesita, nequaquam turpi medio nobilitas descendet ad filios. In eo enim quod sit inique, nulla potest admisceri virtus, neque quicquam quod sit laudabile. Per iniquitatem igitur nulla erit generis laus.

Tua haec ergo Aristotelica nobilitas tum nulla videtur existere, tum posteris non posse relinqui. Quamvis si suam quoque diffinitionem accipiamus, tamen aut nulli aut pauci erunt, et hi ex intervallis nobiles. Cum enim perraro accidat, ut cum virtute divitiae contrahant societatem, cunque virtus rara sit ac difficilis, et qui virtuosi fuerunt, postmodum aliquo turpi iudicio, aut infamia, aut flagitio notari possunt, videtur virtus in ignominiam versa, antea partam amittere nobilitatem.

Themistoclis qui Graecorum omnium pace et bello facile habitus est princeps, priorem aetatem adeo flagitiis vitiisque inquinatam ferunt, ut a patre qui generosus erat exhaereditatur. Hoc tempore desciscens a patris virtute, Themistocles nobilitatem amisit. Ad meliorem deinde vitam reversus, ob res praeclarissime gestas et consecutas opes, nobilitate potitus est. Sed non integra cui paternem opes defuerunt. Hunc rursus nobilitas deservit, cum amissis opibus damnatus proditionis, exul a patria partam gloriam et laudem, conspiratione in patriam inquinavit. Quid dicemus de Hannibale duce omnium praestantissimo? qui ortus ex tali familia tam insigne parente, adeo claruis rebus gestis, an cum eis virtutes ut Titus ait Livius, ingentia vitia aequarent, privabitur laude nobilitatis? Si enim paria erant vitia et virtutes, neque nobilis neque ignobilis fuit. Idem de Pausania licet sentire, quem in omni vita varium tum vitiis, tum virtutibus deditum tradunt. Vellem discere ab Aristotele Laurenti, hoc enim discernendi gratia loquor, quam originem esse nobilitatis velit. Si virtutes solas proferet, audacter repugnabo. Nam cum hae sint fortunae munera quae pro illius

voluntate tenentur, et donari, et auferri nobilitas posset. Sed sit opulentes cum virtute aliquis dum vixit. Hic partem nobilitatis, divitias videlicet, virtutes enim residebit penes parentum, poterit ad filios transferre, qui si neque paternam virtutem sequentur, et opes dissipabunt, ignobiles invenit, sin vero in fortunam et virtutes succedent, nobiles erunt. Sed cum res hominum saepius varientur, nec in eodem stat diutius perseverent, continget ut nepotes fortunae donis spoliati, longe distent a vita superioris, ad hos nulla descendet nobilitas. Item pronepotes si proavorum avorumque virtutes et divitias representent, nobilitate gaudebunt. Igitur longa progenie excitabuntur ex eadem familia nunc nobiles, nunc ignobiles, nulla certa serie, nullo ordine praestituto, nihilque ad eam generis nomine opitulante. Ita facessant a nobilitate bona fortuita, res instabilis et arbitrii alieni. Nos aliquid eam esse arbitremur, quod si cum existat in nostro iudicio et potestate, neque nobis invitis concedi, aut eripi queat. Aristotelem vero cum de republica scriberet, existimo vel communem opinionem secutum, vel plus quam Philosophum deceat divitiis tribuisse.

Tum Laurentius: Ego, inquit, Nicolae, cum multis verbis usus fueris, nihil te docto viro dignum dixisse puto, sententiamque Aristotelis, si vim verbi graeci consideres, contendo esse verissimam.

Nam quam latini nobilitatem, Graeci eugeniam appellant. Hanc verbo nostro recte generositatem dicemus. Qui enim prisco et ob virtutem ac res gestas praeclaro genere nascebantur, propter familiae ac generis claritatem generosi ferebantur, hoc est insigni genere nati.

Hanc latini, Nicolaus inquit, meliori vocabulo ut videtur, quam graeci appellaverunt. Nos a rebus gestis recte factis, et ob aliquam laudem insignem atque famam quae propria sit hominis alicuius nobiles vocamus; illi a bono genere esse volunt, non enim ab aliis, sed a nobismetipsis nobilitatem trahere videmur, ut ille putentur nobilis quem illustre et pervagatum aliquod insigne et laude dignum facinus nobilitavit.

Ut libet de vi nominis sentias, Laurentius ait: Ego Aristoteli haerens ad nobilitatem comparandum non solum virtutem spectare arbitror, sed divitias, genus, patriam, corporis et fortunae adiumenta. Nam divitiis liberalitas gratior omnibus virtus in usum deduci valet. Bello quoque et pace, in quibus pecuniarum sumptus maxime sunt necessarii, gloria acquiritur, a qua descendit nobilitas, magnificentia quoque, ex quo nomen nostrum et fama admodum augetur, nulla erit absque fortunae bonis. Patria insuper plurimum praestat praesidii ad nobilitatem. Sensit hoc Themistocles, cum Seriphio iurganti, patriae illum non sua laudeclarere, respondit neque se Seriphium ignobilem evadere potuisse, neque illum Atheniensem clarum, aut nobilem unquam fuisse futurum. Neque enim ex aliquo opidulo profectus eadem rerum utetur facultate ad gloriam consequendam qua Florentinus civis, neque enim Florentinus ex sola civitate nobilitatem assequatur. Genus praeterea multum opitulatur ad nobilitatem. Non enim solum virtute, sed multo plus quandoque maiorum gloriae et imaginibus legimus de mandata imperia, provincias et triumphos decretos, quae ad nobilitandos

homines amplissimam materiam suppeditarunt. Recte enim sensit Aristoteles, qui virtutes suffultas divitiis voluit nobilitatem praebere.

Divitiae quidem cum neque bonae neque malae, sed pro modo utentium habeantur: si ad virum bonum pervenerint, ullustrem illum et velut in aciem educere videntur, in qua elucescere virtutes queant. Utetur fortunae bonis tanquam instrumento ad vitae cursum, et virtutum usum necessario confert illa in amicorum subsidium, in munificentiam, in patriae defensionem, quae virtutes mancae et debiles absque opibus erunt, nullum eorum officium exercentes. Quid enim mihi ad vitae communis sustentaculum praesidii affert Stoicorum liberalitas? In ipso animi affectu, non opere locantur. Praeclare igitur Aristoteles intelligens ad earum virtutum rationem in quibus civilis vita versatur, necessarias esse fortunas, quibus virtute praeditus prudenter utitur, haud immerito existimavit ad nobilitandum hominem divitias debere cum virtute esse coniunctas. Paupertas enim quamvis a multis laudetur, tamen videmus cum Philosophos, tum viros omni laude dignissimos paupertatis laude quam divitiis carere maluisse.

Haec, inquit Nicolaus, non illius culpa, sed vitio hominum contingit, qui cum doctrina Aristotelis depravati divitias laudant, tum naturae imbecillitate corrupti depravatique, paupertatem tanquam abiectissimam in extremis malis ponunt, et cum plus aequo divitias appetant, nullam sine eis ad virtutem et bene vivendi viam credunt. Sed nos hoc loco non quid corrupta opinio loquatur quaerimus, sed quid pronunciet veritas, quae mea quidem sententia

longe est ab Aristotelis descriptione. Nam divitiae, si recte adverteris, superbum, impotentem, lascivum, contumeliosum promptiorem ad voluptates et vitia solent hominem reddere. Quod et ipsemet sentiens, scripsit solere propter divitias fieri Homines deteriores quare cum divitiae raro societam habeant cum virtute, rarius gignent nobilitatem. Hoc et ipse in Politicis fatetur, dicens nobilitatem et virtutem in paucis esse, addens divitias. Quae si quid nobilitarent, arca et sacculus nobiliores essent possessore.

Illud insuper asseverabo, nullas dignitates, nullos honores, nullas res gestas, nullos magistratus, nulla imperia, nullos triumphos veram nobilitatem secum importare, nisi fuerit admixta et tanquam rerum moderatrix adiuncta virtus. Famam quidem et veluti gloriae umbram secum in vulgus ferunt, sed nobilitatis laus petitur a virtute. Ista vero tria, genus, patria, maiores et caetera quae modo retulisti, absque virtute sunt tanquam cauponularum insignia, quae denotant ubi vendantur vina, nihil tamen ad eius suavitatem conferentia. Virtus enim ex seipsa subsistens, etiam absque istic adminiculis nobis patet ad nobilitatem. Ex infimo quoque gradu ervendum M. Catonem priscum non patria, non genus, non divitiae: Tusculi enim natus est obscuro genere, tenui censu, sed eximiae plurimaeque virtutes nobilitarunt. Gaius item Marius Arpinas rusticanus ignotus, parvo stipendio militans, a virtute sola et rebus gestis nobilitatem coepit. Sertonium quoque virum Nursium plures virtutes insignem ac nobilem effecerunt. Vides igitur et his et pluribus aliis, a solis

virtutibus, non a divitiis vel externis aliis adiumentis nobilitatem concessam.

Tum Laurentius: hic noster, inquit, more suo omnibus contradicendi ac detrahendi artem professus, singulorum sententias damnat, ipse nihil affert quo quid sentiat noscatur.

Ad id tua culpa accidit, Nicolaus ait, qui potius quid non sentirem quam quid sentirem dicendi materiam praebuisti. Nam si quae probem quaeris, facilis est explicatio. Non enim Diogenes sum ille Cynicus, qui nobilitatem irridens, dicebat illam esse malitiae velamentum, sed qui minime conveniam cum vulgi opinione, neque id illam esse iudicem quod hi qui in omni vita delyrare |sic| videntur.

Ego quae mihi similior vero videtur. Stoicorum sententiam Laudo, qui tum omnibus in rebus quae ad rectam vivendi rationem pertinerent, tum vel maxime in hac una re ex ipsius Philosophiae fonte nobilitatem hauserunt. Hi non ad vulgarem auram, sed ad veritatis praescriptum ac normam rationis locuti, non fortunam rem fallacem ac dubiam, sed virtutem sequuntur, veluti certam recte vivendi ducem ac magistrum. Illam caeteris praeesse rebus ac modum ferre, reliqua ei subesse et ab ea regi voluerunt. Hi bonorum finem in honesto posuerunt, cuius stabilis ac manens nostrique est iuris possessio, quae vero subiiciuntur fortunae, labuntur more fluminis nulla in parte firma, omnibus infida.

Hi ut alia multa ita et hoc verissime videntur dixisse, nobilitatem ex sola nasci virtute. Atqui huius sapientiae autorem ac principem videntur habuisse Platonem, cuius sapientia singularis

et pene divina omnibus in rebus fuisse putatur. Hic cum quadrifariam partiatur nobilitatem, ut in eius vita refert Laertius Diogenes, atque unam earum afferat quibus clari boni iustique parentes fuere. Alteram parentes qui potentes aut principes extiterunt. Tertiam cum nostri maiores fama et rebus bello gestis vel publicis certaminibus parta corona claruerunt. Quartam eamque praestatissimam omnium scribit eorum, quibus non aliena, sed sua virtus et animi magnitudo nobilitatem donarit, quos solos vult esse dignos ut nobiles appellantur. Platonis haec divisio illam veram germanamque et suo robore nixam nobilitatem iudicat quam virtus producat. Est enim nobilitas quasi splendor quidam ex virtute progrediens, qui suos possessores illustrat ex quacunque conditione emergentes.

Nam virtus maiorum principatus, gloria certaminium et gestarum rerum illorum bona sunt, illos ornant et insignes reddunt qui ea sibi suo labore, sua industria peperere. Nos vero laudem et nobilitatem meremur nostris meritis, non alienis et his actionibus quae ex nostra prodeunt voluntate. Quid enim ad nos attinet quae multis seculis ante nos nostro neque consilio, neque opera acta sunt? Illa suis autoribus lumen et gloriam praebuerunt, nobis ad imitandum patefecerunt viam, quam si sequamur tanquam parentum opibus suffulti, minoris tamen nos existimari necesse est quam eos qui nullis maiorum subnixi vestigiis sibiipse ad iter virtutis et gloriae autores extiterunt. Quanto enim maioribus habetur aedificare domum quam habitare, aut ornare

aedificatam, tanto praestabilius est atque excellentius ab se partam nobilitatem possidere quam servare ab aliis acceptam, cum altersuis viribus et lumine resplendeat, alter prae se ferat alienum. Quare soli virtuti palma nobilitatis tribuenda est. Atria vero maiorum imaginibus referta, porticus signis ac tabulis ornati, magnificae villae, templa constructa, varia domus ornamenta plus admirationis aspicientibus quam nobilitatis secum ferunt. Hunc Antisthenes secutus, scripsit eosdem sibi videri nobiles et virtutis studiosos, in sola virtute nobilitatem constituens. Stoici hand Platonis sententiam complectuntur, et solos sapientes nobiles esse volunt. Hoc et Cicero noster refert, et Seneca ex Stoicorum secta, Philosophus excellens, tum multis in locis, tum maxime in quadam ad Lucilium epistola, ea quarta est et quadragesima ut opinor, nobilitatis fontem atque originem animi virtutibus assignat. Ait enim cum de nobilitate differet: Bona mens omnibus patet, omnes ad hoc sumus nobiles. Patricius Socrates non fuit. Platonem non accepit Philosophia nobilem, sed fecit. Quis est generosus? Ad virtutem bene a natura compositus, hoc unum est intuendum. Nam si ad vetera nos revocas, nemo non inde est ante quod nihil est. Omnes si ad primam originem revocentur a Diis sunt.

A primo mundi ortu usque in hoc tempus produxit nos ex splendidis sordidisque alternata series. Plato ait neminem Regem non ex servis oriundum, neminem non servum ex Regibus. Non facit nobilem atrium famosis imaginibus plenum, nemo in nostram gloriam vixit.

Animus facit nobilem, cui ex quacunque conditione supra fortunam licet exurgere. Haec Senecae sunt verba , quibus mihi videtur vir sapientissimus tanquam ex Appolonis oracula nihil verius excogitare aut dicere potuisse, quam illam veram nobilitatem quam virtus praebeat et sapientia, eosque solos esse nobiles quibus virtutum officia laudem subministrarunt et dignitatem. Iuvenalis vero cum in Satyra quadam communem ac vulgarem nobilitatis opinionem multis argumentis reprobasset , rectam rationem secutus, neque ex his pendere, quae tu paulo ante recensebas, ostendens hanc eandem sententiam affirmat, scribens solam atque unicam virtutem nobilitatem esse. Equidem Cleantem Philosphum qui aliquando rigandis hortis aquam traxit, et Demetrium quem Seneca in stramentis cubantem cum videt, non praeceptorum, sed testem virtutis ac veritatis dicit, nobiliores Pericle et Themistocle crediderim, quod magis patriae claritas et imperium, quam sua virtus nobilitavit. Nam rerum gestarum gloriae multi existunt participes, socii, milites, fortuna, sine quibus ulla clareret eorum virtus. At philosophiae quae sola nos ad sapientiam virtutumque omnium quibus vita nostra servatur et colitur, cognitionem perducit, is solus est particeps qui illis insudavit. Nam prudenter sapienterque vivens non aliunde, sed a seipso bona vitae refert, accepta eius sunt propriae laudes non ab alio mutuatae. Quae virtutum exercitio functus est, is solus nullo externo adiumento sibi gloriam parit, ex qua praeclaram elicit nobilitatem.

Tum, Laurentius: Et si ad eam, inquit, arbitror spectare

virtutem magnumque habere pondus, tamen in ipsa sita omnia videntur, sed necesse esse, ut ei qui hoc nomine dignus videatur adsint externa quoque, quae paulo ante repellebas, atria imaginibus referta, porticus, theatra, ludi etiam populo facti, venationes et reliqua eiusmodi, per quae nomen nostrum cum laude vulgetur. Haec enim claros et homines celebres praestant, et nobiles efficiunt. Nam sicut gloria virtutis et recte factorum est comes, ita ex his progreditur splendor quidam, hoc est nomen et fama non vulgaris, quae nobilitas appellantur. Hanc maiorem quoque nostrorum praeclara facinora et virtutes videntur praebere posteris, et paternae gloriae decus nobis tribuere, tanquam lumen quo clariores notioresque efficiamur. Quis enim negat nos progenitorum virtutibus reddi illustriores ac nobiliores? Nam si quae agimus celebrari volumus memoria posteritatis, necesse est ut ea commemoratio commendatioque tanquam parentes imagines refulgeat in filios, ad quod haereditatem quoque gloriae transfundere voluerunt. Est profecto multorum opinio, nobilitatem quemadmodum bona fortuita haereditariam nobis a parentibus relinqui, quae abiicere ac retinere in filiorum sit licentia et potestate. Nam qui maiorum virtutes et patrimonium servaverit, nobilitate respondebit superioribus, qui deterioribus studiis deditus, vitiis et flagitiis vitam macularit, profligabit nobilitatem partam, non secus ac patrimonium si prodigus fuerit et sumptibus profusus.

Nullo autem pacto negandum est paternam nobilitatem migrare in filios, et esse et dici nobiles quorum nondum virtus

est cognita. Hoc et sentit Cicero in oratione quam pro Roscio scripsit, inquiens. Vosque adolescentes qui nobiles estis, ad maiorum vestrorum imitationem excitabo. Vult sapientissimus Cicero etiam illos nobiles esse, qui nondum per aetatem paternarum virtutum imitatiores esse potuerunt. Atqui, loquar enim quod sentio, citius appellabonobilem qui excellentis parentes potest referre ipse vel paululum virtute ornatus, quam qui obscuris maioribus extiterit omni virtutum genere excellens. Priori patefactus est aditus ad lucem, commendatione maiorum quae illos notissimos vulgo fecit, ut parvula quaedam virtutis lux in eo plurimum refulgeat, propter superiorem splendidorem. Huic autem cui nullus praecessit aditus ad hominum famam, magno lumine opus erit ad illustrandam in qua natus est obscuritatem, maiore enim quadam difficultate per ignotum inter cogitur proficisci. Alter partam gloriam parvo labore sustentat, alter cum obscuritate certans, plurimo tempore, multo labore, opera diligenti eget ad amplitudinem et laudem, ex qua venit nobilitas consequenda. Istam vero, Nicolae, tuam stoicam virtutem nudam, egentem, et pene molestam, quae non ingreditur civitates, sed deferta videtur et solitaria. licet multi laudaverint, tamen qui appetant pauci reperiuntur. Et quamvis a sola virtute duci nobilitatem velint, fateantur tamen oportet, nisi civilem vitam refugiant, multis illi opus esse praesidiis, valitudine, opibus, patria, reliquisque rebus, in quibus fortuna dominantur, quibus si privata erit vita mortalium, algebit profecto et virtus vestra veluti sola atque egens, neque in hominum coetum et communem usum prodibit, ut ex nata videatur nobilitas quaedam subrustica omni carens nolitate. |sic|

Nam quae nobilitatis inerit vel Philosopho, qui suis studiis contentus latebit in bibliothecula sibiipsi pene ignotus, vel ei qui sobrie, pie, caste, sapienter vivens, abditus in villula, nullis hominum sermonibus celebris, nullo nomine illustris.

Huic virtutem concesserim, sed nullam adesse nobilitatem, studiosum virtutis, non nobilem appellabo. Istam nobilitatem Stoicorum pauci quaerunt, pauciores adipiscuntur. Ego autem illam appeto, illam probo, quam consuetudo mortalium iam dudum confirmavit, neque tum Graecos, tum Latinos arbitror ita inscios rerum fuisse, ut hoc nomen in tam multis usurparint. quod aliud quoddam quam virtutem Stoicorum reddere nobiles crediderunt.

Non insciabor, Nicolaus inquit, civem egregium in sua civitate honoribus et dignitate praeditum, si idem fuerit servator honesti, nobilem esse, illum quoque adiungam, qui procul a Rei publicae negotiis, virtuti deditus sibi vacat et boni menti. Neque minus fortem appellabo qui cum vitiis, quam qui cum hostibus bellum gerat. Neque imprudentiorem eum qui vitae suae cursum ad honestatem dirigit, quique quae appetenda, quaeve fugienda sint dedicerit. quam qui rei publicae curae intentus de bello ac pace pro ipsius utilitate consulat.

Philosophos quoque et doctos viros, qui suis studiis et vigiliis vitam hominum varias per artes excoluerunt, quique vel scriptis vel exemplo nobis ad instituendos mores et vitia propulsanda profuerunt quantumvis abditi non tantum nobiles, sed nobilissimos fuisse dixerim. Illud quoque, ne me pertinacem putes, utque tibi

paulum morem geram, concessero, aliquid splendidoris et dignitatis in nos ex patria et maiorum gloria redundare, ut eius quadam ex portiuncula participes posteri dicantur, sed tamen id cum mentem ad rationem flecto quale sit non satis perspicio. Mihi quidem ea videntur esse blandimenta quaedam inertium ac somnolentorum qui quod ipsi assequi nequeunt, tanquam ab aliis acceperint ignaviae titulum prae se ferunt, pulvererem enim solemque fugientes delitescunt sub umbraculis aliorum, ac commemmorantes priscorum virtutes, ipsi in suis penitus obmutescunt. At vero patria omnibus aeque lucet. Illi autem excellentissimi viri, non magis filiis quam caeteris sui imitandi vestigia relinquere. Lumen quidem quod est in publico, licet pateat omnibus, magis tamen ei qui prope est lucet, quam qui remotior. Ita qui illorum laudi magis haerebit, nobilior evadet quam qui a longe respiciet. Et enim sicut Platonis et Aristotelis non filiis magis quam doctrina ac sapientia profuit, ita superioris Scipionis virtus non plus filios quam me nobilitabit, si illius fuerim imitator. Quare plus Aristotelicae nobilitatis iudico participasse Theophrastum, qui illi in schola et doctrina successit, quam Nichomachum filium, qui longe illo doctrina inferior fuit. Virtus enim omnibus est in promptu, eius efficitur propria qui illam amplectitur. Secordes, ignavi, improbi, perversi, qui se in suorum maiorum locum putant successisse, eo sordidiores quam caeteri habendi sunt, quo longius distant ab imitatione parentum. Equidem libertum Ciceronis tyronem nobiliorem censebo, qui patroni virtutibus inhaesit, quam filium desistentem ab honestate paterna. Nam quod virtutem externorum comitatu nudam, egentem, incomptam et tanquam solitariam credis, vehementer erras. Non eget alterius ope,

aut fortunae adminiculis virtus, quae ex omni parte perfecta, suamet dignitate, cultu, decore tanquam regina in summo collocata resplendet suoque fulgore totum orbem illustrat. Quid enim illi opus est rebus externisquae suis facultatibus, opibus, quae caeteris praestant, contenta est, neque aliquo indiget opitulamento quod extra eum positum existat. Egere enim defectus esse videtur, ac virtus cum in ea satis sit praesidii ad bene beateque vivendum, neque aliquo egeat, res enim quaedam perfecta et suis partibus absoluta, nihil ad sui perfectionem extra eam requirit, neque quicquam addi potest quo virtuosior efficiatur. Sapienter igitur Stoici, qui virtuti nulla re extra se posita opus esse iudicaverunt, ex qua ea sola voluerunt prodire nobilitatem, et qui secus tenent, non tam veritatem quam vulgi opinionem videntursequi. Quae quidem sententia praeterquam quod est verissima summam utilitatem vitae nostrae videtur afferre. Nam si persuasum erit hominibus honestate et bonis artibus nobilitatem fieri, eamque veram esse nobilitatem quam sibi quisque recte agendo quaesierit, non quae sit alterius industria et labore parta, excitabimur mihi crede, magis ad virtutem, neque desidia confecti, nihil agentes dignum laude in aliorum gloria acquiescemus, sed ipsi erigemur ad nobilitatis insignia pervestiganda.

Licet videre illos quibus divitiae absque labore suo obtigerunt inertiores ac negligentiores in earum custodia, quam si suo sudore acquisitae provenissent. Eodem pacto quo sibi haereditario iure nobilitatem relictam arbitrantur, tardiores ad quaerendam laudem lentescunt quodammodo ac torpescunt, nec commoventur ad studia honesti, satis sibi esse ducentes, recensere

superiorum probitatem. Quibus vero persuasum fuerit, nullam nisi in propria virtute et gloria nobilitatem possideri, inflammabuntur ardore quodam ad ea efficienda ex quibus eluceat in eis superiorum virtus. Et sive sequentur exempla parentum, sive aliis exemplo se esse volunt, adipiscentur veram nobilitatem, quam certe iudico clariorem eius qui suapte natura et opere, cultuque virtutis fuerit nobilitatus |sic|, quam qui in iam parta succedit. Colenda est igitur, Laurenti, prae caeteris rebus virtus, quae nos non tantum nobiles efficit, sed etiam beatos, redditque fama et memoria hominum immortales. Ab hac nobilitas, ab hac gloria, ab hac vitae cursus petendus est, ab hac omnis recte vivendi ratio expetenda. Sed iam satis collocuti sumus.

Utrius autem verior sit sententia, hi viderint quibus est acrium ingenium ad disputandum. Liberum est omnibus sentire quod velint. Nunc autem quoniam vis aestus paulum declinavit, deambulandum extra oppidum censeo, visendumque fluvium quem iste nobis saepius ob fertilitatem piscium laudavit.

## Appendix B

### PLAGUE and POPULATION of URBAN FLORENCE, 1280-1551[d]

| Year | Birth Rate | Death Rate | Hearths | Mouths | Conversion Factor | Population Extended |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1280 | | | | 80,000 | | |
| 1300 | | | | 100,000 | | |
| 1318 | | | | 103,750 | | |
| 1338 | 61-66/ 1000b | | | 90,000 | | |
| 1340[a] | | | | 75,000 | | |
| 1347 | | | | 80,000 | | |
| 1348[a] | | | | | | |
| 1351 | | | | 45,000 | | |
| 1352 | | not known | 9,955 | | | 41,413[e] |
| 1355 | | | 9,904 | | | 41,200[e] |
| 1379 | | | 13,372 | | | 55,328[e] |
| 1380 | | | 13,074 | 54,747 | 4.187 | |
| 1382 | | | | 60,000 | | |
| 1404 | | | 13,551 | | | 56,472[e] |
| 1417[a] | | | | | | |
| 1427 | | | 10,171 | 37,225 | 3.65 | |
| 1458 | | | 10,636 | | 4.151[d] | 44,246[e] |
| 1551 | | | | 59,537 | | |

[a] plague years
[b] Based on Villani's chronicle
[c] Includes *miserabili*, excludes religious
[d] Figure for rural Pistoia, from Herlihy
[e] Using factor of 4.16, and rejecting 3.65 as an irrationality caused by the plague of 1417, and righted again by 1458.

## POPULATION of FLORENTINE CONTADO, 1318-1551*

| Year | Hearths | Mouths | Factor | Population Extended |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1318 | | 124,500 | | |
| 1336 | | c.150,000 | | |
| 1343 | 22,599 | | 4 | 90,396 |
| 1348 | | c.200,000 | | |
| 1350 | 31,386 | | | 125,544 |
| 1356 | 32,463 | | | 129,852 |
| 1365 | 29,313 | | | 117,252 |
| 1375 | 30,110 | | | 120,440 |
| 1384 | 30,012 | | | 120,048 |
| 1470[a] | c.24,000 | | | c.96,000 |
| 1551[b] | 38,053 | 220,401 | 5.792 | |

[a]Using Fiumi's contradictory figures in "Demografia fiorentina..." and "Fioritura e decadenza...", I added the mean difference of c.4000 to his lower figure in the second essay.

[b]The higher factor yielded by these figures has been ignored as representing a change in rural society not applicable to the earlier period.

*It must be borne in mind that the physical size of the contado was constantly increasing after 1350.

Sources :

Battara, P.: "Le indagini congetturali sulla popolazione di Firenze fino al trecento" in Archivio Storico Italiano (1935), pp.217-32; see pp.227; 230-32.

Becker, Florence..., I, p.197.

Brucker, Florentine Politics..., p.15.

Fiumi, "Sui rapporti...", pp.30-36.
———, "Fioritura e decadenza...", pp.466,467; 480.
———, "La demografia fiorentina...", pp.94-106.

Herlihy, "Rural Pistoia...", pp.230-32.

Lopez, R.S.: "The Trade of Medieval Europe, The South" in The Cambridge Economic History, II, pp.257-354; see p.339.

Molho,"Tassa dei Traffichi...", p.87.

Renouard, Etudes..., pp.143-45; 157-64; 181-90.

## Appendix C

## PUBLIC REVENUES of FLORENCE

A. Global Figures :

1316, total revenues, all sources, 250,000 florins
1327, total revenues, all sources, 400,000 florins
1336, total revenues, indirect sources, 300,000 florins
1351-53, mean total revenues, all sources, 420,000 florins
1410, total revenues, indirect sources, 250,000 florins
1430, total revenues, indirect sources, 270,000 florins
1429, total revenues, catasto, 168,502 florins
1430, total revenues, catasto, 414,758 florins
1440, total revenues, indirect sources, 217,700 florins
1470, total revenues, indirect sources, 256,500 florins
1487, total revenues, indirect sources, 160,000 florins
1490, total revenues, indirect sources, 105,000 florins

B. Total treasury revenues, Jan.-Feb. :

| | |
|---|---|
| 1316 | 65,749 lire |
| 1319 | 36,000 |
| 1321 | 81,625 |
| 1325 | 115,000 |
| 1327 | 26,367 |
| 1329 | 120,000 |
| 1330 | 186,329 |

C. Wine gabelle, revenues :

| | |
|---|---|
| 1336 | 58,000 florins |
| 1342 | 36,000 |
| 1345 | 44,000 |
| 1348 | 47,465 |

D. Customs gabelle, revenues :

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Corrected for rates and value of silver-gold coin : divide by 2 after 1350, and subtract 1/3 after 1365-66; subtract 1/12 after 1420. |
| 1336 | 90,200 florins | |
| 1338 | 83,800 | |
| 1340 | 76,000 | |
| 1343 | 68,000 | |
| 1345 | 75,000 | |
| 1348 | 79,000 | |
| 1353 | 24,300 | 12,150 |
| 1354 | 25,000 | 12,500 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1357-58 | 47,021 | 23,510 |
| 1358-59 | 58,384 | 29,192 |
| 1362-63 | 64,500 | 32,250 |
| 1365-66 | 85,320 | 28,440 |
| 1385 | 100,000 | 33,334 |
| 1392 | 82,000 | 27,334 |
| 1395 | 115,000 | 38,334 |
| 1415 | 127,421 | 42,474 |
| 1424 | 94,732 | 28,945 |
| 1427 | 100,000 | 30,556 |

E.Salt gabelle, revenues :

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1336 | 14,450 florins | |
| 1342 | 4,679 | |
| 1344 | 10,033 | |
| 1347 | 14,000 | |
| 1384 | 63,870 | (at rate increased by 2 1/3) |
| 1427 | 82,150 | |

F.Contract gabelle, for the sale of land, revenues :

| | |
|---|---|
| 1336 | 20,000 florins |
| 1341 | 6,600 |
| 1342 | 7,322 |
| 1344 | 17,137 |
| 1347 | 18,500 |

---

Sources :

Becker, Florence..., I, pp.74; 85,86; 96; 103; 126,127; 163,164; 188,189; II, pp.26; 71,72; 153,154; 166; 169; 179,180; 190, 191; 238,239,240.

## Appendix D

### GROWTH of PUBLIC DEBT, 1303-1427

Total public indebtedness :

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1303 | 47,275 florins | |
| 1315 | 50,000 | |
| 1336 | 100,000 | |
| 1341 | 400,000 | |
| 1343 | 800,000 | |
| 1345 | 505,044 | (Monte founded) |
| 1367 | 1,250,000 | |
| 1377 | 2,000,000 | |
| 1400 | 3,000,000 | |
| 1427 | 8,000,000 | |

---

Sources :

Becker, Florence..., I, pp.74,75; 129; 191,192; 233; II, pp.153; 178; 235,236.

Sapori, A.: Le Marchand Italien..., p.66.

## Appendix E

### WARS of FLORENCE, 1315-1447

| | |
|---|---|
| 1315-1328 | war with the armies of Castruccio |
| 1335-1339 | war with the armies of Mastino della Scala |
| 1341-1342 | war with Pisa |
| 1351-1353 | war with the armies of the Visconti |
| 1362-1364 | war with Pisa |
| 1368-1370 | war with the armies of the Visconti |
| 1375-1378 | war with the papacy |
| 1388-1394 | war with the armies of Giangaleazzo Visconti |
| 1398-1402 | war with the armies of Giangaleazzo Visconti |
| 1409-1414 | war with the armies of Ladislas of Naples |
| 1424-1447 | war with the armies of Filippo Maria Visconti |
| 1433 | war with Lucca |

Military Expenses :

| | | | florins |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1325 | war against Castruccio | 1,104,276 lire | 356,218 |
| 1336-38 | war against Verona | 140,000 florins/year | 420,000 |
| 1341-42 | war against Pisa | 30,000 florins/month | 600,000 |
| 1362-64 | war against Pisa | | 1,000,000 |
| 1375-78 | war against papacy | | 2,243,000 |
| 1388-92 | war against Giangaleazzo Visconti | | 8,500,000 |
| single years : | 1424, against Filippo Maria Visconti | | 560,912 |
| | 1426, | | 888,309 |
| | 1427, | | 439,590 |
| | 1431, | | 600,000 |

---

Sources :

Becker, Florence..., I, pp.74; 79; 126; II, pp.160; 162; 235; 237.

Brucker, Florentine Politics..., pp.16; 83; 84.

Sismondi, History..., pp.405; 412; 413; 418; 419.

Brucker, Renaissance Florence, p.83.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Primary Sources


Thomas Aquinas. Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas. Edited by A.C. Pegis, New York, 1948.

Aristotle. Introduction to Aristotle. Edited by R. McKeon, New York, 1947.

Augustine. Confessions. Trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin, Baltimore, 1969.

———— Essential Augustine. Edited by V.J. Bourke, New York, 1961.

Vespasiano da Bisticci. Vite di Uomini Illustri del secolo XV. Edited by P. d'Ancona and E. Aeschlimann, Milan, 1951.

Boccaccio, G. The Decameron. Trans. R. Aldington, New York, 1970.

Bruni, L. Laudatio ad urbem Florentiam. In Baron, H. : From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni, Chicago, 1968.

———— Ad Petrum Paulum Histrum Dialogus. In Prosatori Latini del Quattrocento, edited by E. Garin, Milan, n.d.

Capellanus, A. The Art of Courtly Love. Trans. J.J. Parry, New York, 1959.

Castiglione, B. The Book of the Courtier. Trans. C.S. Singleton, New York, 1959.

Cicero, M.T. De Amicitia. Edited by E.S. Shuckburgh, London, 1961.

Poem of the Cid. Trans. W.S. Merwin in Medieval Epics, New York, 1963.

Dante Alighieri. The Divine Comedy. Edited and trans. D.S. Sayers, 3 vols., Middlesex, England, 1968.

Fallico, A.B., and Shapiro, H. (eds.). Renaissance Philosophy: Vol. 1: The Italian Philosophers. New York, 1967.

Froissart, Sir J. The Chronicles of England, France, and Spain. Edited by G. and W. Anderson, London, 1963.

Lopez, R.S., and Raymond, I.W. (eds.). Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World. New York, 1955.

Macrobius. Commentary on the Dream of Scipio. Trans. W.H. Stahl, New York, 1966

The Oxford Book of Italian Verse. Edited and revised by C. Dionisotti, Oxford, 1966.

Petrarch, F. De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae. Edited by F.N.M. Diekstra, in A Dialogue Between Reason and Adversity, (partial text), Assen, Netherlands, 1968.

Plato. Collected Dialogues. Edited by E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, New York, 1963.

Poggio Bracciolini. Opera Omnia. Edited by R. Fubini, 4 vols., Turin, 1964.

Salutati, C. Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati. Edited F. Novati, 6 vols., Rome, 1891.

———— De Tyranno. Trans. E. Emerton, in Humanism and Tyranny: Studies in the Italian Trecento, Gloucester, Mass., 1964.

Scott, W. (ed.). Hermetica. 4 vols., London, 1968.

## SECONDARY SOURCES CONSULTED


Adams, J. du Quesnay. Patterns of Medieval Society. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1969.

Angelieri, C. Il problema religiosa del Rinascimento. Florence, 1952

Antal, F. Florentine Painting and Its Social Background. London, 1948.

Argus, I.A. Urban Civilization in Pre-Crusade Europe. Leiden, 1965.

Ariès, Phillippe. Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life. Trans. R. Baldick, New York, 1962.

Auerbach, E. Dante: Poet of the Secular World. Trans. R. Manheim, Chicago, 1961.

Bacci, D. Poggio Bracciolini nella luce dei suoi tempi. Florence, 1959.

Barbadoro, B. Le Finanze della Repubblica Fiorentina: Imposta diretta e debito pubblico fino all' instituzione del Monte. Florence, 1929.

Barbi, M. Life of Dante. Ed. and trans. P. Ruggiers, Berkeley, 1960.

Baron, Hans. The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance. 2 vols., Princeton, 1955; 1 vol. revised, Princeton, 1966

———— From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni: Studies in Humanistic and Political Literature. Chicago, 1968

———— Humanistic and Political Literature in Florence and Venice at the Beginning of the Quattrocento. New York, 1955

Baudi de Vesme, C. Brevi considerazione sulla stofiografica fiorentine e sul pensiero politico nel XV secolo. Turin, 1953.

Baudry, L. Lexique philosophique de Guillaume d'Ockham: Etudes des notions fondamentales. Paris, 1958.

Bazin, G. Baroque and Rococo Art. New York, 1964.

Becker, M. Florence in Transition. 2 vols., Baltimore, Maryland, 1967-1968.

Beckwith, J. Early Medieval Art. New York, 1964.

Bennett, H.S. Life on the English Manor: A Study of Peasant Conditions, 1150-1400. Cambridge, England, 1969.

Billanovich, G. Petrarca letterato, I, Lo scrittoio del Petrarca. Rome, 1947.

Blau, J.L. Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance. New York, 1944.

Bloch, Marc. Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française. Ed., after Bloch's death, by R. Dauvergne, 2 vols., Paris, 1956

———— Feudal Society. Trans. L.A. Manyon, 2 vols., Chicago, 1968.

———— The Historian's Craft. Trans. P. Putnam, New York, 1953.

Bolgar, R.R. The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries. New York, 1964.

Bosco, U. Petrarca. Turin, 1946.

Brucker, Gene. Florentine Politics and Society, 1348-1378. Princeton, 1962.

———— Renaissance Florence. New York, 1969.

Burckhardt, Jacob. The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy. Trans. S.G. Middlemore, 2 vols., New York, 1958

Cahen, C. Le Régime féodal de l'Italie normande. Paris, 1940.

Canestrini, G. La Scienza e l'Arte di Stato. Florence, 1862.

Carpentier, E. Une Ville devant la peste. Orvieto et la peste noire de 1348. Paris, 1962.

Carré, M.H. Realists and Nominalists. Oxford, 1946.

Cassirer, E. The Individual and The Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy. Trans. M. Domandi, New York, 1963.

Cessi, R. Venezia Ducale. 2 Vols., Venice, 1940.

Chastel, A. Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique. Paris, 1959.

Cipolla, C.M. Money, Prices and Civilization in the Mediterranean world, fifth to seventeenth centuries. Princeton, 1956.

———— Mouvements monétaires dans l'état de Milan. Paris, 1952.

Cochrane, C.N. Christianity and Classical Culture. Oxford, 1957.

Cohen, G. Histoire de la chevalerie en France au moyen-âge. Paris, 1949.

Cohn, N. The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary messianism in medieval and Reformation Europe and its bearing upon modern totalitarian movements. New York, 1961.

Dahmus, J. The Middle Ages: A popular history. New York, 1970

Dobb, M. Studies in the Development of Capitalism. Revised, London, 1967.

Doren, A. Le arti fiorentine. Trans. G. Klein, 2 vols., Florence, 1940.

Doresse, J. The Secret Book of the Egyptian Gnostics. London, 1960.

Duby, Georges. L'Economie Rurale et la Vie des Campagnes dans l'Occident Médiéval. Paris, 1962.

———— La soiété aux XI$^{e}$ et XII$^{e}$ siècles dans la région mâconnaise. Paris, 1953.

Dupin, H. La Courtoisie au moyen-âge. Paris, 1931.

d'Entrèves, A.P. Dante as a Political Thinker. Oxford, 1955.

Ferguson, W.K. Europe in Transition, 1300-1520. Boston, 1962.

———— The Renaissance In Historical Thought. Boston, 1948.

———— Renaissance Studies. New York, 1963.

Fiumi, E. Storia Economica e Sociale di San Gimignano. Florence, 1961.

Frazer, J.G. The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion. Abridged, London, 1970.

Freccero, J. (ed.) Dante. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965.

Ganshof, F.L. Qu'est-ce que la féodalité. Third revised ed., Brussels, 1957.

Garin, E. Italian Humanism. Trans. P. Munz, New York, 1965.

———— Medioevo e Rinascimento. Bari, 1966.

Gilbert, N.W. Renaissance Concepts of Method. New York, 1960.

Gilby, T. Between Community and Society. London, 1953.

———— The Political Thought of Thomas Aquinas. Chicago, 1958.

Gilmore, M.P. The World of Humanism, 1453-1517. New York, 1962.

Gilson, E. La Philosophie au Moyen Age. Paris, 1947.

Le Goff, J. La Civilization de l'Occident Médiéval. Paris, 1965.

Grimaldi, N. La contessa Matilde e le sua stirpe feudale. Florence, 1928.

Gutkind, C.S. Cosimo de' Medici, Pater Patriae, 1389-1464. Oxford, 1938.

Hay, D. The Italian Renaissance in its Historical Background. Cambridge, England, 1961.

Heer, F. The Medieval World. Trans. J. Sondheimer, New York, 1962.

Hinnebusch, W.A. The History of the Dominican Order. Vol. 1: Origins and Growth to 1500. Staten Island, New York, 1965.

Hitti, P.K. The Arabs. Chicago, 1964.

Huizinga, J. The Waning of the Middle Ages. London, 1955.

Klibansky, R. The Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages. London, 1939.

Kristeller, P.O. Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance. Stanford, 1964.

———— Le Thomisme et la pensée italienne de la Renaissance. Montreal and Paris, 1967.

———— Renaissance Philosophy and the Medieval Tradition. Latrobe, Pennsylvania, 1966.

———— Renaissance Thought. 2 vols., New York, 1961-1965.

Leff, G. Medieval Thought. London, 1958.

Lopez, R.S., and Raymond, I.W. (eds.). Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World. New York, 1955.

Lovejoy, A.O. The Great Chain of Being. Cambridge, Mass., 1936.

Luzzatto, G. An Economic History of Italy from the fall of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the Sixteenth Century. Trans. P. Jones, London, 1961.

Martin, A., von. Sociology of the Renaissance. Trans. W.L. Luetkens, New York, 1963.

Martindale, A. Gothic Art. New York, 1967.

Martines, L. Lawyers and Statecraft in Renaissance Florence. Princeton, 1968.

———— The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460. Princeton, 1963.

Masai, F. Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra. Paris, 1956.

Michelet, J. Satanism and Witchcraft: A Study in Medieval Superstition. Trans. A.R. Allinson, New York, 1968.

Mommsen, T.E. Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Edited by E.F. Rice Jr., Ithaca, New York, 1959.

Muir, D. A History of Milan Under the Visconti. London, 1924-Princeton, 1963

Murray, Linda. The High Renaissance. New York, 1967.

_____ The Late Renaissance and Mannerism. New York, 1967.

_____, and Murray, P. The Art of the Renaissance. New York, 1963.

Nardi, B. L'Aristotelismo Padovano. Florence, 1955.

Origo, Iris. The Merchant of Prato: Francesco di Marco Datini. London, 1963.

Panofsky, E. Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism. Latrobe, Pennsylvania, 1951.

_____ Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art, Stockholm, 1960.

_____ Studies in Iconology. New York, 1965.

Previté-Orton, C.W. The Early History of the House of Savoy (1000-1223). Cambridge, England, 1912.

Poulet,G. Les Métamorphoses du Cercle. Paris, 1961.

Questa, C. Per la storia del testo di Plauto nell' umanesimo: La "recensio" di Poggio Bracciolini. Rome, 1968.

Rashdall, H. The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages. Oxford, 1936.

Renaudet, Augustin. Humanisme et Renaissance. Geneva, 1958.

Renouard, Y. Etudes d'Histoire Médiévale. Paris, 1968.

_____ Les Hommes d'Affaires Italiens du Moyen Age. Paris, 1949.

Rice, E.F., Jr. The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom. Cambridge, Mass., 1958.

De Roover, Raymond. L'évolution de la lettre de change. Paris, 1953.

———— Money, Banking and Credit in Medieval Bruges. Cambridge, Mass., 1948.

———— The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank, 1397-1494. Cambridge, Mass., 1963.

Rörig, F. The Medieval Town. Trans. D. Bryant, London, 1967.

Rossi, V. Il Quattrocento. Milan, 1956.

Rubenstein, Nicolai. The Government of Florence Under the Medici (1434-1494). Oxford, 1966.

Ruska, J. Tabula Smaragdina. Heidleberg, 1926.

Sabbadini, R. Giovanni da Ravenna. Como, 1924.

Sapori, A. Le Marchand Italien au Moyen Age. Paris, 1952.

Schevill, F. Medieval and Renaissance Florence. 2 vols., New York, 1963.

Scholem, G.G. Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and the Talmudic Tradition. New York, 1960.

———— Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism. Jerusalem, 1941.

Secret, F. Les Kabbalistes Chrétiens de la Renaissance. Paris, 1964.

Seligman, K. The History of Magic. New York, 1948.

Sereni, E. Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano. Bari, 1961.

Seznec, J. The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The mythological tradition and its place in Renaissance humanism and art. Trans. B. Sessions, New York, 1961.

Shepherd, W. The Life of Poggio Bracciolini. London, 1837.

Singleton, C. Dante Studies. 2 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1954-1958.

Sismondi, J.C.L. History of the Italian Republics in the Middle Ages. Edited and trans. W. Boulting, London, no date.

Southern, R.W. The Making of the Middle Ages. New Haven, 1964.

Stenton, D.M. English Society in the Early Middle Ages. Middlesex, England, 1965.

Taylor, A.E. A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus. Oxford, 1928.

Taylor, H.O. The Medieval Mind. 2 vols., London, 1911.

Taylor, R.A. Aspects of the Italian Renaissance. Port Washington, New York, 1968.

Thorndike, L. History of Magic and Experimental Science. Vols. I-IV, New York, 1964.

———— Science and Thought in the Fifteenth Century, New York, 1963.

Toffanin, G. Storia dell' Umanesimo. 3 vols., Bologna, 1950.

Trinkaus, C. Adversity's Noblemen: The Italian Humanists on Happiness. New York, 1965.

———— "In Our Image and Likeness": Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought. 2 vols., London, 1970.

Ullman, B.L. The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati. Padua, 1963.

———— Studies in the Italian Renaissance. Rome, 1955.

Vallone, A. Cortesia e Nobiltà nel Rinascimento. Asti, 1955.

Violante, C. La società milanese nell'età precomunale. Naples, 1954.

Volpe, G. Il Medioevo. Florence, 1926.

Waddell, H. The Wandering Scholars. London, 1947.

Waley, D. The Italian City-Republics. New York, 1969.

Walker, D.P. Spiritual and Daemonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella. London, 1958.

Walser, E. Poggius Florentinus: Leben und Werke. Leipzig, 1914.

Weiss, R. The Dawn of Humanism in Italy. London, 1947.

Weiss, R. Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century. Oxford, 1957.

White, L., Jr. Medieval Technology and Social Change. Oxford, 1962.

Whitfield, J.H. A Short History of Italian Literature. Middlesex, England, 1960.

———— Petrarch and the Renaissance. Oxford, 1943.

Wilcox, D.J. The Development of Florentine Historiography in the Fifteenth Century. Cambridge, Mass., 1969.

Wilkins, E.H. Life of Petrarch. Chicago, 1961.

———— The Making of the Canzoniere and Other Petrarchan Studies. Rome, 1951.

———— Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch. Cambridge, Mass., 1955.

Wind, E. Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance. Revised ed., London, 1967.

Woodward, W.H. Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators. New York, 1963.

Yates, F.A. Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition. London, 1964.

## Secondary Sources: Articles

Baron, Hans. "Cicero and Roman Civic Spirit in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance." Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XXII (1938), 73-97.

———— "Franciscan Poverty and Civic Wealth as Factors in the Rise of Humanistic Thought." Speculum, XIII (1957), 1-39.

Battara,P. "Le indigani congetturali sulla popolazione di Firenze fino al trecento." Archivio Storico Italiano, I (1935) 317-321.

Bec, C. "Mentalité et vocabulaire des marchands florentins au début du XV$^{e}$ siècle." Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilizations, (1967) 6, 1206-1221.

Becker, Marvin. "Florentine Libertas: Political independents and novi cives, 1372-1378." Traditio, 18 (1962) 393-407.

———— "Florentine Politics and the Diffusion of Heresy in the Trecento: A Socioeconomic Inquiry." Speculum, XXXIV (1959) 60-75.

————, and Brucker, G. "The Arti Minori in Florentine Politics, 1342-1378." Medieval Studies, XVIII (1956) 93-104.

Bernard, S. "The Rape of Books from the Abbey of St. Gallen." Downside Review, LXXXV (1967) 35-38.

Bloch, Marc. "Comment et Pourquoi Finit l'Esclavage Antique." Annales, E.S.C., (1947) 1, 30-44; 2, 161-170.

———— "Mutations monétaires dans l'ancienne France." Annales, E.S.C., (1953) 2, 145-158; 4, 433-456.

———— "Sur le passé de la noblesse française: quelques jalons de recherche." Annales d'histoire économique et sociale, VIII (1936) 366-378.

Brucker, Gene. "The Ghibelline Trial of Matteo Villani (1362)." Medievalia et Humanistica, 13 (1960) 48-55.

_____ "The Medici in the Fourteenth Century." Speculum, XXXII (1957) 1-26.

Carpentier, E. "Autour de la peste noire: Famines et épidémies dans l'histoire du XIV^e siècle." Annales, E.S.C., (1962) 6, 1062-1092.

Catalano, F. "La crisi italiana alla fine del secolo XV." Belfagor, XI (1956) 393-414; 505-527.

Cessi, R. "Venice to the eve of the fourth crusade." Cambridge Medieval History, ed. J.B. Bury, Cambridge England, 1966. Vol. IV, 251-274.

Cipolla, C.M. "Comment s'est perdu la propriété écclésiastique dans l'italie du nord entre le XI^e et le XVI^e siècles." Annales, E.S.C., (1947) 3, 317-327.

_____ "The Economic Policies of Governments: The Italian and Iberian Peninsulas." Cambridge Economic History, ed. M. Postan, E.E. Rich, and E. Miller, Cambridge, England, 1963. Vol. III, 397-429.

Corti, G., and Da Silva, J.G. "Note sur la production de la soie à Florence, au XV^e siècle." Annales, E.S.C., XX (1965) 309-311.

Day, J. "La circulation monétaire en Toscane en 1296." Annales, E.S.C., (1968) 5, 1054-1066.

_____ "Prix Agrícoles en Méditeranée à le fin du XIV^e Siècle (1382)." Annales, E.S.C., (1961) 4, 629-656.

Duby, Georges. "Economie domainale et économie monétaire: Le budget de l'abbaye de Cluny entre 1080 et 1155." Annales, E.S.C., (1952) 2, 155-171.

_____ "Sur l'histoire agraire de l'italie." Annales, E.S.C., (1963) 2, 352-362.

Dunston, A.J. "The hand of Poggio." Scriptorium, XIV (1965) 63-70.

Enriques, A.M. "La vendetta nella vita e nella legislizione fiorentina." Archivio Storico Italiano, XIX (1933) 85-146; 181-223.

Fiumi, Enrico. "Fioritura e decadenza dell' economia fiorentina." Archivio Storico Italiano, CXVI (1958) 445-510.

———— "La demografia fiorentina nelle pagine di Giovanni Villani." Archivio Storico Italiano, CVIII (1950) 78-158.

———— "L'imposta diretta nei communi medioevali della Toscana." In Studi in onore di Armando Sapori, Milan, 1957, 329-339.

———— "Sui rapporti economici tra città e contado nell' età communale." Archivio Storico Italiano, CXIV (1956) 18-68.

Garin, Eugenio. "I Cancellieri umanisti della repubblica fiorentina da Coluccio Salutati a Bartolomeo Scala." Rivista Storica Italiana, 71 (1959) 185-208.

Le Goff, Jacques. "Apostolats Mendiants et fait urbain dans la France médiévale: L'implantation des Ordres Mendiants." Annales, E.S.C., (1968) 2, 335-352.

———— "Au Moyen Age: Temps de l'Eglise et temps du marchand." Annales, E.S.C., (1960) 3, 417-433.

———— "Ordres Mendiants et urbanisation." Annales, E.S.C., (1970) 4, 924-946.

———— "Un XI$^{e}$ siècle qui bouge: du nouveau sur les premiers Capétiens." Annales, E.S.C., (1968) 4, 880-889.

Guenée, B. "Espace et Etat dans la France du Moyen Age." Annales, E.S.C., (1968) 4, 744-758.

Herlihy, D. "Population, Plague and Social Change in Rural Pistoia, 1201-1430." The Economic History Review, XVIII (1965) 2, 225-244.

Hibbert, A.B. "The Economic Policies of Towns." In Cambridge Economic History, III, 157-229.

Jones, P.J. "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century." Papers of the British School at Rome, XXIV (1956) 183-205.

———— "Medieval Agrarian Scoiety in its Prime: pt. 2, Italy." In Cambridge Economic History, I, 340-431.

Lombard, M. "Les bases monétaires d'une suprématie économique: L'or musulman du VII$^{e}$ au XI$^{e}$ siècles." Annales, E.S.C., (1947) 2, 143-160.

Lopez, R.S. "Le marchand genois: un profil collectif." Annales, E.S.C., (1958) 3, 501-515.

———— "The Trade of Medieval Europe: The South." Cambridge Economic History, II, 257-354.

Marks, L.F. "The financial Oligarchy in Florence under Lorenzo." In Italian Renaissance Studies, edited by E.F. Jacobs, London, 1960, 123-147.

Maschke, E. "Continuité sociale et Histoire urbaine médiévale." Annales, E.S.C., (1960) 5, 936-948.

Molho, A. "The Florentine 'Tassa dei Traffichi" of 1451." Studies in the Renaissance, 17 (1970) 73-118.

Mommsen, T.E. "Petrarch and the Story of the Choice of Hercules." Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute, XVI (1953) 175-196.

Palmarocchi,R. "Contributi allo studio delle fonti statuarie fiorentine: Il Constituto de podestà del 1322-25." Archivio Storico Italiano, XIII (1930) i, 57-107.

Patch, H.R. "The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Philosophy and Literature." Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, III, (1922).

De Roover, R. "The Medici Bank." Journal of Economic History, VI (1946) 24-52; 153-172; VII (1947) 69-82.

———— "The Organization of Trade." Cambridge Economic History, III, 42-118.

Le Roy Ladurie, E. "Le climat des XI$^{e}$ et XVI$^{e}$ siècles: Séries comparés." Annales, E.S.C., (1965) 5, 899-922.

Rubenstein, N. "La lotta contro i magnati a Firenze (1281)." Archivio Storico Italiano, II (1935) 161-172.

———— "Poggio Bracciolini: Cancelliere e storico di Firenze." In Atti e memorie dell' Academia Patrarca di Lettere, Arti, e Scienze di Arezzo, n.s., XXXVII (1965) 215-233.

Rubenstein, N. "The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence." Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute, V (1942) 198-225.

Ruitenburg, V. "La vie et la mort des Ciompi de Sienne." Annales, E.S.C., (1965) 1, 95-109.

Sapori, A. "Moyen Age et Renaissance vus d'Italie." Annales, E.S.C., (1956) 433-457.

Sardella, P. "L'épanuoissement industriel de Venise au XVI$^{e}$ siècle." Annales, E.S.C., (1947) 2, 196.

Seigel, J.E. " 'Civic Humanism' or 'Ciceronian Rhetoric'?" Past and Present, 34 (1966) 3-48.

Tenenti, A. "Les marchands et la culture à Florence (1375-1434)." Annales, E.S.C., (1968) 6, 1319-1329.

Toews, J.B. "Dream and Reality in the Imperial Ideology of Pope Pius II." Medievalia et Humanistica, XVI (1964) 77-93.

Ullman, B.L. "Poggio's Manuscripts of Livy." Scriptorium, XIX (1965) 71-76.

Walker, D.P. "Orpheus the Theologian and the Renaissance Platonists." Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute, XVI (1953) 100-120.

Witt, R.G. "Coluccio Salutati, Chancellor and Citizen of Lucca (1370-1372)." Traditio, XXV (1969) 191-216.

Zanetti, D. "A l'Université de Pavie au XV$^{e}$ siècle: les salaires des professeurs." Annales, E.S.C., (1962) 3, 421-433.