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Citation: Thomson, Benjamin (2021) The virtue politics of Cristoforo Landino's Disputationes Camaldulenses. [Thesis] (Unpublished)

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The Virtue Politics of Cristoforo Landino's
Disputationes Camaldulenses

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Intellectual History

Birkbeck, University of London

Declaration

The work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Ben Thomson

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to present a study of the aims, contexts, philosophical basis, and intended praxis of the system of virtue politics in Cristoforo Landino's *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, a philosophical dialogue completed in 1474 whose stated aim is to investigate what a republican politician can learn from Plato. Landino presents a programme for the ascent of the soul which involves both the moral virtues, which involve political activity and the purgation of the soul, and the intellectual virtues, which are concerned with the cognition of God and from which one can gain the wisdom to guide and direct the state. Since the best way of life involves the use of each kind of virtue as far as is necessary, Landino grants the statesman the capacity to move between government and detachment from direct civic intervention as desired. I show how Landino's purpose is, therefore, to justify the exercise of political power in a republic by an individual who does not occupy a governmental role, and in doing so legitimise the position of Lorenzo de' Medici.

My thesis consists of three parts. In the first I outline the political-historical and intellectual contexts for the composition of the *Disputationes*, situating the work within contemporary humanistic debates about political virtue and the Florentine political currents of the late Quattrocento. The second part of the thesis analyses Landino's system of virtue politics, its philosophical and psychological underpinning, and how it reconciles Ciceronian republicanism with Platonic perfectionism. In the third part of the thesis I show how the allegory of the *Aeneid* in the third and fourth books of the *Disputationes* describes a course of practical ethics which the statesman must undertake if he is to purify himself of vice, attain knowledge of the divine, and impart this wisdom to the state while remaining outside of government.

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Acknowledgements

Above all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Stephen Clucas, for his support over the last five years. Not only has it been a privilege for me to have benefitted from his immense erudition and trenchant advice, but his good humour and kindness have also been an enormous help in bringing this project to its conclusion.

I would like to thank my parents for their unconditional love and encouragement in this endeavour as in all others.

Thank you so much to Jo, whose love, laughter, and belief in me have been invaluable during my studies. I could not have completed them without you.

I would also like to thank the late George Molyneux, whose company was a source of much comfort to me during the production of this thesis.

Introduction

Until quite recently, traditionalists saw Cristoforo Landino (1425-1498) as exhibiting mere brilliance in an age of genius. He was a thinker eclipsed entirely by his peers. Scholars tended to view his work as little more than a footnote to that of his pupil and colleague Marsilio Ficino, regarding the older humanist as a rhetorically refined but intellectually ponderous imitator whose contribution to philosophy consisted of little more than superimpositions of Ficinian thought onto an already well-established tradition of allegorical criticism.¹ Over the last forty years, however, Landino's reputation has undergone something of a rehabilitation. This has been prompted at least in part by primary sources being more readily available. In the early 1970s, Roberto Cardini and Manfred Lentzen each edited a number of Landino's shorter texts such as letters, proems, and academic prolusions, and these efforts were accompanied by critical editions of longer works, most notably the *De vera nobilitate*, edited by Maria Teresa Liaci in 1970, the *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, edited by Peter Lohe in 1980 and, eventually, the *Comento sopra la Comedia*, edited by Paolo Procaccioli in 2001.² What followed was a surge of scholarly activity that has illuminated aspects of Landino and his work that had hitherto gone underappreciated. Craig Kallendorf and Jane Chance have identified the originality of his contribution to the tradition of Virgil criticism, Simon Gilson to that of Dante.³ Christoph Pieper, Simone Fellina and Mario Di Cesare have discussed the value of poetry to Landino's thought, Bruce McNair and Eberhard Muller-Bochat have offered insights on his intellectual influences, and Ute Rüsck and Ursula Rombach have undertaken detailed studies of his moral psychology.⁴ Most recently, Jill Kraye has been working on a translation of the

¹ See e.g. Eugenio Garin, *Italian Humanism: Philosophy and Civic Life in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), pp. 84-88; James B. Wadsworth, 'Landino's "Disputationes Camaldulenses", Ficino's "De Felicitate", and "L'Altercazione" of Lorenzo de' Medici', *Modern Philology*, 50.1 (August 1952), 23-31.

² Manfred Lentzen, ed., *Studien zur Dante-Exegese Cristoforo Landinos* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1971); Lentzen, ed., *Reden Cristoforo Landinos*, (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1974); Cristoforo Landino, *Scritti critici e teorici*, ed. by Roberto Cardini, 2 vols (Rome: Bulzoni, 1974); Landino, *De Vera Nobilitate*, ed. by Maria Teresa Liaci (Florence: Olschki, 1970) (hereafter *DVN*); Landino, *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, ed. by Peter Lohe (Florence: Sansoni, 1980) (hereafter *DC*); Landino, *Comento sopra la Comedia*, ed. by Paolo Procaccioli, 4 vols (Rome: Salerno, 2001).

³ Craig Kallendorf, 'The Rhetorical Criticism of Literature in Early Italian Humanism from Boccaccio to Landino', *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 1.2 (Autumn 1983), 33-59; Kallendorf, 'Cristoforo Landino's *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 36.4 (Winter, 1983), 519-46; Kallendorf, 'Virgil, Dante and Empire in Italian Thought, 1300-1500', *Vergilius* 34 (1988), 44-69; Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas: Virgil and Epideictic Rhetoric in the Early Renaissance* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1989); Jane Chance, *Medieval Mythography Volume 3: The Emergence of Italian Humanism, 1321-1475* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015); Chance, 'The Medieval Sources of Cristoforo Landino's Allegorization of the Judgment of Paris', *Studies in Philology*, 81.2 (Spring 1984), 145-60; Simon Gilson, *Dante and Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Gilson, 'Notes on the Presence of Boccaccio in Cristoforo Landino's *Comento sopra la Comedia di Danthe Alighieri?*', *Italian Culture*, 23 (2005), 1-30; Gilson, 'Plato, the *platonici*, and Marsilio Ficino in Cristoforo Landino's *Comento sopra la Comedia?*', *The Italianist*, 23 (2003), 5-53; Gilson, 'Science in and between Dante and his Commentators: The Case of Cristoforo Landino's *Comento sopra la Comedia di Danthe Alighieri?*', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 23 (2005), 31-54.

⁴ Christoph Pieper, *Elegos redolere Vergiliosque sapere: Cristoforo Landinos 'Xandra' zwischen Liebe und Gesellschaft* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2008); Simone Fellina, 'Cristoforo Landino e le ragioni della poesia: il dissenso con Marsilio Ficino sull'origine della *pia philosopha?*', in *Nuovi maestri e antichi testi: umanesimo e Rinascimento alle origini*

Disputationes for Harvard's I Tatti imprint and, in the last year, Bruce McNair has published a work on Landino's life and thought (although, regrettably, I became aware of it too late to incorporate its findings in the present text).⁵

Nowhere is Landino's philosophy more different from that of Ficino, however, than in its focus on ethical and political matters, and it has been the work of Arthur Field and Riccardo Fubini that has been instrumental in emphasising these aspects of Landino's thought.⁶ In a 1996 paper Fubini claims that:

[Landino's] point of reference was not direct Platonic doctrine – and much less in the ideological and emblematic sense in which Ficino assumes it – but it was instead the eclectic Academism of Cicero... [Platonic] philosophy did not interest Landino as a revelation of absolute and primordial truth, nor did it interest him as 'theology', but rather for its capacity for elaboration and rational persuasion in the cultured ages.⁷

Rather, he continues, the Platonism that Landino endorses is of a distinctly humanistic flavour:

'Platonism', as recent research has increasingly been clarifying, was not introduced into Florence by Ficino. It corresponded with the common needs of the cultured citizen to elevate the tone of teaching, inspiring him to noble and sound principles that together amounted to defending, if not directly renewing, the good, old traditions.⁸

del pensiero moderno. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi in onore di Cesare Vasoli, Mantova, 1-3 dicembre 2010, ed. by Stefano Caroti and Vittoria Perrone Compagni (Florence: Olschki, 2012), pp. 191-222; Mario Di Cesare, 'Cristoforo Landino on the Name and Nature of Poetry: The Critic as Hero', *The Chaucer Review*, 21.2 (Fall 1986), 155-81; Bruce McNair, *Cristoforo Landino on the Human Soul* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Duke University, 1991); McNair, 'Cristoforo Landino's *De anima* and his Platonic Sources', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 32 (1992), 227-45; McNair, 'Albert the Great in the Renaissance: Cristoforo Landino's Use of Albert on the Soul', *The Modern Schoolman*, 70 (1993), 115-29; McNair, 'Cristoforo Landino, Coluccio Salutati and the Best Life', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47.4 (Winter 1994), 747-69; McNair, 'Cristoforo Landino, Poetry, and Divine Illumination', *Fides et Historia*, 31.1 (Winter/Spring 1999), 82-93; Eberhard Muller-Bochat, *Leon Battista Alberti und die Vergil-Deutung der Disputationes Camaldulenses: Zur allegorischen Dichter-Erklärung bei Cristoforo Landino*, Schriften und Vorträge des Petrarca-Instituts Köln, 21 (Krefeld: Scherpe-Verlag, 1968); Ute Rüschen, *Untersuchungen zu Cristoforo Landino: De anima* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993); and Ursula Rombach, *Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa bei Cristoforo Landino* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1991).

⁵ Bruce McNair, *Cristoforo Landino: His Works and Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). A German translation of the first and second books of the *Disputationes* can be found in Eugen Wolf, *Cristoforo Landino: Camaldolensische Gespräche* (Jena: Diederichs, 1927); an Italian translation of the first book in Eugenio Garin, *Prosatori latini del quattrocento* (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1952), pp. 715-794; and an English translation of the third and fourth books in Thomas H. Stahel, 'Cristoforo Landino's Allegorization of the Aeneid: Books III and IV of the Camaldolese Disputations' (PhD thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1968).

⁶ Arthur Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence* (Guildford, Surrey: Princeton, 1988); Riccardo Fubini, 'Cristoforo Landino, questioni di cronologia e di interpretazione', in *Studi in onore di Arnaldo d'Addario*, ed. by Luigi Borgia, Francesco de Luca, Paolo Viti and Raffaella Maria Zaccaria, 5 vols (Lecce: Conte, 1995), II, pp. 535-57.

⁷ 'Suo punto di riferimento non era la retta dottrina platonica – e tanto meno nel senso ideologico ed emblematico in cui l'assumeva Ficino – ma l'accademismo eclettico di Cicerone... La filosofia non interessava Landino come rivelazione di verità assolute e primordiali, non lo interessava cioè in quanto "teologia", ma per le sue capacità di elaborazione e razionale persuasione nelle età colte', Fubini, 'Cristoforo Landino', p. 551.

⁸ 'Il "Platonismo"', come la ricerca recente è venuta via via chiarendo, non fu introdotto in Firenze da Ficino.

Foremost among the ‘good, old, traditions’ of which Fubini writes are those of Roman and Florentine republicanism, and the work in which Landino grapples with the implementation of Platonic principles within a republican setting is the *Disputationes Camaldulenses* of 1474. The *Disputationes* is a dialogue set over the course of four days near the Camaldoli monastery in the mountains east of Florence, in which a group of notables including Lorenzo de’ Medici, Leon Battista Alberti, Ficino, and Landino himself discuss what it is in Plato that ‘a governor of the republic should adopt from those who are devoted to the investigation of the truth’.⁹ It is a singularly rich, allusive, and complex text that comprises four books, in which the main disputants are Alberti and Lorenzo. In the first book, they debate the best way of life, with Alberti taking up the cause of *otium* and Lorenzo that of *negotium*. The second book contains a discussion on the different categories of goods in order to ascertain the highest good or *summum bonum*. Finally, in the third and fourth books Alberti illustrates the ethical system that has been adumbrated so far with an allegory of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, in which the journey of Aeneas from Troy, through Carthage, to Italy represents the journey of the soul from pleasure, through civic action, to contemplation. Central to this system is the concept of moral and intellectual virtues adopted from Latin Platonism and Aristotelianism, which play their respective roles in purging the vices of the corporeal world and directing the soul to the cognition of the divine.¹⁰ By making the cultivation of these virtues the yardstick of our ethical progress, Landino is advocating a form of virtue ethics, setting aside codes of behaviour or considerations of the outcome of actions for an emphasis on the development of a moral agent. Yet there is also another aspect to this fusion of Platonism and republicanism. Landino’s avowed interest is the contribution of virtue to republican governance. He is convinced that both the moral and intellectual virtues can be employed to benefit the state. He views virtue in Sallustian terms, as being crucial for the maintenance of the commonwealth. He understands its rhetorical importance in affording political legitimacy. He believes that the impulse to form natural social bonds is as embedded in our psychology as that which drives us to purify our souls through virtue. Landino is not only proposing a system of virtue ethics, but also a system of virtue politics.¹¹

The purpose of this thesis is to present an extensive study of the virtue politics in the *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, encompassing its aims, its contexts, its philosophical basis, and its

Esso corrispose ad istanze condivise della cultura cittadina ad elevare il tono dell’insegnamento, ispirandolo a nobili e saldi principi, che insieme valessero a tutelare, se non addirittura a riallacciare, le buone, vecchie tradizioni’, Fubini, ‘Cristoforo Landino’, p. 553.

⁹ ‘Quid id sit, quod tu illo auctore ab iis, qui in veri investigatione versantur, rei publicae gubernatori mutuandum esse censebas’, *DC*, p. 12.14-15.

¹⁰ On the moral and intellectual virtues, see Michael S. Brady, ‘Moral and Intellectual Virtues’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, ed. by Nancy E. Snow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 783-99.

¹¹ The term ‘virtue politics’ has gained a great deal of salience from the recent work of James Hankins in outlining a theory which argues that political legitimacy was afforded to Quattrocento statesmen through the rhetorical and educational exaltation of virtue by humanists. The forthcoming investigation owes much to his advances in this area.

intended application. I will show that the programme Landino espouses for the soul's perfection is one which is intended to prepare the statesman for the guidance of the republic while at the same time liberating him from the need for direct participation in government. In doing so I will address the questions that the *Disputationes* raises. What kind of intervention was the text making into the contemporary intellectual and political contexts? How is it possible to translate the perfection of the embodied soul to that of the state? How can the citizen and the statesman best contribute to a republic? In what ways can allegory offer practical moral guidance? We shall see that Landino's work was as innovative as it was possible to be within a humanistic framework that favoured precedent over originality. His was an associative, combinational creativity which could produce a rigorous and coherent philosophical system through a process of intellectual bricolage: in the *Disputationes* he devises a structure which incorporates the psychology and perfectionist virtue ethics of Latin Platonism, an Aristotelian-Scholastic conception of the categories of goods and divisions of the soul, a theory of the emotions derived from Augustine and the Stoics, the moral allegories of Virgil criticism, and the republican political traditions of Rome and Florence. Rather than being a figure who offers a watered-down ethical derivate of Ficino's theological Platonism, Landino is better understood alongside Matteo Palmieri as a 'civic Platonist' whose work bridges humanism, republicanism and Platonic psychology.

It is necessary to lay out the particular research objectives that I seek to achieve with this thesis. For the most part, I have adopted a contextualist methodology, exemplified by scholars of the 'Cambridge School' such as Quentin Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock, that attempts to discern as far as possible what an author is trying to *do* by writing a text. Two research objectives are corollaries to this approach. The first of these is that I seek to establish precisely what Landino was trying to achieve by writing the *Disputationes*. Of course, this objective requires caveats about the avoidance of reductionism. Any such text is laden with a multiplicity of literary, social, political, philosophical, and personal reasons for its production that it would be futile to attempt to unravel. It is nonetheless clear, though, that the *Disputationes* stands in some sense as an intervention into the contemporary humanistic and political environment. As we shall see, Landino's aim is to justify the exercise of extra-political power in a republic (rather than, as is a common scholarly view, to advocate the rule of a philosopher-king) and thereby provide intellectual ballast for Lorenzo's political position in Florence.

The second research objective which proceeds from my contextualist approach is to situate the text in both its intellectual and political-historical contexts. As far as the former is concerned, my approach tends towards the philological because Landino's attempts to consolidate the various authorities on which he depends – in particular his efforts to convey Platonic ideas in the language of republicanism – rely on terminological devices which are not immediately obvious but become significant on close reading. Yet when analysing a work with as rich an array of intellectual influences as the *Disputationes* there is a danger of reducing the text to a ragbag of literary and

philosophical signifiers shorn of any contemporary relevance outside humanistic debate. I therefore attempt to interpret its aims and moral guidance within the framework of contemporary events, in particular the political situation in Florence under the early rule of Lorenzo de' Medici.

My third research objective is to establish a theoretical underpinning for the system of virtue politics that Landino advances. Such is the holistic nature of Landino's virtue politics that it demands to be understood on its own terms. For all his humanistic reliance on classical precedent, Landino was an enthusiastic systematiser who sought in his works to describe a philosophy that was internally coherent and self-supporting. All of the elements of his virtue politics – his understanding of the nature of political engagement, his approach to moral reasoning, his theory of vice, his practical ethics, his view of interpersonal association – proceed from one central premise: that the soul is immured within the body and seeks to return to God. Hence, if we are properly to understand Landinian 'civic Platonism' on its own philosophical terms rather than on those of the 'theological Platonism' of Ficino, we must approach it from first principles.

At the same time, it should be remembered that Landino's objective was that his philosophical recommendations ought to be applied practically. The *Disputationes* is a text which offers concrete advice for how to live in the real world, with the allegorisation of the *Aeneid* in its second half presenting an ethical programme which comprises both guidance for moral purgation and the tools to develop therapeutic self-insight. My fourth research objective in this thesis is, therefore, to interpret the *Disputationes* as a manual for ethical and political praxis and to ascertain, as far as possible, the specific behaviours it prescribes.

With this methodology in mind, the thesis is structured in the following manner. I begin with a chapter consisting of three sections that provide context for the production of the *Disputationes*. The first section consists of a brief biography of Landino which outlines his professional and intellectual development throughout the course of his life. This is followed by a section on the political context of the *Disputationes* in which, after examining evidence in his *Xandra* poems concerning Landino's early relationship with the Medici and the genesis of themes which would concern him in his later work, I trace the course of Medicean involvement in Florentine politics in the mid-Quattrocento, paying particular attention to events between the years of 1469 and 1474, which mark the early years of Lorenzo de' Medici's rule and coincide with the composition of the *Disputationes*. By so doing, I present evidence that it is likely that the moral language and instruction of the *Disputationes* was influenced by Lorenzo's handling of the Volterra uprising of 1472, and explain the complexities of Landino's choice to dedicate the work to Federico da Montefeltro (rather than to Lorenzo, to whom the advice in the text is clearly directed) amid growing tensions between Florence and Sixtus IV. In the third section I turn to the intellectual context of Landino's work and examine the treatment of virtue in the political and ethical thought of Quattrocento humanism. Developing some themes identified by James Hankins in his recent work *Virtue Politics*, I identify some principles of humanist virtue politics that are especially applicable to the *Disputationes*: that there is

an assumption of interdependence on the part of the members of a community; that power can only be exercised legitimately by the virtuous; and that rhetoric which regulates political behaviour often does so through subtle and codified language which demands close reading.

The second chapter of the thesis contains ten sections which deal with Landino's thought on virtue in all its psychological, philosophical, ethical and political aspects. In the first four sections of this chapter I describe Landino's philosophical system in the *Disputationes*. I analyse the opening remarks of the dialogue and show how the stated aim of discovering what Plato can teach one who wishes to manage a republic (*administrare rem publicam*) marks a subversion of conventional Platonic language for republican ends. I then cover the Platonic conceit central to Landino's virtue ethics of how the perfection of a soul trapped in a body demands the exercise of both moral and dianoetic virtues, whose purpose is to purge vice and investigate the truth respectively. For Landino, if a statesman is to *administrare rem publicam* properly, he must purge himself of vice with the moral virtues in order that he might exercise the dianoetic virtues in the service of intellectual inquiry. The ensuing discussion is predicated on principles that are either scattered throughout both the *Disputationes* and the *De anima* or remain unstated, so I continue with an explanation of the system of moral psychology that underpins Landino's thought, describing how his view of the human condition necessarily emerges from his understanding of the structure and faculties of the soul. Since the soul is imprisoned in the body, the power of the appetite compels us to obtain or reject things based on sense data rather than reason, causing psychological disturbances, or *perturbationes animi*, which impede the soul's progress to God. I continue with an analysis of Landino's theory of virtue in which I explain how the grades of moral virtue quell *perturbationes animi* and bring the appetite under control of reason, while investigating how he integrates a system derived from Macrobius with his fundamentally Aristotelian view of the soul's composition.

In the next three sections I address the arguments made in the first book of the *Disputationes* by the characters of Leon Battista Alberti and Lorenzo de' Medici which concern *otium* and *negotium*. First I follow on from the preceding chapter by showing how, in Landino's philosophical system, the moral and dianoetic virtues in the soul are exercised through mental operations or *munera* which consist in action and intellectual inquiry respectively. *Negotium* and *otium* are the ways of life devoted to these *munera* but are not coterminous with them: following Augustine, Landino claims that one can exercise either *munus* in either way of life. I argue that, since both characters share a common understanding of the nature of the soul and agree that its perfection lies in exercising the moral and dianoetic virtues to one extent or another, their debate concerns the relative merit of each way of life in delivering self-improvement rather than exploring any differences in central assumptions. They each therefore address the question of precisely how the *munera* of action and intellectual inquiry – and their associated virtues – are employed within each way of life in order to best manage the republic. Alberti's first speech advocates *otium* on the grounds of its instrumental value, in that it offers the opportunity to dedicate oneself to uninterrupted intellectual inquiry. The life

devoted to action is valuable in that it cultivates moral responsibility for oneself, one's affairs and the business of the state and offers a purificatory path to contemplation, but is unquestionably inferior to an *otium* that perfects the mind, which is particular to human beings. Lorenzo responds with a speech devoted to the superiority of *negotium* that is also phrased in instrumental terms, arguing that we ought to prefer a way of life which perfects both body and mind, prioritises action in the civic society to which we are naturally inclined, and maximises the public utility of wisdom. I take some time to show that these arguments, and Landino's views of republicanism more generally, owe a debt to the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis*, in which political associations emerge from a natural human predisposition towards forming interpersonal bonds.

Having now explained both the central issues with which Landino was wrangling and their intellectual and political context, I continue in the eighth section of this chapter to offer an outline of his virtue politics as it is illustrated in Alberti's concluding speech, which responds to each of Lorenzo's points and concludes that, while the *munus* of intellectual inquiry is superior, the best way of life is that in which one devotes oneself to each of the *munera* as far as is necessary. I show that the idea that one can move between *otium* and *negotium* as one sees fit allows a statesman to be perceived as virtuous regardless of the extent of any direct involvement in governance, and can therefore be understood as a legitimisation of Lorenzo de' Medici's behaviour. In the *Disputationes*, Landino is presenting a justification for the exercise of political power in a republic by someone who does not themselves occupy any governmental role, while at the same time remaining true to the tradition of republicanism in both its Florentine and Ciceronian forms. His philosophical, pragmatic and oikeiotic arguments for the integration of action and intellectual inquiry in the first book endorse the extra-political exercise of power while remaining wholly republican. When someone purifies himself such that he can exercise the dianoetic virtues in order to attain knowledge of the truth, he acquires in turn the skills needed to administer the republic, and can return from *otium* to impart his wisdom to the state. Yet in order to attain this knowledge one must first suppress vice by proceeding through the grades of moral virtue which begin with political engagement. Hence the system of perfectionist morality he describes is one which has implications for political behaviour at all points in the purificatory process. I go on to show that Landino's allegorisation of the *Aeneid* in the third and fourth books is intended as a programme of applied moral philosophy that seeks to offer practical and strategic guidance to its readers about moral and political conduct.

In the ninth and tenth sections of this chapter, my attention turns to investigating how, in the second book of the *Disputationes*, Landino begins to define the manner in which his virtue ethics might be applied in practice. While the main focus of the second book is ostensibly the *summum bonum*, the highest good towards which we strive and which Landino identifies as God, much of his analysis is devoted to how we ought to choose between the different categories of goods defined by Aristotle. These choices define our moral progress because the goods of the body and fortune are

situated in the material world, and hence anathema for a Platonic view of the soul. I go on to show how Landino's taxonomy of vice arises from these Aristotelian goods. Following Sallust, he considers three vices to be the greatest obstacles to individual moral progress and the continued well-being of the republic: sensual desire (*luxuria*), avarice (*avaritia*) and the desire for social recognition (*ambitio* or *superbia*). It is the disturbances of the soul caused by these vices of which one must purge oneself with the moral virtues, a task which at the same time prevents the moral dissipation of the state.

The third chapter of the thesis consists of seven sections which discuss the moral and political guidance contained in the allegorisation of the *Aeneid* which comprises the third and fourth books of the *Disputationes*. In the first four sections of chapter I focus on Landino's allegorical interpretation of the journey of Aeneas from Troy, to Carthage, and then to Italy, which concerns the recognition and purgation of vice through the first two grades of moral virtue. With reference to the contemporary political context and the philosophical system he has already laid out, I concentrate on how he depicts each of the three vices of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *ambitio*, teases out their ethico-political implications, and offers advice on how to resist them. The fifth, sixth, and seventh sections contain an analysis of Landino's allegorisation of Aeneas' descent into the underworld, the *descensus ad inferos*, which involves the third grade of moral virtue: the virtues of the purged soul. I show how he makes an 'inward turn' with regard to his methodology of moral instruction, moving from the didactic approach with which he addressed the soul's purgation to advocating a therapeutic method of self-analysis which encourages one to reflect on the psychological origins of vice. Instead of emphasising Sallustian practical advice for maintaining the moral hygiene of the state as he has done hitherto, Landino hopes that, by changing his approach in this way, he can inculcate qualities of mental discipline and moral judgment in the reader that will enable him to impart strategic and advisory advice without occupying any official role.

All translations are my own unless otherwise specified, and I include a translation of the first two books of the *Disputationes* as an appendix. A couple of minor emendations aside, this is based entirely on Lohe's critical edition of 1980. When referring to the *Disputationes* I state both page and line numbers from the Lohe edition. References to Landino's other works, like those to medieval and Renaissance primary sources in general, indicate the appropriate subdivision within the text rather than a specific page number (so, for instance, references to Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* are by part, question and article, and those to Landino's *Xandra* are by poem and line). Classical texts are referenced using their standard abbreviations. Where I have translated a text myself I supply the original Latin or Italian text in the footnotes. Latin terms have been left untranslated in the main body of the text where supplying an English equivalent would risk compromising clarity or accuracy. Since Landino's work was situated within, and directed to, the male-dominated world of republican politics, the language I adopt for the politicians he describes is

that of the 'statesman' and the 'prince', using the pronoun 'he'. I have endeavoured to use gender-neutral terminology in both the text and the translations for all other contexts.

Chapter One – Contexts

1.1 Landino's life

The Landino or Landini family (both names are diminutives of 'Orlando') had established themselves in Pratovecchio in the Casentino valley by the thirteenth century.¹² Cristoforo's keenness to emphasise the accomplishments of his forebears in his poem *De suis maioribus* of 1443-44 provides us with some evidence as to the family history.¹³ According to Cristoforo, an unnamed Landino fought for the Florentines at the battle of Campaldino in 1289 and was awarded a stipend from the military commander Vieri Cérchi for his bravery.¹⁴ Although we might regard Vasari's connection of the painter Jacopo di Casentino to the Landinos with some suspicion, we can be reasonably confident of Cristoforo's relationship with the blind organist and composer Francesco Landini (his 'grandfather's brother') and Gabriele Landino, a Camaldolese monk and poet who was Cristoforo's uncle.¹⁵

Sometime before the birth of his eldest son, Bartolomeo, Cristoforo's father, moved from Pratovecchio to a humble home in Florence's Santo Spirito *quartiere* in an area known as the Pozzo Toscanelli (*Puteus Tuscus*).¹⁶ In this house Cristoforo Landino was born on the 18th of February 1425 and was followed by at least two brothers, the younger being named Piero, and a sister.¹⁷ At the age

¹² Useful sources on Landino's life are Angelo Maria Bandini, *Specimen literaturae Florentinae saeculi XV in quodum Christophori Landini gesta enarrantur virorum ea aetate doctissimorum in literariam remp. merita, status gymnasii Florentini a Landino instaurati, et acta Academiae platonicae ... recensentur et illustrantur*, 2 vols (Florence: Rigaccius, 1747-1751); Francesco Pasetto, *I Landino, una famiglia di artisti vissuti fra Pratovecchio e Firenze nei secoli d'oro della storia toscana* (Cortona: Calosci, 1998); and Lorenz Böninger, 'Minima Landiniana', in *Il laboratorio del Rinascimento: studi di storia e cultura per Riccardo Fubini*, ed. by Lorenzo Tanzini, Bibliotheca 58 (Florence: Le Lettere, 2015). Summaries of his life, thought and work can be found in Jill Kraye, 'Cristoforo Landino', in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, ed. by Henrik Lagerlund, 2 vols (New York: Springer, 2011), I, pp. 240-43; Craig Kallendorf, 'Landino, Cristoforo', in *Centuria Latinae: Cent une figures humanistes de la Renaissance aux Lumières offertes à Jacques Chomarot*, ed. by Colette Nativel (Geneva: Droz, 1997), pp. 477-83; and Simona Foà, 'Landino, Cristoforo', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, ed. by Alberto Maria Ghisalberti (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1960-), LXIII: *Labroca-Laterza* (2004), pp. 428-33.

¹³ Cristoforo Landino, *Carmina omnia*, ed. by Alessandro Perosa (Florence: Olschki, 1939) (hereafter 'Xandra'), I.24. Perosa's is the standard critical edition of Landino's poetry. It has recently been supplemented by Cristoforo Landino, *Cristoforo Landino: Poems*, trans. by Mary Chatfield (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ Xandra, I.24.19-24.

¹⁵ Xandra I.24.25; I.24.95; I.24.123-4; *Comento, Proem* V.7-15. Correspondence between Gabriele Landino and Ambrogio Traversari can be found in Giovanni Benedetto Mittarelli and Anselmo Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses Ordinis sancti Benedicti*, 9 vols (Venice, 1755-1773), VII, p. 167. See also Michael Scott Cuthbert, 'Trecento Fragments and Polyphony Beyond the Codex' (PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2006), pp. 492-95 and Helene Nolthenius, 'Een autobiografisch Madrigaal van Francesco Landini', *Tijdschrift der Vereeniging voor Noord-Nederlands Musiekgeschiedenis*, 17.4 (1955), 237-38.

¹⁶ Xandra I.24.9-12. The name 'Pozzo Toscanelli' refers to a well near what is now the Palazzo Pitti, on which see Pasetto, p. 59, figure 11 and pp. 163-66. The mathematician Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli appears in *DC*, pp. 38.1-40.19 and throughout the *De anima*.

¹⁷ Xandra III.4 is a eulogy on the death in around 1452 of an unnamed brother in the Aragonese war. In this poem, Landino mentions his sister in lines 70 and 103. Piero, who appears as a character in the *Disputationes*, is registered in the Florentine Catasto of 1470 as having been born in 1449. It is worth mentioning that the

of ten Cristoforo was sponsored by a papal scribe named Angelo da Todi to study in Volterra – the boy’s talent was sufficiently precocious to secure a bequest in Angelo’s will to continue his education after his benefactor’s death – and by the age of fifteen he had acquired the title of *Dottore*. On his return to Florence in 1439, following possible employment as a scribe at the Council of Florence, Cristoforo attended the lectures of Carlo Marsuppini where he began a long friendship with his fellow student Bartolomeo Scala and came into the orbit of such prominent humanists as Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini. Around this time his father set him to work as a lawyer in an attempt to lift the household out of penury, causing the young humanist some frustration. In an early poem to his friend Bernardo Nuti, Cristoforo complains that it was ‘harmful poverty’, ‘meagre household wealth’, and ‘poor parents’ (*mala paupertas, tenuis census domi* and *inopes parentes*) that obliged him to abandon poetry for the courts, and hence it was not long before Cristoforo abandoned his legal career.¹⁸ Poetry was Landino’s main humanistic concern in this period of his life. In the *certamen coronario* of 1441, a competition conceived by Leon Battista Alberti and supported by Piero de’ Medici, Landino recited the prizewinning *volgare* tercets of Francesco di Altobianco Alberti, the executor of Angelo da Todi’s will and then Landino’s patron. Three years later he had completed the first book of his Latin poetry collection known as the *Xandra* and would go on to circulate his second and third books over the following decade and a half. The *Xandra* poems are metrically varied, consisting for the most part in skilful if somewhat derivative imitations of Propertian elegy, Catullan hendecasyllables and Horatian lyric, and chronicle Landino’s personal and intellectual development from late adolescence to maturity through prevailing themes of friendship, Florentine patriotism, increasing praise for the Medici and, in particular an idealised desire for one Alessandra or ‘Xandra’. Its original redaction was dedicated to Leon Battista Alberti but a revised edition, rededicated to Piero de’ Medici and omitting some juvenilia, was completed in 1458 and appeared in 1460.¹⁹

Towards the end of the 1440’s, the Medici gradually began to replace the Alberti family as Landino’s main patrons but it seems that he continued to work for the civil service during this time. In 1446, shortly before the death of Eugenius IV, he was part of a delegation to Rome as an apprentice of the Florentine Chancellery, a trip which he sought to romanticise in his poetry as the quest of an abandoned lover following his muse to the Eternal City.²⁰ Landino was presented with an opportunity to establish himself in an educational career, though, when the death of his mentor Carlo Marsuppini in 1453 left vacant the humanistic chair in the Florentine *Studio*. Around this time – that is, between 1453 and 1454 – and presumably in the wake of Marsuppini’s death, Landino had been giving unsalaried public lectures on Dante and had strong support from the Medici and other

year of Landino’s birth is often given erroneously as 1424 because, under the contemporary Florentine calendar, New Year fell on the Feast of the Annunciation on the 25th March.

¹⁸ *Xandra* I.21 (first redaction).

¹⁹ See Pieper, pp. 90-101.

²⁰ See Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte di Corredo 51, ‘Ser Christophorus Bartholomei Landini de Puppio’. Landino mentions his visit to Rome in *Comento*, Par. XV.13-24.20-22 and *Xandra* II.25-27 and 29-30.

prominent citizens as the candidate to replace Marsuppini. A group of predominantly aristocratic former students of Marsuppini including Donato Acciaiuoli, Alamanno Rinuccini and Marco Parenti favoured a rival candidate, the Byzantine scholar John Argyropoulos (though Field argues that the anti-Medicean humanist Francesco Filelfo, whose candidacy was barred by the regime, was their first choice), pointing to Landino's modest fame and the fact that, for all his command of Latin, his philosophical credentials were limited and he knew little Greek.²¹ As a compromise Marsuppini's 'universal' chair was divided into three professorships, each specialising in a particular discipline: Argyropoulos assumed the chair in philosophy in 1455 (lecturing from 1457 onwards) and Francesco da Castiglione that in Greek at around the same time, with the remaining empty chair in poetry and rhetoric to be contested by Landino, Bernardo Nuti, Antonio Rossi and Bartolomeo Scala. In the meantime Landino, funded by the Medici to the tune of forty-five florins a year, had been delivering both private tuition and public lectures on the *Commedia* and counted Lorenzo de' Medici and Marsilio Ficino among his students, being the dedicatee of Ficino's no longer extant *Institutiones ad Platoniam disciplinam* in 1456 and subsequently encouraging the younger scholar to study philosophy in the original Greek.²² In January 1458 Landino, having defeated Nuti, Rossi and Scala, finally assumed the chair in poetry and rhetoric at the *Studio* with a salary of one hundred florins per annum and would continue to hold this position, with periodic increases in salary, until shortly before his death.²³ Later in 1458, Landino failed to attain the chancellorship of Florence, just as his earlier attempt to become a Chancellery secretary under Poggio Bracciolini in 1456 had proved abortive. Instead, given the parlous political climate, the anti-Medicean candidate Benedetto Accolti was elected for the sake of expediency, and Landino's coded irritation that a lawyer rather than a humanist had assumed the role is visible in a letter from December.²⁴ His re-dedicated edition of the *Xandra* two years later went some way in repaying the Medici for their support and, with his status in Florentine society cemented, in 1460 he married Lucrezia, daughter of Alberto di Adovardo Alberti, who bore him seven children, the youngest of whom, Bernardo, would become a member of the Grand Council of the Florentine Republic in 1494 and the Prior in

²¹ On this episode, see Arthur Field, 'The *Studium Florentinum* Controversy, 1455', *History of Universities*, 3 (1983), 31-59. Any ill will between the Argyropoulos-Filelfo faction and Landino was apparently resolved over successive years as Acciaiuoli, Rinuccini and Parenti each appear as characters in the *Disputationes* and Landino delivered Donato Acciaiuoli's funeral oration in 1478. On Landino's command of Greek, see e.g. Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy*, pp. 234-35 and Field, 'Cristoforo Landino's first lectures on Dante', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 39.1 (Spring, 1986), 16-48 (pp. 27-8).

²² In a letter to Lorenzo written in 1464 or 65 which is reproduced in Lentzen, *Studien*, pp. 203-10, Landino asserts that he has been teaching for ten years (p. 207). This is corroborated in a 1455 letter by Donato Acciaiuoli in Ferdinando Fossi, *Monumenta ad Alamanni Rinuccini vitam contexendam* (Florence: Mouÿcke, 1791), pp. 79-82. On Landino's early lectures on Dante, see Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy*, pp. 16-48.

²³ Throughout *Elegos*, Pieper builds a persuasive argument that Landino's redaction of the *Xandra* was an attempt at refashioning himself as a specifically Florentine poetic voice in order to secure his position in the *Studio*.

²⁴ See Landino, *Carmina omnia*, pp. 187-190 and Robert Black, *Benedetto Accolti and the Florentine Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 90-98. Landino's frustration with this episode is evident in *Xandra* III.17.111-134 and 133-34 in particular.

1526.²⁵

Extant sources allow us to construct a reasonably detailed schema of Landino's teaching activity between 1458 and 1471.²⁶ An inaugural lecture or *praelusio* for his first course in 1458 on Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* shows Landino at pains to justify his selection as Marsuppini's replacement in the chair of rhetoric and poetry. That he chose the *Tusculanae Disputationes* was itself a statement that a rhetorician could make a contribution to moral philosophy of the highest calibre and that eloquence was an indispensable component of proper philosophical pedagogy, and so Landino disavowed the title of philosopher, maintaining instead that he was a rhetorician in the sense of 'those who give the faculty of transmitting learning to another'.²⁷ The *Tusculanae Disputationes* would be the only philosophical text on which Landino lectured. Over the next few years he would concentrate on Latin poetry: in either 1459-60 or 1460-61 he lectured on Horace's *Odes*; in 1461-62 he lectured on Persius and Juvenal; and between 1462 and 1464 he led courses on Virgil, covering the first seven books of the *Aeneid* in the first two years and the remainder of the *Aeneid* together with the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* thereafter. In 1464-65 Landino taught a course on the rules of poetry and rhetoric which involved him giving a commentary on Horace's *Ars Poetica* and then, in 1465-66, he delivered a series of lectures on letter-writing and an elucidation of Cicero's *Epistulae ad Familiares*. After two years of innovation between in 1466 and 1467, in which he lectured on *volgare* poetry in the form of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, Landino returned to the Latin classics and taught Virgil's *Aeneid* and *Eclogues* once again until 1469 before delivering another course on Horace's *Odes* in 1470-71. Most of the content of these courses is lost. In 1978 Arthur Field discovered a valuable transcription of Landino's 1462 lectures on Virgil in the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome, and draft commentaries on Persius and Juvenal which accompanied the 1461-62 lectures also exist in manuscript form.²⁸ The *praelusiones* for the courses on Virgil, Petrarch and the aforementioned *Tusculanae Disputationes* are available, as well as for Landino's early public lectures on Dante, but we should be cautious of assuming any commonality between the content of the isolated and

²⁵ Bandini, pp. 207-09.

²⁶ For these sources, see *Scritti* I; Lentzen, *Studier*; Böninger, 'Minima Landiniana'; and Roberto Cardini, *La critica del Landino* (Sansoni: Florence, 1973).

²⁷ 'Qui huic praeceptorum tradendorum facultatem dant', *Scritti*, I, pp. 6-7. On Landino's inaugural speech on the *Tusculanae Disputationes*, see Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy*, pp. 242-46 and Field, 'The *Studium Florentinum* Controversy', pp. 46-47. Cardini and Field both understand this speech as a pointed jibe at the scholasticism of Argyropoulos to which the Byzantine responded in his inaugural lecture later in the same year. See Cardini, *La critica*, pp. 71-84 and Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy*, p. 243. In Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 117-18, Godman points out how Landino's efforts to separate the roles of philosopher and rhetorician in his inaugural speech foreshadow Poliziano's distinction between the philosopher and the *grammaticus* in his *Lamia*. Given that it is likely that Poliziano had Landino in mind as one of the *lamiae* – on which, see Angelo Poliziano, *Lamia, Praelectio in Priora Aristotelis Analytica: Critical Edition, Introduction and Commentary*, ed. by Ari Wesselung (Leiden: Brill, 1986), p. xviii – his adoption seems intentional, and savagely ironic.

²⁸ The Virgil lectures can be found in Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, cod. 1368, and see also Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plut. 52. 32. The lectures on Persius and Juvenal are extant in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, I 26 inf..

rhetorically stylised inaugural lectures and that of the courses themselves.²⁹ That Landino's pedagogical method was primarily concerned with exegetical, rhetorical and allegorical techniques rather than philological or contextualist ones is apparent from a sharp exchange in 1465 between Landino's student Lorenzo Guidetti and Buonaccorso Massari, a pupil of Giovanni Pietro at Lucca.³⁰

Despite his holding the chair in rhetoric and poetry for another twenty-six years, little information on Landino's teaching duties after 1471 remains, which would suggest that during this period he chose to devote his energies to literary production and civic affairs as much as pedagogy. The 1470s saw the publication of the three philosophical dialogues which constitute his major original works: *De anima*, *Disputationes Camaldulenses* and *De vera nobilitate*. The first of his philosophical dialogues, the *De anima*, was dedicated to Ercole I d'Este in 1471, but a mischievous epigram of Gentile de' Becchi implies that Landino had been working on it for some years.³¹ Notwithstanding the profound influence of Bessarion, Macrobius and Albertus Magnus, the dialogue seeks to present a clear and comprehensive view of philosophical thought on the soul by means of a debate between Carlo Marsuppini, Paolo Toscanelli and Landino himself. The first book explains the positions of various philosophical schools on the nature and origin of the soul, the second investigates the relationship between the soul and the body (including an elucidation of the Aristotelian-Stoic concepts of appetite and *perturbationes*) and the third discusses the moral virtues at some length while also addressing the immortality of the soul and the relationship between mind, intellect and reason (*mens*, *intellectus* and *ratio*).³² Three years later, in April 1474, came the *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, which was dedicated to the *condottiere* and humanist Federico da Montefeltro and is the subject of this thesis. Set in 1469 in the monastery of a Camaldolese order characterised by its eremitic and cenobitic wings, the *Disputationes* unifies the Ciceronian moral philosophy to which its title alludes with a resurgent Platonism exemplified by Ficino's then newly-circulated *Platonic Theology*.³³

Landino's third philosophical dialogue, the *De vera nobilitate* of 1487, was dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici and takes place during a banquet held by Lorenzo in the wake of the death of his father

²⁹ These lectures are reproduced in *Scritti*, I, pp. 1-55 and Cardini, *La critica*, pp. 287-371. On the independence of *prolusiones* from the content of the courses, see Field, 'Cristoforo Landino's first lectures on Dante', p. 26 and n. 39.

³⁰ The exchange itself can be found in Cardini, *La critica*, pp. 267-86. On the significance of this correspondence in the context of a wider debate in humanist scholarship, see Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (London: Duckworth, 1986), pp. 58-63.

³¹ Gentile's 1469 poem, *Cur non ederet de anima Landinus ad Ficinianum excusatio*, reads: 'Edere vis animam Landinum, Ficiniane, | et quereris quod non iam videatur opus. | Parce, mori non vult anima properante poeta. | Parce, etiam si non videris, hec anima est.' It can be found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lat. Misc. e 81 and is cited in Cardini, *La critica*, p. 80, n. 19.

³² Valuable recent scholarship on the *De anima* includes Rüsche and McNair, *Cristoforo Landino on the Human Soul*, 'Cristoforo Landino's *De anima* and his Platonic Sources', and 'Albert the Great in the Renaissance'.

³³ On the dating of the *Disputationes*, see Fubini, 'Cristoforo Landino'. On the Camaldolese order, see Dennis F. Lackner, 'The Camaldolese Academy: Ambrogio Traversari, Marsilio Ficino and the Christian Platonic Tradition', in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, his Philosophy, his Legacy*, ed. by Michael Allen, Valery Rees and Martin Davies (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 15-44.

Piero (it is therefore set at the end of 1469), with the bulk of the discussion being shared between two fictitious visitors, the Athenian philosopher Aretophilus and the Byzantine businessman Philotimus. It stands as Landino's contribution to a longstanding debate in Quattrocento humanism on the nature of true nobility: whether it was to be found in virtue alone or in virtue combined with lineage, wealth and so on.³⁴ Aretophilus, the 'lover of virtue' and Landino's mouthpiece, is unequivocal that true nobility consists in virtue alone and is attained through the same Platonic ascent through civic and purgative virtues described in the *Disputationes*. His patron Philotimus, on the other hand, views nobility as a function of wealth and family name and is something of a paper tiger, an irritable figure contributing little more than sneers and interjection to Aretophilus' fluent and multifaceted defence of virtue.

Throughout the 1470's and 1480's the scope of Landino's literary production widened. After the completion of his three philosophical dialogues his foremost concern became commenting on the canonical works of both the Latin and Italian languages. An enormously influential *Comento* on Dante's *Commedia*, presented with much pomp to Lorenzo de' Medici in a public ceremony in 1482 and being reprinted fifteen times over the following two centuries, is suffused with civic patriotism for Florence and begins with a *proemio* which consists in an extended panegyric to the city and her illustrious citizens.³⁵ As well as allowing him to develop material from his lectures in the *Studio* over a decade earlier, the *Comento* presented Landino with an opportunity to apply the Platonic-allegorical interpretive methodology developed in his dialogues to the most celebrated *volgare* epic. By expounding upon the philosophical, structural and theological commonalities of the *Commedia* and *Aeneid* he could establish an intellectual continuity between his Latin and Florentine antecedents. After dedicating to Guidobaldo da Montefeltro a 1482 commentary on Horace's *Ars Poetica* that was distributed widely but later given short shrift by Erasmus, Landino produced in 1488 a commentary on all twelve books of the *Aeneid* (as opposed to the six allegorised in the *Disputationes*) in which he intended to elevate the philological over the philosophical, writing that: 'Just as in the *Camaldulenses* we performed the function of an interpreter of philosophy, so in this commentary we will assume the roles of grammarian and rhetorician'.³⁶ This *Aeneid* commentary nonetheless remained replete with the Platonic allegories of the *Disputationes* and proved very

³⁴ On this debate, see Albert Rabil, ed., *Knowledge, Goodness and Power: The Debate over Nobility among Quattrocento Humanists* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1991) and Francesco Tateo, *Tradizione e realtà nell'Umanesimo italiano* (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1967).

³⁵ On the influence and print editions of the *Comento*, see Gilson, *Dante and Renaissance Florence*, pp. 164-66.

³⁶ 'Nam quemadmodum in Chamaldulensibus philosophi interpretis munus obivimus, sic in his commentariis grammatici rhetorisque vices prestabimus', quoted in Lentzen, *Studien*, pp. 156-57. On the differences between the *Disputationes* and the Virgil commentary, see also Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols (London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), II, pp. 712-21. Erasmus' dismissal of Landino's interpretation of Horace can be found in *Adagia* I.ii.9 and he also offers an unfavourable opinion of Landino when comparing him to Ermolao Barbaro in *Ciceronianus* 124, claiming that while Landino is more Ciceronian, the Venetian should be preferred. Again, we might note the potential influence on Poliziano's *Lamia* of Landino's distinction here between the philosopher and grammarian.

popular, with more than thirty printings between 1488 and 1536 compared to the five printings of the *Disputationes* over the same period.³⁷ Parallel to this exegetical work, Landino produced two translations from Latin into the vernacular, an Italian translation of Pliny's *Naturalis historia* which was commissioned while he was writing the *Disputationes* but not completed until 1475, and a 1490 translation of Giovanni Simonetta's *Sforziad* for Ludovico Sforza.³⁸ For a comprehensive bibliography of Landino's works the reader is directed to Lentzen's *Studien zur Dante-Exegese Cristoforo Landinos*.³⁹

Concurrent with Landino's lecturing and writing ran a career in the civil service of Florence. After his unsuccessful attempt to join the Florentine secretariat under Poggio in 1456, Landino appears to have steered clear of any efforts to attain prominent public office until in a 1464 letter of solicitation to Lorenzo he asks to be appointed 'among the secretaries' (*in secretariorum numerum*) of Florence, a request which was most probably motivated by the death of the incumbent chancellor, Benedetto Accolti, in August 1464.⁴⁰ Landino advises that he should be preferred over a lawyer or a foreign orator (presumably a reference to Argyropoulos), and whether the letter is, as Field interprets it, an application for the position of chancellor itself or is instead seeking a more modest position within the civil service, it transpired that Landino's friend Bartolomeo Scala attained the chancellorship in 1465 and Landino instead succeeded Scala to the lesser but still prestigious position of chancellor of the Guelf party in the same year.⁴¹ In this capacity Landino drafted a public letter to Paolo Guinigi of Lucca in March 1471 which served as a rhetorical defence of Guelf morality and Florentine independence, an indication of how, just as his early legal training stood him in good stead for notarial tasks and the drafting of civic documents, Landino's rhetorical skill allowed him to execute the duties of public letter-writing and oratory bequeathed by the civic humanist tradition of Salutati and Bruni.⁴² Other instances of performative civic humanism on Landino's part include a sermon on the body of Christ which he gave in around 1469 for the Compagnia dei Magi, a lay religious confraternity closely linked to the Medici of which he was a member, and funeral orations for Donato Acciaiuoli in 1478 and the prominent Guelf Giordano Orsini in 1483.⁴³

In 1483, Landino's effectiveness in public administration and his loyalty to the Medici (which had in the previous year been emphasised by the dedication to Landino of Giovanni di Carlo dei Berlinghieri's *De temporibus suis*, a defence of Medici rule from Cosimo to Lorenzo) were rewarded with the position of secretary of the Signoria, the Florentine government. As one of the higher-

³⁷ On the publication history of Landino's Virgil commentary and the *Disputationes*, see David Scott Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 35-37 and Appendix A, pp. 258-59.

³⁸ On the dating of the Pliny translation, see Fubini, 'Cristoforo Landino'.

³⁹ Lentzen, *Studien*, pp. 280-87.

⁴⁰ The source is available in Lentzen, *Studien*, pp. 205-10.

⁴¹ Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy*, p. 239.

⁴² An analysis of this letter along with the full *volgare* text can be found in Frank La Brasca, 'Echos du Moyen Age à la Renaissance: une lettre Pro-Guelfe de Cristoforo Landino', *Chroniques Italiennes*, 63/64 (2000), 139-60.

⁴³ See *Reden*, pp. 46-89 and Lentzen, *Studien*, pp. 243-54.

ranking functionaries in Florence, the secretary of the Signoria was responsible for the composition of official documents and letters as well as diplomatic visits and varied executive business in both the Signoria and the Otto di Pratica, or ministry for foreign affairs.⁴⁴ Landino would also have deputised for the three secretaries of the Otto di Pratica in their absence. Two years later in 1485, Landino drew on his long political and administrative experience to produce the *Formulario di epistole ed orazioni*, a manual on civil service letter-writing in the vernacular dedicated to Ercole I d'Este before, in 1489, being one of five legally-trained citizens whom Bartolomeo Scala consulted in assessing the merits of eligible nominees for the Guild of Lawyers and Notaries.⁴⁵ Having combined civic *negotium* and scholarly *otium* in the service of Florence for four decades, Landino retired on a public sinecure to his country retreat in Casentino where he died on the 24th of September 1498.

⁴⁴ On Bartolomeo Scala's reforms to the Florentine civil service at the time of Landino's appointment, see Alison Brown, *Bartolomeo Scala 1430-1497, Chancellor of Florence: The Humanist as Bureaucrat* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 161-92.

⁴⁵ The text of the proem to the *Formulario* is available in *Scritti*, I, pp. 181-82. On Landino's involvement in the selection process for lawyers, see Brown, *Bartolomeo Scala*, p. 202.

1.2 The political context of the *Disputationes*

As we have seen, Landino had managed to unite a scholar's concern for the *studia humanitatis* with a lifelong dedication to public office. When writing the *Disputationes* he was able to advocate his scheme of Platonic moral perfectionism from a position of familiarity with the praxis of government. His intimacy with the Medici across several generations would have allowed him to observe the impulses, inclinations and flaws of the ruling class, not to mention their methods of maintaining power. It is necessary to spend some time examining the prevailing tensions in the politics of Laurentian Florence in order to understand the ways in which the *Disputationes* is a text informed by the practical necessities of political behaviour as well as the more abstract theorising of moral philosophy.

For almost all of Landino's life the political apparatus of Florence was dominated by the Medici. Factional loyalties based on client-patron relationships had begun to compromise Florence's communal tradition in the years before Landino's birth and, while the principles of Florentine liberty and republicanism remained uncontested, oligarchic families such as the Medici and Albizzi were able to rely on networks of clients and allies to accrue power in the political realm.⁴⁶ The Medici were relative newcomers to such prominence thanks to the huge revenues which their bank had begun to accrue from its various operations – the branch in Rome which managed the papal finances in particular – over the first couple of decades of the Quattrocento. Throughout Landino's childhood in the 1420s and early 1430s Florence had become increasingly dependent on Medici loans for her wars against Milan and Lucca, much to the chagrin of some members of the city's elite, and in 1433, the year before Landino left to study in Volterra, Cosimo de' Medici was exiled from the city by his political rivals on charges of bribery, electoral interference and unnecessarily prolonging the war against Lucca for profit.⁴⁷ A year later a Medicean Signoria engineered Cosimo de' Medici's return, upon which he banished several dozen citizens including his powerful opponents Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Palla Strozzi.

On his return from exile, Cosimo gradually consolidated power through changes to institutional policy that allowed the procedural apparatus of government to perpetuate the appearance of democratic norms while at the same time ensuring that key signorial positions would always be occupied by Medici loyalists. These methods included extending eligibility for governmental roles to non-elite families to increase the proportion of allies in the governing class; the continuance of *a mano* elections in which candidates for the Signoria were selected by Medicean *accoppiatori* rather

⁴⁶ Scholarship on Florentine politics in the Quattrocento abounds, but particularly useful for the present study have been John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575* (Singapore: Blackwell, 2006); Riccardo Fubini, *Quattrocento fiorentino: politica diplomatica cultura* (Pisa: Pacini, 1996); Fubini, ed., *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: Politica Economica Cultura Arte*, 3 vols (Pisa: Pacini, 1996); Nicolai Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence under the Medici (1434 to 1494)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Robert Black and John E. Law, eds., *The Medici: Citizens and Masters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁴⁷ On Cosimo's exile, see Najemy, *A History of Florence*, pp. 271-74.

than by sortition; and the imposition of long term *balie*, war councils hitherto convened only in states of emergency, which allowed the regime some facility to supersede the legislative powers of the obdurate statutory councils by, for instance, authorising trusted *accoppiatori*.⁴⁸ At the same time, opposition amongst the elite was subdued with the abolition of the Catasto, a tax evaluated on investments and liquid assets as well as on property wealth and thus unpopular with the *ottimati*.

Cosimo's inability to command any support from the guildsmen of the statutory councils meant that his control of government was disputed and at times even parlous. After the 1454 ratification of the peace of Lodi, Cosimo's justification for the *balie* and *a mano* elections became untenable and in the following year his *accoppiatori* were removed from their posts. With Cosimo's enemies in the elite and the *popolo* being emboldened by the perceived return towards the traditions of Florentine liberty, the Signoria felt able to reinstate the Catasto in January 1458, and later that year the statutory councils rejected proposals for a permanent *balia* from Luca Pitti, the Medicean Gonfaloniere of Justice. Cosimo's response to the impasse was to stage an effective coup. Milanese troops confined his political enemies and, when a communal *parlamento* of all Florentine citizens was held in the Piazza della Signoria, surrounded the crowds to intimidate them into reaching the desired conclusion. As a result, the Medici reforms were given the stamp of public approval, and in short order they exiled their enemies, reinstated both the *balia* and *a mano* elections and removed the obstacles of the statutory councils through the creation of a council called the Cento which could elect key magistracies and screen legislation. With supremacy for the regime secured, Cosimo withdrew from politics until his death in 1464.

Any evidence in Landino's work of his attitudes towards the political climate under Cosimo emerges only gradually. Throughout the 1440s, Landino's intellectual endeavours were devoted to love elegy. The initial redaction of the *Xandra* poems, dedicated to Leon Battista Alberti in 1444 and which was to remain unpublished for another fifteen years, is for the most part blithely indifferent to contemporary politics: a brief elegiac epitaph on the death of Leonardo Bruni in the same year praises his humanistic achievements rather than his chancellorship, and the most prominent intrusion of the civic realm into the poems consists in Landino expressing his dissatisfaction with his legal career.⁴⁹ Yet, following the death of Carlo Marsuppini in 1453 the tenor of Landinian elegy began to change as the poet, eyeing the vacant professorship at the *Studio*, found it necessary to court the favour of a ruling regime which sought to bolster an insecure political position by making particular artistic demands of its humanist clients. The Medici understood that dominance within the cultural-ideological sphere was an essential complement to political power and, moreover, that this dominance depended upon the cultivation of a public

⁴⁸ On this, see Najemy, *A History of Florence*, pp. 280-86.

⁴⁹ On Bruni, see *Xandra* I.18 (36 in the first redaction) and on Landino's legal work, see *Xandra* I.29 (52 in the first redaction) and his *Ad Bernardum*, poem 21 in the first manifestation of the *Xandra* but excised from later redactions.

image of Medicean majesty.⁵⁰ Cultural dominion was an area in which the Medici could wield a power unmitigated by statutory councils or legislative due process and, for all the genuine interest in humanistic ideas shown to varying degrees by Cosimo, Piero and Lorenzo, they nonetheless considered the management of their image as valuable to their wider strategic goals. So, at the same time that Cosimo financed great cultural endeavours to bolster his image – the Council of Florence; the church of San Lorenzo; the book-hunting expeditions of Niccolò Niccoli and Poggio Bracciolini – he also fostered the careers of humanist intellectuals through patronage, co-opting them to perpetuate the glory of his regime through rhetoric.

In the face of competition for such a distinguished post as the professorship Landino would therefore have to present himself as something more than a love poet, and attracting the support of the Medici would entail an engagement with civic life hitherto absent from his poetry. The position called not only for a humanist, but for a *civic* humanist. His evolution over this period as he produced his second redaction of the *Xandra*, dedicated to Piero de' Medici, has been analysed in Christoph Pieper's exemplary study *Elegos redolere Vergiliosque sapere*. Pieper traces Landino's repurposing of the *Xandra* from a text consisting in blithely apolitical lyricism into one that sought to secure his professorship through its praise of the Medici regime. In order to do so, the poet fashioned himself as *novus vates*, heir to the Florentine humanistic tradition of the recently deceased Marsuppini. Nowhere is the schema for Landino's approach more visible than in his 1458 letter to Piero de' Medici, which he enclosed alongside his *Eulogy* written for Marsuppini's funeral.⁵¹ After emphasising the great loss of Marsuppini, Landino defends himself against accusations that he does not duly honour his memory by recognising his teacher's role as his patron, friend and father-figure before speaking 'frankly' (*plane*) to assert that Marsuppini had chosen him as his successor to the chair at the *Studio*. He writes: 'That most saintly and humane man promised, without my having asked for or sought it... that he would make every effort, as far as he were able, that I should be given a public lectureship'.⁵² With his claim to this academic inheritance established, Landino is able to make a roundabout and exaggeratedly modest request to Piero for the chair, and the enclosed eulogy, outwardly an expression of loyalty and affection on the part of a devoted pupil, offers a bravura example of the type of memorial Piero might also expect from his humanistic charge. On this Pieper observes:

⁵⁰ Valuable scholarship on the manipulation of ideology and image under the Medici produced over the last few decades includes Alison Brown, 'The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici, Pater Patriae', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 24.3/4 (July-December, 1961), 186-221; Mark Jurdjevic, 'Civic Humanism and the Rise of the Medici', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 52.4 (Winter 1999), 994-1020; James Hankins, 'Cosimo de' Medici and the "Platonic Academy"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 53 (1990), 144-62; and Dale Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁵¹ See 'Cristoforo Landinos Taktik im Berufungsstreit' in Pieper, pp. 44-52.

⁵² 'Pollicitus est sanctissimus atque humanissimus ille vir neque roganti neque petenti mihi... se annix operam daturum, ut quantum in se esset, mihi lectio publica mandaretur', Landino, *Carmina omnia*, p. 184.

In this poem, Landino presents an example of his ability to keep the name of the deceased alive and to make his image public, an example, in short, of his ability to ‘fashion’, indirectly promising that he could do similar and greater things for the target audience of his letter.⁵³

The Landino who emerges from Pieper’s analysis is a canny and persistent operator, unafraid of employing his rhetorical skills in the service of personal advancement. At the same time he brings to bear his poetic and epistolary talents for the purpose of self-fashioning (to adopt Pieper’s New Historicist terminology) and establishing himself as the latest representative of a line of eminent Florentine humanists, he indicates to the Medici that he can be entrusted with the fashioning of their own political image as learned and virtuous statesmen.

Arthur Field observes that Landino’s appointment to the chair of rhetoric on 18 January 1458 fell exactly one week after the Signoria reintroduced the Catasto in defiance of both the Medici and the *ottimati*, and Cosimo might have hoped that the second redaction of Landino’s *Xandra* which was then forthcoming would offer, in some small way, an improvement in public relations for a beleaguered ruler in a precarious political position. An absence of specifics of the conflicts between Cosimo and his internal enemies over the previous decade ought therefore to be expected in this redaction, and indeed most of the proximate political references in the *Xandra* refer to Medici success in foreign policy, with the family receiving routine praise for ‘hav[ing] often preserved the safety of the country’.⁵⁴ Likewise, Cosimo is depicted as ‘the author of peace [i.e. the peace of Lodi], but a peace which could preserve the city’s power without deceit, its honour without stain’, and Landino proclaims that ‘with him as a counsellor, [Florence] has repelled great tumults and has the *otium* of gentle peace’.⁵⁵ Yet the occasional allusion to political unrest still creeps in. In the *Eulogium in Carolum Arretinum* accompanying his letter to Piero de’ Medici Landino mentions how Cosimo ‘never rejected you [Marsuppini] as a comrade in doubtful matters, when that good man took care of his people’, and we may read the studied ambivalence of this phrase as a reference to the internal political wranglings of the 1440s.⁵⁶ Similarly coded is the famous passage in the *De laudibus magni Cosmi* which fashions Cosimo as a successor to Caesar who surpasses the Roman in his concern for republican values:

Caesar was great, but his greatness was in arms alone,
Yours, Cosimo, is greater in the urban toga.
He oppressed his country with arms and savage tyranny,

⁵³ ‘Landino schickt also durch dieses Gedicht ein Beispiel für seine Fähigkeit, den Namen eines Verstorbenen am Leben zu erhalten und sein Bild in der Öffentlichkeit strahlen zu lassen, kurz ein Beispiel seiner Fähigkeit zum *fashioning*, wobei er indirekt verspricht, Ähnliches und Größeres für den Adressaten seines Briefes zu tun’, Pieper, p. 51.

⁵⁴ ‘Quis servata salus saepe fuit patriae’, *Xandra* II.6.48.

⁵⁵ ‘Auctor erat pacis: sed quae sine fraude tueri | imperium posset, quae sine labe decus’, *Xandra* III.1.25-6 ; ‘Ille quidem magnos hoc consultore tumultus | reppulit et mitis ocia pacis habet’, *Xandra* III.3.127-8.

⁵⁶ ‘Nec comitem rebus dubiis te respuit unquam | consuleret populo cum bonus ille suo’, *Xandra* III.7.143.

A unique concern for liberty possesses you.
 The senate of deserted Rome saw [Caesar] as an enemy;
 You drive enemies far away from your city and land.
 This is eminent virtue and great civic constancy,
 Which is rarely found in the human mind.⁵⁷

In emphasising the parallel relationships between the statesmen and their city – Caesar with Rome, and Cosimo with Florence – and contrasting Cosimo with a ruler he claims to be more oppressive, Landino relativises and diminishes Cosimo’s less salubrious political behaviour, offering implicit approval that Cosimo’s ‘unique concern for liberty’ should grant him the authority to ‘drive enemies far away from [his] city and land’. Such language not only celebrates Medici foreign policy successes but also seems to justify banishment of internal enemies such as Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Palla Strozzi in the aftermath of Cosimo’s exile in 1434 and presages the banishments of anti-Medicans later in 1458. The fact that Albizzi also makes an appearance in *Xandra* III.6 as an ‘exiled Florentine’ (*exul Florentinus*) ally of Niccolò Piccinino, the Milanese *condottiere* defeated by Florence in 1440, reinforces the feeling in the *Xandra* of old scores being settled.⁵⁸

As well as illustrating how Landino’s political awareness evolved, the *Xandra* also contains his first contextualised statements on virtue and vice. Ruminations on these subjects are largely absent from the first redaction of the *Xandra*, with the notable exception of Landino’s poem to Francesco d’Altobianco Alberti, his first patron, which was excised from the second redaction. Therein, Landino elevates Alberti’s virtue in peacetime over the military exploits of Roman leaders and emphasises the value of virtue and peril of vice to civic life:

Harsh *ambitio* for great honours does not disturb you,
 You are not inflamed by love for coin,
 But you protect the wretched with your works and a generous mind,
 One born for your country, your loved ones and friends.⁵⁹

Here Landino prefigures two themes which would later be prominent in the *Disputationes*: a conception of virtue construed in terms of Cicero’s *non nobis solum* maxim and intimately linked with

⁵⁷ ‘Magnus erat Caesar, sed magnus Caesar in armis; | at tu Cosme tua maior in urbe toga es. | Ille armis patriam saevaue tyrannide pressit, | Te libertatis unica cura tenet; | illum hostem vidit desertae Curia Romae, | hostes e patria tu procul urbe fugas. | Egregia haec virtus magna et constantia civis, | humanis et quae rara sit ingeniis’, *Xandra* III.15.43-50. See also Francesco Bausi, ‘The Medici: Defenders of Liberty in Fifteenth-Century Florence’, in Black and Law, *The Medici*, pp. 239-51 (p. 243).

⁵⁸ *Xandra* III.6.31.

⁵⁹ ‘Nec te sollicitat magnorum tristis honorum | ambitio, nummi non inflammaris amore, | sed miseros opibusque tuis et mente benigna | protegis, et patriae caris et natus amicis’, *Xandra* I.48.31-34 [first redaction], and cf. ‘non nobis solum nati sumus ortusque nostri partem patria vindicat, partem amici’, Cic. *Off.* I.vii.22. Landino contrasts Alberti’s behaviour in peace with Roman military victories in lines 21-30 in the same poem.

a devotion to the public good; and a concern with vice which views lust for honours and greed as the main characteristics antithetical to proper civic conduct. In the second redaction, frequent if occasionally disconnected references to virtue emerge as a matter of course from Landino's tendency to present the Medici as paradigmatic leaders. So, for instance, the Medici possess the 'greatest virtue', Cosimo 'soars past all Romans in virtue', and Piero, already born 'of a great-souled and courageous father', has a virtue which 'grew daily with increasing years and, having been accumulated, carried him to new heights'.⁶⁰ The Medici are said to bear the array of traditional virtues including prudence (*prudētia*) and courage (*fortia*); they are most just (*iustissima*), and possess a specifically civic virtue (*ducis egregii virtus togati*) alongside their military prowess.⁶¹ Presenting the Medicean ruler as an idealised statesman in this way was a common trope amongst sympathetic humanists in the mid-Quattrocento, and Alison Brown has commented that in Cosimo's case such idealisation takes three main forms: depicting him as an inheritor of Roman republican virtue as Landino does in the passage above; portraying him as a humanist-statesman unifying the political and philosophical lives; or, as Landino is particularly wont to do (and as Pieper has also illustrated at length), praising Cosimo as an Augustan ruler and new Maecenas.⁶² Given the importance of the tension between *otium* and *negotium* to the theoretical structure of Landino's later political philosophy it is remarkable that the second of these three forms is the least common in the *Xandra*, especially since such praise was a common conceit amongst contemporary humanists.⁶³ Yet Landino's presentation is rarely so phrased, with Cosimo's civic virtues instead being central to his portrayal in the *Xandra* and his intellectual abilities remaining unmentioned. Any implicit approval of detachment from the political sphere on Cosimo's part is limited to his being a private citizen rather than an elected or hereditary ruler, and he is thus celebrated as a figure who, even though a *privatus*, 'soars past all Romans in virtue and all kings in wealth'.⁶⁴ Representations of the virtuous union of political and philosophical lives are instead provided by other contexts, such as *Xandra* II.8, which extols the pastoral *otium* of Monte Asinario over the 'urban toga's tedium', and by other individuals, such as Marsuppini, whose corpse Landino represents as wearing 'a scarlet toga and a laurel crown', and Poggio Bracciolini, whose political and humanistic achievements Landino celebrates in *Xandra* III.17.⁶⁵ Similarly, Landino anticipates the *De vera nobilitate* by invoking the correspondence between virtue and true nobility (as opposed to nobility of lineage) in his eulogy to

⁶⁰ 'Maxima virtus', *Xandra* III.1.39; 'Latos privatus transvolat omnes | virtute', III.16.21; 'magnanimo genitus fortique parente... Inque dies crevit virtus crescentibus annis, | seque tulit gradibus accumulata novis', II.6.35-40.

⁶¹ *Xandra* III.1.53; III.1.16 and III.3.109; III.18.69; III.1.15

⁶² Brown, 'The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici', pp. 187-204.

⁶³ See e.g. Niccolò Tignosi in the *Collectiones Cosmianae*, assembled by Bartolomeo Scala and found in Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plut. 54. 10 67r.; John Argyropoulos in *ibid.*, f. 52r.; and Flavio Biondo, *Italy Illuminated*, ed. by Jeffrey A. White, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), I, pp. 72-73.

⁶⁴ *Xandra* III.16.20-21 and see above, n. 60.

⁶⁵ 'Urbanæ taedia ferre togæ', *Xandra* II.8.17-24 and II.8.35-36; 'purpureaque toga clarus Phoebique corona', III.7.25; III.17.

Marsuppini, describing the former chancellor as having sung ‘the praises and love of upright virtue, and the honor that comes from true nobility’.⁶⁶

Alongside treatments of virtue in its positive aspect, we also see in the second redaction of the *Xandra* the first intimations of Landino’s concern with the three vices of *avaritia* (avarice), *luxuria* (sensual pleasure) and *ambitio* or *superbia* (desire for recognition and dominion) upon which, as we will see, the practical moral instruction of his later system of virtue ethics was focussed. Landino has something of an equivocal attitude towards *avaritia* in this redaction. Effusive praise of the value of Medicean beneficence to civic life saturates his panegyrics, just as humanists such as John Argyropoulos and Donato Acciaiuoli had celebrated the merits of material wealth by eulogising Cosimo’s financial contribution to Florence.⁶⁷ In his poem to Antonio Canigiani on the beginnings of Florence, Landino contrasts the generosity of Cosimo, like Cato and Aristides a ‘great-souled man [who] justly discharges his public duties’, with Crassus who ‘neither shared his wealth with his family or needy citizens nor built sacred buildings with holy altars’, praising Cosimo’s benefit to Florence in architecture and war.⁶⁸ For the poet, Medici wealth has ‘stabilised the state’ and, as mentioned above, Piero assumes the position of a new Maecenas, who ‘fosters the learned and performs great deeds worthy to be sung in verse by learned poets’.⁶⁹ Yet for all his willingness to endorse the accumulation and disbursal of wealth for the public good, Landino’s regard of *avaritia* as an especially pernicious vice is still apparent. In his *Contra Avaros* he criticises mercantile and military expeditions for personal enrichment in comparison to the opportunity to remain in Florence and write poetry with a *furor* inspired by the Muses.⁷⁰ We also see Landino’s distaste for *avaritia* in his eulogy for his brother, in which he declaims that ‘prosperity, which weakens their hearts with desires, emasculates the common crowd’, and in his poem to Piero in praise of Poggio, who Landino applauds as ‘confound[ing] foolish misers with a thunderbolt’ with his *De avaritia*.⁷¹ In each of these occurrences Landino is bemoaning a violation of civic humanist principles, with *avaritia* either diverting the mind from intellectual pursuits or from civic engagement in the form of military duty. For Landino the accumulation of wealth is not in itself an evil. It is instead the hoarding of such wealth for private benefit as opposed to the public good which constitutes *avaritia*, contributing to a weakening of intellectual faculties and a softening of one’s mental disposition.

Attitudes to *ambitio* or *superbia* in the *Xandra* are also ambivalent, not so much because Landino’s task of exonerating the Medici from this vice is easier – although it is – as that the lexical elasticity

⁶⁶ ‘His etiam laudes rectae et virtutis amorem, | quem sequitur vera nobilitate decus’, *Xandra* III.7.77-78 (translation from Chatfield, p. 179).

⁶⁷ See Brown, ‘The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de’ Medici’, pp. 193 and 196.

⁶⁸ ‘Alter Aristides, alter Cato, publica iusto | munera magnanimus iure gerenda capit... [Crassus] nec partem posuitve suis inopesve levavit | cives, nec sacris stant pia tecta focus’, *Xandra* III.3.98-102.

⁶⁹ ‘Publica res... constabilata’, *Xandra* III.1.47-52; ‘colit doctos, doctorum et carmine vatium | quae sint digna cani, maxima facta gerit’, *Xandra* II.6.33-35. For the presentation of Piero as Maecenas, see also *Xandra* I.1.8, III.2.2, III.17.145 and II.6 passim.

⁷⁰ *Xandra* II.3.

⁷¹ ‘Vulgus enim et vilem demulcent prospera plebem, quae sua denervat corda cupidinibus’, *Xandra* III.4.63-64 and ‘stultos conturbat avaros | fulmine’, III.17.57-58.

of the words *ambitio*, *superbia* and *superbus* is rather wider than that of *avaritia*. For instance, Landino uses these terms in their positive sense to commend individuals such as Alessandro Sforza and achievements such as the Medicean works on the church of San Lorenzo.⁷² Interpreting *superbia* and *ambitio* as undesirable traits is, however, more common, and what points to an increased emphasis on Landino's part on the dangers of *ambitio* for the politically-inclined intellectual is that in the few poems newly composed for the first book in Landino's second redaction, two expressly mention *ambitio* in a negative civic context. In *Ad Xandram*, the poet declares that if Xandra were to submit to him, he 'would say farewell to the confused *ambitio* of kings'; and in *De suis maioribus* he writes how 'No title marks me with the eminent honours that *ambitiosa* thirst for praise desires'.⁷³ He accuses the Milanese *condottiere* Niccolò Piccinino of similar failings in *Xandra* III.6: 'The gods restrain arrogance (*fastus*) and no pride (*superbia*) lasts for long, | And he who flees equality is forced to be lesser'.⁷⁴ Here *superbia* is portrayed as characteristic of tyranny, a quality of aggressive foreigners which is contrary to Florence's egalitarian principles and damaging to its republican bounds of comity. So, likewise, Alfonso V of Aragon, who had been at war with Florence prior to the signing of the peace of Lodi and whom Landino calls a 'Calabrian tyrant', is described in *Xandra* III.3 as '*superbus* in arms and wealth'.⁷⁵ It is precisely this conception of *superbia* as a signifier of autocratic anti-Florentinism which is in Landino's mind when he excoriates an excessive desire for honours on the part of jurists in his *De laudibus Poggio*, fulminating that the lawyers, 'garlanded with shining gold', pettifog for a huge price and 'parade their arrogant (*superbos*) titles, won through colossal *ambitio*'.⁷⁶ Robert Black has observed how this poem and its accompanying letter constitute an attack on Benedetto Accolti, the lawyer who had beaten Landino to the Chancellorship in 1458, and while it may be overstating the case to claim that, by emphasising Accolti's qualities of *ambitio* and *superbia*, Landino is implying he is an anti-republican bogeyman comparable to Piccinino and Alfonso V, it is nonetheless significant that he employs symbolic terminology linked so closely with tyranny elsewhere in the *Xandra*.⁷⁷

By picking the strands of the associations Landino makes in the second redaction of the *Xandra*, then, we can begin to formulate an understanding of his nascent system of virtue ethics. That his serious engagement with themes of virtue and vice only begins in the second redaction of the *Xandra* shows how the reciprocity between civic humanism and virtue is established in his mind. For Landino, to graduate from love elegy to presenting himself as the heir to Marsuppini and

⁷² *Xandra* III.1.44, and III.15.72.

⁷³ 'Regum confusa valet | ambitio', *Xandra* I.5.15-16; 'Nullus et egregios titulus mihi signat honores, | quos inhiat laudis ambitiosa satis', I.24.5-6.

⁷⁴ 'Di reprimunt fastus et nulla superbia longa est, | quique pares refugit, cogitur esse minor', *Xandra* III.6.63-64 (translation from Chatfield, p. 173).

⁷⁵ 'Calabro... tyranno', *Xandra* III.1.35; 'armis opibusque superbus', III.3.111.

⁷⁶ 'Auro cingantur nitido semperque superbos | ingenti titulos ambitione gerant', *Xandra* III.17.111-18 (translation from Chatfield, p. 213).

⁷⁷ Black, pp. 105-06, referring to the letter in Landino, *Carmina omnia*, pp. 187-90. See also Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy*, p. 235.

Poggio is to adopt in his poetry the subjects of proper political discourse, foremost among which are virtue and vice. Likewise, in fashioning an image for the Medici as successors to the tradition of Florentine republicanism, he phrases their excellence in terms of virtues devoted to the common good, the qualities of a paradigmatic statesman in a civic republican context rather than those of the Platonic philosopher-king. When Landino writes of Cosimo's forebear Vieri di Cambio de' Medici that he had a 'sense of duty' and thought that 'public benefit should be preferred to private goods', he summarises the paradigmatic qualities of the virtuous citizen-ruler of the *Xandra*.⁷⁸ Landino construes his conception of the vices in the *Xandra* in a similar way. When criticising *avaritia* and *luxuria*, he lambasts the unwillingness of the wealthy to contribute to the common good, and by interpreting *superbia*, *ambitio* and *fastus* as specifically tyrannical qualities he sets the desire for glory as inimical to republican principles and thus Florentine patriotism, a characteristic of enemies both foreign and internal. As numerous scholars have shown over the last few decades, the Baronian view that civic humanism was somehow at odds with the primacy of the Medici, forcing them to turn to the isolation of Neoplatonism, is undermined by the deep political engagement of contemporary intellectuals.⁷⁹ Landino's view of virtue in the *Xandra* is a case in point, showing that his thought was saturated in the tropes and conventions of civic humanism before there was any evidence of his later Platonic tendencies.

In the years after the 1458 coup and Landino's appointment to the chair of rhetoric, there was a period of relative calm in Florentine politics between Cosimo's withdrawal from public affairs and his death in September 1464. On his ascension to power, however, Piero de' Medici was thrown straightaway into a precarious political situation. Shortly after Cosimo's death, the statutory councils began to dismantle institutional controls such as *a mano* elections, though the ill-judged attempts at reform of Niccolò Soderini, the new Gonfaloniere of Justice, benefitted Piero by dividing the anti-Medicean citizenry into two factions, *ottimati* and *popolo*, which favoured an oligarchic political class and sortition respectively. Hostility smouldered until the death in March 1466 of Francesco Sforza, the Medici's most powerful external ally, which prompted four hundred citizens including a number of former Medici intimates such as Luca Pitti, Agnolo Acciaiuoli and Dietsalvi Neroni to sign an oath in defence of specifically republican liberty. As tensions grew, both Piero and his opponents were ready to summon troops – Piero the Milanese forces of the Sforza; the anti-Mediceans the troops of Borso d'Este of Ferrara – but Pitti, Acciaiuoli and Neroni, wary of the danger to the nobility from a roused *popolo*, neglected to march on Piero's palace. Piero's dismissal of a Signorial summons for talks caused Pitti to lose his nerve and, switching sides, he accepted a secret deal

⁷⁸ 'Notus pietate sui, qui publica semper | duxit privatis anteferenda bonis', *Xandra* III.3.87-88.

⁷⁹ See in particular Jurdjevic, p. 998, n.10, citing Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy*; Jill Kraye, 'Philologists and Philosophers', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. by Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 142-60; James Hankins, 'Humanism and the origins of modern political thought', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. by Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 118-41; and Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1994), pp. 3-17.

before calling a *parlamento* of all citizens which, surrounded by Piero's private forces, approved a *balia* which restored *a mano* elections for another ten years with *accoppiatori* appointed by the Cento. Many of the four hundred signatories of the oath of defence were exiled or arrested in short order. The *ottimati's* confrontation with Piero of 1466 would later be propagandised by the Medici as a conspiracy but as far as the Medici's opponents were concerned it was, as John Najemy puts it, 'an open and legal attempt to restore constitutional government'.⁸⁰ Although Piero's position as the de facto ruler of Florence was now unambiguous, the death of Sforza continued to throw up certain external threats, most notably when Florentine support of his son, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, provoked Bartolomeo Colleoni and Borso d'Este to lead the combined armies of Venice and Ferrara against those of Florence, Milan and Naples under Federico da Montefeltro at the Battle of Riccardina in July 1467. The presence of Federico da Montefeltro later prompted Landino to include a reference to the battle in the second book of the *Disputationes* despite an inconclusive outcome which resulted in little more than great loss of life and the abandonment of Colleoni's campaign.⁸¹ After two years of relative calm, Piero died in 1469.

Years later, Landino would use the death of Piero as a framing event for his *De vera nobilitate*, and the fictive setting of a banquet attended by the great and good of international humanism presents a rather sanitised picture of Lorenzo's succession, though not without intimating some genuine political concerns. As well as assuming all familial burdens, Lorenzo, we are told, also set himself the task of 'safeguarding and growing the good will and authority of his grandfather and father' and, as the *mise-en-scene* is set out, the friends and advisors of Piero and Cosimo are debating how best to maintain Lorenzo in Medicean *fama* and *gloria* given his youth and inexperience.⁸² In fact, Lorenzo was the first member of the Medici family who was groomed to rule from birth, and when he ascended to power on 2 December 1469, he had already gained considerable experience of public affairs through diplomatic missions, political negotiations (including, as Najemy reports, discussions with Lucca Pitti during the 1466 crisis) and a position in the Guelf party of which Landino was chancellor, making him well aware of the dangers of the world into which he was being introduced.⁸³ Nevertheless, the situation which Landino depicts in the *De vera nobilitate* of a Florentine elite questioning the fitness of an untested prince is a genuine one, and his fictitious account concurs with Lorenzo's (private) *Ricordi* in which he claims that:

⁸⁰ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, p. 298.

⁸¹ *DC*, p. 98.17-21.

⁸² *DVN*, pp. 29-30.

⁸³ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, p. 344. Lorenzo was an officer for the Guelf party in 1465 and Landino was promoted to its chancellorship in May of that year, on which, see Alison Brown, 'The Guelf Party in Fifteenth-Century Florence', *Rinascimento* 20 (1980), 41-86. On Lorenzo's early political experiences, see also André Rochon, *La Jeunesse de Laurent de Médicis* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1963), pp. 73-99, Najemy, *A History of Florence*, pp. 341-48, and Francis W. Kent, 'The Young Lorenzo 1449-1469', in *Lorenzo the Magnificent: Culture and Politics*, ed. by Michael Mallet and Nicholas Mann (London: Warburg Institute, 1996), pp. 1-22.

On the second day after the death of Piero, the principal men of the city and of the regime visited us [Lorenzo and Giuliano] to press me to assume the care of the city and the regime, like my grandfather and father. As I was not of age and the burdens and dangers were great, I accepted reluctantly, and only to keep our friends and our assets safe, because in Florence the rich are at risk if they do not belong to the *stato*.⁸⁴

Lorenzo and Landino's respective images of a nobly-intentioned circle of elite well-wishers helping the young statesman find his feet were in fact, as Riccardo Fubini observes, 'diametrically opposed' to the reality of the situation. A number of former Medici loyalists, foremost among whom was Tommaso Soderini, were secretly striving to gain some measure of influence over Lorenzo in order to restrict his power and avert the establishment of a dynasty by attempting to debilitate the relationship between the Medici and Milan, and it took the warnings of the Milanese ambassador Sacramoro Mengozzi to spur Lorenzo out of his vacillation and safeguard the alliance with the Sforza.⁸⁵ This was a turbulent time, but Lorenzo was able to overcome his uncertainty in foreign affairs by reference to precedent. Cosimo had impressed into the minds of his children and grandchildren that his exile stood as a warning never to lose political control and, having absorbed the lessons of 1458 and 1466, Lorenzo understood that he must manufacture an image of unassailable authority which would ensure that such events were not to be repeated. It was therefore necessary that Lorenzo dispose of any pretence that he was a *primus inter pares* among the Florentine elite.⁸⁶ As Fubini puts it, he took the view that 'in order to keep the regime united, it was necessary to exert control from a position outside the regime itself', but the lingering obstacle to the free exercise of his power in this way was the composition of Florentine institutions which neither Cosimo nor Piero had been able to subjugate entirely.⁸⁷ In January 1471 Lorenzo managed to introduce reforms to the Cento – now containing a substantial anti-Medicean presence – that removed the nomination of *accoppiatori* from its remit and instead appointed candidates based on the recommendation of former *accoppiatori*. Six months later, Lorenzo was able to convene another *balia* whose forty members, hand-picked by him, became permanent and lifelong members of the

⁸⁴ '(I) secondo di dopo la sua (di Piero) morte... vennono a noi [Lorenzo e Giuliano] i principali della città et dello stato a confortarmi che pigliassi la cura della città et dello stato, come havevano fatto l'avolo et padre mio; le quali cose, per essere contro alla mia età e di gran carico e pericolo, mal volentieri accettai e solo per conservatione delli amici e substantie nostre, perché a Firenze si può mal vivere ricco senza lo stato', from Morelli Timpanaro and others, eds., *Consorterie politiche e mutamenti istituzionali in età laurenziana*, Exhibition catalogue (Florence: Archivio di stato, 1992), p. 31, cited and translated by Riccardo Fubini in Fubini, 'Lorenzo the Magnificent's Regime', in Black and Law, *The Medici*, pp. 61-84 (pp. 68-69).

⁸⁵ On this, see Fubini, 'Lorenzo the Magnificent's Regime', pp. 69-70, and Najemy, *A History of Florence*, pp. 345-46.

⁸⁶ On Lorenzo's adoption of this new princely approach to his method of leadership, see Melissa Meriam Bullard, *Lorenzo il Magnifico: Image and Anxiety, Politics and Finance* (Florence: Olschki, 1994), pp. 3-42 and 43-80; Alison Brown, *The Medici in Florence: The Exercise and Language of Power* (Florence and Perth: Olschki, 1992); and Francis W. Kent, *Lorenzo de' Medici and the Art of Magnificence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

⁸⁷ Fubini, 'Lorenzo the Magnificent's Regime', p. 72.

Centio and thus finally deprived the statutory councils of their remaining power.⁸⁸ At every level of the Florentine political apparatus, he could now appoint his allies as he wished.

Extant evidence suggests that the relationship between Lorenzo and Landino was close, but would be better described as a bond of cordial respect rather than affection.⁸⁹ Landino had played a role in Lorenzo's education from late childhood and makes a tangential mention of this in the *Disputationes* when he has the character of Lorenzo state that 'these are the things which I must say about the civil life, presented in the declamatory manner in which I am used to exercising myself in the presence of Landino rather than in philosophical argument'.⁹⁰ In his *Trivium* of 1460 Leon Battista Alberti refers to Landino as Lorenzo's *praeceptor* alongside Gentile de' Becchi, Lorenzo's personal tutor, but Andre Rochon has noted that this should not imply to us that the two scholars had an equal standing in Lorenzo's education.⁹¹ Rather, given that the young scion had attended Landino's lectures at the *Studio* from January 1458 and the purpose of the *Trivium* was that of oratorical instruction, the title of *praeceptor* would have been a natural reference to a specialist in rhetoric in that context. Hence much of the correspondence between Landino and Lorenzo has a didactic air, particularly pertaining to moral instruction, and the Latin consolation letters of 1463 and 1464 in which Landino comforts Lorenzo after the deaths of his uncle Giovanni and grandfather Cosimo amount to epistolary lessons in proper civic behaviour.⁹²

Lorenzo conducted relatively little correspondence with Landino compared to other intellectuals such as Ficino and Poliziano, but there are nonetheless signs of personal familiarity between the humanist and the prince in their letters. Rochon notes that most letters addressed to Lorenzo before 1470 conclude with the formulation 'recommend me to [Gentile] Becchi' on account of the fact that Lorenzo's youth rendered him a minor under the stewardship of his tutor, and that Landino never does so himself can be interpreted as a sign of their intimacy, as can his use of the informal second person pronoun in both Latin and Italian.⁹³ Indeed, in a vernacular letter of 1464 Landino feels able to ask that Lorenzo pardon the wayward behaviour of Francesco Filarete, the Araldo of the Signoria, who had been discharged from his role for entertaining a young woman in his room for two days.⁹⁴ Yet for all the genuine intimacy of this early correspondence the power imbalance between the young noble and his teacher seldom recedes from view. Landino never

⁸⁸ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, pp. 346-47.

⁸⁹ On Landino's relationship with Lorenzo, see especially Roberto Cardini, 'Landino e Lorenzo', in *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: Politica Economica Cultura Arte*, ed. by Riccardo Fubini, 3 vols (Pisa: Pacini, 1996), II, pp. 449-62.

⁹⁰ 'Haec igitur habui, quae declamatorie et, ut apud Landinum me exercere soleo, magis quam philosophice mihi pro vita civili dicenda viderentur', *DC*, p. 35.18-22.

⁹¹ Rochon, *La Jeunesse*, pp. 35-36. Rochon notes that Filippo Valori, a political ally of the Medici, omits Landino from his list of Lorenzo's teachers.

⁹² The text of these two letters can be found in Lentzen, *Studien*, pp. 195-200 and pp. 201-02.

⁹³ Rochon, *La Jeunesse*, p. 63, n.218.

⁹⁴ MAP XXI.16r, transcribed in Alberto Maria Fortuna and Christina Lungheiti, *Scriptorium Florentinum: insigni testi manoscritti fiorentini riprodotti al naturale. Autografi dell'Archivio mediceo avanti il principato* (Florence: Corradino Mori, 1977).

misses a chance to praise Lorenzo, and the artful ingratiation and rhetorical self-advancement so evident in his correspondence with Piero after the death of Marsuppini is rarely absent. His tendency to make requests indirectly by addressing them to the son of the current ruler rather than the ruler himself (such as when he wrote to Piero rather than Cosimo in his solicitation for the *Studio* professorship) meant that much of his early correspondence with Lorenzo (such as his 1464 letter requesting a position in the chancery when Lorenzo was fifteen years old) carried a note of servility from the outset. Nevertheless, the relationship between Landino and Lorenzo was to endure, with a celebratory public dedication of the *Comento* and his appointment as secretary of the Signoria serving as notable expressions of Medicean favour in the humanist's later career.

In the potted history of the Medici in his proem to the Virgil commentary of 1488, Landino concedes that Lorenzo 'had only just undertaken public affairs when *fortuna* hurled him from the most tranquil harbour into a very turbulent storm'.⁹⁵ This storm, the defining crisis of Lorenzo's early rule, was the sack of Volterra.⁹⁶ Lorenzo had been despatched to Rome by his father in 1466 to secure exclusive rights from Paul II in the trade of alum, and his success in this venture led to a monopoly for the Medici who were guaranteed a huge income by artificially inflating its price. Four years later, in 1470, significant alum deposits were discovered near Volterra, a town which maintained some small degree of autonomy while being subject to Florentine taxation and military control. The local authorities awarded the mining concession for the alum to a private company whose investors were a group of prominent Medici supporters, a decision which prompted claims of corruption given that the council was relinquishing a valuable public resource so that Lorenzo could continue his price-fixing racket. In short order, the concession rights were abrogated by a reconvened committee and, on 8 June 1471, the Volterrans appropriated the mine and its resources for themselves. Lorenzo, suspicious that his domestic opponents were taking advantage of the situation given that the timing of the seizure coincided with a stubborn Signoria, ordered several Volterrans to be punished and the mine to be returned, but in February of the following year two of the most prominent investors in the mining company were killed by a mob on their return to Volterra. Subsequent attempts at a compromise by the Volterrans were ignored and, despite the disapproval of prominent Florentine anti-Mediceans such as Tommaso Soderini and the intercession of Antonio degli Agli, the bishop of Volterra and a close intellectual associate, Lorenzo resolved that such a challenge to his authority demanded a military response which would silence his internal critics and offer a warning to other cities with thoughts of seceding from Florentine power.⁹⁷ To this end, Lorenzo engaged Federico da Montefeltro and his mercenaries to march on

⁹⁵ 'Verum vix rem attigerat publicam, cum fortuna illum ex tranquillissimo portu in turbulentissimam tempestatem pepulit', *Scritti*, I, p. 218.30-32.

⁹⁶ The definitive historical treatment of the Volterra massacre is still Enrico Fiumi, *L'impresa di Lorenzo dei Medici contro Volterra (1472)*, (Florence: Olschki, 1948) but see also Riccardo Fubini, 'Lorenzo de' Medici e Volterra' in *Quattrocento fiorentino*, pp. 123-39 and Piero Airaghi, Alba Osimo and Gabriella Cagliari Polli, 'Documenti sul sacco di Volterra del 16 Giugno 1472 che si trovano presso l'Archivio di Stato di Milano', *Rassegna volterrana*, 69 (1993), 79-98.

⁹⁷ Antonio degli Agli's letter of the 26th of May can be found in *MAP* XXVIII, 143. Lorenzo's reply of the

Volterra and conquer it ‘by any means’ with support from Florentine and Milanese troops.⁹⁸ The Volterrans, unable to solicit any support, surrendered on 16 June after a long siege with the Florentine government’s explicit guarantee that lives and property would be safeguarded.⁹⁹ On 18 June, however, the peaceful occupation by the invading forces devolved into a massacre as Federico’s mercenaries sacked the city in a murderous rampage.

The reason for the massacre is unclear. A letter from the Signoria to the Roman ambassador asserts that the poorly-fed and unpaid defending forces rebelled in an attempt to wring some personal benefit out of the situation, with the occupiers joining them in plunder in due course.¹⁰⁰ In the *Florentine Histories* Machiavelli agrees with this interpretation to the extent that Volterran soldiers were involved in the looting alongside Federico’s mercenaries, claiming that the rampage was sparked by the robbery of one of the Volterran *priori*.¹⁰¹ Another account states that some pro-Medici Volterrans accepted the terms of surrender without the knowledge of the other citizens, who would have sacrificed themselves rather than fall under Florentine power, and in doing so betrayed their neighbours and consigned the city to the sack.¹⁰² In either case, it is telling that Federico, a highly experienced commander not known for his tolerance of indiscipline, allowed the carnage to continue for hours without sanction, especially in the light of Lorenzo’s instruction that the military campaign should be ruthless in its objective. Lorenzo was a young ruler eager to quell any challenge to his authority and a punitive approach to the uprising could have seemed a viable approach in presenting himself as a formidable force in Italian politics, so it is tempting to read Federico’s inattention as tantamount to a tacit approval of the sack. In the immediate aftermath of the massacre Lorenzo’s comments tended towards the self-justificatory, though at the same time he was keen to forget the grubby affair in order that it should not cause any reputational damage:

Let’s say nothing more about the sack in order to forget about it as soon as possible. Perhaps they deserved this through some sin of theirs. Our conscience, and the actions that we and this illustrious lord [Federico] took to prevent this evil, should be sufficient for us.¹⁰³

14th of April is in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, ed. by Riccardo Fubini, I (Giunti-Barbera: Florence, 1997), 101, pp. 365-66.

⁹⁸ ‘Facciate determinazione di vincere cotesta terra in ogni modo’, Archivio di Stato Firenze, *Balie* 34 c .37, quoted in Fiumi, *L’impresa*, p. 133 and Najemy, *A History of Florence*, p. 351.

⁹⁹ See Fiumi, *L’impresa*, pp. 135-36.

¹⁰⁰ Archivio di Stato Firenze, *Balie* 34 c .56t, quoted in Fiumi, *L’impresa*, p. 138. See also Luca Landucci, *A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516 by Luca Landucci, Continued by an Anonymous Writer till 1542 with Notes by Iodoco del Badia*, trans. by Alice de Rosen Jervis (London: Dent, 1927), p. 11.

¹⁰¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, trans. by Laura F. Banfield and Harvey C. Mansfield Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 309.

¹⁰² Fiumi, *L’impresa*, pp. 138-40.

¹⁰³ ‘Lascерemo stare dir più del saccomanno per dimenticarlo il più tosto si potessi. Forse qualche loro peccato meritava così. A noi debbe bastare la nostra conscientia et l’opere nostre et di cotesto illustrissimo signor per obviare che questo male non fussi’, Archivio di Stato Firenze, *Balie* 34 c .57, quoted in Fiumi, *L’impresa*, p. 142.

Perhaps therefore aware that, given the risk to his good name, he ought to respond magnanimously to the defeated, the note of contrition Lorenzo struck in his offer of recompense to the Volterrans seems reasonably genuine, notwithstanding some special pleading:

The Volterrans will not lack Florentine clemency and good will. The sack of the city was as injurious to us victors as it was to the conquered Volterrans. Two thousand ducats have been sent immediately by way of recompense for the things plundered so far as we are liable. And I, greatly persuaded by your arguments, will leave nothing undone which relates to the preservation and the health of Volterrann affairs.¹⁰⁴

The consequences of this affair for Florentine moral instruction of the 1470s were mixed. Even though the Volterra massacre would become a byword for Medicean cruelty over the following decades, in the short term the Florentine citizenry approved of this show of force and Federico was granted honorary citizenship, with Bartolomeo Scala giving a celebratory oration in his honour.¹⁰⁵ Some intellectuals close to Lorenzo assumed (or perhaps affected) an air of detachment from the events at Volterra, with Gentile de' Becchi, for instance, joking 'This alum mine seems like the Trinity to me: I don't understand it!'¹⁰⁶ but elsewhere there were humanistic attempts to absolve Lorenzo of any blame for the Volterra campaign, with Naldo Naldi's *Volterrais* being noteworthy for its effusive praise of his actions and the presentation of Federico as a model of Virgilian heroism. Never one to criticise the actions of the Medici, Landino would later offer his own account of the sack of Volterra in the dedicatory address of his 1488 Virgil commentary directed to Lorenzo's son, Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici:

The defection of the Volterrans arose suddenly and unexpected by anyone, and the opinion was deeply implanted in the minds of all the citizens that the Volterrans could not be forced out from the position of the city and the security of the walls and defences other than by a long-lasting siege. The Signoria was therefore convened and each individual asked for his opinion, at which point almost all of them considered ceding to this most steadfast and insolent obstinacy and thought that the Volterrans, provided that they were willing to return to [Florentine] protection, should be subjected to all manner of sanctions rather than be forced by arms. But Lorenzo, who perceived the insolence of the Volterrans in this matter, who understood that their minds were wholly hostile to the Florentine name (for by now the Volterrans had begged a few princes and republics for help through their ambassadors and had been promised an alliance), and who thought that it would lead to them using impunity, if it were given in any way, as a victory against us and never returning to a sound state of mind, ordered that they deserved punishment for violating a treaty and betraying a trust, both

¹⁰⁴ 'Non carebunt Volaterrani florentina clementia et facilitate. Direptio urbis aeque nobis molesta fuit victoribus ac victis Volaterranis. Missa iam dudum sunt ducatorum duo millia, quibus redimi possint quantum erit in nobis direptae res', *Lettere*, I, 105, pp. 378-79.

¹⁰⁵ On the subsequent negative reaction to the Volterra massacre, see Marco Bardini, 'I lamenti per il sacco di Volterra (1472)', in *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: Politica Economica Cultura Arte*, ed. by Riccardo Fubini, 3 vols (Pisa: Pacini, 1996), II, pp. 633-80.

¹⁰⁶ 'Questa allumiera mi pare la Trinità! Non la intendo.' The full letter can be found in *MAP LXI*, 23.

to preserve the majesty of the republic and to destroy the obvious seeds of new conflict in Italy as soon as possible before they sprang up. And so, since he is a man with the most perspicacious intelligence and with a mental agility adaptable to all things, even instantaneous events, he brought together everything that each of these arguments raised. Weighing up the difficulty of the campaign and the magnitude of the dangers against the detriment to public honour and pondering for a long time what harm and ignominy there would be if he were not to march against the Volterrans and, on the other hand, what risks would have to be endured if he were to do so, he eventually arrived at the opinion that the love of the nation, which has always been implanted and fixed with all steadfastness in a man great-souled and born for the honour of his republic, would be victorious. The love of the nation would be victorious, I say, the affection for which every wise man always places before everything else. So when he finally converted to his opinion the citizens who had hitherto been opposed, he approached the task with much caution and proceeded with an unconquered spirit. Eventually, when the city was captured, and contrary to what many people thought, he went to the populace (who at that time were under municipal authority), forced them to surrender and ordered that they be subject to taxation by the Florentines.¹⁰⁷

Even many years after the fact Landino was keen to depict Lorenzo as an example of decisiveness and authority in the face of a hesitant Signoria and, although such a favourable image might be expected in a proem addressed to Lorenzo's son, we might nonetheless assume that his retrospective view of events in this passage is congruent with that of fourteen years earlier, when a more mitigated interpretation of the regime's actions could have compromised his career. In a very similar way to Lorenzo justifying his action against the Volterrans as having been merited through 'some sin of theirs', Landino is unambiguous that their appropriation of the alum mine constituted a treaty violation tantamount to betrayal and hence the Florentine reprisal was just. To this end, Landino stresses that it was Lorenzo's *magnanimitas* (magnanimity or greatness of soul) and love for his country which compelled him to wage war, and that the decision arose from a measured and

¹⁰⁷ 'Exorta est subita et a nemine expectata Volateranorum defectio, eratque apud omnes fere cives penitus insita mentibus opinio, illos et situ urbis et murorum propugnaculorumque robore expugnari nisi diuturna obsidione non posse. Accersitur igitur Senatus, rogantur singuli sententiam: quo quidem tempore censebant pene omnes illorum obstinatissimae pervicacitati ac insolentiae cedendum, illosque, modo in fidem redire vellent, quibuscunque conditionibus recipiendos potius quam armis cogendos esse. At Laurentius, qui hominum ex ea re insolentiam cognosceret quique illorum mentes omnino alienas a Florentino nomine intelligeret (iam enim et a principibus nonnullis et rebus publicis auxilia per legationes implorant et societatem polliciti fuerant), qui denique animadverteret illos impunitate, modo ea daretur, pro victoria contra nos usuros neque unquam ad sanam mentem redituros, duxit et ad rei publicae maiestatem tuendam et ad manifestissima novorum per Italiam tumultuum semina antea quam coalescerent quam primum extinguenda vehementer pertinere, ut illi et violati foederis et proditae fidei poenas penderent. Itaque, ut est homo ingenio perspicacissimo et ad omnia vel etiam momentanea celeritate versatili, cunctas quae utrinque sese rationes efferrent in unum adduxit, ac postremo et rei difficultatem et periculorum magnitudinem cum maiestatis publicae iactura componens et quid, nisi contra iretur, damni ignominiaeque, quid rursus, si iretur, discriminis subeundum esset diu pensitans, tandem in eam sententiam devenit, ut vinceret in viro magnanimo et ad suae rei publicae decus nato id quod in omnibus fortibus insitum semper ac fixum est, vinceret, inquam, amor patriae, cuius caritatem omnis sapiens ceteris rebus semper praeposuit. Quapropter cum in sententiam suam cives hactenus repugnantem tandem traduxisset, multa circumspeditione rem aggressus, invicto animo persecutus, ac postremo, contra quam multi putarent, assecutus, expugnata urbe, populum, qui olim municipali iure fuerat, in deditionem venire coegit atque vectigalem populo Florentino esse iussit', *Scritti*, I, p. 219.

proportionate assessment of whether the necessary risks were worth enduring to preserve Florence's honour. For all that this portrait of Lorenzo is unjustifiable, especially in the absence of any mention of the sack and massacre, Landino's approach and terminology give us an insight into how his virtue politics meshed with the events in Volterra. The quality of *magnanimitas*, moral courage in the face of uncertainty, has a pedigree which ultimately derives from the Aristotelian conception in the *Ethics* of μεγαλοψυχία, the virtue which consists in a desire to be worthy of the external good of honour while remaining indifferent in the face of both good and bad fortune, but Landino's depiction of Lorenzo's behaviour here seems to cleave more closely to the following passage in Cicero's *De officiis*:¹⁰⁸

If the exaltation of spirit seen in times of danger and toil is devoid of justice and fights for selfish ends instead of for the common good, it is a vice... And so we demand that men who are courageous and great-souled [*magnanimos*] shall at the same time be good and straightforward, lovers of truth, and foes to deception; for these qualities are the centre and soul of justice. But what is unpleasant is that from this exaltation and greatness of spirit [*magnitudo animi*] spring all too readily self-will and excessive lust for power... But when one begins to aspire to pre-eminence, it is difficult to preserve that spirit of fairness which is absolutely essential to justice. The result is that such men do not allow themselves to be constrained either by argument or by any public and lawful authority; but they only too often prove to be bribers and agitators in public life, seeking to obtain supreme power and to be superiors through force rather than equals through justice. But the greater the difficulty, the greater the glory; for no occasion arises that can excuse a man for being guilty of injustice.¹⁰⁹

Central to this view is that magnanimous conduct in public office must be truthful, honest and subject to argument and correct political procedure, and this is why it is critical that Landino take pains to emphasise the extent of Lorenzo's deliberations. By reinforcing Lorenzo's mental agility and his 'weighing up' and 'pondering' the benefits and disadvantages of the campaign, Landino preemptively rebuts any charges of the war being waged for personal gain or benefit to the Florentine coffers. The Ciceronian criterion of magnanimous courage being tempered by justice is therefore fulfilled: Lorenzo's decision has come about from a great-souled desire to preserve the majesty of the republic and is justified by careful self-scrutiny.

That Landino's moral language evident in the description of the war against Volterra in the proem to the Virgil commentary had already been formulated during the composition of the *Disputationes*, less than two years after the fact, is apparent in his reference to greatness of soul in the third book during his exegesis of the allegory of the Cyclops:

¹⁰⁸ Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* IV.iii.1-38, and see R.-A. Gauthier, *Magnanimité: l'idéal de la grandeur dans la philosophie païenne et dans la théologie chrétienne* (Paris: Vrin, 1951).

¹⁰⁹ Cic. *Off.* I.xix.62-64, translation from Cicero, *On Duties*, trans. by Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913).

It is, therefore, not without the greatest wisdom that the divine poet Virgil leads Aeneas to the shore of the Cyclops, for he shows that when those who seek great and exalted things do not guide their soul with the certainty of reason, they often deceive themselves and sink into terrible brutality on account of their greatness of soul [*magnitudo animi*]... So a man who was desirous of the *summum bonum* but who, with his greatness of soul [*animi sui magnitudo*] not yet well-established, was trying to achieve honour and power in every way possible, would now detest such heinous cruelty [viz. tyranny] as soon as he recognised it. And he recognises it from the lean and filthy appearance of Achaemenides, through which the wise poet has subtly illustrated all the calamities which come to pass upon the human race because of tyranny.¹¹⁰

Here Landino follows the Ciceronian definition in the *De officiis* once again. Just as in the proem to the Virgil commentary Landino shows that Lorenzo's *magnanimitas* is moderated by means of the deliberations over whether or not to go to war in Volterra and is therefore right moral action, this allegorical interpretation contrasts a rationally-guided *magnanimitas* with that of the tyrant. Magnanimity steers a ruler beyond excessive desire for the Aristotelian external goods of honour and empire (that is, *ambitio*, the avoidance of which, as we shall see, is crucial to Landinian virtue ethics) when directed towards the *summum bonum*, but can lapse into tyranny when not led by reason. Such correspondences between the *Disputationes*, *De officiis* and the discussion of the Volterra massacre in the proem to Landino's Virgil commentary do not give us an unequivocal reason to think that Landino had Volterra in mind when writing the *Disputationes* in early 1474, but it is beyond doubt that the technical vocabulary and conception of the role of the statesman he employs are uncanny in their presaging his discussion of events sixteen years later. He would use the intellectual framework he articulated shortly after the events in Volterra in their subsequent analysis, and that this language obtains in both cases gives us reasonable cause to believe in some theoretical continuity between these events and the *Disputationes*.

It should be clear by now that the figure of Federico da Montefeltro would be central to any understanding of the political context of the *Disputationes* even if he were not its dedicatee.¹¹¹ Federico's military prowess had been crucial to the success of Florentine foreign policy over the preceding decade and had been on friendly terms with the Medici for some years before that, with a Montefeltro proxy having been present at Lorenzo's baptism.¹¹² Yet this relationship began to fray after the Volterra massacre and by the time of the composition of the *Disputationes* had reached a

¹¹⁰ 'Non igitur sine summa sapientia ad Cyclopium litora Aeneam deducit divinus poeta, ut ostendat, qui magna quaedam et excelsa petunt, cum nulla certa ratio animum regat, saepe falli et pro animi magnitudine in inmanitatem labi... Quam ob rem vir summi boni cupidus, qui antea non bene instituta animi sui magnitudine quacunq[ue] via ad honores imperiaque nitebatur, nunc demum tam nefariam crudelitatem, quam primum eam novit, detestatur; novit autem ex macilenta squalentique Achaemenidae forma, per quam sapiens poeta omnes calamitates, quae ex tyrannide generi humano proveniunt, latenter significavit', *DC*, pp. 156.11-157.16.

¹¹¹ On Federico, see Walter Tommasoli, *La vita di Federico da Montefeltro (1422-1482)* (Urbino: Argalia, 1978) and Cecil H. Clough, 'Federico da Montefeltro and the kings of Naples: a study in fifteenth-century survival', *Renaissance Studies*, 6.2 (June 1992), 113-72.

¹¹² Kent, 'The Young Lorenzo', p. 6.

breaking point. The backdrop for this deterioration was the increasing discord between Lorenzo and the new pope, Sixtus IV. Sixtus, formerly Francesco della Rovere, had become pope in August 1471 and shortly thereafter appointed two of his nephews, Pietro Riario and Giuliano della Rovere (the future Pope Julius II), as cardinals over Lorenzo's preferred candidate, his brother Giuliano. Mutual distrust between Florence and the papal states grew over the status of a number of border towns under Florence's protection, and when in 1473 Lorenzo sought to purchase the city of Imola from his ally Galeazzo Maria Sforza to secure access to the Adriatic, Sixtus thwarted the transaction by persuading Sforza (under the implicit threat of excommunication) that Imola be sold to the papacy and, to add insult to injury, requested a loan from the Medici bank to fund the purchase. Having been put in an impossible position, Lorenzo refused and Sixtus was able to assume control of Imola with a loan from Lorenzo's rivals, the Pazzi family.¹¹³

Shortly after these events, in late 1473 and early 1474, Landino began to write the *Disputationes*, and the dispute over Città di Castello which would sever Lorenzo and Federico's alliance ran concurrently with its composition. Perhaps emboldened by his success in purchasing Imola, Sixtus sent Giuliano della Rovere to assert papal authority over the city of Città di Castello, a long-contested town nominally a part of the Papal States but then under the Florentine sphere of influence. Its ruler, Niccolò Vitelli, exercised complete control despite ostensibly being a private citizen, and when Giuliano besieged the city with his forces on 24 June 1474 Lorenzo sent troops to support his friend, fully aware that this would provoke a furious reaction from Sixtus. By this time, Sixtus had been courting Federico for a while – in May 1474 Federico was entertained by Giuliano in Rome and had an audience with Sixtus in which they discussed a marriage alliance between Federico's daughter and Giuliano's brother Giovanni – but Federico was swayed by the pope's burgeoning alliance with Naples, with whom Federico had always been close and against whom had never taken military action in his capacity as *condottiere*.¹¹⁴ So, on 21 August, Federico and his troops arrived at Città di Castello alongside those of Giuliano and Naples and Vitelli promptly surrendered, leaving a client of the Papal States on Lorenzo's doorstep. In October, only six months after the *Disputationes* was completed, Federico was rewarded by Sixtus through ennoblement as a duke. There were other repercussions for Lorenzo beyond the loss of Federico's military prowess. In July 1474 the Medici lost their status as papal bankers in favour of the Pazzi, a reward for their cooperation during the Imola affair. Then, in December 1474, and as an act of direct antagonism to Florence, Sixtus appointed Pietro Riario's close associate Francesco Salviati as bishop of Pisa. These events would later set in motion the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478 in which, unknown to Lorenzo or Landino, Federico was a silent participant.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Rochon, *La Jeunesse*, pp. 204-05; Najemy, *A History of Florence*, p. 353.

¹¹⁴ Clough, pp. 118-19, and on Sixtus' courting of Federico, see pp. 133-34.

¹¹⁵ On Federico's involvement in the Pazzi conspiracy, see Marcello Simonetta, 'Federico da Montefeltro contro Firenze: Retrospectiva inedita della congiura dei Pazzi', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 161.2 (April-June 2003), 261-284. See also *Reden*, pp. 69.119-70.139.

Given that the febrile nature of the relationship between Lorenzo and Federico would not have been lost on Landino, what then, if anything, was he seeking to do by dedicating the *Disputationes* to Federico and making him so prominent in its representation of the combination of the active and contemplative lives? It is telling that within the *Disputationes* Federico's role in contemporary politics is discussed both in the fictive setting of 1469 and in non-diegetic sections such as the proem to the first book, where Landino refers to the series of battles between Federico and his arch-enemy Sigismondo Malatesta in the 1460s.¹¹⁶ Hence, whether hearing the voice of the Camaldoli disputants or Landino himself, the reader cannot help but be drawn to associate Federico's presence throughout the dialogue with his political conduct over the preceding years, especially in the theatre of war. That Landino emphasises Federico's politics so explicitly has further implications when we consider the *condottiere's* wider role in the dialogue. Landino presents Federico as nothing less than an exemplar of the union of active and contemplative lives and places this description in the mouth of Lorenzo himself:

We have in our time Federico da Montefeltro, Prince of Urbino, who I do not doubt should be compared with the greatest commanders of a former age. The virtues of this most distinguished man are many, and wholly admirable: an intellect that is sharp and enthusiastic for everything, and so much zeal for literature that there is no period of rest from his affairs in which he does not apply himself to leisurely study. He achieves much by reading, much by listening, a great deal by debating, so that he is rightly thought to be amongst the most learned men. But force him to devote himself wholly to these speculations in such a way that he entirely neglects both his realm, which he administers so that it is peaceful and flourishing, and the military matters in which, without debate, he surpasses the leaders of his age and contends with all in antiquity? To what sort of person will he be reduced, having been such a great man?¹¹⁷

Crucially, the overarching direction of Lorenzo's argument here in favour of the active life demands that he insist that Federico must not neglect his civic or military duties. In the light of Landino's accounts of Federico's political exploits it is tempting to read this as a coded call for reconciliation between the two rulers in the face of the baleful influence of Sixtus IV, celebrating a commitment to political action devoted to a common cause. Under this interpretation, Landino's dedication of the text to Federico is nakedly political, a means of securing peace between him and Lorenzo by exhorting the two statesmen – one established, one inexperienced – to virtuous political action. There is some support for such a view in the fourth book of the *Disputationes*. In a not-so-subtle

¹¹⁶ See *DC*, p. 98.17-21 and pp. 5.13-6.33.

¹¹⁷ 'Habemus nostra tempestate Federicum Feretranum Urbinatum principem, quem ego maximis superiorum aetatum imperatoribus comparandum non dubito. Plurimae sunt ac omnino admirandae in viro excellentissimo virtutes, ingenium acerrimum et ad omnia vehemens, tantum autem litterarum studium, ut nulla unquam a negotiis cessatio detur, quin otium illud ad litteras non transferat, efficitque multa legendo, multa audiendo, plurima disputando ut inter litteratissimos iure censeatur. Sed fac ipsum ita se totum huiusmodi speculationibus tradidisse, ut imperium, quod pacatissimum florentissimumque administrat, penitus neglexerit remque militarem, in qua et suae aetatis duces sine controversia superat et cum omni antiquitate contendit, nunquam attigerit, ex tanto viro ad quem hominem redibit?', *DC*, p. 32.9-21.

barb directed at the clergy, Landino first has Alberti extol Federico's personal conduct, proclaiming 'who would not be amazed at the continence and sobriety of such a man?', and then has him contrast Federico's behaviour with the dissolution of the Church, saying: 'What a criticism he is of the luxury and laxity of those men of ours who in their red and black priestly hats and their white veils preach a doctrine of complete sanctity!'¹¹⁸ In the context of the then recent accession of Sixtus this is difficult to read as anything other than open hostility towards the notion of an alliance between Urbino and the Papal States, and an expression of implicit preference for continued cooperation with a truly virtuous ruler, Lorenzo. One more piece of evidence also implies that Landino's dedication to Federico had an eye on his relationship with the Medici, which has also been noticed by Gabriele Bugada.¹¹⁹ This is the fact that, since Landino dedicated his commentary on Horace's *Ars Poetica* to Federico's son Guidobaldo shortly after the cessation of hostilities with the Medici in the spring of 1482, Landino's dedications to Montefeltro *père* and *fils* demarcate the boundaries of the enmity between the Florence and Urbino with remarkable accuracy. Whether this is by accident or design – Landino never dedicated any other works to the Montefeltro dynasty but his only significant output in the years between 1474 and 1482 was the expressly Florentine *Comento* – it still remains that Landino dedicated a work to a Montefeltro immediately upon the relations between the two houses being repaired.

It is nonetheless worth exercising extreme caution in advancing this analysis of Landino's dedication to Federico. Aside from the crudity of such a monocausal explanation, the practical concerns of literary dedication such as the desire to foster patronage, the wish to self-publicise and, in this case, seek access to an enormously well-appointed library all obtain. Moreover, Landino would have been aware that the hectoring of a humble humanist was unlikely to sway the relationship of two of the most powerful men on the Italian peninsula. This is not to say, however, that elements of political persuasion are absent from Landino's reasoning. Annabel Patterson, in her analysis of the temporality of the *Disputationes* in her *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery*, has identified three potential reasons on the part of Landino for dislocating the setting of the disputation from 1474 to the summer of 1469: to permit a didactic relationship between Lorenzo and Landino; to recreate a time of prelapsarian innocence before Volterra; or for the purposes of political commentary (which is perfectly compatible with the others).¹²⁰ If Landino had an eye on contemporary events at all when formulating the framework of the *Disputationes* we might expect his reasons for the temporal dislocation and his choice of Federico as dedicatee to align closely. Under Patterson's preferred explanation – the third – Landino dedicated the *Disputationes* to Federico but

¹¹⁸ 'Quis non obstupescat tanti viri continentiam ac sobrietatem', *DC*, p. 243.8-10; 'quantum nostrorum hominum, qui rubris nigrisque galeris ac niveis ricinis totius sanctitatis doctrinam profitentur, luxus lasciviaque exagitat', *DC*, p. 243.25-27.

¹¹⁹ Cristoforo Landino, *In quinti Horatii Flacci Artem Poeticam ad Pisones Interpretationes*, ed. by Gabriele Bugada (Florence: Sismel, 2012), pp. 20-21.

¹²⁰ Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 67-68.

shifted the date of the setting to 1469 in order to grant himself the opportunity to comment on current affairs while maintaining a judicious interpretive distance. In this view, Landino's dedication to Federico satisfies the conventions of patronage and humility while still permitting him to construct a virtue politics relating to the contemporary diplomatic situation.

So, while we should not overestimate the extent to which it supplants the usual channels of aristocratic patronage, the decision to dedicate the *Disputationes* to Federico was in some small part an attempt to illustrate the advantages of an alliance with Lorenzo over Sixtus. With the fictive events sitting at a temporal and psychological remove from reality, Landino was free to sketch complimentary depictions of the two rulers – the warrior-sage to whom the work is explicitly dedicated and the young prince whose moral instruction is the work's true aim – in order that their mutual contributions to an ethical framework devoted to a common *summum bonum* might cement the relationship between them. It is likely that the proximity in time between publication and the transference of Federico's allegiance to Sixtus has hitherto obscured Landino's intentions, given that the dating of the *Disputationes* has been erroneous until relatively recently, but that this attempt proved to be futile not long after the completion of the *Disputationes* nonetheless speaks to the urgency of Landino's endeavour.¹²¹ His call to proper moral conduct for these powerful leaders now compels us to investigate the scholarly interpretations of Quattrocento virtue politics.

¹²¹ See Fubini, 'Cristoforo Landino, questioni di cronologia e di interpretazione'.

1.3 Virtue and political legitimacy in the Quattrocento

A theme which has proved consistently useful in understanding the relationship between Quattrocento political thought and the *studia humanitatis* is that of the humanistic cultivation of virtue.¹²² In the tradition of Baron and Garin, the humanistic development of civic virtue towards a *vita activa* of citizen participation in the government and institutions of the republic for the common good was conceived in contemporary thought as the proper realisation of human nature, in contradistinction to the withdrawn religious contemplation exalted in the preceding centuries. Kristeller and his supporters have pointed out how humanist didacticism strives to inculcate classical virtues into the scions of the ruling elite, and, more recently, James Hankins has interpreted this humanistic programme for the personal development of rulers as a system of virtue ethics and, by extension, virtue politics.¹²³

Hankins's motivation for prioritising the role of virtue in humanist thought on politics is as much a procedural decision as a heuristic one. He is scrupulous in his attention to questions of historiography, arguing that the project of seeking foundations in Quattrocento humanism for transhistorical concepts (such as, for instance, republican liberty) is intrinsically teleological, and thus incapable of providing a truly contextualised account of how humanists thought about themselves and their society. In particular, he criticises Skinner's *Foundations of Modern Political Thought* which, its influence notwithstanding, fails to satisfy the requirements of its own contextualising methodology by adopting a framework which focuses on transhistorical explanation of the origins of the modern state.¹²⁴ If we are to avoid pre-empting the answers to our questions by superimposing onto the intellectual environment of the time anachronisms to which

¹²² Choice works from the copious scholarship on humanistic politics include Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), I; John G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and the Arts: Collected Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Kristeller, 'Humanism', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. by Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner and Eckhard Kefler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp. 113-37; Jerrold Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); John M. Najemy, 'Civic Humanism and Florentine Politics', in *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections*, ed. by James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 75-104; and James Hankins, 'The "Baron Thesis" after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56.2 (April 1995), 309-38.

¹²³ James Hankins has recently published his magisterial *Virtue Politics: Soulcraft and Statecraft in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2019), which is the culmination of work developed in a number of articles and conference papers over the last ten years. These include 'Machiavelli, Civic Humanism, and the Humanist Politics of Virtue', *Italian Culture*, 32.2 (September 2014), 98-109; 'The Virtue Politics of the Italian Humanists', in *Beyond Reception: Renaissance Humanism and the Transformation of Classical Antiquity*, ed. by Patrick Baker, Johannes Helmrath, and Craig Kallendorf (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 95-114; and 'Modern Republicanism and the History of Republics', in *Nuovi maestri, antichi testi: Umanesimo e Rinascimento alle origini del pensiero moderno. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi in onore di Cesare Vasoli, Mantova, 1-3 December 2010*, ed. by Stefano Caroti and Vittoria Perrone Compagni (Florence: Olschki, 2012), pp. 109-26.

¹²⁴ Hankins, 'The Virtue Politics of the Italian Humanists', pp. 63-65.

contemporary thinkers were wholly indifferent, we ought instead to ask ourselves precisely what themes humanists wrote about when discussing politics. For Hankins the answer, drawn from his vast knowledge of their literature and correspondence, is *virtue*. This subject is so important to humanists that Hankins claims their political thought can be said to advocate a form of ‘virtue politics’, a term with which he deliberately evokes ‘virtue ethics’, the essentially Aristotelian-Thomistic approach to normative ethics developed by late twentieth-century moral philosophers such as Elizabeth Anscombe, Alasdair MacIntyre and Bernard Williams that centres on the cultivation of moral conduct on the part of an agent rather than placing moral value on the content of actions (as in deontology) or on their consequences (as in consequentialism).¹²⁵

Humanistic virtue politics as defined by Hankins amounts to a collective understanding of the moral character of the ruling class as the means of legitimising the exercise of political power within a commonwealth. In this interpretation, the explicit connection between virtue and political legitimacy is key:

Political legitimacy for [humanists] does not come from divine sanction or from hereditary right or from the constitutional form of the polity or from the express consent of the governed. What ultimately makes a regime legitimate is *power well exercised*, what may be called ‘legitimacy of exercise’, a species of moral legitimacy.¹²⁶

In humanist eyes, a legitimate state is a state whose rulers exercise power virtuously; states whose rulers exercise power in an immoral or vicious way are to be censured and condemned. This understanding developed from what was for the humanists the exemplary role of Rome in political history. Hankins argues that a perceived inability for institutions such as the law, the nobility and the Church to adequately legitimise political authority gave the question of legitimacy an increasing contemporary significance.¹²⁷ When Quattrocento humanists thought and wrote about Italian city-states their idealistic point of reference was the Roman *res publica* and, in the absence of institutional continuity with Rome, not to mention anything approaching its political stability and surpassing power, they strove to emulate it and to revive its glory through the appropriation of what was seen as the only remaining possible means of legitimisation: the great virtue of Rome’s citizens and rulers as scrutinised by Sallust, Livy, Tacitus and, especially, Cicero.¹²⁸ At the same time as these Roman ideas of political virtue began to supplant the constitutional and legal concerns of scholastic

¹²⁵ Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, p.36. See e.g. Elizabeth Anscombe, ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’, *Philosophy*, 33.124 (January 1958), 1-19; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 2007) and *Dependent Rational Animals* (London: Duckworth, 2009); Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Fontana, 1985); Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹²⁶ Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, p. 37; Hankins, ‘The Virtue Politics of the Italian Humanists’, p. 97.

¹²⁷ Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, pp. 37-45 and 48-51; Hankins, ‘The Virtue Politics of the Italian Humanists’, pp. 104-09.

¹²⁸ See e.g. Sal. *Cat.* I.6-10, Livy *Hist.* I.57-60 and Cic. *Tusc.* V passim.

political thought, humanist educational methods were stressing the value of classical literature to moral development. For the educated classes, the cultivation of virtue and of the humanities became synonymous, and hence the ubiquity of these values and the candour with which they were held cannot be emphasised enough. Virtuous legitimacy of exercise was not simply a propagandistic matter of fostering public confidence in the authority of the ruling class. It was an attitude ingrained in educators, nobility, functionaries and citizens alike which concerned the very nature and function of the commonwealth and, crucially, was nurtured and valorised by the prevailing intellectual climate of humanism.

According to Hankins, this socio-intellectual environment was regulated by the use of humanist eloquence, which he interprets as a ‘social technology’.¹²⁹ Even though forms of government and criteria for citizenship might vary, and even though the power of certain dynasties may continue, the humanist must strive to establish a meritocracy of virtue through the persuasion and education of its leaders and citizens. Only then can the state be legitimised and the risk of tyranny reduced. In particular, epideictic rhetoric – the rhetoric of praise or blame – was key, replacing legal or administrative coercion with a framework in which the ruling class was first exhorted to cultivate civic virtue through classical education, then rewarded with the admiration of their peers (and of posterity) through the means of panegyrics, public letters, dedications and celebratory histories.¹³⁰ Vicious conduct, on the other hand, was to be publicly censured and pilloried with invectives or histories of a less flattering kind. This is a political morality lived out in the public sphere and is entirely other-related in its conception, with the ruling class motivated to exercise power virtuously for the community by the desire for honour and to avoid self-interest by the fear of shame. It follows that within the theoretical apparatus underpinning Hankins’ idea of the legitimacy of exercise a recurring theme of educated discourse, which in fact he describes as ‘a genre almost synonymous with humanism’, is that of *true* nobility: namely, the position that nobility is conferred by virtue rather than wealth or lineage and, as a consequence, the basis of admission to the ruling elite should be meritocratic.¹³¹ The examples of this genre are extensive, including Poggio Bracciolini’s *De nobilitate* and the second part of his *De avaritia*, Buonaccorso da Montemagno’s *De nobilitate* and Bartolomeo Platina’s *De vera nobilitate* but, as we shall see later, of particular interest to Hankins – and to us – is Landino’s treatise of the same name.¹³² In each of these works we find the sentiment, implicit or explicit, that virtuous people of humble origins had, in Hankins’s words, an ‘equality in the capacity for virtue’ to the traditional nobility and, while a permeable political elite is

¹²⁹ Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, pp. 52-53; Hankins, ‘Machiavelli, Civic Humanism, and the Humanist Politics of Virtue’, p. 102; and Hankins, ‘The Virtue Politics of the Italian Humanists’, p. 109.

¹³⁰ It is worth pointing out that humanists were far less concerned with the art of oratory than their Roman forebears and hence ‘rhetoric’ tended to be understood in its literary sense.

¹³¹ Hankins, ‘Machiavelli, Civic Humanism, and the Humanist Politics of Virtue’, p. 103.

¹³² Rabil’s *Knowledge, Goodness and Power* is a valuable sourcebook of translated texts on true nobility, and translations of Montemagno’s and Platina’s texts along with Poggio Bracciolini’s *De nobilitate* can be found therein. The most recent critical edition of *De avaritia* is Poggio Bracciolini, *De avaritia*, ed. by Giuseppe Germano (Livorno: Belforte, 1994).

still an elite conceived in terms which are fundamentally hierarchical and far from egalitarian, this way of thinking about politics nevertheless constitutes a radical departure from scholastic thought.¹³³ Virtue-centred meritocracy as a justification for political exercise of power would doubtless have been as appealing to those Quattrocento rulers who were descendants of merchants or *condottieri* as it would for humanist educators, constituting a manifesto both accessible and appealing to the community at large with none of the pedantry and entrenched hierarchies attendant in medieval legalism. Indeed, there was certainly evidence of a wider trend towards meritocracy in the intellectual life of the time. To one extent or another, the scholarly elite surrounding Lorenzo de' Medici mirrored this new political status quo, with Landino, Ficino and Poliziano all being from families of faded or modest reputation.

This conception of virtue politics provides us with a useful framework for thinking about how humanistic ethics was projected into the political realm. It is necessary, nonetheless, to spend some time elaborating upon and developing certain themes which are particularly germane to understanding Landino's approach in order to establish some hermeneutic principles for the analysis of the political thought of the *Disputationes*. One essential element of humanist virtue politics we need to restate is the tacit acknowledgement that that Quattrocento moral thought of every strand – ethical, political and legal – rests on an assumption of interdependence on the part of the members of a community which is based on the intellectual legacy of Aristotle, Cicero and St Paul.¹³⁴ While we can trace the historical development of this mode of thought through the various manifestations of Florentine republicanism, the assumption of interdependence is broader than civic engagement alone. The debate about whether the *vita activa* or *vita contemplativa* was the superior way of life was of profound importance at this time and so there was no shortage of humanists who considered civic engagement a distraction or frustration at best. Rather, what the humanists took as axiomatic was a deeper functional interdependence rooted in Stoic *oikeiosis* and encapsulated in the *non nobis solum* maxim of Ciceronian cosmopolitanism: that since humans join themselves together in societies by nature, there is an inescapable and reciprocally influential relationship between the individual and the collective.¹³⁵ This assumption pervades texts of all kinds in the Quattrocento. It underpins republican writing throughout the century and is intrinsically linked with *libertas* in Florentine civic self-image.¹³⁶ Yet, after Petrarch's advocacy of a secularised solitude, those humanists who advocate withdrawal from public affairs also tend to accept that the purpose of any

¹³³ Hankins, 'The Virtue Politics of the Italian Humanists', p. 41.

¹³⁴ See e.g. Aristot. *Pol.* I.i.1-12; Cic. *Off.* I.vii.20-23, I.xvi.50-xvii.58 and I.xxv.85; Acts 17:26; and 1 Thess. 4:9.

¹³⁵ Cic. *Off.* I.vii.22 and see above n. 59. For Cicero's view of *oikeiosis*, see e.g. Cic. *Fin.* III.v.16-ix.31, *Fin.* III.xix.62-64 and Cic. *Off.* I.iv.11-12.

¹³⁶ See for instance Leonardo Bruni, *Oration for the Funeral of Nanni Strozzi* in *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: Selected Texts*, trans. by Gordon Griffiths and others (Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1987), pp. 121-27; Matteo Palmieri, *Vita civile*, ed. by Gino Belloni (Florence: Sansoni, 1982), II.13-18 and throughout Salutati's *Contra maledicum et obiurgatorem*, a reply to an invective of Antonio Loschi which can be found in Coluccio Salutati, *Political Writings*, ed. by Stefano U. Baldassarri, trans. by Rolf Bagemihl (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 174-395.

such withdrawal on the part of the individual is to benefit the collective in one way or another such as, for instance, a scholarly development whose fruits can improve the moral character of others.¹³⁷ Humanist educational treatises often therefore maintain that the development of moral character on the part of students through learning ought to be viewed for its collective benefit through its cultivation of *liberi homines*.¹³⁸ For instance, in his *De ingenuis moralibus et liberalibus studiis adolescentiae* of 1402-03 Pier Paolo Vergerio writes that a knowledge of history and moral philosophy are crucial for the common good, the former for establishing precedent and the latter for its normative guidance and liberalising power.¹³⁹

Advocates of princely rule advance similar assumptions of interdependence, sometimes in a corporatist form inspired by Plato, with the prince as the head of a collective body politic, and in others through the Aristotelian analogy of the state as being equivalent to a household in which the prince assumes the role of the father. Bartolomeo Sacchi places the prince as a republican *primus inter pares* in his *De principe* of 1471:

Many things belong to fellow citizens in common which, as Cicero says, maintain human society: the forum, temples, colonnades, streets, statues, laws, courts, voting-rights, in addition to social circles and intimate friends. Moreover, there are marriage ties and neighbourhood connections, which are, one might say, very strong knots by means of which the city binds itself together. From here arise the propagation of progeny and the origin of cities. Having concern for this is not out of place for the best prince: the more citizens are united together by their own accord, the more numerous your people become. There can be no mutual goodwill between you and your citizens unless they perceive that you have embraced all of them with the same love and that you see to it that everybody lives as happily as possible. Since no society is more outstanding or stable than one which is provided with good men, it will be your responsibility to ensure that they are instructed in learning as well as good morals and refinement.¹⁴⁰

The reason I make an effort to emphasise this widespread assumption of interdependence is that it creates a mediated space in which the performance of political practice becomes subject to objective standards. In a culture in which the relationship between the collective and the individual is based on a naturalistic theory of human socialisation, the shared values of that collective prevail

¹³⁷ See e.g. letter I.10 in Coluccio Salutati, *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, ed. by Francesco Novati, 4 vols (Rome: Forzani, 1891-1911, reprinted Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1968), I, pp. 26-29, and the proem to his *De seculo et religione* in Coluccio Salutati, *On the World and Religious Life*, trans. by Tina Marshall (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 2-9. On the other hand, Witt, while recognising Petrarch's ethics as 'at once cosmopolitan and personal', interprets his isolation as having a less civically-inclined bent. See Ronald Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 239-60.

¹³⁸ On which, see Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, and Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), II; Grafton and Jardine; and Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning 1300-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

¹³⁹ Pier Paolo Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus studiis adolescentiae* in Craig Kallendorf, ed. and trans., *Humanist Educational Treatises* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 2-91 (p. 49).

¹⁴⁰ Bartolomeo Sacchi, *On the Prince*, trans. by Nicholas Webb, in Jill Krayer, ed., *Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts Volume 2: Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 88-108 (p. 98).

upon individual conduct and in so doing take on a normative dimension which is lacking in the value pluralism of the liberal tradition. Humanistic teaching inculcated into the citizens of Quattrocento city-states that the moral choices available to an actor were limited in a very real sense to the standards of the broad social networks which constituted the public sphere in a way which contained elements of a proto-Burkean support for tradition, albeit not ruling out the capacity for radical action if it conformed to the norms of virtuous conduct. It is, I think, this context that Hankins has in mind as providing a normative framework for the ‘legitimacy of exercise’ of virtue politics and which we should understand as supplying the standards against which moral statements, judgments and decisions were made in the world of the *Disputationes*. As we shall see, the extent to which Landino is able to integrate republican and Platonic ideas rests on ideas that the obligations we have to others arise from our shared social bonds, both in terms of how it is necessary to involve ourselves in civic life to purify ourselves of vice and why the purified sage, or *sapiens*, must return from contemplation to benefit the state.

Another principle important to Hankins’ view of humanist virtue politics is the way in which rhetoric functions as a ‘social technology’ which regulates and mediates the legitimate exercise of political power. If humanist assumptions of civic interdependence meant that the ethical deliberation of the political class was conceived in terms of normative communal standards, then the framework of moral choices available to this political class would be epiphenomenal, an emergent feature of the interaction of citizens in the public space. It follows that the various kinds of political language which mediate this interaction must in turn regulate elite modes of personal conduct. There is no doubt that prominent individuals educated in the *studia humanitatis* cared a great deal about what others thought of them. A concern with personal *reputatio* which was grounded in the classical ideals of Cicero, Aristotle and Sallust established itself as the modality of social control throughout the century, finding its apogee in Machiavelli’s exaltation of princely *gloria* in *Il Principe* and the *Discorsi*.¹⁴¹ Scholars – Quentin Skinner foremost among them – have written extensively about how it was a signature quality of humanistic political thought to hold the chief reward of virtue to be reputational benefit to both community and ruler.¹⁴² With elite attitudes towards civic approval and disapproval being psychologically embedded in this way, the rhetorical power of speeches, public letters, diplomatic *missive*, panegyrics, invectives, dialogues and histories in moulding reputations carried enormous significance and it is this that Hankins describes as the prevailing ‘climate of thought’ suffusing contemporary political discourse.

¹⁴¹ See e.g. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Adams (New York: Norton, 1992), chapters 21 and 25, and Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), I.10 and III.40-42.

¹⁴² In particular see Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, I, pp. 118-28; Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, II, pp. 118-26; Russell Price, ‘The Theme of Gloria in Machiavelli’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 30.4, Studies in the Renaissance Issue (Winter 1977), 588-631; Alison Brown, ‘De-masking Renaissance Republicanism’, in *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections*, ed. by James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 179-99; and Karl R. Alexander, ‘Honor, Reputation and Conflict: George of Trebizond and Humanist Acts of Self-Presentation’ (PhD thesis, University of Kentucky, 2013).

One must stress, however, that the kind of epideictic rhetoric which Hankins emphasises as an instrument of humanistic approval and disapproval is only the most literal and exoteric manifestation of the persuasive techniques used in the Quattrocento. It cannot be overstated how much humanistic culture, steeped in Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, valued rhetorical excellence in all its variegated shades. Humanistic discourse addressed to rulers, directly or indirectly, had a tendency towards the euphemistic, the circumlocutory and the baroque, but was no less replete with coded moral instruction for all that.¹⁴³ Over the preceding couple of centuries, the literary method of the moral persuasion of princes which had emerged from the *ars dictaminis* increasingly emphasised *elocutio*, one of the five rhetorical operations in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*.¹⁴⁴ Quintilian's orator, like that of Cicero's *De oratore* and *De inventione*, must communicate freely and easily, with a full knowledge of the facts, but should adorn his language appropriate to the social context. Both the humanists who sought to emulate him and their courtly readers would therefore have instinctively understood the science of rhetorical devices in all their nuance. As Melissa Meriam Bullard puts it with regard to humanist diplomatic culture, 'Renaissance diplomatic praxis in this context encouraged close attention to words and their possible shades of meaning.'¹⁴⁵ An indicative example can be found in the dedication to Lorenzo in Bartolomeo Scala's *De legibus et iudiciis dialogus* of 1483. Scala's dialogue, whose two interlocutors advance the republican ideal of law and Platonic princedom respectively, is of a decidedly didactic bent and seeks to determine whether laws are universally applicable or should be tailored to their context in place and time. At the time of writing, Lorenzo had just returned from the Congress of Cremona and Scala, then the Chancellor of Florence, presented his moral instruction to the prince thus:

In view of your immense and deserved authority in our republic, Lorenzo de' Medici, and of your clearly superior intellect, gravity and wisdom, I would be imprudent and untrue to myself as a citizen and as your friend, if I failed to consult you... before undertaking any private project, much less an instructive moral treatise that concerns the republic and practically the entire human race. During the few days that you were in Cremona as our envoy to the war council, your absence gave me some extra time off from my duties as a public secretary. So I wrote down, as faithfully as I could, a brief discussion concerning laws and judgments which I had with Bernardo Machiavelli. But I resolved not to publish it without first sending it with greetings to you, who are the judge and advisor of all my affairs, so that I might have your valuable opinion on this subject.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ See in particular Melissa Meriam Bullard, 'The Language of Diplomacy in the Renaissance', in *Lorenzo de' Medici: New Perspectives*, ed. by Bernard Toscani (New York: Lang, 1993), pp. 263-78 and Chapters Two ('Anxiety, Image Making and Political Reality') and Three ('The Language of Diplomacy') in Bullard, *Lorenzo il Magnifico*.

¹⁴⁴ See Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, pp. 28-41 and Brian Vickers, 'Rhetorical and Anti-Rhetorical Tropes: on Writing the History of Elocutio', *Comparative Criticism*, 3 (1981), 105-32.

¹⁴⁵ Bullard, 'The Language of Diplomacy in the Renaissance', p. 270.

¹⁴⁶ Bartolomeo Scala, *De legibus et iudiciis dialogus* in Scala, *Essays and Dialogues*, trans. by Renée N. Watkins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 158-231.

Scala manages to be perfectly clear about his meaning without being explicit in stating it. He indicates that he has written an important work of moral pedagogy concerning the republic, takes care to emphasise both his and Lorenzo's civic duties and encourages Lorenzo to read it soon. Although wrapped up in an ornate and periphrastic phraseology merited by the gulf in social standing, Scala's dedication conveys to Lorenzo an implicit exhortation towards the development of his civic virtue which will be taken seriously because of this language, not despite it.

It is this measured professional praxis as much as the magniloquence of the humanist 'public intellectual' on which Hankins' conception of rhetorically mediated virtue rests. To fully understand humanist rhetoric as a social technology for regulating political virtue requires close reading to recognise the subtleties of discursive admonition: the coded disapproval in the form of scholarly paraphrase; the diminution of achievements through conspicuous omission; the accentuation of personal deficiencies with overblown praise. It is therefore necessary to be alert to the intricacies of language in all its forms and to the particularities of each of its modes if we are to interpret the political message being delivered in the *Disputationes*. The literary techniques with which Landino conveys his moral instruction – the moral allegory, the disputational dialogue, reference to moral and intellectual exemplars – are subtle and allusive, but no less concerned with the language of praise and blame for it. Hence, close philological attention to the language he uses and a sensitivity to literary and allegorical dynamics will be crucial in understanding how Landino hopes to influence the reader and encourage him to the cultivation of virtue.

The final principle which Hankins deems central to humanist virtue politics is the idea that, in theory at least, political power can only be legitimately exercised by the virtuous who possess 'true nobility'. It is therefore necessary to discard other justifications for power such as wealth and status, attributes of what I will refer to as 'conventional nobility'. Crucially, this means that all humans must be equal in their capacity for virtue.¹⁴⁷ I mentioned earlier that Hankins cites Landino's *De vera nobilitate* as a salutary example of this mode of thought. Here is the excerpt, which Landino supports using the authority of Plato:

Virtue is the only and unique giver of true nobility... [True] nobility [based on virtue] is a kind of health-bringing planet and the highest support of the state... All the greatest dignities and highest magistracies should be handed over and entrusted to those who are more noble; ... and because the country itself especially belongs to the nobles, it should be committed to their care.¹⁴⁸

This is as unambiguous a statement of the primacy of virtue as one could hope for and, as we have seen, is indicative of a common sentiment among contemporary humanists. It constitutes an unequivocal commitment to the principle of equality in capacity for virtue with the 'greatest

¹⁴⁷ Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, pp. 54-62.

¹⁴⁸ Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, p. 39 and 'The Virtue Politics of the Italian Humanists', p. 98, citing *DVN*, p. 49.

dignities' and 'highest magistracies' being assigned to the virtuous for the reason of their virtue alone. The key to understanding the broader implications of the primacy of virtue, though, is how in this and other political works of the Quattrocento humanists use the distinction between true nobility – that is, virtue itself – and the various attributes of conventional nobility such as lineage, wealth, and public honours to establish the terms of proper moral conduct.

Landino had recognised this distinction as early as 1453 when, in his eulogy for Carlo Marsuppini, he described the chancellor's poetry as singing 'the praises and love of upright virtue, and the honor that comes from *true* nobility' (my emphasis) and he was able to elaborate upon the question of the role of nobility in the *Disputationes*.¹⁴⁹ In the third book of the *Disputationes* Landino interprets Dido as an allegorical example of an empire's decadence, with her psychological fall from temperance through continence and incontinence into intemperance being a metaphor for the descent from civic diligence into sloth and lust. He adduces the following passage to support his case: 'Often the virtue of the man [Aeneas] returns to her mind, | and often the honour of his lineage; his face and words cling fast to her breast.'¹⁵⁰ For Landino, the fact that Dido's love for Aeneas was motivated not by virtue alone but also by his prodigious social standing compromises it from the outset and reveals a moral unsteadiness which contains the seeds of her own ruin:

From the beginning Dido is moved to love Aeneas not only by [true] virtue... but by those things which in social intercourse are regarded not only as goods but as the greatest goods. For who would not enumerate among the latter nobility of family, dignity and excellence of appearance, and finally, speech distinguished with great eloquence, when in both the forum and the senate these things are not weighed on the scale of the wise, but are weighed on the scale of the people?¹⁵¹

Under this interpretation, conventional nobility has been relegated to a second order of personal qualities, useful for social intercourse but ultimately superfluous or even dangerous. Landino is describing a division common to Quattrocento humanists: the demarcation of goods described in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* which places conventional nobility and its adjuncts among the external goods, or 'goods of fortune'.¹⁵² It is in the second book of the *Disputationes* where Landino first makes this separation explicit:

¹⁴⁹ 'Laudes rectae et virtutis amorem quem sequitur vera nobilitate decus', *Xandra* III.7.77-78 (translation from Chatfield, p. 179).

¹⁵⁰ Verg. *Aen.* IV.3-4.

¹⁵¹ 'Movetur autem a principio Dido, ut Aeneam amet, non solum virtute... sed iis, quae humanis coetibus non solum bona, verum etiam summa bona habentur. Quis enim generis nobilitatem, quis formae dignitatem atque excellentiam, quis denique multo ornatu insignem orationem inter summa non enumeret, cum in foro, cum in senatu haec non sapientum statera, sed populari trutina ponderentur?', *DC*, p. 183.6-13.

¹⁵² This categorisation is first made by Aristotle in *Arist. Nic. Eth.* I.viii.2-x.16 and also *Pol.* VII.i.2-5, with related passages in *Nic. Eth.* I.v.4-8 and X.vi.2-3. It is repeated and scrutinised by Cicero in, for instance, *Cic. Tusc.* V.xxx.84-85, *Cic. Fin.* III.xiii.43-44, IV.xii.29-31 and IV.xxi.58-60, and *Cic. Ac.* I.v.19. Moreover, Thomas Aquinas devotes *Summa Theologiae* I-II Q.2 to the Aristotelian separation of goods. See also Matthew Cashen, 'The Ugly, the Lonely and the Lowly: Aristotle on Happiness and the External Goods', *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 29.1 (January 2012), 1-19; John M. Cooper, 'Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune', *The*

I will use the [following] division, which abides in common parlance. All things which were named good are either called goods of the body, like toughness, health, pleasure and beauty; or goods of fortune – since they were situated by an accident of fortune – in which number are held nobility, wealth, honours and glory; or finally goods of the soul, which is virtue itself.¹⁵³

Aristotle affirms that we achieve *eudaimonia* through the active exercise of virtue – the good of the soul – when this activity extends over a complete lifetime and, crucially, is supplemented with sufficient external goods: while he is unattached to such goods, the magnanimous man is made self-sufficient and can exercise liberality through the virtuous expenditure of his wealth.¹⁵⁴ External goods have an important instrumental value and it is impossible, or at least not easy, to achieve *eudaimonia* without them. This relationship is not quite at odds with asserting the primacy of virtue as true nobility and indeed some humanists were comfortable with excusing excessive affluence on the part of their sponsors (the Medici regime in particular) where it was accompanied by liberality, but the idea of external goods such as wealth and political connections having an instrumental value in performing virtuous action was just as often regarded with suspicion, with humanists instead choosing to adopt Aristotle's terminology without attendant baggage that could be interpreted as celebrating the status quo.¹⁵⁵ Usually this was accomplished by combining Aristotle's ethical thought within a heterogenous mixture of philosophies such as Christian scripture, Stoicism and Platonism. Bartolomeo Scala, for instance, admits that external goods 'minister greatly to the conduct of life' but has already established through Terence, Chilon, Diogenes and the gospels that 'the goods of the mind are lost through material wealth'.¹⁵⁶ Matteo Palmieri errs more towards the Aristotelian position, but still takes pains to emphasise the superfluity of wealth:

Philosophical Review, 94.2 (April 1985), 173-96; and Roger Crisp, 'Aristotle on Greatness of Soul', in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. by Richard Kraut (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 158-178.

¹⁵³ 'Utar ea divisione, quae in ore omnium versatur. Nam omnia quae bona appellata sunt aut corporis dicuntur bona ut robur, valitudo, voluptas, pulchritudo; aut fortunae, quoniam in eius temeritate posita sunt, quo in numero habentur nobilitas, divitiae, honores, gloria; aut postremo animi, quae ipsa virtus est', *DC*, p. 78.5-9. Landino returns to this separation in *Comento, Inf.* VII.67-96.6-17 and *DVN*, p. 47.

¹⁵⁴ Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* I.viii.15-17.

¹⁵⁵ See especially Jill Kraye, 'Moral Philosophy', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. by Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner and Eckhard Keßler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 303-86. Quentin Skinner also addresses this subject in Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, II, pp. 224-29, emphasising the distinction made by humanists between wealth which is inherited (which is compatible with true nobility) and that which is earned (which is most certainly not) and noting that suspicion towards wealth as an external good was not accompanied with negative assumptions about property rights. Cicero's position regarding personal wealth in *Cic. Off.* I.viii.25 is that 'I do not mean to find fault with the acquisition of property provided it hurts nobody, but unjust acquisition of it is always to be avoided.'

¹⁵⁶ Scala, *Dialogus de Consolatione*, 35 and 32 in Scala, *Essays and Dialogues*, pp. 119 and 115.

He who is willing to die for virtue will easily disdain riches and the goods of fortune, since to place hope in them is very much contrary to greatness of spirit. Nothing is more magnificent than to disdain riches if you do not have them and, if you do have them, to liberally distribute them with beneficence.¹⁵⁷

Other humanists who adopt similar attitudes to Aristotle's separation of goods include Leonardo Bruni, Coluccio Salutati, Lauro Quirini and, in particular, Poggio Bracciolini, whose *De nobilitate* contains a spirited discussion of the Aristotelian distinction of goods and the relationship between virtue, wealth and lineage.¹⁵⁸ In particular, Stoic ethics appealed to the advocates of true nobility because, in stark opposition to Aristotle, the Stoics construed virtue alone as sufficient for happiness and placed nobility alongside wealth, honour and glory and other external goods as indifferent things (*adiaphora*). The reason for this appeal was the influence and moral authority of Cicero. Cicero had attempted to reconcile Stoicism and Aristotelianism, writing in the *De finibus* that the Stoics had adopted the moral philosophy of the Peripatetics (and Academics, of whom he considered the former a subgroup) albeit with different terminology and, in the fifth book of the *Tusculanae Disputationes*, explicitly endorsing the Stoic view of virtue being sufficient for happiness while maintaining some consistency with Peripatetic thought.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, the Ciceronian conception of virtue rested on the Stoic concept of moderation in the face of *perturbationes animi* which could emerge from personal vice and desire as well as from external events.¹⁶⁰ In this context external goods can be interpreted as a potentially corrupting influence to be further relegated in their relative importance. By following Cicero, Landino could, therefore, claim to be an heir of the intellectual heft and linguistic precision of the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions while maintaining the Stoic primacy of virtue, of true nobility, necessary for his Platonic-republican project.

In humanistic thought, false attachments to transient goods were as inimical to the political order as they were to individual flourishing, and hence the 'true nobility' of virtue was a necessary element in maintaining the health of the republic. As mentioned earlier, the Roman *res publica* was the exemplary commonwealth for humanists and their scholarly zeal for seeking moral lessons from its rise and fall gave Roman historians enormous intellectual influence in the Quattrocento. Humanists looked especially to Sallust, the great chronicler of lost republican values as a guide for the moral language to express sentiments about virtue, vice and civic duty.¹⁶¹ In both the *Bellum*

¹⁵⁷ 'Chi per virtù è in tal modo disposto alla morte, agevolmente spreza le ricche et beni di fortuna, ne' quali porre speranza è molto contro all'animo grande. Niuna cosa è più magnifica che sprezare le ricche, chi non l'ha, et chi l'ha, con beneficentia liberalmente conferille', Palmieri, *Vita civile*, II.65.

¹⁵⁸ Lauro Quirini, *On Nobility Against Poggio the Florentine* in Rabil, *Knowledge, Goodness and Power*, pp. 143-81 (pp. 172-73); Poggio Bracciolini, *On Nobility* in the same volume pp. 63-89; Leonardo Bruni, *Isagogicon moralis disciplinae* in Bruni, *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, pp. 267-82; Salutati, *On the World and Religious Life*, II.9.15.

¹⁵⁹ Cic. *Fin.* III.xii.41; *Tusc.* V.xvi.46-48, V.xxv.71 and passim.

¹⁶⁰ Cic. *Off.* I.xx.69 and I.vii.27.

¹⁶¹ See Barbara Levick, 'Morals, Politics, and the Fall of the Roman Republic', *Greece & Rome*, 29.1 (April, 1982), 53-62 and Patricia J. Osmond, "'Princeps Historiae Romanae': Sallust in Renaissance Political Thought", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 40 (1995), 101-43. See also Patricia J. Osmond and Robert

Catilinae and the *Bellum Iugurthinum* Sallust is preoccupied with the theme of virtue, extolling republican progress through moral excellence and denouncing moral corruption resulting from the degradation of the Roman *virtus*. These sober warnings were embedded in the Latin educational tradition, with Sallustian values permeating humanism's intellectual framework of personal and political virtue and saturating its terminology. So, for instance, in the *Bellum Catilinae* we have 'For while the glory of riches and beauty is fleeting and fragile, virtue is considered illustrious and eternal', a sentiment which is replicated almost verbatim in Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder's *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adolescentiae studiis*, composed between 1402 and 1403: 'For wealth, glory, pleasures – these are transitory and fleeting. Character, however, and the fruits of the virtues endure undiminished and last forever'.¹⁶²

Similarly, Sallust's summation in the *Bellum Iugurthinum* of the ephemeral nature of external goods in contrast to the incorruptible soul could have been written by Plato himself, and the influence on Landino's thought expressed in the quotations above is clear:

For just as mankind is made up of body and soul, so all our acts and pursuits partake of the nature either of the body or of the mind. Therefore notable beauty and great riches, as well as bodily strength and all other gifts of that kind, soon pass away, but the splendid achievements of the intellect, like the soul, are everlasting. In short, the goods of the body and of fortune have an end as well as a beginning, and they all rise and fall, wax and wane; but the mind, incorruptible, eternal, ruler of mankind, animates and controls all things, yet is itself not controlled.¹⁶³

Sallust saw *virtus*, intellectual and moral excellence, as a necessary condition for perpetuating the civic concord and selflessness essential for the republic. It follows from this connection between the health of the *res publica* and civic virtue that, for him, the three vices responsible for the decline of the Roman republic are *ambitio* (or *superbia*), *avaritia* and *luxuria*, wherein the desires for personal power, wealth and sensual pleasure respectively become ends in themselves.¹⁶⁴ For the Quattrocento moralist, these vices coincided with the sins of the world mentioned in the Gospel of John – the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – granting Sallustian moral language the authority of Christian catechism, but the continuity with republican tradition was just

Ulery, 'Sallustius Crispus, Gaius', in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*, ed. Virginia Brown (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), VIII, pp. 183-326.

¹⁶² 'Nam divitiarum et formae gloria fluxa atque fragilis est, virtus clara aeternaque habetur', Sal. *Cat.* 1.4; 'Nam opes, gloria, voluptates, fluxae res sunt et caducae; habitus autem fructusque virtutum perstat integer atque aeternus manet', Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus*, p. 7.

¹⁶³ Sal. *Iug.* 2.1-3, translation from *Sallust*, trans. by John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

¹⁶⁴ Among many instances see Sal. *Cat.* 5.6-9, 10.3-5 and 11.1-3; *Jug.* 13.5-6 and 31.12-15. This categorisation is common in the Roman moralistic tradition: see also e.g. Livy *Hist.* I.1 and XXXIV.4.2. It is necessary to make a distinction between the vices of *ambitio*, *imperium* and *superbia* and the laudable *gloria* proceeding from just rule. On this, see e.g. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, II, pp. 121-26 and Skinner, 'Political Philosophy', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. by Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner and Eckhard Kefler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 389-452 (pp. 412-16).

as important a factor for its incorporation into the humanist lexicon.¹⁶⁵ Sallust had shown through practical case studies (as opposed to the purely theoretical injunctions of Aristotle and Cicero) how those who seek political legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry should disdain external goods such as wealth and status not just because they are goods of the second order, but because their self-directedness is also inimical to the concord of a properly-functioning commonwealth. Hence, the vices which fetishise externals – *ambitio* or *superbia*, *avaritia*, and *luxuria* – are those to be most strongly discouraged in the political class.¹⁶⁶

Advocacy of true nobility, then, did not just consist in a devaluation of adjuncts of conventional nobility such as wealth and status. Such trappings were often scorned outright. In order to assert the primacy of virtue some humanists fostered a deep suspicion of external goods and, more specifically, the vices devoted to them, to the extent that moral admonitions on the part of humanists were often as concerned with avoiding these vices as they were with specifying which virtues to cultivate. A common theme which begins to emerge is that virtue is counterposed against external goods and their associated vices as a type of freedom: in Sallustian theory, virtue perpetuates the republican tradition of *libertas*; according to the thought of Cicero, it loosens the grip of *perturbationes animi* on one's moral faculties; in the Platonic tradition, it releases the soul from the shackles of the body to begin its ascent to God. Not only are people equal in their capacity for the true nobility of virtue, but that virtue is grounded in various forms of individual and collective self-actualisation.

By way of summary, James Hankins has identified a form of Quattrocento virtue politics in which the cultivation of virtue is crucial to the conferral of political legitimacy. There are certain elements to this theory which bear particular relevance to understanding the system of virtue politics Landino lays out in the *Disputationes*. Virtue was a quality measured and weighed in the public space, thanks to an assumption of interdependence which meant that moral conduct was subject to objective standards and, in theory at least, political figures had externally-imposed limits of action enforced upon them by the collective moral scrutiny of their peers. Political legitimacy or 'legitimacy of exercise' was conferred on the ruling class on account of behaviour which met these standards, and the mediating social technology of humanist rhetoric which did so imparted praise and blame not only through epideictic but also through subtle and roundabout phrasing which can only be teased out through close reading of language, genre and form. True nobility was synonymous with virtuous conduct, a radical move away from the hierarchies of medieval thought towards political meritocracy, and in the eyes of many humanists the demarcation between the

¹⁶⁵ 'Concupiscentia carnis et concupiscentia oculorum est et superbia vitae', I John 2.16. Salutati uses this phraseology in *On the World and Religious Life*, I.21.2 and II.3.9. At II.9.15 he switches to the Sallustian terminology, stating that *superbia* and *avaritia* are the 'head and root of all sins'.

¹⁶⁶ See for instance Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus*, pp. 28-36; Palmieri, *Vita civile*, III.23-29 and especially Bracciolini, *De avaritia* (whose full title is *Historia convivialis disceptativa de avaricia et luxuria*) passim. Bracciolini's shrewd and inventive treatment has the first character deliver a perceptive defence of avarice before his opponents reply.

goods of the soul and external goods such as wealth and status led to a diminution of the perceived value of the latter and a concomitant concern with the vices which arise from them. The world in which Landino was devising his schema for of the divinisation of the soul was therefore one in which the humanistically-educated elites that constituted his audience read his work with the expectation and understanding that moral instruction on virtue was coterminous with moral instruction on politics.

With the biographical, political and intellectual context of the *Disputationes* having been adumbrated, we can now begin to examine how Landino sets out his system of virtue politics within it.

Chapter Two – Psychology, Virtue and Politics

2.1 The introductory remarks of the *Disputationes*

The *Disputationes* begins with Landino and his brother Piero visiting the Camaldoli monastery in the Casentino valley to escape the summer heat of Florence. At the monastery they happen upon Lorenzo de' Medici and his friends Alamanno Rinuccini, Piero and Donato Acciaiuoli, Marco Parenti and Antonio Canigiani. Shortly thereafter, Leon Battista Alberti and Marsilio Ficino arrive, and the next day the company retreat to a mountainous meadow laden with pastoral symbolism. It is here that Landino has Alberti set out the subject of the forthcoming disputation. With Piero de' Medici gravely ill, the responsibility for the republic must soon fall to Lorenzo, and the moral instruction Alberti prescribes is tantamount to a summary of Landinian virtue ethics in the *Disputationes*, emphasising the centrality of a purificatory *cursus virtutum* to the ethico-political project of governing the self and the state:

For you understand that the entire burden of the republic already rests on your shoulders because of the worsening sickness of your father... I think that it is of great importance both for you and the republic that, since you will soon undertake the governance of the latter (and, indeed, for the most part you already have), you spend any *otium* here, withdrawn from public business. Distant from urban tumult, you can investigate and understand through debate – either by yourself or, preferably, with these learned men who care deeply about you – those things through which our souls are led to an understanding of their origin and divinity. For no-one will properly manage either himself or a republic [*nec se nec rem publicam recte administrabit*] unless he has first both purged his mind of every bodily fault with those virtues which improve life and morals [*virtutes quae vitam moresque emendant*], and has then illuminated that mind which has been purged with those virtues which provide an understanding of supreme things [*virtutes quae rerum maximarum cognitionem praebent*], so that he will have properly understood why he himself and the rest of humankind exist and for what reason they were created by the highest God. I think that this pretext motivated the divine Plato, for while he does not venture to assert anything outright about almost any other subject, he nonetheless seems to declare this without any hesitation: only those republics which are either administered by philosophers [*philosophi administraverint*] or whose administrators have begun to philosophise [*qui administrant philosophari coeperint*] will ultimately prosper.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ 'Videtur enim universam rei publicae molem propter ingravescentem parentis vestri morbum iam vestris humeris sustinendam... tamen et tua et rei publicae permulti interesse arbitror, ut, cum tu illam administrandam brevi suscepturus sis vel potius magna iam ex parte suscepis, quodcumque otii publico negotio subtrahere licuerit, id omne huc conferas et procul ab urbanis tumultibus vel tecum ipse vel potius cum huiusmodi doctissimis iisdemque tui amantissimis viris ea inquiras ac disputando assequaris, quibus animi nostri in suae originis ac divinitatis cognitionem inducuntur. Nemo enim nec se nec rem publicam recte administrabit, nisi prius et iis virtutibus, quae vitam moresque emendant, animum ab omni corporea labe expiaverit et iis, quae rerum maximarum cognitionem praebent, illum iam purgatum ita illustraverit, ut quid ipse, quid reliqui homines sint, ad quam rem a summo deo producti recte noverit. Quam quidem causam divinum illum Platonem movisse puto, ut, quanvis in ceteris paene rebus omnibus nihil audeat affirmare,

There is much to digest here. Landino, through the figure of Alberti, wishes to make it clear from the outset that virtuous self-improvement on the part of the individual is not only essential to the right functioning of the state, but also has a synecdochic relationship with the moral health of the body politic: intellectual *otium* is important both for Lorenzo *and* the republic; without moral purgation, no-one can rightly manage himself *or* the republic. To cultivate proper behaviour in citizens – and, specifically, in the individual or individuals who will govern – is to improve the republic itself. In thus asserting that personal virtue plays such a constitutive role to the state, Landino places the *Disputationes* squarely in the tradition of Florentine republicanism. He invites the reader to acknowledge this intellectual provenance and understand that the philosophical and exegetical investigations in the following dialogue will have at their heart a programme of moral perfectionism intended to somehow promote virtue.

Landino's choice of the formulation *rem publicam administrabit* is therefore telling. Not for him are more emphatic alternative verbs such as *dominari*, *regnare* or *imperare*, which might compromise the republican credentials of his moral instruction. Instead, by choosing *administrare rem publicam* Landino invokes a phrase which is common in the works of Cicero and associated with Roman republican theory in that it connotes a way of doing civic business that is collegial and devoted to a shared interest rather than consisting in commands handed down by a ruler.¹⁶⁸ One passage of Cicero which would have been particularly prominent in directing Landino's choice of vocabulary here is that in the third book of the *De finibus*, where he relates the Stoic belief that 'the sage should wish to engage in and manage public affairs [*sapiens velit gerere et administrare rem publicam*]'.¹⁶⁹ I will return later to the significance of Cicero's Stoic sentiments here and elsewhere for Landino's arguments in the *Disputationes*, but for now it is worth remarking that Landino's use of this term in defining his ethical schema – that is, seeking to manage the self and *administrare rem publicam* through successive purificatory degrees of virtue – should be interpreted as an allusion to Cicero's desire to have the *sapiens*, the model of philosophical reason and virtue, take part in the management of the state through cooperation and collaboration rather than by decree.

With this in mind, it is striking that Landino uses the same formulation later on in the extract above where he has Alberti paraphrase a famous passage from Plato's *Republic*, declaring that 'only those republics which are either administered by philosophers or whose administrators have begun to philosophize will ultimately prosper'.¹⁷⁰ None of the translations of the corresponding passage

tamen hoc sine ulla dubitatione sentire videatur: eas res publicas tum demum beatas futuras, quas aut philosophi administraverint aut qui administrant philosophari coeperint', *DC*, pp. 10.23-11.24.

¹⁶⁸ A full treatment of this concept of *administrare rem publicam* can be found in Louise Hodgson, *Res Publica and the Roman Republic: 'without Body or Form'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 21-60. Therein, p. 25, n. 16 supplies an exhaustive list of the classical sources in which *administrare* is used in its republican sense of managing public business.

¹⁶⁹ Cic. *Fin.* III.xx.68.

¹⁷⁰ Referring to Plat. *Rep.* V.473c-473d. Landino had used almost identical language to translate the same quotation at the end of a consolatory letter to Lorenzo de' Medici of the death of his uncle Giovanni in 1463:

which would have been known to Landino use *administrare* in either clause of this antimetabole. For instance, Ficino's translation of the *Republic* runs thus: 'unless either philosophers rule states [*dominentur civitatibus*] or those called kings and rulers [*reges potentesque*] justly and adequately become philosophers'.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the earlier Latin translation of the *Republic* by Manuel Chrysoloras and Uberto Decembrio (which stood as a model for that of Uberto's son, Piero, and Ficino himself) uses *principari* and *reges et principes* here, and when Boethius quotes the phrase in the *Consolatio* he uses *regere* and *rectores*.¹⁷² There is, on the other hand, a precedent for such terminology with reference to Plato in the first book of *De officiis*, where Cicero uses the phrase *rem publicam administraret* when he relates Plato's analogy comparing politicians who compete for control of the state to sailors arguing about steering a vessel.¹⁷³ Landino's decision to use the loaded term *administrare* at the opening of the *Disputationes* must therefore have been deliberate. His choice of words offers the first indication that in the ensuing dialogue the philosophy of the 'divine Plato' will be refracted through the prism of Ciceronian political thought and that Platonic authority will be brought to bear for republican ends. Lorenzo's response to Alberti offers his assent to such terms with a request that Alberti continue explaining to Lorenzo and his brother the value of Platonic investigation as it applies to republican governance:

While everything that Plato has communicated to me on this subject through the mouth of Marsilio (who understands the mind of such a great philosopher more than anyone else) seems truer than any oracle, I would very much like to know what it is in that author that you think a governor of the republic [*rei publicae gubernatori*] should adopt from those who are devoted to the investigation of the truth.¹⁷⁴

Just as Alberti's introductory words and Lorenzo's response to them show that the *Disputationes* has its theoretical basis in republican Platonism, so too do they present a prospectus for the forthcoming discussion in such terms. In asserting that Lorenzo ought to spend 'any *otium*

'beatas res publicas futuras, cum aut illas philosophi administrabunt, aut ii, a quibus administrant, philosophari coeperint', Lentzen, *Studien*, pp. 199-200. He does the same in his funeral oration for Donato Acciaiuoli ('res publicas beatas futuras, cum a philosophis administrarentur') which can be found in *Reden*, p. 72.201-02. By way of corroboration, when translating the quotation to the *volgare* in *Comento, Proem XIII*.118-20 he uses the verb *governare* and the noun *reppublica* abbreviated as *rep*.

¹⁷¹ 'Nisi vel philosophi civitatibus dominantur, vel hi qui nunc reges potentesque dicuntur, legitime sufficienterque philosophentur', Marsilio Ficino, *Divini Platonis Opera omnia* (Lyon: Le Preux, 1590), p. 466.

¹⁷² 'Si non, inquam, vel philosophi in urbis principentur aut legitime et sufficienter philosophentur qui nunc reges et principes nuncupentur', Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. Lat. 1131 23v; 'si [res publicas] vel studiosi sapientiae regerent vel earum rectores studere sapientiae contigisset', Boe. *Cons.* I. iv. 20-21. On this *sententia* in Guarino and Brandolini, and the similarity of the idea in these authors to that of Boethius, see also James Hankins, 'The Reception of Plato in the Early Renaissance' in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance* (Rome: Edizioni di storia et letteratura, 2004), II, p. 69, n. 47 and p. 283, n. 24.

¹⁷³ Cic. *Off.* I.xxv.87

¹⁷⁴ 'Tamen, cum, quaecunque a Platone dicuntur, ea mihi ex ore Marsilii, qui praeter omnes tanti philosophi mentem tenet, iam omni oraculo veriora videantur, ardentissime scire cupio, quid id sit, quod tu illo auctore ab iis, qui in veri investigatione versantur, rei publicae gubernatori mutuandum esse censebas', *DC*, p. 12.11-15. The phrase *rei publicae gubernator* is Ciceronian, appearing in e.g. Cic. *Rab. Perd.* ix.26.

withdrawn from public business' in contemplation of the soul's origin, Alberti establishes an interdependence between *otium* and affairs of state, setting out his stall for the debate which will occupy the first book. For Alberti, the instrumental value of *otium* is that of allowing time for the analytical and discursive reasoning which permit cognition of the divine nature of the soul and its *summum bonum*, and hence the ensuing discussion rests on the process through which one strives towards this position: namely, the relative importance of the moral virtues, the 'virtues which improve life and morals', and the intellectual or dianoetic virtues, the 'virtues which provide an understanding of supreme things'.

Notwithstanding the strict regimentation of the philosophical system he has outlined with these opening remarks, Landino was guilty, like many of his contemporaries, of avoiding clear statements of his premises and making unstated assumptions of knowledge on the part of his readers. His decision to tackle the question of action and contemplation in the first book of the *Disputationes* before defining the *summum bonum* and the nature of the soul in the second is unhelpful in unpicking the principles of his philosophy, however much rhetorical sense it might have made to have Alberti and Lorenzo first discuss how such ways of life contribute to *administrandam rem publicam*. Before turning to the debate on *otium* and *negotium* in the first book of the *Disputationes* it is therefore necessary to adumbrate the principles of the moral psychology which provide a theoretical basis for these two kinds of virtue.

2.2 Landinian moral psychology: the faculties of the soul

Landino's conception in the *Disputationes* of the soul's origin, functions and virtues stands as an abridgement of his earlier theoretical systematisation of this subject in the *De anima* while also serving to refine some of these ideas. In the *De anima*, a work which depends heavily on the *Isagoge* of Albertus Magnus, Landino had attempted – with mixed success – to reconcile Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic thought on the soul, and his doing so illustrates how his theory of virtue is integrated into his broader psychology in ways that remain implied but unstated in the *Disputationes*.¹⁷⁵ His analysis of the nature of the soul follows Aristotle's methodology in his *De anima* by proceeding from first principles (as opposed to the more rhetorical and literary-critical approach taken in the *Disputationes*) while at the same time having as its fundamental premise the Platonic idea of a soul, immured in the body and confused by the false opinions of the senses, which must ascend to a divine *summum bonum*. In the first book of the *De anima*, Landino, following Platonic tradition, defines the soul as 'an incorporeal, rational essence which moves itself' because he thinks this aligns best with Christian dogma in authors such as Augustine.¹⁷⁶ He continues in these terms by giving an account of the soul's origin that relies on Macrobius and Augustine and in which souls created in heaven *ex nihilo* by God descend into the body, ignorant of their divine origin.¹⁷⁷ Here he also invokes Virgil, a 'divine and above all Platonic poet', as an authority on Platonic thought, interpreting the descent into the underworld in the *Aeneid* as a descent of the soul into the body in a manner which would reach its complete fruition in the fourth book of the *Disputationes*.¹⁷⁸ A paraphrase of the account of the origin of the soul in the *De anima* appears early in the first book of the *Disputationes*, near the beginning of Alberti's first speech:

The divine Plato thinks that our souls have sunk from the lap of God into this extreme filth, or, rather, were taken down to adorn this lowest part of the world. They remain stunned for some time by the fall from such heights, and stupified, as if drunk, by the confusion of the matter which they entered, until gradually their inherent divinity awakens some remembrance in them, though it returns obscured. Inspired by this supreme love of divine things, the soul strives to recognise them in justice and religion, as if supported by two wings.

¹⁷⁵ On Landino's debt to Albert's *Isagoge*, see Rüsich, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 129-137, pp. 155-161, and pp. 172-199. On his debt to the *Liber de natura et origine animae*, see McNair, 'Albert the Great in the Renaissance'.

¹⁷⁶ 'Essentiam incorpoream rationalem, quae se ipsa moveat', *De anima*, I, p. 31. The definition of the soul that Landino attributes to 'Divus Augustinus' can be found in Aug. *De quantitate animae* xii.22: 'Nam mihi videtur esse substantia quaedam rationis particeps, regendo corpori accommodata'. The definition of the self-moving soul comes from Plat. *Phaedrus*.245c-246a but cf. Aristot. *DA*. I.iii.

¹⁷⁷ *De anima*, I, pp. 38-47, relying on Macrobius, *In Somm. Scip.* I.xi-xiii and Augustine's *De anima* and *De libero hominis arbitrio*. On the correspondence between the third book of Augustine's *De anima*, his *Epistola ad Hieronymum* and Landino's thought, see Rüsich, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 109-15. Landino's defence of creation *ex nihilo* is intended to forestall potential accusations of his supporting Origen's heretical doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, which he mentions in *De anima*, I, pp. 36-37.

¹⁷⁸ 'Divinus... et in primis platonicus poeta', *De anima*, I, p. 35.

It raises itself to the heights and, as far as the keenness of the soul endures the deadening contagion of the body, it contemplates the light of God, and not without the highest pleasure.¹⁷⁹

This account of the soul's descent into the body is central to Landino's thought and is the axiom from which the rest of his ethical system proceeds because, for Landino, the problem which necessarily follows from this incarceration is to explain 'how [the soul], in the body, exercises its powers' and how the functions of the soul which govern the soul itself and the body interact with each other.¹⁸⁰ Hence, at the beginning of the second book of the *De anima* he describes the four faculties of the soul: the vegetative power (*vis vegetativa*) through which things grow, are nourished and reproduce; the sensitive power (*vis sensitiva*) through which things feel and sense; the motive power (*vis motiva*), through which things move; and the rational power (*vis rationalis*), through which we think and which is unique to human beings, unlike the other three powers which we have in common with animals.¹⁸¹ Of the first three base faculties of the soul, the sensitive power and the motive power are of the greatest concern to Landino's moral theory as these are the powers through which we perceive and react to the sensible world. The sensitive power governs the external and internal senses, which perceive material and non-material things respectively, and the motive power contains the appetite (*appetitus*), the power through which we are moved to appropriate or flee things. The appetite itself is stimulated by two internal senses that are parts of the sensitive power: the *phantasia* or *imaginatio*, which organises sense data, and the *vis existimativa*, which forms judgments on it.¹⁸²

It is the unreliability of the sense data upon which the *phantasia* and *vis existimativa* make their judgments, and the concomitant tendency for the appetite to strive towards bodily – and thus false and harmful – ends, which compromise the moral progress of the soul in discovering its true divine

¹⁷⁹ 'Censet enim divinus Plato animos nostros, postquam ex dei sinu in hanc ultimam faecem deciderunt vel potius ad hanc infimam mundi partem exornandam detracti sunt, ex tam excelso ac praecipiti casu ad longiusculum tempus attonitos et ex silvae, quam ingressi sunt, tumultu stupidos et veluti ebrios persistere, donec paulatim divinitas, quae in illis est, sese excitans in aliquam memoriam quanvis obscuratam redeat; a qua summo ardore divinarum rerum incensa illas recognoscere nititur iustitiaeque ac religione veluti duabus alis suffulta se in altum erigit atque dei lucem, quoad animi acies contagione corporis hebetata patitur, non sine summa voluptate intuetur', *DC*, p. 17.5-15, and cf. Plat. *Phaedo* 79c; Plat. *Phaedrus* 247e; and Macrobius, *In Som. Scip.* I.xii.7-11. Ficino used the analogy of ascent on two wings in *Platonic Theology* XIV.iii.7, but there the two wings are *intellectus* and *voluntas*. Landino's analogy cleaves much more closely to another instance of Ficino's use of the metaphor in his letter *De divino furore* to Peregrino Agli (*Lettere* I, pp. 19-28), where the two wings refer to *iustitia* and *sapientia*, the two virtues devoted to action and contemplation.

¹⁸⁰ 'Quo pacto [anima], in corpore constituta, suas vires exerceat', *De anima*, I, p. 9. The questions on the nature of the soul's incarceration in the body with which Landino concerns himself derive ultimately from Plato's *Phaedo*.

¹⁸¹ *De anima*, II, pp. 8-9.

¹⁸² *De anima*, II, pp. 120-21. This schema of the soul's faculties and senses is Scholastic-Aristotelian. On Landino's debt to this tradition, see Gilson, *Dante and Renaissance Florence*, pp. 47-48; McNair, *Cristoforo Landino on the Human Soul* and McNair, 'Albert the Great in the Renaissance'. Useful secondary literature on these psychological topics includes Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) and Peter King, 'Aquinas on the Passions', in *Aquinas's Moral Theory: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, ed. by Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 101-32.

nature. Landino therefore introduces the idea that the appetite is twofold, with one part, desire (*libido*), being guided by the senses and the other, the will (*voluntas*), being guided by reason (*ratio*).¹⁸³ He expresses this distinction between rational and irrational appetite in emphatically Platonic terms by introducing the chariot allegory in the *Phaedrus* which he would later repeat in the third book of the *Disputationes*, where his description runs thus:

There is a sense and a certain power in our souls they call ‘cogitation’, to which the judgment of goods and evils has been entrusted by nature. Sometimes this power judges in such a way that, regarding nothing beyond the senses, and as if both attracted by their enticements and corrupted by the reward offered by pleasure, it decides that the good of a human being is that which is the good of a beast. But if this same cogitative power is illuminated with the healthy light of reason and is directed by its standard, it does not judge that which allures the senses to be good, but rather that which is dictated by right reason: a true and simple good which can neither die nor become corrupted. So when this cogitative power has decided that this thing is good but that thing is bad, some other power is aroused in us which rises up to acquire the good or to reject the bad. All call this the appetite. It is necessarily twofold: one appetite which always solely depends on the judgment which the senses make, and which does not desire anything on account of reason; and another which pursues nothing at all unless reason has first commanded it. We call the first *libido* and the second *voluntas*. There is, therefore, an appetite by which human souls are moved to acquire the good and to reject the bad: a noble appetite if it is from reason, and the opposite if it is from the senses. So when the divine Plato described our soul as a charioteer in a most beautiful image, he added two horses to the chariot.... he represents the rational appetite with the good horse but the irrational appetite with the bad, and by these the soul is moved.¹⁸⁴

Following Aquinas, Landino describes the twofold appetite as being able to move us to obtain things we perceive as good through a concupiscible power (*vis concupiscibilis*) or to move us to flee or

¹⁸³ *De anima*, II, pp. 121-22, from Aristot. *DA*, III.ix.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Est igitur sensus et vis quaedam in animis nostris, quam cogitandi nominant, cui bonorum malorumque iudicium a natura demandatum est. Nonnunquam autem ita iudicat huiusmodi vis, ut nihil praeter sensus respiciens et veluti illorum illecebris attracta et voluptatis oblato praemio corrupta, quod pecudis bonum est, ipsa hominis bonum decernat. Si autem eadem cogitandi vis salutari rationis lumine illustretur et eius norma dirigatur, non id bonum esse iudicat, quo sensus demulcentur, sed quod recta dictat ratio, quod verum simplexque bonum cum sit neque interire neque corrumpi possit. Cum igitur huiusmodi vis hoc bonum, illud vero malum esse decreverit, excitatur in nobis alia quaedam vis, quae ad bonum asciscendum malumque declinandum insurgat. Hunc autem appetitum omnes appellant. Sed et eum duplicem esse oportet: alterum qui ab eo iudicio, quod solus sensus fecit, semper pendeat nihilque cum ratione expetat, alterum qui nihil omnino sequatur nisi quod ratio prius praeceperit. Primum illum libidinem, hunc secundum voluntatem nuncupamus. Quapropter erit appetitus, quo animi hominum ad bonum asciscendum malumque declinandum moveantur, rectus quidem, si a ratione, contra, si a sensu. Quapropter pulcherrimo aenigmate divinus Plato, cum animum nostrum veluti currum posuisset, aurigam illi duosque equos adiungit... Expressit enim per bonum rationalem, per malum vero irrationalem appetitum, quo animus fertur’, *DC*, pp. 133.13-134.14. The first few sentences are almost identical to Landino’s account of the *duplex appetitus* in *De anima*, II, p. 121; and the chariot allegory from Plat. *Phaedrus*.246a-254e, which Ficino analysed in his commentary on the same text, also appears in *De anima*, II, pp. 130-31, described as the work of a (fictively) young Ficino. On the contribution of this view of the bipartite Platonic soul to Cicero’s thought, see also Cic. *Tusc.* IV.v.10-11. Landino takes the idea of a cogitative or estimative power which can make judgments using either the senses or reason from Scholastic sources including Albert, *De anima*, III.2 and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I Q.78 A.4 and II-II Q.47 A.1.

repel things we perceive as bad through an irascible power (*vis irascibilis*).¹⁸⁵ When exerting itself in either of these ways, the self-reinforcing nature of its primary impulse can become more and more vehement until it produces an established habit called an *affectio* or *habitus*.¹⁸⁶ Those habits which emerge in accordance with the reason are called *constantiae*, or constancies, and those which originate from sense data are called *perturbationes*, or disturbances. As habits which arise from false bodily senses, it is these *perturbationes* ‘by which souls are agitated rashly and restlessly and turbulently’ and thus constitute the major obstacles to the soul’s progress in Landinian virtue theory.¹⁸⁷

Having achieved at least some conceptual continuity between the Platonic and Aristotelian schemata in the *De anima*, Landino is now able to return to Cicero and introduce the theory of psychological attitudes from Latin Stoicism, taking as his model the fourth book of the *Tusculanae Disputationes*.¹⁸⁸ Landino goes into exhaustive detail in adopting Cicero’s taxonomy of *perturbationes* in this work, which he repeats almost verbatim while stating that he prefers the Ciceronian term *perturbationes* to the *passiones* of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.¹⁸⁹ There are four main *perturbationes* because the ‘corrupt judgment’ which causes them to emerge from the appetite can be deceived in four ways, with sorrow (*aegritudo*) the belief in a present evil, fear (*metus*) in a prospective evil, joy (*laetitia*) in a present good, and desire (*libido*) in a prospective good.¹⁹⁰ Since in the *Disputationes* Landino refines this treatment of the *perturbationes* in order that he might harmonise it with the Aristotelian categories of goods of body and fortune, it is necessary to postpone any further discussion of their conceptual framework for now apart from considering Landino’s justification for his emphasis on them at the end of the second book in the *De anima*:

For just as, in Virgil, Neptune could not bring back the sun for the Trojans until he had dispersed the collected clouds, so too our sun – for I call the light of reason which is implanted in us by supreme God ‘the sun’ – cannot illuminate the mind unless the winds of squabbling *perturbationes*, by which the clouds of ignorance and error are drawn in, are first settled and calmed completely. So let us, the best youths, do this and, with our minds set free from such foul and savage tyrants, let us seek true liberty. If the soul, empty of every disturbance, returns to its former nature and, having remembered its origins which it had almost

¹⁸⁵ *De anima*, II, pp. 120-26, cf. *Summa Theologiae* I Q.81 AA.2-3.

¹⁸⁶ *De anima*, II, p. 133.

¹⁸⁷ ‘Quibus temere tumultuoseque et turbulenter animi concitantur’, *De anima*, II, p. 134.

¹⁸⁸ Specifically, Cic. *Tusc.* IV.vi.14-ix.22.

¹⁸⁹ *De anima*, II, pp. 133-38. On the Stoic-Ciceronian-Augustinian system of the *perturbationes* and *passiones* and its adoption in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, see Robert, J. Rabel, ‘Diseases of Soul in Stoic Psychology’, in *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 22 (1981), 385-93; Johannes Brachtendorf, ‘Cicero and Augustine on the Passions’, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 43 (1997), 289-308; Letizia Panizza, ‘Stoic Psychotherapy in the Middle Ages: Petrarch’s *De Remediis*’, in *The Erotics of Consolation: Desire and Distance in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Catherine E. Légü and Stephen J. Milner (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 117-39; and Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). On the comparable Christian use of *passiones*, see e.g. Augustine *Civ.Dei.* IX.4 and XIV 8-9 and Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* I-II QQ.22-48.

¹⁹⁰ *De anima*, II, p. 133, and see also Augustine, *Civ.Dei* IV.8. Landino is apparently unconcerned that, by following Stoic doctrine in listing *libido* as one of the primary *perturbationes*, he is contradicting his earlier use of this name for part of the *appetitus*. Note that, prefiguring the *Disputationes*, Landino offers Dido as a case study for how Virgil understood the power of newly-formed beliefs in causing *perturbationes* at *De anima*, II, p. 135.

forgotten, devotes itself to the eternal alone, condemning those things which are fleeting and which leave nothing behind apart from regret, we can finally devote ourselves to all our activities in tranquillity and speculate in *otium* on what relates to the knowledge of our souls.¹⁹¹

The reason for Landino's interest in this Stoic theory of the emotions is that if one hopes to cultivate the higher part of the soul by devoting oneself to the contemplation of God, one must first quell the *perturbationes* which distract and disturb the mind from its ascent to the divine. Although he mentions the word in neither the *Disputationes* nor the *De anima*, Landino is thinking here of Cicero's paraphrase of *apatheia* in the third book of the *Tusculanae Disputationes*: 'But the task of the soul is to use reason well, and the soul of the sage is always habituated in such a way that it can use reason best. Therefore it is never disordered [*perturbatus*].'¹⁹² For all his devotion to the Platonic idea of an incarcerated soul and the Aristotelian-Thomistic interpretation of its faculties, the centrality of this apathetic ideal to the necessary progress of the soul towards God – and the emphasis on the *perturbationes* which prevent it – betrays a profound Stoic influence on Landino's moral philosophy from Cicero via Macrobius and Augustine. Moreover, given that Landino has expressly linked the soul that is free from *perturbationes* to contemplative *otium*, his reason for giving such primacy in the first book of the *Disputationes* to the question of how the states of *otium* and *negotium* relate to the capability of an individual to *administrare rem publicam* begins to become clear.

To summarise, the foundation of Landino's moral theory is that the soul, trapped within the body, is driven to appropriate perceived goods and avoid perceived evils through the appetite, one of its base faculties. When confused by the false judgments of the senses rather than being guided by reason, the appetite provokes *perturbationes* which are based on erroneous beliefs about perceived goods and evils. If the soul is to recognise its true origin and contemplate God, it is first necessary to bring these *perturbationes* under control. As we have seen in his treatment of the appetite in the chariot allegory, Landino is uncompromising in his assertion that the goods arising from sensual desire are nothing more than those 'of a beast' because they require us to ignore the divine part of the soul which is particular to human beings and instead rely on the senses, which we have in common with animals.

Turning to bodily desires and neglecting one's spiritual nature makes one somewhat less than human, and so the essence of moral perfectionism lies in the cultivation of this superior part of the

¹⁹¹ 'Nam veluti Neptunus apud Virgilium non prius solem Troianis restituere potuit, quam collectas nubes fugasset, sic sol noster (solem enim appello rationis lumen, nobis a supremo Deo impressum) mentem illustrare non potest, nisi proeliantes inter se perturbationum venti, a quibus inscitiae errorumque nubes inducuntur, prius sint omnino sedati atque consopiti. Quapropter agamus hoc optimi adolescentes, mentesque a tam foedis immanibusque tyrannis vendicantes veram libertatem assequamur. Tum enim demum et in omnibus actionibus nostris tranquille versari, et, quod ad nostrorum animorum cognitionem attinet, ociose speculari poterimus, si omni perturbatione vacuus animus in antiquam naturam revertatur et, suae originis, cuius paene oblitus fuerat, recordatus, quae momentanea sunt et nihil praeter poenitentiam relinquunt contemnens, solis aeternis incumbat', *De anima*, II, p. 138.

¹⁹² Cic. *Tusc.* III.vii.15. cf. Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology* XVIII.x.6.

soul which Landino defines in the *De anima* as the *vis* or *anima rationalis*, the intellectual cognitive faculty which is unique to humans and distinct from the soul's base faculties, and which he identifies as the *mens* or *intellectus* of Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition.¹⁹³ Landino is clear that the *mens* is incorporeal and operates distinctly from the body, but throughout his attempt to describe its structure and constituent faculties, he often struggles in his stated aim of reconciling the Platonic division of the soul (that is, the inferior reason and superior reason, or *ratio inferior* and *ratio superior*) with its Aristotelian equivalent (the active intellect and passive intellect, or *intellectus agens* and *intellectus possibilis*). Rather than attempting to reconcile any difficulties in aligning the two schemata he encounters in any cohesive way, he tends instead to simply enumerate the functions of the faculty in question in a manner that Ute Rüsçh has characterised as a 'superficial rhetorical formalism'.¹⁹⁴ The precise way in which the various faculties of the *mens* fit together is therefore at times unclear or even contradictory, but those which Landino lists have certain characteristics in common in that they have the capacity for independent knowledge and are able to cogitate *a priori* or from simulacra, rather than deriving cognitive objects from empirical sense data. Broadly speaking, the inferior reason (or simply reason, as Landino often paraphrases it) has as its purpose the act of ratiocination, in that it derives universals and intelligible species from the simulacra of natural bodies without interacting with the senses themselves. The superior reason, unreliant on simulacra, comprehends incorporeal but created things in its function as intellect (*intellectus*), or the uncreated and eternal divine essence of God in its function as intelligence (*intelligentia*).¹⁹⁵ Through these functions the *mens* is marked by the simulacra of three categories of object, each governed by a particular intellectual faculty: the speculative power (*vis speculativa*) which has divine and natural things as its objects; the active power (*vis activa*) which has the habits and activities of human behaviour as its objects; and the effective power (*vis effectiva*) which has human works (*opera*) as its objects.¹⁹⁶ It is these intellectual faculties that contain the dianoetic virtues, to which we now turn.

¹⁹³ See Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, pp. 41-58 and passim.

¹⁹⁴ 'Vordergründig rhetorischen Formalismus', Rüsçh, *Untersuchungen*, p. 134.

¹⁹⁵ *De anima*, III, pp. 18-22.

¹⁹⁶ *De anima*, III, pp. 40-41.

2.3 Landinian virtue theory

It is in the third book of the *De anima* where Landino embarks on a full exposition of the virtue theory that would figure so prominently in the *Disputationes*. Just as his exposition of the faculties of the soul followed Aristotle closely, so too does he continue in that vein by identifying two kinds of virtue: the dianoetic or intellectual virtues, which are intelligence, scientific knowledge, wisdom, prudence and skill (*intelligentia, scientia, sapientia, prudentia* and *ars*); and the moral virtues, which are temperance, fortitude and justice (*temperantia, fortitudo* and *iustitia*).¹⁹⁷

The dianoetic virtues are concerned with the perfection of the intellect and the ascent of the soul towards God. They emerge from the three intellectual faculties which have just been mentioned: intelligence, scientific knowledge, and wisdom are part of the speculative power; prudence is part of the active power; and skill belongs to the effective power. As we have seen, this higher part of the soul – and thus the virtues which perfect it – can only be exercised in the state of *apatheia* which comes about when any *perturbationes* affecting the mind have been calmed.

It is the function of the moral virtues to calm these *perturbationes animi* by controlling the appetite by means of reason. Following Aristotelian convention, the fact that prudence consists in a deliberative capacity concerning human action and the ends of good and evil allows Landino to include it amongst the moral virtues.¹⁹⁸ Marsuppini, Landino's mouthpiece, articulates the purpose of the moral virtues in the third book of the *De anima*:

But when this is said about the virtues through which the intellect itself is perfected and which consist in the discovery of the truth, we also say it about those virtues which are directed to the right and honourable, and improve life and morals [*vitam moresque*]... it is very much the duty of these [latter] virtues that they control the appetite and contain it under the command of reason, unless the mind falls into those *perturbationes* which we enumerated in yesterday's disputation.¹⁹⁹

This distinction, like that in Alberti's opening speech in the *Disputationes* between 'virtues which improve life and morals' and 'virtues which provide an understanding of supreme things', is therefore a distinction between the moral virtues and the dianoetic virtues and, once again, is entirely Aristotelian in its provenance. Landino has Ficino recapitulate this position in the second book of the *Disputationes*:

¹⁹⁷ The dianoetic virtues correspond to the νοῦς, ἐπιστήμη, σοφία, φρόνησις, and τέχνη of Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* VI.iii; the moral virtues to σωφροσύνη, ἀνδρεία, and δικαιοσύνη of Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* III.vi-xii and *Nic. Eth.* V.

¹⁹⁸ *De anima*, III, pp. 49-50. On the phronetic origins of the concept of prudence, see Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* VI.v.

¹⁹⁹ 'Sed quando de virtutibus, quibus intellectus ipse perficitur, et quae circa veri inventionem consistunt dictum est, dicamus et de iis, quae ad rectum honestumque dirigunt, et vitam moresque emendant... Estque earum munus maxime ut appetitum coerceant atque sub rationis imperio contineant, ne in eas perturbationes, quas in hesterna disputatione enumeravimus, cadat animus', *De anima*, III, p. 49.

So the virtues acquired from the first things of nature can show us what we seek [i.e. the *summum bonum*]. Not those virtues which are devoted to life and morals [*de vita et moribus*], for they are full of toil and are devoted to purging the soul like certain propitiatory rites, but rather those virtues with which we duly speculate.²⁰⁰

It is significant that it is Ficino articulating the distinction here, because while humanists such as Argyropoulos and Ficino and scholastics such as Thomas Aquinas used the phrase *virtutes morales* when discussing this genus of Aristotelian virtue, Landino favours either *virtutes quae vitam moresque emendant* or *virtutes de vita et moribus* both in this quotation and throughout the rest of the *Disputationes*, just as he had in the *De anima*.²⁰¹ The phrases *vitam moresque* and *de vita et moribus* are commonplaces of Ciceronian literature used to signify personal moral character – prior knowledge of which Landino could safely assume on the part of his humanistically-inclined audience – and so his preference for it over the more conventional Aristotelian alternative forces the reader to acknowledge that he situates his ethical instruction within the traditions of Ciceronian republicanism.²⁰² Hence, Landino is careful in the *Disputationes* to have Lorenzo reiterate the phrase *vitam moresque* in his initial response to Alberti: ‘although every kind of human action... is guided by the standard of the virtues which we call “pertaining to life and morals” [*vitam moresque*], we still follow these virtues mostly through habit or through custom’.²⁰³ He does so again in an interjection to Alberti’s first speech: ‘Now I see what you mean, and I notice that you do not in any way situate the highest good in the actions which are regulated by the virtues pertaining to life and morals [*de vita et moribus*].’²⁰⁴ The reader is left in no doubt that in the *Disputationes* these virtues, whose genesis is explained by Aristotle’s moral psychology and which are concerned with the expiation of the soul, are the same as those through which the individual participates in civil life and the commonwealth in Latin republicanism.

Both Landino’s description of the two types of virtue corresponding to the higher and lower faculties of the soul and his idea that the moral virtues calm *perturbationes* in order that the dianoetic virtues might guide the soul in its ascent to God are ultimately Plotinian, with their origins in the

²⁰⁰ ‘Quapropter virtutes inde acquisitae nobis quod quaerimus praestare poterunt, non tamen illae quae de vita et moribus dicuntur – laboriosae enim sunt et ad animos purgandos veluti piacula quaedam adhibentur –, sed eae quibus recte speculamur’, *DC*, p. 71.2-6.

²⁰¹ Thomas Aquinas uses *virtutes morales* both in his discussion of their relationship to the intellectual virtues in *Summa Theologiae* I-II Q.58 and when he describes the virtues themselves in I-II Q.61. Ficino uses *virtutes morales* in his explanation of the two *genera virtuti* in *Platonic Theology* XIII.iii.3 and XV.vi.3 and Argyropoulos used it throughout his Latin translation of Aristotle’s *Ethics*: for instance, ‘Cum autem virtus sit duplex, intellectiva inquam atque moralis’ in Aristotle, *Ethicorum Aristotelis philosophi clarissimi libri decem ad Nicomachum*, trans. by John Argyropoulos, ed. by Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples (Lyon, 1535), p. 99. The many mentions of *virtutes de vita et moribus* in the *Disputationes* include *DC* p. 6.7; p. 24.24; p. 26.25-26; p. 56.2; p. 85.19-20; p. 86.12; p. 100.13; p. 106.8; p. 108.11; p. 114.14; p. 119.9; p. 221.2 and 21; p. 253.15.

²⁰² See e.g. Cic. *Tusc* III.iv.8, IV.xv.34 and V.iv.10-11; Cic. *Off.* I.xxxi.112; Cic. *De orat.* I.xv.68-69, II.liii.213 and III.liii.204; Sal. *Jug.* 85.

²⁰³ ‘Quamvis omnis ratio humanarum actionum... ad normam earum virtutum dirigatur, quas de vita et moribus nominamus, illas autem usu et consuetudine maxime assequamur’, *DC*, p. 12.6-11.

²⁰⁴ ‘Video iam, quid agas, inquit Laurentius, et te summum bonum in iis actionibus, quas ad earum virtutum, quae de vita et moribus nuncupantur, normam dirigimus, nullo pacto ponere animadverto’, *DC*, p. 18.25-28.

third book of the first *Ennead* and the latter concept being developed further by Porphyry in his *Sententiae*.²⁰⁵ In Landino's case, though, these ideas were arrived at through Thomas Aquinas and, above all, Macrobius.²⁰⁶ In the *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*, Macrobius describes freedom from the passions (*passiones*) as a 'second death' in that it releases the soul from its corporeal constraints: '[the human being] is also said to die when the soul, still established in the body, condemns all corporeal enticements through the instruction of philosophy and is freed from the seductive snares of the lusts and all other passions'.²⁰⁷ The task of liberating the soul from these passions falls on the moral virtues, and Macrobius' account of how this is achieved pervades Landino's thought throughout the *Disputationes*. In this system, the soul ascends towards the cognition of divine things through four successive grades, each of which contains the four moral virtues – prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice – in increasingly sublimated forms: the first grade of virtue consists of the civic or political virtues (*virtutes politicae*), with which one learns to control passions; the second the purgative virtues (*virtutes purgatoriae*), with which one eliminates them; the third the virtues of the soul already purged (*virtutes animi iam purgati*), through which one forgets their influence altogether; and the fourth the exemplary virtues (*virtutes exemplares*), which exist in the mind of God and are beyond all corporeal taint. Macrobius makes plain the relationship between his fourfold gradation of moral virtues and the four primary Stoic *perturbationes* of fear, desire, sorrow and joy in the eighth chapter of his commentary:

The passions, as we know, are stimulated because people 'fear and desire, suffer and rejoice'. The first type of virtues moderates the passions, the second takes them away, the third has forgotten them, and it is impious to speak of them in the fourth.²⁰⁸

In Landino's body of work, his first mentions of this scale of virtues appear in drafts of both his Juvenal lectures of 1462 and his lectures on the first seven books of the *Aeneid*, composed between 1462 and 1463 and rediscovered by Arthur Field in Rome's Biblioteca Casanatense.²⁰⁹ Given that Marsilio Ficino first described this schema in his *argumentum* to the translation of *Alcibiades II* in 1464 and that his translation of the *Sententiae* was not completed until 1488, it would be safe to

²⁰⁵ Plotinus, *Enneads* I.3 section 6 and I.2 section 2; Porphyry, *Sententiae* 32.89-140. At the time that the *Disputationes* was written, Ficino had not yet begun his translation of the *Enneads*.

²⁰⁶ Aquinas' treatment of this topic can be found in e.g. *Summa Theologiae* I-II Q.61 A.5.

²⁰⁷ 'Mori etiam dicitur cum anima adhuc in corpore constituta corporeas inlecebras philosophia docente contemnit et cupiditatum dulces insidias reliquasque omnes exiuitur passiones', Macrobius, *In Somn. Scip.* I.xiii.6.

²⁰⁸ 'Passiones autem ut scimus uocantur quod homines metuunt cupiuntque, dolent gaudentque. Has primae molliunt, secundae auferunt, tertiae obliuiscuntur, in quartis nefas est nominari', Macrobius, *In Somn. Scip.* I.viii.11. The quotation is from *Aeneid* vi.733. In *Comento, Inf.* I.37-43.103-10, Landino makes it clear that this process of purification is necessary before contemplating the divine because Plato says (in Plat. *Phaedo* 67b) that 'purum impuro attingere nefas est'.

²⁰⁹ Field's rediscovery of Casanatense cod. 1368 is described in Arthur Field, 'A Manuscript of Cristoforo Landino's First Lectures on Virgil, 1462-63 (Codex 1368, Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome)', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 31.1 (Spring 1978), 17-20, and see n. 27 above.

assume that its initial adoption by Landino was probably not on account of any Ficinian influence.²¹⁰ Rather, given that his Greek was no more than passable, Landino relied on Macrobius and his Latin successors for this doctrine, as has been noted by many Landino scholars.²¹¹ Thanks to the ubiquity of the Macrobian scale of virtue in the ethical thought of both scholastics and humanists in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance it is difficult to reconstruct the precise constituents of Landino's intellectual matrix but we can nevertheless be sure that he encountered the system in at least four different authors besides Macrobius himself – that is, Thomas Aquinas; Petrarch; Coluccio Salutati; and Matteo Palmieri.²¹² That he read Thomas is evident from the influence of the *Summa Theologiae* and *Summa contra Gentiles* on the second book of the *Disputationes* (not to mention on the *De anima*), and Landino also relies heavily on Salutati's *De laboribus Herculis* throughout the entire text.²¹³ He knew the works of Petrarch intimately, having lectured on them in the late 1460s, and, as well as it being likely from his political involvement that he knew Palmieri personally, he was also familiar with his literary oeuvre, praising the *Vita civile* (or, as he calls it, the 'Dialog?') in the prologue to his Petrarch course and the *De temporibus* and *Città della vita* in the proem to the *Comento*.²¹⁴ Moreover, given that Bruce McNair has shown how Landino's theory of the soul in the *De anima* is dependent upon Albertus Magnus, another likely source for the fourfold scale of virtue is Albert's *Ethica*, which presents a revised schema of political, purgative, intellectual and exemplary virtues drawn from the Stoics.²¹⁵ As for the Stoics themselves, Seneca, whom Landino cites in his early lectures on the *Aeneid* of 1462 and 63 as a source for this scale alongside Plotinus and Macrobius, discusses in his *Epistulae Morales* three classes of humanity which represent the successive stages of escape from the passions and, since they align directly with the first three stages of the scale, were a possible influence on Porphyry's initial formulation of it.²¹⁶

For the most part, Landino's definitions of the grades of virtue in the *Disputationes* cleave closely to Macrobius. As we have seen in his opening speech above, Alberti states that an individual who

²¹⁰ Ficino, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols (Basel, 1576; rept. Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1959), p. 1134. See also Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence*, p. 192.

²¹¹ See n. 20 above and Stéphanie Lecompte, *La Chaîne d'or des poètes: Présence de Macrobe dans l'Europe humaniste* (Geneva: Droz, 2009), pp. 164-72.

²¹² The works in which these authors discuss the fourfold scale of virtue are Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II Q.61 A.5; Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* II.12.9 and *Familiars* III.12; Coluccio Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, ed. by Berthold L. Ullman, 2 vols (Padua: Antenore, 1951), IV.vii.9 and prima editio II.5; and Palmieri, *Vita civile* I.184-203.

²¹³ For Landino's references to Thomas Aquinas in the *Disputationes*, see Lohe's addenda to the *index auctorum* therein.

²¹⁴ The prologue to the Petrarch course can be found in *Scritti*, I, pp. 33-40 and Landino quotes Petrarch liberally throughout the *Comento*. On the chronology of the Petrarch lectures, see Cardini, *La critica*, pp. 334-41. On Palmieri, see *Scritti*, I, p. 36 and *Comento*, Proem. IV.78-82.

²¹⁵ Albertus Magnus, *Opera omnia*, ed. by Bernhard Geyer (Münster: Aschendorff, 1951-), XIII.1.1.7, XIII.1.5.7, XIII.1.7.14, and XIII.1.9.1. On Landino's reliance on Albert for the *De anima* see McNair, 'Albert the Great in the Renaissance', pp. 115-29.

²¹⁶ See the reference in Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence*, p. 260 n. 90 to Casanatense cod. 1368, fol. 151 and Laurenziana Plut. 52. 32, fol. 109v. Both Field and Kallendorf state that Landino used Seneca, *Epist. Mor.* 64 as his source here but I can see no description in that letter of the grades of virtue, with the correct source in fact being *Epist. Mor.* 75. For the latter reference see Kallendorf, 'Virgil, Dante and Empire in Italian Thought', pp. 44-69, n. 50.

seeks to *administrare rem publicam* must first purge his mind with the ‘virtues which improve life and morals’ and then illuminate the purged mind with the ‘virtues which provide an understanding of supreme things’, which we now know to be the dianoetic virtues. Notwithstanding its Aristotelian classification as a dianoetic virtue, prudence is included among the moral virtues whenever Landino mentions them in the *Disputationes* and, *a fortiori*, throughout the Macrobian scale of virtues, as was the case in the *De anima* and in accordance with the Platonic tradition.²¹⁷ In an explicit treatment in the third book of the Macrobian schema – which is nominally that expounded by ‘Plato’ – Alberti elaborates upon this rough introductory sketch to describe precisely how the ‘virtues pertaining to life and morals’ are involved in the purgation of the mind:

The divine Plato set out the same virtues pertaining to life and morals as others. He ultimately distinguished them into different ranks or classes in such a way that with one line of reasoning he shows which virtues are cultivated by those who love association and citizenship; with another argument he shows which virtues are cultivated by those who, wanting to forget all mortal things and being moved by a hatred for human affairs, are aroused to an understanding of divine things alone; and finally he shows which virtues are cultivated by those who, having already been purged of all contagion, devote themselves solely to divine things. He called the first kind civic virtues, the second kind purgative virtues, and the third kind virtues of the soul already purged. For there is a triple order of people living rightly and according to reason. The lowest rank of these three is of those who live a social and civic life and who undertake the administration of the republic. Next to them, but established in a higher grade, are those who withdraw themselves from public activities, as if retreating into a tranquil port from things which are stormy and tempestuous and in which the whim of fortune rules absolutely. Withdrawing themselves from the crowd into *otium*, they lead a peaceful life, but not in such a way that there is not something that still remains against which they must struggle. And in the highest rank you will see those who, completely removed from the concourse and tumult of human affairs, do nothing of which they must repent.²¹⁸

The most distinctive feature of Landino’s treatment of the Macrobian ethical schema here is that he omits the fourth, exemplary, grade of virtue from the course of individual advancement, as he had done in the *De anima* three years beforehand.²¹⁹ Landino gives his reason for his truncating the

²¹⁷ Landino goes so far as to state that ‘[prudentia] non in veri investigatione, sed in civilibus actionibus regendis versatur’, *DC*, p. 86.3-5.

²¹⁸ ‘Divinus enim Plato, cum virtutes de vita et moribus easdem quas ceteri posuisset, ita ad postremum illas diversis sive ordinibus sive generibus distinguit, ut alia quadam ratione ab iis illas coli ostendat, qui coetus ac civitates adamant, alia ab iis, qui omnem mortalitatem dediscere cupientes et humanarum rerum odio moti ac sola divina cognoscenda eriguntur, alia postremo ab iis, qui ab omni iam contagione expiati in solis divinis versantur. Primas igitur civiles dixit, secundas purgatorias ac tertias animi iam purgati. Est enim triplex hominum recte et ex ratione viventium ordo. Horum trium inferior est eorum, qui in sociali ac civili vita degentes rerum publicarum administrationem suscipiunt. His proximi, sed tamen erectiori gradu constituti ii sunt, qui a publicis actionibus veluti tempestuosis ac procellosis et in quibus fortunae temeritas omnino dominetur se in portum tranquillitatis transferunt et a turba in otium se recipientes quietam vitam degunt, non ita tamen, ut non aliquid adhuc restet, adversus quod luctandum sit. Supremo autem loco eos cernes, qui penitus a rerum humanarum concursatione ac tumultu remoti nihil cuius paenitendum sit committunt’, *DC*, pp. 153.16-154.3.

²¹⁹ *De anima*, III, pp. 52-59.

schema in the earlier work, stating that the fourth grade of virtues ‘which they call “exemplary”, [do] not pertain to the present disputation for they are not found in human souls, which are now being discussed, but in the mind of God’.²²⁰ It is likely that this decision was influenced by Seneca’s *Epistulae Morales*, given how much of the *Aeneid* allegory in the *Disputationes* – and, as we shall see, Landino’s virtue ethics in general – is devoted to illustrating how the various grades of virtue can be employed in calming the *perturbationes* of vice.²²¹ Likewise, Petrarch was probably also significant in this respect, as in the *De vita solitaria* he emphasises that the exemplary virtues cannot possibly be achieved, and in a letter to Marco Genovese in the *Familiare*s he uses the first three stages of the scale of virtue to show how his friend might balance an active political life with the life of morality and piety.²²² Both Landino’s stated and implicit reasons for the excision serve to emphasise that his interpretation of the grades of virtue in the *Disputationes* is quite different from that of Ficino in the *Platonic Theology*, in which the exemplary virtues – those in God Himself – are essential for implanting in human beings the seeds of the other grades of virtue, for recognising the divine, for ascending to the divine, and for inspiring us to move towards the divine.²²³

Like Macrobius, Landino goes into some detail about the precise function of the four moral virtues at each of the grades in his schema. The civic virtues are inchoate rather than absolute on account of their possessors being engaged in civil life, which is a flux of desires and passions, and hence these virtues are concerned with the direct management of such *perturbationes*.²²⁴ At this degree, Landino follows Macrobius in stating that prudence ‘ensures that nothing is done which cannot be considered to be at least likely to concur with reason’; fortitude ‘brings the mind through danger and fear, teaching it to fear nothing save the dishonourable’; temperance ‘shows that only what is proper should be sought after, that the law of moderation should in no way be transgressed, and that all desires should be submitted to the yoke of reason; and justice ‘sees that each is given his due, to see that all enjoy equal rights’.²²⁵ Those who display the purgative virtues are stronger than the *perturbationes* they fight, winning easily and thus gradually cleansing themselves.²²⁶ At this level prudence ‘turns its every care and thought to the divine, with all mortal things having been put aside and regarded as nothing when compared to those celestial’; temperance ‘allows us only those

²²⁰ ‘Nam quantum quod ponunt earum, quas vocant exemplares, nihil ad praesentem disputationem pertinet. Non enim in hominum animis, de quibus nunc agitur, reperiuntur; sed in mente Dei’, *De anima*, III, p. 59.

²²¹ Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence*, p. 260, n. 90, notes that in the Laurentian MS of the Virgil lectures, Landino mentions that Seneca’s thought comes *ex sententia Plotini*. Whether a simple error or an honestly-held belief, it is nonetheless illustrative of Seneca’s place in the ethical tradition for Landino.

²²² Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* IV.15; *Familiare*s III.12.

²²³ Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, XIV.vi.6

²²⁴ ‘Verum quia in vita civili cupiditatibus ac perturbationibus omnia tumultuantur hisque non nisi aegre resistitur, dicunt in eo hominum genere virtutes inchoatas potius quam absolutas’, *DC*, p. 154.5-8.

²²⁵ ‘Quapropter id in illis prudentia contendit, ut nihil agatur, cuius non possit ratio saltem probabilis reddi. Fortitudo vero animum supra omne periculum atque metum effert et nihil nisi turpia timendum admonet. Temperantia autem ostendit sola honesta appetenda, nulla in re moderationis legem excedendam, omnes cupiditates iugo rationis subiciendas. Iustitiae postremo partes sunt, ut unicuique suum reddatur, ut aequo iure omnes vivant’, *DC*, p. 154.8-15, cf. Macrobius, *In Somn. Scip.* I.viii.6-8.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 16-18 and 27-31.

things without which life cannot be sustained, it will declare with the severest judgment that all else should be disdained and fled'; fortitude 'teaches assiduously that we fear no inconvenience, no effort, no danger through which the soul strives in a true and uninterrupted course, so to speak, to the heavens and its origin.'; and justice 'directs the consensus of the other virtues in such a way of life'.²²⁷ Finally, at the level of the virtues of the soul already purged, one becomes free from any taint of the vices. Those who have attained this grade of virtue exercise prudence 'not in order that they prefer divine things to earthly, but because they know only those divine things and contemplate them alone as if there were nothing else'; they employ temperance 'not so that they restrain desires but so that they ignore them entirely.' Likewise, at this level fortitude 'does not conquer *perturbationes* but is ignorant of them. It desires that hard and terrible things are inflicted upon it not so that it achieves victory, but rather so that it remains firmly and perpetually oblivious of them'.²²⁸

In order to further intertwine the Macrobian system with the Aristotelian elements of his virtue theory, Landino subdivided each of the moral virtues into an intricate system of constituent parts in the *De anima* just as Macrobius had done in the *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*, though their taxonomies are not identical.²²⁹ Both Landino's faithfulness in reproducing the Macrobian schema and the intricacy with which he integrates its complexities with his own wider theory and turns them to his own purposes point to the fact that his foremost intention is to devise a system which can accommodate a naturalistic and compelling account of practical ethics at the level of the moral virtues. He perceives the Macrobian gradations as the answer to the question of precisely how the moral virtues might go about purging the influence of the appetite and bring it under the control of reason. For Landino, the progress of the soul towards God through the exercise of the dianoetic virtues has as its necessary precursor a kind of dissociative equilibrium at the level of the virtues of the purged soul, a state of *apatheia* removed from the power of the appetite which can only be reached through the management and expiation of disruptive emotional states at the lower levels of moral virtue. With this in mind, we can now return to the first book of the *Disputationes*, in which

²²⁷ 'Prudentia... spretis omnibus mortalibus rebus et caelestium collatione pro nihilo habitis omni cura omnique cogitatione ad divina convertatur. Temperantia autem, cum ea solum nobis concesserit, sine quibus servari vita non possit, cetera omnia severissimo iudicio contemnenda fugiendaque pronuntiabit. Sed nec aberit fortitudo, quae assiduo praecipiat, ut nullum incommodum, nullum laborem, nullum periculum horrescamus, quo minus recto et perpetuo, ut ita loquar, cursu ad caelestia et ad originem suam tendat animus. Dices: quid iustitia? Hoc profecto munus sibi imponet, ut reliquarum virtutum consensum in huiusmodi propositum flectat', *DC*, p. 154.18-29.

²²⁸ 'Hi igitur in eo prudentiam exercent non, ut delectu quodam habito divina terrenis praeferant, sed ut illa sola noscant solaque, veluti nihil aliud sit, intueantur. Adhibent autem temperantiam non, ut cupiditates coercent, sed illas penitus ignorent. Eadem ratio erit fortitudinis. Illa enim perturbationes non vincit, sed ignorat. Quin optabit dura atque horrenda sibi offerri non, ut victoriam assequatur, sed ut in eorum oblivione perpetua firmitate perduret', *DC*, pp. 154.33-155.7.

²²⁹ *De anima*, III, p. 48 and pp. 53-56 and cf. Macrobius, *In Somn. Scip.* I.viii.7. Rüsck, *Untersuchungen*, p. 205, argues that Landino adds an extra subsidiary virtue to *prudentia* because of the Thomistic distinction between *partes integrales, subiectivae* and *potentiales*, on which see Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* II-II. QQ.47-51.

Landino wrangles with the question of the relative priority of the moral and dianoetic virtues in managing the republic.

2.4 Action and contemplation as *genera vitae* and *munera*

To recapitulate, Alberti begins the first book of the *Disputationes* by observing that, if Lorenzo is to govern Florence well and develop the qualities of self-mastery necessary for a politician to properly *administrare rem publicam*, he must purge himself of vice with the moral virtues (or ‘virtues pertaining to life and morals’) and then turn his purged mind to exercising the dianoetic virtues. In order that Lorenzo might devote himself to the intellectual contemplation through which the latter virtues are cultivated, Alberti suggests that he spend time free from the affairs of state in *otium* speculating on the nature of the soul. Lorenzo answers that he is already quite familiar with the value of the moral virtues to human activity, though he concedes that such virtues tend to be practised unexamined and without a second thought:

I ask of you that, since you have mentioned this practice of life which is occupied in the investigation of lofty matters, you continue and explain the whole subject in detail to my brother and me, as we would very much like to know about it. For although every kind of human action – whether you provide for yourself, or you take care of your personal affairs and family, or you ultimately undertake public office – is guided by the standard of the virtues which we call ‘virtues pertaining to life and morals’, we still follow these virtues mostly through habit or through custom.²³⁰

He therefore desires to know more about the way of life which involves contemplation on the grounds that he is interested in the value of philosophical investigation for a governor of a republic. Alberti declares that he will proceed in a disputation on the two ways of life by assessing each of them, then comparing them both. It is this analysis which forms the substance of the first of the three extended speeches which comprise this book of the *Disputationes*.

What this initial exchange shows is not only how the ensuing debate takes as axiomatic the principle that the two ways of life under discussion – *otium* and *negotium* – consist in exercising the dianoetic virtues and moral virtues respectively, but also that the very question of how far one should follow each way of living emerges from the tensions inherent within this idea of virtue ethics in the first place. To put it another way, the debate on the relative merits of *otium* and *negotium* is epiphenomenal to the real, underlying concern of how best to cultivate the moral and dianoetic virtues to achieve perfection. Landino’s purpose is to explore the implications for life and behaviour which emerge from what is for him the crucial struggle of the human condition: how the incarcerated soul might negotiate the snares of the appetite and the sensible world to return to its source. So, when referring to the life which exercises the dianoetic virtues through contemplation,

²³⁰ ‘Petam a te, ut, postquam de hoc vitae instituto, quae in rerum magnarum inquisitione collocata est, mentionem fecisti, pergas quaeso et mihi fratrique sciendi cupidissimis rem universam latius explices. Nam quanvis omnis ratio humanarum actionum, sive te ipsum instruas sive rem familiamque cures, sive postremo publica munera attingas, ad normam earum virtutum dirigatur, quas de vita et moribus nominamus, illas autem usu et consuetudine maxime assequamur’, *DC*, p. 12.3-11.

Landino has Lorenzo say ‘you mentioned that practice of life [*institutum vitae*] which is occupied in the investigation of lofty matters’. Here we should interpret the phrase *institutum vitae*, a Ciceronian term which Landino borrows from the *De finibus*, as a set of rules or practices for living rather than the ‘kind’ or ‘type’ of life indicated by the phrase *genus vitae* that Alberti goes on to use in his response to Lorenzo, with the variation in language in the back-and-forth between the two speakers giving a clue as to Landino’s intention.²³¹ As the rest of the discussion unfolds, each of the *genera vitae* is, therefore, referring to the programmatic application, or *institutum*, of the virtues. Hence, Landino sees the two types of virtue as ontologically and heuristically prior to the ways of life which depend on them. It follows that he is seeking to engineer the subsequent disputation in such a way as to investigate the extent to which these virtues obtain in self-mastery, in the relationship between individuals, and between the individual and the state.

After having stated that the soul is the principle of human life on account of its existence, Landino has the character Alberti begin his assessment of the two *genera vitae* with a clarification of their relationship to the functions, or *munera*, of the soul:

When we act in a prudent, just, brave or temperate manner with respect to the things which pertain to social life or, separating the mind from the senses, we look up and speculate upon the divine and eternal, then we say that the soul [*anima*] is able to do so not because it *exists* as such, but because it has an innate capacity to obtain such powers. So, since we have been produced by nature both to act rightly and to investigate the truth, the learned decided to propose two ways of living in accordance with these two functions [*munera*] of human life... It is characteristic of the mind [*mens*] both to act while guided by reason and to speculate on the truth. So, having excluded the other functions of life, which are no more our functions than they are of any other animal, we say the life of a human being – insofar as what makes one a human being – should be devoted to action and speculation.²³²

The *munera*, then, are the mental operations which consist in proper action (*ad recte agendum*) and the investigation of the truth (*ad verum investigandum*), and *negotium* and *otium* are the respective ways of life devoted to them. All the other *munera* of the soul which relate to growth, feeling or movement are held in common with animals and, since Landino considers that only those things which are peculiar to human life are relevant for its study, can therefore be ignored for the purposes of his analysis.²³³ Since Landino describes the two *munera* as ‘such powers’ (*huiusmodi vires*), we can

²³¹ Cic. *Fin.* IV.xv.40

²³² ‘Cum autem aut aliquid prudenter iusteque ac fortiter et temperate de iis rebus agimus, quae ad communem vitam pertinent, aut mentem a sensibus sevocantes divinum quippiam et immortale suspicimus ac speculamur, iam non ea ratione, qua anima est, sed qua vim ad huiusmodi vires assequendas habet, id posse illam dicimus. Quapropter, cum et ad recte agendum et ad verum investigandum natura producti simus, placuit doctioribus, ut sunt haec duo humanae vitae munera, sic duo vivendi genera ponere... Mentis autem est et ratione agere et verum speculari. Quapropter reliquis vitae muneribus, quae non magis nostra quam ceterorum animantium sunt, exclusis vitam hominis, qua ratione homo est, in agendo et speculando versari dicemus’, *DC*, pp. 13.25-14.21.

²³³ These *munera* of the soul correspond to the *vis vegetativa*, *vis motiva* and *vis sensitiva* in the *De anima*, II, pp. 7-9

understand them as being synonymous with the speculative power and active power of the *De anima*. This hypothesis is confirmed during the discussion of the goods of the soul in the second book of the *Disputationes*, when Landino repeats his theory of the threefold power of the human *mens* with reference to practical skill, the virtues of life and morals, and the investigation of the truth: ‘for there is the power with which it [the *mens*] creates, in the same way there is the power with which it acts, finally there is the power with which it speculates’.²³⁴ Moreover, in his description of the *munera* above he reminds the reader of the significance of the virtues to each of them, mentioning the four moral virtues explicitly in his account of the *munus* of action, and describing the *munus* of intellectual inquiry in terms of the abstraction from the senses emblematic of the dianoetic virtues. For Landino, therefore, the operation of the virtues occurs through, and is coterminous with, these *munera*. Just as the soul has an innate drive to perform and perfect each *munus*, it seeks at the same time to perform and perfect the moral and dianoetic virtues. Action and intellectual investigation, and the virtues employed in them, thus constitute the two superior functions of the *mens*; *negotium* and *otium* are the ways of life in which each of these types of virtue is preeminent.

At this point it is worth addressing the misconception, widely-held before Bruce McNair’s valuable corrective, that the two ways of life which Landino is discussing in the first book of the *Disputationes* are the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* rather than *negotium* and *otium*, despite the fact that the phrases *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* appear nowhere in the *Disputationes*.²³⁵ Across the course of centuries the semantic content of these terms had changed constantly, with the concepts of *otium* and *negotium* at turns being adjuncts to, synonymous with, or having flexible and mutable relationships with the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.²³⁶ Yet there emerges an explicit division in Augustine’s *De civitate Dei* between, on the one hand, a *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* which comprise an interior life devoted to questions of personal conduct and the nature of truth respectively and, on the other, the ways of life in which one can partake on earth: the otiose way of life, the active way of life, and the combined way of life (*genus vitae otiosum*, *genus vitae actuosum* and *genus vitae compositum*).²³⁷ Since Landino states throughout the opening exchanges of the *Disputationes* and the succeeding speeches that, on the one hand, action and intellectual inquiry are *munera* which exist in the mind and are devoted to the exercise of moral and dianoetic virtues and, on the other, that *otium* and *negotium* are *genera vitae* consisting in the tangible modes of behaviour encompassing these *munera*, it is clear that he is sticking closely to the Augustinian conception. In the *Disputationes*,

and passim as well as Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I Q.78. See above p. 64.

²³⁴ ‘Est enim qua faciat, est itidem qua agat, est postremo qua speculetur’, *DC*, p. 85.4-5 cf. *De anima*, III, pp. 40-41.

²³⁵ McNair, ‘Cristoforo Landino, Coluccio Salutati and the Best Life’, pp. 747-69.

²³⁶ For an overview of the intellectual history of the debates about *vita activa*, *vita contemplativa*, *otium* and *negotium*, see Brian Vickers, ‘Leisure and idleness: The ambivalence of otium’, *Renaissance Studies*, 4.1 (1990), 1-37, and 4.2 (1990), 107-154, and the valuable essays in Vickers, ed., *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation: Vita Activa – Vita Contemplativa* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1991).

²³⁷ Augustine, *Civ. Dei* VIII.4 and XIX.19.

then, it is the *munera* of action and intellectual inquiry that correspond to the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, not the ways of life which are dedicated to them. The confusion arises because many of the arguments Landino has Alberti adopt are taken directly from questions 179-182 in *Summa Theologiae* II-II, which Thomas Aquinas titles ‘De vita activa et contemplativa’.²³⁸ Given the intricacies of the intellectual tradition to which Landino was trying to contribute, it is unsurprising that both his early readers and editors would look to this obvious reference point given the close correspondences between the two authors.

While there are affinitive links between the *munus* of action and *negotium* on the one hand, and the *munus* of intellectual inquiry and *otium* on the other, Landino’s care in disconnecting the *munera* from the *genera vitae* (despite his affinity with Thomas’ position in the *Summa Theologiae* in so many other respects) shows that the relationships between them are non-restrictive. Indeed one could, in theory at least, undertake the *munus* of activity while living the way of life devoted to *otium*, or the *munus* of intellectual inquiry in the life of *negotium*. During the proem to the second book of the *Disputationes*, Landino confirms this possibility by celebrating the way in which Federico can develop his intellect amidst the demands of public and military life:

As if you were another Ulysses advised by her counsel, you never lacked the help of Pallas Athena in the most difficult times and desperate situations, but amidst your important and almost innumerable public duties you have also striven, with the same goddess as a guide, to attain a degree of learning which many were scarcely able to touch upon when living in the highest *otium* and with everything in abundance. For when could either the fear of an enemy or the shouting of your soldiers resounding in your ears ever distract your mind in such a way that a whole day would pass with you being idle, in which you neither read something yourself nor listened attentively to the reading or disputation of another?²³⁹

The reasons that Landino had for leaning towards an Augustinian position in separating these *munera* from the *genera vitae* would have been several. As we have already seen, the *munera* of action and intellectual inquiry align with two of the three mental powers he had already described in the *De anima* and consist in the operation of the moral and dianoetic virtues respectively. By separating these mental functions from the ways of life which relate to them he could conform to the Aristotelian-Scholastic natural philosophy which underpinned his moral psychology while at the same time avoiding the conclusions of Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus on the unqualified

²³⁸ McNair, ‘Cristoforo Landino, Coluccio Salutati and the Best Life’, p. 752; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* II-II QQ.179-82.

²³⁹ ‘Cuius [Palladis] quidem auxilio cum in difficillimis temporibus ac dubiis rebus veluti alter Ulixes instructus consilio nunquam egeris, eas etiam in maximis ac paene infinitis tuis occupationibus eadem illa duce doctrinas assecutus es, quas multi in summo otio ac rerum omnium affluentia vix degustare potuerunt. Quando enim aut hostilis terror aut tuorum militum auribus undique circumsonans clamor tuam ita mentem unquam avertere potuerunt, ut dies integer tibi vacuus transierit, in quo aut ipse aliquid non legeris aut alium legentem disputantemve non attentissime audieris?’, *DC*, p. 52.21-30.

superiority of contemplation.²⁴⁰ Similarly, in order for Landino to reach his conclusion in the first book that the statesman should employ each way of life as far as is necessary, he had to incorporate into his ethical system the capacity to move to and fro between *negotium* and *otium*, a contingency which would be impossible if the moral and dianoetic virtues were entirely synonymous with the *genera vitae* because in such a case the politician roused to *negotium* from *otium* must cease to be illuminated by reason. It is also important to recognise that Landino's decision to separate the *munera* and *genera vitae* was vital in order for his virtue ethics to coincide with his allegory of the *Aeneid*, in which Troy stands for the voluptuous life, Carthage for *negotium* (or *vita in actione posita*) and Italy for *otium*. At the same time that Aeneas travels to these three locations which represent the *genera vitae*, his journey also represents the purificatory progression through the civic virtues, purgative virtues and virtues of the soul already purged – constituents, lest we forget, of the moral virtues, not the dianoetic – with his descent into the underworld in Italy marking the final exploration of human vice required to achieve a soul purged of bodily contagion. If the *munera* and *genera vitae* were identical, then either Aeneas' journey would have to be reconfigured such that it ended in Carthage with a purged soul but not having contemplated the divine, or his descent into the underworld would have to take place *after* his soul had been purged. Needless to say, neither of these alternatives is at all satisfactory for Landino's purposes.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Influential upon Landino's position here was Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* II-II. Q.180 A.2 (and see also Q.181), which describes how the moral virtues have only a dispositive, rather than essential, relationship with the contemplative life.

²⁴¹ This separation explains an apparent inconsistency between, on the one hand, Landino's association of the *virtutes purgatoriae* and the *virtutes animi iam purgati*, the second and third grades of the moral virtues, with *otium* in the third book ('in otium se recipientes', *DC*, pp. 153.27-154.3) and, on the other, his association of the *munus* of speculation and the associated dianoetic virtues with *otium* throughout the first book. At least part of this irregularity had arisen from Landino's attempts to align the virtue theory of Macrobius with that of Augustine and the Scholastics because it is in *In Somn. Scip.* I.viii.8, the primary source for Landino's description of the grades of virtue in the third book, that Macrobius writes the *virtutes purgatoriae* are 'the virtues of the *otiosi*, who withdraw themselves from the activities of state'.

2.5 Alberti's first speech

The question Landino seeks to answer in the remainder of the first book is whether *otium* or *negotium* is the superior *genus vitae*, with the debate centring on the question of precisely how the *munera* align to these ways of life. First he has the character of Alberti argue for the primacy of *otium*. Before beginning to advance his position, Alberti briefly addresses the idea that the speculative life is not a *genus vitae* because the term 'life' implies a movement which is inimical to actual speculation, an argument he dismisses by asserting that some form of internal motion must be necessary for the investigation of the truth.²⁴² It is likely that here Landino was responding to Lorenzo Valla's argument in the *Dialecticae Disputationes* that contemplation and action are one and the same, feeling that he was obliged to rebut this position before he was able to proceed.²⁴³ To begin the main body of his argument, Alberti concedes that the life of action and the life devoted to knowledge of the truth can each please God and benefit humanity. He first offers passages from Virgil in support of each way of life, and then moves to the authority of Scripture, using as his examples the stories of Rachel and Leah and of Mary and Martha, in which Rachel and Mary represent speculation and Leah and Martha action.²⁴⁴ Yet while each life can be praised, he continues, the *munus* of action is directed towards the right and the just, but that of intellectual inquiry towards the truth. Through the latter we begin an incremental ascent towards the divine essence of God. The ascent consists of a gradual awakening of the higher mental faculties, through which one proceeds in the following way:

We nevertheless see some who, as if reminded by certain shadows and images of the things which fall in our senses, were so ardently inflamed by love of heavenly things that, having abandoned all duties and *negotium*, and having only hitherto perceived material bodies with the senses and the likenesses of these bodies with the imagination, they then contemplate these things in succession: the nature of the bodies with reason itself; spirits which are incorporeal, but nevertheless created, with the intellect; and, finally, that which is uncreated with intelligence.²⁴⁵

²⁴² DC, p. 15.4-14.

²⁴³ Lorenzo Valla, *Dialectical Disputations*, ed. and trans. by Brian P. Copenhaver and Lodi Nauta, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), I, p. 103 (I.8.21-23). On Valla's ideas on this subject, see Letizia Panizza, 'Active and contemplative in Lorenzo Valla: the fusion of opposites' in Vickers, ed., *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation*, pp. 181-225; on Landino and Valla, see especially pp. 209-10.

²⁴⁴ Genesis 29-30 and Luke 10.38-42. Both of these stories had been established as scriptural illustrations of Platonic thought by Augustine: Mary and Martha in *Sermo* LIV [CIV Ben.] and Rachel and Leah in *Contra Faustum* XXII.54. See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* II-II Q.179 A.2, Q180 A.3 and especially Q.182 A.1, and Dante's reference to Rachel and Leah in *Purg.* XXVII.91-108. On the interpretive tradition of the story of Mary and Martha see Jennifer S. Wyant, *Beyond Mary or Martha: Reclaiming Ancient Models of Discipleship*, Emory studies in early Christianity, 21 (Atlanta: SBL, 2019).

²⁴⁵ 'Sed videmus tamen nonnullos, qui quibusdam veluti umbris atque imaginibus eorum, quae in sensus nostros cadunt, admoniti caelestium rerum tam ardenti amore inflammantur, ut relictis curis negotisque omnibus, cum hactenus sensu corpora et imaginando corporum similitudines percepissent, deinceps ipsa ratione corporum naturam, intellectu incorporeos quidem, sed tamen creatos spiritus ac demum intelligentia id, quod increatum est, intueantur', DC, p. 16.13-20, and see also *De anima*, III, p. 21. Note that here Landino

Through these gradations of intellectual investigation, one penetrates ever closer to the nature of reality until the final truth at which one arrives is the cognition of God. Hence, as the *mens* progresses through faculties devoted to objects of increasing abstraction, so too is it perfected, because it moves its focus from the material to the divine. Landino has Alberti reinforce the expressed Platonism of this idea with images originally from the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus* but transmitted to him in the *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis* of Macrobius: that the soul, having sunk into the material world from heaven, acts as though confused and drunk until it remembers its inherent divinity and bears itself to God on the twin wings of justice and religion.²⁴⁶

Alberti's systematisation of the faculties of the *mens* and their respective cognitive objects in his description of the ascent is the same as that in the third book of the *De anima*, and Landino's purpose in reaffirming it here in the *Disputationes* is to establish the mechanistic basis through which the dianoetic virtues stimulate the ascent to God.²⁴⁷ In the earlier work, Landino had gone on to describe how the mental simulacra evoked by perception of such material and immaterial objects are apprehended through the dianoetic virtues under the speculative power: the virtue of intelligence perceives principles of these objects; that of scientific knowledge perceives their effects; and that of wisdom distinguishes between the two.²⁴⁸ So, the ascent consists of our employing these virtues to comprehend the principles and effects of the objects perceived through the successive gradations of our mental faculties. In the *Disputationes*, where he had already established that the speculative power is synonymous with the *munus* of intellectual inquiry, Landino could sketch this same ethical scheme with rather more brevity than in the *De anima*, not least because his audience of Florentine intellectuals would already have been familiar with the technical reasoning of the earlier work.

Nevertheless, it was still necessary for Landino to clarify that cleansing the mind of vice is a necessary precursor to the ascent. He therefore has Alberti continue to sketch how the ascent through the faculties of the mind using the dianoetic virtues can only take place in a *mens* which has first been purified through the moral virtues:

Separating the mind from the senses, elevated with its wisdom, and instructed in all the learning of the things I mentioned a little earlier, the human being is gradually guided upwards by this understanding, where eventually they are nourished by ambrosia and nectar. When Plato says this, what else do I understand that they enjoy apart from the cognition of God and the pleasure which is experienced through this cognition? For although the cognition of God is best achieved through the virtues of the mind – for intelligence

uses the term *imaginatio*, rather than *phantasia*, to denote the imagination. Ursula Rombach points out Landino's debt in this passage and others to the Pseudo-Augustinian *De spiritu et anima* in Rombach, *Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa*, pp. 83-85.

²⁴⁶ DC, p. 17.5-15 and see above pp. 63-65.

²⁴⁷ *De anima*, III, pp. 20-21.

²⁴⁸ *De anima*, III, pp. 40-48.

perceives the principles of things, scientific knowledge the processes and the effects resulting from these principles, and, finally, wisdom tells one from the other –, we will nevertheless be attempting these things in vain if we are not free from all *perturbationes*. How will those enticed by carnal pleasures or captured by avarice or inflated by ambition be able to think about anything higher? So it is also thought that the virtues of life and morals, by which our minds are expunged of all squalor of vice, must be exercised, and exercised in such a way that we begin our ascent with them.²⁴⁹

Alberti's speech continues with two lengthy digressions, both of which address issues raised by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae*. The first of these involves whether the speculative power is situated in the mind (*mens*) or the will (*voluntas*). Here, Landino has Alberti state that the will must take priority over the mind, since it is the appetite, when under the control of reason, that compels us to strive for knowledge of the truth.²⁵⁰ The will inflames us to thought through yet another sequence of psychological gradations: first cogitation (*cogitatio*) involves drawing unity from multiplicity; then meditation (*meditatio*) forms conclusions from these base principles; contemplation (*contemplatio*) follows as a 'sharp-sighted and firm intuition of the soul in the cognition of the truth'; from there wonder (*admiratio*) arises as a stupor originating from the perception of that which excels our faculties; and finally speculation (*speculatio*) allows us to perceive a simulacrum of the truth in those effects which proceed from causes.²⁵¹ Alberti's second digression is devoted to movements of the soul and is drawn directly from the *De divinis nominibus* and *De coelesti hierarchia* of Pseudo-Dionysius.²⁵² He claims that the soul is subject to three types of motion: straight (*rectus*), when something progresses from the external senses to the mind in an act of observation; circular (*circularis*), when its movement is 'one and the same and simple' and tantamount to immobility, permitting simple intuition of the divine; and oblique (*obliquus*) when a circular motion degenerates due to its being mixed with some external disruption.²⁵³ As we progress from sense-perception to abstract mental objects our souls move in a straight line, then, when 'illuminated by the divine

²⁴⁹ 'Nam a sensibus mentem abducens sua sapientia erectus ac plurimis doctrinis instructus earum rerum, quas paulo ante dixi, cognitione eo paulatim deducitur, ubi tandem ambrosia nectareque alatur. Quod cum dicit Plato, quid aliud intelligit nisi cognitione dei et voluptate, quae inde percipitur, illum frui? Hoc enim etsi maxime per eas virtutes, quae a mente sunt, assequatur – intelligentia enim principia rerum, scientia vero progressus effectusque a principiis manantes ac postremo sapientia utrunque percipit –, tamen, nisi omni perturbationum genere vacemus, frustra haec tentabimus. Quomodo enim aut corporeis voluptatibus deliniti aut avaritia oppressi aut ambitione turgidi quicquam altum aut egregium cogitare poterimus? Quapropter eas quoque virtutes adhibendas censent, quibus animi nostri ab omni vitiorum sorde expurgantur, atque ita adhibendas, ut inde initium sumamus', *DC*, pp. 17.21-18.6.

²⁵⁰ *DC*, p. 19.4-29 Elsewhere Landino states that the *voluntas* is in fact synonymous with the appetite under the control of reason. See above pp. 64-65 and n. 183 as well as *De anima*, II, pp. 122-23 and *DC*, pp. 133.25-134.14. Thomas Aquinas addresses the relationship in *Summa Theologiae* I Q.82.

²⁵¹ *DC*, pp. 19.25-21.27.

²⁵² The sources for this discussion on the motion of the soul by Pseudo-Dionysius are *De divinis nominibus* IV.7-10 and *De coelesti hierarchia* VII.4, but Landino would also have been aware of Thomas Aquinas' treatment of the topic, both in *Summa Theologiae* II-II. Q.179 A.1 and Q.180 A.6 and in his commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius. Landino had addressed the movement of the soul before in *De anima*, III, pp. 130-31.

²⁵³ *DC*, p. 22.1-10.

light', they begin their oblique movement, until we finally emulate the angels in the contemplation of God when our souls adopt the constancy of circular motion.²⁵⁴

Having concluded his analysis of the *genus vitae* devoted to the investigation of the truth, Alberti turns to that devoted to action. This life, he says, is truly worthy if led by an appropriate person in accordance with the moral virtues, to which he refers through circumlocutory allusions. Such an individual should exhibit prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice: that is, they should possess evident 'sharp-sighted intelligence and mature counsel'; their mind must be 'guarded against all dangers'; they should live 'with restraint in the face of pleasure'; and should '[reflect] on nothing unless in a just and pious manner'.²⁵⁵ Proper moral conduct of this type is important because 'we were not born for ourselves alone', Alberti states, using the famous Ciceronian formulation of oikeioteic republicanism from the *De officiis*.²⁵⁶ Our moral responsibilities in *negotium* thus consist of successive and sequential duties. Those to family and the household should be fulfilled by furnishing one's dependents with culture, education and patrimony, and those to society in general should be discharged by benefitting the state through public disbursements of wealth, great works and civic tributes.²⁵⁷ One can then devote oneself to the *administrationem rem publicam* through the eloquence and mental strength developed through the cultivation of the moral virtues, striving to achieve religious piety, justice and temperance throughout the citizenry. Indeed, Alberti expresses his astonishment at those who think that anyone could manage (*administrare*) such affairs without the *virtutes de vita et moribus* (and here again he uses this exact phrase) since they direct us to the right action which is particular to humans as opposed to any other living creature. Yet none of this is enough for the advocate of *otium*:

On the other hand, I must dare to say this: no one who is thoroughly lacking in learning will properly administer either himself and his house or the republic. For how can I know either what the *summum bonum* of humanity is, or how it might be acquired, having ignored both the nature of humanity and the nature of things? Does someone who never touches upon the understanding of divine things practice religion correctly? Anyone who wishes to preside over a republic should not be ignorant of such matters. I acknowledge, however, that it is difficult for the man who is occupied by constant *negotium* of both a private and public nature to have a wholly exact understanding of them.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ 'Sin autem divino quoque lumine irradiemur, non iam recto, sed obliquo movemur', *DC*, p. 23.14-15.

²⁵⁵ 'Quod vero in agendo versatur, id, si ab eo viro assumetur, in quo perspicax ingenium maturumque consilium appareat cuiusque animus adversus omnia pericula saeptus, adversus libidinem moderatus existat, qui nihil nisi iuste pieque cogitet, egregium quiddam profecto erit et vere homine dignum', *DC*, p. 23.24-28.

²⁵⁶ *DC*, p. 23.29-30, from *Cic. Off.* I.vii.22.

²⁵⁷ *DC*, p. 24.1-22.

²⁵⁸ 'Quin et illud audebo dicere: neminem aut se domumque suam aut rem publicam recte administraturum, qui omni penitus doctrina expers fuerit. Quo enim pacto aut quid sit summum hominis bonum aut quo modo id acquiratur cognoscam et hominis simul et rerum natura ignorata? Religionem autem quis recte colet, qui nulla ex parte rerum divinarum cognitionem attigerit? Non erit igitur expers earum rerum, qui rei publicae praeesse volet. Fateor tamen difficile esse illarum exactam omnino cognitionem habere eum virum, qui assiduis privatis publicisque negotiis occupetur', *DC*, p. 25.2-11.

The life devoted to action should not therefore be condemned as it corresponds with human nature and forges beneficial bonds between humanity, but since the *mens*, which is particular to human beings, is perfected by the cognition directed to the *summum bonum*, speculation should be preferred to action by far.

With the main elements of Alberti's opening speech having now been summarised, it is worth briefly clarifying an issue of terminology. Through a comparison of passages by Landino and Thomas Aquinas in which Landino has replaced *contemplatio* and its derivatives with *speculatio*, Bruce McNair has argued that Landino, following Salutati, 'is concerned to show that the soul ascends from action to speculation to contemplation'.²⁵⁹ McNair's main intention in this article is to tease out Landino's intellectual debt to Thomas and Salutati and establish continuities between his thought and theirs, but it is nonetheless necessary to challenge this claim. The only place in the *Disputationes* in which Landino places speculation and contemplation in contraposition with each other is his digression in Alberti's first speech on whether the speculative power is situated in the mind or the will, where he defines *contemplatio* and *speculatio* as stages through which the will compels us to the knowledge of the truth. There is evidently some redundancy here between the terms *vis speculandi* and *speculatio* because in this passage *speculatio* is, like *contemplatio*, a mechanism of the mind, not a *munus*. Indeed, from the outset Landino uses *investigatio veri* and *cognitio veri* as synonyms for *speculare* and *speculando* with regard to this *munus*, and at one point he even uses the term *speculatio* to refer to the *genus vitae* for which he would customarily use the word *otium*.²⁶⁰ Even if this were not the case, the fact remains that Landino places contemplation *below* speculation in the hierarchy of mechanisms of the mind, which is inimical to McNair's claim. Landino's language, which uses *speculatio* and *contemplatio* interchangeably as synonyms for intellectual investigation as well as drawing a contrast between them in their role as mental mechanisms, is rather more fluid and inconsistent than McNair suggests.

Throughout Alberti's first speech, then, the superiority of the *genus vitae* of *otium* is justified in terms of its instrumental value in enabling uninterrupted dedication to the *munus* of intellectual inquiry. The life of *otium* is superior to that of *negotium* because the *munus* to which it is devoted perfects the most distinctively human part of us, the *mens*. Yet, Landino's underlying purpose in Alberti's first speech is somewhat broader than setting out the primacy of *otium*. Not only does this speech articulate all the main elements of Landino's perfectionist virtue ethics as they pertain to the psychological ascent towards God, but the reader has by now been exposed to all the main elements of his moral theory as they pertain to the moral virtues and the *munus* of action. Even in this commendation of the life of intellectual inquiry, Landino is, through Alberti, unambiguous about the purificatory role of the moral virtues. Moreover, in the speeches which follow, neither Lorenzo nor Alberti offer any significant revisions to this fundamental model of the moral virtues

²⁵⁹ McNair, 'Cristoforo Landino, Coluccio Salutati and the Best Life', p. 752.

²⁶⁰ 'Negant speculationem vivendi genus esse', *DC*, p. 15.6-7.

purifying the mind of vice so that it can, through the dianoetic virtues, devote itself to contemplation. Landino's decision to structure the disputation in this way betrays how the next two speeches in the first book should be read. Rather than introducing substantive changes to his virtue theory, they will instead offer anticipated objections to it, present his answers to them and provide context for the relative importance of the roles played by the *munera* of action and intellectual inquiry with regard to how the statesman should *administrare rem publicam*. This is a common trope in disputation literature which engenders a particularly self-conscious artificiality because, as was common in such cases, the characters of Lorenzo and Alberti are representing views opposite to those their real counterparts held.²⁶¹ Employing the rhetorical device of *prosopopeia*, Landino has the characters of Lorenzo and Alberti act as instruments for his own opinions, an approach which serves both to provide him with authorial distance and to illustrate his own internal intellectual wranglings in devising his moral philosophy. With this in mind, we now turn to Landino's counterarguments in favour of *negotium* as expressed through the voice of Lorenzo.

²⁶¹ On this conceit in Renaissance disputations on *otium*, see Vickers, 'The ambivalence of otium', II, p. 140.

2.6 Lorenzo's reply

Lorenzo's defence of *negotium* begins from the simple premise that any investigation of human life would be foolish if it did not recognise that the human being is a unity of body and soul, just as two horses yoked to a chariot form an entity which is atomic in epistemological and lexical terms when referred to as a '*biga*'. It necessarily follows the best *genus vitae* is that which perfects both body and soul, and since the purificatory power of the moral virtues is necessary to begin intellectual inquiry, it is the *genus vitae* which cultivates them which is essential to human life:

Ethical living [*ratio vivendi*], which is perfected by civil action, is demonstrated to be the superior *genus vitae*, because the virtues of life and morals to which civic actions are directed serve both the body and the mind as a whole at the same time. For when the health and vigour of all the limbs and the integrity of the senses are preserved by these virtues, then the unpolluted soul is guarded from every stain of the vices. So action, which maintains the investigation of the truth (which itself is devoted to caring for the mind alone in such a way that it neglects the care of other things), must be placed first.²⁶²

Lorenzo's second argument for the superiority of *negotium* concerns the oikēiotic roots of civil society, adapting a concept which Landino has adopted from Cicero and Seneca and which was touched upon by the character of Alberti in his own treatment of the active life. He offers this precis of the theory: 'But who shall not see that nature, the great mother, produced us to celebrate meetings and the unions, and to conserve common society?'²⁶³ According to this reasoning, we are moved 'by nature' to conserve common society, and Lorenzo continues to point out how the introduction of philosophy into cities by Socrates sought to inculcate the principles by which we manage ourselves, our families and the state through actions purified by the moral virtues (we should note that here, once again, Landino uses his *administrare rem publicam* formulation).²⁶⁴ Since every human being struggles daily with both the fear of pain and the hope of pleasure – that is, both the irascible power and the concupiscible power which Landino identified in the *De anima* as the two constituent powers of the appetite – the citizenry should strive together in a common endeavour to engender moral virtues in civic life. One who spends their time in *otium* is, therefore, forsaking a gift granted to them by God.²⁶⁵

²⁶² 'Ratio autem vivendi, quae civili actione perficitur, hoc praestare ex eo convincitur, quod virtutes de vita et moribus, quibus civiles actiones diriguntur, et corpus simul et animum incolumes servant. Illis enim cum valitudo roburque membrorum omnium sensuumque integritas servatur, tum animus ab omni vitiorum labe impollutus custoditur. Praeponenda est igitur actio, quae hoc praestat veri investigationi, quae in sola mente curanda ita versatur, ut rerum ceterarum curam negligat', *DC*, p. 26.24-31

²⁶³ 'Illud autem quis non videat ad concilia coetusque celebrandos et ad communem societatem conservandam nos parentem optimam naturam produxisse?', *DC*, pp. 26.32-27.1.

²⁶⁴ *DC*, pp. 26.32-27.12.

²⁶⁵ 'Quisquam sit, qui in otio marcescens haec negligat, nonne munus sibi a deo demandatum deserere videatur?', *DC*, p. 28.5-7.

In support of this latter argument, Lorenzo presents a thought experiment. He invites the listeners to imagine an empty city which a *sapiens*, the paradigmatic Ciceronian sage, has the task of populating. In order to produce the best imaginable state, free from any superfluous population, the *sapiens* admits citizens in order: first legislators, orators and judges; then physicians, lawyers and soldiers; then artisans and artists; and so on with tailors, weavers, butchers, bakers and the like.²⁶⁶ The *sapiens* who dedicates his life to *otium* as described by Alberti, however, would appear to have no part in this city. Instead, he should be despised as ‘a lazy drone come to another’s honey’, and two analogies serve as evidence for this claim.²⁶⁷ First, Lorenzo compares the state to a ship at wartime in which the *sapiens otiosus* occupies the place of another who could provide some use, acting only as a burden to his fellow crewmembers.²⁶⁸ Then, he uses the analogy of the body politic, claiming that the corporate nature of civic harmony is like the unity formed from diverse organs and limbs, which ‘drives away those things which are abhorrent to it and receives the favourable and healthy’ (another reference to the irascible and concupiscible powers) and which cannot do so if one part abdicates its function like the *sapiens otiosus*.²⁶⁹ The pragmatic dimension of these appeals to the cooperative basis of the republic extends beyond the mere redundancy of *otium* as a way of life. Since only the most gifted individuals are able to devote themselves to speculation, all the more harm is caused to the state because the civic duties which they have abandoned are left to the less talented, as if the Greek army at Troy had lost Achilles rather than Thersites.²⁷⁰

With something of a rhetorical flourish, Lorenzo now has the *sapiens otiosus* defend his value to the state on the grounds that he transmits to political leaders the precepts of statecraft which are the fruits of speculation. Lorenzo remains unconvinced that this is necessarily the case, thinking that too often such wisdom remains hidden. For him, not only should wisdom profit others and not be secreted away, but its active application in civic life is a central pillar of the life of *negotium*. To illustrate his point, Lorenzo produces a catalogue of historical, mythological and scriptural *exempla* of the civic benefits of wisdom, and then remarks pointedly on how, if they had devoted themselves to contemplation, ancient republicans including the Scipios, Catos, Laelii, and Brutus would not have performed valuable service, nor would their names have survived.²⁷¹ Next he turns to the contemporary example of Federico da Montefeltro as one who does not allow the

²⁶⁶ DC, pp. 28.8-29.12, drawing on Plat. *Rep.* II.368e-376c and see Eugene M. Waith, ‘Landino and Maximus of Tyre’, *Renaissance News*, 13.4 (Winter 1960), 289-94. Landino was likely also thinking of Bruni’s systematic praise of the people and institutions of Florence in his *Laudatio*.

²⁶⁷ ‘Ipsum veluti ignavum fucum ad aliena mella venire omnes indignabuntur’, DC, p. 29.20-21.

²⁶⁸ DC, pp. 29.26-30.11 The original source of this image is Plato’s analogy of the ship of state in Plat. *Rep.* VI.488a-489d. Lorenzo’s argument here, however, mirrors that of the real Alberti in his short work *Fatum et fortuna* from his *Intervenales*, in which he warns of the dangers posed to the ship of state by those who indulge in *otium*. See Leon Battista Alberti, *Autobiografia e altre opere latine*, ed. and trans. by Loredana Chines and Andrea Severi (Milan: Rizzoli, 2012), pp. 138-56.

²⁶⁹ DC, p. 30.11-26.

²⁷⁰ DC, pp. 30.26-31.8.

²⁷¹ On the classical topos of rhetorical *copia*, see Cic. *De orat.* I.vi.21, I.xiii.59, and II.liii.214 and Quint., *Inst.* VIII and X.

speculation he undertakes in *otium* to hinder him in the administration of his state or the military ventures for which he is renowned.²⁷² Then, in one of the more famous passages of the *Disputationes*, Lorenzo illustrates his point with the figure of Hercules who, he claims, was a *sapiens* but ‘but not a *sapiens* for himself; instead his wisdom benefitted nearly all mortals’.²⁷³ Using a legendary figure as a case study here is, for Landino, an opportunity to extend his arguments from the particular to the universal through the means of Platonic mysticism. Hercules is the son of Jupiter, the Platonic *anima mundi* which would cause time, the planets and the elements to cease their movement were it to pause in its action, and so Lorenzo is able to present his *negotium* as having an ontological continuity with the forces of the universe itself.²⁷⁴ The final specific example that Lorenzo adduces is that of St Paul, the *doctor gentium* whose evangelism and ministration imparted his knowledge for the salvation of others.

Landino has Lorenzo present two more subsidiary arguments as to why *negotium* is superior to *otium*. The first is that the *negotiosi* are popularly preferred to the *otiosi* – and are duly awarded triumphs and honours – because the former set a moral example through their governance as they ‘better obey unerring nature’.²⁷⁵ Those *otiosi* who defy this nature are often, in fact, hypocrites who praise emperors more than philosophers in any case. Here the ‘nature’ to which Landino is referring is once again the republican-oikeiotic view of civic relations in the commonwealth, which Lorenzo had discussed earlier in his speech.²⁷⁶ The second of Lorenzo’s arguments consists of a striking elaboration of this theory. He suggests that the Christian injunction to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ offers a reciprocal basis for civic life, because one best exhibits love (*caritas*) towards one’s fellow citizens by executing one’s appropriate role within the state as fits one’s abilities.²⁷⁷ Landino has Lorenzo, swept up in his conflation of republicanism and Christian creed, finish with a rhetorical and somewhat hyperbolic declamation:

For, since all who were ever philosophers are resolved that we were born to the social and communal life, anyone who is not a citizen should not be called human, nor should anyone be called a citizen who neglects the care of that state in which they are born.²⁷⁸

²⁷² See above pp. 40-43.

²⁷³ ‘Fuit sapiens Hercules. At non sibi sapiens, verum sua sapientia omnibus paene mortalibus profuit’, *DC*, p. 32.22-23. Landino’s primary point of reference here is Bernardus Silvestris, *The Commentary on the First Six Books of the Aeneid of Vergil Commonly attributed to Bernardus Silvestris*, ed. by Julian Ward Jones and Elizabeth Frances Jones (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), p. 71.25, but another influence was Salutati’s *De laboribus Herculis*, on which he would base much of the allegorical exegesis of the third and fourth books and which the idealised Hercules can be found in, for instance, II.xvii.3-5 and III.xiii.5.

²⁷⁴ *DC*, pp. 32.27-33.6.

²⁷⁵ *DC*, p. 34.22-23.

²⁷⁶ *DC*, p. 26.32-27.1 and see above p. 88.

²⁷⁷ *DC*, p. 35.3-4, referring to Matthew 22.39 and Mark 12.31. Landino may have been influenced here by Dante’s allusive treatment of these passages in *Purgatorio* XVII.58-60.

²⁷⁸ ‘Nam cum omnes qui unquam fuerunt philosophi ad socialem communemque vitam nos natos esse velint, nec homo is appellandus est, qui non civis sit, nec civis, qui eius in qua natus est civitatis curam negligat’, *DC*, p. 35.14-17.

For all the abundance of historical and literary *exempla* he employs, Lorenzo's speech is parsimonious and tightly-argued in that it consists of three principal points: that the mind and body consist in a unity and so the best *genus vitae* must perfect both; that our interpersonal bonds compel us by nature towards civic action within society; and that wisdom has a public utility that should not be dissipated by the abandonment of society by the learned. To reiterate, nowhere does Lorenzo modify or repudiate Alberti's central premise of a progression through purificatory moral virtues to speculative dianoetic virtues. Rather, his defence of *negotium* is a matter of emphasis, allowing Landino to question whether there is a case for prioritising the former over the latter because, just as Alberti has defended *otium* in terms of its value in providing space for the *munus* of intellectual inquiry, so Lorenzo's arguments for *negotium* are phrased instrumentally with regard to the *munus* of action and the moral virtues which govern it.

To this extent, we can deduce that these three points were the most significant factors in Landino's decision to afford greater emphasis to the *munus* of action than his Platonism might otherwise cause us to expect. Each of these arguments ultimately derives from the thought of Cicero. The matter of the unity of body and mind was rooted in Cicero's discussion of this topic in the *De finibus*, in which he explores the idea that 'the human being consists of both body and mind' and 'the life we seek is that which is filled with the virtues of body and mind' (though Landino would also have been thinking of Thomas Aquinas' treatment of this subject in the *Summa Theologiae*); Landino's interpretation of the oikeiotic and reciprocal nature of civil society comes, as we have seen, from the *De officiis*; and the notion that the public benefits of wisdom should prevent the wise from abandoning civil life can be found in the same work, in which Cicero criticises the Platonic view of philosophers who 'detained by their zeal for learning, abandon those they ought to defend'.²⁷⁹ Since the common characteristic of these points – from the natural sense of self-appropriation emergent from the unity of body and mind to the common bonds of shared humanity which compel us by necessity to share the benefits of knowledge – is that of the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis*, it is necessary to spend some time understanding the significance of this idea to Landino's theory of political virtue before analysing Alberti's answers to Lorenzo in his second speech.

²⁷⁹ Cicero's discussion on the unity of the mind and body takes place in *Cic. Fin. V. xii. 34-44*, and that of Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae I Q. 76*. On the public benefits of wisdom see *Cic. Off. I. ix. 28*. A penetrating analysis of these three arguments can be found in Rombach, *Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa*, pp. 120-38, though she characterises the third as 'Die inutilitas philosophorum'.

2.7 *Oikeiosis*, action, and the state

It should be clear by now that, for all his reliance on Aristotelian psychology and natural philosophy, Landino draws his fundamental associative principles from Cicero rather than Aristotle. It is true that, like most humanists, Landino takes certain assumptions from Aristotle such as the need for virtue in political rulers and the idea that human beings are by nature political animals. When advocating the republic as the best political entity, however, he does not undertake any Aristotelian comparison with alternative organisational structures or forms of government, and, more significantly insofar as his virtue ethics is concerned, he views participation in civic life as being valuable only in an intermediary sense. Instead, Landino's political philosophy follows Cicero in viewing the commonwealth of citizens and the proper functioning of the state as being purely instrumental, a vehicle for the exercise of civic virtue through which one can go on to attain one's *summum bonum*, as opposed to Aristotle's opinion that the purpose of the state consists in advancing human well-being and self-realisation as an end in itself.²⁸⁰ Given that the question of the relationship between individual and state is central to his project in the *Disputationes* of uniting republicanism with a Platonic ascent to God, it is necessary to expand upon the intellectual underpinnings of Landino's theory of human socialisation which, as we have seen several times, is that of *oikeiosis*. A concept that is Stoic in origin, *oikeiosis* is a natural appropriative impulse in a living organism that begins self-reflexively, such that an organism concerns itself with its self-preservation and well-being.²⁸¹ In humans, this impulse extends further to encompass the reciprocal well-being of family, friends, country, and, eventually, the entire human race. While Landino would have been familiar with Chrysippus' definition of *oikeiosis* as reported by Diogenes Laertius, it is the treatment of the concept in the *De finibus* and *De officiis* from which he draws his inspiration in the *Disputationes*.²⁸² In the *De finibus*, Cicero had the character of Cato relate the Stoic theory of *oikeiosis* in Latin: 'As soon as a living creature is born... it is concerned with itself, and is committed to preserve itself [*ad se conservandum*], and values its own constitution and those things which preserve its constitution.'²⁸³ If one is to live one's life according to virtue – which, for Stoics, is the *summum bonum* itself – then, after preserving oneself in one's natural constitution and acting in accordance with nature, one must make moral choices in accordance with 'appropriate action' (*officium*, Cicero's translation of the Greek *καθήκον*), a behaviour which, when habituated, eventually develops into a

²⁸⁰ For an alternative view which interprets Landino's theory of socialisation in far more Aristotelian terms, see Rombach, *Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa*, pp. 123-25.

²⁸¹ In Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties and Fate* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), p. 155 it is described as 'a sort of ordered hierarchy of animating principles or constitutions in different kinds of living things, or in one living thing as it matures', whereas Long's definition in Anthony Arthur Long, *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 153 is that *oikeiosis* is 'the way Nature's teleology manifests itself in animal psychology'.

²⁸² DL VII.85

²⁸³ Cic. *Fin.* III.v.16 and cf. Cic. *Off.* I.iv.11-12.

choice in harmony with reason and nature.²⁸⁴ In humans, the affection towards offspring instilled by nature develops into an equally natural desire for association with others, so it follows that *officia* desirable for us include raising a family, the cultivation of friendship and a devotion to the collective benefit of one's community.²⁸⁵ Hence emerges a basis for republican thought. Society ought to be organised on the basis of our owing reciprocal duties to one another on the grounds of the humanity we hold in common and, in turn, the *sapiens* should strive for the common advantage of all by seeking active involvement in the state. In the *De officiis*, Cicero moved from theoretical ethics to practical morality by expanding upon his conception of how such 'appropriate acts' relate to behaviour within society, while seeking, just as he had in the *De finibus*, to use the concept of *oikeiosis* to reconcile principles of human sociability with his belief that one's rights to private property were inviolable. It is here that the summation of the oikeiotic principle most familiar to Quattrocento intellectuals was expressed:

But since, as has been written exquisitely by Plato, we were not born for ourselves alone [*non nobis solum nati sumus*], but our country claims a part of us, and our friends another part, and since the Stoics hold that everything produced on earth is created for the use of humanity, that human beings are created for the sake of other humans so that they might be able to help one another, we should follow nature as a guide in this matter.²⁸⁶

That this sentiment offers a rationale for political organisation within a republic while at the same time being laden with Platonic authority would make it a natural point of departure for Landino's project in the *Disputationes* and, indeed, it is this idea, alongside the broader doctrine of *oikeiosis* in which it is situated, that permits Landino to extend some theoretical distance from the 'theological' Platonic philosophy espoused by Ficino. Here we can return to the passage I quoted in the introduction in which Riccardo Fubini articulates the dissimilarity with his customary precision:

[Landino's] point of reference was not direct Platonic doctrine – and much less in the ideological and emblematic sense in which Ficino assumes it – but the eclectic Academism of Cicero... The philosophy did not interest Landino as revelation of absolute and primordial truth, it did not interest him as 'theology', but for its capacity of elaboration and rational persuasion in the cultured ages.²⁸⁷

Fubini argues that Landino's approach to philosophy is that of an 'institutional', civic-minded Platonism developed in the chancery and the *scuola* which is quite distinct from that of Ficino, and is distinguished by the preeminence of Ciceronian interpretations of Platonism in the *Disputationes*

²⁸⁴ Cic. *Fin.* III.vi.20-25.

²⁸⁵ Cic. *Fin.* III.xix.62-xx.68 and see also Cic. *Off.* I.iv.12.

²⁸⁶ Cic. *Off.* I.vii.22

²⁸⁷ Fubini, 'Cristoforo Landino, questioni di cronologia e di interpretazione', p. 551, and see above p. 7 and n. 7.

in particular and by Landino's tendency to place Plato and Aristotle on an equal footing and counterpose their teachings. One could quibble with this argument by pointing out that Landino's interest in virtue ethics predates his time in the *scuola* and chancery on the grounds of evidence in his second redaction of the *Xandra*, and that his use of Cicero extended far beyond any 'capacity for rational persuasion' into the essence of his natural and political philosophy, but the distinction between the two approaches is nevertheless a valuable one.²⁸⁸ Nowhere is it better emphasised than in Ficino's 1474 letter to Bartolomeo Scala about the *Disputationes* in which he writes, without mentioning Plato at all, that in the work Landino 'imitates the dialogues of Cicero to perfection [lit. a fingernail]: he most happily portrays a happy man'.²⁸⁹ Ficino evidently viewed the *Disputationes* as a Ciceronian work foremost, probably on account of its thoroughgoing focus on the relationship between Platonism and republicanism. Certainly, whatever debt Ficino owed to Cicero, it was not one that involved theories of sociability. While Giovanni Corsi's biography of Ficino speaks of him as having come to the study of Plato through Cicero – an assertion that has been supported by Fubini, when he argues that Cicero was the dominant influence upon early works such as the lost *Institutiones Platonicae disciplinae*, and in an extensive and informative paper by Valery Rees – it remains that Ficino devoted little attention to *oikeiosis*.²⁹⁰ In a letter to Cherubino Quarquagli he discusses Cicero's use of the concept of *officium* in the *De officiis*, but with scarcely a passing reference to the theory of human socialisation that underpins it.²⁹¹ References to Cicero in the *Platonic Theology* concern for the most part his transmission of the doctrines of other philosophers rather than his own thoughts about the relationship between human and society, and oikeiotic arguments are absent from other works which were valuable to Landino such as the *De amore* and the *Philebus* commentary.

Rather than the works of Plato, Plotinus and their successors on which Ficino had drawn for his great philosophical statements such as the *Platonic Theology*, Landino's philosophy had at its root sources which would have been immediately available in his formative years, whether those of Latin Platonism, such as Cicero and Macrobius, or of Christian authors such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas who had, to one extent or another, harmonised Platonic theory with Scripture. As far as *oikeiosis* is concerned it was Cicero and his humanistic successors in particular to whom Landino

²⁸⁸ See above pp. 27-31.

²⁸⁹ '[Landinus] Ciceronis dyalogos imitatur ad unguem: felicem virum fabricat felicissime', Marsilio Ficino, *Lettere*, ed. by Sebastiano Gentile, 2 vols (Florence: Olschki, 1940), I, p. 218 (I.119), and *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, ed. and trans. by Valery Rees, Arthur Farndell, and Adrian Bertoluzzi (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1975-), I, p. 183 (I.119). The second part of the quotation is an allusion to the *Tusculanae Disputationes*. Fubini sees Ficino's analysis as a Platonic rebuke to Landino's aspirations in the text, but I would not be inclined to attribute much rivalry between the two scholars in this regard thanks to Ficino's encomiastic, and apparently unironic, contribution to the *Comento* four years later.

²⁹⁰ Giovanni Corsi, 'The Life of Marsilio Ficino', in *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, III, pp. 137-38; Fubini, 'Cristoforo Landino, questioni di cronologia e di interpretazione', pp. 555-56; Valery Rees, 'Ciceronian Echoes in Marsilio Ficino', in *Cicero Refused to Die: Ciceronian Influence through the Centuries*, ed. by Nancy van Deusen (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 141-62.

²⁹¹ *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, II, pp. 64-67 (III.53).

turned because while the strand of oikeiotic thought important to the *Disputationes* appears in authors in the Latin Platonic tradition after Cicero, it is often by no means dominant. For instance, Macrobius, otherwise the single most important source for Landino's philosophical thought in the *Disputationes*, is content to write that, through the political or civic virtues, people 'devote themselves to their commonwealths, protect cities, revere parents, love their children, and cherish relatives'.²⁹² He enumerates these oikeotic responsibilities without discussing the natural philosophy which underpins them or expanding upon their sequential relationship to each other, although the fact that he is thinking in such terms is implied by his emphasising that 'by these [political] virtues the good man is first made ruler of himself and then of the state'.²⁹³ For the Florentine humanists upon whom Landino relied such as Alberti, Palmieri, Scala and Salutati, however, the importance of *oikeiosis* as it manifests itself through the *non nobis solum* passage of the *De officiis* was crucial in establishing a natural basis for the republican social bond.²⁹⁴ While his influence is otherwise profound, Ficino does not impart any such ideas of human socialisation to Landino either through his original works or through his translations of Platonic texts such as the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. We can therefore conclude, then, that *oikeiosis* is not a purely incidental element of Landino's philosophy, but rather an essential differentiating factor from that of Ficino. Relatively unconcerned with practical ethics, Ficino preferred instead to concentrate on the metaphysical and psychological aspects of Christian Platonism by, for instance, striving to prove the soul's immortality. His perfectionist philosophy is fundamentally salvific, inspired by an ideological and doctrinal commitment to Christianity and looking constantly to God rather than a human society whose bonds emerge through *oikeiosis*. For Landino, on the other hand, the natural impulse towards conservation and 'appropriation' of the self, which then proceeds to friends, family, fellow citizens and so on, is an important principle for reconciling a virtue ethics directed to self-perfection with republican norms of civic responsibility and a duty to others. As Di Cesare puts it, 'Important to the discussion [in the *Disputationes*] is the notion of social man; man in society'.²⁹⁵

Given that the goal of human life in Landino's philosophy is, no less than in that of Ficino, knowledge of the divine, one might imagine that a tension arises within his approach between his desire to emphasise a natural, oikeiotic tendency for human socialisation and civic responsibility, which exists at the level of the civic virtues in the active life, while at the same time advocating the attainment of a *summum bonum* that demands the purgation of corporeal concerns and an ascent to

²⁹² 'His [virtutibus] boni viri rei publicae consulunt, urbes tuentur: his parentes venerantur, liberos amant, proximos diligunt', Macrobius, *In Somm. Scip.*, I.viii.6.

²⁹³ 'His virtutibus vir bonus primum sui atque inde rei publicae rector efficitur', Macrobius, *In Somm. Scip.*, I.viii.8.

²⁹⁴ See e.g. Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, ed. by Ruggiero Romano, Alberto Tenenti and Francesco Furlan (Turin: Einaudi, 1994), p. 139; Palmieri, *Vita civile*, I.17-19; Bartolomeo Scala, 'Whether a Wise Man Should Marry', in Scala, *Essays and Dialogues*, pp. 34-67 (p. 53); and Coluccio Salutati, 'Reply to a Slandering Detractor', in Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati: Political Writings*, ed. by Stefano U. Baldassarri, trans. by Rolf Bagemihl (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 185.

²⁹⁵ Di Cesare, p. 156.

higher grades of moral and dianoetic virtue. Yet, just as his theories of ethical development are integrated into a coherent whole, with the enlightened *sapiens* being able to benefit the state with his wisdom as much as the virtuous statesman does through the exercise of the moral virtues, so too does he show that the oikeiotic bonds between oneself and others which preserve the fundamental interconnectedness of society are supported and strengthened by engagement in contemplation as much as they are by conventional civic duty. In order to demonstrate this I will proceed in three steps. First I will briefly recapitulate the evidence for Landino's general view of *oikeiosis* at both a linguistic and a structural level, which is displayed in Alberti's first speech in the first book and in the discussions on the *summum bonum* in the second. I will go on to discuss how the concept pertains to the moral virtues that relate to the *munus* of activity, paying particular attention to the level of the 'civic' or 'political' virtues, and then, finally, I will investigate how Landino extends this idea such that the dianoetic virtues which are employed in the *munus* of contemplation are brought to bear to reinforce the social bonds which constitute the state.

As we have seen, Cicero's oikeiotic language supplies the backbone of Landino's political vocabulary in the *Disputationes*. The *administrare rem publicam* formulation which is Landino's distinctive way of referring to statesmanship is taken from the *De finibus*, and his intentional substitution of the term *virtutes de vita et moribus* for the conventionally Platonic *virtutes morales* has its origin in Cicero's phraseology in the *Tusculanae Disputationes*, *De officiis* and *De oratore*.²⁹⁶ Moreover, Alberti's first speech, which presents the fundamental details of the system of virtue ethics on which the two discussants can both agree, outlines a central role for *oikeiosis* in the conception of human relations. He begins his speech with an articulation of the *non nobis solum* formulation, and then repeats the sentiment at its end, in the extensive, almost overwrought, passage that declares that while the life of action is inferior to the speculative life in proper administration of the state, it is not nevertheless to be condemned.²⁹⁷ Since we were born not only for ourselves but also, in a much greater sense, to serve in human society, he writes, we ought to praise one whose devotion to his family and the education of his children, whose generosity and liberality, whose eloquence in civic discourse, whose military prowess, and whose piety makes him the best of the human race.²⁹⁸

In each of these cases Landino is advancing oikeiotic socialisation in order to justify the merits of the active life which he will have Lorenzo commend in due course, but his purpose here is to establish a common ground for the intellectual arguments which follow rather than to link *oikeiosis* with the active life alone. To indicate to the reader from the outset that our bonds with other human beings are natural and extend successively from our own self-appropriative impulse (for it is no exaggeration to say that his audience would have been more familiar with the *De officiis* than most other texts save the Bible) is a statement of rhetorical intent and, indeed, in the second book Landino offers a more robust theoretical grounding for this view in his discussion of what is

²⁹⁶ Cic. *Fin.* III.xx.68. See above pp. 60-61 and 69-70.

²⁹⁷ *DC*, pp. 14.29-15.4. See above p. 85.

²⁹⁸ *DC*, pp. 23.28-24.20.

valuable in Peripatetic philosophy. The Peripatetics, he writes, argue that we are born with an instinctive impulse for self-preservation which is directed towards the first inclinations of nature of the body and the mind which are called the *prima naturae*.²⁹⁹ Guided by virtue, we desire what is good for its own sake both for ourselves and, in oikeiotic succession, for others in accordance with their relationship to us:

But the Peripatetics also want this happy life to be situated in society. So the *sapiens* values the goods of friends for their own sake, and he desires the same for his friend which he desires for himself: not for his own sake, but for his friend's. Yet he will have a careful distinction in humankind, so that he best understands in what rank the country, children, parents, blood relations, other more distant relatives, citizens, finally other mortals should be ordered, until the whole race of humanity is encompassed.³⁰⁰

Alongside this oikeiotic principle, Landino took from the Peripatetics (as relayed by Cicero) the idea that one makes moral progress by recognising and choosing between the different kinds of goods represented by the *prima naturae*. I will return to this concept in more detail to assess its implications for the practical aspect of Landino's ethics but, simply put, he argues that the more we refine our moral conduct, the more we turn away from the irrational appetite that directs us towards inferior goods and instead strive for the *summum bonum*.³⁰¹ We learn to distinguish correctly between, on the one hand, the *prima naturae* which are good for their own sake and can lead one closer to God and, on the other, those that are merely useful or even harmful. Since the natural urge for self-preservation extends to others in successive degrees, one is therefore compelled to desire the proper goods for others as well as oneself. Devoting ourselves to the highest good is therefore a task that has repercussions for society at large. Our responsibilities to others oblige us to seek the best goods for them, whether through acting, thinking, leading or teaching.

Yet even more fundamental, from the point of view of Landino's psychology, is that the self-constitutive, self-preservational urge towards proper behaviour is of a kind with that which causes us to associate in social groups. It is the same natural impulse which directs us to God (by driving us to make the correct choice between goods which lead us to our *summum bonum*) as it is that causes us to seek human society (by predisposing us to form social bonds with others). With this in mind, it is not surprising that Landino would see the appeal of an approach which contextualised

²⁹⁹ Cic. *Fin.* III.v.17-30; V.vii.18-viii.23. Note that, since Landino's understanding of the *prima naturae* is based on the *De finibus*, he presents them as a Peripatetic rather than a Stoic concept. This is because in the fifth book Cicero argues that the Stoic position advanced in the third has in fact developed from Peripatetic philosophy.

³⁰⁰ 'Huiusmodi autem beatam vitam socialem quoque esse volunt. Quapropter amicorum bona propter se ipsa diligit sapiens sicut sua idemque cupiet amico, quod sibi, non propter se ipsum, sed propter illum, habebit tamen diligentem in humano genere delectum, ut quo loco patria, quo liberi, quo parentes, quo agnati, quo reliqui necessarii, quo cives, quo postremo ceteri mortales suo ordine habendi sint, quousque universum genus hominum complectatur ipse optime teneat', *DC*, p. 63.17-24.

³⁰¹ For instance, in the *Aeneid* allegory in *DC*, pp. 128.20-131.17, we see the potential pitfalls of directing ourselves towards the wrong *prima naturae*.

virtue within a series of successive and reflexive responsibilities centred on personal self-mastery. While the Platonic concept of an embodied soul which seeks to return to God and a system of political organisation predicated on a natural desire for socialisation with other humans might at first seem incompatible, they are, in fact, equally valid constituent elements of Landino's system of virtue ethics.

Landino would have the reader believe that our motivation to make ethical choices derives from the same instinctual behaviour from which the moral fabric of society is formed. It is for this reason, not to mention the fact that he acquired his oikeiotic ideas from Ciceronian sources, that he is particularly interested in using *oikeiosis* to establish a natural basis for human socialisation which can be used to justify engagement in the active life at the level of the civic virtues. Landino had articulated this idea in full several years earlier in the *De anima* in his discussion of the Macrobian grades of virtue. Drawing on the *De officiis* as he would later in the *Disputationes*, he describes how the other-directedness of the civic virtues emerges from the sociability implanted in us by nature:

For, since a human being is neither a solitary creature nor hostile to the fellowship of other humans, but is born for association and to engage in assemblies, it thinks that its foremost duty is that it inhabits cities, takes care of the republic, safeguards the well-being of its fellow citizens, protects its friends, and, finally, restraining the hand and soul from all wrongdoing, looks to the common good with the powers of both mind and body.³⁰²

When returning to the issue of the oikeiotic basis of civic virtue shortly thereafter, his approach is distinctively Ciceronian once again:

With such virtues, those who are involved in the common life and human society first govern themselves, then their relations, and finally the state, and devote themselves to people in such a way that they inhabit the civil life and do not depart from respectability.³⁰³

Here Landino could scarcely be more unambiguous about the centrality of *oikeiosis* to his conception of civic virtue. Yet what is distinctive about Landino's treatment of the oikeiotic basis of the civic virtues in the *De anima* as opposed to the *Disputationes* is that he goes on to discuss the higher grades of virtue on the grounds that they mark a departure from this principle. The next level of purgative virtue, he writes, is the preserve of those who follow the Platonist view that human beings are no more than a soul temporarily incarcerated in the body, and separate

³⁰² 'Nam, cum homo neque solivagus neque a reliquorum hominum consortio alienus sit, sed ad coetus conciliaque celebranda natus, id in primis ad suum officium pertinere existimat, ut urbes incolat, ut reipublicae consulat, ut suorum civium salutem tutetur, ut socios protegat, ac denique ab omni iniuria manus animumque continens et animi et corporis viribus in commune consulat', *De anima*, III, p. 52.

³⁰³ 'Huiuscemodi igitur virtutibus, qui in vita communi et hominum societate degunt, primum se ipsos, deinde suos ac postremo rem publicam recte administrant, atque ita inter homines versantur, ut et vitam civilem colant, et nusquam ab honestate discedant', *De anima*, III, p. 57. Also, see above p.77 and n. 230.

themselves from the republic into *otium*. In particular, those who exercise the purgative virtues ‘do not apply those four virtues to the conservation of human society [*ad conservandam hominum societatem*] for the common advantage’.³⁰⁴ This is a view of the grades of virtue above the civic virtues as explicitly and characteristically non-oikeiotic in their aim.

To return to the *Disputationes*, we have seen how in Lorenzo’s speech in the first book Landino lays out three principal arguments for the superiority of *negotium* – the union of mind and body, the natural bonds of reciprocity in civic society and the public utility of wisdom – and that each of these has its roots in oikeiotic theory.³⁰⁵ First Lorenzo argues that the virtues pertaining to life and morals protect the integrity of the goods of the body as well as the mind which, as is made clear in the following chapter, is a reference to their encompassing all the *prima naturae* which we have the natural urge to appropriate and which could be of any kind of benefit to us in life.³⁰⁶ Then, redoubling his appeal to nature, he makes his clearest statement of the oikeiotic basis for civil association, writing ‘But who shall not see that nature, the great mother, produced us to celebrate meetings and unions, and to conserve common society?’.³⁰⁷ Hence, Lorenzo claims, philosophy itself was introduced by Socrates to benefit society in order that we might purify ourselves with the moral virtues and in so doing ‘our purified actions administer not only ourselves and our family affairs, but also – in a much higher degree – the whole republic’.³⁰⁸ His third justification for the superiority of *negotium* leads on logically from this view of socialisation, in that it asserts that the civically-engaged *sapiens* benefits others with his wisdom in a way that the *otiosus* does not.

Common to each of the arguments that Lorenzo deploys is the proposition that the merit of the active life lies in its fulfilment of the natural, oikeiotic propensities of humankind. These propensities emerge from an instinct for self-preservation and consist in the impulse to appropriate the *prima naturae* and the drive towards forming reciprocal social bonds. Indeed, he later specifies explicitly that this is the case by claiming that those who engage in *negotium* are held higher in the esteem of the public than their contemplative counterparts because they ‘better obey unerring nature’ when governing and thereby set a better moral example.³⁰⁹ Since we are born for the social life, ‘anyone who is not a citizen should not be called human, nor should anyone be called a citizen who neglects the care of that state in which they are born’.³¹⁰ From the perspective of political aims in the republic, Lorenzo’s concern (as well as that of Landino) is therefore summarised in his statement above. He wants to show that that we are moved by nature to ‘conserve common society

³⁰⁴ ‘Quam ob rem quatuor illas virtutes, quod paulo ante nominavi, non in commune ad conservandam hominum societatem adhibent’, *De anima*, III, p. 57.

³⁰⁵ See above pp. 88-91.

³⁰⁶ *DC*, p. 26.24-27 and pp. 61.9-63.24.

³⁰⁷ ‘Illud autem quis non videat ad concilia coetusque celebrandos et ad communem societatem conservandam nos parentem optimam naturam produxisse?’, *DC*, pp. 26.32-27.1, and see above p. 88.

³⁰⁸ ‘[praecepta] quibus actiones nostrae emendatae non solum nos ac rem familiarem, sed multo etiam magis universam rem publicam administrarent?’, *DC*, p. 27.10-11.

³⁰⁹ *DC*, p. 34.22-23 and see above p. 90.

³¹⁰ ‘Nec homo is appellandus est, qui non civis sit, nec civis, qui eius in qua natus est civitatis curam negligat’, *DC*, p. 35.15-17.

[*ad communem societatem conservandam*], an idea which is, once again, of Ciceronian origin. Recall that Cato's explication of Stoic theory in the *De finibus* defines the natural, oikeiotic impulse to self-preservation as a living creature being 'committed to preserve itself [*ad se conservandum*]'.³¹¹ When he goes on to describe how this impulse also compels us to preserve other human beings, he uses the same language alongside the phrase *administrare rem publicam* that Landino would later adopt as his characteristic definition of political action: 'Since we see that human being is born to safeguard and preserve other humans [*conservandos homines*], it is in accordance with nature that the *sapiens* wishes to manage and administer the republic [*administrare rem publicam*]'.³¹² This passage was an important source for Landino, and is key in understanding how his political thought arises from his natural philosophy. Both Cicero and Landino believe that we are able to administer the republic (*administrare rem publicam*) because nature instils in us an urge to conserve common society (*conservare communem societatem*). Hence when, at the beginning of the *Disputationes*, Alberti asserts that no one will be able to *administrare rem publicam* properly unless they have been purged by the moral virtues and illuminated by the dianoetic virtues, and Lorenzo in turn asks what such a governor might learn from the investigation of the truth, Landino is not only embarking on an exercise in formulating the perfectionist virtue ethics that affords moral legitimacy to the statesman, but is also inviting the reader to engage in a dialogue with the Ciceronian tradition and consider how these two kinds of virtue relate to the conservation of those societal bonds which arise by nature. As far as *negotium* is concerned, Landino's intention is to reconcile the quest for personal perfection through which our souls can return to God with his Ciceronian, oikeiotic principles by advancing the case that it is all the moral virtues, not simply those at the level of the civic virtues, that help us to conserve and benefit society. It is, according to Lorenzo's second argument, our *purified* actions as well as those undertaken in civic virtue through which we administer ourselves, our families and the republic. Note how this position differs markedly from that of the *De anima*. Where Landino had described his oikeiotic theory and had used the phrase *ad communem societatem conservandam* in the *De anima*, it was to argue that it was the civic virtues alone that were concerned with the conservation of these social bonds. Yet, in the *Disputationes*, he is unambiguous that all grades of moral virtues (and, as we shall see, the dianoetic virtues) can benefit the state. This development emerged from the necessity to account for political involvement and the exercise of power by the *otiosus*. If proper political action consists in conserving society, but the best person to guide that action is one who has purified himself by ascending through the Macrobian grades of virtue, one could hardly argue that the impulse to conserve society only exists at the lowest level of these grades. Instead, the will to conserve society must obtain in one form or another throughout the purificatory process and, ultimately, at the level of the dianoetic virtues, when the sage benefits the state by imparting the

³¹¹ Cic. *Fin.* III.v.16 and see above p. 92.

³¹² Cic. *Fin.* III.xx.68. See also Cic. *Off.* I.xlv.159 and the use of the verb *conservare* in Cic. *Rep.* I.vii.12, *Rep.* II.xxv.46 and *Rep.* VI.xiii.13.

knowledge he has gleaned through contemplation. We must now therefore return to Alberti's second speech which addresses Lorenzo's oikeiotic arguments.

2.8 Alberti's second speech: Landino's virtue politics

Given Landino's dialogic conceit of having his two interlocutors act as ciphers for his own wranglings over the question of action and contemplation, Lorenzo's speech should be understood as confronting Alberti's original theory with standard civic humanist objections such that they can be dismissed or incorporated as Landino sees fit. Landino signals as much with Alberti's knowing nod to the reader:

For it quickly becomes clear that everything you have said just now in favour of the civic life has all been directed to this purpose: that you might induce me to corroborate those arguments by which the investigation of the truth is placed *above* action.³¹³

So, while the purpose of Alberti's second speech is ostensibly to respond to Lorenzo's arguments, in truth its reasoning is tendentious and directed to a preordained end. For this reason it is necessary to address its conclusion first before analysing its particularities.

Having offered rejoinders to each of Lorenzo's points by arguing for the superiority of contemplation, Alberti concludes by making what seems like a volte-face. The best way of living, he states, is in fact that which unites the two *genera vitae*. In such a way of life, one devotes oneself to the *munera* of action and speculation as far as is necessary.³¹⁴ The two *genera vitae* are, he says, sisters, 'Mary and Martha living under the same roof'.³¹⁵ We must remain close to Martha, but we should be closer still to Mary, because the contemplation of the truth is the only means by which one can ascend towards the knowledge of God. This idea of a way of life which employs each *munus* as far as it is needed is the natural consequence of Landino's virtue theory having a fundamental structure which disassociates the *munera* from the *genera vitae*. If one can undertake the *munus* of speculation in both *otium* and *negotium*, then neither way of life can be said to have any inherent superiority over the other in the exercise of the dianoetic virtues, nor can this be said of the *munus* of action as it applies to the moral virtues. The appeal of such a separation to Landino over the traditional view of civic action in Florentine republicanism should not be underestimated, because the life which can move between *otium* and *negotium* offers the politician a degree of pragmatic control over his public conduct rather than prescribing any fixed mode of behaviour: the statesman can engage in the practical business of politics to the extent he deems necessary while justifying any withdrawal from such duties on the grounds that *otium* offers longer-lasting strategic and intellectual benefits to the state. Since, as we have seen, political legitimacy was conferred within the Quattrocento republic on account of perceived standards of virtuous behaviour, mediated through rhetoric and resting on

³¹³ 'Facile enim apparet, quaecumque paulo ante pro vita civili dixisti, huc omnia tendere, ut me ad ea corroboranda excitares, quibus veri investigatio actioni praeponatur', *DC*, p. 36.10-12.

³¹⁴ *DC*, p. 47.4-18.

³¹⁵ *DC*, p. 47.19-20.

oikeiotic assumptions, Landino's virtue theory would have been enormously valuable for a statesman as a means of maintaining a sense of propriety regardless of the extent of his direct involvement in governance.³¹⁶

Here we are, of course, led back to the position of Lorenzo de' Medici in contemporary Florentine politics. Like his father and grandfather before him, Lorenzo exercised power through a network of loyalists in the various arms of state but by 1471 – three years before the completion of the *Disputationes* – his reforms to the Cento granted him far greater control of Florentine government than that of his forebears, meaning that he was able to effect political change both directly through personal (and public) intervention in trade, legislation, foreign policy and so on, and indirectly, exercising power at arm's length from official business.³¹⁷ This latter form of political governance did not in itself constitute civic action in the sense it was commonly understood and instead demanded a certain detachment from civic life which would have been more characteristic of *otium*. Writers in the intellectual traditions of Florentine republicanism offered little in the way of a philosophical basis for such a use of power either because – in the case of Bruni and his successors – they celebrated the superiority of the active life and therefore had little time for the role of the *otiosus* in politics, or – in the case of Petrarch and Valla – because *otium* was viewed in humanistic rather than political terms. An arguable exception might be Salutati's *De tyranno*, which presents a defence of monarchy as the best form of republican constitution (in the very broadest sense of 'republican') and has some commonality with the *Disputationes* in advancing the humanistic project of promoting virtue in a ruler. Since it is so divergent from Salutati's earlier opinions, however, it is an ambiguous work to interpret, and even if we assume that the work should not (as Trinkaus suggests) be understood as a rhetorical exercise, the fact remains that for Salutati the monarch is still a figure who is emphatically political rather than an *otiosus*.³¹⁸ Lorenzo's position therefore stood at odds with the principles of the Florentine republic in a philosophical sense, just as it aroused suspicion on the part of anti-Mediceans such as Tommaso Soderini on political and practical grounds. Any humanistic defence of Lorenzo's politics must therefore have been able to accommodate his personal involvement in government through, for instance, convening *balie* and wrangling with the Signoria, while at the same time absolving him of the charge that he was subverting constitutional norms by effecting political change from a position of civic withdrawal.

To this end, a synthesis of *otium* and *negotium* was politically expedient in that it permitted, and even encouraged, detachment from direct civic intervention on the grounds of its value for strategic or exemplary guidance on the part of the statesman. Landino's integration of the two *genera vitae* should therefore be understood as a legitimisation of Lorenzo's political behaviour. His system presents a justification for the exercise of political power by someone who does not themselves

³¹⁶ See above pp. 45-58.

³¹⁷ See above pp. 33-34.

³¹⁸ Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, II, p. 673. On Salutati's view of the monarch as a political figure, see, for instance, *De tyranno* IV.18.

occupy any office of state while at the same time remaining true to the traditions, terminology and spirit of Florentine republicanism.

If we view Landino's advocacy of a life which incorporates *otium* and *negotium* as a justification for the use of unsanctioned power under Medicean republicanism, Alberti's concluding speech of the first book of the *Disputationes* takes on a new light. In order to situate such political intervention in a republican context, Landino must establish a philosophical grounding for the return to *negotium* of the individual who has devoted himself to *otium*. For all that Landino has maintained that action and intellectual inquiry (and the ways of life which govern them) are both essential to *administrare rem publicam*, thus far he has for the most part expressed the movement between the two *munera* as unidirectional, an ascent through the grades of moral virtue to achieve psychological purity which continues through successive dianoetic virtues so that one might draw closer to God. Yet it is movement in the other direction – of the enlightened *sapiens* returning to politics to offer the benefits of his wisdom to the state – that provides the intellectual basis for the exercise of political power without occupying formal office. Alberti's volte-face is therefore nothing of the sort. His preceding arguments, which show the benefit of the sage to the republic, have been *preempting* his conclusion.

With this in mind, we can now approach Alberti's responses to Lorenzo's individual points. He begins by recapitulating his stance on the preeminence of the *mens*. For the *mens* to involve itself in anything other than speculation on the truth would be unworthy because, since this task is devoted to incorporeal things without intermediary sense-perception, it involves the most divine part of us and therefore must be preferred to any task of activity. It therefore follows that the *munus* of intellectual investigation is superior to that of action because the former is aloof from the materiality which afflicts the embodied soul. In order to drive this point home, he delivers a rhetorical defence of this superiority which is illustrated by aspects of the story of Mary and Martha in the gospel of Luke.³¹⁹ The arguments he advances to this end include the fact that contemplation keeps us on a constant course while action involves incessant distraction; the fact that a greater, undisturbed, mental pleasure should be preferred to a lesser one; the fact that, following Psalm 26, speculation is sought on its own account rather than for another end as action is; and the fact that we undertake intellectual investigation in tranquil *otium*, while activity must take place in a material world which is subject to the *perturbationes* that the moral virtues must quell.³²⁰ The deployment of this story, laden with scriptural authority, helps Landino to foreshadow his final conclusion that the two ways of life are, like Mary and Martha, 'sisters' with their own particular value.

Since the superiority of the intellect has now been reiterated, Alberti abandons his oratorical approach in favour of a dialectical method, addressing the specific points raised by Lorenzo in his speech one by one in order to justify the extrapolitical exercise of power. First he seeks to counter

³¹⁹ Luke 10.38-42. See above, n. 244.

³²⁰ DC, pp. 36.13-37.25, from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, Q.182 A.1.

Lorenzo's claim that the *sapiens otiosus* is a redundant drain on the efforts of other citizens with the exemplary figure of Paolo Toscanelli, the prominent Florentine intellectual and friend of Alberti and Landino who served as interlocutor in the *De anima*. A lengthy embedded speech made on Toscanelli's behalf by Alberti imagines how he might defend himself from such charges. Toscanelli – who takes care to point out that he conducts himself according to the virtues pertaining to life and morals and adheres to all laws – is aware of the esteem in which the political life is held by the citizenry if statesmen execute (*administrent*) their offices with the highest virtue, but emphasises that politicians who fall short of this ideal are invariably disgraced because prominence in positions of governmental authority can serve to magnify one's vices as much as one's virtues: "Those who are placed in an exalted and lofty position can hide neither their virtues nor their vices, and the more they deviate from the right path the more they are criticised".³²¹ This advice is at once cautionary and reflective, in the sense that it would necessarily have drawn the contemporary reader's mind to the sack of Volterra in 1472 in which the massacre perpetrated by Federico's mercenaries reflected badly on Lorenzo whether or not it happened because of the wilful intervention of the young ruler. As I mentioned earlier, by the time of the completion of the *Disputationes* the sack of Volterra was already beginning to be seen as a lapse of judgment on the part of Lorenzo by scholars and politicians – if not the citizenry – and it would have provided an object lesson in the reputational risks of political decision-making, especially on the part of supporters of the Medici such as Landino.³²² Prevailing humanistic attitudes to virtue created an environment in which statesmen were legitimised by their moral worth, and the rhetorical apparatus which regulated this environment could easily be brought to bear on a statesman in order to insinuate that his political misjudgments were illustrative of conduct which was less than virtuous, so it was important that any system of virtue ethics in the wake of Volterra should address this issue.

The mitigation of such reputational risks is addressed in Toscanelli's next claim, which is that political decision-making is a matter of acquiring the relevant skill (*artificium*) and tools (*instrumenta*) for the administration of the state, an essential prerequisite for which is the knowledge of the truth. This knowledge, however, is unattainable when vice is present:

Through this knowledge alone does not only the ultimate end (which everyone desires to reach) display itself to us, but we are also shown the shortest and easiest way which leads us there... We will never attain the light of knowledge through sordid and vulgar conduct, nor will we attain it when addicted to pleasure, nor subject to avarice, nor bound to ambition. But we *will* attain it when inflamed by an ardent love for the discovery of the truth, so I follow the guidance of reason in order that I may reach it, and I do not abandon the signs of nature itself.³²³

³²¹ 'Qui enim in sublimi ac excelso loco constituti sunt, eorum neque virtutes neque vitia quenquam latent ac, quantum a recta via aberratum est, tantum exagitantur', *DC*, p. 38.27-29.

³²² See above p. 37.

³²³ 'Hoc enim uno non solum ultimum illud, quo quisque pervenire cupit, se nobis ostendit, verum etiam quae brevissima atque expeditissima eo perferat via manifestatur... Verum id sordidis vulgaribusque artibus

For Landino, the suppression of vice is not only valorised for its purgative benefits in moral ascent, but also for its crucial role in political praxis. One cannot possess the skills necessary for political decision-making without first curbing the risk of error by using the moral virtues to cleanse oneself of sensual pleasure, avarice and ambition, and the moral virtues themselves are perfected by the knowledge of the truth achieved through the dianoetic virtues. This position leads to two main consequences for Landino. First, by having Alberti express his advocacy for a life which includes both action (that is, governmental decision-making and the purgation of vice) and detachment (for intellectual inquiry into the truth) in terms of its mitigation of reputational risk, Landino illustrates the political expediency of such a life for Lorenzo and politicians like him. Simply put, such politicians must hone their statecraft through the *munus* of intellectual inquiry to avoid the damage to their standing that another Volterra would bring. These are practical grounds for political withdrawal which stand as a justification for the statesman to detach himself from the civic context of governmental activity when necessary, directing policy and exercising power free of the usual republican constraints of the purely active life. Second, Landino's concern with the amplificatory quality which the exercise of power has upon a politician's vices, and the fact that these vices are presented as an impediment to attaining the techniques of statecraft as well as being an obstacle in the ascent to God, further explains his decision to emphasise their significance in the rest of the *Disputationes*. When Landino introduces the taxonomy of vice into his system of virtue ethics in the second book and emphasises the triad of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *ambitio* throughout his allegorisation of the *Aeneid*, he is doing so because vice has deleterious consequences for one's political as well as moral development.

Having offered a rationale on pragmatic, reputational grounds for political guidance by a leader who is withdrawn from offices of government, Landino must reaffirm that *otium* is nevertheless entirely consistent with republican orthodoxy in the benefits it brings to the state. He does so by having Toscanelli advance the position that those who dedicate themselves to the investigation of the truth benefit the state far more than those devoted to *negotium*. For Toscanelli, one who conserves the state in its material form – its 'harbour, shipyards, walls, temples or portico' – really 'conserves' nothing at all in the inevitable course of time, whereas collective action in a common cause produces civic concord, the sole power which can truly maintain the state. An elaborate causal chain explains how such civic concord is brought about by *otium*:

The best legislation will produce [civic concord], and the observance of this legislation will be maintained by the virtue of those who exercise it. Reasoning achieved by diligent intellectual inquiry will foster virtue, and

nunquam assequemur, Neque enim voluptatibus addicti neque avaritiae obnoxii neque ambitioni obligati id assequemur, sed ardentissimo quodam veri inveniendi amore incensi, quo ut perveniam sequor ducentes rationes et vestigia ipsius naturae non desero', *DC*, p. 39.12-27.

only mental discipline devoted to the truth will perfect this reasoning. Finally, we will procure the truth after having devoted our attention to it in a long period of *otium*.³²⁴

Thus reason stimulates the soul to learn, to memorise what it has learned and to use what it has memorised in its pursuit of the truth and, ultimately, the *summum bonum*.

Alberti's position here indicates how Landino hopes to extend the oikeiotic idea that political responsibility consists in 'conserving common society' such that it applies to the *munus* of contemplation as well as that of action – or, to put it another way, that the dianoetic virtues are devoted to the oikeiotic conservation of society as well as the moral virtues. By using Toscanelli to defend *otium*, he is inviting the reader to wrangle with what precisely it means to 'conserve' the state.³²⁵ Rather than consisting in the preservation of the physical integrity of walls, buildings and so on, what truly conserves the state is civic concord, through which 'the deeds accomplished by individuals united in one whole' preserve our communal bonds through social harmony.³²⁶ For Toscanelli, and therefore Alberti, and therefore Landino, however, this concord is not sustained by the practice of the moral virtues. Instead, the only thing that can maintain it is legislation drawn up by statesmen who have cultivated the dianoetic virtues through intellectual inquiry. If we are to fulfil our natural impulse to preserve others, we must therefore look to purifying ourselves such that we can exercise the dianoetic virtues in contemplation. Landino is careful not to stray into the traps of either specifying the precise workings of the legislative process any further or following Aristotelian tradition in comparing different systems of government, each of which would present him with uncomfortable questions about how a legislator who withdraws himself from political activity might be integrated within the collective and collegial decision-making characteristic of republicanism. Instead he maintains a studied vagueness which allows him to maintain that those who devise legislation through the cultivation of dianoetic virtues in *otium* do so in the best republican traditions of oikeiotic reciprocity, contributing to the conservation of society whether they operate in an official capacity or not. Later in the *Disputationes* Landino returns to this subject but elides his earlier separation between the official and unofficial leaders of the state by maintaining that it is those in charge of the republic whose speculative vision allows them to offer advice and guidance:

They see Carthage from a high position because – as we also discussed the day before yesterday – a republic will never be regulated with the best institutions and laws unless those who are in charge of it wisely arrange

³²⁴ 'Id autem optima legum institutio pariet, legum autem observantiam eorum, qui illis utuntur, virtus conservabit, virtutem autem rationes a diligenti inquisitione profectae pariunt, illas autem sola exercitatio circa verum perficit, verum postremo diuturno quodam otio circa ipsum adhibito nobis comparabimus', *DC*, p. 40.9-13.

³²⁵ See above p. 88 and pp. 99-100.

³²⁶ 'Concordia civium, quam actiones a singulis profectae in unum coeuntes ita conficiunt', *DC*, p. 40.5-6.

everything they recommend or prohibit according to the rule and norm of that which they perceive through speculation on great things.³²⁷

It is clear from both of these formulations that when the sage returns from *otium* to impart the benefits of his investigations, he will not only dispense strategic advice but will also offer concrete legislative recommendations to best enrich the common good. When compared with Salutati's *De tyranno* and its explicit endorsement of a form of republican monarchy, Landino's view of the foundation of law demonstrates the extent of his efforts to maintain continuity between legislation on the part of an extrapolitical individual and the communal foundations of Florentine republicanism. It is the inverse of princely or monarchical edict that Landino is describing here. No claims are made for the supremacy of the legislator: rather, the virtue he cultivates in *otium* is committed to the flourishing of equal intrapersonal bonds in a way that other intellectual lynchpins of Florentine republicanism such as Bruni would find difficult to dispute.

With Toscanelli's imagined defence of the *sapiens otiosus* having been concluded, Landino establishes grounds for the return of the sage to the political realm by having Alberti respond to Lorenzo's argument that the unity of body and soul necessitates that the correct *genus vitae* is that which perfects both.³²⁸ While the body should not entirely be neglected, Alberti says, it is like a chain, a vase or a vestment for the soul whereas the human being itself is in fact the *mens* alone, as both Plato and the Christians profess. Even if we concede that the human being is constituted of body and mind, and that the moral virtues preserve them both and maintain the senses necessary for the cognition of the divine, we must still acknowledge that, since these virtues emerge from the understanding of what is just and in accordance with nature, they cannot be perfected without the intellectual investigation of the *mens*. The investigation of the truth – and, by extension, the dianoetic virtues which promote it – both produces and aids the moral virtues but touches an element of the divine they cannot. In order to make explicit the link between this rather abstract notion and the business of government, Landino has Alberti venture into scriptural semiotics by suggesting that this is the reason why God handed down the Ten Commandments. In so instructing Moses in the law, he claims, God was showing us that the intellectual investigation of the divine is necessary to *administrare rem publicam*. The dianoetic virtues will, therefore, serve us better in both strengthening the oikeiotic bonds of civil society and in controlling the appetite and its constituent parts, the irascible and concupiscible powers:

³²⁷ 'Carthaginem vero e loco superiore cernunt, quoniam, ut nudius quoque tertius disputatum est, nunquam optimis institutis et legibus temperata erit res publica, nisi qui illi praesunt cuncta, quae aut praecipiant aut prohibent, ad eorum, quae per rerum magnarum speculationem viderint, regulam ac normam sapientissime dirigant', *DC*, p. 181.9-14, referring to *Aeneid* I.419. Stahel's translation is unreliable here because he concludes with 'according to the rule and norm of those who have a speculative vision of great things', which would only be accurate if the final 'quae', an accusative neuter plural denoting the things perceived, were 'qui', a nominative masculine plural denoting those who perform the act of perceiving.

³²⁸ *DC*, pp. 40.20-42.24.

This is why, with regard to both conserving common society and overcoming the two enemies of human tranquillity [viz. pain and pleasure, or the *vis irascibilis* and *vis concupiscibilis*], the virtues which are devoted to the cognition of the truth will serve us better than those which strive in action. Nonetheless, both common society, by which the human race is bound together because it seeks to satisfy bodily need rather than the excellence of the soul, and those fierce enemies, which you were casting before our eyes in your oration in order to strike fear into us, are to be buried as one with the body.³²⁹

After death our souls, free from their bodily entombment, will therefore continue to enjoy the pleasure of the truth which is why, says Alberti, Jesus declared that ‘Mary chose the best part, which was not taken away from her’.³³⁰ This is why those who devote themselves to *otium* discover things which can be used by politicians to manage civic affairs (*ad rem civilem administrandam*).³³¹

By explaining this aspect of the relationship between the two kinds of virtue in terms of the priority of the cognitive faculties over those of the senses, Landino not only sidesteps an apparent contradiction – he has, after all, maintained so far that one must first purify oneself through the moral virtues in order to develop the dianoetic virtues in any meaningful way – but also he introduces into his moral psychology a mechanism for the transposition and assimilation of the benefits of cognition into the realm of activity. This conceptual structure allows him to extrapolate the operation of the virtues from the level of the individual to that of the corporate body of the state. If proper moral or civic behaviour supervenes upon the cultivation of the dianoetic virtues then it follows that the intervention of those devoted to intellectual inquiry in *otium* must also be necessary for government – even a republican government – to work properly. Hence, according to Alberti, ‘the things which will be advantageous to the administration of republics cannot be discovered except through the intellectual investigation of supreme things by humanity’.³³² Just as the enlightened philosopher can return to Plato’s cave to communicate his knowledge of the forms, so too can the sage gain wisdom in contemplation with which he can benefit the republic.³³³

It is therefore the dianoetic virtues rather than the moral virtues which ultimately serve us best in conserving the civic bonds of society, and when the *sapiens*, having exercised his cognitive faculties in *otium*, returns to impart his wisdom to the state he has divine sanction to do so. That this *otium* should necessarily take place free from the constraints of any official political obligations

³²⁹ ‘Quapropter et ad communem societatem conservandam et ad duos illos humanae tranquillitatis hostes superandos multo efficacius hae virtutes nobis proderunt, quae in veri cognitione versantur, quam illae, quae in rebus agendis laborant. Quamquam et societas, qua humanum genus devincitur, non propter animi excellentiam, sed propter corporis indigentiam expetatur et hostes illi, quos oratione tua ita saevos oculis paene nostris subiciebas, ut horrorem incuteres, una cum corpore sepeliendi sint’, *DC*, p. 42.5-13 and see above pp. 65-66.

³³⁰ ‘Maria optimam partem elegit, quae non auferetur ab ea’, *DC*, p. 42.18-19 quoting Luke 10.42. See also Augustine, *Sermo* LIV [CIV Ben.]. Landino mentioned this passage in passing earlier in *DC*, p. 37.19-20, while adapting Gregory’s interpretation from his *Homilies on Ezekiel* II.2.9.

³³¹ *DC*, p. 42.21-24.

³³² ‘Quae ad rerum publicarum administrationem utilia futura sint, non nisi per supremarum rerum investigationem ab hominibus excogitari posse’, *DC*, p. 42.3-5.

³³³ Plat. *Rep.* VII.514a-520a.

permits the intervention of influential citizens such as Lorenzo and Cosimo in the management of the republic on supervisory or strategic grounds, providing advice gleaned from their intellectual inquiries to perfect mechanisms of state which cannot themselves transcend corporeal mundanity. Landino elaborates on this idea in his allegorisation of the *Aeneid* in the third and fourth books of the *Disputationes*. First he describes how the passage in which Aeneas feeds and consoles his followers after having been shipwrecked in Carthage symbolises the way in which the *sapiens* must intervene in practical matters when necessary:

For this is the ministration [*administratio*] of the best leader: when he sees that civic action serves a human need – although it does not serve that which is divine in us – he will devote himself to it, but in such a way that when he has provided the things which are necessary for human needs he will direct their souls to the divine...³³⁴

Similarly, Landino later interprets the passage in which Aeneas leaves Dido but promises to remember her forever as demonstrating the extent to which the statesman ought to devote himself to each way of life:

For we call ‘perfected’ the one who devotes himself to speculation while he lives in such a way that, in his turn, he acts as the circumstance demands. Therefore he does not so much flee the life of activity as withdraw from it, because [Aeneas] did not enter into a contract of marriage with [Dido]. We were not born so that we might devote ourselves to mortal things as though we were married to them: one devotes oneself to them for the sake of necessity and we only expend as much effort on them as is required to conserve society.³³⁵

The messy business of politics is only to be undertaken out of necessity. When the contemplator stirs himself from *otium* it is for the purpose of conserving society (*ad societatem conservandam*), which, as we have seen, is a tell-tale phrase that Landino uses to indicate the kind of political action which is devoted to the maintenance of communal bonds. Yet non-interference remains the default position for the individual detached from government, and any political intervention on his part carries with it no constitutional obligation or responsibility as would a ‘marriage’ to civic activity. It is instead

³³⁴ ‘Haec enim optimi principis administratio est. Nam cum videat civilem actionem humanae indigentiae, non autem ei quae in nobis est divinitati inservire, ita in illa versabitur, ut, cum quae ad mortalium inopiam necessaria sunt providerit, suorum tamen animos ad divina erigat’, *DC*, pp. 174.27-175.1, referring to *Aeneid* I.198-207. Incidentally, this is one of only a handful of occasions where Landino uses the word *princeps* in the elucidation of his political philosophy in the *Disputationes*. Since these all occur within a short section in which Landino interprets the actions of Aeneas when he lands in Carthage, it would seem that he is transferring the epithet from Aeneas to the more generalised description of a republican political leader he describes elsewhere throughout the text. The other instances occur at *DC*, p. 174.12 (‘ea enim principis cura est’) and *DC*, p. 176.12 (‘Est enim optimi principis vel praecipuum munus’).

³³⁵ ‘Nam eum denique absolutissimum appellabimus, qui ita in speculatione, dum vivit, versetur, ut vicissim, cum res postulat, agat. Ergo non fugit a vita agendi, sed inde recedit, quia cum ea non contraxerat matrimonium. Non enim nati sumus, ut circa mortalia versemur illisque coniungamur, sed necessitatis causa est illis insistendum, ut tantum operae impendamus, quantum ad societatem conservandam sat sit’, *DC*, p. 197.17-23, referring to *Aeneid* IV.333-61.

entered into on impromptu grounds and carried out with reluctance, as though no other option were supposedly available. Of course, given the reality of the political position that Landino was attempting to defend – that is, Lorenzo’s intervention in Florentine politics without being part of the government – he seems to be advising that, should such an individual adopt this position of feigned hesitancy, he will be better placed to excuse political interference in the workings of a republic in which he holds no official position.

To reinforce this argument, Landino next has Alberti take issue with Lorenzo’s claim that *negotium* offers the greater benefits to society. Alberti argues that, on the contrary, the benefits of *otium* are disseminated more widely and to more people than those of *negotium*. The figure to whom he turns as his model is Cicero. To hold up Cicero as an *exemplum* of humanistic values, whether in the context of statesmanship, Latinity, or philosophy, was of course a commonplace of Renaissance literature and Landino would have been familiar with many such presentations including those by Salutati, Bruni and Petrarch, not to mention his own praise of Cicero as a literary and philosophical exemplar in his prefatory lecture on the *Tusculanae Disputationes*.³³⁶ Moreover, the fact that Lorenzo’s three principal objections to the superiority of *otium* have their roots in Ciceronian thought supports the relevancy of this choice. Just as Lorenzo had sought to defend activity through a comprehensive roster of eminent men of action, so Alberti brings to bear the moral authority of Cicero’s numerous historical actions, both during and after his consulate, in order to establish that his dedication to the common good through civic duty was deserving of praise. Yet in *otium*, Alberti argues, Cicero’s intellectual investigations offer teachings for all time. Referring indirectly to the *De finibus*, *De officiis*, and *Tusculanae Disputationes*, Alberti describes how Cicero grants us insights into human nature and ends, the moral duties of life, and how to scorn death, suffering and *perturbationes animi*.³³⁷ Moreover, he continues, the *De legibus* and *De republica* describe a ‘universal civil doctrine’ which demonstrates the constitution of the state, its laws, politicians and peoples. Just as Cicero’s works have continued to instruct subsequent and future generations, so those of other *otiosi* have instilled prudence and liberal education (*humanitas*) into the human race. Indeed, intellectual inquiry by such sages was a prerequisite for the formation of the first human communities and their laws. For Alberti, Cicero shows us that the benefits of action are ephemeral when compared to those of speculation, which last forever.

By way of illustration, Alberti returns to Lorenzo’s account of the constitution of the ideal city. Once the *sapiens negotiosus* has admitted all of his citizens, he must also allow entry to the *sapiens otiosus* who (supported by public funds) will benefit communal life by absenting himself from all

³³⁶ *Scritti*, I, p. 14. From the wealth of humanist literature on the exemplarity of Cicero, see for instance Salutati’s use of Cicero as an interlocutor in letter VIII.10 in *Epistolario*, II, pp. 408-409, and Bruni’s *Cicero Novus* passim. For all Petrarch’s concern with Cicero’s moral fibre, he celebrates Cicero as a model of literary excellence in e.g. *Trionfo della Fama* III.19-20 and *Familiars* XXIV.4. A useful survey of Ciceronian exemplarity among humanists is David Marsh, ‘Cicero in the Renaissance’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero*, ed. by Catherine Steel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 306-18.

³³⁷ *DC*, p. 43.12-19.

negotium and devoting himself to intellectual inquiry, the findings of which he will set down in writing. In doing so, he profits civic life by setting an example of a model citizen and offering advice to those who need it. Just as he had with the example of Toscanelli, so too here Alberti justifies the benefits of contemplation in terms which relate to the process of *oikeiosis*. When Alberti refines Lorenzo's image of the *sapiens* admitting citizens into an empty city according to their particular role in its welfare by giving preeminence to those who contemplate God, he perpetuates the metaphor he attributed to Toscanelli of the city being unable to properly conserve civic concord without an animating legislation that is divinely inspired.³³⁸ Through the wisdom the *sapiens* gains, which in turn he communicates through his writings, Alberti believes that each individual will 'learn to execute the role demanded of them in the state', and thereby better strengthen the reciprocal human bonds of society that Lorenzo was himself advocating.³³⁹ Later, at the end of the third book, Landino presents an even more vivid illustration of this sublimated form of oikeiotic theory when he interprets the construction of the city of Carthage in *Aen.* I.423-29 as being an allegory for the constituent functions of the republic. First come the walls and dwellings which represent its capacity to protect its inhabitants; then the laws and government which enshrine the moral behaviour particular to humanity; then the public works which represent things that are useful (*utile*) in their contribution to the financial and political power of the republic; then cultural buildings which represent the capacity for relaxation of body and soul.³⁴⁰

Alberti's last rebuttals to Lorenzo's arguments preempt potential objections to the case Landino has constructed in favour of the republican *otiosus*. For instance, Lorenzo's analogies of the ship and the body politic are both unconvincing, he claims, because in each case it would be necessary to have a presiding power (that is, a navigator and a mind respectively) which remains free from activity to make proper judgments. It is clear that Landino is seeking to propose how in practical terms an individual can and should appropriate political power in a republican context, and his strongest justification for such an action appears when Alberti addresses Lorenzo's point that the state ends up being governed by inferior leaders when the most talented devote themselves to *otium*. It is rare for a *sapiens* to 'abandon' civic life as such, he claims, because they are able to benefit the state through advice and example and, in any case, the *sapiens* will involve himself in governance of the state if called upon by the citizenry, or if the current leadership is incompetent. In the case of incompetence on the part of political leaders, intervention is, as far as possible, obligatory on the part of the sage, who must either 'take charge in their [the current leaders'] place, or try to make them better' or otherwise 'return into himself and benefit humanity in another way'.³⁴¹ If, though, he sees that another *sapiens* is in charge he should devote himself to *otium* because Plato tells us 'it is

³³⁸ *DC*, pp. 28.8-29.12 and pp. 44.15-45.8.

³³⁹ 'A quo quisque partes sibi in re publica demandatas obire discat', *DC*, p. 45.3-4.

³⁴⁰ *DC*, p. 181.18-28.

³⁴¹ 'Aut ipse [sapiens] illorum vicem obire aut eos meliores reddere tentaturum; quodsi neque ipse admittetur neque illi meliores fieri patientur, reediturum ad se aliaque ratione hominibus profuturum', *DC*, p. 46.5-8.

much more pleasant to be ruled [*regi*] than to rule [*regere*]' under such conditions.³⁴² The *sapiens* must also rely on benefitting the state through his *otium* if the current rulers are unwilling to accept his advice or he is not allowed to take their place.

To reconstruct the political involvement of an extra-governmental figure as an act of public service in this way would have been as compelling in its significance to a reader familiar with the context of recent Florentine politics as it was convenient in its validation of Lorenzo's rule. Since the Medici had gained control of Florence under Cosimo, internal opposition to them within republican institutions had manifested itself consistently, albeit in various different ways: Cosimo was forced into exile in 1433 by prominent politicians for his supposed financial and electoral crimes; Piero faced the attempts of the *ottimati* to reassert power; and Lorenzo was confronted with a restive Signoria during the Volterra crisis and faced struggles with the Cento over his reforms.³⁴³ In each of these cases the Medici resorted to *balie* as their preferred instrument of wresting back institutional control and overcoming threats to their authority. The fact that such *balie* were supposedly only ever convened in times of war speaks as to an inclination on the part of the Medici to portray their acquisition of power as a regrettable necessity in desperate times, a stance entirely consistent with the idea that political failure requires the intervention of the *sapiens* and an example of the kind of 'feigned hesitancy' towards exercising extrapolitical power that I mentioned earlier. Moreover, the Medici would often seek to delegitimise their political rivals both implicitly or explicitly, whether through a willingness to treat them far more ruthlessly than other oligarchic elements of the Florentine ruling class did (examples could include Cosimo's exiling of Rinaldo degli Albizzi, Palla Strozzi and others, and Piero's exiling of the signatories of the 1466 oath of defence) or through the retrospective attribution of moral and intellectual failings (such as Piero's portrayal of the conflict with the *ottimati* in 1466 as a conspiracy which sought his assassination).³⁴⁴ If a rival was bad enough to be exiled or wicked enough to attempt any conspiracy, it would only have been right that a more 'virtuous' leader assumed power in such cases. Hence, by couching the adoption of power on the part of an extrapolitical figure as the reluctant action of the withdrawn *sapiens*, Landino can maintain a sense of moral propriety about any Medici involvement in the workings of the republic.

Finally, Alberti acknowledges that Lorenzo's catalogue of eminent men of action throughout myth and history is indeed worthy of praise, but he favours those men who follow the contemplative life because speculation touches the divine: 'He is a *god* amongst mortals who, as it is in Virgil, "was able to know the causes of things". And I consider he who governs properly as the greatest and most eminent *man* within the human race'.³⁴⁵ A statesman deserves admiration on

³⁴² 'Est enim divini Platonis praeceptum, si sapientem rebus praeesse viderit sapiens, usurum illum otio suo, cum multo sit suavius regi quam regere', *DC*, p. 46.2-4.

³⁴³ See above pp. 23-44.

³⁴⁴ On Piero's conflict with the *ottimati*, see Najemy, *A History of Florence*, pp. 298-306.

³⁴⁵ 'Deus est inter mortales, qui, ut est apud Maronem, rerum potuit cognoscere causas. At maximum ac excellentissimum virum inter homines et iudico, qui recte rem gerit', *DC*, p. 46.14-16.

account of his devotion to the common bonds of humankind through care of strangers, self-sacrifice and because he can rouse himself from *otium* to *negotium* when necessary. The honours and wealth accumulated by such men are also necessary because ‘the state honours above all those who it is in its greatest interest to honour’, and it is in the interest of the state that such men defend it and cause it to grow.³⁴⁶ Human frailty requires that such honours entice those who might lack Ciceronian right reason (*recta ratio*) towards proper civic behaviour. Notwithstanding Landino’s interest in the humanistic debates on the moral implications of prosperity since the second redaction of the *Xandra*, it is difficult to imagine that his decision to tackle this subject was not motivated at least in part by the inconvenient fact of Lorenzo’s enormous wealth (and, for that matter, that of Federico da Montefeltro) and his conscious striving for the social currency of ‘honour and benefit’ (*honore e utile*).³⁴⁷ Since Landino would not have been able to address the matter in Alberti’s initial speech in praise of the life of intellectual inquiry because it did not align with the idea of the withdrawn *sapiens*, it was necessary for the character of Lorenzo to raise it in his speech so Alberti could respond with specific reference to the movement from *otium* to *negotium* on the part of the recipient of honours and therefore absolve extrapolitical figures from the shame of having accumulated wealth and accolades during their public duties. Landino partly justifies the acquisition of honours on the pragmatic grounds of their inspiring flawed human beings, but it is his endorsement of the bestowal of honours on the grounds of the self-interest of the state in attracting those who ‘defend it, grow it and amplify [its] majesty’ which ties this line of thought to the potential rewards for the unsanctioned exercise of power within a republican context. By honouring those who take part in political activity the state assures that it continues to flourish, and in this way of thinking it is justifiable for the *sapiens* who is moved reluctantly into political service (as Cosimo, Piero and Lorenzo supposedly were) to be rewarded with garlands such as, for instance, Cosimo’s being granted the title of ‘Pater Patriae’ on his death.³⁴⁸

We should note that Alberti’s arguments show how, for Landino, the reason which compels the contemplative sage to return to *administrare rem publicam* with his divine wisdom is that of *oikeiosis*. Beyond all others, the quality that compels us to fulfil our political responsibilities is the reciprocal pull exerted by the social bonds of humanity. Hence, Alberti tells us how ‘a human being is produced in such a way that he is tied to others in the bond of charity and, at the same time, burns with the love of understanding things’, and the best individual is one who both preserves the oikeiotic bonds of society and strives towards the *summum bonum*.

³⁴⁶ ‘Eos enim res publica in primis honorat, quos honorare sua maximi intersit’, *DC*, p. 46.21-22.

³⁴⁷ Prominent humanist interventions on the subject of the moral utility of wealth include the *De avaritia* of Poggio Bracciolini, the *Della famiglia* of Leon Battista Alberti, and *De paupertate*, the third book of Francesco Filelfo’s *Commentationes florentinae de exilio*. On the specific relevance of such debates to Lorenzo, see in particular Bullard, *Lorenzo il Magnifico*, pp. 43-79 and pp. 133-53, and see above p. 29.

³⁴⁸ On the incorporation of this honour into subsequent mythologising of Cosimo as a republican statesman, see Brown, ‘The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de’ Medici’, pp. 186-221

One who engages in activity as much as the needs of mortal matters and the bond of human society demand and as the love of his country compels him; but who devotes himself to speculation so that he remembers it is the purpose of humanity, except to the extent that our weakness distracts us from it.³⁴⁹

Landino has had Alberti maintain a consistent position in all his responses to Lorenzo's points, such that he accepts the oikeiotic assumptions of civic Ciceronianism while at the same time maintaining the precedence of the dianoetic virtues over the moral. For Landino, there is no contradiction between viewing the republic as a form of natural human socialisation and advocating political influence from a position of *otium*. Since he has recognised that the dianoetic virtues are the optimal means of conserving society then, *a fortiori*, he has confirmed beyond question that the higher grades of moral virtue – the purgative virtues and the virtues of the purged soul – are also beneficial in this regard as they are the only means through which one can attain the capacity for the investigation of the truth. Politically speaking, the intellectual apparatus of *oikeiosis* imposes a moral imperative to concern oneself with the well-being of the state that is equally applicable whether one engages in the *munus* of action, through direct governance or purification, or that of contemplation, through guidance inspired by the dianoetic virtues.

As far as political action is concerned, then, it is the maintenance of natural social bonds that demands the return of the sage from contemplation. Since Landino is using here the precise phraseology of Cicero he has consistently adopted to this end, it is unquestionable that here and elsewhere he means to draw attention to the fact that he is departing from the Ciceronian tradition in ascribing a role to the *otiosus* in cultivating these oikeiotic relationships. To repurpose the Ciceronian interpretation of *oikeiosis* in the service of political interference from those withdrawn from public life is as explicit an example of fulfilling his aims as one can imagine. For so fervent a Medici loyalist as Landino, an unmediated republicanism that did not permit one to wield power beyond the confines of government would never suffice, yet, with some justification, he can claim that he upholds the very Ciceronian (and, for that matter, Florentine) traditions he is subverting. Since human beings are political by nature, and that this same nature compels them to separate their souls from their bodies and draw closer to God, then it must follow that one who has completed the process of self-divinisation can, indeed must, guide the direction of society.

To summarise briefly, in Alberti's second speech Landino has made a case for the exercise of political power by one who does not hold office in philosophical, pragmatic, oikeiotic and republican terms, not to mention his also presenting Cicero as an exemplary historical precedent for the *sapiens otiosus*. De Robertis has observed that such a diversity of methodology in the exchange between Lorenzo and Alberti serves as an investigation into the various epistemological stances

³⁴⁹ 'Cum ita natus, ut et caritatis nodo cum ceteris devinctus sit et rerum cognoscendarum amore flagret', *DC*, p. 47.8-9; 'qui actionibus tantum praebeat, quantum rerum mortalium indigentia atque humanae societatis vinculum postulat, quantum patriae amor impellit. Ad speculationem autem ita se convertet, ut ad eam, nisi quatenus inbecillitas nostra inde avocet, se natus meminerit', *DC*, p. 47.11-15.

which a ruler might use to uncover the best kind of knowledge for conducting his political affairs, and there is certainly some value in conceiving Landino's approach in this way when considering the didactic function of the text.³⁵⁰ I would argue, though, that De Robertis's view underestimates the significance of any overarching intention for the *Disputationes* on Landino's part by focussing too much on its dialogicity, interpreting the discourse between the two characters as a genuine representation of different epistemological positions rather than tending towards a particular goal. As we have already seen, the purpose of the disputational back-and-forth between Lorenzo and Alberti is in fact to tease out the implications of a political-philosophical system which Landino specifies at the outset. Nevertheless, it is true that Landino's employment of different methodologies is deliberate and self-conscious. That he deems the variety of his approaches to be comprehensive enough to support his aims is shown by having Alberti return to Lorenzo's metaphor of the imagined city, reaffirming his central thesis by declaring that the *sapiens otiosus* should offer guidance to its citizens because the benefits of speculation are permanent while those of action are temporary.³⁵¹

It is necessary to make an important qualification about Landino's efforts to accommodate extrapolitical influence within a republican context. Despite the Platonic underpinnings of his moral philosophy, the idea which he is advancing is in an important sense profoundly different from that of the philosopher-king described in Plato's *Republic*. The view that Landino's Platonism and support of the primacy of *otium* mean that he is intent on resurrecting the concept of the philosopher-king endures in some secondary literature on the *Disputationes*. Quentin Skinner claims that 'Landino ingeniously connects [the concept of the philosopher-king] with a further defence of *otium* against the demands of active citizenship'.³⁵² Ursula Rombach argues in a similar vein that Landino's unification of *otium* and *negotium* incorporated 'the ideal of the philosopher-king and the development of his education', and Bernhard Huss and Gernot Michael Müller align Landino's intentions with those of Ficino and Lorenzo, asserting that the *Disputationes* is part of an overall project that 'legitimises Lorenzo, glorified as a philosopher-king'.³⁵³ I find the use of this terminology unsatisfactory in describing Landino's true position, and would reiterate that the image in the *Disputationes* of the statesman who combines the life of intellectual inquiry with that of political action cannot be separated from its republican context. It is true that Landino's political thought is suffused with many of the Platonic tropes found in the *Republic* and that his statesman resembles the philosopher-king in that he must be educated in the moral virtues and that he

³⁵⁰ Tommaso De Robertis, 'Machiavelli's reading of Aristotle: a reassessment' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Parma, Ciclo XXVIII, 2013), p. 152.

³⁵¹ *DC*, pp. 44.15-45.8.

³⁵² Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, II, p. 141.

³⁵³ 'Das Ideal den Philosophenherrschers und der Werdegang seiner Erziehung', Rombach, *Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa*, p. 162; 'als Philosophenkönig glorifizierten Lorenzo... legitimieren', Bernhard Huss and Gernot Michael Müller, "'Illud admiror, cur Ficinum silentio praeteritis'", *Renaissanceplatonismus und Dialogform in Cristoforo Landinos Disputationes Camaldulenses*, in *Möglichkeiten des Dialogs*, ed. by Klaus W. Hempfer (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), pp. 225-78 (p. 271) and see also pp. 239-40.

possesses political legitimacy on account of his having directed his cognitive faculties in an ascent towards the *summum bonum*, the knowledge of which informs proper governance. There is, moreover, no doubt that Landino's allusions to the *Republic* throughout the first book of the *Disputationes* – such as, for instance, the use of the metaphor of the ship of state, or Lorenzo's imitation of Adeimantus in his assertion that the *otiosus* brings no benefits to society – are deliberate in their attempt to reinforce his Platonic credentials.³⁵⁴ Yet the philosopher-king of the *Republic* is an absolutist, if benevolent, ruler who occupies the highest rank in a state organised according to a corporatist hierarchy and who is able both to exercise power and make political decisions free from any mediation or interference from citizens of inferior castes. Throughout the *Disputationes*, Landino forcefully opposes any such form of princely rule, constantly reinforcing the Stoic-Ciceronian view that the bonds of human society are oikēiotic and arise from reciprocal obligations. Again and again he couches his arguments in terms of how they relate to *administrandam rem publicam*. One could argue, of course, that Landino might have adopted this phrase and his broader republican stance in an attempt to appease Florentine tradition and disguise any inclinations he might have had towards Medici supremacy and princely rule, but the absence of any outright advocacy of such a stance in the *Disputationes* and the fact that there was no shortage of humanistic defences of rule by princes would indicate otherwise.³⁵⁵ Indeed, as we have seen, it is through a conscious attempt to draw the reader's attention to the Ciceronian flavour of his Platonism that he reconfigures Plato's most famous dictum concerning the philosopher-king – that the perfect state will only emerge when 'philosophers become kings or... kings have genuinely and adequately begun to philosophise' – into a republican form.³⁵⁶ Through his adoption of Ciceronian terminology, Landino establishes early on in the *Disputationes* that the model for his statesman, rather than the philosopher-king, is the Ciceronian *sapiens*, the sage of the *De officiis* and the *Tusculanae Disputationes* who possesses the 'knowledge of things human and divine', and it is this term which both Alberti and Lorenzo use to refer to the ideal citizen of their transparently Platonic imagined city.³⁵⁷ As a further corrective to the view that Landino's statesman was any kind of philosopher-king, we must also consider the contemporary position of Lorenzo, to whom the *Disputationes* is implicitly addressed and whose political instruction provides the diegetic basis for the discussion therein. It is without question that, by the time the *Disputationes* was being composed, Lorenzo not only exerted unrivalled control over all Florentine institutions, but had also taken pains to assume an image of princely glory at odds with the republican values that he purported to uphold. Yet his image was only that. He was utterly unable to adopt any official kind of monarchical role and the power he wielded, while vast, was

³⁵⁴ Cf. Plat. *Rep.* VI.488a-489d and VI.487c-487d.

³⁵⁵ See e.g. Giovanni Pontano, *On the Prince*, trans. by Nicholas Webb in Krayer, *Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts*, pp. 69-87; Bartolomeo Sacchi, *On the Prince*, pp. 88-108; Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *De liberorum educatione* in Kallendorf, *Humanist Educational Treatises*, pp. 126-258.

³⁵⁶ DC, p. 11.22-24, and see above pp. 60-62.

³⁵⁷ DC, pp. 28.8-30.11 and, in particular, p. 44.21-45.2, where Alberti draws a distinction between 'tuus sapiens' and 'noster sapiens'.

exercised through a network of proxies and allies. This is hardly the position of a philosopher-king, and Melissa Bullard is one scholar who has appreciated the implications of his situation, trenchantly observing that Lorenzo ‘did [not] fit the role of a Platonic philosopher king because his methods of political control in Florence were necessarily indirect’.³⁵⁸ On the other hand, what Lorenzo did possess that legitimised his exercise of political power in a life of *otium* was a profound devotion to learning and other humanistic pursuits. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, contemporary opinion held that humanistic learning inculcated certain moral qualities that informed good leadership, and since Landino’s schema conceives the *munus* of intellectual inquiry as the prerequisite for and the complement to the virtue achieved through the *munus* of activity, it follows that Lorenzo’s commitment to his education must vindicate his engagement in politics at a distance.³⁵⁹ As Landino would have it, Lorenzo was justified in intervening in the political sphere even if he were not a philosopher-king because he had apprehended the truth necessary for political decision-making through cognitive faculties honed by the *studia humanitatis*.

As much as Platonic theories of the ascent of the soul underpin Landino’s moral philosophy, then, he is unable to commit fully to the idea of a state that is ruled by philosophers. This is due in part to a patriotic commitment to the principles of Florentine republicanism that would later reach its apogee in the panegyric to Florence and its citizens in the prologue to his *Comento* on the *Commedia*.³⁶⁰ Throughout the *Disputationes*, the reader is in no doubt that Landino has Florence in mind as the situational locus for his advocacy of republicanism: the disputation is set in motion by Lorenzo’s demand to know what he might learn from Platonic thought to improve his own governance of the republic, and when Landino has Alberti choose a model for the *otiosus* who contributes to the civic good, he picks Paolo Toscanelli for the specific and stated reason that he is Florentine and that he shows how intellectual investigation can benefit their own city. Yet the logical consequence of any wholesale incorporation of the ideas of the *Republic* to his own political theory would be the disavowal of Florentine traditions which made the city worthy of such attention in the first place. Landino was unwilling to advocate any such radical steps that would strip the city of its republican inheritance. We might also attribute Landino’s reticence to abandon republican ideals to his intellectual debt to another of his paradigmatic figures from the *Disputationes*, Cicero, whose *Tusculanae Disputationes* was, after all, the inspiration for his text and who Ficino saw as the primary referent of the work rather than Plato.³⁶¹

With these two influences in mind, it is tempting to view Landino’s moral instruction in the *Disputationes* as a gentle reprimand to Lorenzo which seeks to restrain his princely self-mythologising and to remind him that republican ideals must still obtain. As we shall see in due

³⁵⁸ Bullard, *Lorenzo il Magnifico*, p. 50.

³⁵⁹ See above pp. 45-58.

³⁶⁰ *Comento, Proem.* passim. On the cultural and patriotic themes of this prologue, see Gilson, *Dante and Renaissance Florence*, pp. 163-93.

³⁶¹ See above n. 289.

course, there is plenty to support this view in the more practical elements of Landino's ethical system, since one's moral development depends on restraining the sins of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and, in particular, *ambitio*, which Landino also characterises as a 'desire for honours and empire' (*bonorum imperiique cupiditas*) on the part of an individual that is inimical to both the life of action and that of intellectual inquiry.³⁶² That these lessons might extend to the wider readership of humanistically-inclined Florentines – not to mention foreigners – was all the better. It would be reductive, though, to view the prominence of republicanism within the *Disputationes* through this prism alone. The relationship between Landino and Lorenzo was not only that of a humanist and his tutee, but also that of a functionary and his political sponsor, as well as a dependent and his patron. Ambition and a sense of expediency on Landino's part would have provided an incentive for him to engineer a post hoc intellectual justification for Medici dominance which was in accord with the principles of Florentine political thought. If Lorenzo's power over government could be reconciled with republican tradition through philosophy, any dissatisfaction with his influence on the part of the citizenry and his political rivals would be shown to be baseless, which would be of no small consequence given the fractious years of his early rule. What is more, we have already seen how the *Disputationes* also describes an ethical framework through which the actual dedicatee of the work – Federico da Montefeltro – and the implicit dedicatee – Lorenzo – might find common cause in the face of the growing influence of Sixtus IV.³⁶³ While Federico himself was no republican despite his humanistic tendencies, the fact that he unified the lives of action and contemplation provides Landino with some moral validation of his rule. It therefore follows that, *mutatis mutandis*, Lorenzo's position in the Florentine republic could also be legitimised by a life which comprised both *genera vitae* if he were to follow the example of his ally.

By now, we have examined in some detail Landino's ethical system in the *Disputationes* and the ultimate end to which it is directed – that is, the justification of an extrapolitical exercise of power within a republic. Yet the *Disputationes* is a prescriptive work as well as it is analytical. It seeks to inculcate proper moral conduct as well as describe how action and intellectual inquiry coexist within an ethical schema for the ascent of the soul. To properly understand Landino's system of virtue ethics, it is necessary for us to examine the distinguishing features of his applied moral philosophy. I will therefore proceed as follows. First, I will examine Landino's thoughts on the practical application of virtue, focussing in particular on how, in the second book of the *Disputationes*, he believes we ought to make choices between the different Aristotelian categories of goods, how vice can emerge when the wrong choices initiate *perturbationes animi* which become fixed as habits, and how restraining vice is central to the cultivation of the moral virtues in the first stages of the ascent of the soul. Then I will analyse Landino's prospectus for applied virtue ethics as it appears in the allegory of the *Aeneid* of the third and fourth books, in which he actualises his Platonic-republican

³⁶² DC, p. 155.21.

³⁶³ See above pp. 40-44.

theories by tracking the progress of an individual soul towards the knowledge of God through successive grades of virtue.

2.9 The practical application of virtue

The second book of the *Disputationes* serves a different role in its contribution to Landino's virtue ethics than might be at first supposed. Having established a broad outline of his theory of virtue in the first book of the *Disputationes*, which itself built upon the systematised psychology of the *De anima*, Landino has the character of Alberti suggest to the company at the beginning of the second book that, before proceeding to the *Aeneid* allegory, there ought to be a digression. While yesterday's dialogue covered the 'most suitable way to lead us to the goal', he continues, it still remains today to address the subject of 'where it is we want to be led', which is to say the *summum bonum*, or the highest good.³⁶⁴ Yet since the investigation of the nature of the *summum bonum* involves an assessment of the comparative advantage of different types of goods – goods of the body, of the mind and so on – the first half of this book is as much concerned with the decisions one has to make in choosing between these goods as it is with exploring the teleology of the human condition. It is by making these choices that the human mind either controls the appetite or submits to it, so in order to understand the progression from theory to praxis in Landino's virtue ethics and better appreciate his approach to practical virtue it is necessary to spend some time unravelling his arguments on the goods.

Landino has Alberti begin the second book of the *Disputationes* with a selective doxography of ancient and Christian views on the nature of the *summum bonum* which traces the subject through the various philosophical schools which emerged after Socrates and, in keeping with the tenor of his own philosophy, takes the form of an incremental ascent from what he perceives to be the falsest opinions on the nature of good towards the Platonic-Christian conception of the *summum bonum* as God. This doxography owes a debt in its choice of subjects and terminology to two sources in particular: Cicero's *De finibus* and the nineteenth book of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. Indeed, several passages are near-direct reproductions from these texts, a choice which attests to Landino's opinion of Cicero as philosophically consonant with both Platonic and Christian doctrine.³⁶⁵ Investigating the idea of the *summum bonum* by way of a historical survey (as opposed to, for instance, from philosophical first principles) is an opportune choice of methodology for Landino, because it allows him, step by step, to incorporate into his theoretical framework useful features of other philosophies which he deems to be in accordance with Platonism. He therefore begins by summarily dismissing those philosophical schools which situate the *summum bonum* in pleasure, such as the Epicureans and Cyrenaics (although he mentions that Epicurus' exemplary personal conduct is worthy of commendation), and those who place it in the absence of pain, such

³⁶⁴ 'Tunc enim quae via potissimum nos commodius duceret quaerebatur, nunc vero quid illud sit quo duci optamus investigandum censeo', *DC*, p. 55.3-5.

³⁶⁵ The references in the Lohe edition are comprehensive in illustrating these concordances. See for instance the close similarity of *DC*, p. 57.20-28 with *Cic.Fin.V.xxxi.94*.

as Democritus.³⁶⁶ Of far more importance to the practical aspects of his philosophy are the two traditions which, notwithstanding the fact that their stances on the *summum bonum* are erroneous, can nevertheless contribute something to the understanding of how an ascent to the divine might be achieved in this world. These are the school of Aristotle and his followers the Peripatetics, who place the *summum bonum* in the mind itself insofar as it is devoted to understanding its own nature, and the school of the Stoics, who place the *summum bonum* in virtue alone. Landino has Alberti digress on their respective views in order that he might flesh out the intricacies of his own position. As we saw in an earlier chapter, Landino attributes to the Peripatetics the foundational elements of the doctrine of *oikeiosis* which is so significant to his republican theory.³⁶⁷ The Peripatetics, Alberti explains, claim that human beings are made happy by living in accordance with their nature and that the *summum bonum* therefore consists in a set of goods called the *prima naturae*, through which we are disposed to preserve and maintain our human nature through a kind of instinctual, self-reflective integrity. Within the *prima naturae* the goods of the body comprise, amongst others, health, vigour and integrity of the senses and those of the mind include memory and aptitude for learning.³⁶⁸ As well as these two sets of qualities the Peripatetics value virtue, which is prior to the goods of the mind and the body and acts as a guide, employing the *prima naturae* as far as they are needed. Those *prima naturae* which are essential for the exercise of virtue are vital, while the others are good but inessential. Moreover, since we desire such goods for their own sake the happy life is therefore social by its very nature, with the primal drive to self-appropriation extending outwards from the self to country, friends, family, and thereon to all humankind through the process of *oikeiosis*. Alberti continues to assert that those who claim that the *summum bonum* is virtue – that is, the Stoics, a ‘limb torn from the body of Peripatetic philosophy’ – are the most accurate school described so far.³⁶⁹ Our lives are dominated by the battle of the appetite against reason as a consequence of our souls being incarcerated in the body, and virtue is therefore vital for our happiness because the four moral virtues preserve the mind against the assault of the *perturbationes* roused by the appetite.³⁷⁰ Yet virtue alone cannot be the *summum bonum*. Bodily infirmity can take away faculties such as memory and judgment which are necessary to acquire virtue but if we consider these preferred advantages of the body as goods then any corresponding disadvantage must be evil and able to make us prefer death to life.³⁷¹ Since mortal life is made happy through the hope and expectation of eternal life,

³⁶⁶ DC, pp. 56.23-59.22.

³⁶⁷ See above pp. 96-97.

³⁶⁸ DC, pp. 62.4-15. Landino’s articulation of this philosophy repeats the position attributed to the Academics and Peripatetics in fifth book of the *De finibus*, in particular Cic.*Fin.*V.vii.18, V.ix.24-27, and V.xii.35-36, although his exposition of the principles of the Peripatetic view of the relation of mind and body to the *summum bonum* in DC, pp. 61.14-62.4 and pp. 62.21-63.24, comes from Varro as described in *Civ. Dei* XIX.2-3.

³⁶⁹ ‘Membra quaedam avulsa ex eo corpore’, DC, p. 66.24-25.

³⁷⁰ Landino had, of course, already established this conflict as the foundation of his Platonic moral theory in both the first book of the *Disputationes* and the *De anima*. See above pp. 64-68.

³⁷¹ DC, pp. 67.24-68.3.

both the Christians and Plato (who knew this ‘before Christ was born as a man’) say that the *summum bonum* must therefore be God.³⁷²

However derivative this opening survey might be, it is nonetheless revealing of the concepts that Landino thought most valuable in integrating practical ethical instruction with the idea of an ascent towards God through the exercise of virtue. From the Peripatetics (as interpreted by Cicero) he takes the idea of a natural, appropriative drive to preserve the self and others from which it follows that progress towards the *summum bonum* consists in a choice between different categories of goods; from the Stoics (via Cicero and Augustine) he takes a belief in virtue’s power to overcome the mental *perturbationes* that arise from the appetite. Having thus established these premises, Landino turns to the character of Ficino to expand upon the Platonic understanding of the *summum bonum*, with Alberti lauding him as an authority on Plato and praising in particular his *Philebus* commentary.³⁷³ As is so often the case with Landino’s approach to philosophy, the ‘Ficinian’ Platonism that the character expounds is a reading of Ficino’s work which is heavily mediated by other Latin sources, with Cicero and Augustine once again preeminent. He nonetheless affords a degree of verisimilitude to the speech in that several of the passages do bear a genuine Ficinian influence through a reliance on imagery from original Platonic sources and an emphasis on divine love.³⁷⁴ The character of Ficino begins by offering a proof that the *summum bonum* is God and, in order to do so, he takes up the Peripatetic concept of distinct categories of human goods, adding to the aforementioned goods of the body and goods of the soul a category of external goods, or goods of fortune, which includes wealth, honours, titles and so on. This is the division advanced by Aristotle in the *Ethics*.³⁷⁵ Since the *summum bonum* is acquired for its own sake, it cannot consist in the goods of fortune, which strive for sake of the body, or in the goods of the body, which either strive for the sake of the soul or can act as ‘instruments of the passions’ which are actively corruptive. The *summum bonum* must therefore consist in the goods of the soul somehow, but not, Ficino explains, in the mental faculties such as memory which constitute the *prima naturae*, nor in the moral virtues whose purpose is purgation, as each of these is devoted to another end. Instead, it consists in turning the intellectual virtues towards the ‘cause, the origin, the fount and beginning of everything’, God, the cognition of whom releases our souls from their bodily fetters.³⁷⁶ Thus, he says, Platonic and Christian doctrine are consistent. The ideas in the *Phaedrus* of the soul in heaven being nourished by the contemplation of truth and – significantly, given the previous day’s conversation – of the soul returning to heaven on the twin wings of the moral virtues and intellectual virtues illustrate the rewards of the virtuous Christian: the ambrosia of the vision of

³⁷² ‘Quod et ante Christum ut hominem natum Platonem sensisse constat’, *DC*, p. 68.9-10.

³⁷³ *DC*, p. 68.10-15. Ficino had interpreted the central theme of the *Philebus* as the *summum bonum* rather pleasure, on which see chapter I.9 in Marsilio Ficino, *The Philebus Commentary*, ed. by Michael J. B. Allen (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 126-30. On Ficino’s ideas in the *Philebus*, see pp. 15-22 and 26-35.

³⁷⁴ *DC*, pp. 69.12-75.23.

³⁷⁵ See above n. 152. See also *Reden*, p. 66.26-31.

³⁷⁶ ‘Quod causam, originem, fontem principiumque omnium rerum appellamus’, *DC*, p. 71.11-12.

God and the nectar of joy in Him.³⁷⁷ This parallel prompts Landino to have the character of Ficino intervene in the medieval debate on the relative priority of the intellect and the will in favour of the supremacy of intellect, thus misrepresenting the real Ficino's view on a subject of some importance to him.³⁷⁸ To conclude, Ficino addresses the question of how mortals can ascend to sublimity.³⁷⁹ The more perfect the good, he claims, the more such a good pervades those sharing in it, and the wider its extent. It follows that God, the highest good, must therefore impart Himself to the entire human race. Every single human being partakes in this highest good and, implicitly, must therefore be capable of ascending to God by nature.

With Ficino's speech, Landino has established a continuity between the discussion in the previous book on the ascent of the soul through moral and intellectual virtues and that in the current book on the tripartite division of goods and the *perturbationes animi*. He has shown that the operative functions of the moral and intellectual virtues which perfect the *munera* of action and

³⁷⁷ *DC*, pp. 72.8-73.6. As we have seen, this is the second time Landino has used this analogy, although in the first book the wings refer through synecdoche to *iustitia* and *sapientia*, the principle moral and intellectual virtues respectively. See above, n. 179. Here, as Lohe notes on *DC*, p. 72, Landino is following chapter 1 of Ficino's *De voluptate*, in which the wings symbolise the two kinds of virtue directly.

³⁷⁸ On the question of why this misrepresentation occurred, see Wadsworth, pp. 23-31; Kraye, 'Moral Philosophy', pp. 351-53; Tamara Albertini, 'Intellect and Will in Marsilio Ficino: Two Correlatives of a Renaissance Concept of Mind', in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, ed. by Michael J. B. Allen, Valery Rees and Martin Davies (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2002), pp. 203-25; and Federico Ferrarese, 'Lorenzo de' Medici *De summo bono*: Proposta di edizione critica' (unpublished PhD thesis, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, 2013/14), pp. XIX-XXVII. Ficino and Lorenzo had arrived at the position that the will was superior in a debate at Careggi towards the end of 1473, and had presented their conclusions in Lorenzo's poem *L'Altercazione* (or *De summo bono*) and Ficino's letter to Lorenzo, *De felicitate*, which is undated but was probably written in early 1474. Since Ficino had wavered on this issue over the years, being inclined towards the superiority of the intellect in the *Philebus* commentary completed in 1469 while asserting the primacy of the will in the *Platonic Theology* circulated in early 1474, it is quite possible that Landino misrepresented him unintentionally. Indeed, Landino has Alberti offer enthusiastic praise for each work in the fictive setting of the *Disputationes*. On the other hand, Landino could have been following the rhetorical tradition of disputation literature by having the character advance the opposite opinion to that supported by its real-life counterpart, just as he had with Lorenzo and Alberti. Wadsworth advances the former argument, viewing the letter *De felicitate* as a reprimand to Landino and an opportunity for Ficino to set the record straight. He points out that the close structural and thematic similarity between the *De felicitate* and the second book of the *Disputationes* show that Ficino used Landino's arguments as a template for his letter. To construct our own hypothesis, it is necessary to introduce three further facts. The first is that Fubini's dating of the completion of the *Disputationes* to April 1474 shows that Landino would have been working on it at the same time Ficino wrote *De felicitate*. Second, the *Disputationes*, the *De felicitate* and *L'Altercazione* all mention the *Platonic Theology* and its influence is apparent in the *Disputationes* from the first book onward. Third, evidence internal to the *Disputationes* such as the proem to the fourth book (*DC*, p. 188.1-3) shows that Landino had distributed each book to colleagues and friends as soon as it had been written. Since the *Platonic Theology*, distributed no earlier than late 1473, must have preceded the *Disputationes*, *De felicitate* and *L'Altercazione*, and the second book of the *Disputationes* must have preceded the *De felicitate*, which was itself written as Landino was completing the *Disputationes*, a plausible theory is, therefore, that Ficino's letter, and possibly the debate at Careggi itself, sought to respond to the second book of the *Disputationes* which Landino had recently circulated in manuscript form (this also aligns with the accepted position that the *L'Altercazione* preceded the *De felicitate*). Given that the solution to the debate in *Platonic Theology* was fresh enough in Landino's mind to have supplanted Ficino's earlier ideas in the *Philebus* commentary, and that the personal and professional relationship between the two scholars was sufficiently close that it would be surprising if they had not discussed the *Platonic Theology* before or during the composition of the *Disputationes*, I believe it improbable that Landino was unaware of Ficino's current views. Landino was therefore following the conventions of the disputational dialogue in having the character of Ficino advance a contrary argument to his real counterpart.

³⁷⁹ *DC*, pp. 74.11-75.15

speculation also constitute the goods of the soul, and in doing so has reiterated the respective necessity of each type of virtue while maintaining the hierarchy between them. While the moral virtues have an instrumental role in purging the appetite, it is only the intellectual virtues which can achieve the *summum bonum*. In order that his practical system of virtue ethics can reconcile the choice between goods in human life with the progress towards the divine, it remains for him to flesh out precisely how the enticements of the goods of the body and of fortune inhibit the intellectual virtues from striving for God. So, following on from Ficino's lead, Alberti begins to tease out the commonalities between Platonic thought and Christian doctrine, spending some time discussing the inferior types of good which can supplant the *summum bonum* in people's minds. This lengthy digression is heavily reliant on the second question of *Summa Theologiae* I-II in which Thomas Aquinas analyses the things in which human happiness consists. Landino's approach is similarly systematic, addressing the goods of the body, the goods of fortune and the goods of the soul in turn with Alberti's concern being to show 'the first two types to be false'.³⁸⁰

In order to dismiss the goods of the body, Alberti focuses on the dangers of pleasure (*voluptas*) and the limitations of other bodily goods, denouncing pleasure in a diatribe which he acknowledges is indebted to Plato and which centres upon the role pleasure plays in corrupting judgment in the sensible world.³⁸¹ According to Plato, he says, pleasure is fleeting, mutable and unstable, is held in common with animals (the same reason he uses to dismiss the other subsidiary goods of the body such as health, strength and beauty), hinders the virtues and offers no benefit to the common good of humanity. Returning to the earlier argument of the Peripatetics, he points out that pleasure is inherently base because it is not sought for its own sake, but for the sake of something else such as, for instance, food, drink or sex. What is more, since Platonic doctrine holds that the human being and the soul are one and the same and that the body is only 'a prison and fetter' for the soul, pleasure immerses us in the seductions of the sensible world which prevent us from returning to heaven.³⁸² Hence, pleasure always opposes the *summum bonum* because it originates not in reason but from the infirmity of the senses, 'our most fearsome enemies'.³⁸³ Alberti confirms that the psychological dissonance aroused by pleasure causes the *perturbationes animi* which it is the duty of the moral virtues to calm and purge: 'from pleasures come many *perturbationes*, which constantly afflict and devour the soul like tortures. So pleasures are not goods, but the very worst things.'³⁸⁴

Next Alberti moves onto the goods of fortune, with his aim being to dismiss them by emphasising the ultimate inadequacy of honour, glory and riches for human flourishing.³⁸⁵ He begins with honour (*honor*), in the sense of the titles and garlands awarded by way of civic

³⁸⁰ 'In primis igitur duobus generibus refellendis', *DC*, p. 78.10, cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II Q.2.

³⁸¹ *DC*, pp. 78.13-80.22.

³⁸² 'Carcer vinculumque animae', *DC*, p. 79.11-12.

³⁸³ 'Saevissimos hostes nobis', *DC*, p. 79.16.

³⁸⁴ 'At a voluptatibus multae extant perturbationes, quae veluti carnificinae animum assiduo cruciant atque exedunt. Non igitur bonae voluptates, immo pessimae', *DC*, p. 80.10-13.

³⁸⁵ *DC*, pp. 82.16-84.19.

recognition. Again, Alberti deploys an Aristotelian argument to expose the flaws of honours, reasoning that they cannot possibly be the *summum bonum* because their benefits are only instrumental, in that honours are not sought for themselves but for the affirmation and esteem of others. Moreover, he continues, since the *summum bonum* must be within each individual's capacity to achieve, and since honours are subject to the discretion of the one bestowing them rather than their recipient, then such honours cannot be the *summum bonum*. By extension, it follows that false opinions on the part of flawed human beings can lead to honours being bestowed upon the wicked and, of course, the *summum bonum* admits no evil. Similar to honour is glory (*gloria*), which Landino takes to mean good reputation and fame, a distinction adopted from that made by Thomas in the *Summa Theologiae* and also influenced by Cicero.³⁸⁶ Glory is, of course, something that is not sought for its own sake but for the sake of praise, and is thus disqualified as being the *summum bonum* according to Landino's prior definition, but Alberti also makes the point that reputation – insofar as the capacity to be known or to be an object of cognition – is a quality possessed by even the most insignificant of things but the faculty of knowing is possessed only by human beings. Reputation and glory cannot, therefore, occupy a superior place amongst the goods. Next, Alberti addresses the good of wealth. Returning to the same Peripatetic argument he had used for pleasure, honour and glory, he notes that wealth is not sought for its own sake, but for the sake of its use (*utilitas*). He also argues that since the nature of the *summum bonum* is that it is preserved, and that the benefit of wealth is only evident when it is disbursed on oneself, one's family or for the good of others, then wealth cannot possibly be the *summum bonum*.

The final good of fortune that Landino addresses is political power which, he claims, cannot be our ultimate aim in life because it is often subject to the whim of fate, with rulers being established or deposed by murder or conspiracy. In those cases where political authority is exercised justly, the stress and danger of ruling are so great that it is 'much more agreeable to be well-ruled than to rule well'.³⁸⁷ This sentiment appears at first to be a rather incongruous departure from the attitudes Landino has expressed so far. Not only does it depart from the Platonically-inclined republicanism which was the basis for the fictive conversation and which has been evangelised throughout the first and second books, but it uses the verb *regere* rather than *administrare* which, as we have seen, is Landino's preferred verb for describing the management of a republic. Moreover, it contradicts unambiguous accounts of the relationship between the statesman and the republic in the first book such as, for instance, that prosperous republics are those 'administered by philosophers or whose administrators have begun to philosophise'.³⁸⁸ While we must acknowledge that authorial self-

³⁸⁶ See *Summa Theologiae* I-II Q.2 AA.2-3. Landino is also thinking here of Cic. *Tusc.* III.ii.3-4, Cic. *Off.* I.xx.66-xxii.78, and Cic. *Off.* II.ix.31-x.38.

³⁸⁷ 'Suavius multo esse bene regi quam bene regere', *DC*, p. 46.4. The Aristotelian idea of a natural hierarchy between ruler and ruled originates in Aristot. *Pol.* I.ii.7-9; I.ii.20-21; I.v.1-11, and would also have been transmitted to Landino through, for instance, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* II-II Q.47 AA.11-12 and Dante, *Monarchia* I.v.3.

³⁸⁸ See above pp. 59-62 and *passim*.

contradiction is far from rare in humanistic texts and that there is a risk of imposing unwarranted consistency on Landino's line of thought within the *Disputationes*, it is nevertheless worth attempting to understand why he saw fit to include such a sentiment. This seeming paradox can be resolved by acknowledging that the central allusion of this passage is to the republican theory of the third book of the *Politics* during Aristotle's discussion of whether a good man and a good citizen are the same thing. While the virtue of a ruler is qualitatively different from that of a citizen, Aristotle concludes, it is nonetheless of benefit to both citizen and ruler to understand the reciprocal responsibilities and virtues of each role so that the exercise of political authority works properly. This is because political rule in a polity – unlike the purportedly 'natural' rule of parent over child, husband over wife, and so on – is a form of authority perpetuated between individuals of equal intellectual capacity. Hence 'the goodness of a citizen consists in the ability both to rule and to be ruled well'.³⁸⁹ Yet this is not quite the statement that Landino is making. Aristotle does not claim that it is *more pleasing* to be ruled than to rule. Here we must remember that the intended audience of the *Disputationes* is a political and cultural elite, taught the *Politics* from childhood, and that within the fictive setting the context of the sentiment is that of Alberti explaining to Lorenzo how to manage a republic. Its meaning must therefore be predicated on the assumption that the reader is himself a member of the governing class and, to some extent or another, responsible for exercising political power rather than a common citizen who might require justification for his lowly position in the republic. This is not an audience unsure of its position in society, nor is it an audience unfamiliar with Aristotle. It follows that, rather than serving as an injunction to obedience on the part of the ruled, the sentiment that it is 'more agreeable to be well-ruled than to rule well' is instead conveying a gentle irony to Landino's readers. It subverts the similar phrase in the *Politics* to signal that political authority is a wearisome burden to bear and that, in some sense, those who are ruled have an easier time of it than those who must govern. While the wielding of political power is an onerous task, Landino tells us, it is nevertheless a necessary one, even if its travails and inconstancy mean that it cannot be the *summum bonum*.³⁹⁰

Landino has Alberti conclude his analysis of the inferior goods with a relatively brief discussion of the goods of the soul, which principally serves to reiterate the argument of the first book that the intellectual virtues of intelligence, scientific knowledge and wisdom (*intelligentia*, *scientia*, and *sapientia*) are superior to the moral virtues in attaining the *summum bonum*.³⁹¹ His attempt to incorporate some form of behavioural praxis into his perfectionist ethical system has, as such, come full circle. He has shown that to choose between the different types of goods is to choose whether to submit to corporeal appetites or to strive towards God, because the *perturbationes animi* which impede the

³⁸⁹ Aristot. *Pol.* III.ii.7, see also III.ii passim and VI.i.7. It is likely that Landino also has Sen. *Ira* II.15 in mind.

³⁹⁰ We should note too that certain eremitic Christian teachings align with the opinion that it is easier to be ruled than to rule. See, for instance, Julian of Speyer in Enrico Menestò, ed., *Fontes Franciscani* (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1995), XII.67.

³⁹¹ *DC*, pp. 85.1-86.5.

soul's ascent to God arise when the goods of the body or the goods of fortune supplant the *summum bonum* as the mind's goal. Undue appetitive desire for the goods of the body manifests as the pursuit of sensual pleasure, while that for the goods of fortune is more diverse but broadly speaking takes two forms: on the one hand, a craving for wealth; and, on the other, a drive for political power and recognition. If the statesman is to use his intellectual virtue to achieve cognition of the divine and then guide the republic by imparting this wisdom, he must first purge himself of desire for sensual pleasure, wealth and political ambition through the successive grades of moral virtue.

2.10 Vice and *perturbationes animi*

His analysis of the goods in the second book aside, Landino favours the language of moralising rhetoric to technical vocabulary in the *Disputationes*. He prefers to speak of the irrational desires which initiate mental *perturbationes* in respect of their corresponding vices, with the desire for corporeal pleasure corresponding to the vice of *luxuria* or *voluptas*, desire for wealth to the vice of *avaritia* and desire for political power and recognition to the vice of *superbia* or *ambitio*. We have seen how Landino, following the *Tusculanae Disputationes* and Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, conceives the appetitive desires themselves as provoking mental *perturbationes*.³⁹² When these *perturbationes* become dispositional habits they are implanted as sicknesses (*morbi*) which are identical to these vices.³⁹³ An illustration of this relationship appears in the fourth book of the *Disputationes*:

Just as when the blood in the body has been corrupted... sickness and disease arise, so too does the dissonance of these perverse disturbances [*perturbationes*] deprive the soul of health. From these disturbances arise diseases [*morbi*] which are called νοσήματα, then sicknesses [*aegrotationes*] called ἀρρωστήματα ... When this madness and excitement of the mind becomes habitual and sinks into one's veins and marrow, so to speak, then disease and sickness come forth. For when we become inflamed with a desire for money by some false opinion which values wealth more than it should be valued, and the Socratic medicine which extinguishes this desire is not continually employed, then that desire spreads into our innermost parts and produces that disease and sickness which we call avarice.³⁹⁴

We should recall that, throughout the discussion on the best kind of life in the first book of the *Disputationes*, Landino had established these three particular vices as those which the moral virtues must overcome if one is to release oneself from bodily distraction and concentrate on the divine. Early in his first speech in this book, Alberti singles them out as obstacles to the exercise of the intellectual virtues in his summation of his ethical theory:

³⁹² Cic. *Tusc.* III and IV passim and Augustine *Civ. Dei* XIV.8-10 and IX 4-5.

³⁹³ Note that here Landino departs somewhat from his opinion in the *De anima*, in which the *perturbationes* themselves are habits. See above pp. 65-66.

³⁹⁴ 'Nam veluti, cum sanguis in corpore corruptus est... morbi aegrotationesque nascuntur, sic pravaram perturbationum dissonantia animum sanitate spoliatur vehementerque perturbat. Ex perturbationibus vero morbi conficiuntur, quae illi νοσήματα vocant, deinde aegrotationes, quae appellantur ἀρρωστήματα... Verum cum iam huiusmodi furor ac mentis concitatio inveteravit et tanquam in venis medullisque insederit, tum existit morbus atque aegrotatio. Nam cum ex falsa quadam opinione, quae plus tribuat divitiis, quam tribuendum sit, pecuniarum cupiditate inflammemur nec adhibeatur continuo Socratica quaedam medicina, quae cupiditatem extinguat, manet illa in venas efficitque eum morbum atque aegrotationem, quam avaritiam nuncupamus', *DC*, p. 232.3-16, and see also *De anima*, III, pp. 63-65. Cicero's system of mental *perturbationes* was present in Landino's scholarly thought early, appearing in his opening speech to his lectures on the *Tusculanae Disputationes* in 1458 (*Scritti*, I, pp. 6 and 10) and being discussed at some length in his 1461 Juvenal commentary in Ambros. I 26 inf., fol. 16v as quoted in Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence*, p. 247.

For although [the cognition of God] is best achieved through the virtues of the mind – for intelligence perceives the principles of things, scientific knowledge the processes and the effects resulting from these principles and, finally, wisdom tells one from the other – we will nevertheless be attempting these things in vain if we are not free from all mental disturbances. How will those enticed by carnal pleasures [*voluptates corporeae*] or captured by avarice [*avaritia*] or inflated by ambition [*ambitio*] be able to think about anything higher? So it is also thought that the virtues of life and morals, by which our minds are expunged of all squalor of vice, must be exercised, and exercised in such a way that we begin our ascent with them.³⁹⁵

Later, in the speech which concludes the first day's discussion, Alberti reinforces the idea of the threefold division of vices obstructing the search for knowledge, in contradistinction to the healthy appetitive urge to the investigation of truth:

We will never attain the light of knowledge through sordid and vulgar conduct, nor will we attain it when addicted to pleasures [*voluptates*], subject to avarice [*avaritia*], or bound to ambition [*ambitio*]. But we *will* attain it when inflamed by an ardent love for the discovery of the truth...³⁹⁶

Even though these passages come before Landino saw fit to mention the precise relationship of the three vices to the categories of goods it is clear that they, and the confinement within the shackles of corporeality they represent, were integral to his system of virtue ethics in the *Disputationes* from the outset of the work. It is these vices more than any others that he considers to be the impediments to speculation on the divine. Moreover, Landino stresses in the first book that, of the three vices, the latter two in particular can corrode the principle of comity on which the state is founded. If civic concord is to be maintained, both the statesman and citizen must avoid *superbia* and *avaritia*. For instance, Lorenzo identifies these vices as being a motivating factor for threats to the state both internal and external:

When grave and unremitting dangers threaten [the state] from all sides, and it is constantly either attacked with weapons and deception by the ambition [*ambitio*] and avarice [*avaritia*] of many princes and peoples, or is disturbed by a faction of seditious citizens.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ 'Hoc enim etsi maxime per eas virtutes, quae a mente sunt, assequatur – intelligentia enim principia rerum, scientia vero progressus effectusque a principiis manantes ac postremo sapientia utrunque percipit –, tamen, nisi omni perturbationum genere vacemus, frustra haec tentabimus. Quomodo enim aut corporeis voluptatibus deliniti aut avaritia oppressi aut ambitione turgidi quicquam altum aut egregium cogitare poterimus? Quapropter eas quoque virtutes adhibendas censent, quibus animi nostri ab omni vitiorum sorde expurgantur, atque ita adhibendas, ut inde initium sumamus', *DC*, pp. 17.26-18.6. See above pp. 83-84 and n. 248.

³⁹⁶ 'Verum id sordidis vulgaribusque artibus nunquam assequemur. Neque enim voluptatibus addicti neque avaritiae obnoxii neque ambitioni obligati id assequemur, sed ardentissimo quodam veri inveniendi amore incensi', *DC*, p. 39.22-25.

³⁹⁷ 'Cum gravissima assiduaeque pericula sibi undique semper immineant assiduoque aut multorum principum ac populorum ambitione avaritiaque armis dolisque petatur aut seditiosorum civium factione exagitetur?', *DC*, p. 30.8-11.

Alberti also specifies that his model citizen Paolo Toscanelli conducts himself ‘neither with rudeness nor arrogance [*superbum*] nor greed [*avarum*]’ towards other citizens, and in so doing establishes *superbia* and *avaritia* as the first characteristics which he would expect to be inimical to good citizenship.³⁹⁸

In classical philosophy, the tripartite division of vice ultimately derives from Plato’s discussion in the ninth book of the *Republic* of how each of the three parts of the mind – the rational *logos*, the spirited *thumos*, and the appetitive *epithumia* – has its corresponding pleasures, with the rational part being motivated by wisdom and love of knowledge, the spirited part by ambition and the appetitive part by the various forms of sensual pleasure and wealth.³⁹⁹ A parallel tradition, influential on Augustine in particular, emerges from scripture in the First Epistle of John: ‘all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride [*superbia*] of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world’.⁴⁰⁰ For Landino, though, the primary source of this theory was the articulation of Stoic thought by Cicero in the *Tusculanae Disputationes*. As we have seen, in both the *De anima* and the *Disputationes* Landino follows Cicero in defining distress, delight, fear and lust as the four types of *perturbatio* which can disturb the human mind.⁴⁰¹ According to Cicero, delight and lust can become entrenched in the mind as diseases (*morbi*) or sicknesses (*aegrotationes*) which practically amount to the same thing: a persistent, and deep-rooted disposition which desires the undesirable, causing the emotions to overwhelm reason.⁴⁰² After using *avaritia* and *gloriae cupiditas* as prime examples of diseases of the mind, Cicero broadens his scope to describe the chief kinds of sickness thus:

There are certain kinds of sickness such as avarice, ambition, fondness for women, stubbornness, over-refinement, dipsomania, delicacy, and anything similar. And indeed, avarice is a strongly-held, persistent, and deep-rooted disposition about money such that it ought to be desired above all else, and the definition of the other kinds of sickness is similar.⁴⁰³

If the various types of sensual pleasure are grouped together, this list bears a close resemblance to the threefold division of vices and, indeed, when Cicero was able to generalise elsewhere in his work this is just the separation he made, writing in the *De re publica* that, like anger, ‘avarice, desire for power, desire for glory, and sensual pleasures’ can dominate the mind and must be brought

³⁹⁸ ‘Neque inurbanum me neque superbum neque avarum gero’, *DC*, p. 38.19-20.

³⁹⁹ Plat. *Rep.* IX.580d-583a.

⁴⁰⁰ I John 2.16-17. See also Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* I.xii.25.84-xv.33.113, II.xvi.41.161-xx.54.206 and III.i.1.5-i.2.11. See above pp. 56-57 and n. 165.

⁴⁰¹ See above p. 66.

⁴⁰² Cic. *Tusc.* IV.xi.24-26.

⁴⁰³ ‘Aegrotationi autem talia quaedam subiecta sunt: avaritia, ambitio, mulierositas, pervicacia, ligurritio, vinulentia, cuppedia, et si qua similia. Est autem avaritia opinatio vehemens de pecunia, quasi valde expetenda sit, inhaerens et penitus insita, similisque est eiusdem generis definitio reliquarum’, Cic. *Tusc.* IV.xi.26-27.

under the control of reason.⁴⁰⁴ Later Stoics would follow Cicero in discussing the three vices together, and Seneca – himself an important influence on Landino – would pay particular attention to this division in his moral writings such as, for instance, *Epistulae Morales* 69, where he discusses the rewards of vice: ‘No evil is without reward. Avarice promises money; luxury, many and varied pleasures; ambition, high status, applause and – from that applause – power and all it can do.’⁴⁰⁵ While Landino looks to the Stoic theory of emotion in order to explain the psychological effects of the three vices, it is Sallust to whom he turns for insight into their political implications. For Sallust, Rome’s military dominance after the destruction of Carthage led to such wealth and complacency among the political classes that the vices of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *ambitio* utterly corrupted the body politic and precipitated a moral decline which led to the crises of the late Republic. In the *Bellum Catilinae* he writes that ‘on account of wealth, sensual pleasure [*luxuria*], avarice [*avaritia*], and ambition [*superbia*] invaded the youth [of Rome]’ and that the effeminacy and decadence inculcated in the populace by habitual vice meant that the minds of the citizens ‘filled with bad habits, could not easily abstain from their desires, and were in every way more wantonly abandoned to acquisitiveness and extravagance’.⁴⁰⁶ This is an instrumental understanding of vice, interpreting its consequences less in personal and psychological terms than to the extent that they are injurious to republican principles. Hence Sallust’s disgust at these vices is phrased in terms of their capacity to destabilise the social bonds which are essential in maintaining the commonwealth, with *avaritia* being deplored because it ‘subverted trustworthiness, integrity, and other good qualities and instead taught pride, cruelty, neglect of the gods, and all venality’ and, likewise, *ambitio* because it ‘incited many people to become deceitful, to keep one thing concealed in the heart, and another ready on the tongue, to appraise friendships and enmities according to their benefit rather than their authenticity, and to present a good image rather than maintain a good character’.⁴⁰⁷ Had these vices been expunged from the body politic, a critical threat to the stability of Rome would have been forestalled.

This lesson was not lost on Landino.⁴⁰⁸ Since Rome was the exemplar of the Quattrocento city-state for him just as it was for other humanists, the vices which caused its decline were therefore those which moral and civic instruction had to address. If Landino were to teach the Florentine

⁴⁰⁴ Cic. *Rep.* I.xxxviii.60.

⁴⁰⁵ Sen. *Ep.* 69.4.

⁴⁰⁶ Sal. *Cat.* 12, and Sal. *Cat.* 13. See also Augustine, *Civ. Dei* II.18 and V.12. Rombach, *Vita Activa und Vita Contemplativa*, p. 127, briefly notes the influence of Sallust on Landino’s view of moral degradation. She points out that, in the Casanatense manuscript of his early Virgil lectures, Landino invokes Sallust to warn of the dangers of moral degeneracy. So, in his allegorisation of the Harpy Celaeno in Casanatense cod. 1368, fol. 117v, he reports that ‘Sallust ait enim avaritiam animum virilem etiam effeminare’. On *ambitio*, he writes in Casanatense cod. 1368, fol. 127v, that ‘[Ambitio] enim, ut ait Salustius, multos mortalium transversos ire coegit.’

⁴⁰⁷ ‘Ambitio multos mortalium falsos fieri subegit, aliud clausum in pectore aliud in lingua promptum habere, amicitias inimicitiasque non ex re sed ex commodo aestumare, magisque voltum quam ingenium bonum habere’, Sal. *Cat.* 10.

⁴⁰⁸ Nor, for that matter, by other Quattrocento educationalists: see Grendler, p. 261.

political classes anything, it would be to understand the consequences of Rome's decadence and thus avoid the attractions of sensual pleasure, wealth and honours in order that the moral integrity of the state be maintained. So, when Landino affords *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *ambitio* such significance in the *Disputationes*, he is therefore exhorting the reader to purge these vices not only for the purpose of self-divinisation but also as a prophylactic against political degeneracy. At the same time that the moral virtues purify the statesman so that he can benefit the state through the wisdom gained in contemplation, so too do they help him to *administrare rem publicam* by extinguishing vices which threaten to corrode the bonds of society.

An interest in the three vices of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *superbia* or *ambitio* had been manifest in Landino's work long before the *Disputationes*. As we have seen, in the *Xandra* Landino was led to explore themes of ethics and human frailty in his love poetry, choosing to devote the epideictic elegy *Contra avaros* to the theme of *avaritia* and reserving particular bile for the way in which this vice undermines the foundations of civic comity.⁴⁰⁹ Later, on the occasion of his accession to the chair of oratory and poetry at the Florentine *Studio* in 1458, his opening speech to his lectures on the *Tusculanae Disputationes* identified the three vices as the source of mental *perturbationes* in language following that of Cicero's work:

O what an extraordinary man! O the great stupidity of us who, believing that we are made happy by devoting ourselves to pleasure [*voluptas*] or ambition [*ambitio*] or avarice [*avaritia*], offer harsh sustenance to the *perturbationes* which torment us day and night, just like the sufferings and sicknesses of the body!⁴¹⁰

Landino's notes on his lectures on the *Aeneid* four years later in 1462 illustrate how he had transplanted these ideas into the realm of Virgilian allegory, a move which was no doubt prompted in part by earlier attributions of these vices in the allegorical tradition and the need to maintain some continuity with them. As Arthur Field has shown, these lectures contain a more or less fully-formed version of the *Aeneid* allegory which would follow in the *Disputationes*, with the main elements of the latter exegesis – that is, Troy symbolising luxury, Thrace and the Harpies avarice and so on – already being in place.⁴¹¹ When Landino came to write the *De anima* in the late 1460s, his introduction to the third book also preempted the depiction of vice in the *Disputationes*, although in this instance it was Alberti's first speech which was being prefigured:

⁴⁰⁹ See above p. 29.

⁴¹⁰ 'O egregium virum, O ingentem nostram stultitiam, qui, dum aut voluptatibus aut ambitioni aut avaritiae inseruiendo felices effici credimus, crudelissima pabula iis, quae nos dies ac noctes excarnificent, perturbationes praebemus, aegri profecto aegrotantiumque corporum persimillimi!', *Scritti*, I, p. 12.

⁴¹¹ See Field, 'A Manuscript of Cristoforo Landino's First Lectures on Virgil', pp. 17-20 and Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence*, pp. 231-68.

For a soul that has attained true wisdom understands that those things for which most mortals are either inflamed by desire or stirred up by avarice or driven mad with ambition do not only fail to make life happy, but make it most wretched.⁴¹²

Such was the significance of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *superbia* to Landino's thought that they also continued to occupy a central role in the works which followed the *Disputationes*. In the *De vera nobilitate* he has the character Aretophilus discuss the role of *superbia* in Sallust's account of the Catiline conspiracy before launching into a diatribe against all three vices in an excoriation of false nobility which could have been written by the Roman himself:

They [i.e., those who falsely think themselves noble and well-born] are mad, inflamed by desire for wealth, or by ambition for power and honours, or by lust for many and varied sensual pleasures, in such a way that that there is nothing so wicked, nothing so execrable, nothing so repugnant to all humanity that they will not undertake it with all rashness and insolence and bring it about without any shame at all.⁴¹³

By so identifying the moral failings which emerge from distractions in the sensible world with a flawed political class, Landino shows that these vices have deleterious practical consequences for the state. Courses of action undertaken by statesmen mired in vice are antithetical to those taken under the good governance of the virtuous and wise – that is, those who have *true* nobility – and the Roman dissolution chronicled by Sallust offers a warning as to the cost to republics of such behaviour. The influence of Sallust also looms large in the ubiquitous presence of the three vices in the *Comento* on Dante's *Commedia*. This work is by its nature a study of the taxonomy and psychology of sin, and Landino scrutinises each of the individual vices at their appropriate positions in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. Yet he analyses the three vices with which he has a particular concern together at several points in the commentary, usually in a Sallustian fashion. For instance, Landino refers to Sallust explicitly when discussing the three vices in the proem to the *Comento*, where he notes that Dante vituperates the factionalised and ambitious Florentines just as Sallust vituperated the *ambitio*, *luxuria* and *avaritia* of the Romans of his time.⁴¹⁴ Likewise, in the *chiosa* to canto XXXII of the *Purgatorio* Landino extends his criticism of the political consequences of these vices to the clergy, fulminating that the contemporary church was inspired by the *ambitione*, *avaritia* and *luxuria* of Simon Magus rather than the poverty, humility and chastity (*povertà*, *humilità* and *castità*) of the

⁴¹² 'Veram enim sapientiam [animus] nactus animadvertit, quibus plerique mortales aut ex concupiscentia incenduntur aut ex avaritia exagitantur, aut ex ambitione insaniunt, ea non modo non beatam, sed miserrimam vitam efficere', *De anima*, III, p. 5.

⁴¹³ 'Eos [qui nobiles generososque sese putant] ita insanire, ut aut divitiarum avaritia, aut honorum imperiique ambitione, aut multarum variarumque voluptatum libidine inflammati nihil neque tam impium sit neque tam nefarium neque tam ab omni humanitate abhorrens, quin illud per summam temeritatem cum omni petulantia aggrediantur impudentissimeque perficiant', *DVN*, p. 60. The character Philotimus instigates the discussion on Sallust's account of Catiline on p. 58.

⁴¹⁴ *Comento*, *Proem.* II.48-52.

apostles Paul and John.⁴¹⁵ Most strikingly of all, Landino would follow Boccaccio and other commentators in suggesting that the three vices are symbolised by the three beasts which bar the pilgrim's ascent of the sunlit hill at the beginning of the *Inferno*.⁴¹⁶ It is the presence of these creatures – the *lonza* which represents *luxuria*, the wolf which represents *avaritia*, and the lion which represents *superbia* – that forces the pilgrim to descend to the realms of the afterlife in the first place.⁴¹⁷ Since the *Comento*, in keeping with the Dantean commentary tradition, identifies this hill with the ascent towards the divine illuminated by the light of reason, these beasts represent the main corporeal impediments to the soul's journey just as their allegorical counterparts do in the *Disputationes*. Landino spares no time in tracing the commonalities between his Dante allegory and his recapitulated arguments from the earlier text:

Through Aeneas, Virgil wants to show how a human being can arrive at the highest good, and sets out that there are three main inconveniences which impede us so that we cannot attain our end. Of these the first is *luxuria*, which means every unbridled delight and pleasure of the senses that rule in us when our mind is not restricted by the reins of temperance. And he depicts this through Troy, which Aeneas did not want to leave at all if Venus, motivated by divine love, had not inspired him to leave, as I have shown in my allegories. The second is avarice, which he expresses through Thrace and through the isles of the Strophades and through many other things. The third is ambition and immoderate desire for magistrates' honours and for power. This vice is *greatly* demonstrated through the immortal hatred of Juno for the Trojans. So the person who, by nature, loves virtue, hates vice, desires their highest good, and flees suffering, would always proceed along the straight path if three things did not impede them. These are pleasure [*piacere*], profit [*utile*] and honour [*honore*], and to achieve these we often stray from the true road. So here Dante signifies the same thing through three beasts: the *lonza* is pleasure, the wolf is profit and the lion honour.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁵ *Comento, Purg.* XXXII.94-108.6-11.

⁴¹⁶ *Comento, Inf.* I.31-36, and cf. Boccaccio, *Esposizioni* I 1.31-60. The association between the three beasts and the vices of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *superbia* was made in the earliest commentary on the *Commedia* by Dante's son, Jacopo Alighieri, in 1322 and became a staple of the tradition of Dante criticism, appearing in, for instance, the commentaries of Francesco da Buti in 1385-95 and Filippo Villani in 1405.

⁴¹⁷ The term *lonza* indicates a large, spotted feline, probably a leopard, lynx or panther, although the precise species is unclear. On the *lonza* and its place in the Dantean commentary tradition, see Rosa Affatato, 'Riflessioni sulla "lonza" alla luce di alcuni commenti medievali alla "Divina Commedia"', *Tenzzone: rivista de la Asociación Complutense de Dantología*, 18 (2017), 197-226.

⁴¹⁸ 'Vuole Virgilio per Enea dimostrare come l'huomo possa arrivare al sommo bene, et pone tre essere e principali incomodi, e quali impediscono che non possiamo conseguire el nostro fine. De' quali el primo è la luxuria, intendendo per luxuria ogni lascivia et ogni sfrenata voluptà et piacere della sensualità, el quale regna in noi quando l'animo nostro non è ritenuto sotto el freno della temperantia. Et questo configurò per Troia, la quale non voleva lasciare in nessun modo Enea se Venere, posta pel divino amore, non l'havessi spirato a partirsi, chome nelle nostre allegorie dimostrarai. El secondo è l'avaritia, la quale exprime et per Tracia et per l'isole Strophade et per molte altre chose. El terzo è l'ambitione et immoderata cupidità de gli onori de' magistrati et degli imperii; el quale vitio *maxime* dimostra per le immortali inimicitie di Iunone contra a' Troiani. Adunque l'huomo el quale di sua natura ama la virtù et ha in odio el vitio et desidera el sommo suo bene et fugge la miseria, sempre procederebbe per diricta via se tre chose non lo impedissono. Queste sono piacere, utile et honore; et per conseguir questi spesso torciamo dalla diricta strada. Questo medesimo adunque significa al presente Danthe per tre fiere: lonza è el piacere, lupa è l'utile, leone e l'honore', *Comento, Inf.* I.31-36.3-20.

It was important to a project predicated on the wisdom of the *poeta theologus* that Landino made clear the alignment between the Dantean and Virgilian commentary traditions in the *Comento*. He had already recognised this fact in the proem to the fourth book of the *Disputationes*. In this proem he lists elements of the *Comento* that exhibit Virgilian influence including the midpoint of life, the forest, the sunlit mountain-top and – crucially – the three beasts which, given his knowledge of the commentary tradition, shows that he must have already been aware of their traditional association with *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *superbia*.⁴¹⁹ That in the *Comento* Landino presents a synoptic view of the similarities between Dante and Virgil concerning the treatment of the three vices not only speaks to his hope to impose consistency across his ethical theory, but also emphasises their crucial role in his moral philosophy, in each case being placed at the first steps onto the path of virtue, as it were. Just as he had argued in the *Disputationes* that the ambit of the Aristotelian goods of the body and of fortune contained all other ends inferior to the *summum bonum*, so he emphasises in the *Comento* that the three vices encompass every other moral failing:

Nor does it matter that, because the vices which are obstacles to virtuous living are so many and so varied, the poet sets out only three of them. Since these three contain all the others, it follows that he who is not corrupted by the lust that is the *lonza*, or by the greed for possessions that is the wolf, or by the desire for honours and positions and lordships, can be conquered by no other vice.⁴²⁰

The pervasive influence of the three vices in Landino's work over the course of three decades and their pivotal role in the intersection of theory and praxis in his virtue ethics, both inside and outside the *Disputationes*, shows their importance in deriving normative political and ethical standards from an otherwise abstract idea of psychological ascent. While his interest in the three vices had been sparked earlier in his career by Cicero, Sallust and the medieval commentary tradition, it was in the *Disputationes* that they were first integrated into the comprehensive psychological theory he had first set out in the *De anima*. Notwithstanding the contribution he sought to make in the *Disputationes* to the humanistic debate on how political legitimacy could be derived from personal virtue, Landino was also able to offer guidelines for proper conduct to his audience and, in particular, Lorenzo de' Medici, by presenting easily-digestible illustrations of bad behaviour in the form of the three vices. For a young statesman who had struggled with the uprising in Volterra and was having to grapple with the enmity of Sixtus IV, the avoidance of pleasure, wealth and empty glory was a trenchant and memorable lesson to learn, and Landino's system would have had additional appeal since it could explain away any personal failings as a form of appetitive disquiet emendable through moral purgation. From the broader point of view of the health of the body politic, Landino owed a great

⁴¹⁹ *DC*, p. 190.7-20.

⁴²⁰ 'Né muova alchuno che benché sieno tanti, et sì varii vitii e quali ci sono obstaculi al vivere virtuoso, el poeta ne ponghi solamente tre. Imperoché questi tre contengono tutti gli altri, concio sia che chi non è o corrotto dalla voluptà che è la lonza, o dalla cupidità dell'havere che è la lupa, o dal desiderio degli honori et stati et signorie, di nessuno vitio può esser vincto', *Comento, Inf.* I.61-66.11-16.

debt to Sallust. Alongside his stated aim of exploring the division between intellectual and moral virtues and advocating a stratified Macrobian system to govern the purgation of the soul, the practical purpose of his virtue politics was to preserve the norms which would help the republic flourish and prevent its degradation. Since the aim of the *Disputationes* was to vindicate the exercise of power in a republic by one without an official role, its attempt to encourage principles which perpetuate communal solidarity over venal and opportunistic behaviour was all the more important in offering a veneer of republican respectability, however superficial this might actually have been. There is therefore a secondary end to the exercise of the moral virtues beyond simply purging the soul for contemplation: in the active life, one must cultivate the moral virtues that best help to maintain the republic and expunge the vices that are most harmful to it. We can now therefore turn to the illustrative depictions of sensual pleasure, wealth and political ambition in the *Aeneid* allegory which occupy the third and fourth books of the *Disputationes*, in order that we might assess their contribution to the praxis of Landino's virtue ethics.

Chapter Three – Allegory and Practical Ethics

3.1 The vices allegorised

That Landino chooses poetic exegesis as the vehicle for transmitting the advisory aspect of his ethics is consistent with the significance which he attributed to poetry throughout his career, from the *Xandra* poems, through his lectures at the *scuola* and philosophical dialogues, all the way to the *Comento*.⁴²¹ In the proem to the third book of the *Disputationes*, Landino recounts how Plato explains that the *furor poeticus*, the divine madness which inspires poetry, is that which compels our souls to remember their divine origin, escape their bodily shackles and return to God.⁴²² Here he draws his inspiration from the *Ion* and the *Phaedrus*, which had recently been translated by Ficino, and his arguments (which recur in a similar form throughout his works) are derived from those in Ficino's letter *De divino furore* of 1457.⁴²³ For Landino, poetry therefore 'embraces all the other liberal arts' and creates a continuity between the *prisca theologia* and Christian theology.⁴²⁴ Moreover, its fundamental quality of semantic transference, its capacity to transmute ideas through allegory into forms that are more penetrating and comprehensible to the listener, speaks to its pedagogic value:

Whatever human beings have done, whatever they have known, whatever they have contemplated, poetry dresses in wonderful images, and it transfers these things into other forms so that not only do they seem to relate something rather more base and humble, and not only are they supposed to mimic mere stories to amuse the ears of the idle, but they also bring forth what is most elevated and hidden in the very source of the divine nature. Having finally perceived this most agreeable error, the listener not only reaches the highest understanding of such matters, but is also filled with wonderful pleasure from the image.⁴²⁵

⁴²¹ See above pp. 15-19 and 25-31.

⁴²² *DC*, pp. 111.18-112.27.

⁴²³ A detailed synopsis by Roberto Cardini of similar passages can be found in *Scritti*, II, pp. 206-09 but some examples include the proem to Landino's Dante lectures in *Scritti*, I, pp. 45-55, the proem to *In Artem Poeticam*, pp. 97-99, the introduction to the 1488 commentary on the *Aeneid* in *Scritti*, I, pp. 226-33, and chapters X and XI of the *Proemio* to the *Comento*. Landino is referring to *Ion* 533d-536 and *Phaedrus* 244a-245a and his original source for this theory, Ficino's *De divino furore*, can be found in *Letters*, I, pp. 42-48 and *Lettere*, I, pp. 19-28. On Landino and poetic *furor*, see Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, II, pp. 712-21; Gilson, *Dante and Renaissance Florence*, pp. 186-93; Craig Kallendorf, 'From Virgil to Vida: The *Poeta Theologus* in Italian Renaissance Commentary', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56.1 (January 1995), 41-62; Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), pp. 145-49; and James K. Coleman, 'Furor and Philology in the Poetics of Angelo Poliziano', in *New Worlds and the Italian Renaissance: Contributions to the History of European Intellectual Culture*, ed. by Andrea Moudarres and Christiana Purdy Moudarres (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 251-89.

⁴²⁴ *DC*, pp. 111.3-8 and 112.27-114.15. See also *Scritti*, I, p. 230 and Kallendorf, 'From Virgil to Vida', pp. 50-52.

⁴²⁵ 'Quaecunq[ue] homines egerint, quaecunq[ue] norint, quaecunq[ue] contemplati fuerint ea miris figmentis exornet atq[ue] in alias quasdam species traducat, ut, cum aliud quippiam multo inferius multoque humilior narrare videantur aut cum meras fabellas ad cessantium aures oblectandas ludere credantur, tum maxime excelsa quaedam et in ipso divinitatis fonte recondita promant, quo quidem gratissimo errore tandem animadverso auditor non solum in summam rerum cognitionem deveniat, sed mira etiam voluptate ex figmento perfundatur', *DC*, p. 111.9-18.

As we know, rhetoric was the social technology through which Quattrocento humanists sought to influence behaviour and legitimise political power, and here Landino is disclosing to the reader the way in which he intends to adapt this traditional approach to moral instruction. His poetic allegorising is a form of rhetoric in itself: it seeks through verbal and literary ingenuity to persuade the reader of their ‘agreeable error’ of taking at face value the superficial attributes of the verse, thereby inculcating the precepts of his underlying virtue ethics. Landino has, of course, already shown on several occasions in the first book of the *Disputationes* that he is sensitive to the relative benefits of different modes of communication. For instance, to conclude his speech on the active life the character of Lorenzo mentions that he has approached the subject rhetorically, as he would practice with Landino, rather than through philosophical argument.⁴²⁶ Similarly, in his second speech Alberti introduces his example of Paolo Toscanelli as a means of advancing the disputation ‘with dialectic rather than with oratory’.⁴²⁷ Landino’s overt discussion of the nature of poetry in this proem indicates his acknowledgement of a departure from the disputational approach of philosophical inquiry which had constituted the first two books of the *Disputationes* in favour of the more didactic and persuasive methods of his allegorisation of the *Aeneid*. Since his aim in the third and fourth books of the *Disputationes* is to modify the reader’s behaviour, we can therefore understand the allegorical techniques he uses therein as a subtle instance of the rhetoric which was the primary means of regulating civic conduct for humanists.⁴²⁸

This change in rhetorical approach can be illustrated by the divergence between the role that Aeneas assumes as a moral paradigm in the *Aeneid* allegory in comparison to the models deployed in the first and second books that display either the moral advantages of the active life – such as in the case of Hercules and an array of classical statesmen and military leaders – or the contemplative life – such as in the cases of Paolo Toscanelli and Cicero. Aeneas, unlike these figures, is a cipher for philosophical principles rather than a guide for realistic attainment. Even when compared to mythological and semi-mythological figures used as exemplars elsewhere in the text, he stands as less ‘real’ because the former are used as concrete objects for moral orientation rather than possessing an entirely allegorical significance alone. At the start of the third book of the *Disputationes*, Landino makes this clear. Aeneas, he writes, was created by Virgil according to his plan for ethical instruction as a man who ‘gradually purged of numerous and great vices and then adorned with extraordinary virtues, eventually reached that which is the *summum bonum* of humanity and which no one can attain unless they are a *sapiens*’.⁴²⁹ The models of the first and second books

⁴²⁶ DC, p. 35.18-22.

⁴²⁷ DC, p. 37.26-27.

⁴²⁸ See e.g. Hankins, ‘Machiavelli, Civic Humanism, and the Humanist Politics of Virtue’, p. 102-05 and see above pp. 50-52.

⁴²⁹ ‘[Virum informavit], qui plurimis ac maximis vitiis paulatim expiatus ac deinceps miris virtutibus illustratus id, quod summum homini bonum est quodque nisi sapiens nullus assequi potest, tandem assequeretur’, DC, p. 119.3-6, and cf. *Comento, Inf.* II.10-36.60.

constitute specific (if sometimes fictive) examples of proper conduct; Aeneas provides an abstract, paradigmatic illustration of the philosophical principles of virtue and vice as applied to human behaviour and psychology. One emerges from humanism and the rhetorical culture built upon it, the other from the primarily Platonic tradition of Virgil commentary. Now, recall that in an earlier chapter we touched upon how Vergerio valued the benefit of historical exemplarity to the humanist when compared to philosophical rumination.⁴³⁰ He writes: ‘in philosophy we find rules explaining what one may profitably do or shun, but in history we find [moral] examples; in philosophy the duties of all mankind may be found and what it is fitting for each person to do, but in history what *has* been done or said in every age’.⁴³¹ With his use of both concrete and abstract exemplars, Landino is able to transmit both kinds of teaching at once. His innovation in the *Disputationes*, therefore, is to bring together in one text contemporary and historical models of good humanistic conduct with the allegorical exemplarity of the Virgilian critical tradition in order to transmit a virtue ethics built upon both humanistic and philosophical instruction. On the one hand, he builds a network of classical, mythological and contemporary references that readers can negotiate, aligning themselves to appropriate examples of either action or contemplation on their path to becoming a model citizen and *sapiens*. On the other, he guides his audience through the principles of his system of virtue ethics with an embodiment of his theory of gradualist moral perfectionism, a figure who stands as a paradigmatic example of how to purify oneself of the stains of day-to-day vice while, at the same time, offering a window into the psychological processes of the mind from which the shoots of improper behaviour spring.

When Landino investigates vice in his allegory of the *Aeneid*, then, he is attempting to instil virtue through both ethical instruction and intense psychological reflection, systematising immoral behaviour and situating it in the human experience through the allegorisation of Aeneas’ travels and his descent to the underworld. The voyage of Aeneas to Italy represents the progress of the soul towards God through the expiation of vices that, according to Sallust and Cicero, cause the moral dissipation of the republic and thus prevent any attempt to *administrare rem publicam*. These vices hinder the exercise of civic virtue itself and prevent the ascent to contemplation, whose wisdom can benefit public life. In Alberti’s opening remarks in the third book he states that Virgil, recognising in Homer the hidden wisdom of the Egyptians, wanted to devise a similar figure to Ulysses to act as a vehicle for the moral philosophy of Plato. Hence he uses the following rationale to create the character of Aeneas:

[Aeneas], gradually purged of numerous and great vices and then adorned with extraordinary virtues, eventually reached that which is the *summum bonum* of humanity and which no one can attain unless they are a *sapiens*. When Virgil learned from Plato that the *summum bonum* consisted in speculation on divine things, he learned at the same time that it cannot be reached until our souls are wholly restored, having been cleansed by

⁴³⁰ See above p. 49 and n. 139.

⁴³¹ Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus*, p. 49 (my italics).

those virtues pertaining to life and morals, because Socrates himself denies that it is right for the pure to touch the impure. Hence he has not only marvellously expressed for us the ends of the good, but has also shown in what way and in what manner a person might eventually attain it, and so the part of his philosophy which the Greeks call ‘ethics’ and which we call ‘pertaining to life and morals’ was not omitted. For in this moral philosophy we seek nothing else but, first, the ends of good and evil [*bonorum malorumque fines*], and then the duties [*officia*] by which we may be led to them as if by some kind of road.⁴³²

In this description of Virgil’s aim in composing the *Aeneid*, the emphasis on the moral virtues and the allusions to Cicero’s *De finibus* and *De officiis* in the final line of this passage indicate that the forthcoming allegory will deal with the process of purgation and the implications for personal conduct it entails rather than any divine speculation with the intellectual virtues. This sentiment was expressed even more explicitly in the introduction to his Virgil commentary of 1488, where Landino wrote that, just as Xenophon offered moral advice to a prince in his *Cyropedia*, so the *Aeneid* teaches moral behaviour to all human beings:

Moreover, as regards that which pertains to living well and happily, who could not see that all precepts by which human life is properly governed can easily be extracted and grasped from this poet as if from the venerable shrines of philosophy? For just as Xenophon represents the life of Cyrus from its very infancy, in order that the best prince might be fashioned by the example of that king, so too does Virgil’s poem express every kind of human life, so that there is no class of human being, no age, no sex, ultimately no situation, which cannot learn its duties in their entirety from him.⁴³³

It is the exercise of moral virtue within human life that Virgil teaches us and, moreover, the fact that Landino posits the ethical lessons of the *Aeneid* as generalisations of the precepts found in the most famous classical work in the ‘mirror for princes’ genre shows that he views them as conveying the universalist and egalitarian principles important to his republicanism. These teachings, Landino argues, can be interpreted in four different ways: through history, which investigates bald fact; through etymology, which reveals causation; through analogy, which reconciles contradictions; and

⁴³² ‘Qui plurimis ac maximis vitiis paulatim expiatus ac deinceps miris virtutibus illustratus id, quod summum homini bonum est quodque nisi sapiens nullus assequi potest, tandem assequeretur. Verum cum illud in rerum divinarum speculatione consistere a Platone didicisset, simul et illud didicit eo antea minime perveniri posse, quam animi nostri virtutibus illis quae de vita et moribus sunt expiati penitus reddantur, cum Socrates ipse purum impuro attingere fas esse neget. Quapropter non solum fines bonorum nobis mirifice expressit, verum etiam qua via quave ratione eo evadere tandem homini liceat demonstravit, ne qua pars eius philosophiae, quam Graeci ethicen, nos de vita et moribus nominamus, praetermitteretur. In ea enim nos nihil aliud quaerimus nisi primum bonorum malorumque fines, deinde officia, quibus veluti via quadam ad eos deducamur’, *DC*, p. 119.3-17.

⁴³³ ‘Quod autem ad bene beateque vivendum pertinet, quis non videat omnia quibus vita humana recte instituat praecepta ab hoc poeta veluti ex adorandis philosophiae sacrariis promi facile ac percipi posse? Nam ut Cyri vitam Xenophon ita a primis incunabulis producit, ut eius regis exemplo optimus princeps informari possit, sic Maronis poema omne humanae vitae genus exprimit, ut nullus hominum ordo, nulla aetas, nullus sexus sit, nulla denique conditio, quae ab eo sua officia non integre addiscat’, *Scritti*, I, pp. 215-16, and see Craig Kallendorf, *Virgil and the Myth of Venice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), pp. 62-63.

through allegory, which conceals truth in poetic images.⁴³⁴ It is through this fourth hermeneutic technique that Landino's allegorisation will proceed.

Landino's adoption of the idea of the *furor poeticus* from the *Ion* and *Phaedrus* via Ficino meant that he interpreted the *Aeneid* as a source of philosophical truth and a medium for moral instruction. These ideas were, in one form or another, common to the tradition of Platonically-inclined Virgilian criticism from which Landino drew. Servius in his *In Vergilii Aeneidem commentarii* and Macrobius in the *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis* and the *Saturnalia* both interpreted the Roman poet as illustrating hidden knowledge through his poetic figures and, following the *Phaedo*, equated the underworld with the body; Fulgentius read the *Aeneid* as a moral allegory charting the course of human life; the commentary on the first six books of the *Aeneid* attributed to Bernardus Silvestris expounded a Platonic moral philosophy which included a detailed treatment of the descent to the underworld as representing descent into the body; and Petrarch's analyses in the *Africa* and *Seniles* IV.5 interpret Aeneas a moral exemplar, a *vir fortis ac perfectus* whose virtue readers could seek to emulate.⁴³⁵ Moreover, to this intellectual lineage that Landino absorbed one can also add the profound influence exerted by Virgil upon Dante's *Commedia* and the broader investigations of allegory found in texts such as Boccaccio's *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, Ficino's discussion of the judgment of Paris in the *Philebus* commentary, Poggio Bracciolini's *De avaritia* and Salutati's *De laboribus Herculis*.⁴³⁶

However much Landino relied on this tradition – and on the commentary of Bernardus Silvestris and the *De laboribus Herculis* in particular – for individual elements of his allegory, his approach in the *Disputationes* was innovative in its scope, organisation and sense of continuity. As Kallendorf has commented, Landino prided himself that his allegory of the *Aeneid* in the third and fourth books of the *Disputationes* was the first to uncover its systematised moral philosophy according to the chronological order of its events rather than the order in which they are presented in the poem.⁴³⁷ While he is subjected to certain interpretive constraints because the *Aeneid* takes the form of a journey from place to place, he is nevertheless deliberate in deriving from it a system of moral perfectionism in which the soul is cleansed of vices in a specific order. First the human soul

⁴³⁴ DC, pp. 119.23-120.22.

⁴³⁵ Macrobius, *In. Somn. Scip.* I.iii.17-20 and I.ix.17-20, *Saturnalia* III-VI; Petrarch, *Seniles* IV.5. See also Augustine, *Civ. Dei* X.30; XIII.19 and XIV.3, 5 and 8. Much valuable scholarship has been undertaken on the Landino's place in the tradition of Aeneid criticism. See, for instance: Kallendorf, 'Cristoforo Landino's *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition'; Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*; Kallendorf, *Virgil and the Myth of Venice*; Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil: 'Pessimistic' Readings of the Aeneid in Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 396-419; Michael Murrin, *The Allegorical Epic: Essays in Its Rise and Decline* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980); Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, pp. 135-62; and Wilson-Okamura.

⁴³⁶ On Landino's relationship with Dante, see, for instance, Roberto Cardini, 'Landino e Dante', *Rinascimento*, 2nd ser., 30 (1990), 175-90; Gilson, *Dante and Renaissance Florence*, pp. 163-230; Lentzen, *Studien*; and Lorenz Böninger and Paolo Procaccioli, eds., *Per Cristoforo Landino Lettore di Dante: Il contesto civile e culturale, la storia tipografica e la fortuna del Comento sopra la Comedia. Atti del Convegno internazionale Firenze 7-8 novembre 2014* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2016). On the commonalities between the *Disputationes* and Salutati's work, see McNair, 'Cristoforo Landino, Coluccio Salutati and the Best Life'.

⁴³⁷ Kallendorf, 'Cristoforo Landino's *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition', pp. 533-544.

must free itself from sensual pleasure, then avarice, then ambition. Not only does this sequence serve as an implied hierarchy of vice, but also as an analysis of the human condition. At each step in the process of purgation Landino reminds us that our moral growth risks diversion and backsliding: the *perturbationes* inflicted upon the mind when the appetite is distracted by the corporeal world consist in the psychological difficulties we encounter and the vices to which we are most susceptible at the stage of moral development – and, indeed, of life – that we have reached. So, in youth we are inflamed with sensual pleasure, when entering into public affairs ambition inclines us to put off contemplation and so on. Since in the *Disputationes* Landino's allegorisation treats these milestones as stations in a course of moral progress rather than direct correspondences with each human age, it stands as a refinement of similar theories of moral development in which the conduct expected of a person evolves through the successive phases of life. These appear not only in the commentators on Virgil, but also in humanistic ethical instruction more generally. The former tradition originates in the sixth-century *Expositio Virgilianae Continentiae* of Fulgentius, which aligns the unfolding story in the *Aeneid* (in the order of its relation rather than Landino's chronological order) with the moral concerns of each human age. So, the shipwreck of the first book illustrates the dangers of childbirth, the second and third books youth, the fourth the lust of adolescence and, in the sixth book, Aeneas descends to the underworld to penetrate the secrets of virtue with the golden bough, or learning.⁴³⁸ Few later Virgilian commentators would escape this Fulgentian influence. Bernardus Silvestris, a profound influence on Landino, would follow a schema of allegorising the *Aeneid* as depicting moral progress from childhood to maturity with the descent to the underworld in the sixth book being the centrepiece of the analysis.⁴³⁹ On the other hand, the proximate humanistic influence on Landino that presented this opinion was the *Vita civile* of Matteo Palmieri, which prescribes a course of moral instruction conforming strictly with the phases of mortal life. Like Landino, Palmieri constructs his theories of civic engagement around the Macrobian grades of virtue and the purgation of psychological disturbances which arise from external goods, but the older humanist has the character Agnolo emphasise that he will tackle his moral instruction in life's sequence.⁴⁴⁰ Since Landino mentions the *Vita civile* favourably in the prologue to his university lectures on Petrarch in 1467, we know that he was familiar with the hermeneutic techniques set out in Palmieri's work before he began to compose the *Disputationes*.⁴⁴¹ Given the aforementioned theoretical commonalities along with similar moral sentiments such as the censure of avarice in a leader of the republic, it is noteworthy that Landino resisted the temptation to follow Palmieri in adopting a methodology based on the ages of life.⁴⁴² Among other

⁴³⁸ Fulgentius, *Exp. Verg.* passim.

⁴³⁹ Bernardus Silvestris, *Commentary*, pp. 14-15 and passim.

⁴⁴⁰ Palmieri, *Vita civile*, I.14.

⁴⁴¹ *Scritti*, I, p. 36.4-7.

⁴⁴² Palmieri, *Vita civile*, IV.209-12. Furthermore, I believe that, given the similarities between their main arguments and a common reliance on the Macrobian scale of virtue, a strong case can be made that Lorenzo's speech in the first book of the *Disputationes* takes the *Vita civile* as its main model.

humanists, different modes of conduct were commonly associated with each stage of life in educational literature which took its lead from *loci classici* such as Aristotle's *Ethics* and Cicero's *De senectute*.⁴⁴³ For instance, in his *De ingenuis moribus*, Pier Paolo Vergerio maintains that 'each age has certain vices peculiar to it: adolescence burns with lust, middle age is rocked by ambition, and old age wastes away in greed'.⁴⁴⁴ Similar views were transmitted in public correspondence, with Salutati writing that 'when we have reached that age at which we should gather our burdens and long for the Creator, who is also the goal of all things, let us dismiss such follies and trifles [of the desire for glory]'.⁴⁴⁵ In the *Comento*, which is less rigid than the *Disputationes* in its conformity to the progression from *luxuria* to *avaritia* to *ambitio*, Landino mentions in passing this very idea, writing that 'as the youthful age is impeded by lust, and the virile age by ambition and desire for honours, so is old age impeded by avarice'.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* IV.i.37; Cic. *Sen.* passim.

⁴⁴⁴ 'Habent enim et aetates sua propria quaedam vitia. Adulescentia libidinibus aestuat; aetas media ambitione iactatur; senectus cupiditate avaritiaque consumitur', Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus*, p. 20, and see also Piccolomini, *De liberorum educatione*, p. 258.

⁴⁴⁵ 'Postquam id etatis attigimus, ut debeamus colligere sarcinas et ad auctorem, qui et ipse finis est omnium, suspirare, dimittamus has ineptias et has nugae', *Epistolario*, II, p. 426. See also Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism*, p. 82, who notes the significance of this passage and also mentions the value of Petrarch's *Familiars* VIII.3 in n. 56.

⁴⁴⁶ 'Chome l'età giovanile è impedita dalle voluptà, et la virile dalla ambitione et cupidità degli honori, chosì la vecchiaia dalla avaritia', *Comento, Inf.* I.49-54.21-23.

3.2 *Luxuria*

The allegorisation of the *Aeneid* in the third and fourth books of the *Disputationes* is concerned with sketching a purificatory course towards the divine and hence intersects only incidentally with each stage of human life, but one such alignment appears at the very beginning of the allegory where Landino is unambiguous in interpreting Troy as representing the corporeal pleasures (*voluptates*) which reign in the pre-moral ages of childhood and adolescence.⁴⁴⁷ As Craig Kallendorf has noted in his analysis of Landino's place in the tradition of humanistic criticism of the *Aeneid*, such an identification is a commonplace of Virgilian allegory which appears in Petrarch's *Secretum*, Salutati's *De laboribus Herculis* (although Salutati also identifies Troy with avarice) and Boccaccio's *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, and to this list we can also add earlier commentators such as Fulgentius and Bernardus Silvestris.⁴⁴⁸ While the association of Troy with sensual pleasure did not comprise part of any broader intellectual itinerary in the three authors that Kallendorf cites, for Landino it offered a sensible starting point for a Platonist reading of the *Aeneid* which charted the soul's liberation from being incarcerated in the body. Indeed, Michael Murrin has shown that the concept of Troy symbolising the human sensual condition is ultimately adopted from the commentary on Plato's *Republic* by Proclus and thus constitutes one of six fundamental assumptions which Landino draws from Platonist interpretations not of the *Aeneid*, but of the *Odyssey*, which he mentions in the third book as being the philosophical and allegorical model for Virgil's work.⁴⁴⁹ Since at this age, Landino argues, our capacity for self-reflection is unformed, we concentrate on the appropriation of the fundamental needs of nature, the Peripatetic *prima naturae*, and seek the pleasures of the body which all living beings know from birth. Our actions are essentially involuntary and we cannot yet consider them to be motivated by virtue or vice, and so 'no one will say that there is virtue in a child'.⁴⁵⁰ Instead, we only begin to distinguish good from evil 'when, with the progression of age, our mind begins to be illuminated to some extent by the light of reason', that is, at the age of discretion at which the road of one's life forks into the Pythagorean letter 'y' and its onward paths of vice and virtue.⁴⁵¹ Aware that the consequence of characterising *luxuria* as a vice which has its

⁴⁴⁷ DC, pp. 120.23-121.29. Landino would later refer to this characterisation directly in *Comento*, *Inf.* I.31-36.9-15 and I.37-43.131-154.

⁴⁴⁸ Kallendorf, 'Cristoforo Landino's *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition', pp. 536-38. In the *Exp. Verg.* Fulgentius writes 'In secundo vero libro et tertio avocatur fabulis quibus puerilis consueta est avocari garrulitas'. On Bernardus Silvestris, see above, n. 439.

⁴⁴⁹ Murrin, p. 31, referring in particular to DC, pp. 118.5-119.2, and Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic* I.108.1. These points are reproduced in Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*, pp. 143-44. In turn, Kallendorf draws attention to Müller-Bochat, who, in *Leon Battista Alberti und die Vergil-Deutung der Disputationes Camaldulenses*, goes even further by claiming that the Homeric critical tradition was in fact more influential on Landino than the Virgilian.

⁴⁵⁰ 'Itaque in puero virtutem esse nemo dicet', DC, p. 121.11-12.

⁴⁵¹ 'Ubi iam progressu aetatis rationis lumine aliquo illustrari incipit mens nostra', DC, p. 121.12-13. On the Pythagorean 'y', see Wilson-Okamura, pp. 166-67 and n. 85; Kallendorf, 'Cristoforo Landino's *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition', pp. 32-35 and p. 96; Murrin, p. 46; and Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 62-63, 378-82, 388-89, 408 and 418-19; Wolfgang Harms, *Homo viator in bivio; Studien zur Bildlichkeit des Weges*

origin in the impulsive, premoral phase of life before adulthood is that an explanation is necessary for its presence later in the course of moral progress, Landino therefore tends to focus on its atavistic character in later references to sensual pleasure. So, when discussing his theory of appetite, he writes:

But sometimes this [appetitive] power judges in such a way that, regarding nothing beyond the senses and as if attracted by their charms and corrupted by the reward of pleasure it is offered, it discerns what is good for beasts as being good for human beings.⁴⁵²

Similarly, when Aeneas reaches the Strophades, which represent the vice of miserly avarice, Landino writes that such a development occurs after one has abandoned the 'pristine savageness' of the sensual appetite.⁴⁵³ Hence, the threat that *luxuria* poses is that of a regression to a form of bestiality which, as we shall see later, extends to the influence of avarice and ambition in civic life.

Landino has the character of Alberti illustrate the repercussions of the choice made at the onset of maturity with the contrasting fates of Paris, who is doomed by his adoration of Venus, and of Aeneas, who is led to Italy (that is, contemplation) by the same goddess.⁴⁵⁴ Acknowledging the inconsistency in his interpretation of Venus as both an instigator of and a liberator from sensual pleasure, Landino argues that, while Virgil was constrained by the existing mythography in which Venus was the mother of Aeneas, the poet nevertheless sought to introduce a Platonic conception of the goddess into the *Aeneid*. Virgil, he claims, is representing here the doctrine found in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* of the two Venuses, a heavenly Venus who signifies the divine love which seeks the beauty of God, and an earthly Venus who represents corporeal love which has earthly beauty as its end.⁴⁵⁵ It is the earthly Venus who rules in Troy, because while the perception of corporeal beauty is an important instrument in proceeding to the contemplation of God when one then transcends the sensible world through the direction of divine love, it can cause serious damage when the mind is unable to abstract its understanding of beauty from the senses and becomes consumed by a 'love of a soul dead in its own body and living in another'.⁴⁵⁶ In such cases, the desire for corporeal pleasure becomes habituated, entrenching itself in the mind as a mental sickness or *morbis* and, as we saw in the previous chapter, these sicknesses are the psychological

(Munich: Fink, 1970).

⁴⁵² 'Nonnunquam autem ita iudicat huiusmodi vis, ut nihil praeter sensus respiciens et veluti illorum illecebris attracta et voluptatis oblato praemio corrupta, quod pecudis bonum est, ipsa hominis bonum decernat', *DC*, p. 133.15-18.

⁴⁵³ 'Pristina feritate', *DC*, p. 146.3.

⁴⁵⁴ On the representation of Paris as sensual love, see also Cic. *N.D.* III.91. On the associations between Paris and sensuality in Landino and earlier commentators as regards his judgment of Juno, Minerva and Venus, see Chance (2015), pp. 408-15.

⁴⁵⁵ Plat. *Phaedrus* 266a and Plat. *Sym.* 180c-185c. Landino's understanding of the Platonic theory of the two Venuses is drawn from Ficino's account in *De amore* II.7. See also *Comento, Inf.* I 37-43.136-154, in which Landino refers to this passage in the *Disputationes*.

⁴⁵⁶ 'Eum ardorem animi in suo corpore mortui in alieno viventi', *DC*, p. 126.

dispositions which are also known as vices, in this case that of *luxuria*.⁴⁵⁷ Hence Paris, who is unable to remove his mind from the senses and, having thus fallen into *luxuria*, cannot proceed to celestial love, is consigned to the flames of sensual desire. Aeneas, on the other hand, can perceive vestigial images of the divine in the sensible world and is inspired by the heavenly Venus with a desire for contemplation that ultimately drives him to Italy.

Still, the noble intentions of following divine love are only the beginning of one's moral transformation. Aeneas continues to defend Troy, just as the immature remain distracted by bodily pleasures because reason is not yet aroused in the *prima naturae*. Such people, writes Landino, are ignorant of the precise nature of their *summum bonum* but are nevertheless instilled with a desire for it by the divine love, which causes them to begin to understand that the *prima naturae* of the body are ephemeral and corruptible and the body itself – that is, the city of Troy – must die. Alberti's allegorisation of the fall of Troy concludes by drawing some further Platonic lessons for this advice from Virgil's text. Since bodily pleasures are not only self-destructive – as Alberti established in the previous day's disputation – but also inimical to the comprehension of the divine, the gods are complicit in Troy's destruction.⁴⁵⁸ They undertake their assault while hidden from Aeneas in clouds and shadows, which Landino interprets as representing the common Platonic trope of the immersion in corporeal matter dimming the human mind and obscuring the truth.⁴⁵⁹ One who has resolved to proceed on the moral journey of purgation, however, is able to set the body aside and begin on their way, but the magnitude of the task initiates a struggle between the *mens* and the senses which requires the inferior part of the soul to be supported by the superior. Hence Anchises, who represents the sensual appetite and would rather die than leave the corporeal realm of Troy, is carried out by Aeneas.⁴⁶⁰

It would seem that there are three practical steps to moral purity Landino would have his readership take before anything else. First, to become inflamed with a desire for self-improvement through 'divine love' (or, in other words, take the virtuous path at the Pythagorean 'y') when they reach the age of discretion; second, to struggle against any desire for bodily pleasures, or at least prevent any such desire from becoming the ingrained psychological disposition which is the vice of *luxuria*; and third, to understand that the corporeal world and the physical needs which we instinctively seek to appropriate are transitory. Furthermore, they should accept the difficulty of the challenge ahead. These three steps are a neat encapsulation of the marriage of humanist schooling and Platonic doctrine that constitute Landino's virtue ethics. The advice that, upon reaching adulthood, one must assume personal responsibility for one's own path was commonplace of both humanist moral instruction and the allegorical tradition, with variations on the figure of the Pythagorean 'y' appearing first in Persius, then in commentators such as Servius (who also

⁴⁵⁷ See above pp. 129-32.

⁴⁵⁸ *DC*, p. 80.1-9 and see above p. 125.

⁴⁵⁹ See e.g. Plat. *Phaedo*. 79c and 82e.

⁴⁶⁰ *DC*, pp. 131.10-17.

identified the ‘y’ with the golden bough of the *Aeneid*), and finally in humanists including Petrarch, Salutati and Palmieri.⁴⁶¹ Likewise, a recurring theme in the humanist education of adolescents was the necessity of maintaining moderation in personal behaviour and avoiding indulgence in food, wine and sex. For instance, Pier Paolo Vergerio writes that ‘[young people] are to be kept most of all from those sins into which they are easily and naturally led by their age’ and Palmieri (again) writes that ‘Here [in adolescence] youths begin to taste the pleasures of the world and desire to pursue them according to their desires... in all human acts it is not enough to abstain from reprehensible wickednesses, but one also wishes to be above all suspicion of them’.⁴⁶² Only then could would-be statesmen develop the kind of virtue which would afford them political legitimacy among their fellow citizens. Yet by drawing a comparison between the divergence of the different paths of adulthood and the concept of the earthly and heavenly Venuses, and supporting the repudiation of the corporeal world and the evidence of the senses, Landino also introduces the Platonic elements of his virtue theory in these opening pages. Not only must his reader learn how to cultivate the traditional humanistic virtues of the *vita activa* that sanction the exercise of power within a republic, but these virtues are to be employed in a purificatory ascent to the divine from which the *sapiens* can then return to impart advisory wisdom to the state, thus obviating the need for him to occupy any official role.

As well as identifying the danger of corporeal pleasures and the risk of their being fixed in the soul as *luxuria*, the escape of Aeneas from Troy allows Landino to set out two main themes which contribute to the intellectual underpinning of his allegorisation. The first is that he identifies the sea with the appetite, the power of the mind which acts upon sense data to appropriate or flee things and which, as we saw earlier, Landino had defined in the *De anima* as being a composite of desire (*libido*), the irrational appetite which relies upon the judgment of the senses, and the will (*voluntas*), the rational appetite which is subordinate to reason.⁴⁶³ Like the sea, the appetite can remain serene and direct its desire properly, but when cast into the psychological squalls of the *perturbationes animi* which arise from bodily contagion it becomes disturbed and erratic. Landino would again employ the concept of misguided appetition being a form of psychological turbulence in the *Comento*, in which he discusses the meaning of the souls of the lustful being buffeted by winds in canto V of the *Inferno*. Referring directly to his allegorisation in the *Disputationes*, Landino states that:

⁴⁶¹ Persius, *Satires* 3.56-57; Servius, *Commentary on the Aeneid of Virgil*, VI.136-37; Petrarch, *Familiars* III.12.5, VII.17.1 and XII.3.5-7, and *Secretum* III.130-132; Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis* III.vii.2-3 and III.viii.15; and Palmieri, *Vita civile* I.92-104. On Landino’s use of the figure, see Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, p. 408 and pp. 418-19; Murrin, p. 46; and Wilson-Okamura, pp. 166-67. On that of Palmieri, see Gilson, *Dante and Renaissance Florence*, pp. 106-08, and Timothy Kircher, *Living Well in Renaissance Italy: The Virtue of Humanism and the Irony of Leon Battista Alberti* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012), p. 77.

⁴⁶² Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus*, pp. 20-22 and see also pp. 82-88; Palmieri, *Vita civile* I.103. Similar sentiments can be found in e.g. Piccolomini, *De liberorum educatione*, pp. 142-56.

⁴⁶³ See above pp. 64-66.

[Dante] makes a good comparison with the sea which, as I have demonstrated, represents the appetite and sensuality most excellently in the *Aeneid* of Virgil... These *contrary winds* [in the poem] make the sea roar, that is, they drive the sensuality of the lover to lamentation and misfortune.⁴⁶⁴

It follows that, in the *Disputationes*, the navigator Palinurus who first guides the fleet of Aeneas but loses his way amidst the storms and winds, represents the *libido*, and his death shortly before reaching Italy thus represents reason abandoning any appetitive desire for sensual things.⁴⁶⁵ By characterising the journey of Aeneas in the *Disputationes* as an ongoing struggle against the violent and sudden attacks of appetite, Landino is able to implement the theory of emotions he had derived from the *Tusculanae Disputationes* as a form of practical guidance. The reader is induced to understand that the success or failure of their incipient moral progress will depend upon the extent to which they can maintain psychological discipline and equanimity, a Stoic approach to mental conditioning which was a commonplace of humanist education in the Quattrocento through figures such as, for instance, Pontano and Piccolomini.⁴⁶⁶ When Landino instructs the reader to beware the body's baleful influence on human behaviour through the *perturbationes* of the material world, he incorporates an idea shared with these thinkers that the fallacious judgment of the senses can cause one to become adversely affected by circumstances that are subject to chance and beyond one's control. Later, when allegorising the Carthaginian shore, Landino makes explicit this relationship between appetitive desire and the vicissitudes of *fortuna*:

For you will not find in anyone a prudence with which one can entirely predict the outcomes of those matters to which *fortuna* devotes herself, in her fickleness. This is because we are exposed to such varied events that we very often seek out things which will be harmful to us with great determination, and flee with all our efforts those things which would turn out to be beneficial and useful, as if they were harmful.⁴⁶⁷

For Landino, not only does *fortuna* represent the instability and transience of the material world in a general sense but, more specifically, he understands her as acting in a distributive capacity, as an agent whose function is to bestow or take away the external goods which enmesh us in corporeality.⁴⁶⁸ The choices we make between the 'harmful' goods of the body and of fortune and the 'beneficial and useful' goods of the soul are confused by the vagaries of external events driven

⁴⁶⁴ 'Et ben fa comperatione del mare, el quale chome dimostramo nell'*Eneide* di Virgilio ottimamente si pone per l'appetito et per la sensualità... Questi *contrarii venti* fanno mughiare el mare, cioè commuovono a mughi et a guai la sensualità dell'amante', *Comento, Inf.* V.25-45.44-52.

⁴⁶⁵ *DC*, pp. 144.13-145.23, 198.17-25 and 202.11-203.2.

⁴⁶⁶ See e.g. Pontano, *On the Prince*, pp. 72-73; Piccolomini, *De liberorum educatione*, p. 158.

⁴⁶⁷ 'Nullo enim in homine prudentiam invenias, qua earum rerum, quas sua temeritate fortuna versat, eventus penitus praevideat, cum tot tamque diversis casibus exponamur, ut persaepe et, quae nocitura sint, summis votis expetamus et ea, quae si evenirent saluti usiue essent, veluti noxia omni industria fugiamus', *DC*, p. 173.25-30.

⁴⁶⁸ The concept of *fortuna* (or τύχη in the Greek) as a distributor of external goods is Aristotelian: see e.g. Aristot. *Pol.* VII.i.5 and Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* I.x.6-14.

by chance. By making this connection, Landino is alluding to the humanist commonplace, so beloved of Machiavelli and so central to the analyses of Quentin Skinner in particular, which sets (masculine) *virtus* or *virtù* in opposition to (feminine) *fortuna* and maintains that, through virtue, one can resist, endure and ultimately overcome the external events which disturb the soul.⁴⁶⁹ He is clear that making correct moral and political decisions in such circumstances is a function of an unperturbed mind because ‘the soul fortified against the blows of *fortuna* with virtue has been separated far away from *perturbationes*’.⁴⁷⁰ Hence in the ensuing allegorisation of the soul’s development in the *Disputationes*, the struggle against the appetite through which we overcome avarice and ambition and achieve a final victory of the superior over the inferior reason is not only a psychological battle against the desires which arise from the body but also a means of gaining some form of resilience against, if not mastery over, the influence of *fortuna* in human life. One might note that, in a culture in which humanists strove to portray political legitimacy as being contingent upon the virtue of its wielders, emphasising that virtue is valuable for its consolatory qualities in the face of capricious *fortuna* helps to resolve the thorny question of how circumstances could turn against rulers who had received proper moral instruction.

The second significant theme of Landino’s virtue theory which he elucidates at this point is that of how virtue and vice are habituated in a moral agent, the discussion of which is prompted by Virgil’s depiction of Aeneas weeping as he leaves the shores of Troy.⁴⁷¹ Following Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and Ficino in the *Platonic Theology*, Landino describes four distinct categories of behaviour in regard to the virtue of temperance: intemperance, in which vices are implanted as a dispositional habit, or *habitus*, in the mind; incontinence, in which one fights vices but succumbs to them; continence, in which one acts with virtue but with distraction and difficulty; and temperance itself, in which the virtues are fixed as a *habitus*.⁴⁷² Only in the first and last of these categories are vicious and virtuous behaviour respectively established as a *habitus* – although, as the example of Dido later shows, this habit can be broken – whereas in continence and incontinence, one’s moral condition is inchoate and mutable. What is more, Landino later makes it clear that true temperance is only achieved at the level of the virtues of the soul already purged, where one reaches the

⁴⁶⁹ See for instance Vincenzo Cioffari, ‘The Function of Fortune in Dante, Boccaccio and Machiavelli’, *Italica*, 24.1 (March 1947), 1-13; Klaus Heitmann, *Fortuna und Virtus. Eine Studie zu Petrarca’s Lebensweisheit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1958); Garin, *Italian Humanism*; Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, I; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*; and Antonino Poppi, ‘Fate, fortune, providence and human freedom’, in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. by Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner and Eckhard Kessler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 641-67. On Landino’s view of *fortuna*, see also *Comento*, Inf. VII.67-96.

⁴⁷⁰ ‘Nam animus virtutibus adversus fortunae impetus munitus procul a perturbationibus seiunctus est’, *DC*, p. 173.11-12.

⁴⁷¹ *DC*, pp. 134.24-136.31.

⁴⁷² Landino had outlined this idea earlier in *De anima*, III, p. 55. The fourfold division between temperance, continence, incontinence and intemperance comes from Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* VII.i-x and was elaborated upon in other sources with which Landino was familiar such as Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II. QQ.155-56 and Ficino, *Platonic Theology* XVIII.x.6-16. The idea of *habitus* originates in Aristot. *Met.* V and *Nic. Eth.* II.v and was known to Landino from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II. QQ.49-54.

tranquillity, or *apatheia*, of having forgotten the influence of vice.⁴⁷³ That this system allows both advancement from vice to virtue and retrogression from virtue to vice serves two purposes for Landino. The first is theoretical, in that it fulfils the structural demands of Landino's virtue theory by supplying a mechanism for transition upwards or downwards from one grade of virtue to another. The other is admonitory, in that it serves as practical advice to the reader to remind them that one who is only morally continent and does not cultivate virtue as a habit of the mind runs the risk of relapsing into former vices. Landino is telling his audience that the process of purgation is contingent on maintaining the virtues which are already present, and that one cannot afford to be complacent even when one's behaviour adheres to proper ethical standards. By extension, the moral solidity of the state which rests on the virtue of its political class demands constant vigilance on the part of its citizens, lest unhabituated virtue backslide into the vices so harmful to the Roman republic.

Landino's theories of appetitive habituation account for two further appearances of sensual pleasure and its concomitant risk of falling into *luxuria*. The first occurs after Aeneas meets Helenus, or reason, whereupon he encounters *luxuria* once more, although this time alongside *avaritia*, with the two vices being represented by the monsters Scylla and Charybdis.⁴⁷⁴ Here, where the soul is on its course to the *summum bonum* and would seem to have suppressed its desires, the oceanic appetite is disturbed by perils of circumstance, with Scylla representing the *luxuria* that results from good fortune and Charybdis the *avaritia* that arises from poverty. The apparent inconsistency of the reoccurrence of the vices is so glaring that Landino has Lorenzo act as a reader surrogate and ask why they should appear once more when the soul would already seem to have conquered them. True to Landino's earlier warnings, Alberti's answer is that at this stage of moral development the soul is merely continent rather than temperate. To achieve cognition of the divine requires more than continence, and the ubiquity of the vices in both good circumstances and bad makes it necessary to struggle against them for a long time in a 'sea inhabited by monsters' before one develops temperance at the level of the virtues of the purged soul.⁴⁷⁵ Furthermore, when understood as cautionary advice to statesmen this idea gains another dimension beyond the merely personal. If the moral failings which corrupt the state can arise at the whim of *fortuna* in times of prosperity as well as those of adversity – and this is precisely the view of Sallust in the *Bellum Catilinae* – then all the more humility, moderation and perseverance must be maintained by the citizenry and exhibited by civic leaders.

The final appearance of *luxuria* in the journey of Aeneas is in the figure of Dido. While, for Landino, the figure of Dido herself invites a multiplicity of subtle readings, prominent among which are her embodying the desire to rule and the state itself, the most dramatic interpretation that he devotes to her in his allegorisation is his analysis of what he understands as Dido's gradual

⁴⁷³ *DC*, p. 152.16-23.

⁴⁷⁴ *DC*, pp. 150.27-153.10.

⁴⁷⁵ 'Maria monstris obsessa', *DC*, p. 151.2. On the fickleness of *fortuna*, see e.g. *Sal.Cat.*10.

abandonment of moral principles and deteriorating mental state due to her passion for Aeneas. Stating that Virgil followed Sallust in being aware that the foundations of civil society depend on virtue and that, if states were to retain the virtues by which they came into being, they would not be afflicted by as many adverse circumstances, Landino goes on to interpret Dido's decline as symbolising how the moral standards of a republic degrade only gradually, such that 'she, who had been a most virtuous woman and had been very vigilant in administering the republic [*re publica administranda*], falls into idleness and licentiousness, conquered by a dishonourable love'.⁴⁷⁶ At first, Dido is the model of temperance. She falls in love with Aeneas for the most noble of reasons: his virtue and his possession of goods which benefit social life such as nobility, appearance and articulacy. Yet she lapses from temperance into continence because she can no longer ignore the concerns of the corporeal world but still seeks to resist them. Her virtue is no longer fixed as a *habitus*. Distressed with the situation, she seeks the unreliable advice of her sister Anna who, basing her reasoning on the inconstant arguments of expectation and fear rather than philosophical reasoning, encourages her to entreat the gods that Aeneas will stay with her. Dido is therefore overcome by 'unchaste' love, slipping into incontinence, and when this love becomes a habit and she behaves as though she and Aeneas were married she has fallen all the way into intemperance. Landino views this perceived decline as illustrating his theory of habituation:

All this shows how easily human minds descend from effort to appetitive desire in times of good fortune. Since the virtues of civic life are inchoate rather than absolute, the civic life is dealt with in such a way that Virgil wants to express what I said earlier: that the foundations of republics which grow from small things have happier beginnings than endings.⁴⁷⁷

As Dido's virtue ebbs away, so too do her piety, liberality, wisdom, sense of justice and devotion to public works. She offers 'a profound example to us of how much harm comes to those who live in an empire when *luxuria* and sloth insinuate themselves into the minds of its rulers in place of diligence and effort' and, needless to say, the same reasoning applies equally to the other vices.⁴⁷⁸ These passages lay bare the Sallustian core of Landino's virtue politics in the *Disputationes*. Although the institutions of Florence had been dominated by the Medici to the extent that it remained a republic in name only, the premise on which Landino's political thought in the *Disputationes* relied – namely, that someone could act as steward and advisor to a republic and wield political influence

⁴⁷⁶ 'Ut quae pudicissima fuerat mulier et in re publica administranda vigilantissima turpi amore victa in lasciviam otiumque labatur', *DC*, p. 182.24-26.

⁴⁷⁷ 'Quibus omnibus ostenditur, quam facile rebus secundis humanae mentes a labore in libidinem declinent. Quoniam autem virtutes in vita sociali potius inchoatae quam absolutae sunt, hic autem ita de vita civili agitur, ut velit exprimere, quod paulo ante dicebam, fundamenta rerum publicarum, quae ex parvis crescunt, habere meliora initia quam exitus', *DC*, pp. 182.26-183.2. The dangers of the instability and volatility of sensual love are also mentioned in *Comento, Inf.* I.31-36.71-76 and *Comento, Inf.* V.52-69.

⁴⁷⁸ 'Ut Didonem gravissimum nobis exemplar proponat, quantum detrimentum iis, qui sub imperio sunt, proveniat, cum principum mentes pro industria ac labore luxuria atque ignavia irrepant?', *DC*, p. 184.2-5.

without occupying an official role – could nonetheless allow him to look to Sallust’s Rome as an model. Both the allegorical example of Dido and the lessons taken from Rome’s decline show that one who wishes to exercise power in a republic, whether that power is officially sanctioned or otherwise, must be aware that the permanence of the status quo is never assured and it is the moral character of the governing class, as well as the collective virtue of the citizenry, which acts as a bulwark against civic degeneration. Ensuring the health of the state – and we should note that while Landino uses the term *imperium* here because he is referring to Carthage in particular and historical states more generally, he returns to his favoured term *res publica* when hearkening back to Sallust – requires that the minds of its rulers are guarded against uncontrolled appetition. For a young statesman such as Lorenzo who was still relatively inexperienced and governed Florence in a position that, notwithstanding failures of foreign policy such as the Volterra massacre, was reasonably secure thanks to his reforms to the Cento, this would have been a valuable reminder that both external enemies and the city’s anti-Medicean faction were poised to take advantage of any lapse of focus.

Landino is able, moreover, to pluck some further observations from Dido’s decline that are of use in the political sphere. Dido’s conversation with Anna presents Landino with an example of how bad counsel can harm one’s moral decision-making. It is important which counsellors one uses in public life, he has Alberti point out, and one can be driven to bad deeds whether ‘moved by a poor example or encouraged by the incorrect arguments of those whom they hold dear’.⁴⁷⁹ One cannot say whether when writing this passage Landino had any contemporary figures in mind such as, for instance, Tommaso Soderini, whose attempts to influence Lorenzo in the early years of his rule threatened the inexperienced ruler’s relationship with Milan, but it was certainly intended to present the general point that overreliance on the advice of intimates runs the risk of one’s decisions being compromised by flattery, sentimentality or a simple lack of political experience on the part of the advisor.⁴⁸⁰ Landino also indicates that the fact that Dido is first swayed from temperance by the lineage, bearing and speech of Aeneas acts as a warning to readers that one should not overestimate the goods of social intercourse, which were already mentioned in the second book as being useful, but not essential, to the virtuous life. While valued popularly, these characteristics should not be deemed so important ‘in the scale of the wise’, he claims, a sentiment which points to the egalitarian strand in humanistic thought in which learning and mental acuity were favoured over familial prestige (which benefitted intellectuals from humble backgrounds such as Landino himself) and, what is more, absolves the Medici from the need to justify their relatively modest provenance when compared to other members of the Florentine *ottimati*. Ultimately, though, Dido’s fate is a consequence of her habituated sensual desire, the vice of *luxuria*. As Landino puts it, the passages devoted to her imitate the sentiments of Pausanias on the earthly

⁴⁷⁹ ‘Multi enim aut malo exemplo moti aut eorum, quos caros habent, non rectis suasionibus impulsus ad prava moventur’, *DC*, p. 183.15-17.

⁴⁸⁰ On Soderini and others, see Najemy, *A History of Florence*, pp. 344-48.

Venus in his speech in the *Symposium* and their primary purpose is that 'they execrate libidinous and corrupt love and, by the most grave example of this woman, they warn us to flee from so foul and pernicious a disease'.⁴⁸¹ Until one achieves true temperance, the risk of sensual pleasure continues to lurk for the statesman.

⁴⁸¹ 'Ut libidinosum et corruptum amorem detestentur atque tantae feminae gravissimo exemplo nos admoneant, ut tam turpem, tam perniciosam pestem fugiamus', *DC*, pp. 197.28-198.2, referring to Plat. *Sym.* 180c-185c.

3.3 *Avaritia*

At this point in their moral development, the putative reader has, like Aeneas, become ‘exiled’ from the body and its attractions but does not yet know what the *summum bonum* is. They have established some degree of continence but have not yet adopted the *habitus* of virtue, so, instead of lusting after sensual pleasure, they fall into another form of desire which is the impulse to possess material goods. This desire becomes avarice or *avaritia* when habituated in the mind, and Landino distinguishes between two different kinds of this vice. One is acquisitiveness (that is, when ‘we take something when we should not’), which is represented by Thrace, the first destination that Aeneas reaches after leaving Troy, while the other is miserliness (when one ‘does not give to the person to whom he should give’), represented by the Strophades.⁴⁸² In making such a distinction, Landino departs from many medieval discussions of avarice which tended to view the vice in Aristotelian terms as being a deficiency of an acquisitive and distributive attribute whose mean is the virtue of liberality, and the excess of which is prodigality. This model appears in William of Perault’s *Summa vitiorum* and, of course, the *Summa Theologiae*, but its most dramatic presentation appears in Dante’s depiction in the *Inferno* of the sinners in the fourth circle of hell, who are organised into groups of the prodigal and the avaricious and forced to joust with giant weights.⁴⁸³ In his analysis of the seventh canto in the *Comento*, Landino follows the Aristotelian line of thought by describing how in this circle the demon Plutus punishes sins relating to riches, with ‘one kind of sinner holding onto them too much; the other dissipating them too much’.⁴⁸⁴ Since these vices are two extremes about the mean of liberality: ‘even though avarice and prodigality are contraries, they nonetheless deserve to be punished in one and the same place because they have the same subject.’⁴⁸⁵ Yet he is also careful to specify that avarice itself consists in the two varieties he mentioned in the *Disputationes*: ‘there are two kinds of avarice, as both one who does not give where and as much as he should, and one who takes whence he should not, is an avaricious person’.⁴⁸⁶ This subdivision of avarice into miserliness and acquisitiveness derives from a parallel medieval tradition which draws a distinction between the vices of *avaritia* and *cupiditas*, with the former consisting in not putting one’s wealth to good use, and the latter in desiring wealth itself. While the origin of this distinction is Isidore of Seville’s *De differentiis verborum*, once again it seems likely that the *Summa Theologiae* was Landino’s

⁴⁸² ‘Duplex avaritiae genus sit – est enim avarus et is qui inde rapit unde minime convenit et is qui, cui dandum est, ei minime dat’, *DC*, p. 137.7-9.

⁴⁸³ Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* IV.i; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II QQ 117-19; William Perault, *Summa aurea de virtutibus et vitiis* (Venice: Paganinus de Paganinis, 1497); Dante, *Inferno*, VII.22-99.

⁴⁸⁴ ‘L’uno tenendole [ricchezze] troppo. L’altro spargendole troppo’, *Comento, Inf.* VII.1-3.44-5.

⁴⁸⁵ ‘Adunque benché l’avaritia et la prodigalità sieno contrarii, nientedimeno perché hanno un medesimo subgetto, meritano esser puniti in un medesimo luogho’, *Comento, Inf.* VII.1-3.59-61.

⁴⁸⁶ ‘Sono due spetie d’avarizia. Imperoché è avaro et chi non dà dove et quanto debba, et toglie donde non debbe’, *Comento, Inf.* VII.16-36.23-24.

source, for therein Thomas Aquinas defines the excessive love of wealth which is *avaritia* as consisting of two aspects: an excess of retaining and an excess of receiving.⁴⁸⁷

Thrace, whose ‘avaricious shore’ Aeneas is later told to flee, is the first place that he visits after leaving Troy, Landino claims, because the acquisitive impulse first develops in the incontinent mind after it has abandoned carnal pleasure.⁴⁸⁸ For Landino, Thrace represents the acquisitive type of avarice both because its god is Mars, under whose name war is waged for plunder, and because its king, Polymnestor, murdered Priam’s son Polydorus after the fall of Troy in order that he might keep the treasure entrusted to him. While the association is far from universal in the allegorical tradition – there is no mention of Thrace in the *Expositio Virgiliana* of Fulgentius, nor in Salutati’s *De laboribus Herculis*, although Diomedes, the earlier king of Thrace, is associated with *superbia* and *avaritia* in the latter work – there is a precedent in the commentary on the first six books of the *Aeneid* by Bernardus Silvestris, in which he argues that Thrace stands for avarice because it ‘had the most avaricious inhabitants and the most avaricious king’ and, interestingly, separates the avaricious into the same two categories as Landino, writing that ‘an avaricious person is devoted to the accumulation of much money either by increasing it... or by guarding it with great reverence’.⁴⁸⁹ Landino knew this commentary intimately and its influence on him here is unquestionable. While he does not follow the commentary of Bernardus in interpreting the *Aeneid* as an allegory of the ages of human life and thus situating *avaritia* among the vices of adulthood unequivocally, the consequence of associating Troy with the sensual desires of youth in the *Disputationes* is that abandoning them for avaricious impulses suggests a move from adolescence to maturity, even if such moral progress could theoretically take place at any point of life. This implication is probably unintentional on Landino’s part, because the fact that his plan was to proceed through the vices in the necessary order of their purgation meant that *avaritia* had to be psychologically prior to *ambitio* regardless, but it is worth noticing because it both diverges from the humanist educational tradition represented by figures such as Pier Paolo Vergerio and Matteo Palmieri – who as we have seen, viewed *avaritia* as a vice of the elderly – and would seem to impart the idea to Lorenzo and other young statesmen that acquisitive desire is the foremost threat which risks seizing them on first attaining the age of political majority.⁴⁹⁰

Thanks to Aristotle’s discussion in the *Ethics* of the concept of *pleonexia*, which he sees as being the ultimate cause of all injustice within the *polis*, the seriousness of greed as a danger to political

⁴⁸⁷ Isidore of Seville, *De differentiis verborum*, II.4 (PL 83:9); Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* II-II Q.118 A.8. See also Richard Newhauser, *The Early History of Greed: The Sin of Avarice in Early Medieval Thought and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 108-09 and n. 41, in which he observes that a similar distinction is made in Horace’s *Epistulae* Ii.33.

⁴⁸⁸ ‘Fuge litus avarum’, *DC*, p. 137.6 quoting Verg. *Aen.* III.44.

⁴⁸⁹ ‘[Tracia] que avarissimos habitatores et avarissimum regem habuit’, Bernardus Silvestris, *Commentary*, p. 17.21; ‘Itaque servit avarus aggregationi multe pecunie vel eam augendo... vel eam reverentia magna custodiendo’, *Commentary*, p. 18.13-15. On Diomedes, see Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis* III.xxi.9.

⁴⁹⁰ See above pp. 142-44.

and civil life had authoritative provenance for humanists.⁴⁹¹ Landino's understanding of *avaritia* throughout his career was similar to Aristotle's in that, from his earliest writings, he saw it as a vice which was distinctive both for its insatiability and for its tendency to motivate other crimes. The first of these characteristics is illustrated in his early poem *Contra avaros* in the *Xandra*, in which he writes 'as the pile of money grows, so much does the thirst for having money grow' but its most vivid depiction in his work is that of the allegory of the she-wolf in the *Comento* on the first canto of the *Commedia*.⁴⁹² Adducing classical authorities such as Horace, Virgil and Seneca and the mythological *exempla* of Midas and Tantalus, Landino describes how the emaciated and ravenous she-wolf represents an *avaritia* which, like dropsy, can never be sated and, indeed, grows greater and greater the more one accumulates riches.⁴⁹³ No other animal is more greedy and voracious, claims Landino, and just as the wolf uses ambushes and tricks to catch its prey in darkness, so does *avaritia* harm others with lies and deceit.⁴⁹⁴ The second characteristic of *avaritia* that Landino regularly highlights – that is, it being a wellspring for all other kinds of vice – is also visible in his allegorisation of the she-wolf in the *Comento* in that it he describes it as 'certainly the worst vice of all' from which 'many other vices proceed'.⁴⁹⁵ Later in the *De vera nobilitate* he would repeat this train of thought by discussing how 'those corrupted by avarice – imbued with a noxious poison, as it were – descend into every kind of dishonourable baseness and do not refrain from any kind of vice'.⁴⁹⁶ Yet the most florid and emphatic assertion of the universal influence and danger of *avaritia* appears in the analysis in the *Comento* of the seventh canto of the *Inferno*:

Not without reason does he call him [Plutus] the 'great enemy' at the end of the preceding canto, because without fail he infests and troubles the human race a great deal. Avarice provokes and incites discord among those joined by blood, by friendship and by country. Avarice produces injustice, by which riots, sedition and civil war are stirred up. Avarice is the reason for external wars. Avarice fills the sea with pirates and corsairs, and the streets with robbers. In the city, avarice produces thefts, murders, poisons, perjuries, false testimonies and corrupt judgments. Finally, it makes the father of the family a cruel enemy to his wife, to his children and to himself, because through fear of consuming what he has amassed he cheats himself and all his family of necessary things. It puts laws and magistrates up for sale. It puts modesty and chastity up for sale.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹¹ Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* V.i and IX.vi.3-4.

⁴⁹² 'Quantum crescit acervus | nummorum, tantum crescit avara sitis', *Xandra* II.3.17-18.

⁴⁹³ *Comento, Inf.* I.49-54.10-32 and see also *Comento, Inf.* VII.7-15.14-25

⁴⁹⁴ *Comento, Inf.* I.49-54.5-10.

⁴⁹⁵ 'Vizio certamente pessimo di tutti', *Comento, Inf.* I.49-54.22-23; 'dall'avaritia procedono molti altri vizi', *Comento, Inf.* I.91-99.21-22.

⁴⁹⁶ 'Verum qui illa [avaritia] infecti, tanquam veneno malo imbuti, in omnes turpissimas sordes descendunt, hi a nullo scelerum genere temperant', *DVN*, p. 63.

⁴⁹⁷ 'Né senza cagione lo chiamò nella fine del precedente canto "gran nimico", perché senza fallo troppo infesta e molesta la generatione humana. L'avaritia suscita et commuove discordia tra congiunti di sangue, d'amicitia, et di patria. L'avaritia produce ingiustitia, dalla quale s'excitano tumulti, seditioni, et guerre civili. L'avaritia è cagione delle guerre externe. L'avaritia riempie el mare di pyrate et di corsali, et le strade di ladroni. L'avaritia produce nella città furti, homicidii, veleni, periurii, falsi testimonii, iudicii corrotti. Finalmente fa el padre della famiglia crudele inimico alla moglie, et a' figliuoli, et a sé medesimo, perché per paura di consumare el ragunato defrauda delle chose necessarie sé et tutta la famiglia. Vende le leggi e'

Landino's first concern in his discussion about Thrace in the *Disputationes*, however, is how keen political leaders are to wage unnecessary wars for the sake of the acquisition of wealth. The acquisitive impulse, he writes, drives people to military conflict because 'inflamed with this desire [of surpassing others in wealth], they do not hesitate to undertake not only crimes, but also wars filled with suffering and danger'.⁴⁹⁸ This sentiment echoes that of Poggio Bracciolini in the *De avaritia*, in which the character Andreas declares that the avaricious 'will urge war, even one that is unjust and with danger to the country, if they believe that they will be able to plunder anything for themselves from it'.⁴⁹⁹ Likewise, Christian writers such as John Chrysostom viewed avarice as the main motivation for military conflict, and Virgil himself has Evander say in the eighth book of the *Aeneid* that the Golden Age was followed by the 'frenzy of war and the love of possession'.⁵⁰⁰ It is difficult to look beyond the Volterra massacre as a justification for Landino's thoughts here. Recall that this crisis was precipitated early in Lorenzo's rule on account of his attempts to maintain a grasp on the Volterran mining concession in alum, whose price was artificially inflated by a Medicean monopoly. Despite Landino's later claims in his encomiastic proem to the Virgil commentary of 1488 that the Volterran reaction came 'suddenly and unexpected by anyone' and that Lorenzo ought to be exonerated of any wrongdoing, it cannot have escaped his attention that at each stage in the course of events Lorenzo's inexperience caused him to aggravate matters by trying to assert his dominance rather than attempt a compromise as his advisors had suggested.⁵⁰¹ From the outset, Lorenzo's efforts had been devoted to profiteering from the alum mine rather than allowing the resource to be used for public benefit, and the violent repercussions of such acquisitive *avaritia* provided a valuable moral lesson. Since direct criticism of Lorenzo was out of the question, the allegorisation of Thrace gave Landino the opportunity to comment upon precisely how hot-headed materialism in a politician could have dire consequences. Note too how, shortly before Landino began writing the *Disputationes*, the dispute between Lorenzo and Sixtus IV over the former's attempted acquisition of Imola – a purchase that Sixtus was able to stymie, take on for himself and then turn into a diplomatic zugzwang for Lorenzo by demanding a loan for the transaction – was the spark that ignited the long-running enmity that would culminate in the

magistrati. Vende la pudicitia et la castità', *Comento, Inf.* VII.1-3.27-40, and see also *Comento, Inf.* VII.16-36.11-14.

⁴⁹⁸ 'Qua cupiditate inflammati non dubitant non modo nefaria, verum etiam laboribus periculisque refertissima bella suscipere', *DC*, p. 137.18-20.

⁴⁹⁹ '[Avari] hortabuntur ad bellum, etiam iniquum et cum periculo patriae, si quid ex eo se expilatos confidant', Poggio Bracciolini, *De avaritia*, p. 87, and see also Arthur Field, *The Intellectual Struggle for Florence: Humanists and the Beginnings of the Medici Regime, 1420-1440* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 314, in which the translation from Poggio Bracciolini, 'On Avarice', in Benjamin Kohl and Ronald Witt, ed. and trans., *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), p. 278 is quoted in a discussion of this theme.

⁵⁰⁰ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 63 in Matt.*, 4; Verg. *Aen.* 8.327.

⁵⁰¹ See above pp. 37-38 and *Scritti*, I, p. 219.

murder of Giuliano de' Medici in the Pazzi conspiracy.⁵⁰² For the contemporary tensions surrounding Lorenzo to be instigated by what Medici supporters saw as the deliberately underhand and vindictive behaviour of Sixtus, conduct which could be entirely attributed to acquisitive impulses by Medicean humanists such as Landino, gave a particular piquancy to the warnings that conflicts could arise from the sort of *avaritia* represented by Thrace.

At the heart of Landino's analysis of Thrace are, once again, the condemnatory opinions of Sallust, whom he identifies in the passage as understanding that *avaritia* is a vice which emasculates one's moral character, thus causing one to stoop to the very basest deeds.⁵⁰³ Such moral degeneration has implications for the realm of political praxis. Avarice, thunders Landino, 'teaches the heart treachery and perjury by means of deceit; aiming at the ruin of others, it furnishes the tongue with lies, the hand with poisons and the sword'.⁵⁰⁴ Setting aside Landino's central concern that this habituated form of appetite will prevent the ascent to wisdom which can in turn be imparted to the state, these are not the qualities of a ruler who could attract any kind of political legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry. If the perceived moral character of politicians in the Quattrocento was essential in enabling the legitimate use of power, then for a statesman to behave in a manner that was deceitful, mendacious and aggressive would attract severe rhetorical censure and pose a threat to social cohesion, because these characteristics are not only morally deficient, but threaten to corrode the intrapersonal relationships on which rest the principles of republican comity. Yet of just as much practical use is Landino's unstated but implicit premise that since *avaritia* can arouse these kind of qualities (that is, those that kindle conspiracy and insurrection), a canny ruler can both preemptively mitigate risks against himself by spotting signs of acquisitiveness in his allies, rivals and subordinates and managing them accordingly, and can understand the potential consequences to him if it is allowed to fester unrestrained. Aware that financial situations are volatile and that such dangerous rivalries and discontent can emerge quickly, Landino emphasises the fact that *avaritia* is a vice devoted to money, than which 'there is nothing more unstable, nothing which is more subject to the vagaries of *fortuna*'.⁵⁰⁵

Since the position the Medici occupied in Florence was founded on their enormous wealth rather than any noble lineage, they were, as a family, all too conscious of the risks of financial inconstancy. Landino's advice that fluctuations in wealth at the level of persons, factions and states could inspire *avaritia*, which in turn could provoke treachery at any time, therefore had a powerful historical precedent in the exile of Cosimo de' Medici. The accusations against Cosimo that occasioned his exile had primarily been financial in nature, centring on bribery and, most damagingly, the charge that he had prolonged the war against Lucca in order that he might profit

⁵⁰² See above p. 41.

⁵⁰³ 'Quapropter recte Sallustius avaritiam ita malis venenis imbutam dixit, ut animum corpusque virile effeminet', *DC*, p. 137.24-26. The same association can be found in *Comento, Inf.* I.49-54.24-26.

⁵⁰⁴ 'Ipsa enim perfidiam periuriumque edocet cor fraudibus, linguam mendaciis, manum venenis ferroque in aliorum perniciem instruit', *DC*, pp. 137.28-138.1.

⁵⁰⁵ 'Nihil enim illa [pecunia] mobilius, nihil quod magis fortunae temeritati subiciatur', *DC*, p. 137.23-24.

from his loans to Florence.⁵⁰⁶ His situation therefore offered three lessons about the dangers of *avaritia*: first, that great wealth can lead to accusations of *avaritia* and its attendant crimes of deceit and treachery, compromising one's public standing even if one were innocent; second, how actual deceit and treachery can arise in a republic when money is involved (especially if Cosimo's enemies are seen as being consumed with an acquisitive *avaritia* which overvalues external goods and produces envy of his status); third, how Cosimo's swift transition from public benefactor to exile shows that their inherent inconstancy means that financial affairs can swiftly turn for the worse. In a rather different fashion, Landino also sought to forestall any such criticism of the Medici in his analysis of acquisitive *avaritia* in the *De vera nobilitate*. He argues, in a passage that is an unequivocal reference to the origins of Medici wealth, that the exercise of free trade without deceit benefits all human beings and affords merit to those involved in it.⁵⁰⁷ Drawing a clear distinction with these activities, and hence insulating the Medici from any criticism, he declares that in the realm of commerce it is in fact profiteering and corruption inspired by *avaritia* that is wicked and, indeed, harms the very foundations of the state.

The second type of *avaritia* that Landino discusses in the *Disputationes* is miserliness or meanness, which is represented by the isles of the Strophades and their inhabitants, the Harpies. Almost all medieval and Renaissance mythographers – among them Fulgentius, Bernardus Silvestris, Boccaccio and Salutati – associated the Harpies with *avaritia* (albeit usually in a more generic sense than Landino) and the popularity of the attribution filtered into the works of authors less usually associated with allegory, with the Harpies making an appearance as symbols of greed in, for instance, Poggio Bracciolini's *De avaritia*.⁵⁰⁸ The specificity of Landino's allegorisation of the Harpies and the distinction between two types of *avaritia* exposes his view that, as far as his virtue politics was concerned, these two manifestations of greed posed separate dangers to the state, and hence a different ethical approach was required to tackle each of them. Where the risks to the statesman arising from the acquisitive avarice represented by Thrace were those of conflict, treachery, and moral degradation, Landino's censure of this kind of *avaritia* highlights a different threat: the harm to social cohesion when resources are hoarded without being used for the public good. For Landino, the political consequence of such miserliness is that the oikeiote principle of reciprocal support between individuals within a commonwealth is eroded. The kind of *avaritia* represented by the Strophades, he argues, corrupts us so that 'out of those things which we have already acquired, we do not offer help to those whom justice, nature and the bond of human society require us to help'.⁵⁰⁹ Hence time and again his criticism of miserly *avaritia* in his allegory is

⁵⁰⁶ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, pp. 271-74.

⁵⁰⁷ *DVN*, pp. 62-64.

⁵⁰⁸ Poggio Bracciolini, 'On Avarice', pp. 253-55. As we have already seen (see above, p. 151), Aeneas later meets Charybdis, who, for Landino, represents recidivism towards *avaritia* in either of its forms after attaining some degree of moral continence.

⁵⁰⁹ 'Ex iis, quae iam peperimus, minime illis subvenimus, quibus ius naturae ac humanae societatis vinculum subveniendum postulat', *DC*, p. 145.27-29.

phrased in terms which stress the wickedness of wealth's retention. Aeneas is prevented from eating the feast by the Harpies because 'those who are the wealthiest prefer to die of hunger than to diminish their treasure by the very tiniest particle', and the Harpies have hooked claws just as misers, dragged by the talons of *avaritia* away from the divine into the distractions of the material world, refuse to let go of their wealth.⁵¹⁰ Like the she-wolf of the *Comento*, the Harpies are emaciated by hunger but this time, rather than attributing this imagery to acquisitive rapacity, Landino instead claims that Virgil created it thus because the more wealth the miser amasses, the greater the harm he causes by not distributing it properly.⁵¹¹

Ideas of mutual advantage, of how the exchange of duty and wealth between individuals cements the state, were common among Quattrocento intellectuals thanks to the cultural centrality of that foundational text of humanism, Cicero's *De officiis*.⁵¹² Its oikeotic underpinnings, exemplified in the *non nobis solum* formulation we have already encountered, have the natural consequence that humans within a commonwealth owe duties to one another and that we should 'employ common benefits for the public good by the exchange of duties, by giving and receiving, and bind human society together between people with our skills, effort, and faculties'.⁵¹³ Hence arises Cicero's particular definition of justice, which is relational and distributive in nature and is seen as being devoted 'to the conservation of human society, to rendering to every individual what is theirs, and to the keeping of contracts'.⁵¹⁴ Landino appropriates this definition at the level of the civic virtues, declaring that the elements of civic justice are 'that each is rendered their own, and that all live with equal rights'.⁵¹⁵ Miserliness, as both Cicero and Landino see it, transgresses these collaborative conventions by suppressing the reciprocal exchange of duties and, in doing so, assaults the very principle of distributive justice which maintains the welfare of the republic. Hence, in his allegory of the Strophades, Landino describes the miser in Ciceronian terms: 'more sparing with what has been acquired than is fitting on account of his great meanness, and performing no duty of generosity, he is of benefit neither to himself nor to his own'.⁵¹⁶ This moral position is continuous with the Aristotelian concept of external goods on which Landino bases his theory of vice – that is, that *avaritia* consists in an appetitive impulse which is misdirected towards external material goods rather than its *summum bonum*. It is a short step from here to the issues that Cicero tackles in the *De officiis*. When translated into practical moral terms, Landino's psychological objection to miserly *avaritia* is that, as far as the miser is concerned, wealth is sought as an end in itself rather than for its

⁵¹⁰ 'Qui etiam ditissimi sint, fame perire quam vel minimam acervi particulam inminuere malint', *DC*, p. 147.29-31. The allegory of the Harpies' talons appears in *DC*, p. 146.20-30.

⁵¹¹ *DC*, p. 146.15-20.

⁵¹² Cic. *Off.* I.vii.22 and *passim*, although the concept ultimately derives from the discussion of justice and reciprocity in Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* V.

⁵¹³ Cic. *Off.* I.vii.22.

⁵¹⁴ Cic. *Off.* I.v.15.

⁵¹⁵ 'Ut unicuique suum reddatur, ut aequo iure omnes vivant', *DC*, p. 154.14-15.

⁵¹⁶ 'Per summas sordes plus quam par est parto parcens nullo liberalitatis munere fungens neque sibi neque suis beneficus est', *DC*, p. 146.4-6.

instrumental utility with regard to the common good, and it is this that instigates all manner of immoral behaviour. Cicero advanced precisely the same position, arguing that ‘for the most part, people undertake wrongdoing in order to acquire what they desire. In this vice, avarice is widely evident’.⁵¹⁷

The lesson that Landino wants the reader to learn is that, at the level of the civic virtues, the virtue of justice is not simply a habit attained for oneself, but it must also be operative – it must be put into practice for tangible benefit. One begins to purge the soul of *avaritia* by understanding that the external goods of wealth are purely instrumental (it is ‘due to the highest stupidity that we think riches are the greatest good, when they are either not goods at all or are very inferior goods’) and, moreover, that what advantage they possess is in their disbursement among citizens according to the principles of justice.⁵¹⁸ By advocating this conception of operative virtue, Landino was cleaving to humanistic writings of the preceding fifty years such as Alberti’s *Della famiglia* and, once again, Matteo Palmieri’s *Vita civile*, which takes the question of how far one should do good with one’s wealth as a central theme.⁵¹⁹ In the *Vita civile*, Palmieri follows the *De officiis* in celebrating operative virtue, claiming that ‘the true praise of each virtue is situated in its operation, and one does not achieve such operation without the faculties suitable for it’, and discusses how goods of fortune and goods of the body should be conserved in a civil union for all, with each paying taxes according to their ability to do so.⁵²⁰ While Palmieri, like Landino, bases his ethical system on the Macrobian grades of virtue in that the civic virtues are the first step on the ascent to God, he nevertheless views the civic virtues as being necessarily and functionally prior to the higher grades and is led by this logic to take a conventional humanistic tack in prioritising the *vita activa*, asserting that one who lives in solitude and does not expend resources can never perfect their virtue.⁵²¹ Landino, on the other hand, reiterates that ‘the desire of possessing distracts and separates us from the cognition of those things by which alone the soul can be happy’, showing that the exercise of distributive justice in combatting *avaritia* in civil life consists in engendering an understanding of the true value and function of external goods.⁵²² It is the unnecessary accumulation of wealth and the concomitant misleading of the appetite that he deems injurious to the attainment of the *summum bonum*.

What, then, is the manner in which Landino thought wealth ought to be justly distributed by the political elite which comprised his readership, and by Lorenzo in particular? As we have seen, financial largesse was used by prominent citizens of the time to burnish their virtue through the

⁵¹⁷ Cic. *Off.* I.vii.24

⁵¹⁸ ‘Cum enim ob summam stultiam divitias maxima bona putemus, cum aut bona non sint aut minima bona’, *DC*, p. 147.4-5.

⁵¹⁹ Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, p. 46.

⁵²⁰ ‘La vera loda di ciascuna virtù è posta nell’operare, et all’operatione non si viene senza le facultà atte a quella’, Palmieri, *Vita civile* IV.24. See also III.169-83, IV passim and Cic.*Off.* I.vi.19.

⁵²¹ On the Macrobian scale of virtue, see Palmieri, *Vita civile* I.183-203. On criticism of the solitary life, see e.g. *Vita civile* III.29-30 and IV.24.

⁵²² ‘Avertit enim nos atque sevocat habendi cupiditas a cognitione earum rerum, quibus solis felix animus esse possit’, *DC*, p. 146.25-27.

support of public works and humanistic endeavours – with such expenditure in Florence being dominated by, but not limited to, the Medici – and, as Mark Jurdjevic and many other scholars have noted, the intellectual trends of Quattrocento humanism duly followed in beginning to advocate the value of private wealth in benefitting the republic, a stance exemplified in, for instance, Poggio's *De avaritia* and Filelfo's *De paupertate*.⁵²³ In the *Xandra*, Landino himself was open in judging Cosimo's virtue as being commensurate with the generosity of his gifts to the republic and emphasised that 'the state has been stabilised in the highest place' by the disbursal of his wealth for the public good.⁵²⁴ In a similar fashion, Federico da Montefeltro is praised effusively in the proems of the *Disputationes* for his munificence as a patron of artists and humanists, being acclaimed because his generosity towards learning is no less than Ptolemy's, because he provides 'a safe haven and a unique sanctuary for learned men in calamity and offers glory and distinction to those placed in better fortune', and because he contributes far more to scholars than other princes (note the avaricious implications of his description of Federico's rivals):

While the rest of Italy's princes expend all effort in order that they procure very great treasures for themselves and their heaps of silver and gold grow larger and larger by the day, you lavish the greatest part of your wealth most liberally on the ornaments of the Muses and of those who cultivate the Muses.⁵²⁵

Yet it is necessary to proceed carefully. Humanistic thought drew a distinction between, on the one hand, the just allocation of resources within the republic and, on the other, the kind of magnificence and lavish spending which emerges from personal generosity, because Cicero argues in the *De officiis* that the common bonds of human society are maintained by not one, but two constituent parts: justice, which we have already encountered; and beneficence (*beneficentia*, which can also be called *benignitas* or *liberalitas*), which is 'connected' to justice and can, in a sense, be understood as being subsidiary or ancillary to justice, since justice is inviolable but beneficence is contingent on proximate relations.⁵²⁶ Justice itself consists of two elements which are, first, preventing harm between individuals unless provoked by wrongdoing and, second, the distributive kind, using common resources for common interests and private property for one's own while taking into account that our family, friends and country have a share in us.⁵²⁷ Beneficence requires

⁵²³ See above pp. 113-14 and n. 345 and Jurdjevic, pp. 1005-08.

⁵²⁴ 'Publica res summo constabilita loco est', *Xandra* III.1.47-52.

⁵²⁵ *DC*, pp. 192.20-193.11; 'qui et calamitosis iisdemque litteratis viris salutaris portus unicumque profugium sit et maiori in fortuna constitutis decus ornamentumque afferat', *DC*, p. 53.9-11; 'cum reliqui Italianae principes in eo omnem industriam ponant, ut quam maximos sibi thesauros comparent auri que atque argenti acervus magis magisque in dies crescat, tu maximam tuarum opum partem in Musarum et eorum qui Musas colunt ornamenta liberalissime effundas', *DC*, p. 115.27-31.

⁵²⁶ Cic. *Off.* I.vii.20. An elegant summary of Cicero's views on justice and beneficence (therein translated as 'material aid') is Martha Nussbaum, 'Duties of Justice, Duties of Material Aid: Cicero's Problematic Legacy', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 54.3 (Spring 2001), 38-52. On the intellectual history of distributive justice and its relationship to beneficence, see Samuel Fleischacker, *A Short History of Distributive Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 19-28.

⁵²⁷ Cic. *Off.* I.vii.20-xiii.41.

more caution, in that it should not cause harm to its object or others, it should not be beyond the means of the giver, and that, since it is related to justice, any kindness is proportionate to merit or desert.⁵²⁸

Landino's praise of munificence in his patrons – such as the panegyrics to Federico in the proems to the *Disputationes* – tends to be phrased in terms of Cicero's idea of beneficence. Setting aside the fact that his livelihood depended on the support of these figures (which would have inclined him more towards emphasising both the generosity directed to him and, by extension, the glory accrued by his patrons in supporting his intellectual endeavours), this is because their contribution to the common good is made through patronage of humanism and the arts. Theirs is not a redistribution of wealth which merits the application of distributive justice, nor indeed are they necessarily Florentine, although, as in the case of his celebration of Cosimo, Landino can also celebrate munificence as a civic rather than a Maecenean virtue.⁵²⁹ When analysing Landino's theoretical view on the damaging effects of *avaritia* in the *Disputationes*, however, it is clear he believes that the idea that the corrupting influence of material goods is contrary to justice as well as beneficence alone, because he imitates Cicero's language closely in denouncing its harm to 'justice and nature and the bond of human society'.⁵³⁰ The metaphors of the Harpies' emaciation, their talons and the uneaten feast all point to the idea that amassing great wealth through *avaritia* involves a disinclination to allocate resources as they ought to be allocated, which according to the Ciceronian view is not merely an absence of benevolence, but an injustice. This is a view of the distribution of wealth as being a zero-sum game within the state, in which the non-disbursal of accumulated riches on the part of the miser equates to a direct and proportional disadvantage to other citizens. Hence the Harpies, and thus miserly avarice, '[are reminiscent of] when herds and flocks graze indiscriminately, consume nothing therefrom out of need, and yet allow others to consume nothing'.⁵³¹ Landino, therefore, is describing something rather more than a want of beneficence, because the miser does not simply not give, but actively harms the common good in his not giving. Worse still, this kind of avaricious behaviour can even appear disguised with the image of virtue, presenting itself as thrift, honour and sobriety while all the time eroding the opportunity for mutual advantage. This is why, Landino claims, Virgil represented the Harpies as having the faces of maidens but foul excrement: the miser appears to be noble, but what lurks behind the pretence is loathsome.⁵³²

Yet this is not at all to say that Landino thought that there was no connection between Cicero's idea of beneficence and the kind of disbursal of wealth that *avaritia* prevents. Indeed, some of the

⁵²⁸ Cic. *Off.* I.xiv.42-xviii.60.

⁵²⁹ See above p. 28 and n. 62 on Alison Brown's distinction between the kinds of praise.

⁵³⁰ 'Ius natura ac humanae societatis vinculum', *DC*, p. 145.28; 'si fortem generosumque sumamus animum', *DC*, p. 148.3-4.

⁵³¹ 'Hae [Harpidae] igitur cum passim armenta gregesque pascant, nihil inde sibi ad necessitatem sumunt, nihil aliis sumere permittunt', *DC*, p. 147.14-15.

⁵³² *DC*, p. 146.9-12.

language he uses when criticising *avaritia* seems to be referencing the principle of beneficence in the *De officiis* on purpose. Landino claims that the miser does not disburse his wealth because ‘more sparing with what has been acquired than is fitting on account of his great meanness, and performing no duty of generosity [*liberalitas*], he is of benefit [*beneficus*] neither to himself nor to his own’, and later writes that *avaritia* can be conquered with a ‘brave and generous spirit’ (although this time he uses the word *generosus* rather than the more Ciceronian *beneficus* or *liberalis*).⁵³³ Moreover, we should remember that all Landino’s claims about the hoarding of wealth only obtain at the level of the individual and do not stand as direct critiques of the fiscal and economic policies which would be the usual apparatus of distributive justice within a state. While an individual’s attachment to material goods is a sign of moral deficiency because it presents an obstacle to attaining one’s *summum bonum*, the same cannot be said of a republic which does not disburse a surplus in its exchequer, even if it might be an inadvisable policy. This implies that, for Landino, personal generosity must in some way figure in contributing to the common good, and the obvious example of a contemporary system that had integrated individual benefaction with a republican economic programme was that of the Medici in Florence.⁵³⁴ As we have seen, the idea that the money of the Medici helped to perpetuate Florentine republican principles was valuable to the family’s self-presentation as virtuous leaders, however far it might have been from reality. Their desire for this kind of legitimisation was not lost on Landino who, in the second redaction of the *Xandra*, had argued that Cosimo’s ‘unique concern for liberty’ and his commitment to ‘civic constancy’ showed that his republican credentials surpassed those of the dictatorial Caesar.⁵³⁵ Moreover, since Cosimo’s return from exile, the largesse that maintained the Medici’s hold on power through gifts, patronage, loans and so on had been accompanied with economic innovations to benefit the general good, which included reforms to the maintenance of road and canal infrastructure in the 1450s and 1460s, protectionism through tariffs to protect manufacturing and the Florentine textile market, and tax exemptions and civic privileges for specialised artisans and producers.⁵³⁶

We can therefore understand that, for Landino, the characteristic blend of generosity and distributive justice which miserly *avaritia* suppresses, the kind which a statesman needs to properly *administrare rem publicam*, is exemplified by Medici policy. He is seeking to justify the Medici mode of economic operation and reinforce the concept of a republic in which eminent citizens benefit the commonwealth through their generosity, but collective resources are justly disbursed. This lesson is, of course, entirely consonant with Landino’s broader project of justifying the exercise of power in the republic by one who does not hold any governmental role. The idea that the kind of civic

⁵³³ ‘Per summas sordes plus quam par est parto parcens nullo liberalitatis munere fungens neque sibi neque suis beneficus est’, *DC*, p. 146.5-6.; ‘fortem generosumque... animum’, *DC*, p. 148.3-4.

⁵³⁴ Landino also had in mind Seneca’s *De beneficiis*, which discusses the obligations of gift-giving in Rome, the model for Florentine republicanism.

⁵³⁵ ‘Te libertatis unica cura tenet... Egregia haec virtus magna et constantia civis’, *Xandra* III.15.46-49 and see *Xandra* III.15 and III.16 passim.

⁵³⁶ See Franco Franceschi, ‘Medici Economic Policy’, in Black and Law, *The Medici*, pp. 129-54.

beneficence exercised by the Medici is crucial in purifying oneself for the investigation of the truth (which in turn benefits the state) speaks as to the extent to which support of the regime permeates the allegory in the *Disputationes*. At the same time, however, the particular construction of Landino's discussion about *avaritia* seems to be so arranged that, while it can constitute a defence of the status quo of the Medici regime within Florence, his distributive system nonetheless encompasses standard humanistic tropes of civic virtue such that it seeks to inspire moral self-advancement. The type of individual generosity he advocates is carefully circumscribed within the bounds of republican norms under which, in true Ciceronian fashion, proper distribution of resources benefits the common good, and hence the ethical acceptability of munificence is contingent upon its direction to noble ends. Seeing that he intends to persuade as well as justify, Landino is aware of the likelihood that his elite readership may harbour concerns about the combination of beneficence and distributive justice he endorses, and must address any such uncertainties in the allegory. To this end he uses the example of the harpy Celaeno, who seeks to inspire fear in the Trojans by predicting that they will eat their tables before the end of their journey, even though the execution of this prophecy would in fact be harmless (the Trojans later fulfil it by eating the bread on which they have placed their food). Celaeno, he writes, represents the unreasoning terror experienced by the avaricious when they are inspired to seek the divine, a terror which arises from the belief that abandoning *avaritia* means that one's essential needs will not be fulfilled. This is, of course, hardly an issue for the poverty-stricken because such a situation presupposes some degree of wealth in the first place, and so the aim of this passage – whose interpretation is Landino's own and does not appear in earlier commentators on Virgil – must be to acknowledge and assuage the fears of a prosperous audience. He encourages them to accept the central premise that, in order for a republic to function, its more affluent citizens must contribute to the common good through their own liberality just as the Medici had in Florence.

As well as arguing that generosity should be employed in this way to overcome *avaritia*, Landino also prescribes another course of action. A recurring moral theme in Landino's allegorisation of the Strophades is that satisfaction with one's financial lot can also help to stave off the appetitive impulse and the associated *perturbationes animi* that persuade the mind into hoarding money. It is devotion to wealth for its own sake that causes *perturbationes*, so Landino is clear that, in order to defeat *avaritia*, one must learn that 'the things which the most foolish desire of humanity thinks necessary for living life are not only of no benefit, but become the cause of all our ills'.⁵³⁷ This is best illustrated when Alberti asks Lorenzo which of Alexander the Great and Diogenes was the richer. Lorenzo answers (correctly, for Alberti and Landino) that, since Diogenes was satisfied with what he had, but Alexander could not stop lamenting when Democritus told him there were other worlds to rule and hence possess, then the richer of the two must be Diogenes.⁵³⁸ Since this is a

⁵³⁷ 'Ea, quae hominum stultissima cupido ad vitam degendam necessaria putat, non modo nihil prodesse, sed omnium nostrorum malorum causam existere', *DC*, p. 150.4-7.

⁵³⁸ *DC*, pp. 148.22-149.19.

story which appeared regularly in didactic literature from the classical age to the medieval, and one which Landino would have known from Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* and Seneca's *De beneficiis*, two of the main texts which steered his thoughts on avarice, it is necessary to be cautious in ascribing any broader motivations on the author's part beyond an attempt to guide the reader along the path to personal moral perfectionism.⁵³⁹ It nonetheless remains, however, that the tenor of Landino's discussion so far has been focussed on persuading his audience that miserly *avaritia* impedes the just distribution of resources according to the principles of operative virtue, and therefore the lesson he is seeking to impart here is that to be satisfied with one's wealth is to understand that its value is instrumental rather than intrinsic. However wealthy one might be (and Landino's readers certainly were), if one knows that money should be sought not for its own sake but for its utility then one can profit the common good through beneficence free from the distractions of the appetite. The value of this approach for Landino is that it allows his audience of Mediceans and oligarchs to eat their cake and have it: if they adopt a position of humility in understanding that the value of their massive financial power lies, according to Ciceronian ideals, in the benefit it can impart when distributed with generosity and with justice, then they can not only maintain their affluence but can also at the same time be assured that their minds are being stripped of the disturbances which hinder the ascent of the soul.

⁵³⁹ Cic. *Tusc.* V.xxxii.92; Sen. *Ben.* V.iv.3 and V.vi.1. See also Plut., *Tranqu. Animi* 4 and Ficino, *Platonic Theology* XIV.iv.2. On the provenance of this theme see George Cary, 'The Most Popular Moral Anecdotes of Alexander, and their Medieval History and Usage: Alexander and Diogenes', in *The Medieval Alexander*, ed. by David J. A. Ross (London: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 83-97.

3.4 *Ambitio* or *Superbia*

The third and final vice which the soul must purge on its way to contemplation is *ambitio* or *superbia*, the appetitive desire for reputation, honours and glory.⁵⁴⁰ For Landino, the central figure about whom his ideas on the vice of *ambitio* coalesce is Juno, who signifies in the *Disputationes* what he terms the ‘desire to rule’ (*imperandi cupiditas*), or the ‘desire for honours and dominion’ (*honorum imperiique cupiditas*), phrases which are deliberate echoes of the *libido dominandi* which characterises the earthly city of Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*.⁵⁴¹ Landino would have the reader believe that the ferocity of Juno’s attempts to thwart the journey of Aeneas show how *ambitio* is the most difficult vice to discard if one aspires to power, and the richness and complexity of his analysis of this vice speaks as to the importance of avoiding it if one is to *administrare rem publicam* properly. To this end, his approach to allegorising Juno is distinctive. Among earlier commentators on Virgil there was little in the way of consensus about how Juno ought to be interpreted: for instance, in the *Expositio Vergiliana* Fulgentius associated her with childbirth; and Bernardus Silvestris identified her with both the air and the active life.⁵⁴² The broader ambit of medieval mythographers brought no more clarity, with Boccaccio interpreting her as the earth, air, sea, terrestrial wealth and kingship, and royal power, and Salutati, in whose *De laboribus Herculis* Juno features as prominently as one might expect given her enmity to Hercules, bestows upon her an encyclopaedic array of associations including air, the will, *fortuna*, the sensitive appetite, astrological functions and, in particular, the jealousy she feels towards her husband’s illegitimate son.⁵⁴³ An analysis of the Judgment of Paris by Fulgentius in the *Mythologies*, though, associates Juno, Minerva and Venus with the active, contemplative and voluptuous lives respectively and, since this episode is interpreted similarly by Bernardus Silvestris and Boccaccio, we can establish at least some precedent for, and sense of continuity around, the allegorisation of Juno as representing the *vita activa*.⁵⁴⁴ As Jane Chance has shown, the mythographical tradition of the Judgment of Paris was influential on Landino’s understanding of Juno, and Craig Kallendorf has described how its interpretation by Ficino in his *Philebus* commentary contained the raw materials which Landino could develop in the *Disputationes*.⁵⁴⁵ In the *Philebus* commentary Ficino reiterates the traditional identification of the goddesses with the three ways of life and notes that the respective ends to which they are devoted

⁵⁴⁰ Unless otherwise specified, I will follow Landino in using the terms interchangeably.

⁵⁴¹ *DC*, p. 129.21; pp. 155.21 and 158.28-29. On the *libido dominandi*, the earthly city and Rome as its model, see Augustine *Civ. Dei*. Pr., I.30-31, III.14, XIV.15 and 28, and XIX.15. Lorenzo argues that the oikēiotic bonds of humanity help us overcome the *cupiditas imperandi* in *DC*, p. 27.22.

⁵⁴² Fulgentius, *Exp. Verg.*; Bernardus Silvestris *Commentary*, pp. 4-9 and 46. On the earlier allegorisations of Juno, see Chance *passim*.

⁵⁴³ On Juno, see Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium* II.3.5, IV.20.7, V.24.3, V.25.16, IV.35.4, IV.54.3, and IV.68.27; and Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis* II.iii-vi and II.xix.

⁵⁴⁴ Fulgentius *Mythologies* II.1, and see Kallendorf, ‘Cristoforo Landino’s *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition’, pp. 540-41.

⁵⁴⁵ Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, pp. 408-15; Kallendorf, ‘Cristoforo Landino’s *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition’, p. 529 and 541.

are pleasure (*voluptas*) for Venus, domination (*imperium*) for Juno and wisdom (*sapientia*) for Minerva.⁵⁴⁶ Unlike Landino, Ficino argues that the active life is further away from the *summum bonum* than even the voluptuous life is, because nothing is further from the tranquillity of our ultimate end than *imperium* and its followers but, nevertheless, the commonality with Landino's line of thought is plain from the analogy Ficino continues to make with the protagonist of the *Aeneid*: 'Aeneas is therefore depicted as being plagued by psychological disturbance [*perturbatio*] because of Juno (that is, because of his desire to rule), and Ulysses is disturbed for the same reason'.⁵⁴⁷ The symbolism Landino associates with the Juno of the *Aeneid* is therefore unusual, and the notion that it was deliberately tendentious is supported because previous representations of the goddess in his non-allegorical work had not taken any such form. In an early poem, Landino had appealed to Juno in her guise of Lucina, goddess of childbirth, to help his 'Xandra' during parturition, and later, she is mentioned several times in the *De anima*, but none of these mentions portray her as representing *ambitio*, power or the active life.⁵⁴⁸ Yet we must note that, while the precedent that Ficino set was influential in guiding Landino's thought, there is an important discontinuity between their thoughts on this subject. Ficino articulates precisely what Juno represents when dedicating the work to Lorenzo in the proem: 'We think that to be understood under the term "power" [*potentia*] are: authority in both civic and military governance; abundance of wealth and excellent renown; and the virtue of active affairs [*negotiosam virtutem*].'⁵⁴⁹ Like *ambitio* in Landinian ethics, Juno or 'power' consists in the false ends of dominion, reputation and glory, but with the significant addition of active virtue. For Landino, whose philosophy has its foundations in Cicero and Latin Platonism, the active life does not hold the negative connotations that it does for Ficino because the *munus* of the soul which deals with activity is admirable in its own right, and the civic virtues are an essential first step on the purificatory path towards God. He therefore disposed of this element of Ficino's interpretation. In the *Disputationes*, it is not the active life that Juno represents but the 'desire for honours and dominion'. She does not expedite the journey towards self-perfection but impedes it, and Chance and Kallendorf could perhaps have emphasised this departure rather more.

Landino's innovative treatment of Juno in the *Disputationes* indicates that he thought the extirpation of *ambitio* to be a crucial aspect of the moral education of the statesman rather than an afterthought which merely sought to complete the threefold Sallustian division he had begun to represent with Troy, Thrace and the Harpies. This significance is evident from Landino's first serious allegorical treatment of the vice. When Aeneas visits Helenus after leaving the Strophades,

⁵⁴⁶ Ficino, *Philebus* commentary, p. 446-50.

⁵⁴⁷ 'Propterea fingitur Aeneas ob Junonem perturbatione vexatus, id est, ob studium imperandi, eademque ratione agitur Ulixes', Ficino, *Philebus* commentary, p. 448, and see also Ficino's comments on Hercules and Socrates. I have used my own translation rather than Allen's to maintain continuity with the themes in the *Disputationes* already discussed.

⁵⁴⁸ *Xandra* I.21; *De anima*, I, pp. 3 and 8, and II, p. 136.

⁵⁴⁹ 'Sub appellatione potentiae auctoritatem in gubernatione civili pariter atque militari divitarumque affluentiam et splendorem gloriae negotiosamque virtutem comprehendendi putamus', Ficino, *Philebus* commentary, p. 482, my translation.

he is warned that he will never reach Italy while opposed by Juno, which Landino interprets as teaching how those who aspire to positions of power and influence are subject to the distractions of *ambitio* more than any other vice. After all, ‘it is easy for those who already have bigger things in mind to despise sensual desires’.⁵⁵⁰ *Ambitio* therefore poses a risk to those who would seek to hold political office in three different ways, Landino has Alberti explain. The first is that the honours, titles and dominion which excellence rewards can seem to possess an intrinsic worth; the second is that an aspiration to become like God by bestowing benefits particular to powerful roles can provoke an overwhelming desire for political precedence; and the third is that a noble desire to excel can become perverted into ambition, tyranny, crime and slaughter when not directed by reason.⁵⁵¹

In one form or another, these are definitions which had endured from ancient thought. The concept of *superbia* and *ambitio* being essentially monarchical traits, antithetical to republican order, which cause states to collapse into tyranny and cruelty is one of the central conceits of the works of Sallust. I have already articulated how Landino drew on both Sallust and the Aristotelian tradition in his understanding of *ambitio* as being directed at external goods as an intrinsic end, and his republican interpretation of this view follows Ciceronian sentiments such as the injunction in the *Tusculanae Disputationes* to beware the seductions of honours and popular glory.⁵⁵² The impropriety of bestowing benefits on account of *superbia* and *ambitio* was a common theme in Seneca and, as regards the aspect of self-divinisation, Landino was aware that Cicero thought that we ought to engage in politics for the exaltation of soul rather than on account of popular approval, and that Sallust concluded that *ambitio* is closer to virtue than *avaritia* on account of this striving for what can be noble ends.⁵⁵³ Yet Landino’s formulation of these characteristics and, in particular, the idea of *superbia* potentially being a dangerous vice because it seeks to emulate God, emerges from Christian writings. An early analysis of the characteristics of *superbia* and *ambitio*, whose similarity to that in the *Disputationes* suggests an influence on Landino, can be found in Augustine’s *Confessions*:

For pride [*superbia*] imitates exaltedness, whereas You alone are God, highest over all. And what does ambition [*ambitio*] seek apart from honours and glory, whereas You are to be honoured above everything and are glorious for eternity? And the cruelty of the powerful wants to be feared, but who is to be feared apart from God alone?⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁰ ‘Facile est enim contemnere voluptates ei, qui iam maiora mente concepit’, *DC*, p. 155.21-22.

⁵⁵¹ *DC*, pp. 155.16-156.10.

⁵⁵² See above pp. 55-57, 132 and 134-35, and Cic. *Tusc.* V.xxxvi.103-05. See also Yelena Baraz, ‘From vice to virtue: The denigration and rehabilitation of *superbia* in Ancient Rome’, in *Kakos: Badness and Anti-Value in Classical Antiquity*, ed. by Ineke Sluiter and Ralph Rosen (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008), pp. 365-97.

⁵⁵³ Sen.*Ben.*II.5 and II.11-13 and V.6; Cic.*Tusc.* II.xxvi.62; Sal.*Cat.*11.

⁵⁵⁴ ‘Nam et superbia celsitudinem imitatur, cum tu sis unus super omnia deus excelsus. Et ambitio quid nisi honores quaerit et gloriam, cum tu sis prae cunctis honorandus unus et gloriosus in aeternum? Et saevitia potestatum timeri vult: quis autem timendus nisi unus deus...’, Augustine, *Confessions* II.6. See also Augustine *Civ. Dei* I.31 and V.12, Gregory, *Moral.* XXI.22-30 and the fourfold definition of pride in *Moral.* XXIII.6

These sentiments were developed by Thomas Aquinas, another important point of reference in the development of Landino's moral philosophy. Thomas continued to distinguish between *ambitio* and *superbia* in the *Summa Theologiae*, defining the former as being the contrary vice to magnanimity, a constituent aspect of fortitude, and the latter as being the contrary vice to humility, an aspect of temperance.⁵⁵⁵ In doing so he articulates the same three points described in the *Disputationes*, defining *ambitio* as both an inordinate love of honour and an unhealthy desire to excel which is opposed to proper magnanimity, and describing how *superbia* is an appetite for excellence beyond right reason, from which emerges Landino's idea of *ambitio* perverting excellence into tyranny when right reason does not control it.

In his allegory, however, Landino deals first with the third way in which *ambitio* presents a risk – that of the descent into tyranny and slaughter – to ensure that the statesman avoids any outright cruelty in his administration of the republic. He is offered the opportunity to illustrate this kind of behaviour in the form of the Cyclops Polyphemus, who represents the great-souled leader whose efforts to achieve exalted deeds are not guided by reason, which causes such politicians to 'often deceive themselves and fall into monstrosity through their greatness of soul'.⁵⁵⁶ Landino's allegorisation of Polyphemus is, like that of Juno, relatively novel because the Cyclops did not have any exclusive association with tyranny or *ambitio* in the tradition of Virgil criticism save in Fulgentius, for whom Polyphemus represents *superbia* but in the sense of the arrogance of youth which is overcome as one progresses through the journey of life.⁵⁵⁷ Instead, the principal mythographical influence here is Boccaccio, who interprets the Polyphemus of the Ulysses myth as representing the tyrant and writes that the Cyclops possesses a single eye because 'tyrants care about their own concerns alone: they have no regard for God; for those closest to them; for their subjects'.⁵⁵⁸

For Landino to fashion his allegorisation in such a way that the first lesson to be learnt about *ambitio* was that one must seek to prevent it from precipitating a descent into tyranny marks it as a pressing concern in his programme of civic education. In this he was far from alone among humanists, for debates about the nature of tyranny had abounded in political writing over the preceding decades. Approaches to defining precisely what a tyrant was varied. Some humanists (such as Giovanni Pontano in his *De principe* and Bartolomeo Sacchi in his work of the same name) followed Aristotelian methodology in presenting tyranny as a degraded form of constitutional monarchy, thereby legitimising the rule of princes, while others (such as Poggio Bracciolini in the *De infelicitate principum*) preferred to adopt the Ciceronian-republican view that autocracy is unsound by nature whether an ruler is called a king or a tyrant, since the common good has nevertheless

⁵⁵⁵ See *Summa Theologiae* II-II Q.131 and II-II Q.162.

⁵⁵⁶ 'Saepe falli et pro animi magnitudine in inmanitatem labi', *DC*, p. 156.13-14.

⁵⁵⁷ Fulgentius, *Exp. Verg.*

⁵⁵⁸ 'Solam enim suam rem tyranni curant, nil in deum, nil in proximum, nil in subactam plebem respiciunt', *Genealogie* X.14. See also Boccaccio, *Eclogues* IV and V, where Polyphemus represents the ruthless Louis of Hungary.

been rendered subordinate to personal advantage.⁵⁵⁹ On the other hand, James Hankins has argued that, while humanists interpreted their sources variously and would adapt their methods as they saw fit, there were in fact two main classical approaches to understanding the tyrant on which they drew: a Greek character-based conception which emerged in Plato, Aristotle and Xenophon; and a Roman interpretation, found in Cicero, which understands tyranny as a violation of civil law.⁵⁶⁰ As we have seen, there is no doubt that humanistic virtue politics of the Quattrocento generally sought to privilege this ‘Greek’ view, with political evaluations of statesmen being based primarily on their personal character even when legalistic analyses were present, and whether or not the writer approved of princedoms as well as republics. Likewise, Landino is unconcerned with legal or constitutional arguments and bases his definition of the tyrant – that is, one who is perverted by *ambitio* or *superbia* – solely in terms of the virtue ethics which emerge from his scheme of psychological perfectionism. His idea of tyranny as a state of mind inculcated by disturbances of the appetite which can be subdued by reason, is, of course, Platonic in nature. A recent precedent for a psychological approach to tyranny focussed on *superbia* had been set by Coluccio Salutati. In the *De tyranno*, Salutati was careful to emphasise the role of *superbia* in tyrannical behaviour even while defending the monarchy as a legitimate form of government (as Hankins puts it, ‘Like other humanists, Salutati was not an exclusivist’).⁵⁶¹ He points out that Virgil uses the terms *rex superbus* and *tyrannus* synonymously and, as Bartolo da Sassoferrato had done years earlier, when attempting to define tyranny he quotes St. Gregory: ‘Strictly speaking, a “tyrant” is one who rules a communal republic unjustly...but everyone who rules with *superbia* exercises tyranny to their particular degree.’⁵⁶² Hence, for Salutati, tyranny can exist as a mental attitude regardless of the degree of power one holds. It follows that, when one *does* possess authority, one’s state of mind matters. Petrarch makes this point in *Seniles* XIV, arguing that excesses of power arise from a desire for the external goods of honours and glory (that is, *superbia*, in the Landinian definition) rather than true greatness of soul: ‘it often seems to base persons that when they have attained high office, they have reached heaven, so losing their perspective they lose control. On the contrary, no earthly honour is of much importance to the truly magnanimous leader.’⁵⁶³ The characteristic feature of Landino’s psychological treatment of tyranny, however, is his assertion that *superbia* is such a danger as a corrupting force precisely because its sufferers are possessed of a greatness of soul (*magnitudo animi*) which makes them capable of the greatest deeds.⁵⁶⁴ He would continue to hold this opinion

⁵⁵⁹ On this interpretive division, and on Pontano and Poggio in particular, see Hester Schadee, ‘“I Don’t Know Who You Call Tyrants”: Debating Evil Lords in Quattrocento Humanism’, in *Evil Lords: Theories and Representations of Tyranny from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. by Nikos Panou and Hester Schadee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 172-90.

⁵⁶⁰ Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, pp. 103-52.

⁵⁶¹ Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, p. 128.

⁵⁶² Salutati, *De tyranno* I.3-4, from Gregory, *Moralia in Job* 12.38, also cited in Bartolo da Sassoferrato, *De tyranno* II.4-15. The passage of Virgil to which Salutati refers in *De tyranno* I.1 is Verg. *Aen.* 8.480-84.

⁵⁶³ Francesco Petrarca, ‘How a Ruler Ought to Govern His State’, trans. by Benjamin G. Kohl, in Kohl and Witt, *The Earthly Republic*, pp. 35-79.

⁵⁶⁴ See above pp. 38-40.

throughout his career, later warning in *De vera nobilitate* (following Terence) that a republican official must take care in seeking justice in case they fall into the vice in which ‘the greatest good may cause the greatest injury’, and going so far in the *Comento* as to claim that the tyrant, whose violence is ‘born of a desire which has its origin in *superbia*’, wants to overcome the laws of God and nature that make all equal because they are an affront to his ambition for primacy.⁵⁶⁵ This position, like that of Petrarch, draws from Cicero and Seneca. Cicero teaches in the *De officiis* how excessive greatness or exaltation of soul can turn into a lust for power and glory which increasingly leads one into injustice and autocratic rule, even devolving into savagery when unrestrained by social bonds.⁵⁶⁶ In the *De clementia*, Seneca warns: ‘how little harm can the cruelty of a private individual cause! But the savagery of princes is war’.⁵⁶⁷ Landino spares no effort in forcing these points home. Polyphemus represents the tyrannical life because he is a cannibal who prefers to eat the living than the dead, just as tyrants kill any ‘lover of justice and liberty’ in order to preserve their station and, in case the reader remained in any doubt, such rulers are ascribed a lurid litany of crimes comprising assassination, mass murder, plunder, rape, vandalism, despoliation, slavery, and sedition.⁵⁶⁸ Yet hope remains. The statesman who aspires to the *summum bonum* but at the same time seeks honour and political authority because his *magnanimitas* is not fully-formed will nonetheless recognise and despise this kind of cruelty.⁵⁶⁹ Landino deems this kind of tyrannical brutality so contrary to nature that simply being on the correct path ought to protect one: just like the other vices, *superbia* can only manifest its worst excesses when, through self-deceit, it has situated itself in the mind as an intemperate habit. Hence, he interprets Achaemenides as representing a warning to the statesman which shows the reversals in fortune which tyranny causes for citizens both common and illustrious. Even when these things happen to an enemy (for Achaemenides is a Greek) one’s natural sympathies are aroused.

Polyphemus, then, insofar as he exemplifies the idea of ‘the bolder the spirit, the fiercer the crimes’, is a model of tyranny who illustrates a leader’s mental overreach, the megalomania which, when left unchecked, can cause a state to devolve into autocratic savagery. In keeping with Landino’s underlying structure of successive virtues purging the mind of distracting appetites, this is a conception of proper leadership that prioritises self-control as a prophylactic against tyranny. A statesman whose magnanimity is guided by reason (by receiving good advice, adopting an attitude of humility and moderation and so on) can avoid the excesses of power and foolhardy decisions that endanger the state in this way. While the consequences of failure in such a task might be very serious indeed, this ought not to be too difficult to perform because we possess a natural

⁵⁶⁵ ‘Dum iustissimi esse cupimus, in summam iniuriam recidat’, *DVN*, p. 88; ‘[Violentia tyrannica]... nasce da cupidità, la quale ha origine da superbia’, *Comento, Inf.* XII.46-66.25-26; 67-70 and 103-09.

⁵⁶⁶ Cic. *Off.* I.xix.62-69 and I.xliv.157.

⁵⁶⁷ Seneca *De clementia* I.5; on the *De clementia*, see also Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, p. 113, Schadee, p. 176, and Peter Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁵⁶⁸ *DC*, pp. 156.16-157.9.

⁵⁶⁹ Following Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* II-II QQ.129-38, Landino states in *De anima*, III, p. 53, and *DVN*, p. 71, that magnanimity is a constituent part of fortitude.

disinclination towards tyranny so, in this respect at least, Landino displays a fundamental optimism about the statesman. His analysis of this phenomenon is, furthermore, wholeheartedly republican. Just as his humanism impressed upon him a desire to understand tyrannical impulses in terms of personal vice and virtue, so did his republican inclinations led him to eschew the Aristotelian tradition of opposing tyranny with benevolent princedom.⁵⁷⁰ Since his aim in the *Disputationes* was to justify the exercise of power in a republic by those who did not hold political office, he could not define the danger of tyranny as that of simply being a corrupted counterpart of monarchical government and neither, as a patriotic Florentine, could he avoid the fact that so much republican self-perception of his city was bound up in opposition to autocrats such as the Visconti.⁵⁷¹ When describing the risk of tyranny signified by the Cyclops he therefore speaks of statesmen using egalitarian language, as individuals who ‘seek great and exalted things’, rather than as occupying any particular rank or role. Also, the very idea that the desire for *imperium* represented by the Cyclops necessitates the concentration of political power in one individual is, as Bruce McNair has noted, anti-republican, and by presenting it as an obstacle to the moral development of the statesman Landino is at the same time stressing the need for collective governance.⁵⁷² His philosophical understanding is likewise predicated on republican principles. In both the *De anima* and the *De vera nobilitate* Landino describes magnanimity as ‘that which drives us to excellent and difficult things in the expectation of virtuous utility’, from which it follows that the corrupted greatness of soul that the Cyclops represents is the exercise of great deeds directed towards personal benefit or, worse, persecution and cruelty rather than any common good.⁵⁷³ This is corroborated in the *Comento* on *Inferno* XII, in which the tyrant said to ‘turn every advantage and utility to himself and to allow inconveniences and harms to others’.⁵⁷⁴ By so integrating the concept of utility into the psychological foundations of tyranny, Landino means to define the tyrant’s corruption by *superbia* as running contrary to the republican distributional principles of that central text of ‘civic’ humanism, the *De officiis*. When the tyrant appropriates what is useful for his own ends rather than using it for the benefit of fellow citizens, he also, according to Cicero, destroys the bonds of political society contrary to the principles of natural justice.⁵⁷⁵

Just as Landino’s political contextualisation of tyranny is informed by Cicero, so too is his attitude towards tackling republican notions of virtue and vice. For instance, his allegory of Polyphemus follows a view expressed in the *De legibus* (quoted by Petrarch in *Seniles* XIV) that wrongdoing aristocrats are especially dangerous to the state because their vices and corruption seep

⁵⁷⁰ Landino does draw an opposition between tyrants and kings in *Comento, Inf.* XII.46-66.74-94, but conflates the idea of king with that of the republican governor and the Christian shepherd.

⁵⁷¹ See Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, passim but especially pp. 12-46.

⁵⁷² McNair, ‘Cristoforo Landino, Coluccio Salutati and the Best Life’, pp. 763-64.

⁵⁷³ ‘Magnanimitas autem fortitudo, quae nos ad praeclara quaeque et ardua honestatis vel utilitatis expectatione impellat’, *De anima*, III, p. 53; *DVN*, p. 71.

⁵⁷⁴ ‘Per convertire in sé ogni commodo et utilità, et a quegli lasciare gli’incomodi et e danni’, *Comento, Inf.* XII.46-66.72-74.

⁵⁷⁵ Cic. *Off.* II.vi.21-viii.29.

into the marrow of the commonwealth.⁵⁷⁶ Yet, even more overwhelmingly, Landino's outlook bears a Sallustian influence. Sallust maintains that *superbia* is utterly opposed to peace in a republic and warns that, on occasion the *plebs* have seceded from the patricians with arms on account of the *superbia* of their rulers.⁵⁷⁷ Constant vigilance is therefore required on the part of republican politicians, and Sallust pointedly illustrates the corrosive effect of ambition on Roman politics – and the contempt in which it was held in contemporary discourse – when he presents the evidence of Marius, who was 'later carried away by *ambitio*', attempting to discredit Quintus Caecilius Metellus, who himself displayed a 'proud and disdainful spirit that was a common failing of the nobility', with the accusation that the latter was 'a man of vanity and regal *superbia* rejoicing in too much power'.⁵⁷⁸ The destructive effects of *ambitio* which Sallust chronicled at length in the *Bellum Iugurthinum* and the *Bellum Catilinae* taught lessons which Landino took seriously, not least because, just two years prior to his composition of the *Disputationes*, the massacre of Volterra had shown how youthful pride and overconfidence could easily lead to catastrophe. Whether the bloody consequences of Lorenzo's response to the Volterran uprising were due to negligence or intentional cruelty, they nonetheless provided an example to Landino of how easily a spirited but inexperienced leader could apply excessive power in order to attempt to establish his reputation. One might suspect that Landino had some misgivings about Volterra in mind when writing about tyranny in the *Disputationes* because, as we have already seen, in his justification of Lorenzo's actions in the proem to his Virgil commentary fourteen years later he emphasises that Lorenzo waged war against Volterra because he was 'great-souled [*magnanimus*] and born for the honour of his republic'.⁵⁷⁹ As a loyalist and client of the Medici, Landino could not voice criticism openly, but to ascribe the perpetration of a massacre to a quality of Lorenzo's which, as he had explained in detail, could easily slip into tyrannical cruelty when unconstrained seems to be protesting too much, as though he were striving to confirm that Lorenzo was following Ciceronian precepts on *magnanimitas* by acting for the common good, the 'honour of the republic', rather than his own glory. In any case, there is no doubt that the broader influence of Sallust meant that lessons Landino sought to teach in the *Disputationes* held currency both through their rhetorical value, in that they taught statesmen how the perception of a leader's virtue depends on his avoidance of brutality and excess, and through their practical value, in that he, like other humanists, viewed the avoidance of cruelty as being of genuine benefit in avoiding damage to the fabric of the republic.

Returning to the allegory, Aeneas has escaped the Cyclops in the same way that the good statesman evades any temptation of cruelty in the administration of the republic. Landino now proceeds to investigate the more insidious dangers of *ambitio*. On leaving Sicily, or the inferior

⁵⁷⁶ Cic. *Leg.* III.xiv.31. The passage is quoted in Petrarca, 'How a Ruler Ought to Govern His State', p. 73.

⁵⁷⁷ Sal. *Cat.* 33. See also Sal. *Jug.* 41; Sal. *Jug.* 85; Sal. *Cat.* 7.

⁵⁷⁸ Sal. *Jug.* 63-64.

⁵⁷⁹ 'In viro magnanimo et ad suae rei publicae decus nato', *Scritti*, I, p. 219, and see above pp. 37-38 and n. 107.

reason, and having buried Anchises, or sensuality, Aeneas leaves for Italy but has not made peace with Juno, just as when a leader of a republic tries to turn away from human affairs he is unable pass up the chance of honours or *imperium*. At Lorenzo's prompting, Alberti explains that Juno hates the Trojans whether they are in Troy or are on their way to Italy because *ambitio* despises both pleasure and the search for contemplation. She is still stung by the Judgment of Paris (which once again calls to mind Ficino's representation of Juno in the *Philebus* commentary). Inspired by this hatred, Juno commands Aeolus to whip up a tempest to prevent the Trojans from reaching Italy, just as the desire for involvement in human affairs draws one away from the divine.⁵⁸⁰ The allegorisation of the storm gives Landino the opportunity to recapitulate some of the finer points about the relationship between the superior reason, the inferior reason and the appetite (here represented by Neptune, Aeolus and the sea respectively) that he had already discussed at length in the *De anima*.⁵⁸¹ It is nevertheless of interest to note how, in this section of the allegory, he points out that because the appetite is controlled under reason which is devoted to God in accordance with the Platonic dictum that 'for the good man God is the law, for the evil man the law is sensual appetite', it is necessary for *ambitio* to deceive the inferior reason.⁵⁸² Since the inferior reason only exercises itself when the appetite is disturbed by desire for externalities such as political power, the things it considers 'great', it believes it owes a debt to *ambitio*. Landino seems to be attempting to establish from first principles how a tendency arises in civic leaders towards the self-deceit which he attributes to the tyrant: how, in the mind of a statesman, the perception can arise that struggling nobly against the desire for honours and titles makes one all the more deserving of them. This is a trenchant insight into the psychology of power which, by identifying self-deception as an apparatus by which the civic life seduces and corrupts leaders, not only probes into the formation of the tyrannical mind, but also suggests how the frameworks of flattery, insincerity and toadyism which perpetuate such beliefs might be sustained. Landino's strategy for suppressing the tyrannical impulse seems to be to invite the reader into critical self-assessment: the statesman must constantly scrutinise his achievements and aims to ensure that they are properly motivated.

With the appetitive storm having been calmed by Neptune, the superior reason, the Trojans arrive in Carthage. For Landino, this signifies the desire to involve oneself in human society rather than progress towards the knowledge of the truth, thinking it is enough that the vices have been subdued at the level of the civic virtues. He offers a penetrating analysis of the kind of rationale through which people justify this decision to themselves, laying out an array of republican and oikēiotic principles chiefly drawn from the *De officiis* – the desire to strengthen and grow society; its reciprocal bonds of duty; the opposition of injustice – that he has so far defended.⁵⁸³ If we were not capable of contemplation, he states, no one would fault this stance. Contemplation can, according

⁵⁸⁰ *DC*, pp. 159.15-160.14.

⁵⁸¹ *DC*, pp. 160.15-170.22 and see above pp. 64-68.

⁵⁸² 'Bono viro legem deum esse, malo autem libidinem', *DC*, p. 163.10-11.

⁵⁸³ *DC*, pp. 170.23-171.30.

to this position, be put off for later life, with youth and adulthood being the best years for a lover of wisdom to *administrare rem publicam*, and Landino acknowledges the arguments to this effect from humanist defenders of the civic life, citing Plato, Xenophon and Homer as classical authorities for the deferment of contemplation until older age.⁵⁸⁴ As one might expect, Landino is to some extent sympathetic to these views (which are broadly those sketched out by Lorenzo in the first book of the *Disputationes*) declaring that the rewards of civic action are utility for others and glory and tranquillity for oneself. Since his aim is to offer a defence of the exercise of extra-political power within a republic which relies on achieving intellectual contemplation, he must also acknowledge the value of civic action within the republic, which can in turn benefit from the reluctant intervention of the *sapiens* who is furnished with divine wisdom.

To this end, he spends some time outlining how Carthage illustrates the institutions and leadership of a good republic before returning to any further discussion of how *ambitio* inveigles itself into the civic life. First he describes how the natural harbour of Carthage's shore resists the buffeting of the sea which represents the *perturbationes* of the appetite, and that Aeneas feeds the Trojan survivors just as one who undertakes the administration of a republic must ensure the well-being of his citizens. Then, just as he had done in the first book, Landino wants to confirm that oscillating between non-involvement and political governance is entirely legitimate behaviour on the part of a civic leader. Hence, Aeneas' famous speech, telling his compatriots that 'perhaps one day it will help to remember even this' because they will rebuild Troy in Italy, serves to teach the reader that the soul's earlier, sensual pleasure will be replaced by the true pleasure of contemplation, and – importantly – that the best leader will engage himself in civic action as far as is necessary, but will continue to guide them to the divine through the blows of fortune.⁵⁸⁵ Landino continues to use his allegorisation of Aeneas' exploration of the Carthaginian lands to embark on a revealing discussion about how an administrator of a republic (*administrator rei publicae*) must recognise vice and those under its power. Earlier, I touched upon how he views the sensual appetite or *libido* and its associated vices which dominate the premoral stage of life as comprising the animalistic part of the human mind.⁵⁸⁶ Under this understanding, vice constitutes a deterioration into the bestial, instinctive aspect we share with animals, and can only be excised through proper moral conduct at the age of discretion through the use of the superior appetite, the *voluntas*, which is under the command of reason. Just as Cicero had argued in the *De officiis* that republican leaders must cultivate human rather than animalistic qualities, and thus avoid the cunning of the fox and the violence of the lion wherever possible, so too does Landino forbid any underhand means in politics which might ultimately arise from the sensual part of our nature.⁵⁸⁷ Hence, for Landino, when

⁵⁸⁴ *DC*, pp. 171.31-172.27.

⁵⁸⁵ *DC*, pp. 174.16-175.2, referring to Verg. *Aen.*I.198-207 and in particular I.203: 'Forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit.'

⁵⁸⁶ See above pp. 145-46.

⁵⁸⁷ See Cic. *Off.* I.xiii.41, a passage later subverted by Machiavelli in chapters 18 and 19 of *The Prince*, on which see Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, II, p. 125 and pp. 144-45.

Aeneas wants to discover whether Carthage is inhabited by beasts or human beings, this symbolises the scrutiny of the civic life which is necessary to understand the moral ecology of the citizens in a republic. Many – the ‘human beings’ – are devoted to civic concord, liberty, justice, the rule of law and so on, but one may also find ‘beasts’ among the citizenry:

You may find many whose most lascivious desire leaves nothing holy and nothing undefiled. You may find many inflamed with the greatest avarice who think that everything can be bought and either, like foxes, deceive the incautious with their tricks and plots, or, with regard to people superior in their mental powers, want to surpass in wealth and honours those to whom they are very much inferior in wisdom and virtue. So although people depraved by these vices retain a human face and limbs, nonetheless, since they have assumed animalistic habits, they should be considered as the most savage beasts and no longer as human beings.⁵⁸⁸

This dualistic view of human nature, consistent with Landino’s favoured metaphor of the two-horsed chariot of the *Phaedrus* and systematised in his separation of the powers of the soul and the twofold appetite, therefore necessitates practical advice.⁵⁸⁹ It is imperative that the statesmen recognise the threats of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *ambitio* in his fellow citizens, the threats which Sallust enshrined as fatal to the preservation of the republic. This task may be difficult, because such ‘beasts’ retain a human face – they dissimulate and deceive and the danger they present may not be immediately appreciated. Advice of this nature would have had some resonance for Lorenzo with regard to figures such as Tommaso Soderini, who had attempted to manipulate him shortly after his ascent to power.

Landino goes on to reemphasise his point that the republic can and must be guided by those who depart civic action for the investigation of truth. When Venus appears to Aeneas disguised as a huntress (because the statesman who takes care of his people must pursue the beasts mentioned above), he recognises her as a goddess, which shows how the love with which politicians desire what is just has a divine provenance, even when qualities like piety, justice and greatness of spirit are devoted to the perishable ends of human activity. Hence, ‘when we have cultivated what is right and worthy in civic life for a long time, we are led by their beauty to the divine, of which these things are likenesses’.⁵⁹⁰ Similarly, he interprets Aeneas’ first sighting of Carthage from the high point at the brow of a hill as signifying how the best laws and institutions for regulating the state

⁵⁸⁸ ‘Contra autem plurimos reperias, quorum petulantissima libido nihil sanctum, nihil pudicum relinquat, plurimos, qui summa avaritia accensi omnia venalia habeant et aut veluti vulpeculae dolis insidiisque incautos decipiant aut, viribus superiores cum sint, opibus quoque et honoribus eos anteire velint, quibus sapientia ac virtute longe sint inferiores. Huiuscemodi igitur vitiis depravati homines, quanvis effigiem membraque humana retineant, tamen, quoniam mores ferinos induerunt, non amplius homines, sed inmanissimae ferae putandi sunt’, *DC*, pp. 176.22-177.1 and cf. *DVN*, p. 64.

⁵⁸⁹ See above pp. 63-64.

⁵⁹⁰ ‘[Nam] cum in vita civili quae recta et honesta sunt diu coluerimus, ex illorum pulchritudine ad divina, quorum haec veluti simulacra sunt, erigimur’, *DC*, p. 180.16-18, and cf. Plat. *Sym.* 210a-212b, in which Diotima outlines how perceiving the beautiful in institutions and laws aids the soul in its ascent towards the apprehension of divine beauty.

require lawmakers who legislate according to the recommendation of those who speculate on great things, drawing a distinction between the official and unofficial leaders of the republic.⁵⁹¹ Before he changes subject he discusses one more point of interest, which is Virgil's comparison of the Carthaginians to bees. This is the one point in the *Disputationes* where Landino would seem to skirt close to advocating a political system headed by a philosopher-king – a stance of which, as we have already seen, he is often accused. He describes the characteristics of bees using Ciceronian commonplaces, claiming that they collaborate with the greatest fairness (*summa aequitate*) and highest concord (*summa concordia*), and that they seek all in common (*omne in commune quaeritur*), but states that they would nonetheless establish a Platonic state if transferred to a republic because they follow the rule of their leader unquestioningly.⁵⁹² This view is at odds with the remainder of the *Disputationes*, but can be reconciled if one understands that Landino's analysis here is descriptive rather than prescriptive. His approval of the diligence and concord represented by the bees need not demand that their hierarchical system and blind obedience (which are indeed characteristic of the ideal state set out in the *Republic*) ought to be carried over into his broader system of virtue politics, which he has by now expressed very clearly. Rather, Landino is simply seeking to show how Virgil illustrates the admirable qualities of the political life when subject to the allegorical constraint of a city that is governed by a single leader.

Having laid out his ideas on the proper administration of the republic, Landino now returns once more to *ambitio*, studying its effects on the civic life through the figure of Dido. As we have seen, Dido is a complex figure whose fall from temperance into intemperance was induced by the habituation of sensual desire or *luxuria* and stands as Landino's foremost example of the Sallustian moral decline of a republic.⁵⁹³ The political implications of this decline have already been addressed in the analysis of *luxuria*, but there is a further aspect to Landino's interpretation in that Juno's attempts to effect Dido's marriage to Aeneas symbolise the way in which the *libido imperandi* or *ambitio* causes the statesman to become wedded to the civil life. Craig Kallendorf has identified this depiction as Landino's most radical departure from the allegorical tradition because, rather than simply serving as a cautionary tale about lust, Dido's story also illustrates the final reappearance and suppression of *ambitio* before any advancement to the contemplation of the divine.⁵⁹⁴ This is, in my view, correct, and it is instructive of Landino's intentions that he hopes to show that, at a point in the civic life in which the vices of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *ambitio* have been subdued at the level of the (inchoate) civic virtues, it is *ambitio* that reappears and seeks to entrap the statesman in direct involvement in governance of the state. Although the great-souled man wishes to proceed to the purgative virtues and the virtues of the purged soul, he becomes so involved in the earthly concerns

⁵⁹¹ DC, p. 181.9-14.

⁵⁹² DC, pp. 181.29-182.6.

⁵⁹³ See above pp. 151-54.

⁵⁹⁴ Kallendorf, 'Cristoforo Landino's *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition', p. 541.

of civic life that he forgets to continue on to the divine.⁵⁹⁵ This involvement emerges from the *libido imperandi* or desire to rule:

For the desire to rule wants to marry Aeneas to Dido (that is, to give the excellent man authority over the kingdom) but it is unable to accomplish this unless the excellent man's love agrees. But this love notices that such a marriage does not benefit Aeneas, but Dido: the marriage is not useful to the souls of men born for greater things, but to the government itself. It is better for us to proceed towards true wisdom than to devote ourselves to activity, but if the administration of the state is abandoned by the wise then human affairs are finished. So, although the excellent man's love understands that what the desire to rule urges is false, it nevertheless agrees: either it has already been ensnared by the desire to rule or it is moved by compassion for those who need to be looked after.⁵⁹⁶

Since Landino has already established that the civic life is noble in its own regard and that there are legitimate reasons to involve oneself in it, not least the return from contemplation of the *sapiens*, it is necessary that he introduce the codicil that sometimes it is not *ambitio* but regard for the vulnerable that can move one to engage in human affairs. Nonetheless, it follows that the advice which Landino hopes to impart to his readers is that, while a statesman can contribute to the good of the republic perfectly well through the extra-governmental exercise of power, he can easily be persuaded into involving himself in the machinery of state by this 'desire to rule' or the immoderate hunger for political dominion. This is, of course, the first of the three dangers of *ambitio* that Landino adumbrated in his initial allegorisation of Juno, the devotion to externalities such as honours and glory and, in this case, power over others, or *imperium*. Landino continues to underline this point by portraying the couple's descent into the cave to consummate their relationship as signifying the corporeal nature of these ends. Hence, just as Aeneas languishes in Carthage over the winter, so 'even excellent men are occasionally diverted from the right course by ambition'.⁵⁹⁷

The arguments against the kind of *ambitio* that causes one to be immersed in affairs of state, then, are somewhat different from those against slipping into tyranny. While the core Sallustian danger of moral laxity remains, the broader harm of the *sapiens* engaging in the civic life rather than contemplation is that, rather than presenting any existential risk, it proves suboptimal for the state when compared to the benefits of the statesman's investigation of the truth. This is essentially a utilitarian stance which recapitulates the position on the benefits of the contemplative life advanced

⁵⁹⁵ *DC*, pp. 184.27-185.1.

⁵⁹⁶ 'Libido enim imperandi Aeneam Didoni coniungere, id autem est virum excellentem regno praeficere cupit, sed rem perficere non valet, nisi assentiatur eius amor. Amor autem animadvertit huiusmodi coniunctione non Aeneae, sed Didoni consuli; non enim animis hominum ad maiora natis, sed ipsi imperio conducit. Praestat enim nobis ad veram sapientiam proficisci quam in actionibus versari, sed rerum administratio a sapientibus si deseratur, actum sit de rebus humanis oportet. Itaque quanvis falsa esse cognoscat, quae libido regnandi persuadet, tamen assentitur, sive iam illa irretitus sit, sive eorum quibus consulendum est misericordia motus', *DC*, p. 185.1-12.

⁵⁹⁷ 'Hoc vero quid sibi aliud vult nisi egregios quoque viros interdum a recto cursu ambitione averti?', *DC*, p. 185.23-24.

by Alberti in his second speech in the first book. Much is therefore made in Landino's discussion of Carthage of the fact that the individual whom Aeneas represents is wise, excellent, superior, of great prudence, and so on, because an entrapment in civil life only harms the state if a politician is of sufficient virtue and wisdom to gain the benefits of intellectual contemplation. In terms of practical moral advice for avoiding such entrapment, Landino presents two lessons through his criticism of the desire to rule that engineers the marriage of Aeneas and Dido. On the one hand he warns against being seduced by the possession of power over others and ruling for ruling's sake, as it were; on the other, he reminds the reader that the *libido imperandi* is contrary to republican principles in that, if one undertakes civic action on its behalf, then one is by definition not acting for the common good of the people. As such, this desire represents an inching towards the kind of *imperium* represented by the Cyclops in which one individual possesses all the power in the state. In the context of his immediate audience these lessons can therefore be understood as a warning to statesmen to adhere to republican norms and to avoid revelling in one's power, even if, as the case of Lorenzo in particular would suggest, this is simply a question of paying lip service to the traditions of Florentine politics.

Landino is frank in acknowledging that, just as Hercules struggled to defeat Juno, so this desire to rule is a difficult enemy to overcome.⁵⁹⁸ Indeed, it causes the most admirable individuals to abandon virtue, compromising such moral exemplars as Alexander and Julius Caesar.⁵⁹⁹ If one is to vanquish *ambitio* and separate oneself from direct involvement in civic affairs, then Landino believes that divine intervention is required. When Mercury, on Jove's command, orders Aeneas to recommence his journey, Aeneas is persuaded by the argument that, even if he cannot rouse himself from the administration of Carthage and continue to Italy for his own benefit, then he must do so for his son Ascanius. For Landino, this signifies how, since eternal life in heaven depends on our virtue in this mortal life, we should divest ourselves of corporeal concerns and ensure our perpetual bliss through contemplation. While rather more of a recondite argument than the hard-headed moral calculus that presents contemplation as being of greater benefit to the state than engagement in civic affairs, this nevertheless makes logical sense in that it directs the reader to the *summum bonum* that is the aim of Landino's moral psychology. Continuing in this vein, Landino interprets Dido's attempts to persuade Aeneas to stay as the inferior reason striving to maintain one's bonds to the civic life rather than proceed to contemplation. The manifold reasons she offers serve to remind the reader of the genuine case for civic action: the civic life loves the *sapiens* because it is through his wisdom that the state is founded, preserved and grown; he has promised to devote himself entirely to the administration of the state; it is difficult to reach contemplation; when the state is deprived of the good it runs the risk of falling into avarice and tyranny.⁶⁰⁰ Hence, this is the point at which, as we have already seen, Landino impresses on the reader that one devoted to

⁵⁹⁸ DC, pp. 186.4-187.7.

⁵⁹⁹ DC, p. 186.11-16.

⁶⁰⁰ DC, pp. 196.8-197.3.

contemplation 'acts as the circumstance demands' and 'does not so much flee the life of activity as withdraw from it' and, moreover, he asserts that the death of Dido shows us that 'republics which are deprived of their *sapientes* must by necessity die'.⁶⁰¹ As much as the defeat of *ambitio* in its guise of the desire to rule frees the statesman from the rigid constraints of direct civic governance, the pursuit of contemplation must nevertheless remain contingent. Even the withdrawn *sapiens* – or Medici scion – must take up the reins of political authority when necessary.

⁶⁰¹ 'Ut vicissim, cum res postulat, agat. Ergo non fugit a vita agendi, sed inde recedit', *DC*, p. 197.18-19, 'Didonis vero interitus nobis perspicue ostendit perire necesse esse eas res publicas, quae sapientibus deserantur', *DC*, p. 198.12-14, and see above pp. 109-12.

3.5 From practical to strategic advice

While the bulk of Landino's *Aeneid* criticism consists in educating the reader to regulate the vices of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *ambitio* in civic life, and therefore mitigate their risks to the proper functioning of the state, his allegorisation in the fourth book of Aeneas' descent into the underworld adopts a different mode of instruction. Earlier, I identified two distinct senses in which Landino conceives the administration of the republic: one situated in the *munus* of right action that involves practical political behaviour in civic life; the other in the *munus* of intellectual inquiry that consists in the strategy, foresight and guidance one can impart to the state having been made wise by the contemplation of the divine.⁶⁰² So far, in accordance with the first of the two forms of political engagement, Landino has set forth a course of moral purification that seeks to improve the health of the body politic at the same time as it excises any appetitive influence from the statesman. Hence, when Aeneas reaches Italy, he has attained, and shown the reader how to attain, the second level of virtue, the purgative virtues. Yet the challenge now at hand is to progress to the highest level of moral virtues, the virtues of the soul already purged, at which one forgets the influence of the appetite and can exercise the dianoetic virtues without distraction. Thereafter, one can develop the wisdom that allows one to discharge the advisory and strategic role which constitutes the second kind of political engagement. Landino is aware that this demands a change of tack. When one exercises the *munus* of detached intellectual speculation, many of the reasons Landino has emphasised thus far to justify his virtue politics no longer obtain. Let us take the obvious example. In order to establish a connection between individual morality and the proper functioning of the state, Landino has hitherto advanced the Sallustian argument that vice's corrupting influence on the intrapersonal foundations of the republic demands certain standards of personal moral conduct on the part of the statesman. If this were the sole factor in proper governance, then there would be no need for any further moral development once vice has been expunged by the purgative virtues. It is therefore necessary for Landino to shift the focus of his teaching from an advisory approach, in which the reader is made aware of the dangers of vice and thereby helped to confront his own failings, to a therapeutic method which invites one to self-analyse in order to recognise the psychological process that lead to vice, in such a way that one is prepared both to purge vice utterly from oneself and to guide others in doing so. The vehicle for this 'inward turn' is the descent into the underworld or *descensus ad inferos* that Aeneas undertakes once he has reached Italy, which represents how the soul must analyse embodied vice if it is to contemplate the divine.

As I have already mentioned, Landino followed the tradition of prior Virgil criticism in affording a central role to the *descensus ad inferos* in his allegorisation of the *Aeneid*, and his models in this respect comprised Servius, Fulgentius, Boccaccio, Bernardus Silvestris, and Coluccio Salutati.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰² See above pp. 102-120.

⁶⁰³ See above pp. 142-44.

Never afraid to appropriate existing interpretations, Landino freely repurposes elements of these works and interpolates them into his analysis. Yet his adaptations of earlier commentators are devoted to the service of innovation and the ultimate realisation of the ethical schema he has outlined. Aware that his analysis of the *descensus* is central to the exposition of his virtue ethics as far as it concerns the transition to the speculative life, and that his educated audience would know it to belong to an intellectual tradition that admitted a variety of readings, Landino spends some time teasing out its historical, literary and philosophical interpretations. He has Alberti enumerate five different opinions on the meaning of the *descensus*: the Platonic opinion, in which the soul falls from heaven into the underworld of the body; the Christian view, in which the souls of wrongdoers go to hell after their death; a figurative sense, in which one is said to fall into hell when succumbing to vice; a magical or esoteric sense in which one ‘descends’ to the underworld to call back the spirits of the dead; and an analytical-investigative sense, in which we devote our intellectual energy to studying the nature of the vices.⁶⁰⁴

His favoured opinion, and the one on which he bases his allegorisation of the *descensus*, is the fifth, that the descent to the underworld represents the investigation of vice and hence – as Kallendorf has recognised – his main focus here is not on the descent of the soul into the body.⁶⁰⁵ Yet Landino is nonetheless obliged to dedicate some scrutiny to the first, Platonic understanding of the *descensus* because, according to his moral psychology, vice arises from an appetite directed towards corporeal things. He therefore offers a potted summary of the theory of the soul which is chiefly assembled from the writings of Macrobius, Salutati and Ficino, seeking to reaffirm the conventional Platonic interpretation of the *descensus* in earlier commentators with an emphasis on the ideas from the *Phaedo* of which Landino is particularly fond.⁶⁰⁶ Plato, he claims, follows Orpheus and ultimately the Egyptians in asserting that that ‘the underworld for our souls is nothing other than the body itself, in which they are confined as if in a prison’.⁶⁰⁷ There are twin lights in the soul, a natural, innate light which is devoted to the cognition of itself and things inferior to it, and a heavenly, infused light through which it is compelled to return to God and receive knowledge of the divine. As the soul relies on its innate light to preserve itself and grow the body, it is dragged down by the weight of this purpose and becomes drunk and confused with corporeal desire, falling from the supernal realm of the fixed stars, or *aplanes*, through the inferior spheres of the planets, from which it acquires various attributes, until it reaches the prison or tomb of the body.⁶⁰⁸ This

⁶⁰⁴ DC, p. 218.8-21 and cf. *Comento Inf.* III.1-12.1-127. As Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*, p. 141, has noted, Landino summarises these methods of *descensus* in his 1488 commentary on the Aeneid. See Virgil (comm. Maurus Servius Honoratus and Christophorus Landinus), *Opera*, (Florence: Printer of Vergilius [C 6061]), 18 March 1487-8, 127r.

⁶⁰⁵ Kallendorf, ‘Cristoforo Landino’s *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition’, p. 543.

⁶⁰⁶ DC, pp. 212.25-218.7 and cf. Macrobius, *In Somn. Scip.* I.x.6-I.xii.18; Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis* IV.i.1-3 and IV.ii.2-3; and Ficino, *De amore* 4.4 and 6.13, *Platonic Theology* XVIII.iv-v and *De voluptate* 2.

⁶⁰⁷ ‘Plato... ita singula prosequitur, ut nihil aliud inferorum locum animis nostris esse velit quam corpus ipsum, quo veluti carcere includuntur’, DC, p. 213.19-21.

⁶⁰⁸ Earlier I mentioned the six fundamental assumptions that Murrin argues Landino inherited from Proclus and Porphyry, and Landino’s philosophical and cosmological arguments here satisfy the first three of these:

Platonic concept of the pre-existence of the soul runs counter to the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, so Landino is obliged to point out that, in reality, the purgation of the body's influence on the soul applies only to the vices committed in this life through choices made under free will, and that hell consists in punishment of such crimes.⁶⁰⁹

In summarising the Platonic view thus, Landino has offered a philosophical basis for his own preferred definition of the *descensus*. Yet since his focus is how one might pass from civic virtue into intellectual contemplation, mere theorising on the relationship between soul and body will not suffice on its own. While the katabasis does involve a descent of the soul into the corporeal realm, it is a therapeutic descent whose purpose is to reflect on vice in order to finally purge it. This is quite a different matter from the application of the moral virtues in the republic so, in order to properly understand the purpose of the *descensus* for the would-be participant in the speculative life, it is necessary first to survey Landino's thoughts on the preliminary steps towards contemplation.

see above p. 145 and n. 449 and Murrin, p. 31.

⁶⁰⁹ On the pre-existence of the soul and Christian theological objections to it see Lodi Nauta, 'The Preexistence of the Soul in Medieval Thought', *Recherches des Théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 63 (1996), 93-135, and Peter W. Martens, 'Embodiment, Heresy, and the Hellenization of Christianity: the Descent of the Soul in Origen and Plato', *Harvard Theological Review*, 108 (2015), 594-620. Also, see above p. 63 and n. 177.

3.6 Preparing for the *descensus ad inferos*

The remainder of Aeneas' journey to Italy after leaving Dido is interpreted by Landino as a series of realignments of the parts of the soul as one approaches the *munus* of speculation: the burning of the ships by women inspired by Juno represents the vulnerability of the inferior reason to the senses when sidelined by the superior reason; the abandonment of the weaker Trojans in Sicily illustrates how the *mens* must separate itself from the senses, the weaker powers of the soul; the death of Palinurus symbolises the wasting away of the appetite once reason has devoted itself to contemplation of the divine.⁶¹⁰ When he lands on the Italian shore he therefore represents a mind divorced from the sensible world and with the purgative virtues instilled as a *habitus*:

For the arrival in Italy displays a habit of virtues already firmly established in such a way that Aeneas would not be swayed from this intended life: not a habit of those virtues which are of the soul already purged, for nothing difficult has yet presented itself [in Italy], but of those which are called 'purgative'.⁶¹¹

While his comrades busy themselves with finding resources, just as the inferior powers of the soul attend to the preservation of life, Aeneas seeks the Cumaean Sibyl, the learning which is concerned with divine things (*rerum divinarum doctrina*), who resides in a cavern at the top of a mountain which, like the shining hill of Dante's *Inferno*, signifies the loftiness of contemplation.⁶¹² Since the temple of Apollo near the Sibyl's cave is joined to the grove of Trivia, which represents human affairs, Landino is able to interpret the arrangement as showing how wisdom (*sapientia*) consists in scientific knowledge (*scientia*) of both divine and earthly things, a clear reference to Cicero's definition of wisdom in the *De officiis*.⁶¹³ Just as Landino had made clear in the earlier books, the lessons gleaned from contemplation are as applicable to the state as they are to the celestial realm.

By explaining how the properties of the mind transition from being directed to the *munus* of action to concentrating on that of speculation, these points serve to tie up any loose ends of Landino's allegorisation of the journey from Troy to Italy. Yet Landino's identification of the Sibyl with learning, or *doctrina*, indicates his forthcoming direction. His account of the meeting between Aeneas and the Sybil is characteristically dense in its allusions, but within this thicket of allegorisation one can discern that he is seeking to impress upon his readers the difficulties of the contemplative life, and to inculcate the rigorous mental discipline necessary to withstand them. For instance, the solidity of Apollo's marble temple signifies that the speculative mind must be firm against psychological *perturbationes*, and the shrine which Aeneas promises to the Sibyl represents the

⁶¹⁰ *DC*, pp. 199.17-203.2.

⁶¹¹ 'Nam adventus in Italiam ostendit habitum virtutum iam contractum ita, ut a proposita vita non sit discessurus Aeneas, non tamen earum virtutum, quae sunt animi iam purgati – nam nihil sibi difficile iam proponeretur –, sed earum, quas dicunt purgatorias', *DC*, p. 203.16-20.

⁶¹² *DC*, p. 204.15-25 and cf. *DC*, p. 181.9-14 and see above pp. 107-08 and n. 327.

⁶¹³ Cic. *Off.* II.ii.5.

necessity of preserving one's learning in the memory.⁶¹⁴ The tool with which we can overcome the difficulties of contemplation is learning, to which those who excel morally and intellectually can devote themselves and transcend the fallibility of the body that conquers the foolish. All this is crucial because the Sibyl warns Aeneas that, even though he has defeated the dangers of the sea, 'harsher things await on the land [of Italy]' than he has hitherto encountered in his voyage.⁶¹⁵ Landino recognised the inherent inconsistency of the idea that the contemplative life could hold greater terrors than those of a life subject to the vagaries of the appetite and therefore interprets the Sibyl's warning as symbolising the lingering desire for civic engagement on the part of one who has taken up speculation. The withdrawal from 'common life and human association', he claims, precipitates sharp pangs of desire that seek to compel one to return to human society.⁶¹⁶ While detachment can, under the right conditions, set one on the path to transcending humanity, it can also induce the opposite effect, provoking beastly madness and melancholy. In order to avoid falling victim to these afflictions, a course of rigorous self-examination is needed. If the Trojans are not to repent of their having arrived in Italy – figuratively speaking – then their leader, possessed of true learning, must foresee all potential eventualities.⁶¹⁷ Landino therefore feels it necessary to draw one more line between the lives of civic engagement and contemplation by interpreting the burial of Misenus as representing the elimination of any trace of the desire for empty glory or, to use the terminology followed so far in the *Disputationes*, *ambitio*. While the death of Dido would have seemed a natural point for Landino to conclude his discussion on this vice, he argues that its ultimate eradication takes place in Italy – and, therefore, when all vices should have been purged – because this is not only a death, but a burial, in which any last traces disappear, never to be revived.⁶¹⁸ Sticking to the formula he has followed so far concerning *ambitio*, Landino points out the transience of empty glory, the pursuit of which seeks only 'honours and the residual signs of virtue', branding it a danger to the state on account of the moral decline of the statesmen who pursue it and thus 'destroy the republic and encounter the greatest hatred of its citizens'.⁶¹⁹ So close to contemplation this enemy is easily overcome, for it appears ridiculous when compared to true, divine, glory. The association of Misenus with vainglory is a common one in the tradition of Virgil criticism, appearing in Fulgentius and Bernardus Silvestris, but here Landino's aim is to recontextualise this interpretation.⁶²⁰ He seeks to impress upon the reader that, if one is to self-examine to the extent necessary to gain the strategic knowledge to guide the state, then civic society must be understood at arm's length. By extension, his insistence that any desire for recognition must be quelled is an attempt to urge his audience to accept that the decisions one makes when

⁶¹⁴ *DC*, p. 207.21-208.18.

⁶¹⁵ *Verg. Aen.* VI.84 as quoted in *DC*, p. 209.4.

⁶¹⁶ 'A communi vita ac hominum coetu', *DC*, pp. 209.28-210.1.

⁶¹⁷ *DC*, p. 212.4-20.

⁶¹⁸ *DC*, p. 227.17-20.

⁶¹⁹ 'Honores vero ac reliqua virtutis insignia sectantur', *DC*, p. 226.26-27; 'et rem publicam saepe perdunt et in summum civium odium incidunt', *DC*, p. 227.2-3.

⁶²⁰ Fulgentius, *Exp. Verg.* and Bernardus Silvestris, *Commentary*, pp. 60.6-61.3 and 63.23-24,

wielding power in a republic outside of civic office must not be made with an eye on posterity or public acclaim. If we are to comprehend how best to direct the republic, then our reflection on the vices that plague it must take place with a mind uncluttered by other interests.

The need to extinguish the longing for civic engagement is part of the wider duty of the purgative virtues to expunge any terrestrial influence from the mind, to which end, as Landino puts it, ‘it is necessary that the spirit wage the fiercest war against the flesh’ prior to contemplation.⁶²¹ One must undertake one last investigation of the vices that have been restrained:

It is the first inroad into speculation away from the vices, for there should be a fundamental understanding about the nature of evil so that we might be able to abstain from it. If we are not purified of the vices, we will never reach the divine.⁶²²

This is not the day-to-day advice for avoiding the attacks of appetite that Landino has laid out in his allegory so far, but an attempt to gain an understanding of the vices from first principles. Nor is it devoted solely to personal perfection. The fact that Landino has placed so much weight on interpreting the Sibyl as *doctrina*, learning that is acquired and taught, implies that it is not only a form of revelatory understanding or experiential knowledge about vice that is being transmitted but, also, a lesson that can itself be passed on in its turn, just as he himself is doing in the *Disputationes*. Alongside the purpose of purgation there is therefore a didactic principle that compels the investigation of vice, one that the contemplative *sapiens* – or the statesman withdrawn from any official duties – can impart to others once he has received it. To put it another way, if one knows the origins and processes of vice intimately then one might better prevent it in one’s fellow citizens. This didactic means of transmitting wisdom stands as the mechanism through which it is possible to offer political strategy and guidance when one returns from contemplation to the civic life. When, therefore, Landino dismisses four of his five interpretations of the *descensus* (the Christian, Platonic, figurative and magical explanations) and concentrates on the idea that it consists in an intimate investigation of the vices, he is explicit that it is a transmissible, didactic kind of learning that is being used to undertake this task. It is for this reason that he has Lorenzo, when articulating how the descent of Aeneas represents the investigation of vice, recognise how the whole disputation thus far has been devoted to his education and that of his brother.⁶²³ Recall that the original question which precipitated the company’s discussion was ‘what it is in [Plato] that you think a governor of the republic should adopt from those who are devoted to the investigation of truth’.⁶²⁴ Lorenzo is acknowledging that the lessons derived from the study of vice in contemplative

⁶²¹ ‘Necesse est, ut acerrimum bellum... spiritus adversus carnem gerat’, *DC*, p. 210.12-14.

⁶²² ‘Est autem primus speculandi ingressus a vitiis. Primam enim cognitionem esse oportet circa mali naturam, ut valeamus ab eo abstinere. Nam nisi expiati a vitiis fuerimus, nunquam divina attingemus’, *DC*, p. 206.10-13.

⁶²³ *DC*, pp. 218.22-219.13.

⁶²⁴ *DC*, p. 12.14-15 and see p. 56 and n. 173.

life can be used to guide and govern the republic (and, for that matter, shows the reader how Landino is self-conscious about his own role as moral instructor). His answer to Alberti therefore follows the thread of his interlocutor's reasoning:

Aeneas therefore entreats the Sibyl (whom you have already interpreted as learning [*doctrina*]) to lead him into the underworld and to his father. When he asks this, he shows how the mind descends into sensuality with learning itself guiding it. For he wants to know the vices which come from sensuality completely... Not only have you made me understand what was said by Virgil in his divine inspiration but, with the similarity of the subjects having been brought to mind, I can now easily imagine what our own Dante meant too.⁶²⁵

Just as Virgil holds that the descent to Avernus is easy, so too is this immersion into sensuality. To return from such a venture, on the other hand, is a far more difficult task and only achievable in three ways, represented by those whom the Sibyl refers to respectively as 'of ardent virtue', the 'children of the gods', and 'those whom kindly Jupiter loved'.⁶²⁶ The first two means by which one can ascend from sensuality are excellence in the moral virtues or in the dianoetic virtues which, as we have seen, represent the twin wings of justice and religion through which the soul, weighed down by the body, can return to its origin in accordance with the orthodox Platonic doctrine of the *Phaedrus*.⁶²⁷ The third means through which one might return from sensuality is by way of a happenstance of birth that, for some, can instil a natural predilection for right action. This is, in terms of practical morality at least, a radical departure from anything discussed in the *Disputationes* thus far and derives its Platonic authority not from the *Phaedrus*, but the *Timaeus*. Landino's line of reasoning runs thus. While the mind itself is not subject to the influence of the stars, the body and its appetites come from the world-soul, which Landino, following Macrobius and Ficino, characterises as 'Jupiter' and which permeates the universe.⁶²⁸ Since the mind can only act in the body through intermediaries such as the senses and the appetite (aside from an occasional divine flash of truth that manifests itself through insight, dreams or omens), and since every different body attracts its own distinctive characteristics through planetary influence or 'the kindness of the stars', it follows that certain individuals are born with an instinctive disposition towards the moral or dianoetic virtues.⁶²⁹ I believe that this view is of hitherto underappreciated significance, because

⁶²⁵ 'Petit [Aeneas] igitur a Sibylla, quam tu iam doctrinam interpretatus es, ut ad inferos et ad parentem deducat. Quod cum petit, ostendit mentem praemonstrante ipsa doctrina in sensualitatem descendere. Vult enim vitia, quae ab ea sunt, penitus cognoscere... Nam non solum effecisti, ut haec a Marone divinitus dicta tenerem, sed similitudine rerum admonitus iam quid sibi noster quoque Danthes voluerit facile coniectur', *DC*, p. 219.5-12.

⁶²⁶ 'Pauci [enim], quos aequus amavit Iuppiter aut ardens evexit ad aethera virtus, dis geniti potuere', *Verg. Aen.* 6.129-31, quoted in *DC*, p. 220.8-10. In *Comento, Par.* Prologo.16-25, Landino again uses this passage to illustrate the different ways in which one can reach heaven.

⁶²⁷ See above pp. 63-64, 83 and 123-24, n. 179 and n. 377.

⁶²⁸ *DC*, pp. 223.3-224.2 and cf. Ficino, *Platonic Theology* XVIII.viii.7, *Phaedrus* commentary, X.2-4 and the summary of chapter XIX, and *Philebus* commentary, XI; Macrobius, *In Somm. Scip.* I.xvii.14 and II.ii; and Bernardus Silvestris, *Commentary*, pp. 108.22-109.7.

⁶²⁹ *DC*, p. 221.16-23.

it grants Landino a mechanism through which he can explain why some republican politicians choose to remain in civic life – that is, in the realm of the moral virtues – while others can withdraw themselves into contemplation using the dianoetic virtues and therefore disassociate themselves from public office. In his treatment of this question in the first book of the *Disputationes*, Landino skirted around the issue somewhat by emphasising that those who favour engagement in politics in early maturity can put contemplation into abeyance until later life. If, however, the world-soul has gifted some leaders with a natural inclination towards speculation on the divine while others are better disposed to civic activity, then Landino's earlier argument that the two *munera* and the ways of life devoted to them are equally meritorious despite the metaphysical superiority of contemplation seems to be based on firmer foundations.

The means by which the *descensus* might be made safely is wisdom (*sapientia*) or, in Landino's system of Virgilian symbology, the golden bough.⁶³⁰ Wisdom, which, like the golden bough, is flawless, brilliant and self-nourishing, grants one the capacity to judge what to choose and what to do – as we saw earlier, in Landino's virtue ethics it is the dianoetic virtue which distinguishes between the principles and the effects of things.⁶³¹ In keeping with his discussion of the world-soul, there is a certain exceptionalism to Landino's view of wisdom because, while anyone can purge themselves with the moral virtues, the intellectual investigation of the divine with the dianoetic virtues is the preserve of only a few. The Sybil advises that the golden bough will only grant itself 'if the Fates call you', so Landino must turn to Ficino's *Platonic Theology* for his explanation.⁶³² According to the Ficinian system, God's self-contemplation consists in three successive orders of activity: God knows Himself; He knows all things; and He causes all things.⁶³³ These activities are wisdom, providence and fate respectively. The 'Fates' which call one to wisdom are therefore the earthly part of the providential order, and however much some might exert themselves in the search for *doctrina*, the ability to attain true knowledge of the divine is only granted to a few. Again, we can interpret Landino's keenness to emphasise the particularity of this gift as an attempt to align conventional civic humanist thinking with the promotion of the contemplative life in Latin Platonism, in that it regards republican governance as a perfectly noble vocation for those who have not been granted the capacity for intellectual reflection by God. In this sense, it is an elaboration upon the idea in the previous passage of natural inclinations being imparted by the world-soul, but goes further in offering a providential basis for these inclinations which is concordant with Christian dogma as well as being consistent with Platonic psychology.

⁶³⁰ On the golden bough see Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis* IV.ii.9, Bernardus Silvestris, *Commentary*, pp. 58.3-59.2 and Fulgentius, *Exp. Verg.*, and cf. Ficino, *The Philebus commentary*, pp. 446-50.

⁶³¹ See above pp. 83-84.

⁶³² Verg. *Aen.* 6.147, quoted in *DC*, p. 225.17, and cf. Ficino, *Platonic Theology* II.ix and XIII.ii.

⁶³³ *DC*, p. 225.18-25.

3.7 The *descensus* and the ‘inward turn’

To summarise briefly, Landino believes that the *descensus* involves the psychological investigation of vice. Once the purgative virtues are embedded as a habit, one can immerse oneself in vice in order to accumulate the learning, or *doctrina*, through which one can pass to the virtues of the purged soul. If there is to be a hope of returning from it, the *descensus* must only be undertaken by those who excel in the moral or dianoetic virtues, or have a natural gift that inclines them in such a way. For those whom God deems worthy, wisdom will be the guide into the exploration of sensuality, and any lingering desire for personal glory must be extinguished entirely.

So in what, precisely, does the *descensus* consist? Since its aim is for the utter purgation of vice through the understanding of its origins then, rather than simply analysing the external manifestations of vice in civic life alone, the *descensus* must investigate the foundational aspects of vice in human psychology, requiring of the reader the aforementioned ‘inward turn’ that was lacking from the Sallustian analysis of the third book. Hence, the reader must self-evaluate. He must reflect on his own mental processes to expunge the memory of vice, and thereby cultivate qualities such as proper decision-making, moral accountability and the capacity to endure the intellectual and physical demands of the speculative life. As these techniques of mental discipline and therapeutic reasoning become ingrained, one will forget the vices and be able to exercise the dianoetic virtues in the life of contemplation. Then, and only then, can the sage transmit the *doctrina* he has accumulated to his fellow citizens as moral advice, and thus guide the state without occupying an official role. The parallels between this course of psychological self-reflection and Landino’s intended political practice within the republic are therefore clear and intentional. Just as the enlightened *sapiens* will later descend from his contemplation of the divine to convey his wisdom for the benefit of the state, so too must one who seeks to fulfil this role first descend into the shadows of corporeality to reflect on the psychological processes from which vice emerges.

That the moral education imparted by the descent to the underworld is therapeutic by nature, requiring a degree of introspection hitherto unseen in the *Disputationes*, is important in distinguishing it from the earlier lessons in the text. Landino’s account of the *doctrina* which one must accumulate consists in a recapitulation of the most important elements of his ethics. These are the usual themes we have seen thus far: that an appetite for corporeal things provokes mental *perturbationes* in the soul; that vice comes about when such disturbances are formed into a *habitus* and one slips from incontinence into intemperance; and that freedom from contagion of the body demands a process of purgation through moral virtues before drawing closer to God with the dianoetic virtues. Yet these lessons are recontextualised in such a way that emphasises their therapeutic purpose. Midway through the journey through the underworld Landino summarises the structure of his approach thus:

For the order in such matters is that first vices are recognised, then, having been recognised, they are fled from so that, having finally been purged of them, we are made suitable contemplators of the divine things in which the *summum bonum* consists.⁶³⁴

The contribution of each part of the *descensus* to the understanding of vice roughly reflects this division. In the vestibule of the underworld, Aeneas is immersed in the vices, recognising them first-hand. As he continues his travels through the underworld, the reader is encouraged to reflect upon allegorical figures that mirror the interaction between vice and the will, such that they gain the mental tools necessary to recognise the psychological processes of vice and, exercising free judgment, can remove their influence. When Aeneas reaches Tartarus, the vices are revisited at a distance, such that they can be properly appreciated in the context of this new, analytical understanding of vice and can then, in turn, be purged. Finally, Aeneas enters the Elysian Fields just as the *sapiens* attains knowledge of the divine.

The first step of the *descensus*, the recognition of vice, begins when Aeneas passes into the underworld itself and enters an antechamber filled with an array of monsters. Aware that he has an opportunity to align his interpretation with that of Plato, Landino notes that these apparitions not only satisfy Platonic doctrine by representing the *perturbationes* of the appetite that the soul experiences on its re-immersion in the body, but also support his own preferred view, in which they symbolise the ceaseless stings of conscience when one falls into vice.⁶³⁵ Landino makes much of Virgil's line that 'pale diseases' (*pallentes morbi*) dwell in this vestibule because of the use of the term *morbi* in the Stoic theory of emotions transmitted by Cicero. As we have seen, this concept describes the condition which occurs when the *perturbationes animi* aroused by the appetite become implanted as dispositional habits and ossify into the vices of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *ambitio*.⁶³⁶ For Virgil to have placed these entities early on in the *descensus* was convenient, since Landino was now able to employ his allegorical skill in the service of the soul's recognition of the vices while seemingly having been afforded philosophical authority for the system of emotional dispositions he had already described. We are therefore told that, just as these monsters contravene the law of nature, so do the sins or *morbi* that they represent contravene the law of reason. Being empty images they cannot be overcome by force but can be evaded with reason's aid. The colourful array of allegorisations that Landino deploys to explain their significance serves as a taxonomy of vice of likely mnemonic value to the reader. So, Old Age represents the risk of the soul falling into vice as it loses its vigour, Hunger and Poverty symbolise different aspects of avarice; Sleep, War, and Guilty Pleasures the turpitude, sordidness and agitation of the soul immersed in vice.⁶³⁷ Through

⁶³⁴ 'Quoniam autem ordo in rebus huiusmodi est, ut primo vitia cognoscantur, cognita deinde effugiantur, ut postremo illis purgati rerum divinarum, in quibus summum bonum consistit, idonei contemplatores efficiamur', *DC*, p. 245.8-11.

⁶³⁵ *DC*, pp. 230.22-231.12.

⁶³⁶ *DC*, pp. 231.21-232.16. See above pp. 129-37 and cf. Cic. *Tusc.* IV.x.23-24.

⁶³⁷ *DC*, pp. 232.21-233.10; 234.6-16. The following allegorisations of the monsters appear in *DC*, pp. 235.1-

their hybridity, the Centaurs illustrate how the tyrant provokes a descent from human fellowship into barbarism, and the Scyllas once again represent excessive sensual desire.⁶³⁸ The Hydra symbolises intellectual and rhetorical deceit, its many heads signifying the fraudulent arguments of the sophist; the Chimera irascibility; the Gorgons the snares of sensual desire by which the foolish are ‘turned to stone’.⁶³⁹ Briareus signifies the rejection of the good advice of nature and, finally, Geryon represents one who, consumed with vice, is governed entirely by the inferior part of the soul. Moreover, proper recognition of vices demands that one knows what is *not* a vice, and hence Landino indicates how in the *Aeneid* the apparitions of Death and Labour are not said to be truly terrible but only seem to be so. The sage understands that, in life, the separation of the mind from the encumbrance of the body is a form of death, and one’s own mortality can be therefore approached without fear.⁶⁴⁰ Likewise, hard work should not inspire terror because one should spare no effort in the pursuit of either action or contemplation. Note that the scope of vices that Aeneas experiences in the underworld is far broader than the triad of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *ambitio* whose management was the aim of the civic virtues. This is an immersion into vice in all its complexity and variety. The reader is now aware that it is the *summum bonum* rather than any external goods that is the end of life, but they must still be able to recognise sin in all its forms if it is to be properly understood and purged by rendering the appetite obedient to reason. Landino would later go into more detail on the process of immersion in the vices in the *Comento* when analysing the eighth canto of *Inferno*:

Having made some progress in this matter [i.e., the cognition of the vices], if we cannot proceed any further – that is, to understand them all – we have to turn back – that is, to leave those things which we have understood. And he shows that we have to observe three things to turn back. First, to return by the same footsteps. This means that we have descended into vice only in order to understand it, and not to sully ourselves with it, and so having understood we have to repent of it in the same way. Second, to turn as a unified whole, because whenever the appetite is separated from the reason it will die. The third is that we have to turn swiftly, because having understood the malignity of vice we have to leave it immediately.⁶⁴¹

236.15.

⁶³⁸ For a similar interpretation of the centaurs, see Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, III.xii.20 and see also Boccaccio, *Genealogie*, IX.27.

⁶³⁹ Landino’s allegorisation of the Hydra is drawn from Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, III.ix, but his interpretation of the Gorgons differs considerably from *De laboribus Herculis*, III.xlii and Boccaccio, *Genealogie*, X.10-11.

⁶⁴⁰ *DC*, pp. 233.15-234.5.

⁶⁴¹ ‘Nella quale havendo facto alchun progresso, se non possiamo procedere più avanti, cioè conoscergli tutti, dobbiamo tornare adrieto, cioè uscir di quegli e quali habbiamo conosciuti. Et dimostra che noi habbiamo a osservare tre chose a tornare a drieto. Prima ritornare per le medesime pedate. Il che significa che chome siamo scesi nel vitio solo per via di conoscerlo, et non illordarcene, così conosciuto dobbiamo pentircene per la medesima via. La seconda tornare insieme, perché ogni volta che l’appetito si scompagnassi dalla ragione perirebbe. La terza è che dobbiamo tornare rauto. Imperoché conosciuto la malignità del vitio, di subito dobbiamo partircene’, *Comento Inf.* VIII.97-102.24-32.

With Aeneas, and the reader, having now taken the ‘inward turn’ in order to recognise the vices through personal introspection, the next step in the process of self-reflection is to flee them. The main didactic method through which Landino hopes to transmit this knowledge is the analysis of the conscience and the operation of the mind during the act of sin. Landino begins his illustration of this process by describing how the four rivers of the underworld encountered by Aeneas – the Stygian swamp, the Acheron, the Styx itself and the Cocytus – represent each of the four steps in the lifespan of vice, from its origin in the mind all the way to the guilt which follows it.⁶⁴² First there is an initial motion of conscience, then a conscious deliberation of sin, then the sorrow after the deed itself and finally a deep-seated remorse. To this disarticulation of the process of vice, Landino introduces another factor that harkens back to his description of the Christian interpretation of the *descensus* as punishment for sins committed under free will, an idea that, for Landino, has implications that are procedural as well as theological. So, just as the boatman Charon commands the passage across the Styx, pushing with his bargepole, so too does vice fall under the auspices of the free judgment of the will as it exercises the power of choice (*electio*).⁶⁴³ However transparently Augustinian this emphasis on free choice during the act of sin might be, Landino’s view cannot be entirely credited to Christian doctrine. He maintains that, since free judgment itself is fallible, it is not required for those who have reached the third degree of virtue as their understanding of necessary goods is second nature. Free judgment is only exercised when choosing between the things which are not obviously goods or, to use the language of Cicero, what is morally indifferent:

It is a quality of free judgment to turn to whichever it wishes: not just to the splendour of reason, but also to the ardour of desire... Let the night in us, which is nothing else than those shadows that come forth from ignorance, desist, there will be no need for deliberation because the mind would know the *summum bonum* clearly and would be drawn to it without any doubt. For we never ‘choose’ necessary things and all deliberation ceases once doubt is removed. So those who are now in the third order of virtues, which are called ‘the virtues of the purged soul’, do not use prudence to choose things but acknowledge nothing apart from true goods, and have regard for these things alone... But since, as I was just saying, no one deliberates about necessary things [i.e., true goods], it was proper for the power of deliberation to be bestowed with this freedom in order that, using one’s judgment, one might decide on one thing among many or, concerning one thing, whether or not it should be done.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴² DC, pp. 236.16-237.6, and cf. *Comento, Inf.* III.70-81, *Inf.* VII passim and *Inf.* IX.73-81.21-26. Landino’s understanding of the rivers of the underworld derives from Boccaccio, *Genealogie* III.5 and 14-17, Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis* IV.ii.5-6, Bernardus Silvestris, *Commentary*, p. 51.20-25 and Macrobius, *In Somn. Scip.* I.x.10-11. See also the fragments of the lost *Sullo Stige* by Porphyry in Stobaeus, *Anthology* I.3.56, I.49.50-54 and II.1.32.

⁶⁴³ DC, p. 237.11-23. Landino references this passage and the role of Charon in *Comento, Inf.* III.82-99.

⁶⁴⁴ ‘Liberi est arbitrii ad utrum velit flecti et ad rationis fulgorem et ad cupiditatum ardorem... Cesset enim nox in nobis, quae nihil aliud est nisi ipsae tenebrae, quae ab inscitia proveniunt, nulla erit consultatione opus. Mens enim summum bonum perspicue nosceret et in illud sine ulla dubitatione ferretur. Nunquam enim eligimus necessaria ac sublata dubitatione omnis consultatio cessat. Quapropter qui iam in tertio virtutum genere sunt, quas purgati animi appellant, ii prudentia in rerum delectu non utuntur, sed praeter ea, quae sunt vera bona, nihil noverunt eaque sola intuentur... Quoniam vero, ut modo dicebam, nemo de necessariis

Hence, free judgment defers to wisdom, just as Charon is persuaded by the sight of the golden bough. Landino cannot be credited for the originality of these attributions because he had lifted them directly from Salutati's *De laboribus Herculis* but, as is so often the case in the *Disputationes*, his inventiveness lies not in innovation, but in his ability to integrate disparate elements into a cohesive philosophical approach.⁶⁴⁵ It has already been established that the initial immersion in the vices or *morbi* can only be negotiated through reason, and so the purpose of this intimate and perceptive depiction of moral psychology is to inculcate the capacity to recognise vice at each stage of its existence. Likewise, the emphasis on the role of free judgment in the recognition of vice has its precedent. As we have seen, Landino's discussion in the second book on the different categories of goods is phrased in terms of personal choice throughout.⁶⁴⁶ While the choice between goods is no longer a concern as one passes from the level of the purgative virtues to the virtue of the purged soul, Landino is nevertheless insistent that one must continue to exercise some degree of free judgment. To exercise power in the state without an official role is not to delegate all decisions, and since one will still be held accountable by one's fellow citizens then one must exploit one's knowledge of vice and virtue gained from the process of self-reflection. One can also interpret this passage as a rejoinder to the concept of the Platonic philosopher-king that Landino has at times been accused of supporting, in that it discourages the reader from any anti-republican sentiments that advance unquestioning obedience to political figureheads. Even if the *sapiens* has attained the third rank of virtue and knows nothing but true goods, he must still then exercise his judgment in more nebulous matters and this judgment is imperfect. Political legitimacy in the guidance of the state is granted by virtue, wisdom and the capacity to recognise vice, and these qualities are valuable for their intrinsic merits rather than for conferring any status that makes the *sapiens* beyond criticism.

At this point, Landino feels it necessary to address the practical matter of the demands of the body in the contemplative life. These are signified by Cerberus, whose three heads represent hunger, thirst and the need for sleep, and such demands can only be pacified through temperate living.⁶⁴⁷ Yet physical demands possess their own ethical dimension too. Landino has Alberti remark how both Lorenzo and Federico da Montefeltro avoid any kind of extravagance in satisfying the needs of the body, with their modesty and sobriety standing as a censure of 'the luxury and lasciviousness of our men who profess a doctrine of total sanctity in their red and black

consulit, oportuit hanc vim ea libertate donatam esse, ut aut de pluribus unum aut de uno, sitne agendum, pro suo arbitrio decernat', *DC*, p. 238.8-23. Note Landino's debt to Cic. *Fin.* III.xv.50-xviii.61, especially Cic. *Fin.* III.xviii.61.

⁶⁴⁵ Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis* IV.ii.6 and 7.

⁶⁴⁶ See above pp. 121-28.

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis* IV.ii.3.29-30. In Fulgentius, *Exp. Verg.* and Bernardus Silvestris, *Commentary* pp. 90.11-91.10, on the other hand, Cerberus is depicted as representing rhetorical eloquence. Boccaccio interprets his three heads in *Genealogie* I.14.10 as flattery, false happiness and empty glory, but in *Genealogie* VIII.6.11 allegorises them as three types of avarice.

caps and their white veils'.⁶⁴⁸ This aside is a coded criticism of Sixtus IV, against the influence of whom Landino, as we have seen, sought to cement relations between the rulers of Florence and Urbino.⁶⁴⁹ In accordance with the aims of his virtue politics, his condemnation of the perceived failings of the papacy is on moral grounds, and seeks to destabilise any claims for Sixtus's political legitimacy. More broadly, Landino would have viewed the example of vice on the part of the clergy as a relevant one in this particular allegorical context because of the religious associations with contemplation from the desert fathers through to Salutati's *De seculo et religione*. The idea that those whose lives ought to be devoted to the knowledge of God are nevertheless subsumed in bodily luxury is utterly at odds with the related kind of contemplative detachment which Landino advocates for the *sapiens*. Lorenzo and Federico, on the other hand, exemplify the kind of virtuous leadership absent in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Before revisiting the vices, one must undertake a final meditation on the processes of the mind which involves contemplating the course of human life through an allegorisation of Aeneas' journey through the underworld to Tartarus. The purpose of this exercise is to understand the misery of those dependent on bodily pleasure, whose absence of virtue leaves them vulnerable to the blows of *fortuna*, and so Landino emphasises two subjects in particular: the fear of death and the disturbance of civic concord. While introspection on each of these matters has the effect of broadening the moral universe of the reader, it also serves to proffer pragmatic advice to the reader on issues relevant to the governance of the republic. First, Landino argues that the *sapiens* must overcome the fear of death which can insinuate itself into those who place too much reliance on the body and its senses. By way of example, he censures suicides who, he claims, 'sin twice': their obsession with the corporeal confuses them into thinking death as a great evil, and they 'impiously' desert their body before they ought to.⁶⁵⁰ In order to remove this fear, the *sapiens* must be free of guilt so that he can rejoice in returning to his true nature. Landino's broader aim in discussing the fear of death, however, is to introduce issues of death's injustice, and in particular that concerning capital punishment. On seeing one who, like Socrates, is unjustly sentenced to death, the *sapiens*, 'will convince with Socratic reasoning whoever has been behaving unjustly and cruelly towards another person that he is not harming them, but himself'.⁶⁵¹ What Landino seems to be doing here, through the circuitous method of introducing a putative third party who might consider subjecting someone in their power to injustice, is advocating merciful and magnanimous conduct on the part of the enlightened politician. The second subject upon which Landino encourages the reader to reflect is the fate of warmongers and seditionists, for which his methodology is similar. While such leaders could have chosen an amicable life, they instead chose to disrupt and shatter the peace:

⁶⁴⁸ 'Quantum nostrorum hominum, qui rubris nigrisque galeris ac niveis ricinis totius sanctitatis doctrinam profitentur, luxus lasciviaque exagitat', *DC*, p. 243.25-27.

⁶⁴⁹ See above pp. 40-44.

⁶⁵⁰ *DC* pp. 245.24-26 and 246.18-247.7. See also e.g. *Cic.Rep.VI.xv.15*.

⁶⁵¹ 'Quin et Socratica argumentatione convincet, quicumque iniuste crudeliterque in alium egerit, non illum, sed se ipsum iniuria afficere', *DC*, p. 246.16-18.

Either, having been inflicted with no harm, they are provoked spontaneously by ambition or avarice to assail with sword, fire and fraud those who are entirely undeserving of such treatment, or, having been provoked, they decide nothing according to law, which is fitting for human beings, and turn themselves to the use of force, which is for beasts. Hence we see the human race, which could have lived in the highest *otium* through harmonious behaviour, constantly thrown into chaos.⁶⁵²

Once again, by censuring the unnecessary use of force by others, Landino intends to warn the audience against any such behaviour while wielding unsanctioned power within the state. Just as he had in the third book of the *Disputationes*, Landino presents the proper, lawful functioning of the republic as distinctively human, and contrasts such a state of affairs with a bestial alternative. Yet this time the animalistic quality is the spontaneous use of force which, unlike the avaricious deceit that he had described using the metaphor of the fox, has as its unspoken point of reference the other famous Ciceronian image from the *De officiis*, the lion.⁶⁵³ That Landino had this figure in mind when composing this passage is supported by the fact that Cicero had created the images of the fox and the lion as illustrations of injustice, the very subject that Landino had just addressed with regard to the fear of death. Hence, when one meditates upon the way in which the mind operates during the perpetration of vice, so too does one at the same time recognise and eliminate the seeds of injustice. Here Landino is expressing the view that, since the moral health of the state consists in that of its politicians writ large, then the ‘inward turn’ can have an immediate benefit to the republic in the same way as was the case for the ethical development of the civic virtues. When the statesman is purged of vice, the republic in turn ceases to enact the sort of internal injustice which leads to the cruel treatment of citizens and stops behaving unjustly towards external parties through war-making and violence.

Having now concluded his reflections upon the workings of the conscience, and with the reader having assembled the mental toolkit with which to understand the process of sin properly, Landino continues his analysis of the moral psychology of vice through an allegorisation of the sinners in Tartarus (etymologically ‘the place of perturbation’), the purpose of which is to revisit the vices at a distance now that one is armed with a new understanding of their nature.⁶⁵⁴ Just as he had employed the image of the four rivers of the underworld to illustrate the progress of vice from the initial act of will to subsequent remorse, so now does he use that of the triple wall of Tartarus to expand upon this idea. Here the three concentric walls represent the mental conception of vice, the act itself, and then the fixation of the vice as a habit of the mind.⁶⁵⁵ As such, Landino adumbrates

⁶⁵² ‘Nam aut nulla iniuria affecti ipsi ultro avaritia ambitioneve impulsu ferro, igni, fraude nihil tale merentes lacesserunt aut ipsi lacessiti nihil de iure, quod hominis proprium est, disceptantes ad vim, quae ferarum est, se contulerunt. Hinc genus humanum, cui per concordiam in summo otio vivere licuerat, assiduo misceri videmus’, *DC*, p. 247.11-16.

⁶⁵³ *Cic. Off. I. xiii. 41* and see above pp. 177-78.

⁶⁵⁴ *DC*, p. 248.7-11.

⁶⁵⁵ *DC*, p. 248.11-23.

the central symbolic purpose of Tartarus, which is that it allows Aeneas and the reader to observe vices that have been implanted as a *habitus*. His particular interest is not only in such habits conceived as a state of being, but also the process by which they are inculcated or – to use the language of his philosophical system – how and why someone can fall from incontinence into intemperance. This is a question of free will. When a vice is established as a habit, Landino argues, it is almost impossible to return to virtue. In a sense, one's capacity for the free exercise of the will has been annulled, because while the initial thought that compels one to vice is voluntary when one is only incontinent and struggles against sin, when that vice is established as a *habitus* in the condition of intemperance then one can no longer forgo it. We have already seen evidence that Landino considered the idea of slipping into intemperance to have an admonitory function in the civic life, and this view also obtains in the therapeutic process required for contemplation.⁶⁵⁶ He wishes to express to the reader that it is imperative that vices are not established as habits because they compromise one's capacity to think and act, while at the same time emphasising that one bears ultimate moral responsibility for such a condition. That he deems it necessary to connect this principle of voluntary action with the concept of intemperance leads us to infer that his intention is to show how, if one who wishes to exercise power in a republic by imparting strategic and didactic wisdom, one must be free to make decisions without any constraining force of vice. One aim of this therapeutic *descensus* is, therefore, to inculcate a self-awareness that one's political choices are made in a state of psychological freedom and non-dependence. Hence, since Landino deems it morally important to show that habitual vice originates from a choice freely made, it is unsurprising that he chooses to attribute characteristics of regret and remorse to the imagery of Tartarus. The fiery Phlegethon that surrounds Tartarus represents how 'those who had delighted in vices, moved by regret, condemn and bitterly despise their former life and are furiously angry with themselves' while the presence of the Fury Tisiphone at the gate symbolises the distress caused by the conscience which, even in the absence of witnesses to sin, 'weighs down on you, censures you, carries you to judgment, delivers its grave testimony and finally convicts you'.⁶⁵⁷ Likewise, while some of the allegorisations of the tortured souls in Tartarus depict vices similar to those present in the creatures in the vestibule of the underworld – the Titans represent impiety, Ixion and Pirithous tyranny and avarice – others are said to symbolise moral qualities more in keeping with the themes of remorse and free will: the vulture devouring Tityos symbolises the conscience gnawing at one's soul; the punishment of pushing rocks demonstrates the futility of devoting effort to things beyond one's capability; the sinners hanging on wheels represent those who commit themselves to the whims of fortune rather than virtue.⁶⁵⁸ Through these latter images the reader is encouraged to

⁶⁵⁶ See above pp. 151-54.

⁶⁵⁷ '[Tantum enim est vitiorum odium, ut et, qui illis delectati sunt,] tandem paenitentia ducti vitam praeteritam damnent vehementerque oderint, sibi vero ipsis accerrime irascantur', *DC*, pp. 248.26-249.2; 'adest tamen ipsa conscientia, quae te urget, insectatur, in iudicium rapit, gravissimum testimonium dicit, convincit denique', *DC*, p. 251.6-8.

⁶⁵⁸ *DC*, pp. 251.12-253.7.

meditate on the importance of self-mastery for progressing to the life of contemplation and, by extension, for providing free-minded leadership when offering guidance to the state.

It should now be the case that the sage who follows Landino's prescribed course of introspection understands the vices in their true, psychological context which is centred upon free will and self-mastery. With this knowledge in place – knowledge which the sage can begin to pass on in turn in the form of learning or *doctrina* – the vices can be purged in order that one can proceed to the cognition of the divine, just as the purified Aeneas proceeds to the Elysian Fields. Now that the process of purification is complete, Landino is keen to show that his allegorical method could be applied more generally, and to this end he has Lorenzo remark upon the continuity between the elimination of vice achieved through the *descensus* in the *Aeneid* and that of the journey through Purgatory in Dante's *Commedia*, the symbolic significance of which he had mentioned in the prologue to his lectures at the *Studio* some years earlier, and to which he would later return in the *Comento*.⁶⁵⁹ Yet his main purpose is to tie up any theoretical loose ends of the disputation. Since the *sapiens* has now reached the highest level of the moral virtues, the virtues of the purged soul, Landino can once again remind the reader of the equivalent merit of the two *munera* in the first book of the *Disputationes*:

If we consider carefully those men whom he places in heaven, we will understand that he has very cleverly included all the things which we set forth about the two ways of life on the first day of the disputation: those who are religiously devoted to the cognition of things and those who justly turn themselves to activity and civil life are both entirely worthy of returning to heaven, as if to their origin.⁶⁶⁰

By emphasising this element of Virgil's description, he hopes to show that the often thorny allegorisation he has outlined over the last two books has been brought to a conclusion that satisfies his preceding theoretical work, and that he has answered his original question of what might be gained from Plato in order to *administrare rem publicam*. To this end, it is essential for the purposes of his intellectual schema that men of action occupy just as auspicious a place in heaven as contemplatives, and Landino was not short of classical precedent in this regard. In his account of the dream of Scipio that ends the *Republic*, Cicero had granted a prominent position to such individuals in the afterlife and, as is so often the case, Landino's thought is derived from the *Commentary* of Macrobius on these passages.⁶⁶¹ Later in the *Comento* he would acknowledge how

⁶⁵⁹ *DC*, pp. 253.27-254.2 and 254.10-31 and cf. *Prologo Dantesco* in *Scritti*, I, p. 53.27-33.

⁶⁶⁰ 'Nos autem si, quos viros ille in caelis reponat, diligentius considerabimus, ea omnia, quae primo disputationis die de utroque vitae genere a nobis exposita sunt, acutissime illum esse complexum animadvertemus, ut et qui in rerum cognitione religiose et qui in actionibus ac vita civili iuste versati sint digni omnino existant, qui in caelum veluti in originem suam redeant', *DC*, p. 255.8-14. Note that the adverbs *religiose* and *iuste* relate to the allegory of two wings of religion and justice that Landino took from Ficino and the *Phaedrus*.

⁶⁶¹ *Cic.Rep.* VI.xiii.13 and VI.xvi.16. See also Macrobius, *In Somm. Scip.* I.viii.12-13; I.ix.6-10; and I.xviii.4-12, and see also *Plat. Rep.* X.615b-615c.

Dante had placed military and political leaders in the spheres of Mercury, Mars, and Jupiter in the *Paradiso* and, since we have already seen the influence of Matteo Palmieri upon Landino's thought in the *Disputationes*, it is also important to note that the same admixture of active and contemplative souls occurs at the conclusion of the *Vita civile*.⁶⁶² In fact, as part of his broader humanistic defence of the value of the *vita activa*, Palmieri goes so far as to grant priority to civic leaders in the afterlife, arguing that God orders the gates of heaven to be opened most freely to governors of the republic.⁶⁶³ Given that we have seen evidence that the precedent he established in using the Macrobian scale of virtue as a means for becoming closer to God was influential upon Landino, it is likely that his affording such prominence in heaven to men of action served as a model for the latter humanist.⁶⁶⁴ Like Macrobius, Palmieri demonstrates to Landino how one can justify a place for republican leadership in a system of perfectionist morality, and thus emphasise the salvific value of both kinds of life.

Where the implications of Landino's treatment of the Elysian Fields differ from those in this Platonic-Ciceronian-Macrobian tradition of dream allegory is that the sequential nature of his own allegorisation must necessarily demand theoretical equivalence between the afterlife and the state of having been purged of vice through the moral virtues. Those who lead lives devoted to the *munera* of action and contemplation therefore appear for different reasons: the former because they have purged themselves with the moral virtues through a life of civic excellence; the latter because they have done so in order that they can continue on to contemplation by exercising the intellectual virtues. Landino's initial conclusion that, while both kinds of life are admirable, contemplation is more perfect, is therefore satisfied, yet at the same time he has one eye on the political implications of this arrangement for the administration of the republic. Since Virgil writes that the souls in the Elysian Fields engage in the same activities they had in life, Landino is able to interpret him as adhering to the doctrine of Plato and the 'Platonic Cicero' that 'administrators of republics, when received into heaven, would not set aside their concern for guiding human affairs'.⁶⁶⁵ Just as in the first book he had reconfigured Plato's dictum about rule by philosophers to appeal to republican ideals, so too he has here adopted a sentiment directly from an ancient source – namely, Macrobius – and reformulated it in a similar way, by replacing *rectores urbium* with *administratores rerum publicarum*.⁶⁶⁶ This shows us that Landino's emphasis on statesmen in the afterlife is far from being simply derivative, but is instead a calculated and self-conscious strategy for integrating Macrobian ideas on the soul into his own intellectual framework. By indicating that political leaders purged of vice can still maintain an interest in the civic life, he offers a justification for how, should any such

⁶⁶² *Comento*, Par. V.85-99; Par. XIV.79-90; Par. XVIII.70-81. Palmieri, *Vita civile* IV.269-79.

⁶⁶³ Palmieri, *Vita civile* IV.269.

⁶⁶⁴ See above pp. 72 and pp. 143-44.

⁶⁶⁵ 'Censent enim administratores rerum publicarum, cum in caelum recepti fuerint, regendorum hominum curam non deponere', *DC*, p. 256.5-7.

⁶⁶⁶ 'Rectores quondam urbium recepti in caelum curam regendorum hominum non relinquunt', Macrobius, *In Somm. Scip.*, I.ix.9. See above pp. 59-61.

leaders continue to move away from affairs of state to contemplation – that is, disengage themselves from any official political role within the republic – they can then return to guide the state as needed. Later, Landino would use another allegory of heaven to present a similar view on the relationship between civic and speculative lives when, in his commentary on the *Paradiso*, he would interpret how Dante the pilgrim turning to the voice of Beatrice, or theology, in the thirteenth canto illustrates how we return to contemplation after having digressed to the *vita activa* for as long as one must.⁶⁶⁷

With the *descensus*, then, Landino's system of virtue politics, set out in the first two books of the *Disputationes* and whose prospectus of moral education began in the third, culminates with the prescription of a course of therapeutic self-analysis. When compared to thinkers whose advocacy of the contemplative life is somewhat less mitigated than his, Landino's originality stands not only in his creation of a coherent and mutually advantageous relationship between contemplation and civic engagement, but also in his willingness to outline a programmatic method for how speculation ought to be undertaken. Hence, rather than being deprecated or relegated to an inferior role by the journey to contemplation, the virtues that govern the civic life are perfected through the 'inward turn' that prepares one for speculation on the divine. Unlike the allegorisation of Aeneas' journey from Troy to Italy, the *descensus* consists of symbolic steps – the initial immersion in bodily vice, the reflection on the psychological processes of vice as a prophylactic against their influence, revisiting the vices armed with this new knowledge and their final purgation of vice – that seek to educate the reader by developing a capacity to make decisions based on intimate self-knowledge rather than by prescribing specific modes of behaviour. The 'inward turn' of the *descensus* therefore expands the horizons of Landino's thought beyond Hankins's interpretation of virtue politics as consisting in legitimising and mediating the use of political power by way of a rhetorical social technology. Certainly, when he is concerned with the exercise of civic virtue in the third book, Landino focuses on Sallustian and Ciceronian ideas of the cultivation of proper behaviour conferring a benefit to the republic. Within the back-and-forth of humanist rhetoric, such conduct could be employed for the purposes of granting political legitimacy according to the model that Hankins describes by demonstrating perceptible evidence of a statesman being wise, just, brave or so on. Yet, when it comes to the *descensus*, Landino's is a virtue politics that also aligns with late twentieth-century accounts of virtue ethics because it seeks to develop the reader as a moral agent through the cultivation of interior characteristics, rather than being directed towards any external concerns such as deontological laws or considerations of benefit or disadvantage.⁶⁶⁸ Virtue, in this analysis, is not only a quality that is outward-facing in that it affords legitimacy of exercise in the eyes of others, but it also consists in an apparatus of moral epistemology that operates at the level of the subjective interior life by developing the conscience in order to eliminate vice. One cannot wield political

⁶⁶⁷ *Comento, Par.* XVIII.1-12.19-29.

⁶⁶⁸ See above pp. 45-46.

power unless one is secure in one's *own* virtue, however much one is believed to be virtuous. Landino's virtue politics therefore encapsulates the very essence of the Ciceronian maxim of 'to be [virtuous] rather than to seem so'.⁶⁶⁹ Important as political legitimacy conferred by others might be, one can only employ one's wisdom in the strategic service of the state after a period of self-reflection whose benefits are externally imperceptible.

⁶⁶⁹ Cic. *Amic.* 98.

Conclusion

Landino was not the first to subvert republican ideals in the interests of the prevailing political climate, as Salutati had done so in the *De tyranno*. Nor was he the first to suggest that it could benefit the republic for statesmen to undertake a Platonic ascent through purgative grades of virtue, because Palmieri had written as much in the *Vita civile*. Yet for him to advance an argument for the legitimate, non-monarchical exercise of political power in a republic outside government that was entirely consistent with both Florentine and Roman traditions, and to establish a basis for this exercise in a course of individual moral perfectionism reliant on the legacy of Plato, was a contribution to political thought that was utterly unique.

This thesis has shown that Landino's innovation was to craft a system of virtue politics that was established on the most fundamental psychological principles yet, since its purificatory programme extended from the premise that divine wisdom gained in *otium* could benefit the state as much as direct political engagement, still managed to justify the position of Lorenzo de' Medici and to broaden the possibilities of what was acceptable in a republic. As such, the *Disputationes* was a startling intervention into the prevailing climate of humanistic political thought. Although Landino follows the conventions of Quattrocento virtue politics in believing that political legitimacy is afforded on account of virtuous behaviour, and that this behaviour should be regulated by humanistic rhetoric, he also repurposes certain foundational assumptions according to his needs. For instance, he reconfigures the central assumption of oikeotic interdependence in a republic such that the natural social bonds of humanity compel both the active politician and contemplative sage to concern themselves with the conservation of the state. Hence while the speeches in the first book illustrate the course of Landino's own intellectual wranglings over the questions that had occupied humanist thinkers on the relative merits of action and contemplation – the relationship of mind and body, how individuals can best benefit the state, to what extent wisdom has a public utility – he nevertheless indicates from the outset that he expounds an explicitly republican Platonism by his distinctive and particular use of language. His conclusion that the best way of life involves both action and contemplation as far as they are needed – that is, that a statesman can both engage in political business and withdraw himself from public affairs to benefit the state with his strategic guidance – therefore preempts and addresses potential humanist objections.

Landino's moral teachings are informed by his keen awareness of Florentine history over the preceding decades, particularly as it related to prominent Mediceans such as Cosimo and Piero, but even more so does the contemporary political context have a bearing upon his guidance. Despite its dedication to Federico da Montefeltro, the *Disputationes* is foremost an analysis and a justification of Laurentian power. The events of the early years of Lorenzo's rule – his parlous political position, his response to the Volterra uprising and his friction with Sixtus IV – all therefore encroach on both the practical advice Landino offers and the subjects he deems it necessary to address in the first place.

Moreover, in its celebration of the similarities between Lorenzo and Federico, one can view the *Disputationes* as an attempt to cement the relationship between the rulers of Florence and Urbino in the face of the influence of Sixtus.

We have seen that, for all its engagement with contemporary events, the system of virtue politics in the *Disputationes* is philosophically rigorous. It rests on a bedrock of psychology and emotional theory which is as indebted to Aristotle and Cicero as it is to Latin Platonism, and which proceeds from the premise that the soul is imprisoned within the body. The appetite, the power of the soul through which we are moved to appropriate or flee things in the sensible world, can strive towards the false ends that are the external goods when it is governed by the senses rather than reason. This corrupt judgment induces *perturbationes* which, when established as habits, are implanted as vices. Since the external goods which distract the soul are sensual pleasure, wealth and status, the task of purification is to rid the soul of their corresponding vices of *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *ambitio*. It follows that, if we are to direct ourselves to the true *summum bonum* of the soul which is the cognition of God – and thereby gain the necessary insight to direct the state outside of government – then we must purge ourselves through successive grades of moral virtue before exercising the dianoetic virtues in contemplation of the divine. Yet the exercise of virtue has implications beyond the level of the individual. Political associations emerge from a natural human impulse to forge interpersonal bonds so, following Sallust, the restraint and expiation of vice at the level of the moral virtues is necessary for the political well-being of the republic.

As well as establishing these philosophical foundations for his virtue politics, in his *Aeneid* allegory Landino also outlines a system of practical ethics with which one might purify oneself in order to contemplate God and thereby attain the wisdom that justifies the exercise of extra-political power. In the battle against sensual desire, Landino prescribes that we inculcate a desire for self-improvement, that we prevent a desire for bodily pleasure as being habituated as the vice of *luxuria*, and that we understand the transitory nature of the corporeal world. In doing so, we gain resilience in the face of the appetitive attacks of *fortuna*. Then, we must be aware of the dangers of *avaritia*, both in its acquisitive form – through being aware of the risks of financial inconstancy and resisting the desire to wage war for wealth – and in its miserly form, by acknowledging that distributive justice, the proper allocation of resources and beneficence are essential to the functioning of a republic. For *ambitio* to be conquered, it is necessary that a leader's greatness of soul must be directed by reason, avoiding cruelty and brutality in one's decisions lest one descend into tyranny. Political leaders must also be aware of the risks of self-deceit, subjecting themselves to critical scrutiny and avoiding flattery and toadyism, and resisting the seductions of civic life that cause them to abandon the position of strategic guidance with which they can better benefit the state.

To supplement this didactic schema of practical ethics, Landino steps beyond the Sallustian view of political morality he otherwise endorses. He encourages an 'inward turn', such that the reader undergoes a therapeutic process of self-reflection to gain the mental capabilities to utterly purge

themselves of vice and communicate their knowledge of it to others. Through this programme of introspection, Landino offers a path to the kind of self-knowledge necessary to direct and guide the state outside of government. First one learns to recognise vice in all its forms, then one learns how to flee vice by understanding the operation of the conscience and the deliberative process under free will, celebrating mercy and censuring the use of force, then, finally, one learns the importance of self-mastery by revisiting the vices at a distance.

With this thesis I have therefore demonstrated how the *Disputationes* functions as a defense of the exercise of extra-governmental power in a republic through its philosophical structure, its system of ethical praxis, and its involvement with the contemporary political and intellectual climate. I have shown how Landino's adaptation of Platonic thought is rooted in the concerns of human society, aiming to analyse how political power ought to be used within a republic and seeking to foster the kind of moral development that strengthens the interpersonal bonds on which the state relies. In the *Disputationes*, Landino was presenting a form of 'civic Platonism' with its own distinctive aims, an approach which is deserving of study on its own terms rather than being seen as a derivative or revision of Ficino's more theologically-focussed work. I think that awareness of this fact could lead to profitable future studies of the points of intersection between Quattrocento Platonism and republicanism, in particular those which might trace the genealogical and relational aspects of 'civic Platonism'. Given the abundance of similarities between the *Disputationes* and the *Vita civile*, the work of Matteo Palmieri would seem an obvious starting point for such a task. Furthermore, I believe that my thesis raises other tantalising prospects for further research. How far might Landino's loosening of republican conventions in the *Disputationes* have influenced subsequent political thinkers? In particular, how did its support of the use of unsanctioned power in a republic contribute to the contrasting defences of princely and republican government by Machiavelli? We might also ask whether Landino's subversion of oikeiote socialisation to extra-governmental ends can tell us anything about contemporary theories of the foundation of the state. There are many implications for the arguments Landino lays out in the *Disputationes*. Understanding them will demand further effort and insight, or – as Landino would prefer it – both action and contemplation.

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Appendix: Translation of the first two books of the *Disputationes Camaldulenses*

Book I

Of all the varied and diverse endeavours in which the human race is engaged, Most Illustrious Prince Federico, there is one in particular that is not only universally valued by all who possess even a little prudence, but is also considered to be the best in the opinion of the wisest men. It is that in which we seek the ultimate goal of everything the Greeks call the *telos*, an goal at which, when we reach it, we can rest in safety and tranquility as if at the finishing line of a race. I do not know what I could imagine as being more wretched than the human condition if the highest God had not set out this end as certain and ordained. For if nature had established in all other things – either with or without souls – some final and ultimate end at which they were rightly said to be blessed when they attained it, wouldn't we think it to be very unfair to us if it were only the human being who never discovered the goal to which it directs its wearisome and almost endless efforts, all its thoughts, the whole course of its life? Yet just as, for an archer, a target is set out in the distance at which he aims and directs his arrows, so too has the ultimate goal of humanity I mentioned been set out by unerring nature. If this goal is neglected then a person will always be wretched, but if not – and all ethical behaviours are directed towards it – then we will attain the highest bliss. What can we imagine to be more foolish than such neglect for those of us who grind out such assiduous vigils, who endure such intolerable labours, who rush into such manifest danger on behalf of things which are entirely fruitless and very often rather harmful? Should we not invest even the smallest concern in those things through which alone we can be armed against the varied blows of fortune, and through which we perceive the difference between what is empty and shadowed and what is solid, clear and truly good?

Since I was often turning this subject over in my mind, it did not seem as though it would be without benefit if I were to commit to writing those speeches which I remember being given by Leon Battista Alberti, of all men whom I had ever seen the most well-versed in every kind of learning and distinguished by the highest eloquence. The speeches concerned the twofold way of life which is suitable for human beings and the ends of good and evil, and were based on the divine images of the poet Virgil. Since I wanted to dignify my book with the authority of a prince who greatly surpasses all those our age has produced in both these kinds of life, I found none whom I could compare to you, illustrious Federico, even though I circled the whole of Italy with my mind's eye for a long time. For although there are some with a certain noble character who care for the community and state in such a way that, through wise advice and right action, they do not just benefit themselves but also others, and there are some who, endowed with a greater mind, raise

themselves to the contemplation of divine matters by leaving human affairs, don't we know that you possess both of these qualities? It does not escape you that those who write about the social and civic life divide the subject as a whole into the studies of peace and war. They show that peace should be sought for its own sake and that war should be sought not for its own sake, but in order that it can be undertaken to attain peace. What virtue is unknown to you through which civic harmony and communal tranquility are first established in the state, and then maintained, as if on the best foundations? And what virtue is unknown to you through which we best guard against inciting the hatred, envy or contempt of foreign nations and princes through our own faults? For when I call to mind what your thought processes are when exercising your sovereignty with an almost divine wisdom, what administrative decisions you make on account of your excellent sense of justice, how much you always inspire faith, and how much you want this faith to become common amongst all, and since countless further examples offer themselves in which your great devotion to immortal God, your beneficent liberality, and your prince-worthy clemency have been noted across all Italy, I willingly recognise in you a second Numa.

What is there in military matters that mortals can either desire from nature or pursue by industry, skill, habit or exercise, which we do not see completed and perfected in you? Indeed, by the common consensus, we think it a marvellous thing – and one which appears very rarely across all the centuries – that a man is found, distinguished in virtues which are so many and so great and so varied and so difficult, to whom the command of the whole army can be entrusted in the gravest danger, when it battles for the greatness of empire, for liberty, for the safety of the community, and even for life and blood itself. How should I recount what is best about you? I have no fear of seeming to have said on account of flattery things which are not only celebrated across all Italy, but also move many foreign peoples and countries to admiration. But I do not know how I can confine within the narrowness of this preface your deeds, which could not be treated satisfactorily in proportion to their worth even with the broadest range of historical narratives. On account of the great conflagration of wars in which all have burned for a long time, our age has brought forth leaders eminent in military matters with whom it was necessary for you to engage in combat on various occasions. But in order that I may pass over many of them, isn't the common opinion about Jacopo Piccinino that he added profound judgment and no small courage to his intellectual quickness and familial cunning? Indeed, in the war that he waged so fiercely in hatred for the kingdom of Apulia, he conducted himself in such a way that I can name no one, besides you, who could have overcome him without the benefit of luck, but with strength and diligence alone. Sigismondo Malatesta had inflamed an implacable hatred against you, and the enmity had progressed to such a point that it seemed that one of you either had to die or to submit to the victor. This conflict had excited the minds of all Italians and, although most people wished you victory on account of the distinction of your life and your morals, the outcome of the matter nonetheless appeared doubtful to all. For the rumour was that he possessed the great power of

gold. He certainly had an excellent army, and the duke himself was perceived to be remarkable in his many virtues regarding matters of war and in his long experience. About you, though, I say nothing. While I am telling the truth, I shall not now seem to disparage one who, being dead, cannot respond to the life I have presented. However, both the just and unjust must acknowledge that you descended into battle reluctantly, provoked by the offence of your adversary, and that, driven by a cause most righteous, you undertook the matter with great deliberation and executed it with magnanimity. Finally, you managed the victory in a most clement way so that all were able to understand that you wanted nothing more than peace, and had conducted the war in nothing other than a peaceful spirit. For when the two brothers of your enemy came into your power, you encouraged them to hope for better things and sent them away uninjured after comforting them with a long speech, having honoured them with much money and assuaged them with numerous promises. Indeed, with his father dead, you embraced the elder of the two with such love that you recognised him as your own son and committed yourself, while duke, to defend and conserve for him whatever was left of his father's kingdom. With this wisdom, with this preeminence of spirit, you liberated the city of Rimini from an arduous siege and overcame the strongest troops of the enemy so that the greatest part of the soldiers were captured along with their military banners and were looted of all their supplies! At the same time, although they had long resisted boldly, both Alexander Sforza, a duke distinguished in many wars, and Napoleone Orsini, a man highly celebrated amongst military leaders, finally obtained safety for themselves in flight after having been wounded. But these are a few things out of many. Our age remembers how many were the regions, diverse in both their position and the nature of their terrain, in which you fought different kinds of enemy under assembled banners. It remembers how strong the cities you besieged were. It remembers how many besieged cities you liberated from their enemies. Who could ever question either your capacity for foresight or your readiness to act in such matters? Fabius Maximus, or the two Catos, or Sertorius, or – to refer to foreigners – Hannibal or Mithridates, all of whose military acumen is praised to the utmost: what scheme did they ever devise craftily and shrewdly and cunningly against the enemy that you were unaware of in matters of war? We see that, on entering into public office, the endurance of fatigue on the part of leaders is worthy of the highest praise, because they perform the duty of both the highest commander and the most vigorous soldier at the same time. Of this type, so that I may pass over others, both Marius amongst the Romans and Jugurtha amongst the Numidians have been memorialised. Who doubts that a commander possesses a strength and toughness of the body to often turn the course of battles that are utterly lost? We read that Julius Caesar and the two Scipios – who died bravely in Spain after conducting themselves most gloriously in battle – also Marcellus and, amongst the Greeks, the Spartan Leonidas, the Athenian Themistocles and the Theban Epaminondas, led their armies through their own example and by throwing themselves first into danger, where previously no prayers, no threats, and no speeches had been able to urge their men on. Not only do those who are genuinely well-

disposed attribute these two qualities to you, but your enemies are also compelled to concede the fact, even if unwillingly. But what are we doing? I did not set out to praise you at this moment. That needs more time and leisure. And so enough about your deeds.

As far as the peaceful life and study of culture are concerned, who does not know that from an early age you were inclined to drink in youthful learning with great avidity during total freedom from other things? Thereafter, you were never so busy that you did not take yourself away from your affairs for a part of the day and spend it in the study of varied learning. So, since you could already interpret the poets very well early on, and had scrutinised the written words of all historians, and had not only made yourself very familiar with the principles of speaking but had also practised them diligently, you then turned all your attention to philosophy itself. In this subject you imitated the example of the greatest leaders. Since you read that Alexander the Great employed Aristotle, and Scipio Africanus employed the Stoic Panaetius, and that many other leaders employed the most learned men as teachers, you always – and with great generosity and honour – have people who are outstanding in every kind of learning as your guests. Whether you are at home, or abroad, or even at war, you always have many around you who are able to discuss the most profound subjects with learning, elegance, and skill, so that, even amongst the clatter and tumult of the greatest battles, constant voices of debate may be heard. It will therefore come as a surprise to no one if, just as all commend you as the most righteous in peace, the strongest in war and the wisest in either, so too do they deem you most learned in the pursuit of culture. To whom, therefore, could I have dedicated this book, in which both kinds of life are discussed, other than to you, who has embraced both of them so as to excel in each? But in order that we hear the disputation of Battista himself as soon as possible, hear first, and briefly, what the origin of this conversation was.

When we had arrived at our estate in the valley of Casentino, my brother Piero and I decided on the following day to ascend into the Camaldolese forest – a region famous to you and all Italy for its ancient religion – for the sake of both avoiding the heat and relaxing our minds. In this forest, one can enjoy the spring sky and exceeding wholesomeness with the greatest pleasure when ‘Sirius rages vehemently bringing sickness and fever to mortals’, as it is in Homer. After we had come first to the cenobites, then to the hermits (if I use the Greek), we spotted that Lorenzo Medici and his brother Giuliano had arrived a little before us and had brought with them Alamanno Rinuccini, Pietro and Donato Acciaiuoli, Marco Parenti and Antonio Canigiani, very learned men and ones who, because they had attained power and variety of speech through great skill and long practice from their early years, had in turn made the greatest progress in philosophy with vigorous daily study. They went straight into their cell in which they rested, having been exhausted by the difficulty of their journey, and I came upon them while they were sitting down. Since they were expecting no such thing, they arose at once upon seeing us, seized with a sudden joy, and, after we had exchanged the pleasantries usual on the first meeting of friends, Lorenzo said ‘Landino, we longed for nothing more to happen than for you to surprise us in such solitude. For these few days,

in which all is being burned up in the most intense heat, we have decided to escape from the cares and distastefulness of the city into this pleasant place, in order that we might enjoy the more temperate skies of the mountain and devote ourselves to some pleasures of the mind. If you join these philosophers and me, I do not expect there will be any kind of enjoyment or pleasure that is lacking.’

When I began to respond to Lorenzo, something suddenly interrupted my speech. It was announced that Leon Battista Alberti would shortly arrive. He had recently come from Rome and, since he had followed the Aretine road into Figline to visit Marsilio Ficino, easily the most preeminent man of our time amongst the Platonists, they had agreed not to go to Florence until they had avoided the whole heatwave in the Casentino valley. They had already arrived at the monastery and, having stabled their horses, came up to us with a slow step alongside Mariotto, the prior general of Camaldoli, a man esteemed in both religion and learning. At this news all were seized with a sudden joy and were enthused with a great desire to meet and speak with them. We go to meet them; we meet; we greet each other. For the rest of this day – for by now the sun was already setting – we consumed the speeches of Battista. He was a man who was the most abundantly gifted with wit and culture of all who had been born for many centuries. For what could I say about his learning, when absolutely nothing exists that can possibly be known by humans to which he could not turn himself knowledgeably and wisely?

The following day, when we had all risen and attended the holy rites, we decided – for the sake of health and pleasure – to walk through the higher part of the forest which extended to the summit of the mountain. Eventually we arrived in a flowery meadow, where a spreading beech covered a clear spring with its stretched branches. Here Battista said: ‘Look, my esteemed friends! Both the tree itself and the stream which gushes from the spring with a pleasant murmur recall the Socratic image of the plane tree and brook. The seats which you see everywhere, formed by nature but improved a little by the effort of a shepherd, receive us pleasantly, so that we may rest comfortably after this stroll up the steep hill.’ After we sat he said, ‘I think that those learned people who take themselves into some solitude – not all the time, but often enough – having either put their public and private affairs in order or set them aside for another time, are truly blessed. Thus, as it is amongst our theologians, with Martha having been left to the waves by which she is always buffeted, such people rest in Mary’s safe and peaceful harbour. Not only can they look down on the lands and the seas from her high rocks as if from some tall watchtower, but much more ardently can they look up to the heavens themselves and, having regained their Platonic wings, can soar around the whole upper world as another Zethus. But even though it should often be done by all learned men, it is very advantageous for you, Lorenzo and Giuliano, to do it most often of all. For you understand that the entire burden of the republic already rests on your shoulders because of the worsening sickness of your father. Although virtue appears manifest in you, Lorenzo, it should be thought more divine than human, because in your adolescent years nothing is so great or difficult a

problem that you cannot both grasp it with a mature prudence and approach it with an unconquered magnanimity. Although you flourish in an age which is always inflamed with every sort of greed, although established with a fortune and abundance of possessions by which we often see men who are great and noble through the long-lasting exercise of great virtues shaken from their firm moral position, you never transgress the limits of modesty. Nevertheless, I think that it is of great importance both for you and the republic that, since you will soon undertake the governance of the latter (and, indeed, for the most part you already have), you spend any free time here, withdrawn from public business. Distant from urban tumult, you can investigate and understand through debate – either by yourself or, preferably, with these learned men who care deeply about you – those things through which our souls are led to an understanding of their origin and divinity. For no-one will properly manage either himself or a republic unless he has first both purged his mind of every bodily fault with those virtues which improve life and morals, and has then illuminated the mind which has been purged with those virtues which provide an understanding of supreme things, so that he will have properly understood why he himself and the rest of humankind exist and for what reason they were created by the highest God. I think that this pretext motivated the divine Plato, for while he does not venture to assert anything outright about almost any other subject, he nonetheless seems to declare this without any hesitation: only those republics which are either administered by philosophers or whose administrators have begun to philosophise will ultimately prosper. So go on, good youths! While the diligence of your father and grandfather served to nourish you with learning almost from your very infancy, such that you seem to have sucked it up along with your nurse's milk, you have now progressed to such a place that this birthright should no longer be held accountable for your ability. Because, thanks to nature's blessing and your efforts, a sharp intelligence and extraordinarily mature judgment now shines in you both, you are easily able to achieve that which you desire.'

Then Lorenzo said, 'You indeed advise us wisely and – to respond for my brother too – with paternal concern. And so, in order that you see how much I value your teachings, I ask of you that, since you have mentioned this way of life which is occupied in the investigation of lofty matters, you continue and explain the whole subject in detail to my brother and I, as we would very much like to know about it. For although every kind of human action – whether you provide for yourself, or you take care of your personal affairs and family, or you ultimately undertake public office – is guided by the standard of the virtues which we call "pertaining to life and morals", we still follow these virtues mostly through habit or through custom. And while everything that Plato has communicated to me on this subject through the mouth of Marsilio (who understands the mind of such a great philosopher more than anyone else) seems truer than any oracle, I would very much like to know what it is in that author that you think a governor of the republic should adopt from those who are devoted to the investigation of the truth. So, since you are always good-natured and liberal with whoever asks you questions, do not make things too difficult for us today, contrary to

your nature and habit. The pleasantness of the place and the hour of the day and delightful cool breaths of the breeze do not only allow, but even demand it, and the murmur of the flowing brook and the harmonies of varied birds alluringly urge us on with their voices.'

When Lorenzo had said this and all of us, admiring the intelligence of the youth, had enthusiastically approved the request, Battista, smiling gently, said 'I would have preferred that I had less authority in your eyes than you immediately show how much you make of me, particularly in a matter which demands a much more careful investigation than our sojourn in the country – more suitable for leisure than for argumentation – is able to offer. For it is a difficult question, which cannot easily be resolved with an improvised debate either by the most learned men or by the less learned (within which I suffer to enumerate myself) without long preparation. But how impudent would it be to deny something to your youth, to which even those who are less knowledgeable and more severe are forced to be well-disposed, given such an ardent zeal for learning? Indeed, I hear the constant rumour from the many people who visit me daily in Rome that you have long been determined to dignify all those who excel in any way in learning with every kind of honour and reward, and that many already have experienced your care and liberality. I should therefore appear to be risking the charge not only of being severe, but also ungrateful, if I left wanting someone who very much deserves to learn. Add also that, since a little earlier I encouraged you into such a debate, I would be deserting my duty both as a good man and as a friend if I allowed someone with a most noble desire to desire in vain. So I will not approach the issue intent on hoping to resolve it as much as being compelled by the shame of refusal. For I would prefer to be thought lacking in my prudence by the learned men who are present while obliging your request than to be accused of rudeness if I did not oblige it. Since you ask this of me, I think I ought to proceed in my disputation on the two ways of life in such a way that first I address each one separately and then I compare them to each other. In this way, although we believe that the most perfect person in this life which we live has united both, it shall nonetheless be apparent which one of them is more excellent. And in order that I shall appear to know philosophy under the gaze of such great philosophers, that is how I shall begin.

Not only do the learned demonstrate with clear arguments that the soul is the principle of life just for the reason that it exists, but everyone whose senses are unimpaired can almost see it with their own eyes too. When we act in a wise, just, brave or temperate way with respect to the things which pertain to public life or, separating the mind from the senses, we look up and speculate upon the divine and eternal, we do not say that the soul is able to do so because it *exists* as such, but because it has the capacity to attain such powers. So, since we have been produced by nature both to act correctly and to investigate the truth, the learned decided to propose two ways of living in accordance with these two functions of human life.'

‘They are very admirable,’ said Lorenzo, ‘but if someone were to ask me now whether there are other functions that the human soul performs besides the ones you spoke about, I would answer that there are indeed many.’

‘It performs many functions,’ said Battista, ‘while it is in the body. But it does not escape you that, since we are investigating human life, we seek only the sort of thing which is peculiar to human life insofar as it is present in human beings alone, and in nothing else. So what do we say is peculiar to something other than that to which it is most greatly inclined and disposed? They say that something lives both for that which is peculiar to it and that to which it proceeds of its own accord. If this is the case, we cannot say that a human being lives in order to nourish the body, or to grow to the right size from being very small, or to produce something similar to itself, because these functions of life are not peculiar and characteristic but are in common with crops and trees. Nor, on the other hand, does a human being live to feel or move, for how does this differ from a brute animal? But the human being lives in order to think, because it has a mind which, when you set humans aside, you find is shared with no other living creature. It is characteristic of the mind both to act while guided by reason and to speculate on the truth. So, having excluded the other functions of life, which are no more our functions than they are of any other living creature, we say the life of a human being – insofar as what makes one a human being – should be devoted to action and speculation. Some who argue in favour of adding to these two a third type, which depends on pleasure, seem to me to err gravely. For although many mortals are devoted to sleep and to gluttony or are captivated by sexual enticements and always lying on the ground, never looking up to the heavens, I do not see why they should be counted amongst men rather than amongst the herd. In fact, since the carnal pleasures by which the senses are titillated are not from the mind but from the senses themselves, why do we think they should be ascribed to humans rather than to other animals? So, since the mind alone is ours, if we are not to degenerate from our nature we should live with that mind as a ruler in such a way that we direct all our exertions either to the social bonds of life – and not for ourselves alone but, since we were born into a community and a society, we must care for our parents, for our children, for all our friends and devote ourselves to the just and the right – or, with civil office and activity either abandoned or postponed for another time, to devote ourselves to speculation on the truth.

So either we do something, or we meditate. It does not concern me that some, engaging us too much in trivial quibbles, deny that speculation is a way of life. For they say that the term “life” implies some movement, but speculation should be performed in repose rather than in motion. This I cannot deny, particularly since it is written in the book of Wisdom that “entering into my house I will rest with her”. But who cannot see that, even if we must be free from external motion while we are devoted to the investigation of things, it nevertheless cannot be performed without some type of movement? So we can abandon this objection, because we do not investigate the life of other living creatures but that of humans, which is either devoted to doing things or to the

cognition of the truth, and in either case in such a way that, if it is done with right reason, we are doing something that is pleasing to immortal God and we are greatly benefitting the human race. This is established by the firm consensus of all amongst the ancient poets, who acted as theologians in the ancient religion, and all amongst our own theologians. To pass over the rest, doesn't Virgil, when he proposes certain eternal rewards to the dead, bring forth the words "those who improved life through discovered skills"? So he praises those who invented various disciplines and sciences by daily investigation, or those who have contributed no little improvement to things which others had already invented. But in order that the other type of life is not left unhonoured, he proceeds with good deeds thus: "Here are the dead, who suffered wounds fighting for their country, and those who were unblemished priests while their life remained, and blessed poets, worthy of Phoebus's words". This pertains to Christians. It has been placed in the open in such a way that it does not need proof. For we see speculation represented both in the oldest writings of the Hebrews, under the name of Rachel, and in those which sprung from Christ, under the name of Mary. On the other hand, we see action represented in the former through Leah, in the latter through Martha. So each way of life is ours, such that we bestow with much praise the lives of those people who excelled in either one or the other.

But since all things are distinguished from one another by their greatest end, who does not see that, just as we intend the right and fair in acting, so too are all intellectual investigations devoted to the truth? The latter, ascending many steps in their order, gradually climbs all the way to the contemplation of the incorporeal and divine essence of God Himself. For, although they are few in number, we nevertheless see some who, reminded by certain shadows and images of the things which fall in our senses, were ardently inflamed by love of the divine. Having abandoned all duties and active occupations, and hitherto having only perceived material bodies with the senses and the likenesses of these bodies with the imagination, they contemplate these things in succession: the nature of bodies with the reason itself; spirits which are incorporeal, but nevertheless created, with the intellect; and, finally, that which is uncreated with the intelligence. A wonderful progression through which our soul, gradually removing itself from the troublesome prison of the body and being raised to higher things by those increments which we have mentioned, ascends from the lowest dregs of matter all the way to the summit of divinity. So we can in fact infer a general argument if we say that the purpose of contemplation is to be devoted to truth, because the human mind is perfected and completed by this truth.

Perhaps you will say: will it be any kind of truth? Indeed it will, and especially if we devote ourselves to the contemplation of God. Our intellectual investigation aims for God as the ultimate goal of its progress. All actions and human thoughts arrive at God. When you have reached Him there is nothing beyond to which you can progress. For there you will comprehend that ultimate and final highest good, which all desire by natural impulse. A few, having dispersed the mists of error and ignorance, understand that which not only the Christians proclaim, but the Aristotelians

understood long before the birth of Christ, and the Platonists long before any others. The divine Plato thinks that our souls have sunk from the lap of God into this extreme filth, or, rather, were taken down to adorn this lowest part of the world. They remain stunned for some time by the fall from such heights, and stupified, as if drunk, by the confusion of the matter which they entered, until gradually their inherent divinity awakens some remembrance in them, though it returns obscured. Inspired by this supreme love of divine things, the soul strives to recognise them in justice and religion, as if supported by two wings. It raises itself to the heights and, as far as the keenness of the soul endures the deadening contagion of the body, it contemplates the light of God, and not without the highest pleasure. But when our souls are stripped of all mortality and are returned to their simple nature, it will finally be possible not only to appease, but to thoroughly quench, the long-lasting thirst of knowing God.

But I return to the human being – that is, to an living creature which, since it consists in a soul and a body, is able to overcome the weakness of the body in some measure with the durability of the soul. Separating the mind from the senses, elevated with its wisdom, and instructed in all the learning of the things I mentioned a little earlier, the human being is gradually guided upwards by this understanding, where eventually it is nourished by ambrosia and nectar. When Plato says this, what else do I understand that it enjoys apart from the cognition of God and the pleasure which is experienced through this cognition? For although the cognition of God is best achieved through the virtues of the mind – for intelligence perceives the principles of things, scientific knowledge the processes and the effects resulting from these principles and, finally, wisdom tells one from the other –, we will nevertheless be attempting these things in vain if we are not free from all mental disturbances. How will those enticed by carnal pleasures, or captured by avarice, or inflated by ambition be able to think about anything higher? So it is also thought that the virtues of life and morals, by which our minds are expunged of all squalor of vice, must be exercised, and exercised in such a way that we begin our ascent with them. For if, as in Plato, it is a sin to touch the pure with the impure, if in the Evangelist, “blessed are the pure in heart, since they themselves will see God”, then it will surely be futile for us to attempt this intellectual investigation unless we bring to it a mind that is cleansed of all stain. Virtue is “fleeing vice, and the beginning of wisdom is to have abandoned stupidity”. Horace is quite correct in saying these words, and indeed he saw the same thing that, many centuries before, the poet and prophet David expressed in his illustrious psalm. For he mentions someone who asks: “who will go up to the mountain of the Lord, or who will stand in his holy place?” To which he immediately replies: “the innocent in hands and the pure in heart”. So he who restrains not only his hand but also his mind from vice will be suitable to ascend the mountain of the Lord. For there is the unmoving rest which alone can make us blessed: not in the ascent, but when you reach the summit by ascending. So rest is not given unless you first strive, and you will not rest comfortably on the flat crest of the mountain, from where we can see all, unless you have first reached the summit by climbing through steep cliffs.’

‘Now I see what you mean,’ said Lorenzo, ‘and I notice that you do not in any way situate the highest good in the actions which are regulated by the virtues of life and morals. Perhaps you will be clearer on this a little later. In the meantime, since we depend on the power of speculation, I am very desirous that – unless perhaps you think otherwise – you explain to me what you think about the matter in its entirety. For I see no little doubt amongst the learned whether it should be better placed in the mind or in the will.’

‘There is indeed so much controversy amongst them,’ said Battista, ‘and so much discord, that they are led into the most serious disagreement and often, having declared war, enter into pitched battle on the subject. They eventually separate with the result of the conflict so doubtful that it is not easy to see who has been victorious. Each position presents itself with an argument that seems reasonable. If we set the truth as the aim of speculation, who is unaware that the truth belongs to the intellect alone? So those who knew Hebrew interpreted Rachel, whom they regarded as the symbol of speculation, as the “vision of the beginning”. On the other hand, since those who speculate direct themselves towards the knowledge of the truth with all their strength, and since all the striving which is aroused in us originates in the will, speculation does not now seem to be situated in the mind, but in the will. But there are those who endeavour to break up such a great quarrel and to resolve the dispute, as if they were honorary judges. And certainly, if you look at the essence of the action itself, then without any doubt you refer to the intellect, but if you consider more diligently what moves it to action, then you must think it to refer to the will. The will does not only move the other powers of the soul, but also the mind itself. For we are inflamed towards a knowledge of the truth by the appetite that obeys reason, which all philosophers call the will. It does not matter if it happens through the desire to know or if the pleasure which is experienced by knowing draws it out in the same way. From here originates thought; from here meditation is initiated. From here we contemplate, from here we admire, from here we eventually speculate with great attentiveness. All these things are directed to the same end, but I will explain more carefully what each one means.

The mind thinks when it collects multiplicity in one, so that, having removed what is superfluous as false, it finally chooses the truth. When multiplicity offers itself from everywhere and draws the soul in different directions because of the similarity of its elements, the sage must discover the remedy for this kind of evil. So first he gathers together the different things in a heap, as it were, and then, having gradually set aside what he has refuted through ratiocination, leaves only that which he discerns to be the truth because it cannot be refuted. You see, therefore, that because these things are forced [*cogantur*] into a unity, this action of the mind should be called thought [*cogitatio*]. For the same reason we say “to think” [*putare*] because to think is to purge. From this comes “to prune” [*putare*] trees, which are restored to purity by the removal of superfluities, and pure [*putus*] gold – that is, gold which has been purged. From this also comes to dispute [*disputare*], when we adopt a kind of oration in which pure and clear terms are set out in order that nothing is

expressed which is confused or obscure. But, to return to the point, we will say that thought consists in the examination of many things.

In meditation we understand an advancement of reason which has proceeded from the principles which relate the speculation of the truth, and in which there is a certain form of exercise. For one who meditates dashes, like a runner, from the starting-place of the principles all the way to the finishing line of the concluding arguments. That this word means “exercise” amongst the Latins is attested by Virgil. For he says “[Juno] devised [*meditata*] a pest for the Inachian heifer”, and Juvenal also says “Fuscus planned [*meditatus*] battles in his marble villa”. We see that the word is derived from the Greek, because they also attribute the same meaning to μελεταν.

I see that we define contemplation as a sharp-sighted and firm intuition of soul in the cognition of the truth. If you ask the origin of the term, it should not escape you that the ancient Latins said the temple was a space in the heavens, which augurs designated for augury with a wand and from which they did not turn their gaze until it had been entered by a bird. So, from this very firm gaze on the temple [*templum*], we say that those who contemplate [*contemplare*] are intently affixed on the matter to be investigated.

Admiration – in order that we now may pass to this – is said to be a stupor which originates from the perception of that which excels our faculties. For admiration is usually a companion of the kind of intellectual investigation with which we grasp what has hitherto differed vehemently from our own view. But enough on this.

If you listen to the divine Augustine, you will know that “to speculate” [*speculare*] is derived from “mirror” [*speculum*]. Those who desire to know the truth happen to observe a certain simulacrum of truth in those effects which proceed from causes, just as we observe the images of bodies in a mirror. So much for the words.

Although we call the motion of speculating an action, I do not want you to think that these words seem to contradict those who do not place speculation in movement but in rest. We certainly say that speculation is a motion, but only in the sense that one talks of motion as an act of a thing that is already absolute and perfect. For since our minds find their way by attaining the things which can be perceived by the mind alone through the things which are perceived by the senses, but the actions of the senses are not without motion, it was also acceptable to use the term motion for the actions of the mind which we reach through the actions of the senses. I could relate many things on motion here, especially those things which are said very perceptively by Dionysius and the many Christian theologians who followed him. But perhaps you do not desire them, so we can move onto other things.’

‘On the contrary, I would like to hear them above all,’ said Lorenzo, ‘for what can be imparted by Dionysius, versed in all human and divine learning, which should not be studied with great diligence?’

‘I shall follow your desire,’ said Battista. ‘And since we must talk about such motion, I see that there is a threefold motion attributed to our souls: straight, circular and – derived from the other two – oblique. The motion is straight in us when, in the actions pertaining to the mind, we proceed from one thing into the other. If we are moved in such a way that the form of moving is unique and the same and simple, that the motion is called circular, and it is the nature of a circle that the distance around the centre always remains constant as it is moved. If this motion is mixed with something that also proceeds in different directions, it will no longer be circular movement but oblique movement, because it degenerates from its former state. So although bodily motions, which originate from the external things that affect the mind, disrupt the silence of speculation, not only do the motions which I just discussed not disrupt the mind, but they greatly augment it. But you may say, are these movements of our souls the same as those movements of separate essences, which we call angels, the ancients now called demons, and now called gods? No. For we said that the correct motion in the human soul is when we progress from those things which strike the senses externally to those which are perceived by the mind alone. An angel does not reach the truth in its mind from a multiplicity of composite elements, nor, on the other hand, because it proceeds gradually by ratiocination, but whatever it does it does through an entirely simple intuition, so to speak. It constantly contemplates God, and always in the same way, without any beginning, without any end, as long as it exists. In this way, the circle is always moved around the centre. So, the angel does not know God by a straight motion like a human being, but by a circular motion, because human souls cannot proceed in a circular fashion from the beginning. Nor will human souls arrive at a point where they engage themselves in the same form of motion forever, until both straight motion and the motion which progresses by ratiocination entirely cease. When these movements have finally stopped, our souls fix themselves on the cognition of divine things with an immobile gaze in order that they will be agitated by no other motion. In this there is no error, and in this way we do not err in our cognition of principles, because we know them by simple intuition. So when we are moved in this way we are made equal with the angels, and we are at rest from the two other types of motion. But you say: doesn’t Dionysius attribute these types of motion to the angels too? Indeed he does, but in a particular way. For straight motion in an angel is not that in which it progresses from one thing to another by ratiocination, but that in which, according to its place in the providential order, what is superior illuminates its inferiors with its light. With the straight motion we progress first to the things which surround us, and then we ascend from the external things which strike the senses to the incorporeal things perceived by our mind. But nor do we correspond with the angels in oblique motion, for in the angels the purpose of the oblique motion is to reflect upon what is inferior according to the principles of their speculation on divine things. But I will talk about the angels some other time. What is truly relevant to us is that if we progress from those things which strike the senses to those which are perceived by the mind with the guidance of our innate reason, we are carried by straight motion, but if the divine light also shines

upon us, we are no longer moved by the straight motion, but by the oblique. For no-one disputes that the circular motion alone is characterised by immobility, so to speak. Likewise, there are those who say that souls are moved to the heavenly or to the infernal when we proceed from the genus to the forms, or vice-versa. In a similar fashion, they say there is a movement to the right and to the left if we proceed from one thing to its opposite. Finally, we are moved to the front or to the back, when we proceed from a cause to its effects or, on the other hand, from the effects to the cause.

These, for the most part, are the things said about the way of life which is devoted to the investigation of the truth. But the life which is devoted to action will indeed be something eminent and truly worthy for a human being if it is assumed by a man in whom a sharp-sighted intelligence and mature counsel is evident, and whose mind is guarded against all dangers, who lives with restraint in the face of pleasure, and who does not reflect on anything other than in a just and pious way. For, since we were not only born for ourselves, but also much more so that we shall serve in human society, with what praise do we adorn someone who devotes himself to family and domestic matters in such a way that everything necessary for living and culture is present in abundance, within modest limits, so that the children and others whom he has in tutelage are educated liberally and are cultivated in all humanities, and such a way that patrimony grows with the highest care and diligence, with any suspicion of avarice far removed? This is someone who, besides those he is obliged to support, also uses his wealth to help others, and privately practises liberality to citizens and hospitality to strangers, and can benefit public utility either through the magnificence of his works and the splendour of his gifts, or through the collection of his taxes. When he applies himself to the administration of the republic he is cultivated in every type of virtue and adorned with every eloquence, in such a way that he always holds beneficial and honourable opinions concerning public affairs and he persuades others to share the opinions he holds with eloquence and abundance of speech. He is one who dreads neither the power of enemies, nor the rage of seditious citizens, but defends against the attacks of others with all powers of the mind and the body, thwarting their disloyal and angry attempts with the greatest independence. Finally, he is one who concerns himself with cultivating religion, preserving justice and fairness, and restraining the whole citizenry within the limits of modesty. He does not spare any efforts, any dangers, nor even his own life to achieve these things. So he who conquers like this, he who acts like this, don't we say that he has performed the duty of a human being and should be merited best of the human race? On this point, I am amazed at those who ask uncertainly if anyone can properly administer these things without the virtues of life and morals. Without these virtues, what right action is left in us, or what action which is entirely our own and not instead held in common with beasts? For when we seek a rationale for acting, what else do we seek apart from what the necessary actions are for a person to conduct a social life? If these are not actions performed with justice, with fortitude, and with temperance, I do not know what they could be. But the reasoning is the same for

prudence, for unless, like the best directress, it sits at the beam and guides the course of life into a safe and tranquil port, we must sink amidst waves and tempests of confusion.

On the other hand, I must venture to say this: no one who is thoroughly lacking in learning will properly administer either himself and his house or the state. For how can I know what the highest good of humanity is or how it might be acquired if I am ignorant of both the nature of humanity and the nature of things? Does someone who never touches upon the understanding of divine things practice religion correctly? Anyone who wishes to preside over public affairs should not be ignorant of such matters. I acknowledge, however, that it is difficult for the man who is occupied by constant business of both a private and public nature to have a wholly exact understanding of them. I am not ignorant of the fact that this is why Leah, who stands as the symbol of action in the writings of the Hebrews, was said to be short-sighted but fertile, because while she was distracted by many things around her she could not raise her thoughts aloft. But because she treated others well, many were indebted to her through her kindness as if they were her children.

So you see that the life which is devoted to action should not be condemned. For it corresponds entirely to human nature, and through its industry and its efforts the human race unites itself with a delightful bond and works in order to foster justice and religion. But since our mind, through which alone we are human, is not located in mortal action but is perfected by immortal cognition – in which the highest good, to which all things are drawn and for the sake of which all things happen, is sought for its own sake – who does not see that speculation should be preferred by far?’

When Battista had said these things in roughly this way he sat silent for a while, gazing with eyes fixed on the same spot, like someone who had been turning over in his mind more things than he could express in words. We who were present had been seized with such great amazement by the man’s extensive learning that we were repeating amongst ourselves what we had heard so far rather than asking anything else.

But Lorenzo, being of a very sharp mind and desirous of knowing everything, eventually broke our silence and followed the speech of Battista thus, not so that he could show off, but so that, by opposing it with his own words, he might ascertain more clearly the opinion of Battista on the subject: ‘Given the modesty that my age advises me to show, and the sense which even a little prudence can provide, it would seem that I should agree with what you said on account of the approval of such eminent men alone. I think, though, that it is conducive to the glory of your speculation that all understand she has emerged victorious from this battle after having triumphed over an adversary who refused her a bloodless victory. And indeed, when I consider our nature, as far as my powers of thinking are able, it does not seem that the arrays of arguments which civic action leads into battle should be disregarded. Foremost among them is this. When we investigate human life, I do not think that there is anyone with such a boorish intellect that they think we should conceive in our minds either a soul separated from the body or, on the other hand, a body abandoned by the soul. Just as when we say “a biga” we do not just mean one of those horses

which pull the chariot when collared together, but both at the same time, so too when we think of a human being do we imagine a unity which consists of both the mind and the body. If you allow me this, I must therefore convince myself that the preferred way of life is that which serves and perfects not either one of them, but both. Ethical living, which is perfected by civic action, is demonstrated to be the superior way of life, because the virtues of life and morals to which civic actions are directed serve both the body and the mind as a whole at the same time. For when the health and vigour of all limbs and the integrity of the senses are preserved by these virtues, then the unpolluted soul is guarded from every stain of the vices. So action, which maintains the investigation of the truth (which itself is devoted to caring for the mind alone in such a way that it neglects the care of other things), must be placed first.

Who shall not see that nature, the great mother, produced us to celebrate meetings and unions, and to conserve common society? There is no way we can fulfil this task unless we establish a community. Why else did all Greece exalt Socrates to heaven with immortal praise other than because he first called down philosophy from heaven to earth and introduced it to the cities? When we say this, what else do we mean other than that this most pure man saw with his divine wisdom that it is much more advantageous for the human race to spend life in safety and tranquility if, having set aside the troublesome understanding of divine matters and arcane things of nature which are entirely obscured, people were taught those principles by which our purified actions do not just administer ourselves and matters of the family but also – in a much higher degree – the whole state? If we want to recall our origin, if we want to consider for what reason above all we were born, we should understand that from the outset we were sent by God into this lowest region of the world as though on a long and difficult expedition. He sent us so that, fighting bravely against many difficulties, we might overcome the two fiercest enemies, pain and pleasure, and having conquered them we might enjoy perpetual peace. Since everyone is inspired towards the just and the honest, with nature as their guide, you will not easily find a dissolute man who has not been led astray either by the fear of suffering or the hope of pleasure. What else do the desire of ruling and the desire of possessing – two evils which impel mortals to every abominable crime! – want for themselves apart from that they avoid every inconvenience, enjoy every pleasure? So since, having been recruited in this army, we are led daily into a battle in which we have to struggle for life and blood (that is, for the salvation of our souls), is it not the case that anyone who abandons their place in it and, having betrayed their companions, secretly retreats from the battle into the camp, should be regarded as a deserter? For I beseech you, since we are collected among the same citizenry, since we repel hostile attacks in the same walls and with the same arms, since by common agreement we establish the laws through which we will live justly, and will be inspired to guard against every attack on our dignity, and will not exceed the prescribed limits of moderation, must we not strive for each of these things with the all our strength, so that this civic life is free from every evil and embraces every virtue, and is not in fear of any pain or danger, nor weakened by any

pleasure? But if, on the other hand, there is someone who neglects these things, wasting away in leisure, doesn't he seem to forsake a gift granted to him by God?

In order that the difference between your leisurely contemplator and my active citizen is now demonstrated more clearly than the sun, let us imagine a city constructed before us in which every type of building – public and private, sacred and profane – is present in abundance and magnificence. Inside there is a very wise man, who decides to fill it with inhabitants who will yield a citizenry wealthy in every way. Just as in an animated body, no part should be present which does not serve the whole, and the wise man sitting at the gates will admit no one as a citizen before he examines each person who desires to enter with the greatest diligence, and understands entirely what benefit each of them will bring to the state through their prudence or skill. And so some will answer that they are wise legislators, others prudent counsellors, others powerful orators, others just judges. There will likewise be those who proffer their medical skill, those who promise to interpret the ambiguities of civil law, those who will be employed as soldiers. Architects will be present, sculptors, moulders, and artists will be present, ironmongers and joiners of wood. Besides these professions which, being exercised with intelligence and industry, are worthy of a free human being, various activities are also required so that the multitude which has been collected can not only live rightly, but also safely and comfortably. Merchants who work with money will therefore offer themselves too, who, by exporting our own goods and importing foreign ones, ensure that the populace is furnished with everything and is rich in financial terms. Those who make clothes from different wools will be present, those who dye the finished clothes in various colours, so that we can use them not only to ward off the cold and the heat, but to afford us some decoration and dignity. I will pass over those of lower status and mercenaries, whom we pay for their labour rather than their skill. I will pass over weavers, fullers, beltmakers, sowers of clothes and shoes, and many others of the same kind. And in order that I do not descend into the market, I will omit the vegetable-growers, dealers in salted fish, bakers, cooks, poulterers, butchers, fishermen, whom Terence's Gnato boasts "to have helped in wealth and poverty". So after the wise man, whose authority grants people citizenship, has admired both the intelligence and skill of those I listed at the beginning and has recognised the necessary work and labour of those I have just mentioned, he will finally admit them all, and will urge each person diligently to undertake the business they had just declared.

If your wise man appears leisurely and sluggish amongst these people and, secluding himself alone at home in his library, never leaves, mixes with nobody, greets no one, and performs no task either publicly or privately, then what do we say that his part in the republic should be? What example to human life will he offer? Where shall we put him? For what should we use him? Will there be anyone who thinks that he is to be counted as human? He certainly will not be, but instead all will despise him as a lazy drone come to another's honey. "I seek rest," he says, "and I speculate on the power of nature in the highest leisure, and I seek to discover the truth in everything".

“Indeed you are happy,” one would reply, “but beware lest you forget your nature, you who look after yourself alone such that you do not harbour any concern for others at all. Allow me to ask what I want to know. If you set sail in a fleet with a mind to engage the enemy and you do not sit as a captain at the helm, nor do you row the oars of the ship, nor, running to the bridge, do you tell those about to act what they must do about taking advantage of a side wind or about managing the sail-yards or sails, nor do you obey those ordering you, nor, when you are about to fight the enemy, do you stand equipped with arms, you will only act as a burden to the ship and, otiose, you will occupy a place in it where someone else would provide some benefit. If, I say, you set sail on a ship with a plan that involves you not wanting to help it either by effort or by strategy, wouldn’t those who outrank you on the ship consider you useless and fit to be thrown into the sea, and perhaps, if they were a little more strict, actually throw you in? Or maybe you think a republic has less need of the public-spirited than a ship? When grave and unremitting dangers threaten it everywhere, and it is constantly attacked with weapons and deception by the ambition and avarice of many princes and peoples, or it is disturbed by a faction of seditious citizens? Is there anyone who does not know that the state is most similar to a living creature, in which each of its members performs its function in total harmony? The heart produces from itself the spirit which gives life to a living creature. As far as nutrients are concerned, the stomach certainly provides some, but the liver provides many. What an animal senses depends on the brain, what it breathes depends on the lungs. In order that I do not spend any more time on the remaining parts which are hidden and less well-known by us, let us look at the external ones: feet carry; hands manipulate; eyes see; ears hear. A unity is formed from all these things just as a harmony is created from different voices in common, through which the living creature drives away the things which are abhorrent to it and receives the pleasing and beneficial. If the feet were to refuse to carry the weight of the entire body, or the eyes decline to see those things which contribute to the health of the whole, or the nostrils neglect to take account of odours, or taste not discriminate between the healthy and the unhealthy, how do you think that living creature would take care of itself, and how long would it endure?

Add this, which is even more important: those who are devoted to speculation abandon the duties of the republic, and they are the same people who surpass the others in intelligence and judgment. It is inevitable that great harm is inflicted upon the state in such circumstances, because when the state is deserted by those who are wiser, it is left to the less prudent. Let us take the Greek army as an example. No great shift toward a Trojan victory would be occasioned if Thersites had abandoned his place in battle, because even if he were to fight with all his might he could inspire no great terror in the enemy. If, on the other hand, strong Achilles were to retire to his tent, wrathful against Agamemnon, the Greeks could easily have been turned in flight, for he who can be of much benefit when present will harm the most with his absence. It is the same with respect to a republic. If one who surpasses the others in intelligence and prudence relinquishes its guidance, then it is unavoidable that the state will be administered by those who are dimmer, with harmful

consequences”. “But,” says our speculator here, “I do this in order that, by speculating on the nature of things, I might learn what leads to human salvation, so that I can teach how states should be established and with which laws they should be regulated, and I can show what kind of people should be princes, by whom the magistrates should be appointed, by what penalties each crime should be punished, and with what honours the good should be dignified.”

I admire this man as blessed and I praise him enthusiastically because he accumulates such treasures. But, on the other hand, when I realise that he keeps them hidden, and I do not see him devoting such riches to the liberty of others, I compare him to a very wealthy man who, secretly keeping his riches from all and burying them in the ground, does not benefit either himself or anyone else. It is as if someone ensures that he has the swiftest and toughest body and then does not take part in any race or competition. By immortal God, what benefit is there in possessing medicine unless we devote it to the health of the many? What benefit would Phidias have given us with his art if he had not sculpted it in ivory or gold? We hear that Numa Pompilius, the second ruler of Rome, was a wise man. And I see his wisdom, for he guided the people committed to his trust away from ferocity and excessive bellicosity into peace and leisure and the cultivation of justice and religion, and brought it about that those who were unable to defend themselves against their neighbours with arms and horses a short while earlier were safeguarded under the authority of one man. I pass over Brutus and Publicola concerning the beginning of liberty. I pass over Camillus who, in the times that followed, returned Roman power to its former dignity when it had been cast down to the depths from its former height. I say nothing about the Catos, the Laelii, the Scipios, all of whom we accept to have been educated men. I say nothing on the other innumerable men who, if they had not governed the republic with no less wisdom than courage but had devoted themselves to contemplation alone, would not have been of great value while alive, nor would their names live on in death even now after so many centuries.

We have in our time Federico da Montefeltro, Prince of Urbino, who I do not doubt should be compared with the greatest commanders of a superior age. The virtues of this most distinguished man are many, and wholly admirable: an intellect that is sharp and enthusiastic for everything, and so much zeal for literature that there is no period of rest from his affairs in which he does not apply himself to leisurely learning. He achieves much by reading, much by listening, a great deal by debating, so that he is rightly thought to be amongst the most learned men. But force him to devote himself wholly to these speculations in such a way that he entirely neglects both his realm, which he administers so that it is peaceful and flourishing, and the military matters in which, without debate, he surpasses the leaders of his age and contends with all in antiquity? To what sort of person will he be reduced, having been such a great man?

I return to the ancients. Hercules was a wise man, but he was not wise for himself. Instead his wisdom benefitted nearly all mortals. For, wandering the greatest part of the world, he killed fearful beasts, vanquished huge and destructive monsters, restrained the cruelest tyrants, and restored law

and liberty to many people and nations. If he had devoted such great labour to leisurely wisdom while lingering at the home of his tutor Atlas we would have a sophist for Hercules, and no one would venture to say that of the son of Jove, because Jupiter himself (if we understand him as the world-soul from the thought of the Platonists) never ceases. If he were to cease, everything which is agitated in constant motion would cease: for the heavens would not bear themselves around with constant movement; none of the stars would rise and set; the very elements would not be agitated in reciprocal transformation with each other; the rivers would not flow; the earth would not bear anything; time would never change; the Fates would no longer draw their lots; the Muses would not sing.

But I return to humans. You see the men through whom the reputation of the Christians grew, how many they were, how numerous, how replete in learning. But out of those leaders whose effort and judgment established our Church, who can you show me that devoted themselves to learning in such a way that they did not engage in the practical business of life? In order that I might pass over the rest for brevity's sake, in how much regard do you hold the apostle Paul? How many do you esteem whom you might compare to him? You observe the character of his speech. I do not think that one could imagine anything clearer than it, or more perceptive in teaching, or more effective in stimulation. For, concerning the instruction of humanity, what need is there either for my testimony or anyone else's when, out of all people, one alone is rightly called "teacher of nations" by the steadfast consensus of all who are and were – he who ascended all the way to the third heaven through speculation, and who saw and understood that which is not permitted to be imparted to human beings? Did this man proceed to meditate, closing himself up in his cell such that he neglected the salvation of others? Read, I ask, what this most modest man writes about himself and what many similarly holy men relate about him: how many journeys, how many voyages he undertook in spite of his health; into how many dangers, into how many calamities he fell, so that he might lead Peter's little boat, nearly sunk by the most terrible waves and dashed on the sharpest rocks, back to port in safety and tranquility. I recount one example out of many. But remember that we can count numerous learned men amongst the Latins, amongst the Greeks, all of whom we see to have freely burdened themselves with offices beyond those conferred on them, not for the sake of ambition, but through an ardent love for others. What else do I believe they wanted, apart from to benefit as many as possible by counselling wisely, by advising calmly, by reprimanding fiercely, and finally by helping many with work and deed? And is it not the case that they did not, like the servant [in Matthew 25], want to conceal unprofitably what they had expended much sweat and effort to learn, but instead to bring it forth for the use of others?

But why do I persist for so long with these arguments when we always see active people preferred to the leisurely in the most steadfast consensus of all nations? Read, I ask, the constitutions of different states. You will always see that the greatest prizes and most prestigious honours are not granted to the leisurely, but to the active. There were triumphs devoted to the

greatest glory, there were trophies, there were ovations. Various garlands were invented, various titles devised. We see statues erected to many excellent men, and not only humble citizens, but also knights and officials. We see tombs superbly constructed, fields donated at the public expense, so that with such monuments men who were illustrious and well-merited by the state were rendered immortal. If you bring these things to mind from every age of antiquity, you will find it very rare indeed that those honoured with such prizes are among the leisurely, but it will be difficult for you to count the crowd of the civically-inclined. So why is this? No doubt it is so that you can understand from the example of the wisest and most just leaders, who have governed their republics with the best practices and laws, that the kind of people who better obey unerring nature are more loved. And in order that you understand how much power truth has: those same people who prefer leisurely learning to civic action much more often proclaim the praise of the emperor in their writings than that of the philosopher. For although the knowledge of great things – which I have always valued, as far as is suitable – pleases them a great deal, nonetheless the voice of nature, which all are compelled to obey, sometimes warns them to acknowledge what they often avoid entirely in their discussions, in which they are too boastful.

But I see that I tarry longer than necessary on things which are very clear, particularly since the whole truth can be demonstrated by a single instruction from He who produced us out of nothing, He who restored those he had produced to life when we had fallen into death through rashness, by the single instruction, I say, of the highest God. Isn't the instruction from God that "you love your neighbour as yourself"? But I do not see what could be more of a neighbour to you than the republic itself. How do you love your neighbour as yourself, if you do not lead him back when he is erring in his path, if you do not offer the right advice when he asks you in uncertain circumstances, if you do not offer your help right away when he asks you amidst the greatest disorder and danger? Your neighbour needs the citizen who will prudently and justly administer as a magistrate, he needs the captain, he needs the soldier. So how can you say that you love your neighbour as you should, unless you always help him with such diligence that you do not only endure all difficulties with a calm mind, but you also endure extreme danger and, if the situation demands it, you even go fearless into death? But what else? Since all who were ever philosophers are resolved that we were born for the social and communal life, anyone who is not a citizen should not be called human, nor should anyone be called a citizen who neglects the care of that state in which they are born.

So these are the things I thought I ought to say about the civil life, presented in the declamatory manner in which I am used to exercising myself in the Landino's presence rather than in philosophical argument. For it is much better that I draw out your most profound judgment on this matter in oratorical disputation than I set forth my own stance. If I have abused your patience by making you listen to me for a longer time than both your dignity and my respect for you demand, I hope you will forgive my ardent desire for knowledge. Since I am inflamed with an exceeding zeal

to learn, and it is very rare for me to be given the opportunity to address and question you, I ask you to be indulgent if I have tired you more than is suitable.’

When Lorenzo had said these things, a great astonishment invaded the minds of all those who were present. Even though signs of brilliance had manifested themselves in the youth for a long time, so that everyone had already perceived great things in him, they nonetheless thought that so great a richness of improvised eloquence, such decisive arguments, and such varied examples would warrant no small praise even in someone of a more mature age.

But Leon Battista, since he greatly adored all studious types by nature, valued Lorenzo’s genius paternally and singularly. ‘For a long time,’ he said, ‘I have listened to you attentively and not without great pleasure. For I see that you have not only embraced all the virtues of civic life, which can itself be seen as worthy of the highest admiration in such tender years, but you have also already turned your mind to things which are more divine. It quickly becomes clear that everything you have said just now in favour of the civic life has all been directed to this purpose: that you might induce me to corroborate those arguments in which the investigation of the truth is placed *above* action. This can, if I am not mistaken, be performed without much effort.

The nobility of the subject displays itself to one reflecting on it even a little, considering that, since you learn the truth by speculation and intellectual inquiry, everything else to which the divinity of our mind could apply itself seems almost shameful. For when one observes human nature more closely, who doesn’t see that there is nothing more excellent in us than the mind? But it is not the mind’s task to act, but to speculate, and in particular to speculate on those things which consist in themselves alone and are perceived with no intermediary sense. So, since the investigation of the truth involves the part of us which is the most divine – because it devotes itself to entirely incorporeal things which do not fall into sense-perception –, shouldn’t it be preferred to activity?

Add to this that, if we are lead by the duties of life to the highest good as if by a road, something which proceeds by some eternal sequence and which is not disjoined by any break would seem without doubt to surpass those things which are in the opposite state. But in meditation on great things we commit ourselves on a constant course, while in activity we are drawn in different directions to many things that are different among themselves at almost the same point in time. So, while Martha is disturbed by many things, Mary sits constantly with the Lord. Moreover, wherever a greater pleasure of the soul is experienced it should be preferred to that which affords lesser pleasure. The investigation of truth provides this for us. Mary feasts, but Martha is distracted by the many things around her. Nor do I want to pass over another point. For who does not see that something which is desired for its own sake should always be valued more than that which we do not want for its own sake but because of something else? I can show that speculation is desired for its own sake in both your opinion and that of all learned men, and I will easily prove what everyone believes of their own accord through the authority of the psalm. “For one thing,” the psalmist says, “have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after”. Then he pronounces what he sought, for he

adds: “that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the will of the Lord”. Add to these words that we speculate in leisure and in rest. So, quite rightly the psalmist says: “Be still and see, because I am God”. But we do not engage in activity without noise and disruption. For Mary sits in leisure; Martha goes around preparing everything. Nor is this surprising, because the latter does not detach herself from matter, in which everything is disrupted and moves about in various waves of disturbances, but the former, with fixed eyes, always observes the divine, which never comes into contact with any disturbance. Mary performs her function with the mind alone, which is immortal and susceptible to no influence. Martha does nothing without the senses, which depend on the body and easily slip into corruption, and which we do not have in common with God but with the beasts. So the subject in hand is concluded most divinely by the divinity Himself: “Mary chose the best part, which will not be taken away from her”. He said the *best*, because you understand that action is also good but is nonetheless far surpassed. It is easy to show what is not taken from her. For if our souls, created by God, will be returned to God, and will find rest through contemplating Him, who does not understand that human activity will sooner or later cease and utterly pass away, but we will rest in the most joyful contemplation of God?

But since these things are better expressed through dialectic than rhetoric, I can make more progress if I try another path. Since you were accusing as idle those who, having abandoned administration of republics, surrender themselves entirely to leisurely contemplation, let us pick someone from our city who lives like that and can defend their way of life well. Do we want Paolo Toscanelli, an excellent natural philosopher and mathematician whom your grandfather Cosimo loved a great deal, both for his admirable teaching and for a characteristic sweetness in speech and disputation?

‘Yes, him indeed,’ said Lorenzo, ‘for, out of everyone I have known, he is alone among us as one who delights so much in the cognition of the loftiest things that its pursuit is the only thing which concerns him. There is nothing besides.’

‘So,’ said Battista, ‘born in Florence and having all the public affairs of our city in common with the remaining citizens, he is nonetheless devoted to the diligent questioning of the truth at home, fleeing all civil tumult and conflict. If, rejecting public duties, he were charged as a deserter of public welfare and dignity (so to speak), I think he might defend himself thus: “Men of Florence, I know very well that I inflict no harm upon you, because I lead a life separate from yours. For I do not appropriate for myself the riches of the treasury, nor those of any private citizen, whether by stealth or by force. Nor are my life and morals such that I bring any disgrace upon this city through which it would regret having produced me. Indeed, toward individuals I conduct myself neither rudely nor arrogantly nor greedily. There is no one who conducts himself with greater care for the laws and institutions through which the state can endure in good condition.

I do not ignore, however, that the powers of the republic and the magistracy are valued greatly among the people and that the greatest honours come to those who discharge them, if they

administer them with the highest virtue. If it were otherwise, it would be inevitable that they were crushed by their disgrace. So Anaxagoras of Clazomenae wisely said that the ‘office reveals the man’. Those who are placed in an exalted and lofty position can hide neither their virtues nor their vices, and the more they deviate from the right path the more they are criticised. Because if someone tries to take on the administration of the state – whether led by false glory or moved by the highest love for the country – he should first consider and ponder for a long time the skill, or the tools suitable for that skill, with which he sets about so great an undertaking. Neither a painter nor a sculptor can complete a work properly unless first they know the technique very well and have all the instruments with which they can finish the work they have already conceived in their mind, lest they are either condemned by their ignorance or mocked when struggling with a lack of supplies. If anyone were to ask what qualities are necessary in someone to whom the state can be safely entrusted, I would respond without any hesitation that all the efforts he is about to undertake will be in vain unless knowledge of the truth is present. For just as the light by which we might observe all corporeal things offers itself to our eyes when we come into this life, so too, unless we stray completely from the right path, does the certain knowledge of things offer itself to our souls. Through this knowledge alone does not only the ultimate end (which everyone desires to reach) display itself to us, but we are also shown the shortest and easiest way which leads us there. If anyone strives to reach the end I have discussed having disregarded the light, he will lead as though blind, and those who follow him rush headlong into an abyss of all calamities, from which any hope of return inevitably perishes once they have been engulfed in it. I therefore think that this light, by which we understand our nature and those things which are fitting for it, should be valued far more than that which, coming forth from the sun, shows us the corporeal bodies subject to corruption. We will never attain the light of knowledge through sordid and vulgar conduct, nor will we attain it when addicted to pleasure, subject to avarice, or bound to ambition. But we *will* attain it when inflamed by an ardent love for the discovery of the truth, so I follow the guidance of reason in order that I may reach it, and I do not abandon the signs of nature itself. And there you have it as far as I am concerned.

If you were to urge me on more zealously, I would appeal to any one of those who have applied themselves eagerly to intellectual investigation. They will not be afraid to declare that, on their own, they have benefitted the republic through that way of living far more than many of those you see exerting themselves daily in the forum and in the senate. And certainly, I will never agree that one who conserves a harbour or shipyards or walls or temples or a portico ‘conserves’ the republic for you. All of these, even if they are neither demolished by the fire or weapon of an enemy nor destroyed by an act of God, will waste away completely with the inevitable progression of time, than which nothing is more voracious. The sole defender and most faithful protectress is civic concord, which is established by the deeds accomplished by individuals being united in one whole, just as diverse voices coming from single strings in a lyre resound together in such a way that the

sweetest union of sounds, which the Greeks call harmony, issues forth from them. The best legislation will produce civic concord, and the observance of this legislation will be maintained by the virtue of those who exercise it. Reasoning achieved by diligent intellectual inquiry will foster virtue, and only mental discipline devoted to the truth will perfect this reasoning. Finally, we will procure the truth after having devoted our attention to it in a long period of leisure. For virtue uses no other tool besides true reason, by which the soul is stimulated and excited so that it learns, and maintains in the memory what it has learned, and uses what it has memorised. When using it you will not lose your way. This is the exercise of truth, this is the skill and the power of reason, which we must make the greatest efforts to attain. For it alone leads us to the highest good.”

Do you see how a man devoted to speculation defends himself? I think he would respond to the things you have set forth so ingeniously and explained so elegantly in the following way. First, you said that what must be taken into account about the nature of humanity is that we consist of the body and the soul at the same time. It cannot be denied that, since we have been confined within the troublesome prison of the body, its care should not entirely be neglected and that we should instead take into account each part of ourselves, conceding that to some extent we consist of both body and soul. But if we examine our nature more carefully, we will not seem to be mistaken if we call the human being the mind alone. I see that this argument is acceptable not only to so great a man as Plato, but also to the Christians, who are unsurpassed in learning. So what *is* the body? I could say that it is a bond for the soul, from which it shall soon be unchained. I could call it a clay vase, which will shortly be broken. Finally, I could call it a vestment which shall soon age and be degraded. The mind, though, which is eternal, does not seek action but speculation for its food and nourishment, so to speak. But “we pursue a fatter Minerva”, as they say, and so we shall concede that the human being consists not only in the mind, but also in the body. What then? “Should the body,” you say, “be taken into account?” Indeed it should! While we live this mortal life, it is essential that the soul uses the aid of the body in many things because it cannot obtain its cognition, which concerns immortal and eternal things, except through those things which fall under its senses and which we see circumscribed in place and in time, continually being born and dying. I acknowledge, therefore, what you say about the civic virtues – which concern morals – caring for both the mind and the body at the same time, as long as you also understand this: that all these virtues derive their origin from the power of cognition. Who can live justly, unless they have first used their mind to discover what is just, and that what is just, and what must therefore be done, is in accordance with our nature? Indeed, this argument extends more broadly to both fortitude and temperance. So, those things which are devoted to activity cannot be perfected without the intellectual investigation of the mind. These things are apparent in Martha and Mary, for Mary does not demand Martha’s help, but Martha demands the help of Mary when, in the presence of the Lord, she complains that she has been abandoned by her. Hence, Martha demands help because without investigation of the truth activity achieves almost nothing.

The search for truth will therefore be more excellent than activity because it begets the virtues which we have said are devoted to action and helps to achieve things by them and, furthermore, it touches a divinity to which action is not worthy to aspire. Nor, I think, is there any other reason for immortal God bringing it about that Moses, the great leader of the Jews, did not accept the laws through which the people were instructed in right and honest actions in a city full of people, nor in a valley closed in on all sides, nor in a plain or depression, but on the peak of the highest mountain. For God, the architect of everything, wanted above all to signify to us by this act that the things which will be advantageous to the administration of republics cannot be discovered except through the intellectual investigation of supreme things by humanity. This is why, with regard to both conserving common society and overcoming the two enemies of human tranquility [viz. pain and pleasure], the virtues which are devoted to the cognition of the truth will serve us better than those which strive in action. Nonetheless, both common society, by which the human race is bound together because it seeks to satisfy bodily need rather than the excellence of the soul, and those fierce enemies, which you were casting before our eyes in your oration in order to strike fear into us, are to be buried as one with the body. For when our souls, free from all corporeal contagion, have returned into their natural state, society will not be desired, nor enemies feared, and activity will cease while meanwhile speculation will be strengthened more and more. The pleasure which comes from the truth endures forever. Not in vain does He who never says anything in vain declare: "Mary chose the best part, which was not taken away from her". Although I have said these things, we will not stop from exalting the other type of life with the highest praise if it is undertaken with complete virtue. But we should think that more gratitude is due to these men who, in great tranquility, conceive and discover those things which your patrons use as general principles to administer civic affairs.

Add to this that those things which are conceived through leisure are disseminated more widely and are of benefit to many more people than those which are accomplished in active occupation. The same example can be offered for each of these facts. For who can be conceived as being more admirable in action than Marcus Cicero? He had such prudence and strength of soul during his consulate that he held back a fire from the city, servitude from the Roman people, and devastation from the whole of Italy. After the death of Caesar, however, he was defenceless against the arms of Anthony, and, stripped of his consulate against the will of many senators, he was excluded from the city in such a way that, although he was not proclaimed an enemy by the senate, he was nonetheless held as an enemy. He accomplished these things while in the toga in such a way that they should be considered superior to the greatest triumphs of the most eminent military leaders. So what? Will we deny that such actions should be bestowed with immortal praise? No! How could we do so, seeing that he gave his all with the utmost efforts, the greatest risks and – since the outcome of the matter is known – also with his death, by which he restored to the citizenry a liberty which was interrupted or, rather, lost, for such a long time? I ask you: when, taking up residence far from public affairs, he

had wholly devoted himself to the investigation of superior things, was he now useless to his country such that he would offer nothing to it by way of benefit? When, scrutinising the great works of all the Greeks and examining everything with the divinity of his mind, he did not just understand what could help his citizens who were alive at the time but, having understood human nature in general, perceived what the end of human life is, to which everything returns, and what the duties of life are which lead to it, and discovered many approaches by which we might scorn death, pain and suffering of the body, illness and other disturbances of the soul? Finally, in those divine books the *De legibus* and the *De republica* did he not describe a universal civil doctrine to show everyone how a state should be constituted if it is going to be happy, what kind of princes and governors are in it, what the duties of the citizens and the magistrates should be, from which classes and types of people a republic should be populated, with which laws it should be equipped, what should be done by the advisor, by the commander, by the soldier, by the worker, by the farmer? Since he discovers all these things with great acumen and ingenuity and describes them clearly, fully, weightily and with elegance, so that he does not only teach the reader effortlessly but captivates them with his zeal and delights them with the greatest charm, will you deny that he has benefited his state and all humankind? See what a difference there is between those noble actions of his and these divine speculations! For with the former he benefits the state alone, but with the latter he teaches all who know Latin. With his actions, which he performed with judgment and prudence, he repelled the greatest dangers which were pressing at the time. But the things he set down in writing through his intellectual investigations are relevant forever, as he did not only have regard for those at hand and those who were then living, but left the tenets of a good and happy way of life both to those who have lived through so many intervening centuries thus far and to those who will exist in the future. And indeed, if you read over the great works of the leisurely you will discover that, through their writings, people were made tractable and humane from being foolish and savage, and were brought over into prudence and humanity. For before the wise could attempt to collect together the people – who had been wandering scattered through fields and forests before any cities had been established – and educate those they had assembled about laws, it was necessary that they diligently investigate those things which would be of use and, in particular, those related to human nature.

So from these things we can extrapolate a general argument. Those who are devoted to action can certainly be of benefit, but only for the present or for a brief time, while those who bring forth into the light for us the nature of things concealed in obscurity will be of benefit forever. For actions are fixed in their limits along with human beings. But, by surviving over all centuries, speculations endure immortal and become equal with eternity. For this reason, when your sage, sitting at the gate, examines those about to enter, he will admit the senator, the orator, the soldier, the lawyer and then the rest of the crowd, whom you listed in more detail a little earlier. And he will not admit them without good reason, because the city needs all of these people as a body needs its

limbs, without which it will be crippled and, to some degree, useless. But when *my* sage goes to enter, having been asked what he offers to the benefit of communal life, he will respond that he intends to cease all active occupation so that he will not undertake either private or public duties, but will instead devote himself to the investigation of the most important things in such a way that he can discover best what is useful, what is honourable, and what is in accordance with nature, and that he will put down the things he discovers in writing. Does your sage exclude him, I ask? Or rather, rising up in veneration as though to some mortal god, does he proceed all the way to the middle of the city and, giving my sage the best and most distinguished house, take care to support him at the public expense? Indeed, he will declare my sage an example to all citizens, from whom each person will learn to execute the role demanded of them in the state and from whom, as if from an oracle, each will receive advice in their own doubtful situations. Will anyone deny that such a man offers any value to the state, when there is no one else who is able to properly perform their role without first having received his advice?

And so I was laughing to myself a little earlier at the ostentation of your words when you were comparing the state to a ship and to an animated body, and I tacitly approved of your opinion because I understood the sense in which you were talking. But I believe that the ship which is best crewed is that in which my sage is present, as well as those who you mentioned earlier. He, exempt from all occupation, speculates only on those things which are conducive to navigation, and offers advice to those asking what would be the best things to do. And, in the animated body, the only time the senses will pass proper judgement and the appetite be undisturbed is when the mind is present, which, free from activity itself, nonetheless helps with its advice whatever entertains it.

You were saying the republic would suffer great harm because when the most excellent minds are occupied in the cognition of the truth it will be governed by worse ones. In fact, the sage will never rest, but will always offer good advice to those consulting him on difficult questions, and so he will benefit the state with his counsel if not with his deeds. But believe me, those who can be alone, fleeing human society, will be very rare. For it is only possible for a human being who, having already surpassed human nature, flies to more divine things. So, as I said, there will be very few of them. We see how remarkable the scarcity is over so many centuries, and how rarely these people appear “swimming in a great sea”, so there is no danger that the republic will be abandoned now. But it is precisely those devoted to leisure themselves who provide the greatest benefit to their citizens, for they are the most profound example to others that they should not abandon themselves to sleep and the belly so as to disregard all learning. If, however, the citizens want to appoint them as leaders to govern the republic justly then they will not refuse their service. For it is a precept of the divine Plato that if a sage sees that another sage is in charge he will devote himself to his leisure, since it is much more pleasant to be ruled than to rule. But if those who lead are stupid, he will either take charge in their place, or try to make them better. If he is not allowed to

do so, and the rulers do not submit to being made better, then he will return into himself and benefit humanity in another way.

You have also listed many people who have attained divine honours for eminent deeds at home and in war. I certainly think that they are worthy of many more, and I do not doubt that they were great and admirable human beings. For when I say that those who favour contemplation surpass them, I do not mean that those who engage in action are unworthy of esteem. He is a *god* amongst mortals who, as it is in Virgil, “was able to know the causes of things”. And I consider he who governs properly as the greatest and most eminent *man* within the human race. Since he takes care of strangers rather than himself (although “he is a man, and will think nothing human alien to him”) and since he is roused from leisure to occupation, and from quiet to tumult and danger, and since he neglects his own safety while he attends to that of others, it is not wrong that he should be rewarded for such efforts. The state honours above all those who it is in its greatest interest to honour, and it is in its greatest interest to attract such men with every kind of reward to defend and to grow the state, and to amplify its majesty. For although there is great power in virtue, and the beauty which it presents to us from everywhere is so great that we are still compelled to attain it for its own sake, nonetheless, given human traits such as lack of self-knowledge and corruption and perversion of morality, those who want to undertake some great effort or grave danger will be very few unless they are promised grand and magnificent honours. You will find many more who strive to achieve the trappings of virtue than love virtue stripped of its privileges. So it was wiser to establish that, since right reason does not flourish amongst all, we should be inspired towards the right and the honourable by such enticements.

These were things that persuaded me that I should place cognition before action when examining the investigation of the truth and right action separately. But when I considered the matter as a whole more closely, I saw that, while the human being originates from the mind alone, the body must not be neglected, and I saw that a human being is produced in such a way that he is tied to others in the bond of charity and, at the same time, burns with the love of understanding things. So I will only think him a man who, leading each type of life in the right way, unites them both: one who engages in activity as much as the needs of mortal matters and the bond of human society demand and as the love of his country compels him; but who devotes himself to speculation so that he remembers it is the purpose of humanity, except to the extent that our weakness distracts us from it. He will engage in intellectual inquiry so that he becomes a participant in the highest good. He will act so that he avoids harm to him and his own. He will duly excel in both ways of life, provided that he employs each as much as is necessary. For they are not opposed to each other, they are not fighting between themselves in such a way that they cannot somehow unite. They are sisters, Mary and Martha living under the same roof. Both please God: Martha because she nourishes; Mary because she is nourished. Both are good, but one involves much effort, the other involves tranquility, although in such a way that the effort does not bring forth disgrace, nor the

tranquility sloth. So we shall remain close to Martha, lest we abandon the duty of humanity. However we shall be joined much more closely to Mary in order that our mind is nourished with ambrosia and nectar. For with her we gradually ascend towards the understanding of God, and whoever does not know that the highest good consists in this is, I firmly believe, ignorant of both his true self and his origin. When I consider the various swells and storms of our life, which is very similar to a turbulent sea, I think that it is very difficult to attain this goal unless we retire into that contemplation of the truth which I spoke about, as though mooring in a tranquil harbour. Because even though this has been repeated in the most profound thoughts of all philosophers who are worthy of the name, it has nonetheless been depicted more penetratingly in the beautiful images of the two wisest poets, Homer and Virgil, in such a way that, for this reason in particular, reading their work delights me a great deal. For what did they want to show us – one through Ulysses, the other through Aeneas – other than the highest good of humanity? And they did not just want to show us the highest good, but also to demonstrate the most direct way which leads to it without any error.

But what are we doing? Have we forgotten that we came to this place not so much for the sake of debate as of good health? I think, therefore, that since we have now rested enough we should get up and descend to our cells, and not by that path from which we came, but by that nearby hill which is more winding but less steep.’

‘Certainly,’ says Lorenzo, ‘but on this condition, if it is acceptable to you: that tomorrow and on the other days on which we come to this place we might have the pleasure of your company. Since you have discussed each type of life, not just with elegance and in detail, but also with precision and penetration, continue, I ask, and teach us about what you were just saying about Virgil in such a way that you proceed on the subject in an unbroken sequence and with an uninterrupted train of thought. And – in order that you understand what I desire – I saw a few passages in Virgil which expound different positions on this way of thinking. Since, when you omit the intermediate parts, they cannot convey the same thing, what is being conveyed cannot be trusted. But you, through your wisdom and, as I have heard from many, your singular genius in interpreting this poet, can complete the continued course of disputations from the beginning to the end without any offense to the texts. For although, by the testimony of these educated men, there is no kind of learning whose topics you cannot explain plainly, eloquently, learnedly and wisely, what could be more in keeping with the disputation you just delivered, or more pleasurable to the ears and the minds of all these men who honour and respect you a great deal, or – since I know that you are very well-disposed to me in your benevolence – more relevant to my studies and those of my brother, than now, after you have discussed each way of living, to show us what the opinion of such a great man is on the same subject through the wanderings and journey to Italy of his Aeneas?’

When Lorenzo had said this and we had approved his request, showing our enthusiasm with our words and faces, Battista said ‘How much differently it went for me than I had planned! Although I

came here to live in the countryside in great leisure, I had to set forth an explanation for things which are drawn from the most profound philosophical subjects! But, as it is in the proverb, night will advise us very well. Let us now return to the cells, by the path which I mentioned, or another, if any seems more convenient to Mariotto.' 'That would certainly be better' said Mariotto and at once we headed back, proceeding with pleasant and varied speeches which, they say, are like a vehicle on the journey.

Book II

Many people seem to complain about the powerlessness of the human condition, most illustrious Federico, and not entirely with injustice. For nature has produced us in such a way that there is a great desire for knowledge implanted in us, but the faculty through which we attain what we desire is, perhaps, imparted ordinarily to a few who are of exceptional intelligence but not granted at all to other people. Nature does not, as they say, pour whatever things she can into us liberally and obligingly like a kind and indulgent mother. On the contrary, she is like an unfair and hostile stepmother. When she has shown us what delights us a great deal and has inflamed us with empty hope for it, she then leaves us so entirely ignorant of the path that, wandering in the shadows of error, we cannot discern the correct route which guides us. Since our mind is encumbered with corporeal mass from the beginning and, as if made drunk, is immersed in that very matter than which nothing is inferior, it comes to pass that, with the mind buried in a deep sleep, for a long time nothing flourishes in us apart from the bodily senses. The reason is only roused late and at a time when the sensual appetite has, like the cruelest tyrant, already seized power over all life: a power which does not rightfully belong to it, but to reason. So, finally returning to its reign after a long exile, reason is recognised by few and is received by fewer, so either it does not restore its rule at all or it has to govern with precarious authority. For a soul corrupted by the worst habits and saturated with false opinions – because the senses invaded before it could contemplate the light of reason – cannot return to the right or discern the truth except with effort. But if, with difficulty, the soul finally identifies truth itself as its safe harbour (if not in clear light, at least in a scant light and by an uncertain moon, as it is in Virgil), it is nonetheless tossed by the fickle surges of disturbance and thrown back into the sea by the overflowing waves, so that it completely loses sight of the port which it thought it had already reached. The shortness of life itself comes as no little inconvenience, as they say, with respect to these difficulties. For since nature has concealed the truth in secrecy, as Democritus said, and it is therefore buried in such deep shadows that we cannot release and draw out the light except with much effort over a long time, we are killed during the race itself before the finish line can be reached.

When people say these things, they find many who agree with them. Everyone prefers to accuse nature impiously than to frankly acknowledge their own idleness. But it is quite another matter for them to refute that there is a manifestly exceptional genius in the most eminent men who, although they have not been born in a different condition to other humans, and have not been created in another image, have nevertheless through their effort and through much sweat and vigilance ascended to the place at which those who arrive are justly considered blessed. In order that I may now pass over many who both in our time and in superior ages seem to have drawn near to divinity either by acting or by contemplating, can't you, illustrious Federico, be the best example for us? If

anyone recalled to memory your eminent deeds, he should think no time would remain for the study of culture. But, on the contrary, when we consider with what learning you are endowed and what longstanding and what unremitting effort you have expended on these matters, who should not be surprised that the Muses dared to venture into the greatest tumults of wars and the horrible clamour of arms? We read that many military leaders were amongst the most learned of the ancients. But that must be thought praise of the times rather than of the people, since it would have been unseemly for them not to know that in which nearly all others excelled. Our times have produced no small number who are distinguished in military matters, out of all of whom you will perhaps find some imbued with learning, but as yet I have known no one except you whom you could truly say to be *learned*. So your glory must be considered more illustrious. You, who are not confined to those skills that were always held in the greatest honour for their own sake, decided not only to follow Mars, in whom all resounds with the sound of arms and the blare of trumpets, but showed that you cherished Pallas, who is considered to be the goddess not only of martial matters but also of all wisdom, above the others. As if you were another Ulysses instructed by her advice, you never lacked her help in the most difficult times and desperate situations. But amidst your important and almost innumerable public duties you have also striven, with the same goddess as a guide, to attain a degree of learning which many are scarcely able to touch upon when living in the highest leisure and with everything in abundance. When could either the fear of an enemy or the shouting of your soldiers resounding in your ears ever distract your mind so much that a whole day would pass with you being idle, in which you neither read something yourself nor listened attentively to the reading or disputation of another? So we are by no means surprised if the most erudite men were always held in the highest honour at your court. How many do you also have in your court who you have both always supported with your riches and provided honours with much dignity? And how many erudite men through the whole of Italy have you either supported with your marvellous liberality when poor, or bestowed with a fitting reward for their learning when they sustain themselves comfortably with their assets? For this reason I will say (not so much that I detract anything from the praises of other princes, but so that I give thanks for your great merits with respect to the Muses – if not the thanks I owe, then those which I can give): out of all princes in our time of whom I am aware, Federico is alone, I say! He is a haven of health and a unique sanctuary for learned men in calamity and offers glory and distinction to those placed in better fortune. So the more princes surpass you in magnitude of territory and dominion, the more the Greek, the Latin and Florentine Muses will elevate your name to the heavens for future centuries, ever with greater praise. For, excluded from the courts of others, they are received with so much generous hospitality by you – not as guests, but having already been bestowed with citizenship and established in a sanctuary which is exceptionally well-furnished and crowded with all kinds of books. This is because you dedicated a library to Pallas, to Apollo and to the nine Muses that is wholesome in location, spacious and distinguished in form and celebrated for its abundance of

books. For so distinguished, so honourable, and so useful a gift, the state now owes no less to you than Athens once owed to Peisistratos, or Alexandria in Egypt owed to Ptolemy (who had the cognomen 'Philadelphus'), or Rome owed to Lucullus, Caesar and finally Asinius Pollio, all of whom, we remember, instituted libraries crowded with varied volumes of all types. What tool, what apparatus, what treasure, will a man who is worthy of the most holy name of a prince rather procure for himself than those things which alone are the best provisions for us on our journey, and through which we can attain the highest good? For from them we obtain ambrosia, from them we obtain nectar, with which the happy life can be nourished with the highest pleasure.

When I hear that, at the moment, out of all the almost countless number of your books you read those avidly which involve the ends of good and evil, I would like you to know my lucubrations on the same matter too. It is not as if they can teach you anything that is unknown to you – for I am not so impudent that I might, as the Greeks say, try to enlighten you as the pig tries to enlighten Minerva – but if my book might sit among so many works of the most learned men, even in the lowest place, I will think its position the greatest kindness to me. For this reason, just as I described the speech given by Battista on the first day in the previous book, so I have also dedicated the disputation which that divine man performed on the next day, committed in this second book, to your name: Federico, both unconquered in war and sole protector of the Muses.

It had scarcely become fully light on the following day when we were summoned to worship. Mariotto, a host who was very pleasant in his liberality and friendship, had urged us to finish these things in the morning so that more time would be left for us to listen to Battista. So, with the worship completed, he directed our path so that showing themselves to us from all directions were many pleasurable things produced by nature and also many places where monuments stood to the holiness of ancient men and to the austerity of life. And so great was the pleasure, not only to the eyes from the pleasantness of the area, but also to the mind and the soul from the vestiges of ancient religion, that we arrived at the spring before we noticed that we had set forth from the threshold. When we had sat down and all faces were turned to Battista in great silence, he said: 'I understand that I must speak, but see, Lorenzo, how generous the night has been to me! For not only do I intend to honour what I have promised you, but I have something else I want to add. You have sought what is fitting for a person fond of liberty to know, and what is both pleasing to hear and not without benefit. Since the disputation has been led to this place, though, it will not be a departure from the business in hand to discuss the ends of good and evil, separately and taking no more time than necessary, before I undertake that task. You say: surely that was in yesterday's speech? It was almost the same but for a different reason. Yesterday we were asking which was the most suitable way to lead us to the goal, but now I think we should investigate where it is we want to be led. So if we set forth the opinions of almost all the philosophers on this matter, and add to them the many thoughts of the Christians, I hope it will be the case that the things we seek in Virgil will be altogether more easily ascertained and perceived.'

Since we all enthusiastically agreed with this plan and we had shown that we were ready to listen, I remember he began like this: ‘Since it became clear from the things which we discussed yesterday that man is not born by accident for the idlest leisure or for listless sensual enjoyment, but is produced by immortal God, either for the cognition of great and divine matters or for deeds which are noble and beneficial to the human race, it always seems to me that an especially useful disputation is that which best lays out what the purpose is, what the end is, what the ultimate goal is, to which we should direct all our plans of both living correctly and of thinking properly. Although we see that there was extraordinary controversy between the ancient writers on this subject I do not doubt that, if all their views are collected together in common and compared with each other, it will be easy (even by men endowed with middling intelligence or learning!) to pick out which of them appears either most truthful or the most similar to the truth. They did not only agree on the name – for they call it the highest good without any disagreement – but also on what they all thought to be the same about it: they affirmed that it exists for its own sake alone, but all other things must strive towards it. But when they considered what that end actually was, such great dissent arose between them and so fierce a dispute was incited that it seemed as though they no longer desired to discover the truth, but instead wanted to defend with all tenacity the first argument they had seized upon. So while this whole branch of philosophy which concerns life and morals flowed from Socrates alone as if from a spring, we nevertheless see what should have been one thing rent and dispersed into many parts by the diversity of thought and of human strife. For although that blameless man always followed the same belief, on account of his penetrating sharpness of the mind in choosing and his firm constancy of spirit in persevering with what he had chosen, nonetheless, because he did not always seem to think the same thing, but was thought to argue different things in different places as he could dispute with marvellous irony about anything on either side of the debate, he granted to those who delighted in human learning a certain handle, as it were, so that each followed the view which was most suited to his own inclination and nature, as if afforded the best defence by Socrates. This is why we see as many families and schools of philosophers among the Greeks as there are opinions on the ends of good and evil. For if we believe the most profound of authors, Varro and Cicero, then we should not talk about a separate school of philosophy that, even if it differs concerning other subjects, agrees about the ends of good and evil, because there is no reason for someone to philosophise other than in order to be happy, and they cannot be happy unless they have perceived and acquired the end of the good. And so, that which does not pursue an end of the good cannot be said to be a school.

But I return to the ancients, of whom there were some with such sluggish and debased intellects that, although we consist of both body and soul, they were nevertheless unable to pursue the divinity of the human mind with their own. And so, concerning themselves with nothing else beyond the body and the senses which depend on the body, and thinking that only the body exists, they placed the highest good in the things which pertain to it. Since pleasure, which allures the

senses, greatly rouses every living creature in its pursuit, it had many adherents who considered it supreme. Aristippus is known as the first of all these. He was born in Cyrene in Libya and educated in Athens by Socrates, although he nonetheless attributed everything to pleasure. He observed that many occasions arose in which people could not enjoy pleasure, and in order that, just as he perceived pleasure from an abundance of things, so too would he not fall into distress from deprivation, he trained his soul in an extraordinary way, so he could both enjoy what was available and despise what was absent with ease. So he was the first of the Socratics to philosophise for pay, and he inhabited the palace of the tyrant Dionysius, receiving the best hospitality, so that he duly acquired riches for himself to furnish every kind of pleasure. He could endure being treated with contempt or suffering loss with such great equanimity that “with his friend amazed because he carried himself so modestly when spat at by Dionysius, he responded, ‘Fishermen will suffer to be overwhelmed by many waves to catch an ignoble little tiddler. Should I, so sprinkled, not suffer so that I can eat the prize catch?’”. I pass over many of the highest indignities to which he willingly submitted in order to avoid losing the pleasure through which alone he thought himself happy. Diogenes is not being unfair when he calls him the dog of the king. Nichomachus, the son of Aristotle, recounted that of the same opinion was Eudoxus of Cnidus, in other respects an illustrious man, distinguished in mathematics and medicine and not an unwise lawgiver. Dionysius of Heraclea also thought the same. He had learned from Zeno of Citium, the head of the Stoics, to be somewhat steadfast and revered virtue as the sole good and abhorred vice as the sole evil on account of his teachings. Eventually suffering a disease of the eyes, he sank into sadness and, abandoning the Stoa, he deserted to the Cyrenaics, so that he was not afraid to do anything that pertained to pleasure, even before the eyes of all. He also very carefully wrote a book about pleasure in which he commended it as the highest good.

I really do not know what I shall say about Epicurus of Athens, than whom there was no fiercer advocate in defending pleasure, they say. For when he discusses the highest good in his *χρῆσις δόξαις* (that is, his *Principal Doctrines*), he asserts that there is nothing he understands as the good apart from those things which provide gustatory or sexual pleasures or which charm us by the beauty of their form. However in his letter to Hermarchus he considers virtue of such importance that in the greatest torments of the body, in which he himself has placed the highest evil, he dares to say that he is still happiest in the conscience of good deeds. Sometimes he speaks about pleasure in such a way that he seems to understand that the pleasure of the soul is superior to that which is from the senses. He does not always consider pleasure as the good, but sometimes freedom from pain. If you look to the life and morals of the man, you will find many things deserving of high praise. Indeed, if he had felt rightly about God, you would find nothing in his actions which cannot be justly praised. For he never did anything, nor persuaded others to do anything, which was lacking in justice or equity. No sadness, no torments could cast him down from the highest degree of steadfastness. So great was his faithfulness, so great was his charity to people, that he generously

fed and taught the children of his deceased friends and, when dying, provided for them in his will to be fed and taught by others. It is easy to understand how continent or, rather, temperate he was in those pleasures which he so greatly extolled, because he rarely drank wine, and rarely added anything to bread apart from a little bit of cheese. He therefore seems to have thought differently from the multitude of other people. For most people, even when they live most shamefully, present themselves as having the highest continence and sternness in appearance and words. “For,” as it is in the writings of the satirist, “what street is not full of sad debauchees?” But although he said things which libertines would not utter without shame, in terms of his life and morals he should not be ranked behind Socrates. But so much for Epicurus.

Hieronymus of Rhodes, a well-learned and agreeable man, but one who could not maintain the severity of the Peripatetics, in whose bosom he had been nourished, did not value pleasure but the absence of pain as the highest good, following, as many believe, the authority of Periander, tyrant of Corinth, whom they are inclined to think was the originator of such opinions. Leucippus the Abderite thought the same, and also Theodorus, whom they named *atheon* because he denied that there are gods. All learned people surmise something greater about Democritus. For when a man of his surpassing genius says that the highest good is εὐθυμία, he does not only mean an absence of those pains which are in the body, but the right and peaceful state of the soul produced by the removal of all disturbances. So I believe that the εὐθυμία named by this philosopher is the same as what in our sacred writings they call peace, in which the Hebrew poet places the highest good. For he says: “Praise the Lord, Jerusalem, praise your God, Zion, because He has strengthened the bars of your gates, He has blessed your sons within you, because He has placed peace in your borders”. For with the bars of the gates strengthened, nothing will either enter nor depart from therein, which is just as if he says that, when the appetite is not moved by anything either external or internal which is contrary to reason, the highest tranquility will exist in the soul. If we call this the highest good while we live, we will never stray. But about this a little later.

We have briefly shown, I think, both those who think that the ends of the good are in pleasure and those who think they are in freedom from pain. Aside from these people, I see that there were some who believed that it is neither of these things separately, but both of them in conjunction, that brings about the happy life, amongst whom I would more readily count Epicurus than amongst those who adhere to pleasure alone. Likewise, there were those who were of the opinion that not even these two things joined together could offer what we seek, but they think that all things which they call the “first things of nature” must be sought to achieve such a great task. Although they count pleasure and the absence of pain as important among them, there are nevertheless many more things which they call the first things of nature, sometimes in the mind, sometimes in the body. But we will discuss these things more clearly and more productively a little later in a convenient place.

So if you think correctly about the opinions of all of these philosophers, you will see that they have perceived nothing which can be regarded as excellent, nor do they separate the mind from the senses, nor can they understand anything beyond the senses. We can duly disregard them without harm. For who has not laughed at that philosopher who, investigating the highest human good, supposes that he has discovered it in something which either does not occupy any part of the human being or is in its smallest and worst part, so that it now seems that one can rightly call him not a philosopher, but a *philosarcus*? Those discovering this error, who excelled both in dignity of soul and intellectual acumen, admired the divinity of the mind so much that they thought that nothing beyond it pertained to humans. So they placed the final end, for the sake of which all else must be done, in the speculation of divine and mortal matters and in drawing out the secrets of nature. They say that the first people of this opinion were Thales of Miletus, one of the Seven Sages, and Bias of Priene, of the same group. They also add Anaxagoras of Clazomenae and Euclid the Socratic. If we were to count Aristotle in this group, we would not appear to be ignorant of those things to which he refers in his ten books on ethics, but since the entire school of the Peripatetics draws its origin from this man, we will explain a little later the particular opinions which are of that sect. Aside from these was another kind of philosophising whose practitioners, although they did not wholly adhere to this kind of speculation, nevertheless embraced virtue alone in living life and in doing things, to the extent that they dared to say that there is no good besides virtue and no evil besides vice. They write that the first among the Greeks who thought this were Pittacus of Mytilene, Menedemus of Lampsacus and Bion of Borysthenes, and both the Socratics and the Pythagoreans seem to affirm the same. But we can offer the Stoics as those who established this view in its entirety with the most numerous and profound arguments. They were truly vigorous philosophers and you can perceive in them a firmness of spirit in every type of danger, a temperance in the face of all pleasures, such that no snares of fortune seem to be able to cast them down from the highest degree of tranquility. If you wanted to group the Cynics together with them you could certainly do so, for you would think that their same opinion, their same rigour of spirit, is almost the same thing with a different appearance.

You see what the Stoics attribute to virtue. But the Peripatetics and the ancient Academicians thought that the origin of the highest good was to be derived from nature. The Peripatetics deny that one can know the final end of a human being when ignorant of its nature, because all things which nature produced live good and happy lives if they live in harmony and accordance with their nature, as it were. So Varro, a man whom no learned person ever hesitated to consult on the greatest men of the Greeks because of the magnitude and variety of his learning, traces out the ultimate end in the following way. He thinks that, since one seeks the highest good of the human being, one must first seek what it is that we call "a human". Either "a human" consists of the mind and the body, which one can easily doubt because the mind is far superior to the body; or it is the mind alone, and the body is not a part of the human being but supports the mind like a horse

supports a rider (for a rider is not so named because they consist in a person *and* a horse, but because they are the person alone and are called a rider because they have some relation with regards to the horse); or the human being is only the body, so that somehow it holds itself to the mind in the same way in which a cup holds itself to a liquid. For a saucer and the liquid which the saucer contains is not called a cup at the same time, but only a saucer. It is never called a cup unless it is suitable for containing a liquid. Since neither option is satisfactory and Varro does not think that a human being is either the body alone or the mind alone, he finally investigates whether man can be said to be both at the same time, as we say a chariot is not this horse or that horse, but is both, joined at the same time by a yoke. Since he adheres entirely to this opinion, this great man thinks that the highest good itself, through which we will be happy, consists in the goods of the mind and the body at the same time. So, persuaded by this reasoning, he deduced that the first things of nature should be sought for their own sake. For since every creature, by its very nature, is committed to its own preservation above all else, it devotes its attention to everything in order that it may conserve itself. Nature, the best mother, established this primary appetite in every creature so that it wants itself to be safe, and is disposed in such a way that best accords with its nature. So the animal values its security, it values the conservation of all its parts, health, integrity of the senses, removal of all pain, likewise strength and beauty and other things of the same kind, all of which they call the first things of nature in relation to the *body*. In the same way it values those things in the *soul* which are like the sparks and the seeds of virtue: comprehension and memory, which are two things summed up in the single name of “intelligence”. But even though virtue itself, which is implanted by learning and which some call the art of living, is the most excellent of all the goods which are in the soul, we do not realise this is the case until late in life. So Plato rightly calls someone happy who attains it even in old age, because they gain wisdom and true opinions.

Since virtue (which is the art of living life) recognises the first things of nature (which are all present when learning is absent), it strives for them for its own sake, so that it delights in and enjoys all of them, this one more, but that one less, to the extent that each is superior or inferior. It therefore takes pleasure in all of them, but with the determination that, if necessity so demands, it can easily disregard some lesser things so that it can acquire the greater or preserve those already acquired. So virtue does not put itself before any of the other goods that are of the soul or of the body because it is the leader and the wisest empress and it knows how to best use itself and these other goods which make human beings happy. If, however, virtue relinquishes its control of life and the first things of nature do not submit to it, they will necessarily be ruined and, having been used for evil, cannot in any way be used for good. So the happy life will correspond with virtue first, and then with those goods of the mind and the body without which virtue has no reason to exist. If to these aforementioned goods are added many of those other goods which do not take away virtue even if absent, then life is made even happier from its initial happiness. But if it were not simply many goods that were added, as I was just saying, but all goods, what would prevent us

calling such a life, with its heaping up of all goods, the happiest? It is easy to distinguish between the goods without which virtue cannot exist and, on the other hand, those which cannot remove virtue through their absence. The integrity of the senses, memory and reason are those without which virtue cannot exist. For through them we attain the learning without which virtue cannot be understood. But swiftness, vigour, beauty, nobility and those things which are similar to them are not related to virtue. They are nonetheless thought by the Peripatetics to be goods which virtue values for its own sake and which the sage rightly enjoys as far as is suitable.

But the Peripatetics also want this happy life to be situated in society. So the sage values the goods of friends for their own sake, and he desires the same for his friend that he desires for himself: not for his own sake, but for his friend's. Yet he will have a careful distinction in humankind, so that he best understands in what rank his country, children, parents, blood relations, other more distant relatives, citizens, and finally all other mortals should be ordered, until the whole race of humanity is encompassed.

I have summarised, I think, all the thought of the Peripatetics on the highest good. If I have spend less time than you wanted on this subject, know that it is no misfortune. For you have these Acciaiuoli, you have Alamanno Rinuccini, who, when you wish, can offer a disputation on all these matters, on which they are learned and eloquent, with more profundity and detail. And if only our Oliviero Arduino were present, a man whom I regard of such importance in all areas of philosophy that, in my opinion, he occupies the most honourable place amongst the Aristotelians!

'He is, as you say,' said Donato Acciaiuoli, 'a man eminent in much learning and who, if his employment permitted, would not be absent as Lorenzo's companion in such a sojourn to the country. With respect to us Acciaiuoli, since you speak about us in such honourable language, let others decide whether you do this justifiably or somewhat excessively, as a friend. But we don't reject such high praise from so great a man as you! For although we have always esteemed virtue itself for its own sake, seeking no intended reward, if I am to acknowledge the truth, we have still not yet accomplished so much that if some little fame follows virtue as a shadow follows a body we are able to flee it. But I am amazed at why, while you count us expressly as Aristotelians, you should pass by Ficino in silence.'

While looking at Ficino with a smile, Battista said, 'What else do you think, Donato, stops me from doing this apart from envy? For although I do not doubt that he has also drunk abundantly from that which has flowed from the spring of the Lyceum, even so, since all acknowledge that he is the most accurate interpreter of the mysteries which are uttered by the oracle of the Academy, do you think it can be wrenched out from me that I should yield to him in both areas?'

Here Alamanno said, 'You joke, Battista, and in your characteristic manner you wanted to sprinkle the profundity of your disputations with some wit. But – if I may speak in earnest – if only others suffered envy like you! For there would not be so much envious rivalry roused daily among the learned and instead each person who understood the good in another would praise it without

deceit, embracing in mutual benevolence, and if there were anything by which he was offended he would put a stop to it in a friendly manner. But at present I cannot say I wonder enough about some people – and I might be inclined to mention either cruelty, or stupidity, or both – who think they can approach that nature which is particular to man while drawing off as much praise for themselves as they detract from others through disparagement, and rely on being able to prove their own learning to others by charging their rivals with ignorance. I shudder at the barbarised minds of these people as if at a monstrosity of nature. For learning often exerts the same impulse on humans (if they are not by nature some hideous monster) as they say water does on a wolf. For just as those things which, when marinated, lose all bitterness and are furnished with the most pleasurable flavours, so does the human mind, when refined with learning, set aside not only everything rough and absurd, but also everything disagreeable or barbarous that resides in it. But perhaps we deviate too much from what was intended. And so do now return to the undertaking, if it seems acceptable to you.’

‘O Alamanno,’ said Battista, ‘this digression was a great pleasure. For I very much approve of what you said, and acknowledge that you do not philosophise in words alone, as many are accustomed to do, but also in life and in morals. In order that the speech is resumed from where we left it: the Peripatetics tend to explain the ends of the good according to this formula, more or less. But Varro affirmed that the same opinion was also found in the author Antiochus of the old Academics, whom we read was the teacher of Varro and of Cicero, although Cicero contends that in many ways he is a Stoic rather than an old Academic.’

So you see how varied opinions are on the highest good. But in fact, if we contemplate our nature diligently, consider what a wretched condition in which we live this mortal life, and are able to pursue what is good in it as if it were the highest good (which embraces the whole person, in that it takes account of the dignity of both of the body and the mind at the same time), those who place virtue first do not seem to have gone astray, as they also add the remaining goods in the order I have described. For we acknowledge it is necessary that, as long as a fiery and fast horse is joined to so dull and stupid an ass – that is, the mind is joined to the body – neither concern should be neglected. So I think that this is the most complete opinion of all those which have been discussed so far. There are those who, in order that they seemed to contribute something new, broke off some small part from this philosophy as if from a whole and undiminished body. Herillus, the pupil of Zeno the Stoic, strove to prove that the highest good was knowledge alone, because he had often seen knowledge praised by Aristotle and Theophrastus for its own sake. But Aristo of Chios, charmed by the magnificence and beauty of words and driven by the love of virtue, and having read what had been written by the ancients on the disdain of human affairs, ventured to affirm that, apart from virtue and vice, there is nothing else which should either be sought or avoided. Because Aristo neglects the things in the middle between virtue and vice in such a way that he thinks no delight can be gained from them, and regards all things as equal, and thinks that there is no

difference between extreme poverty and the highest riches, no difference between vigorous health and the greatest sickness, he completely exalts the very virtue which he loves so much, whose particular characteristic is to choose between those things which are in accordance with nature. For he takes away the possibility of recognising duty, and by removing this from life I do not see what differs between us and animals. Still lesser is Hieronymus of Rhodes who departed very much from his teacher Aristotle. When he saw that many natural things are counted as goods, out of all of them he chose freedom from pain alone and, as I have already said, bestowed upon it the principle of the highest good. Somewhat more noble are Calliphon and Diodorus, for although the first valued pleasure as the highest good, and the second the absence of pain that I just discussed, nonetheless, neither excluded moral character. But Polemo, content with the first things of nature, neglects virtue in such a way that he thinks the happy life can be achieved by the first things of nature alone, without moral character.

So when we regard the opinions of all these philosophers, we understand them to be like a limb torn off from the body which the Peripatetics had described to us in its entirety. Since we are exposed to blows of fortune which are so numerous, so varied, and so horrible, we will never declare a man happy unless virtue is at hand, into whose well-fortified stronghold, as it were, he withdraws himself from the the fierce enemies raging at him and attacking him on all sides. For the battle of the appetite against reason is so fierce and unremitting, the tempests rise up so horrible and numerous from the changeable winds of fortune, and so many disturbances are aroused from it that, unless some true and, as it were, divine wisdom is present at hand that “free from the mist of error, distinguishes the true good”, as it is in Juvenal, what shall we be able to seek or to flee when we use our reason? For *wisdom* is that which, having cut off worthless and countless desires and having removed empty terrors, alone knows the truth and, bringing *justice*, weighs and distributes everything on the same scale. It establishes *fortitude* against the greatest and most compelling dangers as an adamant and unbreakable shield and, for the sake of honour and moral character, impels the soul with the spurs of magnanimity and steadfastness to endure every burden. But, on the other hand, lest it slip into too much lust and desire through excessive lasciviousness, confines it with the reins of *temperance*. It therefore comes to pass that, just as the firmest rock remains immobile in the middle of the waves and is not moved from its place by any swell or storm, so too does our mind endure in the highest tranquility with every surge of disturbance broken on its steadfastness. It forever enjoys that peace, which is not granted by the human condition, but which Jesus bequeathed to his own as his final testament and, as long as it endures our weakness, it lives happily. And indeed, what can harm that person who is never impressed by what the crowd thinks is the greatest, and scarcely counts poverty, exile, sickness, loss of children, indeed death itself, among the number of evils?

Even though these things are set out in this way, the Christians nonetheless deny that men can be truly called happy while living such a life. For if you say that virtue alone is good, don't you leave

the body, companion of the soul and a part of us, without any good? If you are of the opinion that the body is not a part of us, I would readily allow this argument. But if such sicknesses rise up in it that the senses are corrupted and memory and judgment taken away, where, I ask you, is virtue established? By what faculty is it acquired? If, on the other hand, we call the useful things of the body good, the detrimental things will be evil, and they will be able to inflict such troubles that they either divert us from all the duties of life or diminish them so far that death is to be preferred to life. So they force us to desist from that without which we are not human, because it is the first demand of nature that the human being preserves itself and therefore escapes its death. While we wander through life as a mortal, we will not therefore be happy expect in the sole hope of that which is the coming and immortal life. Hence this is in the letter of Paul: "For we were saved in hope". For the Christians say that God is the highest good, which is also established as being what Plato knew before Christ was born as a man. You can easily learn his opinion when you wish, either in those commentaries which Marsilio wrote (not only with great profundity, but also with the foremost clarity and plainness) on the *Philebus* of Plato or, if you cannot wait any longer he can take my place in this disputation, as I am tired, and he can satisfy your wish while I take a little breath.'

'Since we are on the road,' said Lorenzo, 'I certainly do not want us to stop here, as if damaged by potholes. So, now that the business is being conducted according to Greek honesty, it does not matter to me whether the debt should be owed by you or by Marsilio. Neither of you will be compelled to emigrate or to borrow a loan for a down payment, because each of you has so much hoarded in the safe that you would not default on the debt were it even for a much greater sum. But I am surprised, since you have conducted the disputation all the way to this point and did not attempt in either yesterday's or today's speech to substitute a proxy, that you now want to interrupt an oration delivered thus far on a continuous thread.'

'Particularly since,' said Marsilio, 'in the sight of so many eminent Aristotelians, he recounted the entire teaching of that school without attempting to be relieved of so great a burden by any of them.'

'Many are present, as you say,' said Battista, 'who would have been of service to me in that task and, if they had been, would have done me a favour. So why did I not request it? Because, as you saw, since there are many who could excel at it, while each one pushes the task on to another, eventually all will reject the responsibility. I am not afraid of the same thing with you. For although the Academy is not forbidden to these men, nor the Lyceum to you, I nonetheless prefer to call them Aristotelians but you a Platonist. So, since I see that you are the only Platonist standing here, I ask you, can you be equal to me with your fragile health, if we have to engage in single combat? Nor should you rely too much on your age. For, if you were to do that, the duel of Dares and Entellus should be a warning to you. So you will, if you have good sense, acquiesce and discharge with indulgence the trifling burden which has been imposed on you.'

After this was said by Leon in witty jest, Marsilio replied: ‘Very well, I stretch out on the grass and surrender with equanimity. For although I hope that all who are present will pardon me for the vice of rashness, and that they can absolve an obedient pupil of the crime of impudence to his teacher, how can I be reluctant to speak, when I can do so for my own benefit and without detriment to Lorenzo? If by some chance there are things which I express correctly I will think it no small benefit. Because from now on I will consider those things of which I think you approve as being beyond doubt since, having too little faith in myself, I have not so far dared to do it. If I should err in this task, what could be of greater benefit and pleasure to me than to return from error to the true path under your guidance. But lest the beginning be drawn out longer than is necessary on a subject which will be very brief, we now approach the matter in hand.

As Leon said a little earlier, the divine Plato thought that God is the highest good. He did not only say the highest good was God alone, but also taught this fact with the most profound arguments. But this is not questioned in the present disputation. Unless I am mistaken, he establishes what the highest good is with the following argument. The highest good is so called by the agreement of all philosophers because we both strive toward it for its own sake before it is acquired and, when we have attained it, one remains tranquil in it in such a way that one desires nothing beyond it. But since, as most people agree, there are three types of good, we shall consider carefully which of them is the highest good which we seek. Is it the goods called “external”? No. They do not strive for their own sake, but for the sake of the body. For whatever depends on an accident of fortune – wealth, honours and things similar to them – is either for pleasure or for the use of the body, so they are better called “uses” than “goods”. Nor do the goods of the body seem to strive for their own sake. For we seek them on account of the soul. Add too that it does not seem as though they should even be called goods. For if we call “good” that which, by its own nature, is always the same for everyone, how can things be goods which are invariably bad when badly used? What does the form of the body confer to the libertine, what do riches confer to the spendthrift, what do toughness and strength confer to the gladiator, to the murderer, to the robber except that it makes them worse in their evil? For when such instruments of the passions present themselves to a soul already sickening, what window do you think it opens to every kind of wickedness? But this is even more wretched: make the same men good and extremely temperate. However much they made use of the bodily goods – which the stupid do not only regard as goods, but even as the greatest goods – with the utmost prudence and temperance, nonetheless, rushing into the offensive conduct that bad people exhibit, into envy, cruelty, avarice, and finally into the licentiousness of wanton women, haven’t many of them experienced extreme ruin? Orators describe these more comprehensively. For us, however, it will be enough to have shown that what we seek can be found in neither the goods of fortune nor in the goods of the body. So the highest good will be in the goods of the soul or it will be nowhere. The latter is absurd, so the former is true. The ultimate end we seek will not, however, be in those goods from nature, in which kind we

count intelligence, memory, bravery and the rest, and which are called the first things of nature by the Aristotelians. For we do not rest in those things as if at the ultimate finishing line of the race but, supported by them, we hasten to something greater. So the virtues acquired from the first things of nature can show us what we seek. Not those virtues which are devoted to life and morals, for they are full of toil and are devoted to purging the soul like certain propitiatory rites, but rather those virtues with which we duly speculate. But, you might ask, the virtues devoted to the cognition of earthly things too? This cognition certainly strives to make us happy, but it is not able to do enough for our minds. Nothing is more eager than our minds, which never rest, never set aside the carefulness of investigation, unless they attain that highest good – incorporeal, uncreated, dependent on nothing – on which everything depends, which we call the cause, the origin, the fount and beginning of everything. Since the cognition of the highest good, filled with darkness, with obscurity, with ambiguity, and finally with apprehension, offers itself to our souls while they are confined in the blind prison of the body, Plato denies that we can be happy unless, after having been unfettered from terrestrial chains, we have returned free into our true nature. For how could the highest good be where there is no clear understanding of things, nor any rest in the soul?

Gradually, if I am not mistaken, a case has been made that the highest good is proven incontestably to rest in God alone. Even if this is clear and obvious to those considering the matter more carefully, the Platonists were nonetheless accustomed to prove it with plentiful and powerful arguments. Since I understand that, a little later, Battista will come to the Christian theologians having abandoned the philosophers (he already hastens along the route on which he knew to proceed), I will pass over them all. For everything he adduces to explain their Christian view on the ends of the good flows from this one source. I think in general that the opinions of the Platonists and the Christians on this matter, and the proof of these opinions, are the same. For who out of all the Greeks thinks more divinely about divine power? So although everywhere they call Plato *θεῖον*, they do not call Aristotle *θεῖον*, but *δαίμονιον*, because he was turned most keenly to natural philosophy. The divine Augustine says it was mainly for this reason that he chose the Platonists for himself out of all philosophers because he thought that they should be considered superior to the others to the extent that their opinions were more correct about God. So our souls will finally be happiest when, free from the bodily contagion of all things, they contemplate God alone. For this reason, when, in the book titled *Phaedrus*, Plato speaks about the happy life which the souls enjoy in heaven, he affirms that they are nourished by the contemplation of truth, from which they obtain a kind of unparalleled joy. He thinks that the truth is like a fertile and abundant pasture and that, if well cultivated, it will produce contemplation itself as the best crop, so to speak, and that the joy by which souls are sustained flows eternally from the two of them. “In fact,” he says, “there is a great impulse to consider where the field of truth is. For food suitable for the soul grows from it and the nature of the wings by which the soul is elevated is nourished by it”. For Plato thinks that our souls return to the heavens by means of a twofold class of virtues as if by two wings: the virtues which

consist in action and those which consist in investigation. When they have returned to the heavens, two rewards are given: one the contemplation of the truth like the sweetest ambrosia; the other a joy absolute in its perfection, in which they are saturated as if in nectar. These are his words in the same book, unless memory fails us: "But when the chariot has returned, leading the horses to the stable he holds forth ambrosia and, in addition to that, nectar to drink". Do you see through such a great philosophical author that our souls will finally be happy when, returned to heaven, they are permitted to enjoy God? Not to enjoy Him in such a way that the soul enjoys its own body for itself (for they are joined not only by their position in space, but also as a whole) nor, on the contrary, like a friend enjoys a friend. For although in a true friendship a great and perpetual harmony flourishes, and the will of the friends should appear to be entirely the same, friends are still neither the same nor circumscribed in the same place. But the soul clings to God in such a way that, although it is not the same in essence, it is not separated from him by any distance. So, just as the eye enjoys the light by which it can see everything, and it enjoys it in such a way that, although the eye is something different from light, it is nevertheless not separated from the light by any interval, so too do our souls enjoy God, always clinging to Him.

Since, at the same time, we will see God and we will perceive from that vision (so to speak) the joy which, as I said a little earlier, is the greatest of all, many have questioned which of the two is of more importance to the happy life. The more brilliant Platonists are of the opinion that the vision takes precedence over the joy. For who doubts that the ultimate end always corresponds to the Prime Mover? And who, again, cannot see that the Prime Mover in the soul is the intellect? For the will is moved by the intellect. So the highest good will be in the intellect, rather than in joy. Add to these things that, when the human highest good is sought, it will be better placed in the part of the soul which is common to us with the incorporeal and divine minds, than in that which almost makes us equal to other minds. Reason renders us most similar to the angels, but in our appetite we do not differ from beasts. So the highest good should not be located in the will, but in reason. If you like, add this too. Since all motion is toward the good, and that the nature which carries us toward future good is the same nature in the good which is already present and which rests having attained what it sought, as if in its particular place, it follows that, just as motion holds itself to the future good, so too does rest hold itself to the good which is already present. We do not call something good because our nature is moved toward it but, on the contrary, we call it our nature to be moved to the good, because it is already established to be good. For no object, no end, no cause depends on the power which provokes movement, but the opposite. The reasoning is the same about present good too. For who will be so dull in judgment that he concludes: "This must be a good, because I am resting in it?" Rather: because right reason decided that this is already a good, the mind itself therefore rests in it calmly and with pleasure. Fire flies up into its own higher nature and, having reached this boundary it rests, since it has now conformed to its good. This is not fire's peculiar good because it was carried up to it, but because it is moved by its nature to pursue it.

All these things lead us to conclude that it is not rest itself – whether you would prefer to call it either joy or pleasure – that is the highest good, but something else, which compels us to unite with it because it is good and grants us rest when it is finally reached.

This is roughly what the Platonists think about the highest good, but they do so with far more evidence. But since all this happens in such an exalted height, there are some who question whether mortals can ascend all the way to such sublimity. Plato answers this question easily. For he proves that nothing is more characteristic of nature than to permeate everything it creates and to impart itself to the things that share in it, to the extent that they are receptive. For water does not transform air into itself to destroy air. If it were to strive for the destruction of things nature would not be the best, as all acknowledge, but rather the worst. Water does not therefore intend to destroy the air, but to draw the air to itself so that it assumes the form of water. So since it is characteristic of nature that it pours itself out abundantly and pervades everything, it will surely be the duty of the good that, following nature's lead, it imparts itself to everything that shares in it. So while he still praises that good which touches one person, Aristotle nevertheless rightly thinks that the good which extends to the whole community – or, rather, the race of humanity – is more beautiful and divine. What else does prudence want for itself other than to best take care of the many? What does justice demand other than that everything is devoted to common benefit? Doesn't fortitude exhort us to certain death for the welfare of others? Last of all, doesn't temperance deter us lest we enjoy desire at the expense of another? So, conclude: that which nature greatly strives for, should be thought of as being greatly in accordance with nature. Since nature desires to exercise its faculty for others, it will be this faculty that especially conforms with nature. If you grant this, you should also concede that, since the first duty of the good is to follow nature unerringly, the good primarily exists so that it pours itself abundantly into all. If this is particular to the good, it will be more particular to the better, but especially to the best. And God is the best of all. Now you see what follows. Moreover, what each thing delivers to others, it must first have it in itself. That which you do not have yourself, you will never give to another. But God gave all things a desire to pour themselves into other things. So He too will have this quality in Himself, and in just as much a greater degree in him as that to which he excels over everything he has brought forth. But since He excels infinitely, this same quality is infinite in him, so to speak.

I seem to have touched upon these things rather than explained them properly, because neither the weakness of my intelligence nor the shortness of time allowed them to be discussed more broadly and more copiously. So, I have left out and neglected a lot. You understand, Lorenzo, that the things I said were recounted more feebly and obscurely than was warranted either by the dignity of the subject or by your most patient ears. Ask Leon if you think that anything was lacking on this important matter.'

'On the contrary,' said Battista, 'you have presented your disputation on these things clearly and precisely, Marsilio, and seeing that such a speech needed to be joined together out of many and

varied elements, you have progressed in order. So unless Lorenzo thinks otherwise, we shall return to the Christians.'

'Yes, to that very point,' said Lorenzo, 'for Marsilio both satisfied me with his clear and transparent way of speaking and delighted me with his great brevity.'

'So the one opinion of the Christians,' said Battista, 'is that God is the ultimate and final of all the goods. But in that opinion originates some controversy, because there are those who propose that the ends of the good are in divine speculation, among whom it is easy to see that the leaders are Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. In the same way there are those who propose that the task is not concluded in speculation, but in the love which is felt from it. Scotus, who they call *Subtilis*, and Occam, Alexander too, and Nicolaus of Lyra, think that we are granted happiness in this joy, which comes to us from the perception of truth. But lest I should perhaps represent so excellent a subject too drily, I will discuss something a little more profound, but in brief until the matter is clearly evident (and it nevertheless takes away the tedium of longer disputations).

So, in the first place, the Christians claim that God is not only good, but also the good of all good. Unless I am mistaken, they establish this using the following method. The perfection of every single thing is said to be nothing other than its goodness. For if by chance you were to ask me what virtue itself is, I would respond (rightly, I think) that virtue is that which renders a thing absolute and perfect in what it is. Who doesn't know that virtue of a horse brings it to pass that the horse is good and does its job perfectly? So the virtue of a horse will be the perfection and completion of the horse. For we call that which has already attained its own virtue perfect and absolute. So whatever we call good, we think it worthy of that name because it has been perfected in every way. But since God has been so perfected that he encompasses with His perfection the perfections of everything, so too does he encompass all other kinds of goodness, so to speak, with his goodness. He is therefore the good of all goods. Moreover, when we say that a thing is like something else, we say so, if I am not mistaken, because it bears some likeness to that which is its essence. I ask: what sort of wall is this? You respond: a white one. How so? Because, of course, it possesses something similar to that essence which we call whiteness. When you concede this, you must also concede that it is God alone who is good in His essence, and all other things are not good in their essence, but to the extent that they achieve some similarity with the divine essence called good. So if we conclude correctly here, nothing should be called good except that which has some similarity to the divine good. So God will be the good of all good. Add too that, if each thing is worthwhile on account of no other reason except for its end, for which we strive, and if in the same way the principle of good is contained in itself alone, and we strive for it because it is worthwhile, then whatever is called good is rightly called good either because it is an end or because it is determined towards an end. But if it should be the case that it is not only a particular end but the ultimate end, it will indeed be that from which everything else receives the principle of the good. That is God, as I showed a little

earlier. God is therefore the good of all goods. So when God promised to show himself to Moses He said “I will show all good to you”.

If you agree that these things are true, I will show that God is the highest good using the same method. For the good which extends itself to the whole world surpasses that good which extends to just some part. And it has already been demonstrated that this good is God. So God is the highest good. Add also this: that which is called something on account of its essence is better named than if it is not called something on account of its essence, but rather through a certain participation, as I have said. You will find nothing other than God that is called good on account of its essence. I will say something else too. That which is the greatest in some class is properly said to be the cause of other things which are in the same class but inferior to it. For the cause must necessarily be more powerful than the effects of the cause. But who will deny what was proved a little earlier by clear arguments and without any difficulty? Who, I say, shall deny that everything that exists draws its relationship to the good from God?

With this, if I am not mistaken, we have conducted our speech so that it is quite clear that the highest good of humanity is God. So even if it seems that, in the continuing course of the disputation, there are many things on the same subject which are still to be explained, I nonetheless think – and it shall only happen with your consent – that, in a brief digression, I should return to the things which occupied the place of the highest good in the opinion of various people. Having refuted these things and, by righteously engaging them in battle, having expelled them from an occupation which they did not claim for themselves fairly, but rather invaded with the greatest violence, I will return to the disputation at the place from which I now digress. Lest perhaps these things seem to be more numerous than there are, I will use the following division, which abides in common parlance. All things which were named good are either called goods of the body, like toughness, health, pleasure, beauty; or goods of fortune – since they were situated by an accident of fortune – in which number are held nobility, wealth, honours, glory; or finally goods of the soul, which is virtue itself. In showing the first two types shown to be false we do not only have fighting alongside us the Christian theologians, whom we follow, but every profound thinker from philosophy itself.

Let us begin with pleasure, whose enticements allure the senses so much that in many they corrupt the judgment. What school of philosophy do you find – with a few excepted: not in those schools of higher breeding, as they say, but in those of the plebs! – that does not declare that the battle with it is like the battle against a pernicious plague? With what thunderbolts did Plato drive it away just as the second race of Titans were driven to deepest Tartarus! Plato was constantly saying that we should remember that pleasures are brief and do not leave anything after themselves other than repentance. Pleasure cannot be good, he says, because we hold it in common with the beasts, and more wickedness than virtue results from it because pleasure is changeable and in constant motion, but good must be stable. Add to these arguments that the good never obstructs the good,

but there is nothing which hinders the virtues more than pleasure. For it causes the greatest detriment to humans, producing ignorance, disturbance, stupidity, petulance. Whom do you find to be so corrupt that they think pleasure worthy either of praise or of other veneration? No one has ever been so devoted to pleasures nor has loved them so much that he has not made the greatest efforts to conceal them. Why is this? Because pleasures are ugly and disgraceful in the opinion of libertines too. But you will find nothing more praiseworthy than good, nothing more honourable. So the pleasures are not good. For, by its nature, the good strives for the common benefit of the human race, which a little earlier Marsilio showed to be true for the virtues. But pleasure, applauding only itself and the senses, does not want to undergo any inconvenience at all for the sake of other people. And I beseech you, can we rightly say that anything is good for us that is neither innate to our nature nor produced by our effort? Can you say that either of these things applies to pleasure? Neither, surely. For the human being is nothing other, if you believe anything in the philosopher whose arguments we have advanced, the human being is nothing, I say, in the author Plato, beyond mind and reason. You say: what of the body? A prison and fetter of the soul. The cruelest attendants of the body are the senses. Immortal god, with what schemes do they attack us, what snares do they set up, entangled by which we are hindered from returning to heaven, our ancient homeland! Pleasure is neither acquired by our effort nor originates from reason but, having appeared in the feebleness of the senses (which a little earlier were shown to be the most fearsome enemies to us) it always opposes the highest good. Above all, what is characteristic of the good is that it wants to preserve whole and uninjured, according to its nature, that for which it is a good – for we see that the moral virtues preserve souls so that they are untainted by everything harmful to themselves – and that it inspires that for which it is a good to something greater or more divine – a purpose served by the virtues devoted to the cognition of the truth. Pleasure is inimical to both tasks. So pleasure should not be counted among the goods. And Socrates shows very wisely that the nature of goods and evils is contrary, so that we easily slip into evil. For, as Terence’s Simon says, “great is the inclination of all men from labour to lust”. But the road of virtue is difficult, steep and rugged and full of toil. So good would be extinguished entirely by evil, if there were not a medicine for such a destructive disease: for evils always disagree amongst themselves, they never unite, never agree. For fear persuades one, rashness or boldness another. What the wasteful pursues, the miser thoroughly dreads. But virtue is the greatest harmony of all. For it is the same destination to which prudence leads, justice encourages, fortitude impels, temperance persuades. Evils are dissonant, goods harmonise. So into which category should you place pleasures, when you will not find anything that fights against itself more than they do? I add this too. It is necessary that an efficient cause and the effects which are caused by it are related. But from pleasures come many disturbances, which constantly afflict and devour the soul like tortures. So pleasures are not good, but the very worst things. Since they violently corrupt judgment and produce ignorance, no one should be considered more unlearned than one who thinks that they are not the origin of all evils.

For people are ensnared by them as if they were stuck fixed on a nail and, blinded by such great shadows, they cannot escape what they know to be evil. The raving Ovidian Medea is not foolish in her lamentation. She suffers because although she sees and values what is better, she is nevertheless held back in such a way that she is compelled to strive for what is worse. So these are a few things which seemed as though they should be collected from the many powerful arguments of Plato at this point.

But the Aristotelians, and many of the Christian theologians, argue as follows. First they argue that pleasure was not invented by nature for its own sake, but for the sake of activities from which pleasure itself originates. Someone thirsty drinks with pleasure, someone starving dines with pleasure, and sex does not occur without pleasure. Otherwise, if pleasure were removed, we would be made indifferent to both the former and the latter activities, and would therefore die from pleasure's absence and leave no one who could take our place. So they declare that if the action of pleasure – on account of which nature has established pleasure – does not strive for its own sake but for the sake of something else, then it is far less the case that pleasure itself strives for its own sake too. But food and drink and, likewise, engaging in venereal matters have not been established by nature for their own sake, but for the sake of something else. For the latter has been provided to preserve the human race, the former two so that one who feasts lives healthily. So pleasure is not sought for its own sake, so it is not the highest good.

Add this too. When we seek the end of human good, what we propose must be characteristic of humanity in such a way that it not in common with other animals. But pleasure is in common with everything in which there is sense. I think, however, that we say that the highest good is that which is the most perfected and most excellent in human nature. If it is, it cannot by any means be situated in anything by which we are joined to the far worse and inferior, because there is no debate that the end must be superior to the thing which is directed to that end. But who does not know that pleasure is from the senses? And, likewise, who does not know that we have the senses in common with the beasts? Understand something that can convince even anyone who is stupid: that which is not a good unless it is circumscribed to some extent by certain limits of moderation is not a good by its nature, but receives what is good from the limits by which it moderates itself. But no one approves of pleasure unless it is moderated. So when Epicurus grants preeminence to pleasures, he still does not venture to call them the highest good unless all the virtues accompany them as lackeys and maidservants and, as excellent governesses of living, they curtail certain boundless desires which are neither necessary nor natural. For he saw that, if the pleasures were to proceed freely and with no other restriction present, they would be as sicknesses are to us, leading to the greatest detriment and greatest turpitude, then to the gravest dangers, and, ultimately, to death. So pleasures are not good according to their own nature. But the highest good must be. For what is good of its own accord is greatly and extensively superior to all the other goods which are

not good for themselves, but for the sake of other things. But what about you, Lorenzo? Don't you think that what has been said up to this point has been powerful enough to discount the pleasures?

'Quite enough,' said Lorenzo, 'for there is nothing more powerful than those arguments for conquering utterly the ideas of the Cyrenaics and Epicureans. And I recently scrutinised Marsilio's book on pleasure that he wrote for Antonio Canigiani when still an adolescent, from which, if I am not mistaken, no subject which is often discussed in this debate is missing.'

'Indeed,' said Antonio, 'it conscripted venerable learning and an old man's prudence at a youthful age. For, with the question posed incisively in the manner of the Academics, he argues each side in such a way that, with battle arranged between the supporters of pleasure and the others who disagree with them, he commits the philosophers to the fiercest combat. Although at one point it seems that, for the Platonists and the Aristotelians and all who support the portico, the army is reduced to its reserves, they still finally throw the ranks of the enemy into disorder and force those who were driven from their position to turn their backs in retreat.'⁶⁷⁰

'So,' said Battista, 'the battle lines should not be drawn anew against those conquered. Having overcome pleasure, we will vanquish honours with a brief skirmish. For who does not understand that what is good for the sake of something else and what strives for the sake of something else cannot be the highest good? To be specific, no one seeks honour for itself because all acknowledge that it is the reward of virtue and is owed to the good alone. But whether people are good or evil, they nevertheless want to be affirmed and esteemed as good. Since they want this, they are extraordinarily delighted and gladdened that honours follow, because they can present them as though they were witnesses of their own virtues. This is the reason that we desire above all to be bestowed with honour by those who are in a certain rank and are wise. So Naevius's Hector did not enjoy being praised in itself, but being praised by a man who was praised. Add to this that the highest good has been established by nature to be like the truth, such that achieving it has been placed within our ability. For, if we had been created in such a way that we should not be allowed happiness even when we strive for it with all our vigour, one could imagine nothing more wretched than a human being nor anything more hateful than nature. And no one disputes that honours are not granted according to the will of those who receive them, but according to the will of those who award them. You might also have remembered something else. What is called the highest good must surely be perfect and be accumulated from parts which are themselves all perfect. So it admits no evil. Evil cannot exist in a person in whom no evil is present. Yet it is very often that someone more wicked is bestowed with a greater honour. How many tyrants, when they have placed the harshest yoke of servitude on the necks of the nation, do we see honoured with the titles and decorations which are owed to a promoter of freedom! How many citizens have attained magistracies through the most turbulent uprisings on account of which, if the laws had not been

⁶⁷⁰ Here Lohe has *loco notos*, but I believe *loco motos* ("driven from [their] position") makes more sense in this context.

suppressed by arms, they deserved to have been put to death! What did Sulla, what did Marius do to deserve such good treatment from the republic, when the former acquired a seventh consulate after a sixth in which he exercised every kind of cruelty on the citizenry, every impiety on the nation; and the latter was made eternal dictator after he raged like a savage beast against all order? I would be too verbose if I now referred to all those leaders called the Caesars, who still attained divine honours beyond the human ones, after they had not only cast off all humanity, but had been transformed into some hideous and hitherto unheard-of monsters (by what execrable Circe I know not!). Through these examples it is easy to see how far honours are removed from those things we seek.

If honour is not the highest good, then neither is glory. For glory is favourable opinion about someone that is frequent and attended with praise. But why do we desire to live with a distinguished reputation – that is, to be known by many people or, preferably, by all of them if possible – unless we seek honours? People do not see that the thing that knows is worthy of greater praise than the thing that is known. For nothing occupies so low and so base a position in the scheme of things that it is not *known*, whether it is animate or inanimate. But the capacity *to* know is possessed only by a certain more noble animal. So glory will not be the highest good, especially because we do not seek glory for its own sake, but so that we may gain praise from it. For in those things which are not worthy of praise, no one wants to be conspicuous, but to be unknown.

If honour and glory are not goods, how can we now say that wealth a good? Why should wealth be sought unless you put it to use? So it is not sought for its own sake, but for the sake of its benefit. Moreover, that which is the highest good demands by its nature that it is preserved as much as possible and is not allowed to dissipate. But I do not see what riches confer unless they are distributed for the use of yourself, your own and – according to one's inclination – for the benefit of others.

And it will not be difficult for us at this point to discount political power or authority and sovereignty. On the one hand these things are subject to the whim of fortune and always in flux, and, on the other, they are acquired by sedition, fraud and murder, and are constantly supplanted by the same methods. But suppose that they are justly acquired and justly administered. Are they not full of anxiety, toils and dangers so that no one, in any way healthy in mind, does not know that it is much more agreeable to be well-ruled than to rule well?

Those things remain which are called the goods of the body. They are of this sort: health, strength, speed, beauty and those things obtained which are similar to them. I do not understand at all what solidity these things can have – that is, the solidity in which the goods that we seek reside pleasantly in peace – because they are fleeting and liable to many misfortunes. Is it not the case that whatever powers or dignity the body has are all derived from the soul? So do you think that the goods of the soul should not be preferred to the goods of the body? How can these goods be called ours, which we do not only have in common with other animals, but in each of which we may be

surpassed by many of them: the eagle sees more sharply, the same power is also in the lynx, the boar hears further, the dog smells more keenly, as does the vulture? Whoever does not know that they are surpassed by many beasts in the powers, speed and stature of the body certainly does not know themselves. When you ponder all these things diligently, you will conclude that nothing is further from the highest good.

Now, with the rest refuted, we come to the goods of the soul, which have been established by us as the third type. We will see what these are clearly if we show that the power of the human mind is threefold: for there is the power with which it creates; there is likewise the power with which it acts; and finally there is the power with which it speculates. *Skill* is applied in creating things, for this is the right reason of creating things. *Prudence* is the guide for our actions, from which justice, fortitude and temperance learn their functions. In the investigation of the truth, if we seek first principles, *intelligence* is our guide, but if we seek those things which proceed from the first principles, *scientific knowledge*. Finally *wisdom*, although it embraces both intelligence and science, is yet something third.

If we consider skill, we will conclude that it is certainly not the ultimate end. For what can be an end when its cognition is directed towards an end? It is the work which is produced by skill that we call the end of skill. For example, the end of that skill which is in the architect Daedalus is the labyrinth. I do not understand how such works can be ends of life for us because all of them are made for various uses in human life, whereas no human being was produced by nature for the sake of creating works.

Neither will you find the highest good among the virtues of the soul which pertain to life and morals. For if the virtues are such ends, they will surely be sought for their own sake and will not be directed to another end. This is not the case. Take a moral principle from them and then infer what follows! Do you want fortitude, and especially that fortitude which is devoted to war and battle? Do they seek it for its own sake? Ask our Federigo da Montefeltro, I beg; ask the commander of his divisions; ask whoever gives orders in his army; finally, ask each knight and footsoldier whom he leads into battle. None of them says that they seek fortitude because it must be sought for itself, but rather they seek it so that victory is obtained against enemies and that one can pass time safely in leisure with them conquered. But what of justice, what of temperance? Do they not do the same thing, so that we can live in peace, together and with other people? It is therefore clear that they are not sought for their own sake, but so that the soul is rendered purified of all sin. Nor is prudence able to offer us a highest good, since it dwells not in true investigation, but in governing civil actions.⁷

When Battista had said these things, Lorenzo said, 'I have listened to you most attentively for a long time. I have seen that you have not only refuted those things which have been long since refuted by the most illustrious philosophers, but also you deny that we are made happy by those virtues which the most profound Stoics did not only consider to be the highest but also the only

good. So now that you have cast down the goods both of fortune and of the body and you have not entrusted so great a responsibility to the virtues which concern life and morals, proceed, I beg, and explain at length where our mind comes to rest, as if at the finishing line.’

‘I will resume in the same place, then,’ said Battista, ‘from which the disputation on the highest good digressed. Since it is already established that God is the highest good, the rest will be explained easily. And this first of all. For since God is the highest good, what kind of difficulty will it be to prove that he is also the highest good for a human? For whatever something does, it has been demonstrated that it does it for the reason of some good. So do you concede this, lest, as it is in the proverb, we open a closed case?’

‘Indeed I do’ said Lorenzo.

‘So,’ said Battista, ‘no one doubts that such a good is humanity’s end. For everything that exists and acts directs its own activity to some end. We say that an end is that by which, when it is acquired, the appetite is satisfied in such a way that it seeks nothing else. But every appetite is satisfied by the good. So if we conclude that it is correctly called an end because if it is absent we desire it, and if it is present we delight and find satisfaction in it, then it is easy to see that everything has the same end and perfection. For anything that lacks its perfection is carried towards that perfection – either by the impulse of unerring nature itself or by its own sense and its reason – until it arrives, and when it has arrived, it rests willingly in it. I think, then, that I have shown clearly enough that everything strives for its own end and that same end is also the good.’

‘Indeed you have,’ said Lorenzo, ‘and I understand plainly from this what you want to accomplish. For if the good and the end are the same, who does not see that it is the highest end because it is the highest good?’

‘Your conclusion is excellent,’ said Battista, ‘but understand this too: when there are many and varied ends for the same thing, all other ends must refer to the ultimate end. In order to make this clearer I will demonstrate it with a brief example. Philip the doctor puts the health of a sickening Alexander as his end. This will be like an ultimate end to which all others are referred, in order that the king can be in good health. Philip therefore reads closely the learning which has been handed down by Hippocrates. But for what purpose? So that, of course, he can discover which would be the best medicine to give him. When this is discovered, the medicine is given to Alexander, with the plan being that, by causing the bile in the king to flow out, the medicine purges him. What is the purpose of this deed other than that, with the bile drawn off, the heat of the fever can be extinguished? Nor is this done for its own sake, but in order that that Alexander may return to his former health. If the doctor fulfils this aim, he will have reached the point at which nothing else is sought other than for its own sake, and so he rests in it. Do you see that all the other inferior ends originate in this ultimate end, so to speak? So, for the same reason, the good is varied and manifold, which, dispersed into its different grades as if into many rivulets, flows back to God, the highest good, as if to the source and origin of all goods. It does not escape me that those philosophers who

have addressed this matter in disputation more precisely have often demonstrated it with numerous arguments. But we cannot pursue all of them in an improvised disputation.

I will not, however, omit one point. For, since we have set God as the ultimate end of everything, it is of great interest to many how this fact should be understood. We will not go astray if we call God the ultimate end insofar as he is the first cause of all action. For the other ends cannot be the first cause of all action, but rather they are what is caused by it, because they are brought about through the action of that which acts. So it is wrong to say that the end itself – that is, God – is something brought about, but rather it is something which preexists. Moreover, if anything acts for the sake of a thing which already exists so that something is brought about by that action, it comes to pass that it acquires something of the thing for which it was done. Soldiers who achieve victory fighting fiercely at the order of the commander, accomplish that victory for the commander. But no work of ours, nor of anything else is acquired by God, since He is so utterly complete that nothing else can be added to Him. For work is apportioned to its end to the same extent that whatever is acting acts to that end. But God, who is established to be the end of all things which already act, does not act in such a way that he acquires anything for himself by the action, but in order that he may impart to others. With all of this I have demonstrated that all things which are in God are moved to His end, so to speak, not in order that they add something to God (which cannot happen) but so that they reach him as the ultimate end of all things. If, therefore, everything produced by God is rendered similar to God to the extent by which it acquires the divine good, then the ultimate goal of all things will be to render themselves similar to God. But since that which has regard for the end must be good, everything will strive to render itself similar to God to the extent that it is good. Why am I saying this? So that you understand, of course, that if whatever is created flows back to God as though towards its origin, then the mind must also do the same, but strive in some more excellent way by virtue of its powers, that is, so that it understands Him through its activity. For, in this way, if anything of the essence of God falls into our cognition we can draw somewhat closer to it.

There are those present who could confirm what I have said. For each thing, its end is its peculiar activity. To know is the peculiar activity of the human mind. You see what follows. Because, if it is, what is most perfect in this activity will be the ultimate end. Since operations receive a quality from their objects, the operation will be more excellent than that object, because each subject is more excellent than its object. But out of everything which enters the mind, nothing is more excellent than God. So the highest good consists in the cognition of God. But listen also to this! A little earlier I showed that everything strives for divine similitude as its own end. But the human mind is rendered most similar to God by its intelligence. Out of everything, there is nothing which is sought more than the highest good, and the human mind delights in nothing so much as the cognition of divine things. For although our little intellects, when they are directed towards that light, are like owls in the sun, we nonetheless make far more of what we perceive, however small it

is, than if we were to hold a complete and precise cognition of all other things. For we desire it, we love it, we enjoy it. If even those things lacking reason, even those things lacking sense strive for similarity to God as the highest good, then each thing better approaches its own goal the more it is rendered similar to God. But nothing is more similar to God in all of creation than the mind. So, through the mind we are rendered similar to God. But the mind bears a certain resemblance to God not through what it *can* know on account of its nature, but through what it *knows*. If you ponder all these arguments properly, they lead to this point: that the highest good of humanity is in the supreme action of the mind. That is to say, through wisdom itself one can know God, as far as it is possible.

Gradually and in order, unless I am mistaken, our enquiry on the ends of the good has extended from a humble and dejected place to heaven itself, where it can rest easily as if in its own natural position. For in the lowest depths we left Aristippus, Eudoxus and Epicurus thrown to the ground, and not much higher also left Hieronymus of Rhodes, who loved either idleness or the first things of nature without virtue. I dared say nothing about the Peripatetics and the Stoics and the Cynics that was not respectful. For if the things they teach could not deliver people from great and numerous misfortunes, nor from what is distressing, they nonetheless instruct us in such a way that we will still proceed a great distance, enduring misery with an unconquered soul even if we cannot reach the highest good. But, since they cannot guide us to the place we want to reach, we leave them behind. We can do this without any danger. For we have already found the most reliable guides, following whom we have now reached the pinnacle of nature, that is, we can rest in God Himself.

Since we do not only reach the divine essence by thinking, but we also strive for it and love it and enjoy loving it, all of which are situated in the will, it is rightly asked amongst the theologians whether the highest good should be placed in cognition itself or, rather, in the will. So an extensive and varied battle is aroused, and is fought by each side with such force that its final outcome would seem uncertain. Those theologians who think the highest good is stationed in the will, or love, usually try to speak for the defence in the following way. Since the object of the will is the good – which, as we have already shown, is the same as our end – but the truth which is presented to the mind is not called true because it is our end, but because the good is, it should therefore be clear that we do not achieve our ultimate end by the effort of the mind, but by the operation of the will. Moreover, we say pleasure is that which most abundantly perfects and completes an activity, just as we say youth is perfected by beauty. But a perfected activity is rightly called an end, and we attain it because we use our will rather than our mind. They also add this. According to the tacit consensus of all people, the ultimate end cannot be attained through any learning, so it is attained by the guidance of nature. But many desire pleasure over wisdom by nature. So it seems that the end should be called pleasure rather than cognition. Moreover, no one doubts that the supreme end of all the powers of the soul is that which seeks the most excellent and most superior. But it appears

that the will is the more excellent of these powers, because the intellect is moved towards an end by its work. Only when it already strives for something does the intellect reflect on that very act which, up to this point, had commanded it with its power. So the will is superior. Moreover, all acknowledge that the highest good must be situated in something through whose goodness the whole person is called entirely good. But through the volition to good, the whole person is called simply good. One can add to these arguments that the highest good seems most to consist in our enjoyment of the highest good itself. So Augustine says, in the book he wrote on the Christian religion, that the highest reward is that we might enjoy God. But he says “to enjoy” not because we think, but because we use the will.

Those who ascribe the principle of the highest good to the will rely on these arguments and many more. Their opponents, who place the highest good in cognition, advance their arguments too, but this one foremost. Since we seek the end of the good for the form which is the mind, we will surely think that this end is what is most peculiar to it. But how can we say that the appetite is peculiar to our mind, since all learned men now share the opinion that the appetite is in all things? All things possess it, not in some particular way, but in different ones, seeing that they do not perceive in the same way. Those things which lack cognition entirely are said to be carried by this appetite, which is called the natural appetite. All heavy things are carried downward by it, and the light things upwards. But the appetite impinges upon the things which make use of the senses through the senses alone. It is through this sensual appetite that every living creature both appropriates those things which are beneficial to it and escapes those which are harmful. But in those things in which reason flourishes as well as the senses, the appetite – unless it wants to be hostile – conforms to reason and we call this the will. So since the will is indeed an appetite, how far can it be peculiar only to the human mind? But the intellect is peculiar to the human mind by its nature, so the highest good of the human mind is in the intellect. Moreover, for all the powers of the mind which are activated by their objects, these objects must by nature be prior to any action of such powers. A body causes the eye to be sprinkled with colour, and so such colour will be prior to the vision produced in the eye. For a mover is by nature prior to that which is agitated by its movement. But the will is such a power. For that which is worthy of being desired arouses the appetite. So the object of the will precedes the action of the will. If you concede this, you will also concede that the act of the will cannot be what we want first of all. But what we want first of all is the highest good. So the will shall not be the highest good. Likewise, in all forces which are capable of being converted into acts, their act is directed first at its object, through which it is realised itself. How will our mind know that it knows, unless it has first known something else? I will only know that I know you are my friend after I have first known that you are my friend. To know that the intellect knows is itself to know some object. So we arrive at the prime intellect itself, which is not the *act* of knowing, but rather a faculty through which something can be known. For the same reason, the first thing to which we direct the will is not itself an act of the will, but some other

good. But the first thing to which we direct the will by nature of being endowed with reason is the highest good, for we direct the will for the sake of some other object to which we direct the will. So the highest good is not in the act of the will. There is also another argument of these theologians. Everyone, by their nature, possesses virtue from the things which constitute their essence. How else does a corpse differ from a human, other than because it lacks what constitutes the human essence? But, as far as the will is concerned, there is no difference between true happiness and false happiness. Nor does the will behave any differently when desiring, loving and enjoying that which it thinks good, however false it is, than if it is entirely true. What is true or false is already known through the intellect, not through the will. So, on account of its essence, the highest good is better positioned in the intellect than in the will. They also maintain this too. If the will were to impart the highest good to us, it would be in the form of either desire or love or joy, because the will is divided into these three things and cannot be anything else. But how can we call desire the end of the good? Desire is for something absent, which we ardently wish to be present. For desire drives you towards that which you have not yet attained. Just as we would never call someone who had not yet reached the finishing line the winner in a chariot competition, even if he were first in the race, so will we not call someone happy who has not yet gratified their wish, even if their desire of acquiring it were very great. Love would make us no more happy. Often we love that which is absent, for the desire of acquiring what has not yet been acquired is aroused by love. And how can we situate the highest good in joy, when it must be an end to which all other things are directed, but it is never directed to itself? We see that joy is, by its nature, roused for the sake of its own actions, as we have previously shown in the refutation of pleasure. Add, if you like, that just as desire seems to drive to attain something, so too does joy return itself to quiet and tranquility so that you rest in that which you have already attained. We see that heavy things are carried to the lowest point by their nature, at which they do not avoid resting. But this rest is not an end, but something in which they want to be a participant at what is their end.

It would take me longer than is necessary for undertaking this speech if I were now to relate all the arguments in order through which some assert that the highest good consists in the will for the good and others that it consists in the cognition of the truth. But there were some of a third type, who did not entrust the whole matter to either the cognition or the will alone, because – as they thought – neither could accomplish it separately. Instead, they wanted to render us most abundantly happy by joining both of them. This is the argument they advance above all. They say that, just as actions are, so to speak, devoted to what makes us happy to the same degree, so too do those actions establish happiness in equal measure to each other. The intellect and the will are such actions. For we love God to the extent that we perceive Him. So both of them will accomplish the highest good at the same time. In the same way they add: if to enjoy God is the highest good, cognition is also attendant in that enjoyment. For – and Augustine also testifies this – what things do we enjoy apart from those already known, in the delight of which the will then finds rest?

Moreover, we can also say we are happy when our mind is united with God, as far as it can happen for us. But who cannot see that such a union in the intellect occurs equally in the will? For we are joined to God by the will insofar as He Himself is the highest goodness, we are joined to Him by the intellect insofar as He is the highest truth. Finally, if you ask them what it is in us from which the highest good proceeds, they will respond that, in the learned consensus, it proceeds from the fact that we are made in the image and likeness of God. They declare that we attain such an image not through either one of the two, but both of them.

Even when all these arguments are advanced, there is still no shortage of those who venture to argue otherwise. Although they acknowledge this equality of the mind and of the will, nonetheless, because the mind is more noble, they think that the highest good must be situated in the mind above all, as if it were a sovereign. They think that the mind is more noble because if the connection between these two things – the mind and the will – could be severed, the mind would itself remain a perfect act peculiar to the form of reason. But if the will were abandoned by the intellect, what else would remain other than some desire held in common with all living creatures? Who does not understand that the act of the will depends on the mind, because we never want anything that we first do not either know, or think that we know, to be good? Add to this that the act of the mind is purer. For it produces no impurity on account of its object, nor does the soul commit a disgraceful act in knowing about evil. So when talking about the old man, Simo, Davus is not accurate in saying “evil mind, evil soul”, even if the master knows about the slave’s deceit. In comparison the will is easily polluted, so Simo is accurate in saying “evil mind, evil soul” about Davus. For the slave has performed evil, not because he understands how he acts wrongly, but because he *wants* to act wrongly. No surprise. For when we either love or want anything, the soul itself is inspired towards the thing that is loved. So in some way the lover receives from what is loved. But what is received is not received according to its own moral standards, but instead according to the standards of what receives it. So when we want the squalid and criminal, the will is transformed such that it possesses a squalid nature and is repulsively soiled. We cannot say the same thing about the mind. For when something is perceived by the mind, the soul is not moved to the object, but the object to the soul. Hence the mind is not impoverished by the insignificance of things, but rather those things which are of less worth than it are improved. For these things assume a certain spiritual essence in the intellect itself. They also argue this: a power which extends itself in many ways is more excellent and more noble than all other powers which reach fewer things. So the mind, which is not only extended with respect to the truth, but also in relation to the good, far surpasses the will, which does not reach anything except in relation to the good. Likewise the power we possess which separates us from those things which lack reason – because we ourselves use reason – will be preferable. For this power is particular to us. But who does not know that we are not separated from things which lack reason on account of our will, but on account of our mind? Moreover, the power which brings us closer to that act by which we are made happy

must be more noble than all others. But this is peculiar to the mind. For since the object of the will is not the good in and of itself, but rather the perceived good, what will ever be accomplished unless the cognition intercedes? Although they say all these things very perceptively, there are nonetheless those who try to overthrow their claims, the arguments of whom it would be protracted to relate. If I am correct, however, they drive at this. They say that, when something is asserted simply, then what is understood must be that which is wholly perfected in it. If someone says “animal”, we do not understand a dead or painted animal, but a living one. So, for the same reason, if someone says “the soldier engages the enemy by the will of the consul”, the will must be understood to be that which, enclosed by fixed rules, obeys the reason. The act of the will shall therefore be more perfect than the act of the intellect.

But what am I doing? For I see that, while I am lingering too much on one thing, I have almost abandoned my plan, for which it was enough to state what the highest good is. Since I have shown with clear arguments that it is God, it is of no importance at all to one who seeks to attain it whether we do so with the mind or the will or both. For we must progress by the same path and strive with the same methods. So we should leave all this investigation into how or what it is to those who have not only learning in abundance, but also leisure. For the nature of these things is that either view can be presented in a disputation by those who are most learned and vigorous in intellect such that it seems most similar to the truth. Even if I were to be accepted as the honorary arbiter in such a matter, I would still never interpose my opinion and would rather free myself with a Virgilian judgment, pronouncing both worthy of a heifer. For since we have already established that I know God to be the end of all goods for us, I will maintain it. We – that is, the human essence – are blessed in God.’

When he had said these things and we had honoured his oration with admiration and applause, Lorenzo said: ‘The argument could not have been made any more satisfactory to me in its abundant detail than it has been by you. You have brought me over to your opinion in such a way that if anyone now wanted to assert anything to the contrary, I would “stuff up my ears with that Ulyssean wax” lest I should be compelled to listen unwillingly. For I have a complete definition of what the highest good is. Yet one thing remains, and upon having understood it, I will be happy to leave the matter – unless, since you are exhausted from your long disputation I will perhaps annoy you by asking.’

‘No, not at all, for my part,’ said Battista, ‘I will explain what you desire to know immediately. I will not let you want for anything.’

‘So hear,’ said Lorenzo, ‘what I would like to be made plain to me. I was often present when the ends of the good were being discussed, and recognised that, when the subject was brought forth in the opinions of some philosopher, two connected things could easily be perceived. When you knew what the philosopher established as the end of the good, you could also immediately identify an end of the evil with the same reasoning. Epicurus says that the highest good is bodily pleasure. So we

could say without trouble that the highest evil is pain. Another philosopher places the highest good in wealth, and another in honours. So, vice-versa, the latter establishes the end of evil in ignominy, the former in poverty. Nor do the Stoics waver, because they say that the highest good is virtue, and affirm that the highest evil is vice. The reasoning is the same for the other philosophers. Now when, having refuted everything else, you said that God is the highest good, I wholly understand what you mean, and I do not only understand, but also agree. But then, when I consider diligently what I could set in opposition to this highest good as being entirely antithetical to it, nothing presents itself. There is nothing which, in an equal sense, can properly be called the highest evil in such a way that God is called the highest good. So you would be doing me the biggest favour if you could explain how or of what kind this is also the “highest” evil.’

‘That is a good question,’ said Battista, ‘for this is a matter that lacks neither difficulty, if you want to investigate it, nor benefit, if you understand the truth in it. I see many people perplexed by it. For when you run your mind over all the philosophers, you find no one, as you say, who does not place each highest end in contrast to its opposite. But when you turn to the Christian theologians, they indeed set out the highest and ultimate end of the good, but not the highest end of evil. Unless I am mistaken, however, we can resolve this contradiction easily if we investigate what we call “evil” in such a way that we establish exactly what it is. In order that we attain this understanding, there are certain things about the whole matter which I need to go over in a little more detail, unless perhaps you think it will be enough for you if, for the sake of brevity, I only show what they think, not why they think it.’

‘I would like to know both,’ said Lorenzo, ‘for although there may be nothing that I do not think should be conceded to the authority of such eminent men, you are nonetheless aware of the avidity of my spirits, which is so great in wanting to know things that it will never rest unless the reasoning is examined.’

‘I will therefore gratify your wish,’ said Battista, ‘but you must suffer with equanimity if I extend the speech a little longer in order to indulge you. Out of everything that acts there is nothing that does not place some goal for itself in acting. Those who farm, those who wage war, those who navigate, those who build, do not each carry out all their labours in order to act, but in order that they attain from their actions the goal which they intend to achieve. They call the goal that to which those who act are driven. So we endure toil and so many difficulties and inconveniences in vain, unless they have some purpose for the sake of which they are undertaken. Virgil therefore advises that:

In the new Spring, when the frozen moisture melts from the grizzled mountains,
And the crumbling soil loosens itself to the zephyrs; then my bull begins
To bellow from the sunken plough and the share is rubbed to a gleam by the furrow.

When he gives this advice, he does not convey it in order that the farmer torments himself by ploughing, but in order that, through the diligent cultivation of the field, he might eventually obtain a plentiful harvest. What is sought for its own sake can therefore be found in all our actions. All the rest is for the sake of that end in such a way that, when we arrive there, we cannot progress any further. For unless a particular end is prescribed, an action must proceed towards those things which are entirely infinite and, since there are no means to attain such things, we would cease from all action. For no one is driven towards that which there is ultimately no hope of attaining. So whatever Cicero did for the sake of action, he also did for the sake of persuading people. And in that recent war against Bartolomeo of Bergamo [culminating in the battle of Riccardina in 1467], whatever our Federico of Urbino did either to marshal his soldiers or to reconnoitre his adversaries extensively was aimed at the goal of obtaining a victory, at which he would rest on achieving it. Why do we so often return to the same point? Let it be determined beyond question that whatever action we perform is performed for the sake of something that is sought for its own sake. But this must be the good. If we always direct our actions towards something we are resolved to do, then we consider that goal is appropriate to us and in accordance with our nature. For whatever is produced by nature preserves itself in such a way that it always strives for what is beneficial to it and, for the same reason, avoids anything harmful. So we strive for the good, and we therefore say the end is the same as the good. So we can rightly conclude: what people do, they do for the sake of what is good.

From these things this now remains. If something acts it intends the good for itself, certainly, but if anything deviates, that error – which is sin and evil – happened contrary to the original intention. And the error is not easily distinguished, unless all actions strive for their end. Who can say that an archer misses if he does not set out a target at which he aims his arrows? For this reason, a doctor also sins when, intending to cure an illness, he exacerbates it in the sufferer. You can perceive the same thing in nature. For nature intends that a human is produced from human seed. But if a foetus is produced with either a bovine head or the legs of a horse, it will now be called an error of nature, since it has deviated from the end to which it had directed itself. From all these arguments it will be clear that evil occurs in things contrary to the intention of something which performs an act. Something which arises contrary to the actions with which an acting entity has directed itself must be acknowledged to have occurred contrary to its intention. But all know that evil is completely contrary to the good. Evil therefore occurs contrary to the intention of that by which an act is performed.

Here I will pass over those things which are produced by the power of nature, for which the explanation is the same, but we will look at human actions, of which our mind is the foundation. There is a certain power in us which is concerned with the judgment of the right and the wicked. It grasps the forms of things and is directed to that which has already presented itself as an end. If, however, it is deluded by the false appearance of a thing and strives for something else, error now

arises, and who can deny that this is contrary to intention? This power determined that King Porsena of Clusium should be killed by Mucius, because he was the most hostile of Rome's enemies. So Mucius was directed to perform this murder as the good. Deceived by a similarity of dress and appearance to the king, he killed the king's scribe. This did not happen any more contrarily to his intention than if someone about to accept a debt of gold for himself took brass to be gold, deceived by the colour of the metal. But we can at last conclude the subject thus, without any lack of clarity: when we do not perform any action other than because we have decided that it is good, whatever evil arises from an action will be contrary to intention.'

'What you have said so far is pleasing,' said Lorenzo, 'for everything seems to proceed in its order and has, at the same time, been corroborated by profound arguments. Yet there is one thing I would like to be made clearer to me. When you said that evil arises contrary to the intention of something which performs an act, the arguments you set forth persuaded me that it is so. But, on the other hand, when I considered the matter more carefully it occurred to me that whatever happens contrary to intention often happens by chance and by accident, and therefore only rarely. How can we say that evil happens by accident, or by chance, or in rare cases? In order that I may for the moment set aside natural things – for which privation is present not rarely or by chance, but all the time – in human life and morals, don't you find many more vices than virtues, and these vices indulged by our very will? Look carefully, I beg, at what things are done by all the people you know. How few people occur to you whose errors you do not perceive to be almost endless? No one doubts that these errors were not only undertaken by the will, but also by choice. In order that I may now set aside the authority of Aristotle, which is able to move anyone because it represents the the highest learning of humanity, I will not now relate this great philosopher's arguments which show vice to be voluntary. Yet never, in a properly administered republic, would those who legislate wisely and justly have contrived so many and such serious punishments against evildoers unless they knew for sure that people sin voluntarily and are not forced to do so.⁶⁷¹ Because in that type of philosophy in which life is purified, virtues and vices do not depend on what each person does, but on the spirit in which it is done. So when I observe that vice arises frequently in human actions, and that it is committed by our will, I do not understand how it can be contrary to the intention of whoever commits it.'

'It is indeed justifiable, Lorenzo,' said Battista, 'that you ask that question, and is it not easy to respond to anything which you have said. Yet I will try, if I can do enough to satisfy you. In order that this can be made easier, you should notice that you discuss a twofold evil, such that we should consider it either inherent in some essence or in the activity of an essence. But we say that evil is in an essence because the essence lacks something in itself which, by its very nature, it should not only have, but it should also have by necessity, unless it is defective. So it will not be an evil for you if you do not have winged sandals like Mercury has, because the nature of humanity is such that it

⁶⁷¹ In Lohe there is a misprint here, reading *suas ponte* instead of *sua sponte*.

cannot acquire winged sandals. Nor, on the other hand, should it be thought evil if you do not have blonde hair, because even if such a colour can occur in human hair, it is nonetheless of no detriment to a person if they lack it. But no one can lack a hand without it being to their detriment. For wise Nature, when she produced such an excellent animal as a human, understood that it could not employ the skills bestowed upon it without the precise assistance of the hands. So if someone lacks hands, they will lack an instrument without which they cannot perform many things necessary for life. From these things we are led to this point: what we call "evil" is a privation of something which is granted by human nature and without which you cannot lead life well and completely. Although matter, which the Greeks call *hyle*, can indeed assume all forms through its innate possibility, it is not bound to anything such that it is said to be perfected in one form rather than another. You will not, however, find any form which is not bound to something that consists of both matter and form. For water cannot endure without the peculiar form of water, nor fire without the peculiar form of fire. So such a privation of form, if it is applied to the matter itself, will not be evil in nature because matter is no more inclined to one form than another. But if the privation is applied to the form that the matter has taken it will be wholly evil. For if fire is deprived of its form, who does not see that it is now an evil for the fire? So these are the evils which are said to be inherent in some essence. And it is said that evil occurs in actions performed, if the actions themselves are lacking in their order and measure, since there is no activity which is not bound to a certain measure and order.

You have what philosophers think to be evil in an essence and what, on the other hand, is evil in the activity of a thing. And we will easily refute your argument, in which you thought you could prove that whatever happens contrary to the intention of an acting entity happens by chance and accident. For although such things happen contrary to your intention, they nonetheless follow consequentially what you intended to do, so you will never persuade me that they happen by chance. I will demonstrate with a brief example in order to make this clearer. A bibulous glutton forms the intention that it is appropriate for him to enjoy the great pleasure of Cretan wine, but when he undertakes this intention he is made drunk. Drunkenness therefore comes to him contrary to intention, but not by luck, because drunkenness accompanies his glasses of wine, which are so numerous as to be either continual or almost continual. You find the same condition in the natural world in which, even if procreation does not intend any such thing for itself, corruption nevertheless always ensues. For air is never produced from water, unless it destroys that form of water. If something happens rarely, it can be by chance and accident, like when a monster is born from human seed. For this does not necessarily follow what nature intended to do for itself, but rather opposes it, because nature desires to produce the perfect. But evil arises in the actions of nature when the power which acts is deficient in acting. Although this is contrary to its intention, it is not said to be by accident if it happens frequently, but only if it happens rarely. But, on nature, some other time.

I will now return to our actions, which my speech concerns. Our intention to the good is not directed at something which cannot be contained within a boundary – for universal concepts do not incite action – but at something limited and circumscribed in place and time. So if such a good is connected to a privation of good – that is, an evil – and draws it along with itself, we can blame neither chance nor accident. Suppose you intend that it is good for you if you indulge in venereal pleasure with a woman who is married to someone else. Here you do not seek adultery, but sex, which nevertheless cannot happen without adultery. Adultery has not been committed by accident, although it is contrary to your intention, because it cannot be separated from the sex. Yet we say that it *is* an accident if someone fighting in a battle accidentally kills a citizen whom he desires to protect when he strives to drive back the enemy from its position. The striking of the citizen is not connected with the battle, which was engaged against an enemy, in such a way that it cannot be separated from it. For this reason it will be obvious even to an indifferent onlooker that vices which are committed when acting are voluntary even if they are contrary to intention, not because we want the vices for their own sake, but because they always accompany that which we *do* want for its own sake, just as a shadow always follows a body. For the will is also correctly said to be something we want for the sake of something else, although we do not want it for its own sake and directly. For, in the greatest tempest, sailors intend that they are made safe. But when, with a laden vessel, they cannot obtain safety, they throw the goods overboard – and, indeed, the expensive ones – willingly. So they make a loss willingly: not directly, but for the sake of health.

If you understand all these arguments correctly, you will also know that, out of everything that exists, nothing is entirely evil, but evil itself is justly called a privation, which is explicitly not an essence, but a negation in essence. From this it is clearly evident that all that exists is good, because everything that exists desires nothing more than to exist. Unless something is good, this shall not be desired at all. So no essence is evil and, consequently, nothing evil will be an essence. Add this too, if you wish. Whatever exists is said to exist either through its actuality or through its possibility, and beyond these you will not find anything else through which something can exist. Actuality will be good for the reason that it is the actuality of a thing. For all things are called perfected when they exist through an actuality. But a capability itself must also be good. An actuality comes from a capability, and the capability adheres to the actuality through a certain resemblance, and it is not contrary in any way. Likewise, capability is also of the same class as actuality. So whatever exists exists for some reason and, from this, what exists is good. So evil has no existence. Besides, it is agreed amongst the metaphysicians that, whatever exists, it is all from God. But since God is the highest good, no one of a sound mind says that evil is caused by Him, on which this from Genesis is very much appropriate: “God saw every thing that he had made, and it was very good”.⁶⁷² I think that it has now been clearly demonstrated that evil has no essence.’

⁶⁷² Here Lohe has *sana ementis*, which should be *sanae mentis*.

‘It is indeed clear,’ said Lorenzo, ‘and has been demonstrated by arguments which do not only persuade the reluctant, but also guide the well-disposed. When I hear them, I surrender myself to them entirely. But, on the other hand, when I reflect on the matter, I am not sure if it what you said is true: evil *does* exist in things, by reason of which it is not true to declare that evil has no essence. I beseech you, is it not correct to say Appius Claudius *is* blind? Because if it is correct, isn’t it correct to say that something *is* blind rather than we understand that all is privation?’

‘It is correct,’ said Battista, ‘but not directly nor for one and the same reason. We say that something exists in two senses: in the sense in which the existence of a thing is signified, which is divided in those ten classes of dialectic which they call “categories”; and in the sense by which we express the truth of something said. You can therefore say that evil and privation exist in this second sense with complete scholarly approval, because on account of that very privation it is perfectly true to say that something *is* deprived. In the first sense, however, you cannot say that at all. But so much on the nature of evil.

Perhaps it will seem absurd to some to say that the cause of evil is not evil, but good. Yet it is so true that it cannot be any other way. For if you were to say that evil is the cause of evil, you should remember that it has already been demonstrated that no evil can act unless it acts by the power of its own good. So we say that the first cause of evil is good. But doesn’t this disturb our argument a great deal? If evil is nothing, how can something that is nothing be caused? What shall we say? This, if I am not mistaken. If something is a cause of evil, then that cause must be good, but not because good intends evil as its end – for things which are opposed to each other can never cause their opposite – but because evil occurs contrary to the intended end. For we can see cold as being the cause of heat, on which there is “and the piercing chill of the North Wind scorches”, not because the power of heating is peculiar to cold, but for some other unintended reason. So evil draws its origin from the good not on account of the nature of the good, but on account of a defect. We can take an clear example of this from nature. There is a certain power in a living being to which nature has entrusted the task of digesting the food which has already slipped down into the stomach. This is the end that the power of digestion intends for itself. If it is affected by a weakness and cannot complete its function, the digestion is left unfinished and the undigested food sticks in the stomach. So the power of digestion errs: not, however, because it is acting according to its intention, but on account of its own defect. Something which is acting does not mediate its action according to any possible defect, so instead, although it intends to complete its task, it is unable to accomplish its action because of the defect. But it sometimes also happens that a power which, in itself, is healthy and capable of acting, is nevertheless unable to complete a task because the instrument it possesses is unsuitable. The power by which the motion of the legs is stimulated into a forward step can be healthy, but that power will never maintain a forward step if the legs, which are used as an instrument to direct the step, are deficient. For the motive power of Horatius Cocles, by which he could form a forward step, was not deficient, but one of his legs, disfigured by a wound, did not

obey him. I think you understand how certain corruptions in actions happen: on the one hand, because of a defect through which the power which acts is debilitated, and, on the other, because of a corruption in the instrument which renders it unsuitable.

But just as corruption of action happens, so too can that which arises from action fall into evil. In this case, either matter or form is to blame. There is a power in the masculine seed through which it can form a person from the blood of a woman. But if the matter in which the human form must be impressed is by nature reluctant and wholly unyielding, the power will not now form a person, but some monster. Who does not acknowledge that this is a fault arising from matter? For the privation of some form must be connected with that form. So when nature strives to create air from water, it intends the form of air as its goal, but a privation of the form which is water happens contrary to its intention. You also observe the same thing in the arts, for art always imitates the nature as far as it can.

But I do not know how, when we had sought to find out about an evil which is brought about in life and morals, I have now slipped back into nature for a second time. And so, having set nature aside, we finally return to that evil. First of all, along with all philosophers and Christian authors, we do not place it in the consequences of activity, but in activity alone. For they are not concerned with what was done, but the state of mind in which it was done. So they establish four states of mind as principles. When something presents itself to us, some power of our mind is occasioned by that object such that we recognise it and, eventually, determine whether it is something good or evil. So when, in the first place, an object presents itself, and then, in the second, a judgment is formed about it, in the third place the will is aroused, so that we strive for the good but avoid the evil. Finally, in accordance with the will's command, a movement rises up in the body in such a way that the limbs perform what the will has previously determined. We do not observe vice in the first two principles, nor in the last one, but in the will, which we placed third in the order. For Verres did not sin because the paintings, statues and other precious paraphernalia of the Sicilians presented themselves to him, nor because he judged that he would abound in wealth from the acquisition of such accoutrements, but, rather, because he wanted to steal. This is because culpability depends on the will alone, to such an extent that, even if he had not stolen, he had committed a sin nonetheless because he wanted to steal. For the question of guilt is not "has he killed or has he not killed?" but "does he want to kill?". Clodius lacked the strength to kill Annus Milo. If you are looking for fault in this matter as far as nature is concerned, then it is the power which has not fulfilled the mind's intention that has sinned. If you turn to morals, however, then it is not the act of physical motion but the act of the will that commits the crime, and Clodius is justly called a murderer because he wanted to kill Milo. Suppose, however, that he *had* killed, but when he had not wanted to kill. He would at once be absolved of the crime. For someone who has not done such a thing on account of the will, but through a weakness of the aforementioned powers or through ignorance, does not only lack culpability but is also very often thought to be worthy of compassion. Who, when they

read about what Cephalus did to Procris (even if they think it mythical), does not only acquit Cephalus of the crime, but also offers him the greatest compassion, because they understand that, out of ignorance, he struck the wife most dear to him when he intended to wound a beast, and her death went on to cast him into the greatest grief and sorrow? So you see that vice that arises in morality has the act of the will as its origin.

Since we have already established that the deficiency of an action arises from the weakness of its first cause of action, I think that this subject should be explained more detail. So let us see the point at which the will fails before it performs the act. The will is not defective by its nature, for the defect would always cling to it and it would always fail. Nor, on the other hand, is it defective by accident or chance, for the defect would be out of our hands. It is therefore voluntary. But, in order that you see where the error comes from, hear this. The power of something which acts is brought about by the cause which is prior to it. For as long as that which acts in the second place proceeds in order from the first cause, it accomplishes its function perfectly. If, however, it deviates from it, there is now no remedy: it will fail either straight away or a little later. A circle which is rotated by a human hand turns in a circular motion. If it is abandoned by the same hand it will cease from movement. So, to return to the point, I was just saying that there are two principles which precede the will: the object that presents itself to us and a certain power which recognises the objects it is shown. But since whatever can be moved has something peculiar to it by which it is moved, not every power of perception is able to arouse every appetite. The power which perceives sensible things can only arouse the appetite which is from the senses. But it is peculiar to reason to arouse the will. On the other hand, since reason can perceive different types of good, each of which has its particular end, the will must also have an end peculiar to it and a first cause by which it is aroused: this is not any good, but a good that is certain and fixed. So if our mind and will are moved by the perception of reason, which possesses the correct judgment of good and of evil, correct action will originate in them. But if action arises from those things which have been determined to be good by the false judgment of the senses when they are not at all good, the will at once fails in regard to life and morals. So a perversion of order with regard to reason and its peculiar end produces a fault in action. This happens with respect to reason when the will is suddenly driven to perceive with the senses something that would not be good if you were to perceive it correctly but, because it allures the senses with its enticements, is judged to be good by them. There is, on the other hand, that which can genuinely be called good when undeceived reason itself judges that it is good, but at this point in time or in this way cannot be called good. The will is driven to it nevertheless, possessing no regard for order. Such a perversion of order is voluntary and is therefore not without vice.

Perhaps I am more talkative than necessary on the nature of evil. But, using the arguments by which I have shown that evil is not essence and, on account of this condition, cannot exist for itself, I will add that it is easy to understand that evil must always exist in something good. This has also been shown because when we say "evil", we mean "privation". For I have already proved this.

Privation itself and the form of which something is deprived are the same thing. But that which is the subject of a form is such that it is the subject of a form by its native possibility. Who will deny this is good, when the possibility or potential itself, and the actuality which comes from it, are of the entirely same kind? Moreover, evil is called evil for one reason alone: because it is harmful. But it does not harm evil, for if it caused harm to evil it would be good. So it harms good. But, if we speak about the form of the thing, evil would not harm good unless it were in it. What blindness will harm Polyphemus, unless the blindness is *in* Polyphemus? “But since evil is opposed to good, how can they both be the same subject? For one of the opposites drives out the other.” If you were to say this, I will respond thus. Whatever can be called a being, the same thing is also called good. It is not irrational that non-being should be in being. For any privation is in some essence, which is a being and yet is not in a being opposite to itself. For if I were to say “blindness”, this is certainly not a universal non-being that takes away vision everywhere. So blindness does not have vision as its subject, but the animal.

All these arguments proceed to this point: a highest evil cannot be found in such a way that the highest good is found. For if there were a highest evil, it could not have any association with anything good. But you will find that no evil is entirely separated from good, because, as we showed a little earlier, evil extends its roots into good and establishes its foundations in it, so to speak. Besides, if you were to grant to me that there was some highest evil, it would be evil in its essence in such a way that we see the highest good is good in its essence. But it has already been demonstrated that evil has no essence. Furthermore, there can be no cause of the first principle, for it would not be the first principle if there were a cause on which it depended. But we have said that good is the cause of evil. Add too that a cause which is called a cause on its own account is always prior to that which is called a cause for its accidental quality. But evil is not a cause except through its accidental quality. So you cannot find a highest evil.’

This is what I was able to remember from the many and far more excellent things that Leo Battista discussed – off the cuff, and with precision and eloquence – in this assembly of great men. Since he had more than satisfied Lorenzo with them, and the sun was already ascending to its midday height, we all arose with the encouragement of our most generous host Mariotto and, following him, departed to refresh our bodies.