

CHAPTER 2

The Literary Environment: Genealogies

Lapo's work on the *curia Romana* fits into a number of literary streams. Closest to home for him would have been the literature of humanism with which he would have been familiar, such as Petrarch's *Liber sine nomine*, which presents a polemic against the papacy at Avignon.¹ Although Petrarch does not fault the institution of the papacy, one hears there an angry voice calling for reform. Moreover, although Petrarch unceasingly complains about the city of Avignon, when he looks deeply at the situation, he realizes that not the city itself but rather its inhabitants deserve blame. Similar to what Lapo would later write concerning the evil men at the curia who were undermining what was basically a good institution, Petrarch writes (92), "Confess that it is not so much the city they inhabit that is evil, as they themselves who are vile and deceitful."

Petrarch's own negative feelings about the curia of his day were clearly bound up with a kind of protonationalism for which he was so admired by modern Italian nationalists; he ended the *Sine nomine* with a call to the then emperor Charles IV to free the papacy from the Babylon of Avignon and restore it to its proper place in Rome. While Lapo's treatise is free of this sort of nationalist sentiment, it is reasonable to suppose that he knew and was inspired by Petrarch's work. Petrarch was the archetype of the disenfranchised intellectual who heroically sought to continue with his humanistic work despite the hardships of repeated dislocation. Lapo probably saw in Petrarch a kindred spirit and perhaps even felt a deeper sense of kinship, since Lapo's uncle, Lapo the Elder, was among the cor-

1. See Francesco Petrarca, *Petrarcas 'Buch ohne Namen' und die päpstliche Kurie: Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte der Frührenaissance*, ed. P. Piur (Halle an der Saale, 1925). I cite from the translation of N.P. Zacour, *Petrarch's Book without a Name: A Translation of the "Liber sine nomine"* (Toronto, 1973).

respondents in the *Sine nomine* and was a friend and admirer of Petrarch.²

While there do not seem to be any direct quotations of the *Sine nomine* in the *De curiae commodis*, Lapo often echoes Petrarch. The most notable similarities occur during the angry speeches in the dialogue, bewailing the excesses of the curia. Petrarch makes use often in the *Sine nomine* of a type of topos in which the world seems upside down. For example, he writes (59),

it is shocking to see pious solitude replaced with shameful comings and goings and swarming troupes of the most debased hangers-on, to see rich feasts in place of sober fasts, rude and revolting slothfulness for sacred pilgrimages—and instead of the naked feet of the apostles, to gaze upon the prancing snow-white mounts of thieves, bedecked with gold, covered with gold, champing on gold bits, soon to be shod with gold shoes if the Lord does not curtail this debased excess.

Lapo often echoes this type of angry argument in his treatise. In addition, as Lapo would later do, Petrarch took care in his *De otio religioso* to discuss wealth, suggesting that “in our own age . . . gold and silver are cultivated with as much reverence as Christ himself is not, and often the live God is despised out of admiration for inanimate metals.”³ However, Lapo turns this usage of the topos of the golden age on its head in his defense of wealth in the *De curiae commodis*, when he suggests that precisely because pomp is so respected in modern times, curialists should be possessed of ample wealth (VIII).

The *De curiae commodis* represents part of the rich tradition of Italian

2. Letter V of the *Sine nomine* is part of a larger letter that Petrarch wrote to Lapo the Elder (Petrarch, *Le Familiari*, ed. V. Rossi, 4 vols. [Florence, 1933–42], XII.8). He later judged the opening too harsh and thus excerpted it, leaving it in its present form in the *Sine nomine*. Lapo the Elder is the addressee of *Fam.* VII.16 and XVIII.12, in addition to the letter mentioned. He is also alluded to twice in the Petrarchan *epistolario* (according to the index in *Le Familiari*, ed. Rossi, vol. 4), once in a letter to Boccaccio (XI.6.10) as one of “our three compatriots” (“ad hec et ad tres compatriotas nostros, optimos illos quidem ac probatissimos amicos . . . salvere iubeas ore tuo meis vocibus”). The other mention is in a letter to Francesco Nelli (XVIII.11.1–3), where Petrarch discusses Lapo the Elder’s decision to pursue legal studies in Bologna.

3. For the treatise, see Francesco Petrarca, *Il ‘De otio religioso’ di Francesco Petrarca*, ed. G. Rotondi and G. Martellotti (Vatican City, 1958). The quoted passage is cited and translated in C.M. Trinkaus, “*In Our Image and Likeness*”: *Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols. (London, 1970), 2:656–57.

Renaissance Neo-Latin dialogues. David Marsh has established a loose typology of the Quattrocento dialogue.⁴ Focusing on five figures—Bruni, Alberti, Poggio, Valla, and Pontano—Marsh argues that the main inspiration for most humanist dialogue writers was the Ciceronian dialogue, in which different (usually philosophical) positions were set forth and discussed by a number of interlocutors. The Ciceronian dialogue would often end with a lack of resolution as to which of the positions was best.

One Ciceronian dialogue that Lapo certainly would have known was Poggio Bracciolini's *De avaritia*, a piece that deals out some fairly heavy-handed anticlerical criticism, an example of which follows:

Then Cencio laughingly said: "When Antonio said 'all men,' he meant it to be understood also about priests. For a long time now this is an evil that is in them and is proper to their characters. For from the very beginning of our religion, it seems to me, this plague began to grow in them. First of all Judas of the disciples, once he accepted the coins, betrayed the Savior; from him onward, this gluttony for gold has spread into the rest of them and has lasted to our era. It dwells in them to such an extent that it is rare to find a priest free from greed."⁵

In addition, in Poggio's dialogue preachers are criticized for lacking the very qualities that they preach, clerics are spoken of as often studying only for the sake of monetary gain, and monks are criticized for being burdens to the state. Moreover, as Lapo later will do (VII.18) and as Petrarch had done in his *Sine nomine*, Poggio uses the Tantalus myth when speaking of the clergy. For Poggio, the clergy are tormented by a lust for gold, even though they live in abundance and can lack nothing;

4. See D. Marsh, *The Quattrocento Dialogue: Classical Tradition and Humanist Innovation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980).

5. "Tum subridens Cincius: Atqui, inquit, cum omnes Antonius dixit, de sacerdotibus voluit intellegi, quibus iam dudum hoc est commune malum et moribus consuetum. Ab ipso enim, ut mihi videtur, exordio religionis nostrae coepit haec pestis vigere in illis. Iudas primum ex discipulis Salvatorem prodidit, acceptis nummis, et ab eo in reliquos ingluvies auri manavit perseveravitque ad nostram aetatem, adeoque in eis insedit, ut rarum sit reperire sacerdotem cupiditatis expertem." See Poggio's *De avaritia* in Poggio Bracciolini, *Opera omnia* (Basel, 1538; reprint, with a preface by R. Fubini, Turin, 1964), 1–31, at 22. It is interesting that Poggio, unlike Lapo, sets the origins of clerical greed in apostolic times. On the date of the *De avaritia*, see Walser, *Poggius Florentinus*, 126; for literature on Poggio, see the collected studies in Poggio Bracciolini, *Poggio Bracciolini, 1380–1980: Nel VI centenario della nascita*, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Studi e Testi VIII (Florence, 1982).

yet, like Tantalus's desire for food, their lust for gold can never be fully satisfied. Beyond the anticlerical tendencies of the work, Poggio has his interlocutor Andrea discuss virtue in technical terms, as will Lapo's interlocutors. For Poggio's Andrea, the real blame to be laid on the head of the miser is that he does not practice temperance, which is the mean between the two extremes of prodigality and parsimony.

Marsh also outlines three other ancient traditions that were followed in the Italian Renaissance: the Socratic dialogue, the symposiac dialogue (as in the work of Xenophon or Plato's *Symposium*), and the Lucianic comic dialogue. In reading Lapo and in placing him in the tradition of the Quattrocento dialogue, we should keep the Socratic form in the forefront. Authors of Quattrocento "Socratic" dialogues changed the morphology of the Socratic dialogue as it had been realized in the works of Plato. Whereas Plato had removed his own presence from the dramatic equation, a number of fifteenth-century authors appeared as interlocutors in and even introduced their works. Despite the differences, however, the Quattrocento "Socratic" dialogues share in the same spirit as the dialogues of Plato, even if they do not possess the same level of technical philosophical depth.⁶

Marsh mentions three "Socratic" dialogues from the first half of the Quattrocento, Alberti's *Pontifex* (1437), Valla's *De libero arbitrio* (1439), and Valla's *De professione religiosorum* (1442).⁷ An explicit assertion on the part of Lapo's interlocutor Angelo alerts us that Lapo's dialogue is part of this tradition (II.19): "You wish to handle me in the manner of Socrates." Given that it was written in 1438, Lapo's dialogue must be seen as an essential part in the development of this Socratic trend that began in the late 1430s.

Alberti addresses the question of wealth and the church in his *Pontifex*.⁸ In one section an interlocutor speaks as follows:

Even if, perhaps, those things that I called vices before—that is, pleasure, ambition, and desire—are occasionally on view in high priests, unless you think we should do otherwise, let us single out that vice that, almost to a one, all of them admit is rather detrimental to themselves, inasmuch as at the beginning of our discussion you had spoken

6. Marsh, *Quattrocento Dialogue*, 6.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Edited in Leon Battista Alberti, *Opera inedita et pauca separatim impressa*, ed. G. Mancini (Florence, 1890), 67–121.

of their sumptuousness and ostentation, [from which] we easily understood how incredibly dedicated to wealth they are.⁹

Alberti thus points out for particular condemnation the vices associated with ostentation.

Lapo must also have known Alberti's *Intercenales*.¹⁰ Intended to be read *inter cenas et pocula*, the short pieces that comprise this work were brief, often satirical comments on various aspects of life, written in a sometimes ponderous Latin, and collected by Alberti into eleven books sometime after the year 1437. Sometimes they were written in dialogue form, sometimes not. In a number of places Lapo echoes the sentiments and often the prose itself of certain of these works. In terms of actual language, Lapo owes most, perhaps, to the *intercenale* "Poverty," a very short dialogue between Peniplusius and Paletterus.¹¹ When one hears one of the interlocutors advising the other that he is "in the public eye no less than other prominent men" and that his "character and behavior are closely scrutinized,"¹² one thinks of Lapo's argument that the public position of the highly situated curialists prevents them from doing wrong out of concern for their reputation (VIII.9). The interlocutors of "Poverty" also discuss the utility of wealth.

Consider what the public must think when they behold a prominent man's family clothed with insufficient decency, his horses neglected, and the master himself attired with insufficient dignity—in short, the entire house less sumptuous and elegant than it was in previous generations and than public customs and standards require.¹³

9. *Ibid.*, 92: "Tametsi fortassis illa in pontificibus, quae dixi vitia, voluptas, ambitio et cupiditas perspicua interdum sunt, ni aliter agendum censeas, id unum excipiamus quod illi sibi deterius putant, quive ad unum usque ferme omnes, quantum a principio dixeris de illorum apparatu et pompis, facile quam deditissimi sint intelligimus."

10. There is still no complete critical edition of the *Intercenales*, but some are collected and translated in Leon Battista Alberti, *Dinner Pieces*, trans. D. Marsh, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, 45 (Binghamton, New York, 1987), and there is an excellent bibliography in the notes there. The two main printed sources for the Latin texts are in Alberti, *Opera inedita*, and E. Garin, "Leon Battista Alberti: Alcune intercenali inedite," *Rinascimento*, 2d ser., 4 (1964): 125–258, reprinted as *Intercenali inedite*, ed. E. Garin (Florence, 1965). For other bibliography and notes on the manuscript situation, see Marsh's introduction and notes in *Dinner Pieces*. I cite from the translations of Marsh.

11. Alberti, *Dinner Pieces*, 46–50.

12. *Ibid.*, 46.

13. *Ibid.*, 47.

Lapo uses just such reasoning to argue that curialists should be attended by much pomp and circumstance (VIII.48–49). In describing poverty, Alberti also suggests:

a reputation of wealth enhances our dignity and esteem, and . . . we must completely shun the very name of poverty. For hand in hand with an indigent condition, there goes a reputation for instability, impudence, audacity, crimes and vices which are condemned by everyone's suspicions and rumors.¹⁴

Lapo's interlocutors argue that wealth is to be preferred to poverty since the crimes committed by the poor are baser than those committed by the wealthy (VIII.20–22), a position that bears indubitable similarities to Alberti's stance here in favor of wealth.

Other affinities between the *De curiae commodis* and the *Intercenales* reflect the concern, occasional discomfort, and sometimes outright bitterness in the humanist community concerning the proximity of wealth and religion. In "The Coin," Alberti offers a fable in which, after much suspenseful waiting at the oracle of Apollo, ancient priests came to the realization that money was their "sovereign and supreme god" and wound up swearing to this notion. Alberti goes on to say that "priests value this oath so highly that, even to the present day, no priest has incurred even the slightest suspicion of perjury in this regard."¹⁵ Along the same lines, in the short fable "Pluto" (in which Pluto is identified with Ploutos, god of wealth) we are told that Hercules "could not patiently tolerate in the society of the gods one whom, during his travels across the earth, he had only seen as a close friend of the most slothful and indolent men."¹⁶

Finally, certain parallels to Lapo's dialogue are evident in a work not part of the *Intercenales*, Alberti's famous Tuscan dialogue, the *Libri della famiglia*.¹⁷ In book 4 Alberti has the interlocutor Piero suggest that "excessive greed for money" is "the most common and most notorious vice of all priests" (262 Watkins trans., 280 Grayson ed.). We hear from the interlocutor Ricciardo that "virtue ought to be dressed in those

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 50–51.

16. Ibid., 52.

17. Here I cite from the translation of R. N. Watkins (*The Family in Renaissance Florence: A Translation of . . . "I libri della famiglia"* [Columbia, S.C., 1969]) but give also the reference to the Grayson edition of the Italian text for each passage (from vol. 1 of Leon Batista Alberti, *Opere volgari*, ed. C. Grayson, 3 vols. [Bari, 1960]).

seemly ornaments which it is hard to acquire without affluence” (250 Watkins trans., 267–68 Grayson ed.).

One landmark work in the tradition of humanist polemic against clerical wealth was Valla’s *De professione religiosorum*, written a few years after Lapo’s dialogue, in 1442. In a number of places Valla’s concerns resonate with Lapo’s work. The usual protestation against wealth held by the religious is present: “The church, therefore, also has treasures, but it is not the possession or use of these treasures that is criticized but rather their tight hold and abuse of them.”¹⁸ Valla also mentions the sexual immorality of many religious, a topic that is not absent from Lapo’s work. Valla laments:

Oh, would that bishops and priests “were deacons of one wife for each man” and not—pardon me—lovers of one prostitute. No one will be able to become angry with me, unless he is someone who doesn’t wish to look into his own conscience. Many are good, but—and it pains me to say it—more are bad.¹⁹

Given their acquaintanceship, it is probable that Valla knew Lapo’s dialogue, but in any case these sorts of ideas were clearly in the air in the humanist community.²⁰

Another contemporary with whom Lapo has affinities is Enea Silvio Piccolomini, who became Pope Pius II in 1458. The specific point of connection comes in an epistolary treatise that Piccolomini composed in 1444, six years after the final redaction of the *De curiae commodis*. The treatise is entitled *De curialium miseriis* (On the miseries of courtiers)²¹ and there are

18. Lorenzo Valla, *De professione religiosorum*, ed. M. Cortesi (Padua, 1986), X.22: “Habet ergo et Ecclesia thesauros, nec eorum possessio aut usus, sed tenacitas atque abusus reprehenditur. Quod de Ecclesia, idem de privatis singulisque dicendum est, maxime pro qualitate persone.”

19. Ibid., XI.7–8: “Utinam, utinam episcopi, presbyteri, ‘diacones essent unius uxoris viri’ et non potius (venia sit dicto) non unius scorti amatores. (8) Nemo mihi irasci poterit, nisi qui sibi conscius de se noluerit confiteri. Multi sunt boni, sed, quod dolore cogente loquor, plures mali.”

20. As many have realized. See Trinkaus, “*In Our Image and Likeness*”; S. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla, umanesimo e teologia* (Florence, 1972); idem, “Lorenzo Valla tra medioevo e rinascimento, Encomium Sanctae Thomae,” *Memorie Domenicane*, n.s., 7 (1976): 3–190.

21. I cite from Aeneas Silvius, *De curialium miseriis epistola*, ed. W.P. Mustard (Baltimore and London, 1928); this also edited in R. Wolkan, *Der Briefwechsel des Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini*, I, 453–87 (Vienna, 1909). There is a good discussion on this treatise’s debt to Lucian in K. Sidwell, “Il *De curialium miseriis* di Enea Silvio Piccolomini e il *De mercede conductis*,” in *Pio II e la cultura del suo tempo*, ed. L.R.S. Tarugi (Milan, 1991) 329–41. On Lucian in the Renaissance see D. Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins: Humor and Humanism in the Early Renaissance* (Ann Arbor, 1998); see esp. 35–36 for Lapo’s translations of Lucian.

a number of fruitful points of comparison between the two works. Both the differences and the similarities are instructive. First, there is the obvious difference in form. Piccolomini's work is an epideictic treatise rather than a dialogue. This allows him less in the way of the deliberate ambiguity with which Lapo's work is suffused. Moreover, Piccolomini's work differs in that it concerns life at a secular court, rather than at the papal court. So if he reports the presence of excessive luxury, sexual vices, and greed at the court, it is not quite as radical and risky as Lapo's description of those things at the *curia Romana*.²² Finally, it differs throughout in that Piccolomini uses more scriptural and religious imagery than does Lapo.

The similarities are numerous and allow one to suppose that Piccolomini may have seen Lapo's work. Both authors are concerned that their patrons not think that any of the enumerated vices pertain to them.²³ The structure of Piccolomini's treatise is not dissimilar to Lapo's and in some places overlaps directly. Its purpose, Piccolomini says, is to dissuade its dedicatee, Johann von Eich, from beoming a courtier. Piccolomini finds that men will serve princes with five ends in view: honor, reputation in the world, power, wealth, or pleasure. In his work he intends to show that none of these ends is easily attainable by the courtier.²⁴ The general theme throughout, in fact, is that the vicissitudes of court life prevent the courtier's attainment of these things, and that the outward veneer of court life conceals a none too appealing reality.

As to honors, they are given at court only to the wealthy and powerful.²⁵ If it is objected that some have risen from relative poverty and obscurity to preferred positions, we find that they have pleased the king because they match him in vice.²⁶ Reputation gained at court is without

22. Along these same lines, there is more direct moralizing quotation of scripture in Piccolomini's treatise.

23. Cf. Lapo, *De curiae commodis*, Introduction, 5–12 and Piccolomini, 6. There Piccolomini praises Frederick III, his patron, and Frederick's court, giving a list of ancient, medieval, and modern rulers who were good; he goes on: "quibus, si vel pietatem vel mansuetudinem vel pacis amorem vel iusticiae zelum vel religionis affectum requiris, Fredericum nostrum nulla in re minorem invenies; tantum abest meis ut sibi scriptis velim detractum, ut eius laudes illustrare et versibus, quoad possim, et oratione soluta decreverim. Nec me nunc eius curia detineret, nisi sua me bonitas allexisset."

24. Piccolomini, 5.

25. Ibid., 7. "Dantur honores in curiis non secundum mores atque virtutes, sed ut quisque ditior est atque potentior, eo magis honoratur."

26. Ibid., 8. "Audio quod obiicis. Fuerunt nonnulli, dicis, obscuro nati loco atque inopes quondam, qui nunc omnibus sunt praelati; sic enim principes voluerunt. Sed quos, oro, sic praelatis ais? Nempe quos suis moribus conformes invenerunt. Quibus moribus? Avaritiae, libidini, crapulae, crudelitati. Sic est sane. . . . Nemo acceptus est, nemoque ex parvo statu praefertur aliis, nisi magno aliquo facinore sese principi conciliaverit."

foundation, since the people offering praise are like actors and jokers. Real praise is that which is offered by those who are themselves praiseworthy.²⁷ True power is impossible to achieve; princely power is so subject to constant envy and conspiracies that the prince is always on the lookout for enemies. So, “often, someone who pleased the prince yesterday, displeases him today.”²⁸ Wealth cannot really be acquired at court, or at least not without great cost, for whoever gains great wealth sacrifices his liberty; he must laugh when the king laughs, cry when the king cries, praise whomever the king praises, and condemn whomever the king condemns.²⁹

Finally, Piccolomini arrives at pleasures. He admits frankly that all people like pleasures (“nec quisquam est qui voluptati non obsequatur”) but suggests that whoever goes to a court to find them will be deceived.³⁰ As Lapo had, Piccolomini discusses the pleasures affiliated with various senses. The pleasures of sight—grand processions and pomp—are there in court life, to be sure. But since the courtier is often a participant in these events, he cannot really enjoy them.³¹ Piccolomini’s discussion of the “pleasures” of hearing can be interestingly compared with Lapo’s discussion of the same pleasure. For Lapo, the “pleasure” of hearing was that in the papal court one heard much news from all over as well as things which were useful for one’s advancement in court life. As Lapo wrote (VII, 15):

From this one acquires not only pleasure but also the greatest utility, since the life and character of all is thus placed before your eyes. No one can escape you when the whole curia is like this. And so, if you

27. Ibid., 9: “Praetereo histriones atque ioculatores et totius vulgi laudes, quas vir prudens pro nihilo reputabit; quid nulla est vera laus, nisi a viris proveniar laudatis.” This should be compared with Cicero’s letter to Cato (*Fam.* XV. 6.1) and Lapo’s use of same at *De curiae commodis*, VI. 16.

28. Ibid., 10: “Saepe qui heri placuit hodie displicet.” He goes on, using language which evokes Lapo’s description of the papal court as a place where all eyes are on one; to Lapo’s *De curiae commodis*, V.14, compare the following passage: “Si quis potens est, mille circa se oculos habet et totidem linguas ad ruinam eius aspirantes, et unus hinc alius illinc praemit.”

29. Piccolomini, 12: “Sunt qui se posse putant divitias cumulare principibus servientes, at hi ut divitias comparant, libertatem vendunt, nec tamen divitias assequuntur. . . . oportet . . . ridere et flere cum rege, laudare quem laudat, vituperare quem vituperat.”

30. Ibid., 14.

31. Ibid., 15.

ever need a favor from these people, the result is that, almost like a learned doctor, you have your medications ready and prepared.

Piccolomini pays less attention to the low-level gossip that circulates at court and focuses rather on other matters. One might think, he argues, that at court one will hear “news from the whole world, the wisest of men speaking, the deeds of great men, and the songs and sounds of musicians.” But on all these accounts one is disappointed.³² One does hear much news, but it is almost all bad, as one is told of captured cities, the death of great men, kidnappings, and other such catastrophes.³³ When learned philosophers and orators come, they cannot speak freely as they might in republics, so they bide their words carefully.³⁴ There are those of course who tell the histories of great and ancient men, but they do so in a lying, twisted way, preferring the inane fables of authors like Marsilio of Padua and Vincent of Beauvais to the great works of ancients like Livy, Sallust, and Plutarch.³⁵ Finally, when it comes to music, the singers have the same flaw attributed to singers by Horace: when their friends ask them to sing, they refuse; unasked, they never desist.³⁶

32. Ibid., 16. “At in auditu, dices, magna est curialium delectatio, dum novitates totius orbis, dum viros sapientissimos loquentes, dum gesta virorum magnorum, dum cantus sonosque audiunt musicorum. Credo et hoc plerosque decipere.”

33. Ibid. “. . . cum plura illic displicentia quam grata audiantur, cum nunc civitates captae, viri praestantes occisi, spolia facta, rapinae commissae, victores mali, victi boni saepius referantur.”

34. Ibid. “Now if learned orators and philosophers sometimes come to courts and give speeches before princes, it is not as pleasing to hear them there, since they have to speak more carefully there than they do in schools, where they are free and speak truthfully and not only with the aim of pleasing [their audience]. This is why at Athens (when it was a free city) and at Rome (when the consuls governed the republic) literary studies were at their highest point.” [“Quod si nonnunquam oratores atque philosophi disertis curias adeunt, orationesque coram principibus habent, non tam dulce est eos illic audire, ubi cum metu magis loquuntur quam in scholis, ubi sint liberi et ad veritatem, non ad complacentiam, fantur. Hinc est quod Athenis, dum libera civitas fuit, et Romae, dum consules rem publicam gubernabant, litterarum studia maxime flourerunt.”]

35. Ibid. “Sunt qui veterum narrant historias, sed mendose atque perverse; claris auctoribus non creditur, sed fabellis inanibus fides adhibetur. Plus Guidoni de Columna, qui bellum Troianum magis poetice quam hystorice scripsit, vel Marsilio de Padua, qui translationes imperii quae nunquam fuerunt ponit, vel Vincentio Monacho quam Livio, Salustio, Iustino, Quinto Curtio, Plutarcho aut Suetonio, praestantissimis auctores, creditur.”

36. Ibid. “‘Omnibus hoc vitium est cantoribus,’ inquit Horatius, ‘inter amicos ut nunquam inducant animum cantare rogati, iniussi nunquam desistant.’ Piccolomini quotes Horace, *Sat.*, I,3,1–3.

Piccolomini's discussions of the "pleasures of Venus" are less explicit than Lapo's and contain none of the homoerotic subtexts which Lapo employed. Piccolomini argues that while there are many beautiful women at court, the individual courtier will have many rivals for each and will be hard pressed to find a woman satisfied with only one man.³⁷ If one is lucky enough to find a woman who is *fida*, it will be impossible to satisfy her and the king at the same time, since both are "insolent lords and want the whole man for him- or herself."³⁸ As to the senses of smell and taste, here too the courtier's privileged position is a myth tempered by a stark reality: the king gets all the good food and wine and the very odors of the food destined for the kingly plate makes one into a latter day Tantalus, condemned to physical proximity to unenjoyable pleasures.³⁹

When Piccolomini's discussion of the senses comes to a close, he goes on at length about other disadvantages of court life: traveling with military campaigns is difficult and dangerous (35); the need to travel takes away the courtier's personal liberty (36); the relatives of the highly placed are given privileged positions (39); again, Tantalus-like, the courtier's apparent *otium* is not what it seems—because there is always so much clamor and noise, he really never has time to read the ancients and engage in humanistic study (41); real friendship is impossible, since even those who seem virtuous conceal ulterior motives (44); and, whatever your position at court, from the lowliest cook to the highest placed chancellor, there will always be someone who complains about the way you do your job (45).

Much of Piccolomini's imagery, argumentation, and sometimes actual verbiage, is similar to Lapo's. But there is an essential difference, beyond the formal ones noted above, between the social places of the two men and the perspectives from which they write. One comparison will suffice: of Lapo's arguments regarding the pleasures of sound and sight and Pic-

37. Piccolomini, 17.

38. Ibid., 17: ". . . quia uterque insolens dominus est, et qui hominem totum vult sibi." Piccolomini goes on to argue there that if the courtier comes to court already married, he cannot hope to keep her uncorrupted at court because of the manifold temptations to sin.

39. Ibid., 18–27. Lapo had employed the image of Tantalus at *De curiae commodis*, VII.18. Just to give one example of the types of food Piccolomini laments, he writes (22) "Cheese rarely comes to you and if it does, it is alive, full of worms, with holes everywhere, squalid-looking, and harder than stone." ["Caseus raro ad te venit, aut, si venit, vivus est, plenus vermibus, undique perforatus, situ squalidus, saxo durior."]

colomini's. Lapo's wonder at the papal court shines forth when he praises the pomp and beauty of all the great visiting figures and the spectacular grandiosity of curial ceremony.⁴⁰ As we have seen, however, Piccolomini regards this as an empty pleasure, since the courtier, as a participant, cannot take great enjoyment in these sorts of things. The difference between the two men and its reflection of their respective social positions could not be more apparent: Lapo, liminal, the quintessential outsider, dazzled by court ceremonial; Piccolomini, the weary insider, far enough within the court environment to make distinctions between the external veneer and the internal reality. Piccolomini's discussion comes from one who is fully established in a powerful position in the ambient of court life. Even their different perceptions of the sorts of news one hears at court reflects this. Lapo views news about the private lives of courtiers as a means of personal advancement, to be used as a learned doctor might use a medicine. Piccolomini, on the other hand, is accustomed to hearing news of truly high import—of the sacking of subject cities, of kidnappings, of evil conquerors and good men slain, news, in other words, of the sort to which Lapo might not have been privy and, even if he had, would have been utterly powerless to do anything about.

Lapo's work had humanistic literary ancestors and contemporaries in a number of different senses. The style of discourse used in the dialogue, termed by Fubini a "pro and contra style," is similar to arguments *in utramque partem*, recommended as a form of training by Cicero, in whose footsteps Quattrocento humanists happily followed. Cicero wrote:

For concerning virtue, duty, concerning the fair and the good, concerning dignity, utility, honor, dishonor, reward, punishment, and similar things, we too should possess the power and the facility to speak on both sides of a question.⁴¹

Naturally, training one's mind to be able to think on both sides of question—that is, *in utramque partem*—does not mean that humanists did not have opinions or were insincere, molding themselves only to the exi-

40. Cf. *De curiae commodis*, VII.2–11.

41. Cic. *De or.* III.107: "De virtute enim, de officio, de aequo et bono, de dignitate, utilitate, honore, ignominia, praemio, poena similibusque de rebus in utramque partem dicendi etiam nos et vim et artem habere debemus." Cf. *De or.*, I.263, III.80; *Or.* 46: "Haec igitur quaestio a propriis personis et temporibus ad universi generis

gencies of the moment.⁴² One must simply make distinctions when it comes to the final purposes for which this type of rhetoric was used.

Paul Oskar Kristeller argues that the humanists were representatives of an intellectual movement that went hand in hand with a curricular shift stressing the *studia humanitatis* of grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy; that with a passion for resurrecting antiquity, they engaged in a stylistic revival of Latin culture; that the movement is thus an important phase in the history of the rhetorical tradition.⁴³ This is true. It is the most empirically inclusive view of the humanist movement; it gives a synchronic picture of the movement and is essentially irrefutable.

But have all the possibilities for analysis and examination been exhausted? One can also look diachronically at the movement, for instance, and suggest that within it were trends in which some but not all humanists partook.⁴⁴ We can judge these trends as important and worthy of analysis in themselves, even if they are not representative of the movement as a whole. One must thus be on one's guard not to conflate the trend or specific thinkers under consideration with humanism in its entirety.⁴⁵

Bearing that in mind, I suggest that Lapo's use and variation of *in utramque partem* argumentation is part of one such trend. One can describe this trend as "rhetoric as a way of thought," in which one leans more on inference and enthymematic reasoning than on *apodeixis* and syllogisms.⁴⁶ As is the case with the subtextual subtleties behind his

orationem traducta appellatur θέσις. In hac Aristoteles adulescentes non ad philosophorum morem tenuiter disserendi, sed ad copiam rhetorum, in utramque partem, ut ornatus et uberius dici posset, exercuit; idemque locos—sic enim appellat—quasi argumentorum notas tradidit unde omnis in utramque partem traheretur oratio."

42. This is essentially the opinion of J. Seigel, in his *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton, 1968).

43. See P.O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York, 1979).

44. For a diachronic examination of the evolution of the term *studia humanitatis* in humanist thought, see B.J. Kohl, "The Changing Concept of the *Studia Humanitatis* in the Early Renaissance," *Renaissance Studies* 6 (1992): 185–209.

45. As occasionally happened in the case of Hans Baron's "civic humanism" thesis.

46. Cf. R.G. Witt, "Medieval Italian Culture and the Origins of Humanism as a Stylistic Ideal," in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. A. Rabil, Jr., 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), 1:31–32.

translations,⁴⁷ Lapo is able to use this type of rhetorical approach to his advantage. It is not the case that Lapo and other humanists employing this style of thought are necessarily criticizing the reigning cultural, educational, or political establishment, although they may often choose to do so. In the case of the *De curiae commodis*, whenever one of the many harsh criticisms of the curia is proffered by one of the two interlocutors, it is almost always tempered by a counterargument. Yet the counterposition is itself posed in a manner that leaves the original criticism hanging in the air, imbued with resonance. This style of thought enables Lapo to pose some harsh criticisms of contemporary religious life, even if the dialogue is not always and everywhere critical.

Seen in this light, Lapo's dialogue may also be considered as taking part to a certain extent in the literary tradition of irony, wherein the opposite of what is explicitly stated is intended.⁴⁸ It may be less than pure coincidence that a thirteenth-century ironic dialogue ostensibly praising the Roman curia, the *Liber de statu Curie Romane*, was copied in a *de luxe* edition sometime during the papacy of Eugenius IV (1431–47).⁴⁹ Whether this work was known to Lapo is unclear, but it does show, at the very least, that literary irony was seen (as early as the late thirteenth century) as a reasonably secure means by which one could launch criticisms of curial morality. Lapo articulates his positions in a more sophisticated fashion than does the author of the *Liber*, and he certainly did not intend the *De curiae commodis* as a simple piece of polemic tout court. But in its general aspect, like the *Liber*, it is a work that purports to set forth the advantages of the curia and many times does anything but that.⁵⁰ An example might make this clearer.

47. See Celenza, "Parallel Lives."

48. See D. Knox, *Ironia: Medieval and Renaissance Ideas on Irony*, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 16 (Leiden, New York, 1989).

49. See the edition of the dialogue and the discussion of its *fortuna* in H. Grauert, *Magister Heinrich der Poet in Würzburg und die römische Kurie*, Abhandlungen der Königlichen Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-philologische und historische Klasse 27 (Munich, 1912); see also P. Lehmann, "Zur *Disputatio Ganfredi et Aprilis de statu curiae Romanae*," *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 17 (1916): 86–94. Both are cited in Knox, *Ironia*, 17–18.

50. For another, nonhumanistic critique of the curia that was not at all written in the ironic mode, see the 1405 work of the Polish cleric Matthew of Krakow, *De praxi Romanae curiae*, which also circulated under the title *De squaloribus curiae Romanae*. See the edition of Władysław Seńko (Breslau, 1969).

The dialogue is structured as a series of examinations of the “benefits” of the Roman curia. The first examination presents the curia as a good place because it is a concentrated seat of religion. The summum bonum is most desirable, and this highest good, this most desirable thing, is God; both the summum bonum and God must exist, because people have an inborn desire for them (III.1–5). Means that lead us to the highest good are themselves goods and are more so the closer they bring us to the highest good. Religion is the best of these means, and the most concentrated place of religion is the curia.

So one of the curia’s “benefits” is that it is a concentrated seat of religious practice. When pressed for proofs of this assertion by Angelo, Lapo responds (III.16): “For where else might you find such a great number of priests?” Angelo argues that the high number of priests is unsurprising, given the curia’s importance as a religious center, and he goes on to aver that this is no proof that the curia’s priests are good. Lapo’s ultimate response is noteworthy and worth quoting in extenso (III.18–21).

This at least I would not hesitate to affirm: first, in a small number [of men], there are few good men, even if they were all good; but in a great multitude there can exist very many most upright men. In fact—as far as I can follow it with human ability—I am convinced and I judge that a multitude of priests who are not the worst is more pleasing to God than a paucity of priests who are not the best. [This is so] since we learn from the old traditions of sacred scripture that God always wanted to be worshiped by the multitude. Certainly, if I make a conjecture about us human beings, worship and veneration are usually pleasing, whoever carries them out. This is also most wisely established by our divine laws: that every sacrifice, even if it is made by the most corrupt of priests, provided that the ritual is done correctly, is a sacrifice that is true, integral, absolute, intact, and inviolate and is to be deemed as accepted in the eyes of God. . . . For this reason we cannot doubt that a multitude of worshipers—in which it is necessary both that there are many good men and that sacrifices, worship, and ceremonies are celebrated and renewed amid the greatest concourse—is most beloved in the eyes of immortal God himself, in whose honor these things happen.

What is happening here? Angelo convincingly refutes the notion that where there are many priests, there is an abundance of holiness. The response Lapo offers to this refutation is as follows: in a small group of all good men, one still finds only a small number of good men, because the group is numerically small; but in a large group, even if the ratio of good men to the whole is less than in the small group, one still finds, in terms of pure numbers, more good men. This weak, enthymematic counterargument stresses quantity rather than quality and by implication asserts that there are in fact quite a few bad *sacerdotes* in the curia.

This passage is important not only in itself but also because it shows Lapo's method: all the arguments given in the treatise, in fact, are a mélange of argument and counterargument; the original position here, that the curia is a concentrated seat of religion, is severely tempered by the "many priests" argument. Here and elsewhere in the dialogue, no position is allowed to go completely unchallenged—no position, that is, but that advanced on the virtues.

Prudence and the Virtues

The general point of the discussion on the virtues is clear: since many different peoples and customs can be observed there, the curia provides useful experience of the world. Experience is the basis for acquiring virtue, especially prudence; therefore the curia is a good place to be if one wishes to acquire virtue. To understand this position on the virtues, it is necessary to fill out the background a bit. As always, antiquity is important, and in this case two authors jump to the forefront: Aristotle and Cicero.

A key event in Florentine intellectual history was Leonardo Bruni's translation and popularization of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Far from a manual of conduct or a work that postulated proscriptive rules, the *Nicomachean Ethics* was a creative work of doctrinally flexible, inductive, observational anthropology. Aristotle was less concerned overall with either recommending specific courses of action to human beings or, like his teacher, Plato, describing how people ought to act. Instead Aristotle was interested in determining what people did, how they did it, and what common rules human beings seemed to share when they approached what we would now call ethical problems. No better

match could have been found for the concerns of Florentine humanists than the *Ethics*, and no better person for introducing it than Bruni.

In dedicating to Cosimo de' Medici his translation of Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles*, Lapo spoke of Bruni as "the prince of eloquence of this age, the beautification and ornament of the Latin language."⁵¹ Lapo's sentiment certainly reflected contemporary *opinio communis*. The translations and manuscript diffusion as well as the printing histories of Bruni's many influential works demonstrate the respect in which he was held by contemporaries and his enduring influence.⁵² Bruni's translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, completed in the years 1416 to 1417, was no exception.⁵³ This is an episode in the history of the reception of Aristotle that itself has its own, well-studied history.

In his polemic *On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others*, Petrarch misunderstood Cicero and Quintilian and complained that barbarous translations had ruined the natural eloquence of Aristotle, who had been "pleasant, abundantly eloquent, and admirable in his language."⁵⁴ Cicero, in his *Academica*, and Quintilian, in his *Institutio*, had of course been referring to Aristotle's dialogues—his exoteric works—which are now almost exclusively lost to us.⁵⁵ But the memory of this

51. "... princeps eloquentiae huius aetatis, decus et ornamentum latinae linguae." See the edition of the text in Celenza, "Parallel Lives," app. 1, sec. 26.

52. See J. Hankins, "The Man and His Reputation," 42–46 in the general introduction (3–50) in Leonardo Bruni, *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, ed. G. Griffiths, J. Hankins, and D. Thompson (Binghamton, N.Y., 1987), at 45–46; and see the literature cited there.

53. See E. Garin, "Le traduzioni umanistiche di Aristotele nel secolo XV," *Atti dell'Accademia fiorentina di scienze morali "La Colombaria"* 16 (1951): 55–104; on Bruni, see especially 62–68; for the date of the translation, see 62. See also B. Copenhagen, "Translation, Terminology, and Style," in *CHRP*, 77–110.

54. See Petrarch, *Le traité "De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia,"* ed. L.M. Capelli (Paris, 1906), 67 et seq.

55. Cicero (*Acad.* II.38.119) speaks of the "flumen aureum orationis" of Aristotle. Quintilian (*Inst.* X.1.83), in a judgment of the philosophers ("from whom Tullius confesses he drew most of his eloquence" [ex quibus plurimum se traxisse eloquentiae M. Tullius confitetur] (X.1.81), says: "What of Aristotle? I doubt whether I judge anyone more outstanding when it comes to knowledge of things, abundance of writings, power and sweetness of speech, precision of inventions, or variety of works" [Quid Aristotelen? Quem dubito scientia rerum an scriptorum copia an eloquendi vi ac suavitate an inventionum acumine an varietate operum clariorem putem]. On Aristotle's exoteric works in general, see E. Berti, *La filosofia del primo Aristotele* (Padua, 1962). See also O. Gigon, "Prolegomena to an edition of the *Eudemus*," in *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-fourth Century*, ed. I. Düring and G.E.L. Owen (Göteborg, 1960), 19–33; I. Düring, *Aristotle's "Protrepticus": An Attempt at Reconstruction* (Göteborg, 1961); A.-H. Chroust, "Eudemus or On the Soul: A Lost Dialogue of Aristotle on the Immortality of the Soul," *Mnemosyne*, 4th ser., 19 (1966): 17–30.

humanistic mistake, itself stimulated by a polemic against scholastic philosophy, remained strong. Even stronger was the humanist desire that had given rise to the mistake: the desire, that is, to appropriate ancient culture in not only its Latin but also its Greek manifestations and to do so in a Latin that was adequate to the humanists' new, largely Ciceronian ideals of eloquence, if not always *adaequata* in the philosophical sense of the term.

When it came to this desire Bruni was no exception among humanists.⁵⁶ In the case of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the translation that he had read in school was the one that had become the standard full translation of the work since the 1250s, that of Robert Grosseteste, the thirteenth-century bishop of Lincoln.⁵⁷ Without naming Grosseteste, Bruni strongly criticized this received translation, saying that the *Nicomachean Ethics* "seemed to have been made more barbarian than Latin."⁵⁸ He also complained about the many incorporations into Latin of Greek terminology, transliterations that in Bruni's view were unnecessary.⁵⁹

Despite these criticisms it is probable that Bruni had Grosseteste's version of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in front of him as he worked. His method of translation had more to do with sprucing up Grosseteste's Latin and giving the language more *ornatus* than it did with freshly translating from the Greek in a philosophically informed manner. In a debate with Bruni, Alonso Garcia da Cartagena, himself admittedly Greekless,

56. Quotations from Bruni are taken from Leonardo Bruni, *Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften*, ed. H. Baron (Berlin, 1928; reprographischer Nachdruck, Stuttgart, 1969). The citations have been compared with the suggested modifications in L. Bertalot, "Forschungen über Leonardo Bruni Aretino," in *Studien zum italienischen und deutschen Humanismus*, ed. P.O. Kristeller, 2 vols. (Rome, 1975), 2:375–420. James Hankins has provided English translations and helpful discussions of many of Bruni's works that dealt with the *Nicomachean Ethics*: see Bruni, *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, sec. 4, "The New Language" (197–234), especially Hankins's discussion of the ethics controversy (201–8); sec. 6, "The New Philosophy" (255–99).

57. Cf. the passage Bruni quotes in his *Praefatio quaedam ad evidentiam novae translationis Ethicorum Aristotelis*, in Bruni, *Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften*, 76–81, at 78 (which is *Eth. Nic.* II.7.1108a23–26; *praemissio* is the first word in the Baron edition), to Grosseteste's translation of the same in R.A. Gauthier, ed., *Aristoteles Latinus*, XXVI 1–3, fasciculus tertius, *Ethica Nicomachea: Translatio Roberti Grosseteste Lincolnensis sive 'Liber Ethicorum' A. Recensio Pura* (Leiden, Brussels, 1972), at 174, line 23, to 175, line 1, as well as in *B. Recensio recognita* (Leiden, Brussels, 1973), at 406, lines 28–31.

58. "Aristotelis *Ethicorum* libros facere Latinos nuper institui, non quia prius traducti non essent, sed quia sic traducti erant, ut barbari magis quam Latini effecti viderentur" (Bruni, *Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften*, 76).

59. Bruni, *Humanistische-philosophische Schriften*, 78–79.

defended the worth of the older translations and even the practice of incorporating Greek words into the Latin language.⁶⁰ Later, Agnolo Manetti would report that his father, Giannozzo, had decided to retranslate the *Nicomachean Ethics* because he thought Bruni's version was too free.⁶¹ And at the end of the fifteenth century, Battista de' Giudici would question whether Bruni had had the philosophical erudition to have taken on such a job.⁶²

The debate shows that Bruni's translation, historical and philosophical discussion, and consequent popularization of various works of Aristotle all had a powerful effect on the moral philosophical discussions of the fifteenth century. More specifically, owing to Bruni's stimulus and the great respect in which he was held, discussion of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (as well as of individual issues contained in that work) was especially alive for many years after Bruni's translation.⁶³ If one were a humanist, then, one way to achieve a connection with one's audience would have been to use terminology from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which at that point would have been fashionably familiar to the reading public. Lapo certainly does this in the *De curiae commodis*; that he believed he could include a fairly detailed discussion of the virtues in a treatise ostensibly about the *curia Romana* is an index of just how familiar the *Ethics* had become.

Lapo's discussion of prudence and the virtues also reveals the close relation of the *De curiae commodis* to the philosophical works of Cicero.⁶⁴ Cicero permeates the dialogue, but his influence is more

60. See A. Birkenmajer, "Der Streit des Alonso von Cartagena mit Leonardo Bruni Aretino," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters* 20, no. 5 (1922): 129–210, cited in Garin, "Le traduzioni," 64 n. 1. See also Hankins's discussion of the ethics controversy, cited in n. 36 supra.

61. Agnolo's edition of his father's translations appears in MS Florence, BN Magl. VIII, 1439, f. 23, and MS Vatican City, Urb. Lat. 223, f. 1; both manuscripts are cited in Garin, "Le traduzioni," 72 n.1.

62. See M. Grabmann, "Eine ungedruckte Verteidigungsschrift von Wilhelms von Moerbekes Übersetzung der Nicomacheischen Ethik gegenüber dem Humanisten Leonardo Bruni," in *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben*, 1:440–48 (Munich, 1926), cited in Garin, "Le traduzioni," 64 n. 1.

63. See, e.g., Bruni's 1441 letter responding to Lauro Quirini in Luiso, *Studi*, letter IX:3. The letter is translated in Bruni, *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, 293–99 (see also the discussion of Hankins in *ibid.*, 264–67).

64. On Cicero's philosophical works, see A.E. Douglas, "Cicero the Philosopher," in *Cicero*, ed. T.A. Dorey (London, 1964), 135–70; P. Boyance, "Les méthodes de l'histoire littéraire: Cicéron et son oeuvre philosophique," *Revue des études latines* 14 (1936): 288–309; P. Poncelet, *Cicéron traducteur de Platon* (Paris, 1957); P.A. Sullivan, "The Plan of Cicero's Philosophical Corpus" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1951).

strongly felt in the discussion of prudence than anywhere else, both in terms of content and in terms of expository style. Perhaps the most salient stylistic characteristic of Cicero's philosophical works is that he consciously and intentionally avoided dogmatism—indeed, he despised it.⁶⁵ The works have therefore sometimes been blamed for vagueness or lack of purpose, other times praised for their open-mindedness.⁶⁶ Cicero was content to transmit opinions accurately to his contemporaries, and his approach to philosophy was conditioned by his rhetorical concerns.⁶⁷ His style of exposition in the philosophical works is thus sensitive to the demands of his audience, that is, to the demands of the elite readers and listeners of the second half of the first century B.C. The audience was adapted not to apodictic exposition but rather to *ornatus*, which was itself conditioned in Cicero's own (somewhat revolutionary) view by *probitas* and *prudencia*.⁶⁸

Florentine Renaissance thinkers followed this Ciceronian lead. Part of their self-imposed task was to express themselves as Cicero had himself and to express the moral philosophical ideas that they discussed as Cicero had (if not always with the exact same language).⁶⁹ As a whole—and there are exceptions—when the humanists approached any topic or area of study in which detailed, syllogistic, technical exposition had been the rule, they transformed the discourse, deeming it necessary that the ideas under discussion be transmitted in a manner that they considered eloquent. This was the case with theology, for example; one scholar has

65. See, e.g., the attack on the Pythagorean “ipse dixit” in *Nat. D.* I.10–11.

66. On Cicero's vagueness, cf. Michel de Montaigne: “I want arguments which drive home their first attack right into the strongest point of doubt: Cicero's hover about the pot and languish. They are all right for the classroom, the pulpit or the Bar where we are free to doze off and find ourselves a quarter of an hour later still with time to pick up the thread of the argument” (from “On Books,” in *The Complete Essays*, trans. M.A. Screech (New York, 1987), 464).

67. On the philosophical background to Cicero's rhetorical works, see A. Michel, *Rhétorique et philosophie chez Cicéron: Essai sur les fondements philosophique de l'art de persuader* (Paris, 1960), especially 112–37, 537–85, 642–45.

68. See Douglas, “Cicero the Philosopher,” 154.

69. The attempt to employ only language or expressions used by Cicero is known as Ciceronianism. On this interesting, multifaceted ideological movement, see R. Sabbadini, *Storia del ciceronianismo e di altre questioni letterarie nell'età della Rinascenza* (Turin, 1886). See also J. D' Amico, “Humanism in Rome,” in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacies*, ed. A. Rabil, Jr., 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), 1:264–95, at 280–83; and see the literature cited there. Cf. D'Amico's description on 280–81: “Ciceronianism was an attempt on several levels by many humanists to locate in time the perfect expression of the Latin language, and in so doing to recapture and recreate the cultural ideals that undergirded ancient civilization.”

characterized the humanist contribution to theology as a *theologia rhetorica*.⁷⁰

This meant that humanists usually did not approach areas of thought like metaphysics and logic, where detailed, technical, apodictic discussion was not only the norm but also necessary. This antiapodictic tendency in humanist method is articulated by Lapo himself, in the person of the interlocutor Angelo (III.15).

Now make all this clearer to me, but not like the mathematicians usually do, who argue from “what has been said above” and “conceded thus far” and then demonstrate what has been propounded. Instead do it in your customary manner, with many arguments and theories—so that necessity compels me to concede your arguments and I am persuaded both by the abundance of the oration as well as by its rhetorical sweetness.

As discussed earlier, Lapo’s treatise is clearly not a Ciceronian dialogue on the model of, say, the *Tusculans*. The *De curiae commodis* resembles much more closely the Socratic type of dialogue, identified by Marsh as one of the minor strands in the Quattrocento dialogue tradition. Yet this trend against *apodeixis*—against traditional philosophical demonstration—was the crux of the change that Renaissance humanism wrought in Western patterns of thought, if it wrought any at all. Their successful revival of ancient rhetoric was the humanists’ most original and lasting contribution not just to the history of rhetoric but to the history of Western thought taken as a whole.

Certainly, however, this was not without its consequences, and often-times, when humanists did approach philosophical problems of all different sorts, their style of communication failed them and left them unable to make philosophically satisfactory contributions to the problem under consideration.⁷¹ But this humanist method of thinking and expressing—this “rhetorical way of thought”—was suited to incorporat-

70. See Trinkaus, “*In Our Image and Likeness*.” See also J. D’Amico, “Humanism and Pre-Reformation Theology,” in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. A. Rabil, Jr., 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), 3:349–79.

71. Bruni’s translation of Aristotle’s *t’agathon* as *summum bonum* comes to mind. On this cf. Hankins in Bruni *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, 201–8 and the literature cited in the notes.

ing elements of moral philosophy. If this humanist way of thought considered very generally bears indubitable similarities to Cicero in a stylistic expository sense, the following analysis of the interlocutors' discussion of prudence in the *De curiae commodis* will make Lapo's debt to Cicero explicit.

The discussion begins, typically enough, with a backhanded presentation of the topic. Having just mentioned Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.8, on the importance of *empeiria*, Lapo (IV.8–9) introduces Homer's *Odyssey* into the discussion and, in typical humanist fashion, uses literature to read philosophy, Homer to read Aristotle.

L: Well then, I think that Aristotle read the poem of Homer and that he imitated him. When Homer wanted to portray the prudent man in the person of Ulysses, he wrote as follows: "Having been cast onto various shores, he came to know the cities and customs of many peoples";⁷² that is, Homer denoted the same things [mentioned earlier] by the length of wandering and variety of places and men.

Then comes the important point.

I never thought that for the sake of pursuing this most precious thing [i.e., this virtue], anyone—like Ulysses—had to seek out Calyps, Circes, the Phaeacians, the Laestrygones, the Sirens, the Cyclops, and Hades. After all, what he gained by long wandering and with extreme danger to his life—well, the Roman curia will offer you all of it in abundance.

The curia helps one acquire prudence because of the variety of experience one can gain there.

Implicitly, however, Lapo is suggesting that not all of those experiences are of the most savory sort. Ulysses' experience with the Cyclops might have provided him with some useful *empeiria*, but it certainly was not enjoyable or even salutary to do it. Indeed, a number of his comrades died during that episode. Virtue is used as a *prima facie* persuasive tool in the *De curiae commodis*, but it is no accident that the virtue Lapo chose as his focus was prudence, whose basis was experience that could often

72. See Hom. *Od.* I.3–4.

be harsh. Given the Ciceronian coloration of the work, the presence of Ulysses is also no accident. In Cicero's works Ulysses is often mentioned in connection with wisdom and prudence.⁷³

The interlocutor Lapo points out (IV.9–10) that, because so many important matters pass before the eyes of the pope, the resident of the curia must inevitably see, hear, learn, and do many things. Eventually, as long as one is not completely dim-witted and negligent, one emerges with much valuable experience of life. Angelo agrees (IV.11–12), commenting that there are indeed some amazing teachers at the curia.

Then he asks (IV.12): “But what about the rest of the virtues? In the curia isn't there any practice of them, any training in them, any function for them?” This initiates the only properly philosophical discussion in the dialogue. Lapo begins his answer to Angelo's query by suggesting that the virtues are all inextricably bound to one another (IV.13–14).

L: Of course. After all, it is difficult for someone to be prudent without at the same time being just, brave, and temperate. Really, who would dare to call the prudent man unjust, or ignorant and cowardly,

73. Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* I.98, where Ulysses is used as an example of one who possesses prudence (“temptarem etiam summi regis, qui maximas copias duxit ad Troiam, et Ulixi Sisyphique prudentiam”), and V.7, where Ulysses is designated as wise (“[sapientia] quae divinarum humanarumque rerum, tum initiorum causarumque cuiusque rei cognitione hoc pulcherrimum nomen apud antiquos adsequebatur. Itaque et illos septem, qui a Graecis σοφοί, sapientes a nostris et habebantur et nominabantur, et multis ante saeculis Lycurgum, cuius temporibus Homerus etiam fuisse ante hanc urbem conditam traditur, et iam heroicis aetatibus Ulixem et Nestorem accepimus et fuisse et habitos esse sapientes”). Cf. II.49, where Cicero cites an instance of Ulysses having the ability to withstand great pain, owing to his great experience; then Cicero says: “the prudent poet knew that the habit of withstanding pain was a teacher that was not to be criticized” [intelligit poeta prudens ferendi doloris consuetudinem esse non contemnendam magistram]. At *Fin.* V.49, Cicero argues that Homer's meaning was that the Siren's songs were so appealing because they promised knowledge; Ulysses went to them because he was desirous of knowledge: “<ut> mihi quidem Homerus huius modi quiddam vidisse videatur in iis, quae de Sirenum cantibus finxerit. Neque enim vocum suavitate videntur aut novitate quadam et varietate cantandi revocare eos solitae, qui praetervehebantur, sed quia multa se scire profitebantur, ut homines ad earum saxa discendi cupiditate adhaerescerent. Ita enim invitant Ulixem . . . [Cicero quotes Homer]. Vidit Homerus probari fabulam non posse, si cantunculis tantus irretitus vir teneretur; scientiam pollicentur, quam non erat mirum sapientiae cupido patria esse cariorem”—the last thought translates, “it was no wonder that knowledge was more dear than one's homeland, to the man who was desirous of wisdom.” This context must have been in the front of Lapo's mind—directly hereafter (*Fin.* V.50) Cicero goes on to name famous thinkers who have traveled much to gain wisdom; Lapo will do the same a bit later in the *De curiae commodis*.

or intemperate? All of these vices seem to be characteristic of the highest folly and insanity.

Besides, all of the virtues, even though they flow from one source and one point of origin and are contained among themselves, singularly bonded in relationship, nonetheless are distinguished one from another in their duties. Thus whoever does those things that are characteristic of prudence is said to be prudent; whoever does those things that are characteristic of bravery is said to be brave; whoever does those things that are characteristic of temperance is said to be temperate. If all of these things are gathered together in one man, then we call that man good. And so it is necessary that someone who possesses prudence or any other virtue possess all the virtues. Whoever is lacking one lacks them all.

Lapo points out that virtue is something that is actualized by repeated praxis (terminology that would have been fashionably familiar to his audience, given the prominence in the humanist community of Bruni's comparatively recent translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*). He further argues that the virtues are connected with one another, and he adopts an extreme position, the Stoic *locus communis*: "whoever is lacking one lacks them all."⁷⁴

Next Lapo reveals the orientation of this opinion (IV.15).

Because of this it seems that the Stoics were not being rash to have thought that the man who is lacking anything toward the attainment of the highest virtue is polluted by all vices.

Lapo's orientation here regarding the virtues is Stoic, of the kind that Cicero had his interlocutors discuss in the *De finibus*. Although Cicero himself occasionally leaned toward this virtue-venerating position, in the final analysis Cicero remained undecided, owing to the seeming impracticality of the life of the Stoic sage, with its *apatia* and its extreme moral

74. Perhaps from Peter Lombard, perhaps from Jerome? Cf. Lapo with Peter Lombard, who himself quotes Jerome. Lapo: "Itaque necesse est qui prudentiam sive quamvis aliam virtutem habeat, eum virtutes omnes habere; cui una desit, deesse omnes." Peter Lombard *Sententiae* III.36: "Solet etiam quaeri utrum virtutes ita sint sibi conjunctae ut separatim non possint possideri ab aliquo, sed qui unam habet, omnes habeat. De hoc etiam Hieronymus ait: 'Omnes virtutes sibi haerent, ut qui una caruerit, omnibus careat. Qui ergo unam habet, omnes habet.'"

philosophical positions.⁷⁵ Although Lapo goes on to examine other aspects of the question of virtue, this position is key and is the only major position in the entire dialogue that remains unassaulted by counterargument. It is especially important if one wishes to arrive at a consistent interpretation for a dialogue that seems inevitably to prevaricate. Why is this so?

Lapo's position on the virtues can be extrapolated: for a good person, there are no excuses and no ways out; to be a good person, one must possess all the virtues. The very next sentence (IV.16) is extremely important: "But Aristotle and others argue more precisely about virtue." In the Latin, the sentence reads, "Sed Aristoteles et alii de virtute accuratius disputant." On first sight, one might be tempted to translate this as "But Aristotle and others argue more accurately about virtue." One would then construe Lapo to be dismissing the extreme Stoic view and moving on to a preferable point of view, in the same way that Cicero seemed to reject the extreme Stoic view as unreasonable. But a further look at the passage shows that this is not the case.

But Aristotle and others argue more precisely about virtue. They set forth that there are two genera of virtue. One of these turns on the investigation and cognition of truth, the other on action. They call the first genus "intellectual virtues" and the second "moral virtues." Cicero followed them in the first book of the *De officiis*. He says that there are two genera of duties. One of these pertains to the end of goods, and the Greeks called it *κατόρθωμα* [katorthōma]; we can call it "complete duty." The other comprises the principles of common life, and they called it "middle duty."

75. Cf. Cic. *Fin.* V.77–78 (77: "nam illud vehementer repugnat, eundem beatum esse et multis malis oppressum") and especially 95: "Haec igitur est nostra ratio, quae tibi videtur inconstans, cum propter virtutis caelestem quandam et divinam tantamque praestantiam, ut, ubi virtus sit resque magnae <et> summe laudabiles virtute gestae, ibi esse miseria et aerumna non possit, tamen labor possit, possit molestia, non dubitem dicere omnes sapientes esse semper beatos, sed tamen fieri posse, ut sut alius alio beatior." Cf. Cic. *Off.* III.11: "nam, sive honestum solum bonum est, ut Stoicis placet, sive, quod honestum est, id ita summum bonum est, quemadmodum Peripateticis vestris videtur, ut omnia ex altera parte collocata vix minimi momenti instar habeant, dubitandum non est, quin numquam possit utilitas cum honestate contendere. Itaque accepimus Socratem execrari solitum eos, qui primum haec natura cohaerentia opinione distraxissent. Cui quidem ita sunt Stoici assensi, ut et, quicquid honestum esset, id utile esse censerent, nec utile quicquam, quod non honestum." Also see Cic. *Tusc.* V.39 et seq., especially 47–48.

Instead of presenting a less extreme point of view about the virtues, Lapo simply addresses a different aspect of the question and sets forth a discussion of the types of virtue. The distinction of the different types of virtue that Cicero mentioned in the *De officiis* and to which Lapo alludes here was rooted in the traditional Pythagorean-Platonic division of the soul into a rational and nonrational part, of which Cicero was well aware.⁷⁶ Aristotle had followed this division in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, dividing the virtues into intellectual and moral virtues on precisely that basis (even if in *De anima* he did present a different psychological scheme, dividing the soul into five faculties).⁷⁷ But Lapo adopts the Stoic position regarding the connection of the virtues. This is revealed by what is next articulated (IV.17).

[17] Certain ancient philosophers judge that these two genera are contained under the single name of wisdom, and they say that all these virtues are collected together and, hanging together among themselves, constitute wisdom. They mean that whoever is completely composed of these virtues is wise and is called wise. Indeed, they define wisdom as the very knowledge of divine and human things, from which we can gather that they thought that virtue was very much one thing and that whoever has obtained it is wise and good, whereas whoever is lacking even a part of virtue is neither wise nor good.

If it is true that “whoever is lacking even a part of virtue is neither wise nor good,” then Lapo’s criticisms of the curia in the rest of the dialogue must be taken somewhat more seriously than they have been hitherto. As

76. Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* IV.10: “Because we like to call the things that the Greeks call *pathe* ‘disturbances’ rather than ‘sicknesses,’ in explaining them [the *pathe*], for my part, I follow that old distribution first of all of Pythagoras but then of Plato. They divide the soul into two parts: they say that the one part partakes of reason and that the other is unknowing of reason. In the part that partakes of reason they place tranquillity, that is, a placid and peaceful constancy; in the other part they place the turbulent movements of both anger and desire, which are contrary and inimical to reason” [Quoniam, quae Graeci πάθη vocant, nobis perturbationes appellari magis placet quam morbos, in his explicandis veterem illam equidem Pythagorae primum, dein Platonis descriptionem sequar, qui animum in duas partes dividunt: alteram rationis participem faciunt, alteram expertem; in particeps rationis ponunt tranquillitatem, id est placidam quietamque constantiam, in illa altera motus turbidos cum irae tum cupiditatis, contrarios inimicosque rationi].

77. This discrepancy on Aristotle’s part was cause for reflection on the part of certain later Renaissance philosophers, such as Crisostomo Javelli and Pier Vettori. See J. Kraye, “Moral Philosophy,” in *CHRP*, 303–86, at 333–34.

we have seen, the attempted refutations of the criticisms are always made in such a way that the original opinion retains a certain resonance. Even after the defense of wealth much later in the dialogue, Lapo will be unable to resist concluding the discussion without having an interlocutor point out the vice present in the curia. But the Stoic position he here articulates regarding the virtues—whoever has one has them all—is an all-or-nothing affair. If one extends the notion from the personal, which is its focus in Stoic moral philosophy, to the corporate—that is, in this case, the curia—one could draw some interesting conclusions about the curia as a whole. To use more modern language and to mix metaphors, if even a shadow of doubt remains, all bets are off. And much more than a shadow of doubt remains in the rest of the dialogue about the vice present in the curia.

Throughout the treatise, Lapo's expository method reveals the following, fairly consistent message. On the one hand, given the particular historical circumstances in which it finds itself situated, the curia is a place of almost unbounded positive potential on many different fronts. On the other hand, if the greater part of the curialists who dwell there do not engage in some serious soul-searching, the curia is doomed to remain in its largely corrupt state and has no hope of traveling the difficult, straight road that will lead it from potentiality to actuality.⁷⁸ To put it simply, the curia is in essence a good thing, but the practice of corrupt individuals there has led it to fall far short of the desirable ideal.

78. David Quint's work on Bruni's *Dialogi* shows the manner in which a literary work can develop internally consistent tendencies even in the context of the often seemingly contradictory *modus loquendi* that arguing *in utramque partem* represents. See Quint's "Humanism and Modernity: A Reconsideration of Bruni's *Dialogues*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985): 423–45.