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Daily Beauty: A Reading of Bruni's Laudatio Florentinae Urbis

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See table of contents

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Article abstract

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Daily Beauty: A Reading of Bruni's *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis**

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This article is a close reading of Leonardo Bruni's panegyric for the city of Florence (1404). It expands the discussion of the Laudatio Florentinae Urbis *beyond the political context in which it has mostly, through the influence of Hans Baron's pioneering work, been considered. It reads the text as a powerful assertion of Renaissance Humanism in its most secular, world-affirming mode. In exploring the value structure of the text, it finds the distinctly Aristotelian virtues of* megaloprépeia *(magnificence) and* megalopsychia *(great-souledness) structuring the text along with the Ciceronian and Aristidean virtue of* humanitas. *The article sees the appreciation of beauty as permeating the text, from its treatment of architecture, landscape, and city life to its treatment of the Florentine political institutions.*

Cet article propose une lecture attentive du panégyrique de Leonardo Bruni pour la ville de Florence (1404). Il élargit la discussion sur la Laudatio Florentinæ Urbis *au-delà du contexte politique dans lequel elle a été principalement examinée, sous l'influence des travaux pionniers de Hans Baron. Nous voyons dans ce texte une formidable affirmation de l'humanisme de la Renaissance dans sa forme la plus laïque et la plus ouverte au monde. Explorant les valeurs structurant le texte, cet article montre que les vertus aristotéliciennes de* megaloprepeia *(magnificence) et de* megalopsychia *(grandeur d'âme), ainsi que la vertu cicéronienne et aristidienne d'*humanitas*, charpentent le texte. L'article constate en outre que l'appréciation de la beauté imprègne le texte, depuis son traitement de l'architecture, du paysage et de la vie urbaine jusqu'à son traitement des institutions politiques florentines.*

A single scholar, Hans Baron (1900–88), brought Leonardo Bruni's *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis* (1404) into high visibility in the field of Renaissance studies.[1] The text was an example or expression of "civic humanism," which, for Baron, had a very specific meaning: it was a humanism that not only wished to revive classical eloquence (meaning, basically, Ciceronian Latin) but also to be politically *engagé*, and to be so in the cause of republicanism and liberty, taking the latter in the "negative" sense.[2] Baron saw the text within a political and mili-

* For helpful comments on various drafts of this article, I am indebted to a number of scholars, including James Hankins, Edward Muir, Laurence Bernard-Pradelle, Rosalie Stoner, and the extremely helpful and generous "Reader A" for this journal.

1. See Baron, *Crisis*.

2. For "negative" liberty (freedom from) *versus* "positive" liberty (freedom to), see Berlin, "Two Concepts."

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tary context in which the battle for liberty (against tyranny and one-man rule) was real.[3] In more recent scholarship, civic humanism has been disentangled from republicanism and shown to be a view of politics available in all sorts of regimes.[4] But the *Laudatio* has remained of interest to scholars primarily as a political document (though Baron did see it as a pioneering humanist imitation of a Greek original, Aristides's *Panathenaic Oration* of 155 CE).[5] This article does not mean to minimize the political content of the *Laudatio* but rather to move the text into the general world of Renaissance values. It could be seen as adding Burckhardt to Baron.[6] I see Bruni's text as a utopian one, committed to elaborating ideals, though since it is purportedly a description of an actual city (as opposed to "no place"), it has to have some plausibility in relation to the actual place.[7] The focus will be on the ideals themselves, not on their relation or lack of relation to the reality, though I will signal those when appropriate.[8] I see the *Laudatio* as truly a repository of Renaissance values, as expressing civic humanism in a very broad sense—that is, as seeing life in a properly organized city as the highest human good. The terms of praise in the text, and the significance of these terms, will be my focus. I will treat the text as rhetoric, but not as "mere rhetoric," since the articulation of an ideal is a serious endeavour,

3. Baron saw the *Laudatio* as celebrating Florence's survival of the military threat of Giangaleazzo Visconti to Florence and the whole of Italy. Baron used the analogy of the Second World War, in the aftermath of which *Crisis* was written (see Baron, *Crisis*, 40). This made the dating of the text a crucial matter since, for Baron, the text had to have been composed after the death of Giangaleazzo in 1402. Baron addressed the dating issue in chapter 10 of *Crisis* and again in "Chronology and Historical Certainty." This dating was disputed by Jerrold Seigel, who followed pre-Baron scholars in placing the composition of the *Laudatio* (and the second of Bruni's *Dialogues*, in which it is mentioned) in 1400–1401 (Seigel, "'Civic Humanism'"). Recent scholarship has borne out Baron's view. James Hankins dates the *Laudatio* to late summer 1404 (Hankins, *Plato*, 367–78).

4. On civic humanism not being necessarily (or even primarily) republican, see Hankins, *Virtue Politics.*

5. For Baron's treatment of the *Laudatio* and its Greek model, see Baron, "Imitation."

6. What I mean by a Burckhardtian perspective has little to do with what Oren Margolis means by it in "After Baron, Back to Burckhardt?" Margolis is calling for a sociological perspective, which is one way of seeing Burckhardt's approach. My use of Burckhardt has to do with the aesthetic orientation and positive worldliness of Bruni's text.

7. Eugenio Garin distinguishes between texts that provide idealized versions of actual cities and utopias (Garin, "Ideal City"). There is a distinction here, but I do not think that it is a deep one.

8. Elizabeth Frood, reviewing a book treating highly ideological (ancient) texts, suggests that in relation to such texts, historical truth "may not be what we should be seeking in the first place." Frood, "Kings."

however much hyperbolization it involves.[9] I will not, as Baron urges, look "beneath" the eulogistic rhetoric, but at it.[10] My aim is to provide a "reading" of the text in something like a "literary" way, noting its local movements as well as its themes and overall progression.[11]

Bruni refers to Plato in the *Laudatio* as "without question the greatest of all philosophers" (*omnium philosophorum longissime princeps*).[12] Yet despite this, and despite Bruni's more or less contemporary translation of Plato's *Phaedo* (1404), the value structure of the *Laudatio* is strongly Aristotelian. Further emphases are drawn from Cicero and Aristides, but long before Bruni's important translations of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1417) and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Economics* (1422), Bruni was an Aristotelian.[13] Much of the *Laudatio* relies on the two virtues that are most distinctively Aristotelian, and most difficult to accommodate to a Christian context; namely, the two *megalo-* virtues: *megalopré-peia* and *megalopsychia*.[14] "Magnificence" has become the standard translation

9. In a late letter, Bruni defends the *Laudatio* against the charge of untruthfulness by citing its genre and explaining that the job of a panegyric—as opposed to a history—is to extol many things "above the truth" (*supra veritatem*). Bruni, *Lettres familières*, trans. Bernard-Pradelle, 2:322. Gary Ianziti suggests that in Bruni's actual practice, the distinction of genres might not be as sharp as this formulation suggests (Ianziti, *Writing History*, 9). Katrin Ettenhuber gives a useful overview of the ambiguous status of hyperbole in the rhetorical tradition: sometimes negative, breaching decorum; and sometimes positive, leading the mind to appreciate grand things (Ettenhuber, "Hyperbole"). Hankins warns that if we dismiss the *Laudatio* as "mere rhetoric," we miss "the real idealism that lies behind Bruni's claims." Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, 230.

10. Baron, *Crisis*, 199. Political and descriptive content aside, Baron finds much of the *Laudatio* "wearisome" in its eulogistic mode (Baron, "Imitation," 155).

11. By a "reading," I mean a treatment of a piece of writing that, following the order of the piece, tries to show how it proceeds and, in doing so, takes account of stylistic and rhetorical features as well as themes. For the usefulness and productivity of such readings for all types of written material, including "documents," see Strier, "Afterword." For readings of two "documents" of the English revolution, see Strier "From Diagnosis." For the distinction between "monuments" (literary) and "documents" (historical), see Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, 15. This distinction is one that I take to be of only very limited use.

12. Bruni, *Panegyric*, trans. Kohl, 145; *Laudatio*, ed. Baron, 240. I will often modify Kohl's translation and have also made use of Bruni, *Éloge de Florence*, trans. Bernard-Pradelle. For the Latin text of the *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis*, I have used the edition in Baron's *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*. Hereafter I will give the page number of the Kohl translation in text followed by the page number for the Latin text from the Baron edition.

13. Cf. Hankins, *Plato*, 63.

14. For Aquinas's struggle with *megalopsychia*, see Strier, *Unrepentant Renaissance*, 252–54.

of the first, whereas the second, "great-souledness," does not have a standard translation ("magnanimity" derives from a literal translation into Latin but has, for us, a specialized meaning). Bruni does not worry about the relation of these terms to distinctively Christian virtues like humility and renunciation. As Christopher S. Celenza says, Bruni found the *Nicomachean Ethics* "useful precisely because it was so human."[15] There are, as we shall see, moments in the text that could be described as religious, but they are not Christian. They exalt the secular virtues and treat them as sacred. For Savonarola at the end of the Quattrocento, Florence was a sacred city because it was going to bring on the millennium.[16] For Bruni, it was sacred in and of itself.

In Aristotle, *megaloprépeia* (literally "grand appropriateness") is a virtue that pertains to individuals and consists of spending large sums of money in an appropriate way. This means primarily spending on public enterprises such as equipping a warship (a trireme), funding a sacred embassy, or sponsoring a dramatic chorus.[17] A person is magnificent "not when he spends [large sums] on himself but when he spends [large sums] for the common good," though Aristotle does add that "it is typical of a magnificent man to furnish his house commensurate with his wealth," since this is an appropriate adornment, and such a person prefers to spend money "on things that endure."[18] He is like an artist or a scientist in the precision with which he matches grand expenditures to grand objects.[19] The Romans, through Vitruvius and others, associated magnificence more strongly with built structures, but the stress remained on public works. The Renaissance revived the concept and the term in relation to built structures in and around cities. Richard A. Goldthwaite has argued that in Quattrocento Italy, among the dominant groups within society, "the city itself came into clearer ideological focus" (compared to the preceding period); that magnificence is "the key term in the discussion by the humanists of the positive uses of wealth"; and that architecture in this period became "the principal means

15. Celenza, *Intellectual World*, 82.

16. See Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence*.

17. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* [hereafter *NE*], trans. Ostwald, 1122b23. References to Aristotle's *NE* here and throughout refer to Bekker numbers.

18. Aristotle, *NE* 1123a3–7.

19. At *NE* 1122a25, Martin Ostwald has the magnificent man as "like a skilled artist"; in Terence Irwin's translation, the magnificent man is "like a scientific expert."

by which Italians staked out their claim to splendor and magnificence."[20] In his survey of the reception of Aristotle's *Ethics* in the Renaissance, David A. Lines styles magnificence as "perhaps the Renaissance virtue *par excellence*."[21] Peter Howard has argued that the term came into its own in Renaissance Florence in the third decade of the Quattrocento in the sermons of some Dominican priests.[22] But the term is fully alive, in its distinctively Renaissance sense, in Bruni's 1404 panegyric.

Magnificentia and *voluptas*

The *Laudatio* opens with a brief and somewhat disingenuous plea for appropriate eloquence. This is needed in order to demonstrate the city of Florence's "magnificence and brilliance" (*magnificentiam nitoremque ostendendum*; 135; 232).[23] The virtue now applies to the city as well as to individuals within it. Bruni wishes to describe with suitable elegance and dignity the outstanding and most beautiful (*formosissima*) city.[24] It is no accident that the first of the text's many adjectival superlatives is a word for beauty. Georgia Clark notes that Renaissance theorists of architecture gave beauty more weight than their ancient source (Vitruvius) did.[25] Several sixteenth-century texts in praise of cities have the word "beauties" in their titles, including Francesco Bocchi's *Bellezze della città di Fiorenza* (1591), but it has been claimed that Bocchi does not "use the term for the city in its entirety."[26] Here, too, Bruni is in the humanist avant-garde. The beauty of the city is part of its magnificence for Bruni. He reverts to the problem of his task, somewhat wickedly but with a light touch, comparing the problem of praising Florence with the problem of praising God. But, as he

20. Goldthwaite, *Wealth*, 177, 207, 222. On the changing attitudes towards wealth, see also Baron, "Franciscan Poverty"; and "Civic Wealth." In Poggio Bracciolini's "On Avarice," one of the speakers (Antonio Loscho) is a thorough-going Aristotelian and defends wealth.

21. Lines, "Aristotle's *Ethics*," 192.

22. Howard, *Creating Magnificence*.

23. In the translation of the passage quoted, I have used "brilliance" rather than Kohl's "splendor," because the word *splendidius* only occurs for the first time in the next sentence.

24. Laurence Bernard-Pradelle observes that in the exordium, "l'auteur s'en tient à un registre purement esthétique pour qualifier la ville." Bernard-Pradelle, "L'Influence," 365.

25. G. Clarke, "'La più bella,'" 107–8.

26. Frangenberg, "Notion of Beauty," 195–96.

says, many good and important men have done the latter. And, besides, he does have the benefit of all the competence, expertise, and skill with words that he has garnered through long nights of effort (*quantum studio, disciplina, exercitatione dicendi, multis denique vigiliis assecutus sum*; 136; 233).[27] He claims not to know where to begin and lists the properties of the city that demand to be properly eulogized. The order of these is significant and is basically the order that he follows: first the beauty (again, but now *pulcritudinem*) and brilliance (*nitorem* again) of the city; and then its power and wealth (entirely positive qualities); and then its history, either modern or ancient; and then its customs and institutions (*mores institutaque*).

For Bruni, the physical city seems to pre-exist its inhabitants. He knows that it has been skillfully constructed (*summa ratione factum*; 136; 233) but sees its inhabitants in harmony with it rather than the other way around. The physical city is his focus. It surpasses all other cities not only in its splendour but also—and these are new entrants into the eulogistic field—in its most prudent (*prudentissima*, an odd word to hyperbolize) site and, somewhat surprisingly, its cleanliness (*munditia*). The city's geographical prudence becomes the topic. Florence is neither on a mountain (where one experiences "intemperate" climate and nasty winds) nor in a plain (where one experiences "impurity of the air" and nasty vapours). The site of Florence is a kind of Aristotelian mean ("a proven principle in all things"). One experiences this as a bodily pleasure, enjoying a sweet climate (*celi suavitate fruatur*; 137; 234). Bruni wants to continue to celebrate the beauty of the city, but he now adds the idea of its completeness. Comparison will bring this out. There is no other city in the world that does not lack something that keeps it from being perfectly beautiful.[28] One lacks population, one beautiful buildings, one a salubrious site. But what really strikes Bruni is that the defect that all other cities share is that (compared to Florence) they are filthy. This is where Bruni's stress falls, and it is one of the most striking passages in the *Laudatio*. He evokes the experience of living in and moving about in a filthy city. It becomes clear that sewage is the issue: "The filth created during the night is seen in the morning by the eyes of the people and trampled

27. As Ronald Witt remarks, "the elegant introduction left no doubt that the author, despite his customary bow to modesty, was equal to the task that he had set for himself." Witt, *In the Footsteps*, 405. Witt's analysis of the new (Ciceronian) classicism of Bruni's Latin style is invaluable (Witt, *In the Footsteps*, 404–7).

28. Bernard-Pradelle has "manque l'une des conditions essentielles à la beauté." Bruni, *Éloge*, 211.

underfoot in the streets" (*quicquid sordis noctu factum est, id mane ponat ante oculus hominum et pedibus per vias calcandum subiciat*; 138; 234). The experience of disgust, of physically encountering sewage, is evoked. He says one could think of nothing more foul (*nichil fedius*) than this. He could not be more emphatic. Nothing else matters as much. No positive feature of a city can outweigh it. If a stinking city were to have a thousand palaces, inexhaustible wealth, and an infinite multitude of people, Bruni says that he would nonetheless condemn such a city as most fetid (*fetidissimam*) and not think well of it.

As Bruni's evocation of the sweetness of the Florentine climate suggests, he sees Florence's unique cleanliness (*in toto orbe terrarum sola*) in relation to the senses, to specifically bodily experience. In Florence, he claims, one is confronted by nothing disgusting to the eye, offensive to the nose, or filthy to the foot. The diligence of the inhabitants is such that everything offensive is removed from the city so that whatever one physically encounters brings pleasure and happiness to the senses (*letitiam ac iocunditatem sensibus*; 138; 235). Bruni presents this (supposed) phenomenon as a secular miracle. The idea of such unique cleanliness is inconceivable (*incredibilis*) to those who have never actually seen Florence. One might think that the Florentines take it for granted, but Bruni insists that those who live in the city are constantly struck with admiration for its cleanliness, and the regular experience of this produces no satiety (*nec consuetudine satiari possumus*). Custom cannot stale it. Bruni concludes the discussion of sewage by asking, "What is more marvelous in a populous city" (*quid enim mirabilius quam in populosissima urbe*) than that there is nothing offensive lying in its streets? He then praises the drainage of these streets, such that a rainstorm has almost no effect on them, and that the streets and public squares of Florence have the cleanliness and dryness that is found only in the bedrooms of private homes in other cities.

The extent of Bruni's emphasis on this topic is unique to him. Laurence Bernard-Pradelle notes that it is not based on any classical model and that it "fait partie des préoccupations des urbanistes" of the Renaissance.[29] There is a hint of the topic in a text by Bruni's mentor, Coluccio Salutati, but nothing like this extended treatment.[30] Petrarch, in 1373, had strongly advised Francesco

29. Bruni, *Éloge*, 211n1.

30. A passage in Salutati's *Invectiva ad Antonium Loschum* (1403) claims that among Florence's other outstanding features, there is no city "more clean." Quoted in Santosuosso, "Leonardo Bruni Revisited," 46.

Carrara of Padua to get the herds of stinking pigs out of the streets of the city, but there is no particular mention of sewage.[31] No historian, to my knowledge, has confirmed in reality the strong contrast with other cities that Bruni asserts (though Florence does seem to have paved many of its streets—something else Petrarch strongly recommended to Francesco Carrara).[32] Douglas Biow in his study of cleanliness in Renaissance Italy cannot find a precedent for the prominence that Bruni gives this theme. Biow makes the (to me) unconvincing argument that Bruni's insistence on the cleanness of the city is related to his obsession with "pure and clean" Latin.[33] I would suggest, rather, that the passage is an indication that we should place Bruni's *Laudatio* among the Renaissance utopias. Gilles Lapouge notes that "la passion d'hygiène" pervades the utopian genre.[34] In the cities of More's *Utopia*, animals are butchered outside the gates, and nothing *immundum* (unclean) is allowed into the cities.[35] But, interestingly, there is no mention of human waste. Bruni's strategy is to present his ideal city as a present, historical reality. He insists that what he describes can actually be experienced, actually *is* experienced, by the city's inhabitants. Perhaps the most important conclusion that we can draw from Bruni's extraordinary emphasis on *munditia* is the extent of his commitment to sensory pleasure as a component of the ideal human life, which for him means life within a magnificent but very concretely imagined (and experienced) city. The nose and the feet must be happy as well as the eye and (ultimately, though not pre-eminently) the mind. Bruni insists on everyday, bodily pleasure—an aesthetics of the total being.

He continues with another short passage on architecture but then turns to praising one of Florence's geographical features: that the city is bisected by a river. In a passage that reveals his evaluative perspective, Bruni finds himself unable to decide whether the river that flows through the city brings more utility or pleasure. Large numbers of people go to the riverbanks either to do business or to have pleasure (*vel negotii obeundi vel voluptatis gratia*; 139; 235).

31. See Petrarch, "How a Ruler," trans. Kohl, 52.

32. Goldthwaite does note that "from the end of the thirteenth century through the first third of the fifteenth century, [Florence] engaged in the most ambitious building program undertaken by any city since ancient times." Goldthwaite, *Wealth*, 181.

33. Biow, *Culture of Cleanliness*, 87–94.

34. Lapouge, "Utopie et hygiène."

35. More, *Utopia*, 138 (Latin), 139 (English).

He has no problem with *voluptas*.[36] He says that nothing is more pleasurable than to walk by the river, either at midday in the winter or in the evening in the summer. But he then rebukes himself for singling out this one area. He insists that Florence is everywhere splendid and beautiful. This too, he asserts, makes it unique. In other cities there may be one or two streets with fine buildings on them, but the rest of the town is completely and embarrassingly lacking in such. Whereas "in our city there is really no quarter that does not possess very spacious and very elegant buildings" (*in hac vero nostra nulla est via, nulla urbis regio,que non amplissimis atque ornatissimis edificiis sit referta*; 139; 236).[37] The *magnus animus* of the builders is reflected in the structures, but in this opening section, the structures themselves remain the focus. The most impressive of these buildings are the sacred churches and shrines (also distributed throughout the city). Nothing could be richer, more elaborate, or more magnificent than these. In a revealing sentence (accurately translated by Kohl), Bruni claims that "as much attention has been given to sacred buildings as to secular ones" (*non enim profana tantum loca cure fuit ornare, verum etiam sacra*; 140; 236). This rightly reflects Bruni's priorities. After that brief excursus on churches, his next and much longer section begins, "But I return to the houses of private citizens" (*Sed redeo ad privatorum domos*; 140; 236).[38]

Bruni's focus in discussing the magnificence of these is not their impressive façades but their interior spaces (*penetralia*) and accoutrements. Following Jacob Burckhardt, who states that in Quattrocento Italy, we hear of "soft, elastic beds, of costly carpets and bedroom furniture, of which we hear nothing in other countries" in the period,[39] Goldthwaite sees the emphasis on private magnificence and on the aesthetic enjoyment of private spaces and household possessions as a distinctly Renaissance phenomenon developed in fourteenth- and

36. Much later, in the *Isagogue to Moral Philosophy* (1525), Bruni asserted that "happiness is impossible without pleasure," and he argued that even the Stoics believe a version of this. See Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 273.

37. There seems to be some truth in this. Gene Brucker notes that "a remarkable feature of Renaissance Florence was the social and economic heterogeneity of each district and neighborhood. No sections of the city were reserved exclusively for the rich, no ghettoes inhabited solely by the poor." Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 23.

38. When Stefano Ugo Baldassarri states that Bruni's *Laudatio* "devotes no less attention to lay as religious buildings" (Baldassarri, "City Views," 432), he gets the proportions reversed.

39. Burckhardt, *Civilization*, 2:370.

fifteenth-century Italy.[40] Goldthwaite speaks of "an attachment to [household] possessions of a kind that can hardly be documented for an earlier period."[41] Bruni exclaims over how delightful (*amenius*) it is to view the curtains, the arches, the panelled ceilings, and "the beautiful chambers decorated with fine furniture, gold, silver, and brocaded hangings and precious carpets" (*preclara cubicula, ditissimam supellectilem, aurum, argentum, stragulam vestem pretiosaque peristromata*; 140; 236). Bruni knows that he is getting carried away with this. He exclaims, "Am I not a fool to go about to enumerate all this?" (*Sedne ego stultus sum qui hec enumerare aggrediar?*), and he invokes another impossibility trope. He says that even if he had a hundred tongues (*oraque centum*), he could not possibly describe "all the magnificence, wealth, decoration, delights and elegance of these homes" (*omnem magnificentiam, ornatum, gazam, delitias, nitorem possum ostendere*). But he insists that visitors to Florence should make an effort to appreciate these things, and he sees the equal attention to *penetralia* as to façades as another special characteristic of Florence. If he knew Thucydides at the time of composing the *Laudatio*, Bruni might have taken note of the claim in Pericles's Funeral Oration that one of the things that makes the Athenians special is that "in our own homes we find a beauty and good taste that delight us every day."[42] But Burckhardt and Goldthwaite are surely right that here Bruni is observing an actual phenomenon. There seems to be no worry about *luxuria* here. Bruni does avoid the term, but Kohl may well be right in translating *ad delitias* in the initial paean to the private homes as "for luxury" (140; 236).

Bruni stresses the uniformity throughout the city of homes with wonderful interior spaces and objects, and this might account for his relative lack of interest in the grand structure that he sees as the centre of the city, the Signoria (not, one might note, the cathedral or baptistry). He gives this *arx arcis* a short paragraph of high praise, but he is much more interested in and enthusiastic

40. Goldthwaite, *Wealth*, 208–9ff.

41. Goldthwaite, *Wealth*, 227.

42. Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, trans. Warner, 146. Bruni certainly came to know Thucydides (see Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 107, 180), but what acquaintance he would have had with the Greek historian in 1404 is unclear. In a fairly early letter, he thanks Pietro Emiliani for giving him a copy of Thucydides, which he had been desiring to read (Bruni, *Lettres familières*, 1:236). In a late letter to Francesco Barbaro, he speaks of the "majesty" and eloquence of Thucydides, to which Procopius compares badly (Bruni, *Lettres familières*, 2:440).

about the continuity between the areas inside and outside the city walls of Florence.[43] There is also a city outside the walls. Bruni is rapturous about the *contado*.[44] I take it that the reason why he introduces an entirely irrelevant reference to Homer (on snow) is in order to give his vision of this area a kind of epic grandeur. The country villas are a heavenly city: "they seem more to have fallen from heaven than to have been constructed by human hands (*potius e celo delapsa quam manu humanum facta videantur*; 141; 237). Again, the private inner spaces (*cubiculis aut tricliniis*) are as magnificent and *ornatus* as the colonnades and gardens. And then there are the suburban groves and meadows, and, what surpasses all (*quod omnia superat*), the nature of the overall site is disposed to delight (*ad letitiam nata*); the very hills seem to exude joyfulness (*diffundere jocunditatem*). Again, it is a pleasure that cannot be satiated (*expleri non possunt nec videndo satiari*); the place is rightfully designated something like a paradise (*hec regio paradisus* [*quidam*] *recte* […] *nominari*)—he is being slightly careful here. Visitors who from a vantage point can see the whole vista of city and suburbs together are struck dumb (*obstupescunt*; 141; 237).

At this point Bruni finds himself tempted to approach a topic that he knows looks like a non-sequitur and should (and will) be treated later: the success of Florence at war, especially its success against the Duke of Lombardy (Giangaleazzo Visconti), whose power struck terror into the nations north of the Alps as well in people throughout all of Italy (142; 238). The interesting question is why Bruni felt drawn to introduce the topic here. The answer seems to be that he sees the beauty and magnificence of the city as making plausible its military successes. The rhetorical power, so to speak, of the experience of seeing the city, the power that strikes the observer dumb, makes its might completely understandable. The first-hand observer—and Bruni is very insistent on the actual experience—is moved from being stupefied (*obstupescunt* again) to understanding Florence's military triumphs. Everyone's mind and spirit are thus changed (*omnium mentes animique ita mutantur*; 143; 238), and, here Bruni makes his greatest leap, everyone comes to affirm that Florence is worthy of attaining dominion and empire over the whole world (*ad*

43. Again there seems to be some truth in this. See Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 5.

44. For the legal definition of the *contado*, see Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 5n.

totius orbis dominium imperiumque; 143; 239).[45] He does not push the point but instead offers a rather strange metacomment: he finds his own argument very convincing.[46] He insists that it is so because it rests on direct experience. After a rather silly (but very Greek) analogy to believing in an athlete's exploits after inspecting his strong body, Bruni insists that once this most excellent and most beautifully constructed city is actually seen, all doubts about it disappear, and (again) men's minds change (144; 239). Such *mutatione mentis*, *sententiarum*, *opinionum* could not happen if this city were not of such majesty and amplitude (*amplitudinem*) that it exceed what tongues can say or minds conceive (an echo of 1 Corinthians 2:9?). In emphasizing "amplitude" in this inexpressibility trope, Bruni nearly duplicates the phrase he had used at the opening for the special inexpressibility of God (*glorie et magnitudinis*). The sight of Florence produces a conversion experience. The prose becomes virtually liturgical: "Indeed, let everyone praise this city, let them always praise it (*laudabuntque semper omnes*; 144; 239).

In this section, Bruni may be drawing on an unusually lyrical moment in the *Panathenaic Oration*, when Aristides speaks of those approaching Athens being transformed by the initial sight of it: "thus in every way the soul is first purified and exalted, indeed in preparation for the spectacle of Athens, as if receiving preliminary initiation in some sacred rites."[47] When Bruni finishes the excursus on why his previous argument is both completely adequate and completely inadequate, he returns, as he says, to his subject (*sed iam ad rem redeamus*), moving from the country houses to the *castella* (walled towns) outside of Florence—and here he follows Aristides closely. He borrows Aristides's emphasis on the centrality of Athens to Greece, his comparison to

45. Mikael Hörnquist notes that Bruni attributes the recognition that the Florentines are worthy of world rule to a hypothesized non-Florentine visitor to the city (Hörnquist, "Two Myths," 126). I would not, however, describe this rhetorical move as "cautious" (as Hörnquist does) but rather as shrewd and entirely in line with Bruni's continuous emphasis on the psychological impact of the city on its observer.

46. Despite this claim, repeated later along with the claim that "all wars waged by the Florentines are [most] just" (*omnia bella que a populo Florentino geruntur iustissima sint*; 150; 244), it seems to me an overstatement to see the *Laudatio* as "essentially an imperialist tract" (Hankins, "Rhetoric," 146). Hankins's own account of the relatively immediate afterlife of the text does not support this view (Hankins, "Rhetoric," 148–49), and he in fact withdraws from this view in his later work (see Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, 224).

47. Aristides, *Panathenaic Oration* [hereafter *Panathenaicus*], trans. Behr, 12. References to Aristides's *Panathenaicus* here and throughout refer to section numbers.

the moon surrounded by the stars, and his analogy to a shield with circular layers and a central knob.[48] He is as happy in borrowing rapturous and semi-religious description as he was in borrowing Aristides's praise of a perfect climate.[49]

But Bruni cannot follow the model for very long, for where Aristides praises Athens for being on the sea, Bruni finds himself on the defensive about Florence being landlocked. The mode changes from rapture to argument. Plato is brought in as an authority about the dangers of the sea to a happy way of life (*beate vivendum*; 145; 240). Seaports are seen as liable to invasion, and further classical authorities are summoned: "Read the Roman, read the Greek historians" (*Lege Latinas, lege Grecas historias*; 146; 241), we are commanded. Bruni returns (somewhat disingenuously) to seeing Florence as occupying a golden mean between two oceans. But he is much happier returning to praise of its river (he repeats the claim about beauty and utility); of the city's amazing elegance, incomparable splendour, mind-numbing beauty, and manifestation of the height of all magnificent things (*summa omnium rerum magnificentia*); and of the pleasantness of the surrounding villas that is (again) "truly not of this world" (*amenitas vero plus quam terrena*; 148; 243). He ends the section by stating that he has been so caught up, so violently seized (*violentia huc usque me rapuit*), by the abundance of beautiful things (*pulcherrimarum rerum affluentia*) presented to him by the city that he has neglected or omitted (*pretermiserim*) the thing that he now designates Florence's greatest treasure, and that (he now says) should have been one of the first things to come to mind: the inhabitants of the city. He has wandered and now needs to collect himself (*colligamus*). This is the kind of moment that is easily classified as "merely" rhetorical. But it need not be. It can be taken as truly revealing, as a moment of genuine self-recognition. Bruni will move on, but he really was almost ludicrously captured by his vision of urban and suburban beauty and (need I say it?) magnificence.

48. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 16. This borrowing is noted in Baron, "Imitation," 157; and Santosuosso, "Leonardo Bruni Revisited," 30–31. If there was supposed to be a cruciform geographic orientation to the city, one that was followed by the annual spring rogation processions, one would not know this from Bruni. On this orientation, see Atkinson, *Noisy Renaissance*, 162–63. One would also not know about the cathedral bells that Atkinson emphasizes.

49. See Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 25.

Born before the fall

In turning to the *habitatores* (and I believe this is meant to include inhabitants, like Bruni himself at this time,[50] who are not citizens), Bruni expresses no uncertainty, as he did at the beginning of the panegyric, as to where to begin. He asserts that the proper place to begin in an account of the population of a city, as in an account of an individual person, is with the question of origins, of ancestors. For Bruni, the key (supposed) fact is that the founder of Florence was "the Roman people" (*populus Romanus*); that is the fact of primary importance (*hoc primus est*). The reason why this is so has to do with the special qualities of the ancient Romans. They were the most famous, and the most powerful, of the ancient nations, but most of all they were outstanding in every sort of virtue (*omni genere virtutis*). Their power rested on a moral foundation, and this is what the Florentines have inherited.[51] It is because of this that Bruni can reassert his extraordinary claim that Florence has a right to *dominium* over the entire world (150; 244).[52] Earlier, this was seen as flowing from the magnificent city's own qualities; here, it is seen as also a matter of inheritance. But Bruni wants to specify the matter of Roman virtue further. He asks what purports to be another actual historical question: At what point in history did the Romans found Florence? The answer to this constitutes one of Bruni's most important politico-historical claims—what Baron called "the republican interpretation of Renaissance history."[53] The claim is that Florence was founded under the Roman Republic, which is seen as a glorious period before the accession of those plagues (*pestes*), the Roman emperors (151; 245).

What interests me here is less the historiography, which has been fully studied, and more the terms in which the emperors and their opponents are

50. Bruni was born in Arezzo (he was Leonardo Bruni Aretino). He was granted Florentine citizenship in 1416, after his return from Rome in the previous year (Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 36).

51. On the strongly Ciceronian colouration of his claim, see Hörnquist, "Two Myths," 109; and on Bruni as "the self-styled new Cicero," see Hörnquist, "Two Myths," 123. The background and implications of the claim are developed in Woodhouse, "Subjection without Servitude." Aristides develops the theme as well (Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 62–74, and throughout).

52. Hankins points out that, not surprisingly, this was disputed in a panegyric for Milan (Hankins, "Rhetoric," 150).

53. Baron, *Crisis*, 69.

described.[54] What was destroyed by the emperors was not merely something worthy and successful but a "sacred and untrampled freedom" (*sancta et inconcussa libertas*; 151; 245). The destruction of the Roman Republic was not merely a historical disaster but the supreme crime in history (*summum scelus*). Dante and many others would not only disagree about the virtue of the Republican heroes and clans (150; 244) but also assert, with a huge cultural weight behind them, that the *summum scelus* in history was the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ (see canto 34 in Dante's *Inferno*). This does not seem even to occur to Bruni. He gives a catalogue of select crimes of the emperors (from Suetonius and others) in order to conclude that Florence has legitimately (*non iniuste*) developed its political orientation (154; 247)—that is, its commitment to the (postulated) republicanism of the Guelf party.[55]

Magnitudo animi

Highly interesting moments for recognizing the value structure of the text appear in the next section, when Bruni moves from the Florentine founding to the Florentine present and recent past. He claims that the glory of the Florentine republican past functions as a collective conscience to the Florentine body politic, or collective psyche politic. This glory functions like the eye of God: "The light of paternal glory leaves nothing hidden" (*Nichil enim sinit esse occultum paterne glorie lumen*; 155, 248). In the section on the origins of Florence, the Roman Republican heroes (Scipio, Marcellus, the Catos, etc.) are described in a way normally reserved for Christian saints: they were "most holy and most chaste" (*sanctissimi et continentissimi*; 152; 246)—the latter an especially interesting attribution. In the section on the present and recent past, the light of paternal glory not only reveals the failures of those who degenerate from it but also enhances the virtues of the descendants who possess *generosos animos*, so that these men "are carried up to heaven and placed together with their forebears on account of their own virtue and because of the nobility of their ancestors" (*tollunturque in celum homines cum in uno eodemque loco et propria virtus et maiorum nobilitas conglutinata perpenditur*; 155; 249). Roman virtue (*Romana virtus*) and greatness of soul (*magnitudo animi*) earn heaven—now,

54. On Bruni's historiography, see Baron, *Crisis*, ch. 3; Ianziti, *Writing History*.

55. See Baron, *Crisis*, 21, 553n18; Ianziti, *Writing History*, 98.

just as they did in the past. Burckhardt pointed to Scipio's dream in Cicero's *De re publica* as a source for this kind of vision of a heroic, entirely non-Christian afterlife.[56] To say that this amounts to "a kind of secular Pelagianism" certainly seems fair enough, to say the least.[57]

Yet before moving from ancient origins to more recent history, Bruni presents himself as having another moment of intense self-consciousness like the one that followed the assertion of dominion following from magnificence (143; 238–39). There, he was worried that his argument might not be convincing to some. Here, interestingly and presciently, he worries that he will not be taken to be sincere.[58] Bad natured or ignorant persons will accuse him of vanity and say that he has written nothing sincere (*nichil sinceri scripsisse*; 157; 250).[59] He confesses that he desires to be loved and accepted by everyone but insists that he would not seek this through flattery, and that he does not expect to get anything for writing what he refers to in this moment as a *tantula*, a trifle.[60] He claims to be composing at some personal risk—he is afraid that all those who hate Florence will hate him for praising it.[61] He raises the problem of hyperbole. Has he overpraised the city? Here he claims that it is important that he is writing about the entire community (*de universa re publica*) and not about individuals (he does not, in fact, name any of the Florentines who will ascend *in celum* with the named Romans).[62] Rather reluctantly, he acknowledges that there are some wicked Florentines, but he insists that they are detected and corrected. Moreover, he makes a strong distinction between public and private crimes. There are only the latter in Florence, where the view of the potentially

56. Burckhardt, *Civilization*, 2:313. See book 6 of Cicero's *De re publica*, trans. Keyes, 263–83.

57. Hankins, *Plato*, 61.

58. This anticipates an entire line of criticism of the *Laudatio*, most notably that of Jerrold Seigel.

59. I am not sure why Kohl avoids the word "sincere" here and substitutes "genuine." If John Martin is correct, Bruni's is an early instance of the term used in our sense. Martin sees the term in our (subjective, moral) sense gaining prominence in the course of the sixteenth century (Martin, *Myths*, 109–22), though he does acknowledge that "there is some evidence that this new moral meaning of sincerity had begun to appear in Renaissance writers as early as Petrarch and Valla" (110).

60. Seigel, "'Civic Humanism,'" 25, suggests that the *Laudatio* was a job application (for the position of chancellor).

61. This does seem far-fetched; Hankins calls it "clumsy" (Hankins, "Rhetoric," 145).

62. Harvey Mansfield comments on this surprising omission, which he sees as a political strategy (Mansfield, "Bruni and Machiavelli," 231–32).

dangerous majority always coincides with that of the best citizens (158; 250).[63] The memory of the Ciompi Revolt of twenty years before is repressed or erased in this idealization.[64] But the distinction between public and private crimes frees Bruni from having to do what Aristides does in the most disconcerting part of his oration: defend state crimes (the Athenian treatment of the Melians and the Scionians).[65]

Bruni then borrows from Aristides the claim that while other cities praise themselves for having particular virtues, the greatest city has all of them together.[66] A new set of virtues is ascribed to the Florentines: *fides*, *industria*, *humanitas*, *magnitudo animi* (159; 251).[67] These last two virtues become dominant in the rest of the text.[68] Bruni skips over prudence, taking it for granted that the Florentines manifest this, and moves on to the realm of values suggested by *humanitas*. Here we can see Bruni's deepest debt to Aristides. With regard to politics and public life, the primary ethical virtue that Aristides sees in the Athenians and their entire history is *philanthropia*.[69] The term appears early on[70] and pervades the oration; it characterizes Athenian behaviour not only in peace but also in war. The embracing of exiles was an example of *philanthropia*, as was the establishment of colonies, from which all profit (here power and *philanthropia* nicely converge).[71] The Athenians publicly maintained citizens

63. This is a wonderful case of Bruni presenting an oligarchy as also democratic. See Hankins, "'Baron Thesis,'" 321–23; Blanchard, "Leonardo Bruni."

64. See Najemy, "Civic Humanism," 81–86.

65. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 302–11.

66. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 336.

67. Bernard-Pradelle's translation of *fide* as "loyauté" is closer to what the context demands (see Bruni, Éloge, 265). The Kohl translation of "devoutness of belief" cannot, perhaps, be ruled out, but the later discussion of *admirabilis fides* (again translated as "loyauté" by Barnard-Pradelle) very clearly refers to keeping commitments to other polities. It should be noted that *humanitas* was mentioned earlier in the transition to part 2 (see Bruni, *Panegyric*, 149, "kindness"; *Laudatio*, 243).

68. Kohl translates *magnitudo animi / animorum* many different ways, so the prominence, persistence, and consistency of the term throughout the text is obscured.

69. Cf. Oudot, "Aelius Aristides and Thucydides," 42.

70. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 8–10.

71. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 72–74.

unable to take care of themselves, manifesting glorious *philanthropia*,[72] and they showed *philanthropia* even towards their enemies.[73]

When Bruni claims that everyone in Italy considers himself a dual citizen of his own city and of Florence, he is echoing Aristides on the relation of the Greeks to Athens when he says that "no Greek will be without a city as long as there is a city of Athens."[74] Bruni does not have a single dominant term like *philanthropia*, but he employs a cluster of equivalent terms. The reason that everyone in Italy feels the dual citizenship is because of Florentine *beneficentia* and *liberalitas* and *humanitas*.[75] Because of these qualities, persons exiled from their own cities by seditious plots or envy (which, surely, Florence lacks) can—if they are not completely unworthy—count on being welcomed and taken care of by the Florentines and even given monetary gifts so they can either live in Florence with dignity or seek to recover their standing in their own cities. As Aristides claims that Athens did for Greece,[76] Bruni claims that Florence took it as a duty to ensure that no city in Italy suffered total destruction. Here, too, beneficence and something like empire converge. Since Florence defended these states in times of peril, they have naturally (*necesse est*) taken it as their patron (161; 252). From that position, how can they deny Florence's surpassing dignity, power, and *industria*?

But Bruni does not want the focus to be on power. He immediately replaces the previous terms with beneficence and liberality, and adds another ethical virtue, though one tied up with dignity. He returns to *fides*, which here clearly means keeping one's commitments. The city has kept its *fides* inviolate (*inviolatum*; 161; 252). And here Bruni draws directly on Cicero rather than

72. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 369.

73. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 279–82.

74. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 56.

75. Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights* 13.17) insists that those who are properly educated in Latin do not equate the Latin *humanitas* with the Greek *philanthropia* or general benevolence, but rather use *humanitas* to mean mastery of the liberal arts (the "humanities" in our sense). Bruni knew Gellius (see Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 262, 381, 385–86) but disregards his caveat and consistently holds to the "vulgar" meaning, without the educational specification. Gellius insists that Cicero used the term as equivalent to *paideia*, but this represents a narrowing of Cicero's use, which was quite various (see Høgel, *Human and the Humane*, ch. 2). On the pre-Ciceronian development and range of the term, see Sulek, "On the Classical Meaning."

76. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 213.

Aristides. Cicero was highly concerned about the issue of expediency (*utilitatis*); the issue defines the second book of *De officiis* and is wrestled with throughout Cicero's text. Bruni insists that once Florence had thought something out from the beginning and come to believe that its cause was just, no matter of expediency (*nullam utilitatem species*) has ever led Florence to break any "pact, treaty, league, oath, or promise" (*pacta, conventa, federa, iusiurandum*; 161; 253). Bruni takes from Cicero a line that Cicero took from Euripides as exemplifying what the worst sort of criminal in a polity would say: "My tongue has sworn; my mind continues unsworn" (*Iuravi lingua, mentem iniuratam gero*).[77] *Fides*, for Cicero, must be "religiously" observed even with enemies.[78] For Bruni, here *humanitas* comes into play. It leads the Florentines to forgive injuries, and it is knowledge of this, together with knowledge of Florentine *fides*, that has led former enemies to commit their wealth and children to the safekeeping of the Florentines. Whether this was expedient for the Florentines is irrelevant. Cicero insisted that "nothing is truly useful that is not also honorable" (*nihil vero utile, quod non idem honestum*)[79]—Bruni follows suit in almost identical words (162; 253).

When Bruni shifts his focus from diplomacy and public policy to war, he reverts to asserting the Roman virtue and character of the Florentines, and in doing so emphasizes *magnitudo animorum*. We are moving into the realm of heroic virtue here, and Bruni equates this greatness of soul—a version of Aristotle's *megalopsychia*—with contempt for dangers. The Romans, in their whole history, never relinquished their *magnitudo animorum*. Nor did the Florentines. Emperor Henry VII besieged Florence (in 1312), and was even more fierce than Hannibal had been (162; 254). Despite the enemy being at the gates (some of which were not even well-fortified at the time), the Florentines went about their daily affairs. Every office and store remained open; there was no work stoppage and no halt in the administration of justice.[80] It was precisely

77. Cicero, *De officiis*, trans. Miller, 3.108. References to Cicero's *De officiis* here and throughout refer to book and section numbers.

78. Cicero, *De officiis* 1.39 (though speaking of individual duties), 3.102–13.

79. Cicero, *De officiis* 3.34. Bernard-Pradelle considers this statement "la thèse maîtresse du *De Officiis*" (Bruni, *Éloge*, 269n1). She translates *honestum* as "moralement beau."

80. This vision of happy urban commercial life without fear of military threat strikingly anticipates a passage in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, where, after Coriolanus is expelled, the tribunes present a vision of "our tradesmen singing in their shops, and going / About their business friendly" (4.6.8–9).

Henry's recognition of this *magnitudo animorum* in the Florentines that led him to give up the siege. And the city manifested its heroic virtue not only when under siege but also when forced (by being attacked first) to go on the attack. In such circumstances, the city, like an ideal Homeric warrior, always "blazed with" an amazing love for praise and glory (*incredibili quodam amore laudis gloriaque flagraret*; 163; 254).

Here the continuity and the difference between the way Bruni is using *magnitudo animi* and Aristotle's *megalopsychia* becomes clear. The most obvious difference is that Aristotle's virtue is of an individual, whereas Bruni's is of a collectivity. The continuity is in the idea of undertaking a grand task. Aristotle's figure is "slow to act except when some great honor or achievement is at stake."[81] Bruni emphasizes difficulty. His example is the Florentine campaign against Volterra in 1234. Volterra was well-fortified and on top of a hill; the size of the opposed armies was about equal, but the Florentines possessed an advantage in "fighting ability" (*peritia pugnandi*; 164; 255). But what Bruni asserts is that the Florentines were superior not only in *peritia pugnandi* but also in *magnitudo animi*. With typical appeal to first-hand experience, Bruni says that this victory will be especially appreciated by those who have actually seen Volterra. Using his favourite word for a powerful effect on the consciousness of an observer, Bruni says that such persons will be struck dumb (*obstupescunt*) by the Florentine achievement, which was accomplished without the use of any mercenary troops (*nullis extraneis auxiliis*). "With this same morale," the Florentines have often laid low (*prostravit*) the Sienese, smashed (*delevit*) the Pisans, and crushed enemies and tyrants (164; 255).[82] But "with this same morale" does not capture what Bruni says here; he reverts to his key term. His words are "*hac illa magnitudine animi*."[83] This allows Bruni to continue the rejection of self-interest. Florence has more often undertaken military actions for the benefit of others (*pro aliorum utilitate*) rather than for itself.[84] Through

81. Aristotle, *NE* 1124b25.

82. The strength of the verbs here are a bit hard to reconcile with *humanitas*. (Note that Bernard-Pradelle translates *delevit* as "anéantit"; Bruni, *Éloge*, 271). There are a few other such moments. Arthur Field points out Bruni's admiration for the Roman destruction of Carthage, Numanthia, and Corinth "root and branch" (*a stirpe interierant*; 151; 245); see Field, *Intellectual Struggle*, 139. Bruni also writes of the Florentines wreaking a "splendid vengeance" (*magnifice ultis*; 172; 261) on their enemies.

83. See note 68 above.

84. Cf. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 270.

its services as a protective patron (*suo patrocinium tutaretur*), it has undergone dangers for the welfare and freedom of other polities.[85] He gives the example of the Florentines defending one of their friends and allies (*socios atque amicos*), the Lucchese, against the conquering forces of the Pisans (165; 256).[86] In this way, the *virtus* of the Florentines saved Lucca and won glory and praise for themselves.

But again, Bruni does not want to focus on *virtus* of this kind. He asks whether it was this that allowed them to have such victories or rather their *magnitudine animorum* (165; 256). He then adds the quality of *beneficentia*, which led the Florentines to undergo such a battle on behalf of the welfare of their friend. In a move that is deeply revelatory of his framework, Bruni calls attention to the cluster of his terms and asserts that it seems to him (*michi* […] *videntur*) that the three qualities—*virtus*, *magnitudine animorum*, and *beneficentia*—ought to be seen as coming together in producing a most illustrious deed (165; 256). This is the moment when he can finally get to the topic that, as we saw, obtruded itself into the discussion of the magnificence of Florence—that is, the most recent military triumph of the city. Bruni believes that Florence has always shown its armed beneficence not only to individual cities like Lucca, but to all of Italy (*universe simul Italie*; 165; 256). He does not need to delve into the past, as he has been doing, to show this. This, it should be noted, is the great difference between Bruni's account of Florence's military history and Aristides's of that of Athens. The triumphs and episodes that Aristides recounts, at enormous length, all took place in the past, four or five centuries before Aristides was writing.[87] Athens was no longer a military power. It no longer, Aristides claims, even enters into worldly affairs (*pragmatenetai*).[88]

To make his point about Florence's defense of the liberty of all of Italy, Bruni can move into very recent history. No one, he asserts, could be so intellectually weak or out of the way of the truth to deny that all of Italy would have fallen under the power of the Duke of Lombardy (Giangaleazzo) had not

85. On the meaning of *patrocinium* here, see Woodhouse, "Subjection without Servitude"; Shupeck, "*Patrocinium Orbis Terrae*."

86. On the *socios atque amicus* formulation, Hörnquist points out that it was used by the Romans to designate a free state under Roman overlordship (Hörnquist, "Two Myths," 127).

87. Antonio Santosuosso estimates that more than 60 per cent of the oration is taken up with accounts of Athens at war (Santosuosso, "Leonardo Bruni Revisited," 40).

88. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 332.

this one city of Florence resisted his power with its troops and strategy. To make his point, Bruni has to evoke (again) the fearfulness of this threat. He repeats from his previous excursus the claim that this duke was a source of fear not only to the people of Italy but to peoples north of the Alps as well (166, 142; 257, 238). He launches into a kind of eulogy of Giangaleazzo (foreshadowing, it might be said, Machiavelli's praise of Cesare Borgia).[89] The duke's power was due to his resources, his wealth, and his men, but most of all to his strategic planning and his cunning (*astu*). This last quality (the kind of cleverness [*deinos*] that Aristotle distinguishes from true practical wisdom[90]) characterized Giangaleazzo. He succeeded by military power, but also by bribery and trickery (*fraude*). Bruni never attributes *magnitudo animi* to Giangaleazzo (as Machiavelli does to Cesare).[91]

In Aristotelian fashion, Bruni distinguishes between happiness and mere success. Bruni is emphatic that the duke could have been a happy man, a supremely happy man (*felix ille, felix inquam, nimium esse potuit*), if he had dedicated his energy, his attentiveness, and his mental capacity (*suam industriam, vigilantiam, solertiam*) to *bonis artibus* (166; 257). Again, it is hard not to see Machiavelli's prince in Bruni's Giangaleazzo. He was everywhere, left nothing unnoticed or untried; he bonded people to him—some by money, some by lavish gifts, some by promises and a semblance of friendship (*caritatis specie*). He set polities to war, and when they had exhausted themselves, he occupied them. Eventually, his *doli artes* flourished everywhere. Many polities, seeing his great powers, were terrified and began to temporize with him. But the Florentine *magnitudo animi* could not be terrified, nor could it consider surrendering any of its former dignity. Bruni attributes an awareness of the genesis he posited for Florence as a key motivating factor. Florence knew that it was a Roman quality to defend the liberty of Italy against enemies. In the spirit of *megalopsychia*, they were willing to undergo the greatest dangers in order to gain the greatest glory. Here Bruni seems to imagine someone thinking that Florentine wealth would lead the city to be conciliatory. He vehemently rejects this idea together with that of conserving wealth in war. Florence meets its rich

89. Oddly, Mansfield does not make this connection in his "Bruni and Machiavelli."

90. Aristotle, *NE* 1144a25.

91. See Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 7. At the end of the chapter, Machiavelli ascribes *l'animo grande* to Cesare and describes him as *magnanimo* (Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. and trans. Musa, 60, 62).

and powerful enemy with its own riches and power and high spirit; through Florentine virtue, he who shortly before had menaced all Italy and thought himself invincible came to desire peace and was forced to quake behind the walls of Pavia and give up the cities of Tuscany, the Romagna, and even a large part of northern Italy (167; 258).

Unsurprisingly, the next paragraph brings together the physical and the moral greatness of the city: "*O incredibilem magnificentiam virtutemque civitatis!*" (168; 258). But there is an odd feature of the account of this extraordinary Florentine victory that has troubled a number of analysts of the *Laudatio*: the account nowhere mentions that Giangaleazzo grew ill and died in the summer of 1402. The omission of this fact is part of what led to the controversy over the dating of the text.[92] Jerrold Seigel had a straightforward answer to the question of why this crucial fact was not mentioned: it had not happened at the time the *Laudatio* was written (although the reference to Giangaleazzo having conquered Bologna, which happened in June of 1402, complicates this thesis).[93] If Bruni had been aware of the death of Giangaleazzo, he surely would have mentioned it, and he could easily have used it to demonstrate that God was on the side of the Florentines (recall the English Protestant winds that defeated the Spanish armada).[94] But Baron's answer to this puzzle seems obviously right. For Bruni to mention the duke's sudden death through illness would have entirely undermined his account of Florentine greatness of spirit.[95] It would, in Machiavellian terms, have made the end of the war a matter of *fortuna* rather than *virtus*.[96]

Yet Bruni does, in a way, invoke providence. After asserting that Florence demonstrated that it had preserved the *virtus* of its (Roman) forebears in liberating, by its own resources, all of Italy from servitude, he states that while all other peoples offer praise and gratitude to Florence for this achievement, the city itself deflects these to God. Florence is suddenly the epitome of modesty

92. For the controversy over the dating of the *Laudatio*, see note 3 above.

93. It should be noted that Seigel does have something of an answer to this complication (see Seigel, "'Civic Humanism,'" 21).

94. Siegel, "'Civic Humanism,'" 22.

95. Baron, *Crisis*, 217–19.

96. This is exactly what Buonaccorso Pitti, an exact contemporary of Bruni, thought: "It is to his [Giangaleazzo's] death that we owe our salvation […] thanks to luck and God's grace rather than our power." Pitti, *Two Memoirs*, 74.

(*modestia*) and wishes to credit its great deeds to the beneficence of God rather than to its own virtue. This is another kind of virtue, and it allows Bruni to assert that the city never became inflated by its own success, and, more importantly, to claim that the city exercised the highest *humanitas* (*summam humanitatem*) to those it conquered. But *modestia* is soon replaced by another term. One of the high virtues of the city is that at all times it retained its *dignitas* (*in omni temporum retineret dignitatem*; 168; 258). For all of the virtues of restraint that it has shown (modesty, constancy, justice, and prudence), the great name of Florence has acquired maximum glory among all mortals (*preclarum apud omnes mortales nomen maximamque gloriam consecuta est*; 168; 258). Modesty indeed.[97]

The harmonious *polis*

The final section of the *Laudatio* concerns the internal political and legal structures of the city. One striking feature of this section is that it begins by praising the Florentine polity in strongly aesthetic terms. This is truly what Burckhardt called seeing "the state as a work of art."[98] Nowhere else but Florence, Bruni claims, does one find such orderliness (*ordo rerum*); nowhere else such *elegantia*; nowhere else such harmoniousness (*concinnitas*). The institutions of the city are like the strings of a musical instrument whose diverse tones make a harmony by which nothing could be more delightful or sweet to the ear (*qua nichil auribus jocundius est neque suavius*; 168; 259). Bruni presents himself as a kind of connoisseur of political and social arrangements. The institutions are in harmony with themselves; this delights the minds and (switching senses) the eyes of men (*mentes atque oculos*) with its perfect arrangement (*convenientia*). Nothing is out of place, nothing is unfitting, nothing is foolish, nothing is pointless. Everything is congruent and also well-defined. This is important to Bruni. There are distinct duties, distinct supervisors, distinct judges, distinct social classes (*ordines*). He defines two overarching principles guiding all the city's institutions: justice—which, Bruni insists, is what makes a city, and

97. Quentin Skinner takes note of the Christian-sounding "priggish asides" in Quattrocento humanist texts that "do nothing to hinder" the most full-blooded assertions of devotion to earthly success (see Skinner, *Foundations*, 100). This paragraph of Bruni's is perhaps not quite a case of this, but it is similar.

98. This is the rubric of the opening section of Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.

is that which is held most sacred (*sanctissimam*)—and freedom (*libertas*), without which no one in the city would consider life worth living.

Virtually all of Bruni's efforts in describing the various institutions of the city are devoted to explaining how the city provides for the first of these principles. The magistracy exists not only to punish criminals but to make it clear that no power in the city will be valued above the law (169; 259). Minor magistrates who are not citizens have power over capital cases (so that no Florentine will have this power over another), and the procedures of such magistrates are carefully prescribed. But there are many other groups (such as the heads of guilds) that are given authority to judge in legal cases, so that everyone has access to the law. Within a historical narrative with classical analogies, the heads of the Guelf party are idealized as a kind of supreme court (or Areopagus) to make sure that the city is always governed by its fundamental laws (171–72; 261). All the magistracies, including the highest, are always open—that is, on duty. Legal complaints can be freely brought against all classes of men. More than in any other polity, justice is open to all, and "nowhere else does freedom grow so vigorously, and nowhere else are the great and the humble treated with such equality" (*nusquam enim viget tanta libertas et maiorum cum minoribus exequata condicio*; 173; 262). Status differences are respected, but the state makes sure that the weak are not abused by the rich and powerful. From this, Bruni says, comes the saying that has often been hurled (*iactari*) against the more powerful when they have threatened the lower classes: "I also am a Florentine citizen" (*ego quoque Florentinus sum civis*; 173; 262). The Florentine state guarantees such legal equality. And it offers such guarantees even to non-citizens (*peregrinos*) living in the city.[99] In line with the general interest in and positing of psychological effects of phenomena on those who experience them that we have already noted in Bruni, he then goes on to state that the justice and equability of the city produces the qualities of *facilitatem et humanitatem* among its citizens (173; 262).[100] He explicates this by saying that it means that no one in the city can be puffed up with his own importance or be disdainful to others. Aristotle specifies that the *megalopsychos* can be neither.[101]

99. The context makes it clear that *peregrinos* here does not mean foreigners but rather non-citizen inhabitants.

100. *Facilitas* in this context is very hard to translate. It seems to mean something like "ease in social relations." Kohl's translation is "toleration"; Bernard-Pradelle's is "affabilité" (Bruni, *Éloge*, 299).

101. Aristotle, *NE* 1123b25, 1124b18.

The institutions and effects of justice in the city are thus laid out in detail. But the other fundamental principle governing the life of the city, *libertas*, is never clearly defined.[102] One has to infer its meaning from the discussion of justice. In the first discussion of magistrates, Bruni points out that many precautions (*multis cautionibus*; 169; 259) are taken to make sure that the magistrates do not turn into tyrants and diminish the high liberty of the Florentines. This suggests the tight connection between liberty and living under a properly functioning legal system. The citizens (and denizens) of Florence have rights by virtue of being citizens, just as the ancient Romans did.[103] This seems to mean freedom from arbitrary punishment or injury (*nemo hic iniuriam pati potest*) and the right not to be forced to give up one's case (*nec quisquam rem suam nisi volens amittit*; 173; 262).[104] "I also am a Florentine citizen" echoes "I am a Roman citizen," by which certain rights were being claimed.[105] Equality of inviolable rights before the law seems to constitute a good deal of what Bruni means by liberty. It might seem to be mainly a version of negative liberty, but it does include the right to make use of the system.[106] One passage, moreover, suggests an element of positive political participation. In describing how major public decisions are made, Bruni states that the groups of magistrates that he has just described (the Nine, the Twelve, the standard-bearers of the Companies) often refer decisions that they have approved to the Council of the People (300 members, including guild members) and the Council of the Commune (200 members, more aristocratic) for final action. This is done, Bruni claims, because it is thought to be consistent with justice and reason—that what concerns the many should be decided by the opinion of the many (*quod enim ad multos*

102. On the complexity of this term in humanist discourse, see Hörnquist, "Two Myths"; Brown, "Demasking Renaissance Republicanism."

103. On "rights" in the ancient Roman legal system, see M. Clarke, "Doing Violence."

104. Where Kohl translates *nec quisquam rem suam nisi volens amittit* as "no one ever had to alienate any property except when he wanted to," Bernard-Pradelle has "personne ne renonce à sa cause si n'est de son plein gré" (Bruni, *Éloge*, 297), which seems to me more accurate.

105. Michelle Clarke cites Acts 22, a passage from Livy, and a supporting passage from Cicero (M. Clarke, "Doing Violence," 220).

106. For "negative" and "positive" liberty, see note 2 above. Skinner questions some of Isaiah Berlin's distinctions and shows how Machiavelli (in the *Discorsi*) managed to combine features that Berlin thought incompatible (see Skinner, "Idea of Negative Liberty"). Bruni's conception of liberty is close to Skinner's picture of Machiavelli's, but with the extremely important exception that Machiavelli excises justice from the conception, and Bruni insists on it.

attinet, id non aliter quam multorum sententia decerni; 170; 260).[107] In this way, says Bruni, liberty flourishes and most sacred justice is preserved in the city. So, liberty here means that the *sententia multorum* is the determinant in (some) political decisions—though it is not clear whether the "many" here includes the lower-class artisans and workers who participated in the Ciompi Revolt.[108]

Following the claim that the Florentine political and legal system produces benignity to all persons (*erga omnes homines benignitatem*; 174; 262), Bruni makes a final brief inability claim and then sums up. He is no longer going to particularize. The Florentines surpass all others in whatever they undertake (arms, government, research, commerce). He provides a final list of Florentine virtues and qualities: they are patient in labour, prepared in danger, eager for glory, potent in planning, industrious, generous (*liberales*), magnificent, wittily merry (*jocundi*), affable, and, above all, *urbani*. What a wonderful word on which to end this list! The inhabitants of the ideal earthly city are fully suited to inhabit it.[109]

But the panegyric does not, in fact, end there. Bruni adds a short paragraph that raises a large puzzle. If he were following his most overt classical model, he would expatiate at length on Florence's pre-eminence in language and literature. That is, after all, Aristides's major claim for the Athens of his time. Aristides purports to think that in his time (mid-second century CE), when the pre-eminence of the Athenian dialect, literature, and educational program (*paideia*) is universally recognized, Athens has a better empire than it had when it ruled over provinces and seas: "This," he says, "I call the great empire of the Athenians, not two hundred triremes or more, and not Ionia, or the Hellespont, or the regions in Thrace."[110] Athens has prevailed in the arena that is most important and most truly human, that of language, and especially oratory.[111] Comparing the past and present Athenian "empires," no one, says

107. Kohl's translation loses the parallelism between *multos* and *multorum*. Bernard-Pradelle captures this better: "ce qui concerne le peuple […] ne pas le trancher autrement que par la décision du peuple" (Bruni, *Éloge*, 289). For the history of the "*Quod omnes tangit*" idea, see Fasolt, "*Quod omnes tangit*."

108. How democratic this system actually was and how much Bruni was committed to anything like democracy are key questions in the scholarship. See De Angelis, "Florence's Ruling Class"; Blanchard, "Leonardo Bruni"; Field, *Intellectual Struggle*, ch. 4.

109. Compare the humanist use of *civile*, cf. Goldthwaite, *Wealth*, 177.

110. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 233.

111. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 7, 231, 237.

Aristides, "would readily wish for its old state instead of its present one."[112] It is possible that Aristides actually believed this.[113]

Bruni could have made similar claims—without the contrast between the past and present kinds of "empire." Florence could be shown to have both. The *Laudatio* could, as Baron says it does, have pictured "Florence as Italy's cultural center."[114] After all, the case for the Tuscan dialect had already been made by Dante, and by Bruni's time, the three literary "crowns of Florence," Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, had already attained their cultural status. After his list of Florentine virtues, Bruni devotes a few sentences to the sweetness and elegance of Florentine speech and to its status as a standard of correctness (174; 263). But, contrary to Baron, and to the consternation of Ronald Witt and others, he does not allude to vernacular literature at all.[115] Various theories have been put forth to explain this absence. Probably the most widespread is Bernard-Pradelle's view that the panegyric is short on language and literature because Bruni treated these matters in his contemporary *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, the second book of which (in direct opposition to the first) seems to praise the three crowns (*tre corone*).[116] Yet book 2 of the *Dialogi* might well be less admiring of the Tuscan masters than it seems to be. David Quint (following a few others) has shown that the praise of Dante there may well be undermined, and that the praise of Petrarch there constitutes a joke—Petrarch's prose is better than that of Virgil's letters (of which we have none), and Petrarch's poetry is better than Cicero's verse (!).[117] The speaker on the three crowns in both dialogues, Bruni's good friend, Niccolò Niccoli, might not actually ever withdraw his claim in the first of the dialogues that we should leave Dante's poetry to "wool workers, bakers, and the like."[118] Moreover, the picture is changed when it is recognized that in having Niccoli apparently

112. Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 241.

113. In another oration, Aristides states: "For me, oratory means everything, signifies everything. For I have made it children, parents. […] This is my play, this is my work. In this I rejoice, this I admire, its doors I haunt." Quoted in Oudot, "Aelius Aristides," 259.

114. Baron, "Imitation," 156. See also Mansfield, "Bruni and Machiavelli," 242, though Mansfield sees the cultural as opposing the civic.

115. See Witt, *In the Footsteps*, 411.

116. See Bruni, *Éloge*, 301n1.

117. Quint, "Humanism and Modernity," 440.

118. See Bruni, *The Dialogues*, trans. Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, 74.

contradict himself, Bruni is imitating Cicero's *De oratore*, in which one of the speakers (Antonius) seems to recant the view he expressed earlier yet actually maintains a coherent position.[119]

The final sentence of the small paragraph that begins by acclaiming the qualities of the Florentine vernacular turns from *oratio* to *littere*; this is usually seen as merely a switch from the oral to the written, and Kohl translates it as such (174; 263). But that interpretation makes it even more puzzling that Bruni does not mention the *tre corone*. Hester Schadee, building on Quint and others, proposes a very different reading. She sees the paragraph as addressing two different languages, so that when Bruni shifts from discussing the spoken language of the Florentines to discussing "letters" (*littere*), he is not shifting his focus from speech to writing but rather from the vernacular Italian to classical Latin.[120] This, Schadee claims, is what *littere* means here—not the language of Dante's great poem but of Cicero's orations. It is the language that the humanist elite idealized and saw themselves as reviving. The way the sentence is constructed bears out Schadee's reading. Immediately after mentioning *littere*, Bruni adds what would seem to be an unnecessary qualification—not *littere*, which is mercantile or low (*non mercennarie ille quidem neque sordide*), but that which is pre-eminently worthy of free men. One might think that the vernacular would be especially liable to being thought of as mercenary and low, but it is in the context elsewhere of distinguishing humanist Latin from the Latin of the civil lawyers that Bruni speaks of the mercenary.[121] Humanist Latin is what is flourishing in Florence. That is what really matters. The *littere* must be worthy of the politics—"worthy of free men" (*liberis hominibus digne*).[122]

After this very brief excursus on language and letters, Bruni once again lists the features of Florence that most impress him. Possibly because of the previous mention of "free men," he begins with the illustrious forebears, with the Florentines as the descendants of the (Republican) Romans (174; 263).

119. See Seigel, "'Civic Humanism,'" 14–16; Quint, "Humanism and Modernity," 428; Witt, *In the Footsteps*, 433.

120. Schadee, "Tale of Two Languages."

121. Bruni, *Lettres familières*, 2:122; Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 252.

122. Schadee goes on to assert that Bruni was campaigning for humanist Latin to replace the vernacular in all public affairs (Schadee, "Tale of Two Languages," 39–43). This would shut the non-Latinate entirely out from such. I am not sure that the *Laudatio* implies this—or it might include the fantasy of the whole city speaking humanist Latin. One thinks of Ezra Pound's "Cantico del Sole": "The thought of what America would be like / If the Classics had a wide circulation / Troubles my sleep."

Then he speaks of "glory," earned through the great deeds accomplished by the *virtus* and the *industria* of the Florentines, internally and externally, in the past and every day. Finally, he reverts to his greatest loves: the splendour of the buildings, so adorned and elegant (it is hard to distinguish these terms, which seem to operate in the same range); the wealth of the city; the multitude of its people; and, last but not least, ending where he began, the healthfulness and pleasantness of its site. Nothing remains but to venerate the *summum numen* for such beneficence and to extend prayers. So Bruni does this. He addresses all-powerful and immortal *deus*, in whose temples and altars (*delubra atque aras*) his people worship most devoutly. So far, Bruni has avoided any specifically Christian terminology, avoiding using *ecclesia* to designate a place of worship. But he then turns to the most holy parent, who embraces her most sweet son and is at once a mother and a most pure virgin. The first thing that he says about (to) her is that the city has completed (*absolvitur*) for her a huge *templum* of pure and shining marble—a beautiful and grand piece of architecture.[123] John the Baptist, the city's adopted patron, is then called upon, together with the Virgin and the *summum numen*, to defend this most beautiful and adorned (*pulcerrimam et ornatissimam*) city against all adversity. This seems as much a charm as a prayer. As Bernard-Pradelle says, "la piété se voit accorder un petit développement."[124] The *beata vita* is, for Bruni, to be had in his Florence. Ultimately, it is the aesthetic that is to be defended, and he ends as he began: with beauty.

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123. I am not sure why Bruni uses *absolvitur* here, since Santa Maria del Fiore was not actually finished until Brunelleschi completed its dome in 1436, but it is true that the church itself was largely finished by 1400.

124. Bernard-Pradelle, "L'Influence," 380.

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