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POLIZIANO AND PHILOSOPHY

THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN NOTION OF THE HUMANITIES?

BY AMOS EDELHEIT

*This article is focused on Angelo Poliziano's general attitude to philosophy as a discipline and on his specific accounts of scholastic philosophy, found mainly in his four opening lectures to his courses on Aristotle's logic and ethics that were held in the Florentine Studium between 1490 and 1494, in the light of his overall exclusive classical approach. It shows, among other things, that philosophy was more important to Poliziano than common expressions such as "the humanist interest in philosophy" may suggest. Poliziano's important definition of history presented in his *Panepistemon*, together with other pieces of evidence, can reveal the moment in which disciplines associated with the "humanities" (in the modern sense of this term) began to be separated from the natural sciences — at a point just preceding the massive critique of Aristotelian science during the sixteenth century — through Poliziano's notion of a philosophical literature to which also the Aristotelian texts belong.*

Some longstanding scholarly views concerning Renaissance humanism have been revised in recent years. Ronald Witt's books dealing with the issue of the starting point of the humanist movement and fashion in Italy (around the middle of the thirteenth century, instead of the accepted view of the mid-fourteenth century — that is, two generations before Petrarch, the so-called father of Renaissance humanism), and with the most crucial discipline for this starting point (grammar instead of rhetoric), is one obvious example of this new outlook.¹ Another case is that of the formerly prevalent views of the relations between Renaissance humanism and the humanists on the one hand and philosophy on the other. In this case too, as we shall shortly see, more adequate scholarly accounts were needed in order to revise some of the so-called standard views.

In this article I shall further investigate the relations between humanists and philosophy in general, and more specifically scholastic philoso-

¹ Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden, 2003); idem, *The Two Latin Cultures and the Foundation of Renaissance Humanism in Medieval Italy* (Cambridge, 2012). But see the review article of the second of these books by Alexander Murray: "Out of Limbo: Devotion, Erudition and an Anticlerical Strain in a Remarkable Study of the 'All-Conquering Classical Enthusiasm' that Nourished the Renaissance," *The Times Literary Supplement* (January 11, 2013): 3–4, for some limitations in Witt's perspective concerning theological matters and the role of religion in the Italian Renaissance.

phy, through a close examination of the case of Angelo Poliziano. I shall present a fresh account of the relations between Poliziano and philosophy, classical and scholastic, with special attention to his interest in logic and dialectic. I shall focus mainly on Poliziano's four opening lectures for his courses on Aristotelian ethics and logic held in the University of Florence in the early 1490s (the *Panepistemon* of 1490–91, the opening lecture for a course on the *Ethics*; the *Praelectio de dialectica* of 1491–92, the opening lecture for a course on Porphyry's *Isagoge* and on Aristotle's *Categories* and *On Interpretation*; the *Lamia* of 1492–93, the opening lecture for a course on the *Prior Analytics* and *On Sophistical Refutations*; and the *Dialectica* of 1493–94, the opening lecture for a course on the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Topics*, which also includes another account of *On Interpretation*), but I shall refer also to his translations of Plato's *Charmides* and Epictetus's *Enchiridion*, and to his interest in Sextus Empiricus.

Poliziano's interest in philosophical and theological matters was not occasional or accidental. He was among the humanists who participated in a famous scholastic debate on the question of evil that took place in Florence in 1489 between two scholastic thinkers (Nicolaus de Mirabilibus and Giorgio Benigno Salviati),² and we know that his interest in scholastic logic was not a very late development in his intellectual interests, nor was his interest in philosophy only the result of Pico's influence during the late 1480s.³ The fact that a scholastic thinker, the Dominican Francesco di Tommaso, dedicated a dialogue on scholastic logic to Poliziano in 1480 is good evidence for Poliziano's longstanding and serious interest in philosophical issues. An even earlier piece of evidence is Poliz-

² For a detailed account of Poliziano's intervention in this debate in the context of humanist theology, see Salvatore I. Camporeale, "L'esegesi umanistica del Valla e il simposio teologico di Lorenzo il Magnifico a palazzo Medici: L'intervento di Poliziano," in *Poliziano nel suo tempo: Atti del VI convegno internazionale (Chianciano-Montepulciano 18–21 luglio 1994)*, ed. Luisa Secchi Tarugi (Florence, 1996), 283–95. For more general accounts, see Armando F. Verde, *Lo studio fiorentino 1473–1503: Ricerche e documenti*, vol. 4, *La vita universitaria* (Florence, 1985), 822–29; Jill Kraye, "Lorenzo and the Philosophers," in *Classical Traditions in Renaissance Philosophy* (Aldershot, 2002), chap. 4. For a detailed analysis of the main arguments in this debate and their implications, see Amos Edelheit, *Scholastic Florence: Moral Psychology in the Quattrocento* (Leiden, 2014), 33–81.

³ The crucial mention of Pico's role in encouraging Poliziano to study philosophy can be found in Poliziano's 1489 *Miscellanea*, which is cited and discussed in Christopher S. Celenza, "Poliziano's *Lamia* in Context," in *Angelo Poliziano's Lamia: Text, Translation, and Introductory Studies* (Leiden, 2010), 1–45, at 34 and 34n82, where we find that "is [Pico] me institit ad philosophiam, non, ut antea, somniculosus, sed vegetis vigilantibusque oculis explorandum, quasi quodam suae vocis animare classico." Celenza's account is a very useful starting point for an examination of the relations between Poliziano and philosophy.

iano's translation of Plato's *Charmides*, probably from the late 1470s.⁴ But already in 1473 we find echoes of such interests in Poliziano's elegy to Bartolomeo Fonzio, where we have, for instance, references to Ficino and his critique of Epicurus.⁵ This interest should be studied in the context of the new status assigned to philosophy by several humanists and humanist-oriented philosophers who were part of Poliziano's close circle, such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino, Cristoforo Landino, and Ermolao Barbaro, and its results should probably redraw the boundaries between Renaissance humanism and scholasticism, while avoiding the common scholarly fallacy of prioritizing the humanists over the scholastics or of disregarding the sincere interest of some humanists in scholastic philosophy. Moreover, as I shall try to show in what follows, focusing on Poliziano's interests in philosophy and on his four opening lectures to his courses on Aristotle can reveal the moment in which disciplines associated with the "humanities" (in the modern sense of this term) began to be separated from the natural sciences, at a point just preceding the massive critique of Aristotelian science during the sixteenth century, through Poliziano's notion of a philosophical literature to which also the Aristotelian texts belong.

Poliziano's *Panepistemon* opens with a methodological call to follow the ancient Greek commentators on Aristotle and to begin the study of Aristotle's writings by dividing Aristotelian philosophy into different categories.⁶ But already at this stage Poliziano points out that his method

⁴ On this text see James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden, 1990), 2:449–53. For Poliziano's preface to this translation, and for Badius's remarks on this preface and on Ficino's and Poliziano's translations, see *ibid.*, 623–29. At 449, Hankins points out how little scholarly attention this translation by Poliziano has received. One should add that Poliziano's general attitude to philosophy has not attracted enough scholarly attention either and that his interest in philosophy is still regarded as very marginal in comparison to his philological achievements. The fact that we find Plato, beside Homer and Demostenes, mentioned among his *Musarum instrumenta* in a letter to Lorenzo cited and discussed by Hankins, at 450–51, is yet another example of this.

⁵ Angelo Poliziano, *Due poemetti latini: Elegia a Bartolomeo Fonzio; Epicedio di Albiera degli Albizi*, ed. Francesco Bausi (Rome, 2003); see *Ad Bartholomaeum Fonzium*, verses 155–90. And see an account of this elegy for Fonzio in Celenza, "Poliziano's *Lamia* in Context," 3. An important comparison between Poliziano's *Panepistemon* and Fonzio's *Oratio in bonas artes* can be found in Jean-Marc Mandosio, "Filosofia, arti e scienze: l'enciclopedismo di Angelo Poliziano," in *Poliziano nel suo tempo*, ed. Tarugi, 135–64, at 145–46.

⁶ Angelo Poliziano, *Omnia opera* (Venice, 1498), Y8v: "Qui libros aliquos enarrare Aristotelis ingrediuntur consuevere a principio statim philosophiam ipsam velut in membra partiri, quod et Themistium facere videmus, et Simplicium et Ammonium et alios item peripateticos veteres." Compare Poliziano's method of dividing the Aris-

of division in his interpretation of Aristotle's *Ethics* will be different from previous methods of division, since he will include in the discussion not only disciplines (*disciplinae*) and arts (*artes*), both liberal (*liberales*) and mechanical (*machinales*), but also base (*sordidae*) and low-ranking (*sellulariae*) arts. The reason for this is that these arts are also needed in life, and they are therefore to be included in this new division, a reflection of the whole of human knowledge, offered here by Poliziano.⁷ In doing so, Poliziano is telling us, he is following two professional groups (*sectiones*): doctors who specialized in anatomy and mathematicians who are making calculations by using special boards.⁸ The principle behind it is that through this practice of dividing individual matters into smaller parts and then restoring them to their wholeness, every part in them could either be more easily perceived or remembered in a more trustworthy manner.⁹ It can be said that Poliziano is describing here something similar to the practice of *διάρρησις*, found in some of the later Platonic dialogues such as the *Sophist* or *Statesman*.

Poliziano is not worried by the thought that this is a difficult task that so far has not been proposed and performed by anyone, facts that can provide an opportunity for his detractors to criticize and attack him.¹⁰ This constant presence of critics, who are not mentioned by name but who nevertheless seem to be coming from local Florentine Aristotelian and scholastic circles, is implied in all four of the opening lectures by

totelian philosophy, and philosophy and science or knowledge in general, to Argyropoulos's method found in his *Praefatio in libris Ethicorum quinque primis*, in *Reden und Briefen italienischer Humanisten*, ed. Karl Müllner (Vienna, 1899), reedited with bibliography and indices by Barbara Gerl (Munich, 1970), 3–18. For a different interpretation of the *Panepistemon* see Heikki Mikkeli, "The Aristotelian Classification of Knowledge in the Early Sixteenth Century," in *Renaissance Readings of the Corpus Aristotelicum: Proceedings of the Conference Held in Copenhagen 23–25 April 1998*, ed. Marianne Pade (Copenhagen, 2001), 103–27, especially 110–18. An early version of the *Panepistemon*, found in Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana MS 2723, fols. 73v–74v, was published in Ida Maier, "Un inédit de Politen: La classification des 'arts,'" in *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance* 22 (1960): 338–55; the text is on 343–44.

⁷ *Ibid.*: "Mihi vero nunc Aristotelis eiusdem libros de moribus interpretanti consilium est, ita divisionem istius modi aggredi, ut quoad eius fieri possit, non disciplinae modo et artes, vel liberales quae dicuntur vel machinales, sed etiam sordidae illae ac sellulariae, quibus tamen vita indiget, intra huius ambitum distributionis colligantur."

⁸ *Ibid.*: "Imitabor igitur sectiones illas medicorum quas anatomas vocant. Imitabor et tabularium calculos."

⁹ *Ibid.*, Y8v–Z1r: "Nam et dividam singula prope minutatim et in summam summarum redigam, quo possit unumquodque vel facilius percipi vel fidelius retineri."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Z1r: "Nec autem me fallit quam sit operis ardui, quod nec ab ullo tentatum hactenus, quam denique obtractatoribus opportunum quod polliceor."

Poliziano. But in the *Panepistemon*, as we have just seen and as we shall see in what follows, we find an argument in support of explicit novelties that goes beyond the standard, albeit implicit, manner in which new ideas and theories are introduced in scholastic discourses. According to Poliziano, the common or wonted (*usitata*) practices (probably the manners of classifying sciences and disciplines by the scholastics) are, on the one hand, exceedingly worn out (*exculcata nimis*) and practically worthless (*sordent*), while he, on the other hand, has learned not to follow in the footsteps of others, since in matters of importance his own will is not devoid of excellence. Poliziano adds that Plato regarded imitators as the most worthless among human beings (probably referring to the famous critique of poets found in the *Republic*), and he was followed by Horace who called such men servile cattle (*servum pecus*).¹¹ His scholastic rivals, Poliziano complains, will look for every opportunity (*occasio*), for no good reason at all, to attack him.¹² What is it that seems to be bothering them? According to Poliziano, his own use of Greek words in his discussion of the arts while his rivals hardly know Latin is one reason; but, Poliziano explains, many matters that are common to various arts and disciplines are so obvious that it is enough to point them out with one's finger. Now, Poliziano asks his readers to pay attention and show favor toward one who offers them great utility emerging from a clear and short division of so many matters. Then, they will experience the delight that comes from an erudite and somewhat new variety of different concepts.¹³ Greater utility and delight will be the outcome of this new method of dividing arts and disciplines offered by Poliziano to replace the common and much too habitual methods. And here comes a rather surprising statement:

You should not, however, expect here either a display of speech or decorations of words, nor cosmetics of colorful language. For as Manilius

¹¹ Ibid.: "Sed ita homo sum. Sordent usitata ista et exculcata nimis, nec alienis demum vestigiis insistere didici, quoniam in magnis etiam voluntas ipsa laude sua non caret, et vilissimos hominum Plato existimat imitatores, meritoque ob id vate Horatio [*Ep.* I, 19, 19] servum pecus appellati sunt."

¹² Ibid., Z1r: "Obtrectatorum vero nulla prorsus habenda ratio, qui si nunc desit occasio, facile tamen invenient alteram."

¹³ Ibid.: "Illud obsecro ne quinquam perturbet, quod ipsis artium vocabulis etiamque Graecis utar interdum, si quidem pleraque sic exposita reperiuntur, ut Latine nondum loqui didicerint, sed et multa diversis artibus disciplinisque communia semel explicata, mox quasi digito notari, nutuque significari sat erit. Nunc adeste animis quaeso, et auribus omnes, ac favete dicenti magnam (ni fallor) et ex perspicua brevique rerum tantarum distinctione utilitatem, et ex erudita quadam novaque vocum diversarum varietate voluptatem percepturi."

the astronomer elegantly says, the matter itself rejects being decorated, being content in being taught.¹⁴

Coming from Poliziano's mouth, this rather standard apologetic statement that we usually find in the beginning of a scholastic account, in many cases addressing a humanist audience, is indeed surprising.¹⁵ This statement is immediately followed by the first division, and so, at this point, we move from the opening section to the actual presentation of the new division of the arts and disciplines.

Poliziano begins by saying that there are three kinds of doctrines among human beings: inspired, acquired, and mixed. Theology belongs to the first, philosophy as the mother of arts to the second, and divination to the third.¹⁶ God is the object of theology, and the Scriptures are its instrument.¹⁷ Philosophy is divided into three: speculative (*speculativa*), practical (*actualis*), and rational (*rationalis*). Speculative philosophy has three objects: material things, things that are detached from matter, and things in the middle, that is, between material and immaterial. Some of these things in the middle are joined with real (material) things (*re coniunctae*) and are separated from them through an act of

¹⁴ Ibid.: "Nec pompam tamen hic orationis aut verborum phaleras expecteris, et pictae tectoria linguae. Nam quod eleganter Manilius inquit astronomus [*Astronomicon*, 3, 39]: ornari res ipsa negat contenta doceri." The same citation from Manilius can be found in Pico's *proemium* to his *De ente et uno*, which was dedicated to Poliziano; see Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno, e scritti vari*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence, 1942), 388. And see now in the more recent critical edition of this text, *Dell'Ente e dell'Uno*, ed. Raphael Ebgi and Franco Bacchelli (Milan, 2011), 204.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Niccolò Tignosi's prologue to his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, cited in David A. Lines, *Aristotle's Ethics in the Italian Renaissance (ca. 1300–1650): The Universities and the Problem of Moral Education* (Leiden, 2002), 192n33: "Quisquis has glosulas lecturus es, quoniam elegantes minimum conscriptae sunt, praecor latio conveniens pone supercilium [Periapea 1.2]. Non enim omnia possumus omnes." And see also Vincenzo Bandello da Castelnuovo, "Opusculum Fratris Vincentii de Castronovo Ordinis Praedicatorum ad magnificum ac generosum virum Laurentium Medicem quod beatitudo hominis in actu intellectus et non voluntatis essentialiter consistit incipit," in *Le Thomisme et la pensée italienne de la renaissance*, ed. Paul Oskar Kristeller (Paris, 1967), 187–278; see 196: "Reliquum est, Magnifice Laurenti, ut si in verborum compositione ornatuque sententiarum nos deficere tua eloquentia iudicavit, non propterea munusculum hoc minus gratum habeas. Siquidem theologorum consuetudinem imitamur, qui longo suo exemplo docuerunt oratione simplici huicemodi gravissimas quaestiones clarius ab omnibus intelligi posse."

¹⁶ Poliziano, *Omnia opera*, Z1r: "Tria sunt igitur inter homines genera doctrinarum: inspiratum, inventum, mixtum. In primo genere theologia nostra; in secundo mater artium philosophia; in tertio divinatio sita est."

¹⁷ Ibid.

the intellect (*intellectione distractae*). These things are either substances or accidents. These accidents are yet again divided into accidents through being a multitude and accidents through being a magnitude. Multitude is divided into absolute and relative; magnitude is divided into abiding and changing.¹⁸ From this speculative philosophy, just as in a natural pedigree (*stemma naturale*), are born first philosophy, which investigates the soul, and four mathematical disciplines (the traditional *quadrivium*): arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. These disciplines are followed by yet other disciplines.¹⁹

Practical philosophy expounds customs and ways of behavior (*mores*) on individual, family, and city or community levels. This triple offspring conducts the administration of moral and civil matters.²⁰ By rational philosophy, Poliziano means an extended version of the traditional *trivium*. Here we find logic, dialectic, rhetoric, poetry, grammar, and history.²¹

Poliziano next discusses natural philosophy, in the beginning of the following section of the *Panepistemon*, which is dedicated to a detailed account of each part of philosophy. Natural philosophy clearly belongs to the speculative part. It focuses on matters that generally are present in (material) things (*communiter insunt rebus*), such as (material) principles and things related to them or proceeding from them, or on matters that only seem to be present but in fact are not, like vacuum (*inane*) and infinity (*infinitum*).²² It is rather difficult to understand

¹⁸ Ibid.: "Philosophia spectativa est, actualis, rationalis. Sed spectativa pars aut res considerat materiae prorsus implicitas, aut a materia penitus abiunctas, aut medias, quasdam re coniunctas, intellectione distractas, easque vel substantias vel accidentia; rursus haec, aut qua multitudo sunt, aut qua magnitudo. Multitudo ut absoluta ut relata. Magnitudo ut manens ut mobilis."

¹⁹ Ibid.: "Ex hoc igitur spectativi generis quasi stemmate naturalis, et prima philosophia tum quae de anima pertractat, et mathematicae quatuor seu doctrinales: arithmetica, musica, geometria, et sphaerica, cum suis illis quasi pedissequis: calculatoria, geodesia, canonice, astrologia, optica, et mechanica nascuntur."

²⁰ Ibid.: "Actualis pars mores expendit, sed aut singulorum, aut familiae, aut civitatis. Unde quasi trigeminus partus moralem dispensativam civilemque pertulit."

²¹ Ibid., Z1r-v: "Rationalis aut indicat, aut narrat, aut demonstrat, aut suadet, aut oblectat. Unde grammatica, historia, dialectica, rhetorica, et poetica emergerunt." On this see Ari Wesseling, "Poliziano and Ancient Rhetoric: Theory and Practice," *Rinascimento* 30 (1990): 191-204, especially 194, where the author identifies the hidden source for Poliziano's account of rhetoric, grammar, and logic: Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. On the other sources (Quintilian, Augustine, and Isidore) see *ibid.*, nn10-11.

²² Ibid., Z1v: "Naturalis aut circa ea versatur quae communiter insunt rebus, aut circa ea quae videntur inesse, nec insunt. Inesse videntur nec insunt inane et infinitum. Insunt aut vel principia, vel quae principiis adnexa, vel quae de principiis exorta."

what exactly Poliziano means in his references to vacuum and infinity here, two aspects that are denied existence in Aristotelian physics but, despite Aristotle's objections, are much discussed by ancient, medieval, and Renaissance philosophers.²³ Does he mean that these aspects are not present in the material world because of their "nature" or "quality" not to be present (and thus they exist as part of reality), or does he mean that they do not exist in reality, thus following a standard Aristotelian view? The first possibility might bring us to the conclusion that what we have here in Poliziano's account of the objects of natural philosophy is an important and explicit step away from the framework of Aristotelian physics, at the heart of his new scientific scheme, and as part of his opening lecture for his course on Aristotle's *Ethics*. But it is more likely that Poliziano simply follows the Aristotelian position here.

Given the institutional affinity in the Italian universities between natural philosophy and medicine, and the fact that natural philosophy was mainly taught in medical faculties,²⁴ it is not surprising that Poliziano regards medicine as the pupil (*alumna*) of natural philosophy and thus provides a rather detailed and technical account of the medical disciplines.²⁵

Focusing on first philosophy, Poliziano argues that it investigates God, minds (*mentes*) that are separated from the body, and also many principles of all doctrines that we call axioms, through their footprints in nature.²⁶ Another object of investigation of first philosophy is the soul, and Poliziano presents the standard triple division into vegetative, sensible, and rational powers or faculties (*vires*), and their subdivisions.²⁷ This is followed by a very interesting account of two "tendencies" (*expetitio-nes*): one in reason, or rather in the rational faculty of the soul, which is the will (*voluntas*); and one in the senses, or rather in the sensible faculty

²³ For one example of supporting the idea of the existence of actual infinity in the created world according to Richard Kilvington, see Elżbieta Jung and Robert Podkoński, "The Transmission of English Ideas in the Fourteenth Century: The Case of Richard Kilvington," *Mediævalia Philosophica Polonorum* 37, no. 3 (2008): 59–69, especially 64–67. For important general accounts of the concept of space see Keimpe Algra, *Concepts of Space in Greek Thought* (Leiden, 1995); Edward Grant, *Much Ado about Nothing: Theories of Space and Vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 1981).

²⁴ For an account of the academic status of natural philosophy in the Italian universities see Paul F. Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore, 2002), 267–313.

²⁵ Poliziano, *Omnia opera*, Z1v.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: "Prima philosophia deum mentesque corpore seiunctas, ac multiplicia doctrinarum omnium principia quae vocamus axiomata, sed naturae vestigiis indagat."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Z1v–Z2r.

of the soul, which is irascibility (*iracundia*) or desire (*libido*).²⁸ *Expeditio* should be understood here as a tendency toward action through a certain impulse. The nature of this impulse is determined according to the faculty of the soul to which it belongs. Thus, what we seem to have here in Poliziano's definition of the will is something like a rational impulse. This definition, which is very close to that of Thomas Aquinas and most of the Thomists in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, who — very differently from John Duns Scotus and his followers, who emphasized the independence of the will from reason and the intellect — regarded the will as subject to reason and defined it as a rational appetite (*appetitus rationalis*). But Poliziano does not seem very keen to enter into these debates among medieval and Renaissance scholastic schools.²⁹ He rather prefers at this point to present an important patristic source for human psychology: Nemesius's *De natura hominis*. This strategy reflects well the humanist approach and its philosophical preferences.

The significant difference between the triple division of the soul presented by Poliziano, which can be regarded as Aristotelian, and the one of Nemesius, lies in the fact that, beyond the change in terminology for each of the three faculties (*animalis, vitalis, naturalis*), we find all the intellectual and sensual abilities in the first faculty, while the other two contain only the physical aspects of a living human being.³⁰ This structure, which sharply distinguishes the intellectual and sensible level from the corporeal level, is obviously more compatible with the Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul than the Aristotelian division, where the intellectual abilities are completely dependent on the function of the imagination and of the senses, which are connected to corporeal organs

²⁸ Ibid., Z2r: "Expeditio vero in ratione voluntas, in sensibus, aut iracundia est, aut libido."

²⁹ Ibid. On these debates see, e.g., the studies of Guido Alliney, "La contingenza della fruizione beatifica nello sviluppo del pensiero di Duns Scoto," in *Via Scoti: Metodologica ad mentem Joannis Duns Scoti; Atti del Congresso Scotistico Internazionale, Roma 9–11 marzo 1993*, ed. Leonardo Sileo (Rome, 1995), 2:633–60; idem, "Fra Scoto e Ockham: Giovanni di Reading e il dibattito sulla libertà a Oxford (1310–1320)," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 7 (1996): 243–368; idem, "La ricezione della teoria scotiana della volontà nell'ambiente teologico parigino (1307–1316)," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 14 (2005): 339–404; idem, "The Treatise on the Human Will in the *Collationes oxonienses* Attributed to John Duns Scotus," *Medioevo* 30 (2005): 209–69.

³⁰ Ibid.: "Nemesius autem sic in libro *De homine*. Vis inquit animae triplex est: animalis, vitalis, naturalis. Primi generis mens, phantasia, ratiocinatio, memoria, cogitatio. Tum opinio, sensusque particulares et quicumque motus ab electione profiscuntur. Secundum genus in respiratione continetur et pulsibus. Tertium vero in gignendo, nutriendo, augendo, continendo, transmutando, excernendo."

and thus perishable. But this aspect does not seem to bother Poliziano at all, since he immediately relates each part of the soul, including reason, to a corporeal organ.³¹

Following short accounts of other disciplines included in first philosophy, such as arithmetic, music, astrology, and optics, with an important section dedicated to mechanics,³² Poliziano moves on to the second part of philosophy, the moral part, which is part of politics (*civilitas*), and in which different good matters (*bona*) are treated. Among these Poliziano mentions virtue both of the rational soul and of a soul that obeys and follows reason.³³ What are the objects of investigation here?

Therefore, the affections, potencies, and habits of the soul are investigated, and among them excesses and deficiencies, moderate passions, judgment, choice, the appetite and its parts: cupidity, rage, will.³⁴

Once again we see that the will is attached to the appetite, and here it is mentioned with two of the appetite's other parts: cupidity and rage. Although still subjected to the rational soul, this is not the most flattering description of the will even by Thomistic standards.

The virtues are mentioned next, and Poliziano presents twenty-six virtues: courage (*fortitudo*), equanimity (*aequanimitas*), continence (*continentia*), temperance (*temperantia*), kindness (*liberalitas*), greatness of soul (*magnitudo animi*), eminence (*magnificentia*), integrity (*honestas*), gravity (*gravitas*), refinement (*urbanitas*), truthfulness (*veritas*), righteousness (*iustitia*), expertness (*scientia*), prudence (*prudencia*), intelligence (*intellegentia*), appraisal (*aestimatio*), shrewdness (*solertia*), sagacity (*sagacitas*), friendliness (*comitas*), heroic virtue (*heroica virtus*), enjoyment (*voluptas*), prosperity (*prosperitas*), friendship (*amicitia*), benevolence (*benevolentia*), concord (*concordia*), and love (*amor*).³⁵ It would be interesting to find out where Poliziano got this multiple list of virtues, which cannot be found in any of the Stoic lists and might just be his own invention. This catalogue of virtues is immediately followed by a swift move to that part of moral philosophy that is related to management (*dispensativa pars*) in general and to politics (*civilis pars*) in particular,

³¹ Ibid.: "Fit et illa divisio de partibus corporis, ut in cerebro ratio, ira in corde. Cupiditas collocetur iecore, quod est virtutibus et vitiis commune seminarium."

³² Ibid., Z2r–Z3r.

³³ Ibid., Z3r: "Moralis, pars civilitatis est, in qua de bonis agitur diversis. Quorum numero etiam virtus est seu rationalis anime sit, seu rationi obtemperantis."

³⁴ Ibid.: "Tractantur igitur affectus et potestates et habitus animi, et in his excessus, defectus, mediocritates, arbitrium, electio, appetitus eiusque partes: cupiditas, furor, voluntas."

³⁵ Ibid.

including a mention of the standard classical account of the three “good” and the three “corrupted” regimes, and then a discussion of some related disciplines: civil law and the art of war.³⁶

After discussing other celebrated arts (*artes celebratae*) like agriculture, pasturing, hunting, architecture, painting, cooking, and some arts related to the theater (actors, gladiators, gymnasts, and charioteers), Poliziano continues in the same vein and mentions briefly nomenclature and its parts, and then many other professions.³⁷ Upon reading this long and detailed list of almost any possible art and discipline, including some worthless artists (*nugatorii artifices*), one might think that this is some kind of a parody on the notion of practicality and on such detailed discussions with endless divisions and subdivisions. This list ends the account of practical philosophy, and Poliziano, after an interesting remark³⁸ that yet reinforces the impression that this last section in the *Panepistemon*, focusing on many ultra-practical disciplines, is indeed parodical, immediately moves on to discuss grammar, which is, as we have seen, already part of rational philosophy.

Grammar is divided into three: methodical, historical, and mixed. After a short explanation of each part, Poliziano describes the objects of grammar, where he mentions letters, syllables, and parts of speech; likeness and unlikeness; errors, orthography, and other matters dealt with by this discipline.³⁹

Poliziano’s account of history is interesting:

History [is divided into two kinds]: fabulous and trustworthy. Fabulous history [is divided into a part that aims at causing] pleasure, as in the plots used by comic poets, [and another part that aims at] encouragement. The subject matter of this [part] is either based on fiction, like the Aesopian fables, or on the solidity of truth, which is put together either by means of shameful matters in the case of some poetic fables, or concealed in pious veil, which is the only genre the ancient philosophers accepted. Trustworthy history deals with places, as geography, or with epochs, as chronicles, or with the nature of animals [and] plants, or with public affairs, like annals, and other histories, of which the components are persons, causes, place, time, mode, instrument, matter, objects. The style [used] in history is extended and continuous, not periodical, except when it represents speeches made in public gatherings.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., Z3r–v.

³⁷ Ibid., Z3v–Z5r.

³⁸ Ibid., Z5r: “Sed iam video de fece haurimus. Itaque mox paulo meliora.” This *faex* is sharply contrasted to the “celebrated arts according to the authors,” described on Z3v.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.: “Historia, vel fabularis vel ad fidem. Fabularis, aut voluptatis, ut in argumentis comicorum, aut adhortationis gratia; haec aut argumentum habet ex ficto ut

In this description of history, the second part of rational philosophy, we see a most unusual group of arts and disciplines put together. It is thus crucial to determine what exactly “history” means for Poliziano. To begin, history is not understood by Poliziano either in the ancient or in the modern sense of this term. And it is definitely not the way most contemporary humanist intellectuals in the fifteenth century had used this word. History, according to Poliziano, is a narrative description used in different forms of writing, either literary (fabulous) or what we can call scientific (trustworthy). Interestingly, some literary forms are based on the solidity of truth; here he includes the ancient philosophical literature. This point is crucial, since Poliziano is clearly developing a new notion of philosophical literature thanks to which this textual corpus becomes a legitimate object for philological scrutiny, and it also allows someone like Poliziano, with his literary formation and expertise, to teach philosophy. This notion stands in sharp contrast to contemporary institutional divisions and practices, as we can see from the angry reactions toward Poliziano and his initiative to teach Aristotle in the University of Florence.

According to Poliziano, scientific history includes such fields as geographical and chronological narratives as well as “history” in the classical sense: investigation of natural and other matters, and also political analysis.

The other parts of rational philosophy are dialectic, rhetoric, and poetry. Since Poliziano’s account of rhetoric has been studied in some detail,⁴¹ and since the main theme of the present study is Poliziano and philosophy, let us turn our attention to dialectic. According to Poliziano, the Latin term *dialectica* was first presented by Varro, who divided this discipline into six rules (*normae*) studied by dialectic: on logical terms and explanatory concepts (*de loquendo*), on grammatical terms and parts of speech and sentences (*de eloquendo*), on proposition (*de proloquendo*, the Stoic *axioma*), on different kinds of propositions (*de proloquiorum summa*), on judgment (*de iudicando*), and on these matters that should be presented in speech (*de his quae dicenda sunt*).⁴² This basic division

Aesopeis fabulis, aut ex veri soliditate, quam aut per turpia contextitur, ut in quibusdam poeticis figmentis, aut pio tegitur velamine, quod solum genus philosophi veteres admiserunt. Ad fidem historia de locis est, ut geographia, vel de temporibus ut chronice, vel de natura ut animalium, plantarum, vel de gestis rebus ut annales, historiaeque ceterae: quarum elementa sunt personae, causae, locus, tempus, modus, instrumentum, materia, res. Stilus in historia fusus et continuus, non perihodicus, nisi cum prosopopoeias asciscit in contionibus.”

⁴¹ Wesseling, “Poliziano and Ancient Rhetoric: Theory and Practice” (n. 21 above).

⁴² Poliziano, *Omnia opera* (n. 6 above), Z5r-v: “Dialecticam prius latinitate donavit Marcus Varro, quam sex normis utitur. Et enim de loquendo, de eloquendo, de proloquendo, de proloquiorum summa, de iudicando, de his quae dicenda sunt quae-

is followed by subdivisions of each of the six basic rules.⁴³ The whole passage is taken mainly from Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis* IV, 335–43, with some variations, a fact that associates Poliziano with the medieval encyclopedic culture, which adapted Martianus Capella's text and turned it into a popular textbook during the Middle Ages.

The third and last kind of human doctrine discussed by Poliziano in the *Panepistemon*, which contains an admixture of inspired and acquired elements, is divination or, in a Christian context, prophecy.⁴⁴ Following Chrysostom, Poliziano mentions five kinds of prophecies.⁴⁵ It is interesting and unusual that Poliziano regards prophecy also as "acquired," while theology is completely "inspired." Under "natural prophecy" we find also "frenzy" (*furor*) and a reference to Plato and the four kinds of frenzy,⁴⁶ which were so important to Ficino, mainly in his 1469 commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. The "acquired" element in prophecy becomes clearer in the discussion of "artificial prophecy." Here Poliziano mentions doctors, advisors, and governors, who make use of the art of dream interpreters as a kind of practical prophecy, which is closer to art.⁴⁷ The *Panepistemon* ends with a very critical account of magic, the last kind of prophecy.⁴⁸

In his *Praelectio de dialectica*, Poliziano presents a distinction between two different meanings of the term "dialectic."⁴⁹ While in the exposition

rit." It is beyond the scope of the present article to deal with the complex blend of Aristotelian and Stoic logic found in Martianus Capella. It is enough to point out that Poliziano in this case does not seem to be aware of these very different traditions reflected in his source.

⁴³ Ibid., Z5v.

⁴⁴ See n. 16 above.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Z6v: "Reliqua divinatio est, quae prophetia quoque dicitur a nostris. Haec (ut ait sacer Chrysostomus) aut spiritalis, aut naturalis, aut artificiosa, aut popularis, aut damnata est et profana."

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.: "Onirocriticon artificiosa est qua medici, qua consiliarii, qua gubernatores utuntur. Nam et medici morborum principia, momenta, finesque praesciscunt, et consiliarii, quid expediat in posterum coniectant, et gubernatores ventorum tempestatumque praevident varietates."

⁴⁸ Ibid.: "Tum illa quoque pars damnata in primis, quae vel malos genios consulit, vel deos evocat manis, cuique magicae nomen fecimus . . . multaque id genus alia vana prorsus, et deridicula quaeque iam merito silentii nos admonent."

⁴⁹ Poliziano, *Opera omnia* (Lyon, 1546), 174–78. This rather short but dense text "has never . . . been correctly interpreted," according to Jonathan Hunt, *Politian and Scholastic Logic: An Unknown Dialogue by a Dominican Friar* (Città di Castello, 1995), 27 (part of the introduction to the critical edition). This interesting account by Poliziano of dialectic, logic, and philosophy as a whole reflects his complex and more mature attitude to these disciplines and to scholastic philosophy, beyond his well-known attacks. One good example of such an attack is cited by Hunt, at 26n62

of the first meaning dialectic is regarded as the greatest art and the purest part of philosophy, it is the second meaning that attracts Poliziano:

We are dealing here with dialectic: but not that one which is said to be the one art which is the greatest of all arts, the purest part of philosophy, one that extends itself above all disciplines, gives strength to all of them and imposes a ceiling on all of them. But that one (if we are to trust Plotinus, the greatest of Platonists) is preferable, by means of which we can speak of anything with certain reasoning, that it is, in what it differs from something else, with what it is in agreement, or where anything is, is it what it is, how many are there that exist, how many, on the contrary, that do not exist, and are thus different from those that exist. This dialectic also discusses the good and that which is not good, deals with all things that fall under the good and with those that fall under that which is the opposite of good.⁵⁰

in his introduction. The basic facts concerning the date (October 1491, the beginning of the academic year 1491–92) and circumstances (introductory lecture to Poliziano's first course on logic) of the writing of the *Praelectio de dialectica* can be found in Verde, *Lo studio fiorentino (La vita universitaria)*, 3:1043–45. And see also the general account in Vittore Branca, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo della parola* (Turin, 1983), 73–78. For the exact dating of the text and an account of the contents of Poliziano's courses on Aristotelian logic see Al Wolters, "Poliziano as a Translator of Plotinus," *Renaissance Quarterly* 40 (1987): 452–64, especially 463–64. For Hunt's speculations concerning this text see *Politian and Scholastic Logic*, 27–28. See also Hunt's general discussion of Poliziano and scholasticism, with further references to modern scholarly literature, on 23–33. Hunt's approach clearly prioritizes the humanists over the scholastics, as can be seen from the fact that the name of Francesco di Tommaso, the author of *De negotio logico*, is not even mentioned in the title of this critical edition of his text while the name of the dedicatee Poliziano is mentioned. (This reflects an overall attitude: the whole discussion and scholarly attention focused on Francesco di Tommaso, including the preparation of a critical edition of his text, is only justified by its relation to Poliziano!) Some remarks on the relations between the scholastic thinkers and the *studia humanitatis* (18), or on the dialogue form (21), reveal Hunt's limited understanding of some key features of Renaissance scholastic thinkers. In this respect Hunt reflects what is still quite a common perspective in Renaissance studies. I shall therefore offer a different interpretation of Poliziano's *Praelectio de dialectica* from the one presented by Hunt on 28–32. For the best previous attempt to deal with issues concerning Poliziano and dialectic see Cesare Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo: "Invenzione" e "Metodo" nella cultura del XV e XVI secolo* (Milan, 1968; repr., Naples, 2007), 183–203.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 174–75: "Dialectica nobis in manibus, non illa quidem, quae ars una omnium artium maxima dicitur, eademque purissima philosophiae pars est, quaeque se supra disciplinas omnes explicat, omnibus vires accomodat, omnibus fastigium imponit. Illa enim (si Plotino credimus Platonicorum summo) praestat, ut ratione quadam de quovis dicere possimus, quod sit, quo differat ab alio, in quo conveniat, aut ubi quidque sit, an sit quod est, quot sint quae sunt, quot rursus quae non sunt, alia scilicet ab iis, quae sunt. Haec et de bono disputat, et de eo, quod bonum non est, omniaque pertractat, quaeque sub bono sunt, quaeque sub eo, quod contrarium

The first meaning of dialectic, which never searches anything beyond itself, is called “logic” and deals with propositions, syllogisms, and theorems.⁵¹ The second meaning of dialectic does not deal with words (*literae*) but rather with the truth (*veritas*) and with the cognitive movements of the soul (*animi cogniti motus*). It examines all these matters, but it avoids the filth of matter (*materiae sordes reformidans*), allowing logic to occupy itself with these material things.⁵² This dialectic has been the subject of debates among philosophers: some regarded it as a part of philosophy, others as an instrument, or, like Boethius, as both.⁵³

The Platonic dialectic, Poliziano contends, may appear to some to be very different and perhaps also more difficult.⁵⁴ But the subject of Poliziano’s course is Aristotelian logic, and so, while answering the rhetorical question of who are his teachers in this field, he mentions “his teachers” in the Peripatetic school: Theophrastus, Alexander, Themistius, Ammonius, Simplicius, and Philoponus. These ancient Greek commentators on Aristotle are followed now (*nunc*) by Walter Burley, Herveus Natalis,

bono.” In the passage between “ut ratione quadam” and “contrarium bono,” Poliziano is rendering in Latin parts of the Greek parts of Plotinus’s account of dialectic found in *Enneads* I, 3, 4, and 5, as has been shown in Wolters, “Poliziano as a Translator of Plotinus.” For the above cited passage see Plotinus, *Enneads* I, 3, 4 (2–7).

⁵¹ Ibid., 175: “ubi vero quieta, nihil iam quaerit ultra, sed in se ipsa considens, etiam, quaeque logica disciplina vocatur, inter propositiones, ratiocinationesque suas, interque regulas, et theoremata agitantem.” See Wolters’s remarks on this passage in “Poliziano as a Translator of Plotinus,” 458–59, where he points out some grammatical problems including a *lacuna* before “interque.”

⁵² Ibid.: “Nec enim ipsa illa talibus, tamque minutis vacat, sicut neque literis, sed veritate perspecta, atque animi cognitis motibus, et haec ipsa plane pervidet, sed materiae sordes reformidans, volutare in eis logicam sinit.” Compare with Plotinus, *Enneads* I, 3, 5 (17–19), and see Wolters, “Poliziano as a Translator of Plotinus,” 458.

⁵³ Ibid.: “Quae tamen quoniam similitudine quapiam dialecticam repraesentat, nata inde contentio inter philosophos est, philosophiae pars, an instrumentum dialectica sit, an (quod Boetius existimavit) utrumque.” Compare Plotinus, *Enneads* I, 3, 5 (8–10): ἡ φιλοσοφία τὸ τιμιώτατον; ἢ τὰ ὑτὸν φιλοσοφία καὶ διαλεκτική; ἢ φιλοσοφίας μέρος τὸ τίμιον. οὐ γὰρ δὴ οἰητέον ὄργανον τοῦτο εἶναι τοῦ φιλοσόφου. Plotinus’s point here is that Aristotelian logic is related to philosophy only as far as it is connected to reality. For some discussions of Boethius’s logic see, e.g., Sten Ebbesen, “The Aristotelian Commentator,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, ed. John Marenbon (Cambridge, 2009), 34–55; Taki Suto, *Boethius on Mind, Grammar and Logic: A Study of Boethius’ Commentaries on Peri Hermeneias* (Leiden, 2012); Dimitrios Nikitas, “*Exemplum logicum Boethii*: Reception and Renewal,” in *Greek into Latin from Antiquity until the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Glucker and Charles Burnett (London, 2012), 131–44.

⁵⁴ Ibid.: “Verum Platonica ista remota nimis, nimisque etiam fortassis ardua quibusdam videri poterit.”

William Ockham, William Heytesbury, and Ralph Strode.⁵⁵ Beyond the ironic tone of Poliziano here, deliberately contrasting the ancient Greek commentators (whom he highly esteemed in matters of both style and contents) with some “obscure” (according to Poliziano’s standards) and difficult fourteenth-century scholastic thinkers, we also have here an important account of the status of several outstanding representatives of the *via moderna* in Italy by the end of the fifteenth century.⁵⁶

In his adolescence, Poliziano tells us, he was taught dialectic by some hardly obscure teachers of philosophy, some of whom did not know either Greek or Latin letters, and so they defiled the purity of Aristotle’s books while causing him to laugh or making him angry.⁵⁷ The few teachers who knew Greek were dependent on rare volumes of these commentators that

⁵⁵ Ibid., 176: “Et ego igitur, si ex me quaeratis, qui mihi praeceptores in Peripateticorum fuerint scolis, strues vobis monstrare librias potero, ubi Theophrastos, Alexandros, Themistios, Hammonios, Simplicios, Philoponos, aliosque praeterea ex Aristotelis familia numerabitis, quorum nunc in locum (si diis placet) Burleus [Walter Burley], Erueus [Herveus Natalis], Occan [William Ockham], Tisperus, Antiberus [William Heytesbury], Strodusque [Ralph Strode] succedunt.” It is important to mention here a dramatic shift from Averroës to Themistius and Simplicius as the best interpreters of Aristotle in both Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo during the 1490s. On this see Edward P. Mahoney, “Philosophy and Science in Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo,” in *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance* (Aldershot, 2000), chap. 1.

⁵⁶ On this see Carlo Dionisotti, “Ermolao Barbaro e la fortuna di Suiseth,” in *Medioevo e Rinascimento: Studi in onore di Bruno Nardi* (Florence, 1955), 1:217–53.

⁵⁷ Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 176: “Et quidem ego adulescens doctoribus quibusdam, nec iis quidem obscuris philosophiae, dialecticaeque operam dabam, quorum alii Graecarum nostrarumque iuxta ignari literarum, ita omnem Aristotelis librorum puritatem dira quadam morositatis illuvie foedabant, ut risum mihi aliquando, interdum etiam stomachum moverent.” I cannot accept Hunt’s speculations on the meaning of *adulescens* here and his conclusion in Hunt, *Politian and Scholastic Logic*, 32: “Politian is using *adulescens* in the wider sense allowed by classical Latin, meaning a young man roughly between the ages of fifteen and thirty; and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he is deliberately exploiting the ambiguity of the word to distance himself from his debt to scholasticism, even as he avows it.” This humanist theme of the purity of the Aristotelian texts, or their sweetness, which was corrupted by ignorant scholastic philosophers and medieval translators, found in our sources at least since the days of Petrarch (e.g., *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, in *Invectives*, ed. and trans. David Marsh [Cambridge, MA, 2003], 232), probably comes, when it refers to the original texts of Aristotle, from an uncritical reading of Cicero (e.g., *De oratore* 1, 49), who praises Aristotle’s style while referring to Aristotle’s “exoteric” works (most of them now lost) such as his dialogues, and not to his “acroamatic” writings, which, after their publication in the first century BCE, slowly became one of the basic textual, philosophical, and scientific foundations for centuries in the Latin West.

Poliziano could use thanks to Lorenzo de' Medici's generosity.⁵⁸ Since the innovations of these teachers were all derived from these commentaries, Poliziano was gladly attaching himself to those leading Greek commentators, whose footsteps showed the way even to the ancestral temple of philosophy.⁵⁹ He would pursue this way toward the Mistress (*domina*), but without conciliating the handmaids that are called by us the liberal arts.⁶⁰ This statement already aims at putting philosophy (or at least this kind of Platonic dialectic) on a higher level than *liberales artes*. Poliziano admits that he is making good use of these liberal arts to this very day through his intimate familiarity with them and that he would consider them useful, mainly for training one's intellect, but not for dominating it.⁶¹ It is interesting to notice how he determines the relations between the liberal arts and philosophy:

For although [the liberal arts] do not teach philosophy, yet they should be regarded [as disciplines] that create a place [for perceiving philosophy], and if they do not lead [toward philosophy], yet they certainly bring one closer [to philosophy]: wherefore indeed I would hardly deny also their achievement through which, indeed, I sometimes would recline beside the tables of the lady [philosophy], from whose wine-bowl I drink to you at this very moment.⁶²

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 176–77. On this see E. B. Fryde, *Greek Manuscripts in the Private Library of the Medici, 1469–1510* (Aberystwyth, 1996).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 177: “Quocirca cum ne ipsi quidem quiquam nisi (quod dicitur) ex commentario saperent, libenter ego quoque ad illos adiunxi me duces, quorum trita vestigiis ad usque lares philosophiae semita patebat.”

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: “Sed cum ad ipsam quoque dominam affectarem viam, nequaquam postrema fuit cura etiam eius mihi ancillas et pedissequas conciliandi, quae liberales a nostris artes appellantur.” Compare this attitude with the one we find in Pico's letter to Andrea Corneo (1486), where he defends philosophy from its bad image as a discipline of no value unless it can lead to an active political life; he also regrets the expectation that future leaders should only have a taste of philosophy for their general education, or for the sake of showing off their knowledge. Thus he is not willing to turn philosophical learning into some temporary stage during the training of an educated man, a view of philosophy implied in Corneo's letter. See Pico, *Opera omnia* (Basel, 1557; repr., Hildesheim, 1969), 376–79, e.g., 377: “Adhortaris me tu ad actuosam vitam et civilem, frustra me et in ignominiam quasi, ac contumeliam tam diu philosophatum dicens, nisi tandem in agendarum tractandarumque rerum palaestra desudem. Et equidem mi Andrea oleum operamque meorum studiorum perdidissem, si ita essem nunc animatus, ut hac tibi parte accedere et assentiri possem. Exitialis haec illa est et monstrosa persuasio, quae hominum mentes invasit, aut non esse philosophiae studia viris principibus attingenda, aut summis labiis ad pompam potius ingenii, quam animi cultum vel ociose etiam delibenda.”

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: “Earum igitur me scitis ad hanc usque diem familiaritate intima esse usum, quoniam non inutiles esse audieram, praesertim si praepararent ingenium, non detinerent.”

⁶² *Ibid.*: “Nam si philosophiam non docent, ipsae mox tamen percipiendae locum parant, si non perducunt, ac certe expediunt: quapropter minime equidem negaverim

And indeed, Poliziano mentions some early episodes in his life when he was involved in scholastic disputations, pointing out that he was praised for his performances. He also describes some philosophical books that he interpreted either publicly or privately for some students.⁶³

Poliziano refers next to the tension between words and actions: why do we need words when we are evaluated by our actions, he asks. Following Epictetus, he presents an analogy between sheep, which do not brag about the large amount of grass they have eaten but rather offer their shepherd their milk and wool, and the philosopher, who ought not to make long speeches about the efforts he has invested in his studies but rather offer us the fruits of his learning.⁶⁴ Poliziano makes it very clear that this is what he believes that he, too, should do (*quod et nobis erit, opinor, faciendum*): action and doctrine are more precious for the philosopher than words and declarations (interestingly, this is also the preference and criterion for good preachers in medieval culture, and so we have here yet another analogy between the preacher or the theologian, and the philosopher). The question, as far as Poliziano is concerned, is only about the quality of these doctrines, and even here one has to be cautious about what one does draw out of Greek and Roman sources:

Therefore, lend me your ears and minds, Florentine youth, to draw with me the elements of true philosophy, not from the muddy cisterns of the barbarians, but from the perspicuous fountains of the Greeks and Romans. We should also take care and avoid a situation where we draw anything from this source that we would not be able to defend with reason or authority.⁶⁵

While clearly regarding classical philosophy as superior to medieval philosophy and identifying it with “true philosophy,” Poliziano still

harum quoque beneficio factum, ut ipsis aliquando dominae mensis accubuerim, de cuius videlicet cratera vobis in praesentia propino.”

⁶³ Ibid.: “Nec tamen haec prima nostra sunt rudimenta iuvenes: nam et in palaestram quandoque disputationis, non sine laude descendimus, et philosophiae libros nonnullos vel publice vobis (quod scitis) vel privatim studiosis aliquot hominibus enarravimus.”

⁶⁴ Ibid.: “Denique quid verbis opus est? spectemur agendo: ut enim oves, quod Stoicus inquit Epictetus, in pascua dimissae, nequaquam illae quidem apud pastorem gloriantur, plurimo se pastas gramine, sed lac ei potius, vellusque praebent; ita philosophus minime quidem praedicare ipsa debet, quantum in studiis desudaverit, sed ipsam suae doctrinae frugem proferre in medium, quod et nobis erit, opinor, faciendum.”

⁶⁵ Ibid., 177–78: “Quare ades auribus, atque animis Florentina iuventus, ac verae philosophiae primordia, non iam de lutosi Barbarorum lacubus, sed de Graecorum Latinorumque nitidis fontibus hauri mecum. Curae autem nobis erit, ne quid huc afferatur, quod non vel ratione tueri, vel autoritate possimus.”

thinks that it should be defended by using what are, in fact, the same philosophical practices used by the “barbarians” (i.e., the scholastics): reasons and authorities. Poliziano seems here quite committed to philosophy in a way that is beyond Kristeller’s historical definition of Renaissance humanism.⁶⁶

In his final words, Poliziano declares that, in the case of this short lecture, it is not true that the sharpness of the mind will be blunted by excessive verbosity, obscurity of speech, or by the weight of the questions, thanks to its evident shortness and its free style of discussion.⁶⁷ Not all doubts and concerns will be either raised and discussed or dismissed, according to Poliziano, in order to exercise “your minds” (*vestra ingenia*) in the most comfortable manner, and not to cause you fatigue.⁶⁸ So this short account of dialectic is already itself a kind of a dialectical exercise.

In the *Lamia*, Poliziano developed further a model for the historian of philosophy very different from the models held by contemporary scholastic philosophers. In many respects the Florentine intellectual scene of

⁶⁶ Humanism, according to Kristeller, was an important cultural movement, but it was focused on a very specific part of culture, basically the linguistic disciplines. He saw no relation between the humanists’ interest in rhetoric (both in theory and in practice), their new attitude to Aristotle and Cicero, their critique of scholasticism, their political activity, and their philosophical viewpoint. See, e.g., Kristeller, “Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance,” in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome, 1956), 553–83, especially 560–74. As the case of Poliziano’s attitude to philosophy and logic shows, Poliziano’s interest in these disciplines began at least around 1480, when the Dominican Francesco di Tommaso dedicated to him his dialogue *De negotio logico*, which seems to reflect previous encounters and common interest in scholastic logic. This means that Poliziano’s attraction to philosophy and logic is not only the result of Pico’s influence in the late 1480s, nor is it some very late development in his intellectual interests that occurred in his last years, during the early 1490s. This interest can be dated at least more than a decade before Poliziano’s death in 1494. A general discussion of these issues can be found in Hunt, *Politian and Scholastic Logic*, 23–33. For a more adequate perspective on the relations between the humanists and philosophy see Jill Kraye, “Philologists and Philosophers,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. eadem (Cambridge, 1996), 142–60. For a detailed account of Poliziano’s Platonic interpretation of Epictetus’s *Enchiridion* see eadem, “L’interprétation platonicienne de l’*Enchiridion* d’Épictète proposée par Politien: Philologie et philosophie dans la Florence du XV^e siècle, à la fin des années 70,” in *Pensé entre les lignes: Philologie et philosophie au Quattrocento*, ed. F. Mariani Zini (Villeneuve d’Ascq, 2001), 161–77.

⁶⁷ Poliziano, *Opera omnia* (n. 49 above), 178: “Nec vero verbositate nimia, aut perplexitate orationis, aut quaestionum molibus vestrae mentis acies retundetur. Etenim perspicua brevitatis, atque expeditus erit nostrae orationis cursus.”

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: “Dubitationes autem nec omnes, nec ubique aut interponemus, aut omittemus, sicut vestra quam commodissime exercentur ingenia, non fatigentur.”

the last decades of the *Quattrocento* anticipated much later debates concerning different approaches to philosophy.⁶⁹ Poliziano's model was an exclusive one (as against both Ficino's and Pico's inclusive models), giving precedence to the ancient Greek and Roman sources over everything else, and in fact dismissing any other source. The image of the *lamia* that he uses to describe his scholastic opponents (probably some scholastic-Aristotelian colleagues in the *Studio Fiorentino* or any other scholastic philosophers, teachers in the private *studia* of the different religious orders, etc.)⁷⁰ is that of bloodthirsty creatures with removable eyes (*oculi exemptiles*) who put their eyes on like eyeglasses when they are walking outside, putting them away and becoming blind while being at home. This limited, manipulative, and rather inconsistent use of the eyes and of the sense of seeing is clearly the way, according to Poliziano, scholastic philosophers are using their eyes, i.e., their minds, while discussing philosophical matters: a limited, manipulative, and inconsistent way of philosophizing.⁷¹

⁶⁹ The perception of Poliziano's model of doing philosophy and his historical and philological approach to philosophical texts presented here is different from the one found in Celenza, "Poliziano's *Lamia* in Context" (n. 3 above), 28. While Poliziano certainly does not represent anything close to a "formal history of philosophy" in the spirit of Brucker, he still presents something more systematic than "a dialogical reflection on the search for wisdom." On this see also idem, "What Counted as Philosophy in the Italian Renaissance? The History of Philosophy, the History of Science, and Styles of Life," *Critical Inquiry* 39 (2013): 367–401.

⁷⁰ This is yet another example of the need for a detailed reconstruction of the Florentine scholastic discourse in the last decades of the fifteenth century. The phrase "vecchi autori scolastici" used by Vasoli in his *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo* (n. 49 above), 190, to describe those possible opponents against whom Poliziano was reacting is not only too general but also a bit pejorative. I could not find any evidence to support Vasoli's speculation, *ibid.*, that Landino or Ficino are also objects of Poliziano's reaction in the *Lamia*. We should not forget, however, that Poliziano had some very good relations with Francesco di Tommaso and probably also with other scholastic philosophers.

⁷¹ For Poliziano's text see Angelo Poliziano, *Lamia: Praelectio in priora Aristotelis analytica*, ed. Ari Wesseling (Leiden, 1986); see also the Latin text (with some minor variations from Wesseling's edition) with annotated English translation, in *Angelo Poliziano's Lamia*, ed. and trans. Christopher Celenza (Leiden, 2010), 191–253. I shall refer here to this edition. For Poliziano's description of the *lamia* see 194–98; for the analogy between seeing and philosophizing see 218–20. Igor Candido in "The Role of the Philosopher in Late *Quattrocento* Florence: Poliziano's *Lamia* and the Legacy of the Pico-Barbaro Epistolary Controversy," in *Angelo Poliziano's Lamia*, ed. Celenza, 95–129, justly cites a passage from Plato's *Timaeus* as one possible source for this well-known analogy (110), but his overall interpretation of the importance of Poliziano's *Lamia* relies too heavily on unhelpful phrases such as "Socratic irony" and "ironic method" (99), or "the Socratic doctrine of inner knowledge" (114), and

The analogy between the eyes and the mind, seeing and thinking, a standard analogy in the philosophical tradition known at least since the Platonic dialogues and revived, like so many other classical analogies and themes, during the fifteenth century, becomes evident in a very significant passage in the *Lamia*:

Since if it is not permissible to philosophize, it is not permissible to live according to the virtue of the soul. But just as we are alive thanks to the soul, so we live well thanks to the virtue of the soul; as for instance, just as we see through the eyes, so we see well through the virtue of the eyes. Therefore, the one who does not want to live well should not philosophize. The one who wants to live dishonorably should not pursue philosophy.⁷²

There are many obvious reminiscences in this passage, e.g., to Plato's *Apology* (38a5–6: "the unexamined life is not worth living") and to Aristotle's opening sentence of the *Metaphysics* (980a1), concerning the natural desire of all human beings "to know," as well as the general emphasis on the "theoretical life" and its connection to human happiness. These arguments by Poliziano come at the beginning of his response to several critiques of philosophy that were presented earlier, and they are part of Poliziano's defense of the proper way of philosophizing. It is important not to disregard Poliziano's use of the role of the will here: the way of living is clearly determined by a free-willing agent who should know that philosophizing is strongly related to living in accordance with the virtue of the soul. Following a certain old and broad-shouldered Athenian ("Atheniensis quidam senex altis humeris"), that is, Plato, Poliziano emphasizes the importance of dialectic as the necessary art of distinguishing the true from the false, while dismissing rhetoric and regarding it as meddlesome vanity, an art that is focused on pretending and deceiving instead of pursuing the truth.⁷³ On the same lines, philosophy does not

even on "complex irony," which he takes from Gregory Vlastos (116). For this reason he misses, for instance, the important differences between Poliziano's and Pico's approaches (122).

⁷² Poliziano, *Lamia*, 218–20: "Quod si philosophandum non est, secundum animi virtutem vivendum non est. At sicut animo vivimus, ita animi virtute bene vivimus, quemadmodum sicuti oculis videmus, ita oculorum virtute bene videmus. Qui bene vivere igitur non vult, is ne philosophetur; qui turpiter vivere vult, is philosophiam ne sectetur."

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 208: "Illam tamen in primis necessariam esse artem qua verum a falso dignoscitur, qua mendacium refutatur, sicuti e diverso, esse occupatissimam vanitatem quae artificium hoc non sequitur sed simulat, verumque colorem fuco mentitur." The reference to Plato appears earlier, at 206: "Sed extitit Atheniensis quidam senex altis eminens humeris. . . ." This is a hint to an ancient popular etymology of *Plaon*, "broad-shouldered."

have to do anything, only devote itself to contemplation.⁷⁴ What we seem to have here is a very Aristotelian perspective on philosophy, identifying the role of “first philosophy” with philosophy as a whole. This is a very different perspective from what is usually regarded as the “humanist approach to philosophy,” which is associated with moral and mainly civic and political issues. The truth of the matter is that once the historical and philological methods have come to be used in philosophy, every part of it becomes a subject of scholarly scrutiny, and in turn this scrutiny becomes part of philosophical discourse. This was possible thanks to a rather new notion of a “philosophical literature” (as we have seen in Poliziano’s definition of history found in the *Panepistemon*), contextualizing philosophical prose and treating it as part of ancient literature in the broad sense.

Poliziano continues with this Aristotelian line of argumentation, completely understandable in an introductory lecture for a course on the *Prior Analytics*, relating philosophy to happiness (*felicitas*) and assigning to philosophy the role of curing the soul.⁷⁵ He seems truly committed to philosophy in a way that is beyond mere stylistic and philological concerns.⁷⁶ The fact that Poliziano does not wish to be called a philosopher does not mean that he regarded himself as a philologist “only,” but should rather suggest a completely different approach to philosophy from the one used by most scholastic philosophers. In other words, Poliziano cannot be regarded (by himself or others) as a philosopher simply because this title was commonly identical at that time to that of scholastic philosophers of some sort, while he tried to establish a new identity:

Now indeed I truly hear and understand what you say, what you mean, good Lamias. But on the other hand you, on your part, listen also to me for a moment, if you have time. I admit that I am an interpreter of Aristotle. It is beside the point to determine how capable [I am]; I just declare that I am certainly an interpreter, not a philosopher. For I would not think that if I am an interpreter of a king, because of this I am also a king.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid., 228: “At nihil agit philosophia, tantum contemplationi vacat.”

⁷⁵ Ibid., 220: “Mihi autem videtur et illud: qui philosophari nolit etiam felix esse nolle”; “profecto ut felices efficiamur philosophandum est”; “Ut autem medicina corpus, ita animum curat philosophia.”

⁷⁶ Ibid., 222: “Sed quae sola iudicium teneat rectum, quaeque ratione ipsa utatur atque universum bonum contempletur, ea certe vel uti vel imperare omnibus suaapte natura potest. Talis autem praeter philosophiam nulla omnino est. Cur igitur pudeat philosophari?” Poliziano’s remarks here seem more than the words of “the amateur philosopher, the accomplished Latinist and the imaginative poet”; see Wolters, “Poliziano as a Translator of Plotinus” (n. 49 above), 460.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 240: “Audio equidem nunc vero et intellego quid dicatis, quid sentiat, bonae Lamiae. Sed vicissim vos quoque audite me parumper, si vacat. Ego me

This is clearly one of the early accounts of the importance of the place of the interpreter of philosophical texts, including a distinction between philosophers and interpreters. The remark in the last sentence is directed against the arrogance of scholastic philosophers who are unaware that the fact that they are writing commentaries on Aristotelian texts does not yet turn them into Aristotles. Moreover, the use of scholastic methods will probably make many of them bad interpreters.

We have seen that Poliziano's commitment to philosophy is a natural part of his new scholarly approach to philosophy.⁷⁸ This new approach also implies regarding philosophy as an end in itself and not as an instrument for making profit or gaining anything, as well as realizing that philosophy reflects human interiority and an internal need; in this regard it reflects an absolute institutional freedom:

Let also this be an argument for this ease: that philosophy quickly reaches its full growth even without any price required. And how many ingenious people are there whose prayers would not include the wish for a free time to philosophize? But this indeed would not happen if to philosophize would be regarded more as a task than as a pleasure. How come that we can practice this study and always meditate without the need for any instruments from outside, that there is no place unsuitable for it? For wherever you are the truth is at hand.⁷⁹

Poliziano is describing here the notion of philosophical freedom, or the freedom to pursue the truth everywhere and without any pragmatic or economic calculation, which is used in this context as an argument against "formal" philosophers, the men of the schools who have very specific places (and methods) for philosophizing: the *studia* and the universities.

Aristotelis profiteor interpretem. Quam idoneum non attinet dicere, sed certe interpretem profiteor, philosophum non profiteor. Nec enim si regis quoque essem interpretes, regem me esse ob id putarem." This passage, without the last sentence, is also cited and discussed in Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo* (n. 49 above), 191–92.

⁷⁸ On this issue see the important but inconclusive remarks in Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo*, 202–3. See also the remarks on Poliziano's philological method and its relation to ethics and moral issues in Revilo P. Oliver, "Politian's Translation of the *Enchiridion*," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 89 (1958): 185–217, at 203–7.

⁷⁹ Poliziano, *Lamia*, 222: "Sit huius argumentum facilitatis et illud: quod ad maximum incrementum brevi pervenit philosophia nulla etiam proposita mercede. Et quotus est ingeniosorum cui non otium sit in votis ut philosophari liceat? Hoc autem profecto non fieret, si philosophari labor ac non potius voluptas esset. Quid quod exercere id studium semper meditarique possumus, ut quod nullis extrinsecus indigeat instrumentis, ut cui nullus incongruens sit locus? Ubi ubi enim fueris, praesto erit veritas." I prefer to translate in this polemical context the word *labor* as "task" (and almost as a job) rather than Celenza's "labor" (*ibid.*, 223).

In an elegant variation on a standard scholastic argument concerning the connection between loving and knowing (i.e., one must know an object in order to be able to love it), Poliziano provides his readers with an explanation for the common human fear of death: lack of knowledge and understanding.⁸⁰ But knowing and understanding are the unique features of philosophy, and so, Poliziano concludes, only philosophy should be regarded in this life as the proper discipline or activity that is for us just like a haven where we should rest.⁸¹ It is clear here that Poliziano is

⁸⁰ Poliziano, *Lamia*, 224–26: “Cur autem et mortem prope omnes expavescimus? Quoniam, puto, cuique terribile quod ignoratur, ut quod obscurum, quod tenebrososum est, sicuti contra amabile quod intellegitur, ut quod apertum, quod illustre est.” For this argument in three contemporary thinkers see, e.g., Alamanno Donati, “De intellectus voluntatisque excellentia,” ed. Lambertus Borghi, *Bibliofilia* 42 (1940): 108–15, especially 109: “Id proculdubio quod sibi nequaquam sufficere valet ignobilius est et imperfectius eo quod sibi sufficit. Ex quo perfectissimum in natura dicitur quod nihilo indiget. Is est intellectus, qui operationem suam absque voluntate utique producit, cum absque ea intelligere possit. Voluntas vero minime, quando invisita diligamus, incognita nequaquam.” See also Giorgio Benigno Salviati, “Fridericus, De animae regni principe,” in P. Zvonimir Cornelius Šojat, OFM, *De voluntate hominis eiusque praeeminentia et dominatione in anima secundum Georgium Dragisic (c. 1448–1520), studium historico-doctrinale et editio Tractatus: “Fridericus, De animae regni principe”* (Rome, 1972), 139–219; especially 151: “coexigere aliquid necessario et indigere illo, si non sit mutua coexigentia, ignobilius et imperfectius est: unde qui nullius indiget, perfectissimus dicitur; sed actus voluntatis poscit et coexigit actum intellectus, hic vero non exigit illum (intelligere namque possumus absque voluntate, velle certo non valemus nisi cognoscamus: ferimur enim in ea solum quae prae-novimus); praeclarius igitur intellectus ipse”; and see also at 191: “Cur igitur homo, qui hanc picturam agnoscit, non poterit erga eam elicere amorem, ex quo sequitur voluptas? Unde quamvis homo non possit amare incognita, potest tamen diligere quoquo modo cognita.” As we can see, the context of this argument is the debate concerning the will (which is related through its activity to love) and the intellect (which is related through its activity to reasoning). For the last example see Vincenzo Bandello da Castelnovo, “Opusculum,” in *Le Thomisme et la pensée italienne de la renaissance*, ed. Kristeller (n. 15 above), 245: “Ad idem respondet S. Thomas in quaestionibus *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 5, ad quintum. *Intellectus*, inquit, *praecedit voluntatem in via receptionis*, quia nihil potest velle voluntas nisi id primo in intellectu recipiatur, ut dicitur in tertio *De anima*. At voluntas praecedit intellectum *in movendo seu agendo*. . . . *Praemium autem dicitur per modum receptionis, sed meritum per modum actionis. Et inde est quod totum praemium beatificum principaliter ascribitur intellectui*, unde dei visio dicitur *tota merces beatitudinis*. . . . *Meritum autem principaliter caritati attribuitur quae perficit voluntatem quae movet omnes potentias ad operandum opera meritoria*.”

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 226: “Si igitur quae nota sunt delectant, cur etiam nosse ipsum ac sapere non delectet? At id maxime proprium philosophiae est. Aut igitur nihil agendum in hac vita, nihil expetendum est, aut in sola philosophia tanquam in portu requiescendum.” Compare with the words of Cristoforo Landino from his *Praefatio in Tusculanis*, written around 1458, in Roberto Cardini, *La critica del Landino* (Florence, 1973),

assigning to philosophy what is traditionally assigned to theology. This is a dramatic change from the medieval institutional status of philosophy, which was regarded as an important and crucial ingredient taught in the arts or medical faculties as a preparation for a career in the three higher faculties: law, medicine, and theology.⁸²

Poliziano continues along this line, and it carries him far beyond Aristotelian logic and much closer to the territory of standard theological themes, when he declares that human life is nothing but an empty shadow; but, instead of some biblical, patristic, or scholastic authorities, he cites Pindar on the one hand, and an ancient popular proverb on the other.⁸³ A serious consideration of human life, glory, and physical beauty will force us, according to Poliziano, to conclude that there is nothing solid and lasting in human affairs.⁸⁴ Can the human soul save the day? Poliziano rejects the possibility of separate souls: since the soul is spread out and extended (“*anima . . . extenta et explicata*”) in every part of the body, it practically shares the same destiny as the body and dies with the body, just like the miserable subjects of Mezentius in Virgil’s description.⁸⁵ The only thing in human affairs that is worthy (*dignum*) of pursuit and attention is, according to Poliziano (who is citing here Horace and following Iamblichus), our soul, a particle of the divine breath (“*divinae particula aerae*”), and it is God who is mind for us (“*Deus enim est animus nobis*”).⁸⁶ One notices the

304: “*Quam ob rem, si humanas sollicitudines atque miserias sola philosophia potest pellere, eius saluberrima praecepta diligentissime attendamus illique ceteris posthabitis negociis incumbamus; cuius quidem, etiam si maximus proponeretur labor, summa tamen rei utilitas omnem difficultatem vincere deberet.*”

⁸² On the institutional status of theology in the Italian universities and in the academic life of the Renaissance, see Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (n. 24 above), 353–92. Crucial to this point are Grendler’s remarks on 353 that subjects like theology, metaphysics, and scripture “remained minor subjects in universities dominated by arts, medicine, and law.”

⁸³ Poliziano, *Lamia*, 226: “*Subiciamus, quaeso, oculis hominum vitam. Quid ea est omnis praeter inanem umbram vel, ut significantius ait Pindarus, umbrae somnium? ‘Homo bulla est,’ antiquum inquit proverbium.*”

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 228: “*Nam cum sit anima iuncta agglutinataque corpori ac per omnis artus omnisque sensuum quasi meatus extenta et explicata, non alio mihi videtur supplicio affecta quam quo Mazentius ille Vergilianus miseris cives suos afficiebat. Ita enim de eo canit Poeta noster: ‘Mortua quin etiam iungebat corpora vivis, / componens manibusque manus atque oribus ora, / tormenti genus, et sanie taboque fluenti / Complexu in misero, longa sic morte necabat.’” For the reference to Virgil see *ibid.*, 229n46.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*: “*Nihil igitur in rebus humanis studio curaque dignum praeter illam quam pulchere vocat Horatius ‘divinae particulam aerae,’ quae ut in hoc caeco rerum turbine tamen vita hominum tuto gubernetur. Deus enim est animus nobis, deus profecto, sive hoc Euripides primus dicere ausus, sive Hermetimus, sive Anaxagoras.*”

change in Poliziano's terminology here, from *anima* to *animus*, and the focus on the divine spark in us rather than on the human soul. Describing this particle of the divine breath as governing or directing all human life ("quae . . . vita hominum tuto gubernetur"), as well as the image of breath (*aura*), has a clear Stoic flavor.⁸⁷

It seems that Poliziano's radical and critical approach to texts⁸⁸ and his historical sensitivities stand behind his description of the philosopher (in which he is following Plato and Seneca) as someone who is very critical (and thus radical from a social and political point of view) with regard to noble origins: a serious historical consideration does not allow for a complete distinction between kings and slaves.⁸⁹ This remark should be understood in the context of the well-known Florentine republican discourse, which is one of the most intriguing features of the political discourse in Florence (but usually not associated with Poliziano), at least since the days of *Salutati* by the end of the fourteenth century.⁹⁰

For the references to Horace and Iamblichus see *ibid.*, 229nn47–48. For more sources see *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling (n. 71 above), 83.

⁸⁷ In Stoic sources *animus* is a translation of *logos*; see Adler's index to the *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, collegit Iohannes ab Arnim, Volumen IV, quo indices continentur, conscripsit Maximilianus Adler, Lipsiae in Aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1924 (and reprints), 91. This *logos* emerges from the *hegemonikon* but is not equal to it. In this regard Horace's expression reflects just that: our own human *animus* is a spark of the divine *pneuma* = *hegemonikon*. One need not assume that Poliziano was fully aware of all these Stoic connections.

⁸⁸ On this point see Anthony Grafton, "On the Scholarship of Politian and its Context," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 40 (1977): 150–88. And see also Michael D. Reeve, "Classical Scholarship," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Kraye (n. 66 above), 20–46, especially at 29–30.

⁸⁹ Poliziano, *Lamia*, 232–34: "An is non eum deridebit qui se generosissimum putet quod avos quinque forte aut sex nobiles numeret et divites? Cum sciat in stemmate cuiusvis et serie generis prope innumeros inveniri et servos et barbaros et mendicos, nec esse regem quemquam qui non sit e servis natus nec item servum cui non origo sint reges. Omnia enim ista, quae distant, longa aetas miscuit." It seems that Poliziano is combining here two sources: Plato and Seneca. Compare Seneca (probably Poliziano's first source where he found the reference to Plato), *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, ed. L. D. Reynolds (Oxford, 1965), 1:44: "Platon ait [*Theaet.* 174e5–175a5] neminem regem non ex servis esse oriundum, neminem servum non ex regibus. Omnia ista longa varietas miscuit et sursum deorsum fortuna versavit." See also Plato's account (and the manner in which Poliziano modified it): ὥς γενναῖός τις ἐπτὰ πάππους πλουσίους ἔχων ἀποφῆναι . . . (174e6–7); . . . ὅτι πάππων καὶ προγόνων μυριάδες ἐκάστῳ γεγονάσιν ἀναρίθμητοι, ἐν αἷς πλούσιοι καὶ πτωχοὶ καὶ βασιλεῖς καὶ δοῦλοι βάρβαροί τε καὶ Ἕλληνες πολλαῖς μυρίοι γεγονάσιν ὁτῶον . . . (175a2–5). And see also *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling, 89.

⁹⁰ Compare Poliziano's account of noble origins with the words of his student and follower in the *Studio fiorentino*, Marcello di Virgilio Adriani, who was also the chancellor of the Florentine republic and served in different political positions during

Equipped with a new scholarly apparatus, Poliziano's philosopher is turned against the "shady wisdom" (*umbratilis sapientia*) that is described in the midst of Poliziano's account of Iamblichus's version of the myth of the cave.⁹¹ Those fettered in the darkness of the cave are the mob (*vulgus*) and the unlearned (*ineruditi*), while the philosopher is free from chains in the shining light (*clara in luce*). It is here that we find Poliziano's clear indication that he would like to be a philosopher, if it were allowed.⁹²

the last decade of the fifteenth century and the first two decades of the sixteenth century, found in his 1516 funeral oration for Giuliano de' Medici, in John M. McManamon, S.J., "Marketing a Medici Regime: The Funeral Oration of Marcello Virgilio Adriani for Giuliano de' Medici (1516)," *Renaissance Quarterly* 44 (1991): 1–41; see 29–30: "Dum enim eandem urbem incolentes omnes aequa virtutis suae proportione, eadem dignitate et civilitatis honore esse voluistis, dum novae peregrinaeque virtuti aditum ad honores in vobis non precluditis speratisque et alienum et e plebe hominem posse inter vos fieri in curia sapientem, in foro facundum, domi utilem, foris honestum, bello paceque bonum civem, nec (quod fere ubique fit) nobilitati tantum sed virtuti honorum titulos et praemia decernitis, dum acerbissimarum ignavae nobilitatis legum vinculis solutos cives vestros esse voluistis licereque omnibus quod virtuti suae respondeat confidentius quaerere — nuptias, magistratus, honores, clientelas, et imperia — et, ubi virtus sit, paupertatem aliasque Fortunae Naturaeve iniurias nihil obesse, et, ne longiores simus, dum licet in consortio et societate reipublicae esse et, quod aequae libertatis est, sortito et invicem annuis magistratibus parere atque imperitare, eo incrementi et gloriae res vestra perducta est ut rerum gestarum gloriae imperium accesserit et gloriam studiumque eius tanta imperii merces nunc etiam accendat." McManamon's observation on 4 that "Florence's humanist chancellors were committed public servants but cautious ideologues" who "lent their academic prestige to a variety of regimes" is crucial here. For some "classic" scholarly accounts of these issues with further references, see, e.g., Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton, NJ, 1966); idem, *In Search of Civic Humanism*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1988). For a critical evaluation of Baron's thesis see especially James Hankins, ed., *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2000). See also Albert Rabil, Jr., "The Significance of 'Civic Humanism' in the Interpretation of the Italian Renaissance," in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. Albert Rabil, Jr. (Philadelphia, 1988), 1:141–74; James Hankins, "The 'Baron Thesis' after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995): 309–38.

⁹¹ Poliziano, *Lamia*, 234–40; see 238: "Cedo, quid hic volutabit animo? Quid faciet? Quoties carcerem caecum, quoties vincula, quoties vere umbratilem sapientiam, recordabitur, equidem puto gratias diis aget magnas, ingentes, quod inde se emerit tandem dolebitque vicem sociorum, quos in tantis reliquerit malis." For the source of this version see *ibid.*, 235n55.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 240: "Nunc illud tantum admonebo: vinctos in tenebris homines nullos esse alios quam vulgus et ineruditos, liberum autem illum clara in luce et exemptum vinculis, hunc esse ipsum philosophum de quo iamdiu loquimur. Atque utinam is ego

It is exactly at this point that Poliziano is accused by the Lamias for his arrogant behavior and for practically being a charlatan who in the last three years has been teaching things that he does not really know and understand, things that he is not competent to teach.⁹³ Against this accusation, Poliziano declares that he is only an interpreter of philosophical texts, not a straightforward philosopher.⁹⁴ He gives as an example the names of interpreters of poets who were not themselves poets.⁹⁵ By doing that, Poliziano is pointing out the significance of interpretative scholarship, which, since antiquity and all throughout the Middle Ages, has had its place beside the works of philosophy or poetry. Moreover, Poliziano is presenting a part of the philosophical tradition as a tradition of philological interpretation, and by doing so he brings it closer to philology. He creates a space for philological interpretations that are not restricted to specific disciplines but rather are being used as instruments in different disciplines.⁹⁶ These instruments of the philologists are valid and useful for any kind of writings (*omne scriptorum genus*): poetic, historical, rhetorical, philosophical, medical, and legal.⁹⁷ From a contemporary, twenty-first century perspective, it makes us smile a sardonic smile to read Poliziano's complaints regarding fifteenth-century limited appreciation of the philologists, in comparison to their status in antiquity.⁹⁸

essem! Non enim tam metuo invidiam crimenque nominis huius ut esse philosophus nolim, si liceat."

⁹³ Ibid.: "Nec ita imperitae aut praeposterae sumus ut philosophiam tibi obiectaremus pro crimine. Sed illud indignabamur, facere te (ne graviore utamur verbo) subarroganter, qui triennio iam philosophum te profitearis ac nunquam scilicet ante id tempus operam philosophiae dederis. Ob id enim nugatorem quoque te diximus, quod illa diu iam doceas quae nescias, quae non didiceris."

⁹⁴ See n. 77 above.

⁹⁵ Ibid.: "Nec apud nos Donatus, puta, et Servius, apud Graecos Aristarchus et Zenodotus continuo se poetas profitentur, quoniam quidem poetas interpretentur." For the sources here see *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling, 98.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 240–44: "An non Philoponus ille Ammonii discipulus Simpliciique condiscipulus idoneus Aristotelis est interpres? At eum nemo philosophum vocat, omnes grammaticum. Quid? Non grammaticus etiam Cous ille Xenocritus et Rhodii duo Aristocles atque Aristetas et Alexandrini item duo Antigonus ac Didymus et omnium celeberrimus idem ille Aristarchus? Qui tamen omnes (ut Erotianus est auctor) Hippocratis interpretati sunt libros, sicuti alii quoque, quos Galenus enumerat. Nec eos tamen quisquam medicos esse ob id putat." In this context Celenza is of course right in maintaining that the Latin *grammaticus* should be rendered as "philologist," See *ibid.*, 243n60. For the sources here see *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling, 99.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 244: "Grammaticorum enim sunt hae partes, ut omne scriptorum genus, poetas, historicos, oratores, philosophos, medicos, iureconsultos excutiant atque enarrent." For the sources here see *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling, 99–101.

⁹⁸ Ibid.: "Nostra aetas, parum perita rerum veterum, nimis brevi gyro grammaticum sepsit. At apud antiquos olim tantum auctoritatis hic ordo habuit ut censores

This is mainly because in Poliziano's times it was the elementary grammar teachers who were called *grammatici*. Poliziano is aiming at establishing a distinction (which he supports by using the authority of the ancient Greeks and Romans while closely following Suetonius) between this group of elementary teachers (who in fact should be called *grammatistae* or *litteratores*) on the one hand, and the professional men of letters, the learned (who in fact are the ones who should be called *grammatici* or *litterati*).⁹⁹

Thus, the only title that Poliziano is asking for himself is that of a philologist, a *grammaticus* in the true and ancient sense of this term. But this still entails knowing many things regarding many different disciplines, without which the philologist will not be able to correct and properly comment on the texts he is working on. The point here is that philology is always an instrument only; it is not an end in itself, and there is no such thing as pure philology. The philologist, just like a chameleon, which changes its colors to suit the different surfaces, must learn the details of the disciplines behind each of his texts. But, as Poliziano clarifies, working as a philologist on legal or medical texts has not turned him into a jurisconsult or a physician.¹⁰⁰ One can have the proper scholarly and theoretical background without the more technical, formal, and practical aspects of a discipline. This might be the turning point that later led to the creation of the sharp distinction between the humanities and the natural sciences. Philosophy is in no way different: while replying to the Lamias' concerns that he does not seem to have had any teachers in philosophy (that is, that he does not have any formal philosophical education), nor has he ever seemed to be reading philosophical books,¹⁰¹ Poliziano mentions his friendly relations with the most learned philosophers on the one hand, and his trunks full of books of the ancient

essent et iudices scriptorum omnium soli grammatici, quos ob id etiam criticos vocabant." For the sources here see *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling, 101–2.

⁹⁹ Ibid.: "Indignari litterati possunt quod grammatici nunc appellentur etiam qui prima doceant elementa. Ceterum apud Graecos hoc genus non 'grammatici' sed 'grammatistae,' non 'litterati' apud Latinos sed 'litteratores' vocabantur." For the source here see *ibid.*, 245–47n65. See also *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling, 100–101, for an important account of a change in the usage of the term *grammaticus* in Poliziano.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 246: "Rogo vos, adeone esse me insolentem putatis aut stolidum ut, si quis iurisconsultum me salutet aut medicum, non me ab eo derideri prorsus credam? Commentarios tamen iamdiu (quod sine arrogantia dictum videri velim) simul in ius ipsum civile, simul in medicinae auctores parturio et quidem multis vigiliis, nec aliud inde mihi nomen postulo quam grammatici." For the sources here see *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling, 104–5.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.: "Quomodo enim tu philosophus qui nec magistros habueris nec id genus unquam libros attigeris?"

Greek commentators on Aristotle, on the other.¹⁰² As we have already seen in the *Praelectio de dialectica*, this corpus of the ancient Greek commentators on Aristotle is the basis for Poliziano's courses on Aristotle, and we may speculate that these texts were the foundation of Poliziano's competence in philosophy in general.¹⁰³ Such competence was probably not enough to turn him into a philosopher in the eyes of some scholastic philosopher,¹⁰⁴ but nevertheless it is a valuable competence thanks to which Poliziano could correct, comment on, and translate some ancient philosophical texts, and teach some parts of the Aristotelian corpus at the university.

Poliziano offers the *Lamias* a deal: to look for the many philosophical traces in his writings, and if they will find such traces, they will be forced to admit that he has learned at least something from some teachers.¹⁰⁵ This statement, once again, indicates how important philosophy was for Poliziano. The many allusions, explicit and implicit references to classical philosophical texts (e.g., Aristotle and his ancient Greek commentators; Plato and the Neoplatonists; the Stoics, mainly Epictetus and Seneca; Cicero and Sextus Empiricus) that are found in the *Lamia* are clear evidence of this. Poliziano thus mentions his lectures on the *Ethics*, on Porphyry's *Isagoge*, on the *Categories* and on Gilbert of Poitiers's *Six Principles*, and on *On Interpretation*; he points out that he also taught, beyond the accepted practice (*extra ordinem*), the *Sophistical Refutations*, a text that, according to him, was untouched by other teachers and almost inexplicable (*pene inenodabile*).¹⁰⁶ It seems that Poliziano's philological competence led him specifically to pay more attention in his courses to the more difficult texts in the Aristotelian corpus. After all

¹⁰² Ibid., 248: "Nec autem allegabo nunc vobis familiaritates quae mihi semper cum doctissimis fuere philosophis, non etiam extracta mihi ad tectum usque loculamenta veterum commentariorum praesertimque Graecorum, qui omnium mihi doctores prestantissimi videri solent." For the background here see *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling, 107–9. This does not mean of course that Poliziano did not use many other ancient philosophical sources; see, e.g., his excessive use of Sextus shown in Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, "Sesto Empirico e una dispersa enciclopedia delle arti e delle scienze di Angelo Poliziano," *Rinascimento* 20 (1980): 327–58.

¹⁰³ See n. 55 above.

¹⁰⁴ The list of philosophy teachers at the University of Florence in the early 1490s presented in *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling, xiv, n. 6 (and based on Verde's essential volumes on the Florentine *Studium*), is, of course, only a possible starting point for reconstructing this intellectual context.

¹⁰⁵ Poliziano, *Lamia*, 248: "Sed ita vobiscum paciscar: si nullus in nostris aut scriptis aut sermonibus odor est philosophiae, nemo audisse me philosophos aut eorum attigisse libros arbitretur. Sin plurima sunt in eis quae sectam redoleant aliquam, tunc me, si non peperisse ipsum talia, saltem didicisse credite a doctoribus."

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 250.

this he now turns his attention to the two books of the *Prior Analytics*, books that, on the one hand, are enveloped in plenty of philosophical and textual-linguistic difficulties (“multis rerum verborumque difficultatibus involuti”), but on the other hand contain every rule of proper reasoning (“in quibus omnis recte ratiocinandi regula continetur”). Poliziano approaches these rules more willingly, eagerly, and spiritedly,¹⁰⁷ and therefore emphasizes the importance of the *Prior Analytics*:

[These books] are almost disregarded in all the schools by our contemporary philosophers, not because they are less useful, but rather because they are too difficult. Who then would justly be angry with me if I should choose this task of interpreting these most difficult texts but leave to others the name of a philosopher?¹⁰⁸

We have here an important account of what was going on inside other courses on the Aristotelian corpus in the Florentine *Studium* and probably also in other *studia*, where, according to Poliziano, this important text was hardly ever taught because of the difficulties it presented; the obvious implication is that most of the teachers in those *studia* were incompetent and could not deal properly with these difficulties. As we now know, this was not really the case: at least seventeen commentaries on the *Prior Analytics* were written between 1450 and 1492.¹⁰⁹

Poliziano chooses to end the *Lamia* with a story in which a sharp contrast is once again drawn between contemporary and ancient philosophers.¹¹⁰ Apparently the birds once upon a time (*olim*) neglected good advice given them by the owl. Realizing that it was good advice and recognizing their mistake on the one hand and the wisdom of that owl on the other, they now (*nunc*) regard the owl with enormous respect, since now they want to learn something from it. But all these efforts are useless (*frustra*), Poliziano contends, since only those ancient owls were indeed wise (“nam veteres illae noctuae revera sapientes erant”);

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.: “. . . fere in omnibus gymnasiis a nostrae aetatis philosophis, non quia parum utiles, sed quia nimis scrupulosi, praetereuntur. Quis mihi igitur iure succenseat, si laborem hunc interpretandi difficillima quaeque sumpsero, nomen vero alii philosophi relinquero?” In the annotations added to Poliziano’s contract with the University of Florence in 1489–90 and 1491–92 we find that utility is mentioned; see Celenza (citing documents that were first published by Verde), “Poliziano’s *Lamia* in Context” (n. 3 above), 7: “Cum latine tum grece eas lectiones quas studiosis utiles esse arbitratur”; 8: “. . . lectiones . . . quas ipsemet utiliores et fructuosiores florentinae iuventuti esse cognoverit.”

¹⁰⁹ See Celenza, “Poliziano’s *Lamia* in Context,” 43–44.

¹¹⁰ Poliziano, *Lamia*, 250–52. For some sources and background see *Lamia*, ed. Wesseling, 113–15.

the present situation is that there are many owls around that only have owl's feathers, owl's eyes, and owl's beaks. There are many who appear to be philosophers and have all the external features, but they do not have wisdom. This is yet another example of Poliziano's exclusive approach. In this context it means that the only trustworthy way of doing philosophy is through philological and historical methods, thanks to which we create a bridge to the ancient wisdom, the only authentic wisdom that ever existed. Any other way means pretending and concealing the truth. Ancient wisdom is lost, and contemporary pretensions to present wisdom in philosophical discussions are useless and based on false assumptions.

Let us now discuss the fourth and last opening lecture that we have by Poliziano: his *Dialectica* of 1493–94.¹¹¹ One should point out that this text is not a systematic account of logic with some full-fledged discussions of different fundamental concepts and theories but rather a collection of the basic notions in logic presented in a unique way of connecting them.

While discussing the most truthful principles of argumentation (*argumentandi verissima percepta*), that is, the principles of Aristotelian logic, Poliziano, who compares himself to pilots drawing all-inclusive maps, wishing to bring together into one account the many different components of logic,¹¹² admits, in the section dedicated to the presentation of Aristotle's *On Interpretation*, that in fact there is no one examination made by the dialectician but rather many starting points to a dialectical investigation: either investigating the one from the many (induction) or the many from the one (deduction), since this investigation does not follow one response.¹¹³

Poliziano follows Aristotle and presents the rules regarding demonstration (*praecepta de demonstratione*): demonstrations can be either affirmative or negative, and they can be either universal or particular, or else indefinite. There is a demonstrative proposition and there is a dialectical proposition. The dialectical deals with contradictions, and through a process of investigation one should choose the probable option, which is then resolved by this proposition.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ For this text I shall use Poliziano, *Omnia opera* (n. 6 above), aa7v–bb8v.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, aa7v: “Quod facere navium gubernatores solent, ut maria, portus, litora, insulas intra unam paginam colligant, unde quantum per actum quantumque supersit itineris ratiocinentur, idem mihi nunc arbitror faciendum libris his enarrandis, quibus argumentandi verissima percepta comprehenduntur.”

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, bb2v: “Verum nec una dialectici interrogatio, quae vel unum quaerit de pluribus vel de uno plura, quare nec una responsione excipitur.”

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, bb3r: “Praecepta igitur de demonstratione daturus Aristoteles ipsam prioribus libris ratiocinationem, quoniam communior edocet propositionem finiens,

We can find here an interesting account of universals, where Poliziano seems to present a realist point of view, regarding universals as first principles that should not be objects of demonstration. First principles should be trusted more than conclusions. The subject should be presented in what is known by itself (*per se*). Poliziano defines “by itself” as either by essence (*essentia*) or by its own peculiar characteristic (*proprio*) but also in a universal manner (*universaliter*). A universal (*universale*) is defined as something that is about everything and is the first cause or reason for its own existence (“de omni et per se et qua ipsum est nec in alio prius”).¹¹⁵ Interestingly, Poliziano creates a conceptual relation between three terms: first principle (*principium*), universal (*universale*), and form or idea (*idea*), all of which are beyond demonstration.

We should not, according to Poliziano, make a distinction between a universal and that which is about everything. Truth and necessity are demanded, and they indicate not only the existence of conclusions and first principles but also the reason for their existence, not only through necessary arguments but also through their own concepts like the one or related genus, and then, through universals, because they are not made out of corruptible things. But there is no science that can watch over its own principles; all sciences are reduced to the one that is called wisdom.¹¹⁶

Poliziano is not only expressing here a philosophical position that is associated with the realists, and mostly with the followers of the *via antiqua*; he also regards logic as a discipline that is essentially related to some fundamental philosophical concepts such as truth and necessity, science and wisdom, and thus he rejects the view according to which logic is regarded as an instrument only.¹¹⁷

quae aliquid aut confirmet aut neget de aliquo. Sed vel universalem esse ait, vel particularem, vel indefinitam, tum aliud demonstrativam propositionem, atque aliud dialecticam, quoniam sumat illa propositionem contradictionis alteram. Haec ipsius contradictionis interrogationem si quaeras illius optionem quod verisimile videatur si respondeas. Terminum quo propositio resolvatur.”

¹¹⁵ Ibid., bb5r: “Principiis credendum potius quam conclusionibus. Praedicatum dici per se de subiecto debet, priusque de omni, per se nunc accipe vel essentia vel proprio, sed et universaliter, universale hic intellige, quod et de omni et per se et qua ipsum est nec in alio prius. Nec ideas demonstraveris.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid.: “Cum discrimen inter universale non cernimus et quod de omni. Nec veritas modo sed et necessitas exigitur. Eaque non conclusionum modo sed et principiorum, non modo esse indicans sed et cur sit, non modo ex necessariis sed et e suis, hoc est ex iis, quae vel unius, vel cognati generis, tum ex universalibus, nec enim corruptibilium, nec autem scientia ulla sua tuetur principia, sed ad unam rediguntur omnes, quae sapientia vocatur.”

¹¹⁷ See n. 53 above.

We establish, as the subject of that truth that was just mentioned by Poliziano, mainly first causes.¹¹⁸ At this point Poliziano refers to the term *axiom*; there are some axioms that befit all the sciences, and there are two faculties that establish knowledge or science: wisdom and dialectic.¹¹⁹ What we have here is an interesting correlation between axioms (*axiomata*) and faculties (*facultates*). Poliziano presents a clear and rather standard hierarchy: universal is preferable to particular, affirmation to negation, correct demonstration to the one that is derived from impossible circumstance. Here, again, we find the term *faculty*: a superior faculty is that which teaches us about a cause of something else, that which is focused on the intelligible and the universal, and finally that which has simpler principles.¹²⁰

We further find some more standard but nevertheless important distinctions including the one between knowledge and opinion: just as there are different principles, so there are different sciences, and the same issue can be demonstrated by various means. There is no science of the accidental, since a sensible object cannot be demonstrated, but the origin of demonstration is in sensible matters; between different sciences there are no similar unique principles nor common principles, and opinion on the one hand and knowledge or science on the other differ both in their subject and in their manner of estimating.¹²¹

Just before leaving the discussion of *On Interpretation* and moving on, in the last section of the *Dialectica*, to present each of the books of Aristotle's *Topics*, Poliziano provides an interesting account of a compromise between the position of the realist and the nominalist:

At last we have in the midst of our soul the seed of an absent proposition, when that universal that is the one beyond the many is produced by the senses, imagination, memory, intellect, forms, and some concepts.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.: "Quaeque [sapientia] primas et easdem maxime causas considerat, subiectum statuimus esse."

¹¹⁹ Ibid.: "Proprium quaerimus quid significet, axiomatis utrunque debemus. Quorum interdum vi utimur potius, sed et quaedam sunt axiomata, quae scientiis congruunt omnibus, duae scientiam facultates constituunt, sapientia et dialectica."

¹²⁰ Ibid.: "Particulari praestat universale, affirmatio negationi, iusta demonstratio illi quae sit ex impossibili. Potior illa et prior facultas quae causam docet alterius, quae circa intelligibile, circa universale vertitur, quae superior, quae simpliciora habet principia."

¹²¹ Ibid., bb5r-v: "Nam quarum diversa principia sunt, hae diversae scientiae, res eadem variis demonstratur mediis, nulla fortuiti scientia, nihil sensibile demonstratur, demonstrationis origo in sensibus, diversarum scientiarum, nec eadem propria principia, nec communia. Etiam utra opinio et subiecto differt a scientia et aestimationis modo. Nec eiusdem omnino rei opinio et scientia."

This principle of comprehension is the intellect, that is the recognition of principles of a knowable object.¹²²

The universal seems here to be, on the one hand, an abstraction created by human faculties, but nevertheless, on the other hand, it seems to have real existence behind the phenomena, and it takes the form of a seed inside our soul.

In the *Topics*, we are being taught how to examine arguments, and dialectic is mainly treated here as reasoning from probable arguments (*rationatio ex probabilibus*), differently from forensic dialectic, since in forensic dialectic things are presented as probable that only seem to be probable.¹²³ Poliziano then enumerates the four instruments of the dialectician: approving propositions, distinguishing between comprehensions, finding out distinctions, and considering similarity.¹²⁴

Poliziano ends this account by pointing out the importance of Aristotelian logic for anyone's own argumentation and demonstration, and, in the case of a debate, for attacking or defending positions, since this whole art is about reasoning, demonstrations, distinctions, and cavils.¹²⁵

* * *

Let us draw some conclusions. In the *Panepistemon* we have encountered an unusual and rather original division of sciences and arts, which reflects a new conception of knowledge and challenges both classical and medieval divisions while presenting a fresh account of the practical dis-

¹²² Ibid., bb5v: "Postremo semen carentis medio propositionis in animo habemus, quando universale illud, quod unum praeter multa sit sensibus imaginatione memoria intellectu, formisque et notis quibusdam paritur. Principium scientiae intellectus hoc est cognitio principiorum scibilis rei."

¹²³ Ibid.: "Nunc et Topica percurramus. Disserere hic in quo vis negotio docemur. Tractaturque dialectica potissimum rationatio ex probabilibus, differens a litigiosa. Quoniam in ea non tam probabilia sunt quam videntur." Interestingly, Poliziano presents here the standard Aristotelian definition of accepted or common views (*ἐνδοξία*), the starting point of any scientific investigation, which was wrongly understood in the Latin tradition at least since Boethius as *probabilia*, possibly under the influence of Cicero and because of a lack of familiarity with the ancient skeptical terminology in Greek as it is reflected in Sextus Empiricus.

¹²⁴ Ibid., bb6r: "Cernitur et idem et alterorum quod utrunque genere specie numero, quatuor dialectici instrumenta: acceptio propositionum, distinctio intellectuum, inventio differentiarum, consideratio similitudinis."

¹²⁵ Ibid., bb8v: "Hactenus Aristotelis ars omnis vel rationandi, vel peculiariter demonstrandi, vel differendi, vel postremo cavillandi. Quam qui penitus spexerit, edidicerit, exercebit, et secum quod opus est argumentando colliget, ac demonstrabit, et cum alio disputans facile quod volet, aut impugnet, aut tuebitur."

ciplines. A complex definition of history allows Poliziano to develop a notion of “philosophical literature,” which again breaks with standard academic disciplinary divisions on an institutional level on the one hand, and offers the possibility of a separation (which indeed happened much later) between natural sciences and the humanities on the other hand. In his discussion of rhetoric and dialectic, Poliziano turns to Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis* as a main source, a fact that shows that our humanist was not, after all, that allergic to works that served as medieval textbooks.

In the *Praelectio de dialectica* we have found an important account of “dialectic,” both the concept and the discipline. While tacitly using Plotinus, Poliziano is implicitly pointing out two different meanings of dialectic: an Aristotelian and a Neoplatonic. Poliziano also establishes the relations between liberal arts and philosophy, where apparently the liberal arts prepare the ground for the study of philosophy.

The important definition of history that was presented in the *Panepistemon* receives an interesting echo in the *Lamia*, where Poliziano establishes the position of the historian and interpreter of philosophy as against that advocated by contemporary scholastic philosophers. His exclusive historical model — prioritizing classical sources including philosophical texts — was part of Poliziano’s efforts to show his students what he regarded as the proper manner of philosophizing. But the new philological and historical methods as applied to philosophical texts had yet another important implication, the first glimpse of which we have already noticed in the *Panepistemon*: the beginning of the separation and distinction between the natural sciences, which are going to become more practical and technical, and the humanities, which are going to provide the historical dimension and critical reflection about natural and other sciences. It might come as a surprise to some Renaissance scholars to find here Poliziano’s critique of rhetoric and his defense of the concept of philosophical truth, following some well-known classical models.

In Poliziano’s account of universals as found in his *Dialectica* we have noticed his attitude toward the tension between the realists and the nominalists: while being somehow closer to the first, he nevertheless is looking for a compromise between these two different positions. We have also found here a general appreciation of logic as a discipline, as strongly connected to necessity and truth, and thus as much more than a mere instrument. Poliziano discusses here the relations between first causes, axioms, and faculties, and argues that wisdom and dialectic are the two faculties that are crucial for any kind of knowledge or science.

In light of all this evidence, it is clear that the relations between Renaissance humanists like Poliziano and philosophy as a discipline, and even more so Renaissance Aristotelianisms and scholasticisms, should be reconsidered and better contextualized. As the present study has attempted to show, it is among Renaissance humanists and scholastics that we can find the first steps toward the modern separation between the natural sciences and the humanities.

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