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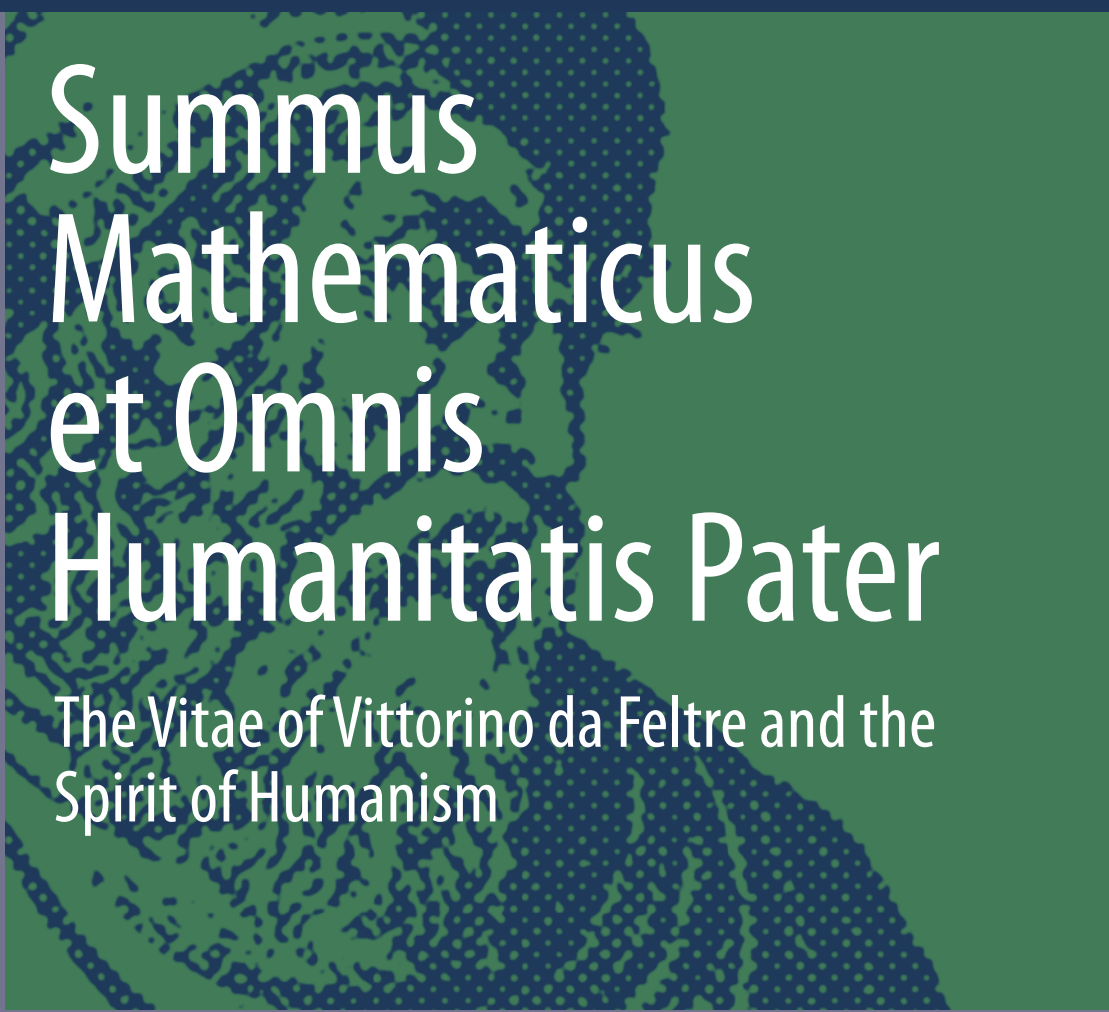
Anja-Silvia Goeing

Summus Mathematicus et Omnis Humanitatis Pater

The Vitae of Vittorino da Feltre and the Spirit of Humanism



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Transl. Deanna Stewart. Appendix: Sassolo da Prato. Letter about Vittorino da Feltre.
Transl. from Latin by James Astorga.

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Acknowledgements

This book is the newly revised and expanded English edition of my doctoral thesis, written in the German language, accepted by the philosophical faculty of the Julius-Maximilians-University Würzburg in 1999, and published by Ergon in 1999 in the series Erziehung-Schule-Gesellschaft.

When I started thinking about a suitable doctoral topic, I wanted to prove that the reputation of the great Renaissance educator Vittorino da Feltre was a fiction, a creation of fifteenth-century Mantuan campanellismo and the recreation of early nineteenth-century Italian pride, groomed and cared for by later scholars in Switzerland, Germany, France, Britain, and the United States.

Both my doctoral advisers, Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Winfried Böhm in History of Education the late Prof. Dr. Dr. Klaus Wittstadt in Church History, and especially my outside reader Prof. Dr. Eckhard Kessler in History of Renaissance Philosophy at the University of Munich encouraged me to think for myself and to carve out my own pathway through the jungle of the literature on Humanism. In this journey, I owe much to the goodwill and patience of the late Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Giuseppe Flores d'Arcais in Padua, who had included Vittorino da Feltre in his philosophy of the person. At a much later stage, in Oxford in 2008, I was very happy to participate in Prof. Martin McLaughlin's seminar Biography and Autobiography in the Italian Renaissance, which allowed me to enlarge my perspective significantly through learning about biographical writing practices in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, from Petrarch to Giorgio Vasari.

My work has required considerable research in Italian libraries and archives. I am deeply indebted to staff at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, the Biblioteca Nazionale in Venice, the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, the Biblioteca Comunale in Mantua, and both Max-Planck-Institutes for Art History in Florence and Rome. I am also obliged to Prof. Dr. Rodolfo Signorini, who helped me to find the Mantuan Manuscript of Francesco Prendilacqua's Dialogue.

So, did I crush the canon? In hindsight, I would say that it was naive to think in such black-and-white terms. I have come to realize that my project instead occupied shades of grey between straightforward fact and obvious fiction, and between

notions of celebrity and daily routines. Vittorino's legend has been built up by his students, and they shaped the picture of their teacher into what Alison Knowles Frazier calls a "possible life," a believable history.[1]

My academic career has led me via Helmut Schmidt-University Hamburg, the University of Zurich, and the California Institute of Technology to Northumbria University, where I am currently Anniversary Fellow in History. For the preparation of this English publication, I am indebted to two great advisers: my translator Deanna Stewart and my editor Audra Wolfe. A critical edition of the vitae of Vittorino da Feltre, edited by myself and Prof. Dr. Sabine Schmolinsky from the University of Erfurt, is also in preparation.

As an appendix I am happy to include an English translation of the first account of Vittorino's life and work, a letter by his student Sassolo da Prato to the Florentine humanist Leonardo Dati, written in Vittorino's lifetime, ca. 1443 to 1444. The Pasadena-based Classics scholar James Astorga (Ph.D.) has translated the biographical sketch from the manuscript and from its original language, Latin.

[1] Frazier (2005, title).

Contents

Chapter 1
Introduction

In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, biographies – whether of contemporaries or people of the past, whether written in Latin or the vernacular languages – constituted a significant portion of writings on history. Since Jacob Burckhardt's 1860 volume on *Civilization of the Renaissance*,[1] historians have written extensively about the role of biographies in developing views about individual upbringing, citizenship and ethics. Above all, scholars have pointed to the ways that biographical patterns were adapted from approaches in antiquity, how different modes of celebrating the individual were used, and how vital was the notion and reality of leading the good life.

The practice of writing biographies was so common in the fifteenth-century manuscript world that it deserves notice of its own accord. But the fifteenth century is also critical from a historical perspective, as the genesis of modern biographical writing and, to a large extent, modern historical writing. The practices of fifteenth-century biography writing usually adopted three particular formats. The first was antiquity's *viri illustres*, based on Plutarch's parallel lives or Suetonius's lives of important Romans. The second used the format of martyr legends, taken from models developed in monasteries, of which Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* (1260)[2] was the most influential predecessor. The final format followed the lives of people known personally to the authors, usually told in the form of orations and written primarily for friends. The period of the fifteenth century represented a significant break because newly erudite men who taught Latin and Greek texts were discovering and circulating classical works both inside and outside the monasteries.

The most recent interpretations of trends in fifteenth-century biographical writing focus on four developments. A first trend emerging from this literature is an emphasis on the role of biography in the development of the discipline of history as it unfolded in the fifteenth century. Biographies in this view played prominent roles as works of history. Gary Ianziti shows in his recent monograph on the writing of

[1] Burckhardt (1860).

[2] See Sect. 4.1.

A.-S. Goeing, *Summus Mathematicus et Omnis Humanitatis Pater: The Vitae of Vittorino da Feltre and the Spirit of Humanism*, Archimedes 33,
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history in fifteenth-century Italy (2012) that the Florentine chancellor Leonardo Bruni used biographies as a legitimate format for explaining the past. In 1413, Bruni's vita of Cicero represented his first serious attempt to write history.[3] Focusing on Bruni's working methods, Ianziti asked whether Bruni had used other and more critical methods than his medieval predecessors to approach the reading of sources and the writing of histories in their own right, methods that would characterize a new, humanistic, approach to history. As Ianziti shows, Bruni used many more sources in a more critical way than anyone had before him.

Nevertheless, Bruni was not averse to manipulating the large body of his evidence. His narrative of *res gestae* "operates as an instrument for presenting, justifying, and explaining the career of the individual concerned."[4] Ianziti called the evolving picture of Cicero "uncompromisingly political."[5] Unlike earlier biographies that were shaped around moralistic statements, Bruni's interpretation of Cicero's life instead took the form of a chronological narrative.

Secondly, scholars have pointed out that fifteenth-century biographies, especially those written by humanists, followed the format of writers from antiquity, foremost Suetonius and Plutarch. In 2007, Marianne Pade provided a valuable analysis of Plutarchian biographies translated between 1400 and 1500 in Italy. In the humanist centers of both Florence and Venice, she found, the many translations of Plutarch's lives and of his *moralia* had a purpose that went beyond school learning of the Greek language, beyond any principles of translation into Latin, and beyond learning about antiquity. For example, she found evidence that authors refurbished the biographical details of Athenians so that they would fit into a model for modern Venice: the authors picked a specific selection of lives for translation and bent or refashioned details as arguments for contemporary political representations.[6]

Thirdly, scholars have shown how biographies were part of Renaissance philosophy in so far as they developed case studies on how to lead a good life. A good life included conduct adapted to the biblical works of charity and according to such virtues as "honor" that were taken over from classical treatises. Christopher Celenza (2013) reminds his readers that treatises on Renaissance ethics were formulated as single case studies and have therefore been omitted from the canon of modern philosophical works. Biographies taught ethics with material that fleshed out what it meant to "lead a good life."[7] One of the most meaningful genres in this respect was the lives of the saints. In her book *Possible Lives: Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy* (2004), Alison Knowles Frazier scrutinizes more than 250 different saints' lives in their various manuscript and print formats, all written between 1420 and 1520. She asks, "what happened when an author with training in the *studia humanitatis* undertook to revise the life of a medieval saint?" This revision, in her opinion, had three elements, of which the main component was "a tight knot of

[3] Ianziti (2012, Kindle Location 583).

[4] Ibid. (Kindle Locations 819–822).

[5] Ibid. (Kindle Location 828).

[6] Pade (2007).

[7] Celenza (2013).

style, content, and structure," with attention to elegance in style and a different tone in the authors' concerns of *veritas*.[8]

A fourth and final cluster of studies has revealed that some fifteenth-century authors described celebrated contemporaries, discussing their specific role in society. In the fourteenth century, it had been more common to write about the famous people of the past, as had Petrarch and Boccaccio. A series of manuscript vitae written by the humanist author Vespasiano da Bisticci in the second half of the fifteenth century, published for the first time in 1970 by Aulo Greco, serves as an instructive example.[9] Greco's edition showed how Vespasiano depicted a whole arsenal of different co-citizens in Florence, men and women, and revealed an unprecedented number of details about their professions and roles in society. After Greco's edition, these vitae became the basis for significant speculation about the activities of humanists and humanist teachers, and of the idea that people from humble beginnings were able to rise in society, based on their merits.[10]

Sabine Schmolinsky's essay (1995) about the series of lives of famous contemporary men written by Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini in 1446 – the first such series composed in the fifteenth century – points out that the vitae contained non-explicable autobiographical fragments and other very personal features.[11] James M. Weiss elaborated this finding into a general argument about fifteenth-century Italian contemporary biographies. In a 1999 article, he points to a significant fight among three famous humanists in the 1450s at the court of Naples that arose because of a biography about the King's father, Ferdinand of Antequera.[12] The court historian Lorenzo Valla had inserted this biography in his *Gesta Ferdinandi Regis Aragonum*, and, according to his attacker Bartolomeo Facio, he had included indecorous details. Facio's own *De rebus gestis ab Alphonso primo neapolitanorum rege*, about Ferdinand's son, presented his answer: a well-researched narrative containing mostly political events in ten books that avoided personal comments. A third contestant in this debate, Panormita, then wrote a biography in the style of Xenophon and Suetonius with many anecdotes, confining himself to the ruler's admirable qualities. Weiss concludes that the presence of personal detail is contextual rather than general.

Weiss's 1999 essay is intended as a criticism of Jakob Burckhardt's claim about the rise of individualism in biographic writing in Italy, which Burckhardt had seen as "the search for the characteristic traits of significant persons."[13] Frazier's study of hagiographic vitae similarly detects a handful of texts with rhetorical patterns that adopt a personal account. Her work shows that the promoters of personal accounts appear to have been Greeks who came to Italy in the first half of the fifteenth

[8] Frazier (2005, pp. 16, 27).

[9] Vespasiano da Bisticci (1970, 1976).

[10] Ijsewijn (1983).

[11] Schmolinsky (1995).

[12] Weiss (1999, p. 28).

[13] Ibid. (p. 25).

century, for instance, Cardinal Bessarion, who wrote his saint's life around 1425.[14] The manuscript vitae of the humanist teacher Vittorino da Feltre, the subject of this study, all adopt to a greater or lesser extent a personal tone.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, two cultures of distributing biographical texts overlapped: the printed format, with its culture of print shop manufacture, of selling and buying; and the scribal distribution of manuscripts that additionally included more intimate forms of distribution, including the personal letter. Such biographies were being written at a time when book practices were changing – and when a general transition from manuscripts to books was taking place. Those vitae that were among the early prints from the second half of the fifteenth century were frequently reprinted in the sixteenth. But those vitae that were originally distributed in manuscript form were almost never printed, and only recirculated in manuscript form on rare occasions. The vitae on Vittorino da Feltre all belonged to the second category, manuscript culture. Manuscript vitae represented different practices of writing from their printed counterparts. Though some followed formats that were very close to those then being printed, many others included biographies written in an oratorical style that included a strong impression of the author and autobiographical insights into relations between the subject and the author of the vita.

In the first decade of the printing press in Italy, with the single exception of a biography of King Ferdinand I of Antequera printed in Rome in 1472, printed biographies corrected ancient manuscript versions of already known vitae from antiquity, or printed the lives of saints. For example, the first biographies printed in Italy came out in Rome. The Roman press Sweynheym and Pannartz published, only 3 years after its installment in 1467, the *lives* by Suetonius.[15] Ulrich Han, a competing printer in Rome who had a workshop from 1466, published in the same year 1470 the *parallel lives* by Plutarch.[16] In 1479, 10 years after these humble beginnings, the librarian of the Vatican library, Bartolomeo Platina, opened the possibility of printing biographies of celebrated and politically important people of the more recent past by printing a collection of lives of the popes. This tradition was revived later in the sixteenth century.[17]

Apart from printed lives and works on church fathers and church teachers like Saint Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas, and a large number of printed saints' lives that reached into contemporary times, there were only a handful of printed biographies of famous figures from any era on the Italian market in the late fifteenth century. The few that did exist were usually sandwiched in a complete edition of

[14] Frazier (2005, p. 353): From Greece came Basilios Bessarion. On or close to Jan 30, 1423, he wrote a vita about the Egyptian Anacoret Bessarion, *Oratio de laudibus Bessarionis*, at which point he gave himself the religious name Bessarion. Between 1469 and 1471, the vita was translated into Latin by Niccolo Perotti.

Ibid. (p. 414): In 1451–1452, George of Trebizond (1395–1472/3) translated two vitae from Greek into Latin that were set in the form of oration. The author of both was Gregor of Nazianz. One presented the life of St Athanasius, and the other, the life of St Basilius Magnus.

[15] Suetonius (1470).

[16] Plutarch (1470).

[17] See Bauer (2006, pp. 1–104).

their works. The subjects of fifteenth-century printed biographies included Cicero, Quintilian, Virgil, Terence, and Aristotle, whose works were read in schools; Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, the founders of Italian literature; and finally, standing alone among the early fifteenth-century humanists, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, whose vita was edited by his nephew Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola in 1496.[18] It is important to notice the selection of works being printed: It seems that the printing presses in Italy had an agenda that might have changed and expanded over the course of 30 years until the end of the century. Vitae of contemporaries known only to a small circle of people, such as humanists, only started to be printed at the end of the fifteenth century, and very rarely.

Like their printed counterparts, some manuscript biographies, such as the vita of San Zeno written by Giovanni Tortelli in 1462,[19] maintained a very distanced tone toward their subjects. This had also been the case for the whole genre of saints' biographies since the twelfth century, when Jacobus de Voragine wrote the *Legenda aurea*. But other manuscript biographies that circulated as letters, such as Francesco Prendilacqua's dialogue on the vita of Vittorino da Feltre, retained the intimate tenor of addressing a friend or future employer directly, despite being written in the age of the printing press (in this case, around 1470). Their tone remained much more autobiographical and personal, in a manner that is to be found in reflections, forewords, necrologues, or oratorial letters to friends, all of which had been circulating since the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

This connection between fifteenth-century authors and their biographical subjects represents a unique period in the history of biographies. Manuscript vitae occupy a moment after the emergence of secular biography as a recognizable genre and before the widespread availability of print. While it has generally not been commented upon in the scholarly literature, this connection is critical for understanding the changing relation between the biographer and his subject in a way that starts to make space at the end of the century for what Gregor Misch in the 1940s and later called "autobiographies."[20] In their accounts of Vittorino da Feltre, the biographers included sketches of their own school life, remembering the excellence of their teacher and school colleagues. All grow out of a similar education in terms of writing, and all share the same subject. These vitae allow us to examine changing biographical and autobiographical practices in fifteenth-century Italy because some of the influences that might otherwise have driven authors to pursue different approaches have been eliminated.

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Vittorino da Feltre (1378?–1446) was one of the first generation of teachers who, it has been argued, used a new focus and style in teaching. He and his cohort have been widely regarded as the founders of the first humanist schools. His vitae represent one very important group of the interpersonal biographies circulated in

[18] Pico della Mirandola and Pico della Mirandola (1496).

[19] Tortelli (<1462>).

[20] Misch (1949–). The terminology is discussed in Schmolinsky (2012).

manuscript form. Written between 1443 and 1491, the vitae of Vittorino da Feltre contain the testimonies of people who had actually seen Vittorino, worked with him, or had heard about him in orally transmitted testimonies by people who knew him.

Vittorino's importance as a historical figure concerns his relationship to "humanism." From the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the term was first used to interpret an entire period from ca. 1350 to ca. 1650, 'humanism' referred to the emergence of a new notion of education and learning that shaped the intellectual life of Europe. Scholars paired humanism with the search for and correction and transmission of antique texts, but textual transmission was seen as only one part of a broad public movement that started in Italy. Since then, the history of 'humanism' has expanded to include the notion of the good individual life and how it led to a rethinking of ethics; looked at the formation and development of today's disciplines of knowledge; and lastly, investigated new modes for distributing information, political opinion, and reflection, in the form of letters, scribal publications, books, and pamphlets.

Schools were part of this movement insofar as they made it possible for people to participate in the new learning: in them students studied Latin, learned oratorical and epistolatory forms of expression, and acquired knowledge in the form of excerpts that alluded to a common canon of beautiful and useful writings. Part of the new Latin grammar curriculum included treatises of history, such as works by the classical historians Tacitus and Livy. Learned circles both inside and out of schools and academies discussed mathematics and new notions of nature, natural philosophy, and medicine. Paul Grendler has pointed out in many publications that the schools, rather than universities and other institutions of higher learning, were the first to adopt the humanist syllabus, in part because their structure lacked the long traditions and formalized canons of the more established institutions.[21]

Nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century scholars identified Vittorino da Feltre, together with Guarino Guarini Veronese and Francesco Filelfo, as the first founders of humanist schools.[22] They have revealed that these schools shared a similar focus, intent on developing oratorical skills in their pupils.[23] This training was to be achieved by reading ancient texts as close to the original Latin and Greek voice as possible, by translating Greek texts into Latin, and finally, by comparing and editing texts to arrive at something as close to the imagined original as possible. For example, the pupils' schoolwork included recitations of self-composed poems and others' works in front of an audience. As Remigio Sabbadini and Eugenio Garin have pointed out, Vittorino da Feltre's school at the court of the Gonzaga in Mantua (1423–1446) featured a very broad curriculum. In contrast to, for example, Guarino

[21] Grendler (1989), compare also Grendler (2002).

[22] See especially the work of Remigio Sabbadini (1885, 1891, 1904, 1905–1914, 1924a, b, 1928a, b, 1964).

[23] Compare Kallendorf (2007); Grendler (1989).

Guarini's school at Ferrara, Vittorino included not only a reformed Trivium (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic), but also readings of Euclid's geometry.[24]

Vittorino's fifteenth-century biographers seem at first to have left us a thorough account of his teachings. A comparison of his different vitae, however, shows that these manuscripts were quite interpretative and should not necessarily be considered an accurate historical picture. In thinking about the beginnings of humanism, the discipline of historiography, and humanist schools in general, the biographies of humanists like Vittorino offer a different perspective from textbooks and syllabi: they reveal how the practice of scholarship and a certain form of canonical knowledge fashioned a new elite. The vitae contain not only the only surviving testimony on Vittorino da Feltre and his school, but also include lists of Vittorino's students' names, their publications, and the canonical readings that emerged from the school. Even more importantly, they reflected on the doings of a teacher and described how a teacher should teach and behave toward his students. With this, they made available norms for good teaching, clothed in the garb of idealized biographies.

The biographies also showed off the skills of their makers: the authors' writings demonstrated what they had learned in Vittorino's school, praising a certain set of virtues and skills connected with their teacher, while simultaneously showing through example how a biography should have been written, according to rules. And indeed, the vitae on Vittorino were not the only biographies that his students produced. In Vittorino's lifetime, Ognibene da Lonigo wrote a life of Camillus, Carlo Gonzaga a life of Agesilaus. Both of them were Plutarchian vitae. Mariarosa Cortesi's analysis of these vitae shows that the purpose of the exercise was a full-fledged translation of the vitae from Greek into Latin.[25] Cortesi also found two other pupils of Vittorino who composed biographies later in life. The vitae on Vittorino thus were part of broader biographical writing practices among Vittorino's students.

Past writing about the humanist teacher Vittorino da Feltre took it for granted that the four most important surviving accounts of his life presented an exact, factual account of his life and work.[26] Focusing on the different individual biographical manuscripts written by Vittorino's students and followers, I ask whether each narrative might have introduced a different Vittorino, and, if so, whether the differences can be set in relation to the background of the writer and the model the writer used to develop his account. The authors tell stories that reveal other truths, beyond the bare facts of the life of Vittorino: stories of kinship and teacher-esteem; an amalgam of the writers' experiences and those imagined from what they read from antiquity; and attempts to replicate the three overwhelmingly present biographical models of Plutarch, Suetonius, and the medieval holy martyrs.

[24] See Sabbadini (1928a); Garin (1957, 1958, 1966, 1967). Baxandall (1971, pp. 127–129) summarizes the mathematical skills that Vittorino's students possibly had gained through his school.

[25] Cortesi (1997); Pade (2007, pp. 229–230). See also Cortesi (1979) on the Greek studies of another former student of Vittorino who wrote saints' lives, Giovanni Tortelli.

[26] Müller (1984), to cite the most recent example.

For this group of author-students, the importance of scholarship was a way of dealing with life. Their attempt to grasp history through the medium of biography is not only an autobiographical instinct, but also a gesture to social and political issues that were pressing at the time. The group formed itself as members of the Vittorino-kinship group. They defined themselves according to a canon of works they had read, and also, according to how they had read those works. In writing biographies of Vittorino, they were attempting to disseminate their own canon.

In writing the life of their teacher, Vittorino's students elevated the role of the teacher to a rank similar to that of other famous men of the period. They placed both Vittorino himself and the humanist teacher within the *republic of letters* as later imagined by Erasmus. In doing so, they also helped perpetuate their own fame. Nevertheless, the early circulation of the vitae was restricted to those who had access to manuscript copies of the lives. Only decades later, with the advent of the printing press, would those same authors encounter a larger audience: those who buy printed books. Vittorino's students edited and printed new editions of Cicero and Quintilian, and also, not coincidentally, major works of biography. But despite the fact that some of the vitae on Vittorino were composed after the advent of the printing press, the authors did not have them printed.

Given this context of individual and group formation, the different angles by which Vittorino is described in the vitae provide a fascinating window into the emergence and spread of Italian humanism. The authors of Vittorino da Feltre's vitae reflect the great interest in writing vitae that was part of Italian intellectual society in the fifteenth century. They demonstrate the focus on oratorical work that Vittorino da Feltre featured in his school curriculum. The authors of the vitae work hard with the material they have, question the veracity of accounts written by others, and express their own story. They are, in short, on the cusp of modernity.

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In 1423, Vittorino da Feltre, a scholar in his mid-1940s, founded an educational establishment at the court of Mantua at the behest of the Marquis of Mantua, Gianfrancesco I Gonzaga, which he directed until 1446.[27] Since the publication of works by Eugenio Garin, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and August Buck,[28] the existence of this "Casa Giocosa" has been regarded as historically proven; this institution's curriculum was based on early humanistic ideas of education. We will critically reexamine the sources that have led to this conclusion, focusing on the sources' properties as the literary works of later authors, an aspect previously overlooked in scholarship on the topic. Even Gregor Müller's recent extensive study of Vittorino da Feltre[29] assumed that these sources alone reflected the historical reality of Vittorino and his school. This assumption is revealed in such remarks as: "When we look at the pedagogical work of Vittorino … we are interested first and foremost in

[27] Woodward (1970, pp. 22, 30–34, 90).

[28] The following publications are the classic basis for the research questions developed in this book: Kristeller (1974, 1976); Garin (1966); Buck (1991).

[29] Müller (1984).

his school."[30] Later he states: "To these factors we can add, as the most critical factor of all, the extraordinary person of Vittorino, who authentically embodied and radiated the ideal of humanistic education …"[31] In both cases, Müller passes over the fact that this "radiating" is a creation of the next generation, pieced together from literary and artistic – i.e., aestheticizing – sources. Nor did Vittorino embody "the" ideal of humanistic education; rather, he represents one possible ideal of specific thoughts on education, which, however, were not homogeneously regarded as binding for the various intellectual groups of the period.

My approach shifts the focus of analysis from the historical facts to their echo in literature, placing the spotlight on the tension between reality and fiction's function in reality. Closely related to this is the question of the function of this idealized representation of Vittorino in the context of theories of education. The methodological approach to the topic is hermeneutical, i.e., the criteria for analysis and ultimately the intrinsic value of the sources will be determined from the sources themselves.

I have tried to confine the discussion to a narrow set of topics in order to impose a meaningful structure on this work and to avoid being sidetracked by the century-old debates on Vittorino as standard-bearer for educators of this period. Instead, the volume will both span and be constrained by the meanings of "humanism," particularly "Renaissance humanism," and pedagogy.[32] The central question is whether, and to what extent, the vitae reflect Vittorino's concept of how to teach and the ethical and pedagogical background for his approach. I will address these issues both in general and in the context of fifteenth-century Italy, in which the school had a particular importance as a social institution.

Without going into too much detail, it should be mentioned here that the current difficulties with the semantic diversity of the term "humanism" stem from its dual epistemological roots, grounded in the work of Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer (1808)[33]; the various meanings have resolved themselves over the course of the history of this field of research into two divergent strands that are nonetheless interdependent. One strand takes an ahistorical approach, more or less a priori, to a particular view of human nature,[34] while the other ties the term to historical thinking and has come to characterize an entire epoch.[35] This latter approach, owing to the discovery of new sources, is constantly in danger of losing the unitary principle it was originally thought to have.[36] Paul Oskar Kristeller was the first to construe the term "Renaissance humanism" only formally.[37] His use of the term is the one that is

[30] Ibid. (p. 123).

[31] Ibid. (p. 123).

[32] Tenorth (1992, p. 12ff).

[33] Used reprint: Niethammer (1968).

[34] An overview of developments in more recent times (until 1954) is provided in Rüegg (1977).

[35] Paulsen (1885).

[36] For the destruction of the concept of Renaissance humanism as an epoch see Müller (1969).

[37] Kristeller (1974, pp. 11–29).

in general use today,[38] although one could ask whether a more neutral designation encompassing the time and place under consideration (here, fifteenth-century Italy) would be more accurate.

I will begin with a critical reexamination of the available sources on Vittorino in order to set the historical stage. In particular, I will discuss the scholastic tradition in which Vittorino's Casa Giocosa was integrated; this tradition is the only empirical fact that can be gleaned from the existing documents. After looking at the critical reception of the school and the vitae, I will evaluate their positions within the research history, as an introduction to this study.[39] I will then select my sources, based on their value as source material, and examine separately those that are particularly rich in terms of content. Because Vittorino left behind no writings of his own, his desires and achievements can only be accessed through secondary sources. In this case, as the selection of texts will show, these sources are those Lives of Vittorino that were authored by his former students and contemporaries. My analysis represents the first time that these sources will be discussed in terms of their literary background and the circumstances in which they were created. This approach should give us a deeper historical and hermeneutical understanding of the literary texts.

I will begin, in chronological order, with the letters exchanged between Sassolo da Prato and Leonardo Dati, followed by the texts written when Vittorino was already dead – the Lives of Bishop Antoninus of Florence and Vittorino da Feltre written by Francesco da Castiglione, Bartolomeo Platina's commentary on the life and achievements of Vittorino, and Francesco Prendilacqua's dialogue.[40] For various reasons that will be explained later, the Life by Vespasiano da Bisticci is not considered one of the canonical Lives and therefore does not receive a separate treatment here; rather, it will be interwoven into the discussion in various places. The different biographical portrayals of Vittorino were created between 1443 (Sassolo's letter) to 1470 (Prendilacqua's dialogue). The school, however, only existed from 1423 to 1446, the year of Vittorino's death (it was continued for a few years later by his students). The only text created during Vittorino's lifetime is Sassolo's letter.

The individual lives exhibit certain thematic differences. Sassolo primarily discussed the rationale for the quadrivium within the framework of the tradition of the *studia humanitatis*, which he associated closely with *humanitas*, in the Christian sense of works of charity. Aside from its content, the method of communication played a large role in his discussions. His letter had a certain rhetorical form and an

[38] Schmitt (1988, pp. 113–137).

[39] The most important publications about Vittorino da Feltre are Rosmini (1801, 1845); Woodward (1970), a reprint of the 1st ed. New York 1897; *Vittorino da Feltre. Nel V Centenario della sua morte MCDXLVI–MCMXLVI* (1946); *Vittorino da Feltre. Pubblicazione commemorativa del V centenario della morte* (1947); Giannetto (1981); Müller (1984).

[40] Without including Dati's letters, or the vita on bishop Antoninus, Garin (1958, pp. 500–718), presents an edition of all the vitae on Vittorino da Feltre, using old publications. Dati (1943) is a reprint of 1743. Epistles 7 and 12 are addressed to Sassolo da Prato. Francesco da Castiglione (1680a, b) present the first two printed vita of Antoninus.

instructive purpose, allowing us to assume that the letter was also intended to serve as a model for didactic discourse. Sassolo would have understood the difference between playing and practicing in pedagogy and the appropriateness of each depending on the age of the student, a realization that acknowledged the intrinsic worth of the child. Francesco da Castiglione, in contrast, discussed the relationship between religious and worldly life under the banner of *vita activa*. He gave the Casa Giocosa the new title of a Platonic academy, probably borrowing the idea from the founding of a new "Accademia Platonica" in Florence. In his content, he adhered rather strictly to moral concepts from the Dominican tradition. Bartolomeo Platina's account attempted to synthesize the writings on education from that century, emphasizing the successes of Vittorino's former students within society. Francesco Prendilacqua's dialogue was concerned with determining the place of education within the framework of the goings-on at court. For him, the focus was on individual education, but unlike the others, he did not hold Vittorino up unconditionally as a model. This approach – considering the Lives separately and contrasting them – leads to results that demonstrate a new way to understand the ideas communicated within the domain of the Casa Giocosa.

Quotations from the biographies written by Sassolo da Prato, Francesco Castiglione, Platina and Francesco Prendilacqua were taken usually from the primary manuscripts cited in the bibliography. The orthography is rendered as literal as possible to the manuscripts. If the date of the manuscript is only my estimate, I have written it in angle brackets "<. . .>". If not noted otherwise, the translations from the Latin in chapters 1 to 5 were produced in collaboration of Anja-Silvia Goeing with Deanna Stewart; the translation of Sassolo's letter in the appendix (Chap. 6) is entirely due to James Astorga.

Chapter 2
The Sources on Vittorino da Feltre

In this chapter, I will introduce Vittorino and his school. I will investigate thoroughly what we know about him by critically examining the sources. I will then trace the publication and research history of the vitae and explore the historiographical assumptions that have, thus far, shaped understandings of Vittorino's work.

2.1 Vittorino da Feltre: Name and Research History

The early biographies of Vittorino Rambaldoni da Feltre provide some basic information about the educator's life and pedagogical approach. They contain descriptions and assessments of the school[1] he led from 1423 to 1446 at the court of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, who ruled Mantua from 1407 to 1444,[2] first as *capitano*[3]

[1] On May 5, 1423, Vittorino da Feltre formulated two official documents in which he authorized trusted people to represent his interests in Venice. The notary called him a recent citizen of Venice. The publication of both documents from the Archivio di Stato in Mantua is in Nardi (1958, pp. 14–15). Compare also Rosmini (1801, p. 69, note (b)). Indications on how the school was run are in Luzio (1888, pp. 329–341). Luzio (1888, p. 330) cites a document establishing that in 1423, an overcoat was bought for Ognibene da Lonigo, "puero magistri Vectorini magistri Lodovico et Caroli die 24 decembr." In 1424, Guarino Guarini (1915–1919: vol. 1, 1915, p. 399, letter no. 256) wrote a letter to Lodovico Gonzaga, confirming that Vittorino was Lodovico's teacher. An inheritance decree as of April 1446 attests to the date of Vittorino's death (Rosmini 1801, p. 238).

[2] Coniglio (1958, Sect. 1, vol. 1, pp. 443–445) states that Gonzaga reigned from the death of his father in 1407. Until 1410, he probably was under tutelage of the Venetians and of his uncle, Carlo Malatesta of Rimini, whose brother's daughter, Paola, married him in 1409. The references cited by Coniglio (ibid., pp. 454–455, notes 1–5), are unfortunately not proof of these statements.

[3] Ibid. (p. 427): "All'epoca della signoria di Francesco, lo stato era organizzato come segue. Al vertice stava il signore, Dominus Capitaneus, … . Il suo potere non era più personale, ma ereditario." The author does not give references or notes.

A.-S. Goeing, *Summus Mathematicus et Omnis Humanitatis Pater: The Vitae of Vittorino da Feltre and the Spirit of Humanism*, Archimedes 33,
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and then, starting in 1433, as marquis[4]; the contents of these biographies provide a basis for reflecting on statements made about pedagogy during the period of Renaissance humanism in Italy. This study will primarily focus on the four "core" vitae of Vittorino da Feltre, though it takes into account several other sources that have been preserved. All of these sources are treatments of the same theme, namely, they are all literary or artistic portrayals of Vittorino da Feltre. Because there are no other biographical documents available outside of a few archival documents, these written biographies continue to serve as the basis for the reconstruction of Vittorino's life and achievements.

The four biographies, to which we can also add one additional biography and two portraits, can be more or less accurately dated. These will be covered in more detail in the pertinent chapters; for now I will confine myself to a short overview.

The first vita consists of a letter sent by Sassolo da Prato to Leonardo Dati in Florence[5] between March 12, 1443, and February 8, 1444. The date of this document is confirmed by two dated letters from Leonardo,[6] one of which received a response from Sassolo,[7] the other of which was in response to Sassolo's letter.[8] The letter contained nothing that could point to an alternative date of composition.[9]

By virtue of allusions in the second text and its overarching conclusion, the *Vita Victorini Feltrensis* written by Francesco da Castiglione[10] forms a single

[4] Ibid. (pp. 450–451): "Il 7 maggio [1433] Gianfrancesco riuscì ad ottenere il titolo di marchese da Sigismondo, dietro pagamento di 12.000 fiorini." Again, this statement is made without reference. The relevant documents in the Archives of Mantua do not mention a payment. Francesco Gonzaga had obtained the title already in 1403 from King Wenzeslaus. This title was not valid, however, because Wenzeslaus had lost his reign in 1400. An attempt by Gianfrancesco, to obtain the title newly from Sigismund, failed in the year 1412. Coniglio does not give references for this statement.

[5] Sassolo da Prato: De Victorini Feltrensis vita ac disciplina. (a) Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Cod. Estense lat. R. 8. 15. (b) Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale: Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>). According to Avanzi (1947, pp. 87–103: p. 100, no. 98), Sassolo (a) was first published by Martène and Durand (1968: vol 3, 1724, col. 843–856). Avanzi values Sassolo (b) as the better manuscript. Guasti uses Sassolo (b) for his edition of Sassolo da Prato (1869). A revised version of Guasti's transcription is printed by Garin (1958, pp. 504–533).

[6] Dati (1943, pp. 13–14 [letter 7 to Sassolo da Prato, dated May 21, 1443]; pp. 39–42 [letter 23 to Sassolo da Prato, dated February 8, 1443 ab incarnatione (= 1444)]).

[7] In letter 7 (May 12, 1443), Leonardo Dati recommends Giovanni Aretino as a student to Vittorino, via Sassolo da Prato. Giovanni Aretino is traveling to Vittorino in Mantua. Sassolo mentioned in his own letter to Dati that Giovanni Aretino had arrived.

[8] In letter no 23, dated February 8, 1444, Leonardo Dati praised the vita of Vittorino da Feltre by Sassolo da Prato: He had received it.

[9] See Sect. 3.2.

[10] Francesco da Castiglione(<1460>). Further manuscripts: Kristeller (1963–1992, vol. 2 (1967), p. 162): Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati: E IV, 16. ff. 83–93r. (dated 1462). Kristeller (1963–1992, vol. 2 (1967), p. 170): Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, T III, 1. ff. 154v–157v. According to Kristeller, this was the original text. All three manuscripts connect the *Vita Victorini* as an annex to the *Vita Antonini*. First publication extracts appear in Bandini (1961, vol. 3, p. 415ff). Avanzi (1947, p. 94, no. 38) refers to other mentions of the *Vita Victorini*. The document was published in full in Garin (1958, pp. 534–551).

conceptual unit with the same author's *Vita Antonini*.[11] A handwritten manuscript of Castiglione's vita of Vittorino has also survived without the vita of Saint Antoninus appended to it.[12] The *Vita Antonini*, which refers to Archbishop Antoninus of Florence, can be dated by its contents to within the year following May 2, 1459. On that day, Archbishop Antoninus of Florence died.[13] If we assume that the two vitae were produced as a single work, then the vita of Vittorino can also be dated to this period. But if we are inclined to consider it a later addition,[14] at the very least we have a *datum post quem*.

Bartolomeo Sacchi da Piadena, also called Platina, must have written his *Commentariolus* (little commentary) on the life and achievements of Vittorino,[15] the third vita under consideration here, to his friend Baldesar Suardo after 1462. In this case, the date is established by a mention in the text of Francesco Gonzaga as cardinal.[16] The date of composition remains uncertain but it was probably before 1474 since Federico da Montefeltro of Urbino was referred to as *comes* and not *duca*.[17]

The fourth primary vita, Francesco Prendilacqua's dialogue,[18] was written just before 1470. This date was confirmed by Oreste Antognoni in the late nineteenth

[11] See Sect. 4.1.

[12] For a list and discussion of the manuscripts of the *Vita Antonii*, see Orlandi (1962, pp. 1–24). Orlandi does not give the correct number. See also Sect. 4.1.

[13] Francesco da Castiglione (1680, pp. 313–325: pp. 311, 313 Annotata). The source for the date of death is, however, not given. Castiglione wrote that he had composed the *Vita Antonini* in the year after the death of Antoninus (Acta Sanctorum [1680, p. 313]). The Bishop of Spoleto is mentioned in the vita as a bishop, not a cardinal. He was promoted in the year 1460 to cardinal (Acta Sanctorum 1680, p. 313 Annotata). The vita should have been written before this important date. See also Sect. 4.1.

[14] This is possible, because the author has written more vitae, and all are independent of each other. Therefore, the *Vita Victorini* could also have been composed as part of this larger oeuvre, see Garin (1958, p. 723f); and reference to Marsilio Ficino, Supplementum ficinianum, in Ficino (1937: vol. 2, pp. 340–341). The hints within the *Vita Victorini* show clearly that the *Vita Antonini* was written prior to the *Vita Victorini*.

[15] Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>), edited by Tommaso Agostino Vairani and published as Sacchi da Piadena (1778, pp. 14–28). Giuseppe Biasuz's edition (Sacchi da Piadena (1948)) was based on the Vairani-edition, also the later edition by Eugenio Garin in Garin (1958, pp. 668–699).

[16] Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>), ff. 30v–31r: "Et ne filios Principis omittam: Ludovicum Illu. Francisci Cardinalis parentem: qui nunc mantuanis imperat," (Garin [1958, p. 690]). For the promotion to cardinal on March 23, 1462, see Medioli Masotti (1977, p. 407, note 1), with reference to [Sacchi da Piadena, Bartolomeo, named Platina] (1913–32, p. X). A check of the latter reference brought to light that it does not provide any documental evidence for this statement.

[17] Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>), f. 31r; (Garin [1958, p. 692]) For the promotion to *duca* see note 19. According to Garin (1958, p. 730), the *datum ante quem* could have been the imprisonment of Platina in 1465. I do not see any obvious connection between the writing and Platina's imprisonment.

[18] (a) Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>); other Manuscripts of the Dialogue are: (b) Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, Lat. 6247; (c) Mantua, Biblioteca Comunale, Codex Capilupi, Man. 1374 (see Eramo and Signorini [1981, pp. 313–314]). The Codex Urb lat. 897 (a) is published with its preface omitted in Garin (1958, pp. 552–667). A rare complete publication of the manuscript with preface is Prendilacqua (1774). Extracts of the preface are in Zampetti (1981, p. 260, note 2). In 1501, Bartolomeo Sanvito of Rome transcribed a copy of the Codex Urb. lat. 897: (d) Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Patetta 380.

century through a dated letter.[19] A fifth vita, produced by Vespasiano da Bisticci as part of a collection of vitae of famous contemporaries written between his retirement to Antella from Florence in 1480 and his death in 1498, will not be much discussed here, for reasons explained below.[20] As Aulo Greco demonstrated in 1970,[21] it is not possible to date the individual vitae any more precisely.

In addition to these five vitae, a medallion, which was signed by the artist Antonio Pisano, also called Pisanello, shows a portrait of Vittorino and includes a circumscription; the back includes another circumscription and depicts a pelican feeding her young with her own blood. The medallion was dated by the art historian George Hill, without much evidence, to the years 1445–1446, "soon before or after the death of Vittorino (Feb. 2, 1446)."[22] Later art historians revised Hill's dates to the period after Vittorino's death, once again without presenting much evidence for their claims.[23] It is possible that the medallion bears a very portrait-like resemblance because the artist was famous as a portraitist[24] and had known the master for many years through their common employment at the court.[25] The portrait of Vittorino in the *studiolo* of Federico da Montefeltro, which was included in the *uomini-illustri* series compiled according to the personal taste of the Duke of Urbino,[26] was painted some time during the period 1473/1474–1476[27] and is generally attributed to either Justus of Ghent or Pedro Berruguete or both.[28] Like the other depictions, it included an explanatory inscription.[29]

In summary, we can say that our literary and artistic documentary evidence was created between 1443 and 1498, while Vittorino's school in Mantua existed from 1423 until his death in 1446. The majority of the vitae and portraits must have been

[19] Antognoni (1889b). Prendilacqua's letter to Ottaviano degli Ubaldini is dated February 1470. In it, Prendilacqua mentions the biography on Vittorino da Feltre he has just finished for Federico da Montefeltro. He already addresses Federico as *duca,* although Federico would officially be promoted *duca* only in 1474: Rosmini (1801, p. 364, note (a) refers to Muratori [1744, vol. 9, p. 518]). Although the title *duca* would refer to a date after 1474, the letter provides evidence that the dialogue was already finished by 1470.

[20] Vespasiano da Bisticci (1970, 1976, vol. 1, pp. V–VII; pp. 573–580 [*vita Victorini*]).

[21] Ibid. (vol. 1, 1970, pp. VII–VIII).

[22] Hill (1930, vol. 1, p. 11, no. 38).

[23] Brockhaus (1994, p. 315, no. 165): Georg Syamken believes it to be a commemoration medal for the death of Vittorino; compare also Mariani Canova (1981, pp. 199–201).

[24] Compare Dell'Acqua (1972).

[25] These documents are assembled in Dell'Acqua (1972, pp. 83–84). Pisanello was in Mantua in 1422, 1424–26, 1439 and 1447. He travelled many times between Milan, Verona, Ferrara and Rome. It can be assumed that he was even more often in Mantua, as it is on the route between Rome and the North of Italy. The poet Basinio da Parma praised the high likeness of the medal "as if you were alive:" Basinio da Parma (1925, p. 104).

[26] For documents and bibliography see *Les Primitifs Flamands* (1995, serie 1, vol. 17, text vol., pp. 95–180).

[27] *Ibid*. (p. 131).

[28] A recent compilation of opinions in *ibid*. (p. 150).

[29] For the publication of the inscriptions in 1592, see *ibid*. (pp. 167–170).

produced posthumously, although they certainly came from Vittorino's immediate circle, which explains why they have been considered historically valuable.

The biographies are not, however, the only historical information available on the actual life and achievements of Vittorino da Feltre. The value of the biographies as source material for historical facts remains debatable[30]; for that reason, it is advisable to begin by examining what few letters and archival documents refer to Vittorino. Carlo de' Rosmini provided the as-yet-unsurpassed foundation for scholarship on Vittorino in his 1801 book, *Idea dell'ottimo precettore nella vita e disciplina di Vittorino da Feltre e de' suoi discepoli*.[31] While Romini based his work on the vitae by Sassolo, Castiglione, Platina, and Prendilacqua, and other contemporary appraisals, he also thoroughly examined archival notes and reports about Vittorino's students and was able to access materials dating back to 1680.[32]

Despite the wealth of more recent literature on Vittorino da Feltre, only a handful of researchers have discovered new primary sources. Only in those rare cases where new materials have been found have later researchers been able to improve on Rosmini's work, either by providing more precise accounts or by pointing out discrepancies. The vita by Vespasiano da Bisticci was first used as a new source[33] by Jacob Burckhardt in 1860[34] in his description of Vittorino's educational system. In 1889, Oreste Antognoni was able to assign an earlier date to the vita by Prendilacqua,[35] originally thought to have been written after 1475, using newly discovered letters from the year 1470. In 1979, Giuseppina Eramo and Rodolfo Signorini discovered new primary material in the form of Prendilacqua's third codex, the Codex Capilupi,[36] which was first mentioned by Giovanni Andres in 1797.[37] In the margins of this document Eramo and Signorini discovered evidence for an additional, yet unknown student of Vittorino.

At the time Rosmini was writing, Vittorino's known correspondence consisted of a single letter written to Ambrogio Traversari[38]; this was subsequently expanded by

[30] The following articles and books give an introduction into the problem arising around research on the *Humanist Vita:* Bauer (2006), Berschin (1983), Buck (1989, pp. 7–17), Enenkel (1998), Enenkel (2008), Enenkel (2010), Frazier (2005), Ianziti (2002), Ianziti (2012), Ijsewijn (1983), Kessler (1983), McLaughlin (2002), Miglio (1974–1975), Pade (2007), Schmolinsky (1995), Weiss (1999).

[31] Rosmini (1801; 2nd ed. 1845).

[32] See below, note 198.

[33] For the history of publications of the vitae by Vespasiano da Bisticci from 1642, see Vespasiano (1970, 1976: vol. 1, 1970, pp. IX–X).

[34] Burckhardt (1860, p. 208, note 1) had a follower who elaborated on didactics: see Krampe (1895). Krampe himself hints to Burckhardt in his introduction to the chapter about Vittorino da Feltre on pp. 29–37.

[35] See note 19.

[36] Eramo and Signorini (1981, pp. 313–314).

[37] Rosmini (1801, p. 326, note a) cited the finder, Andres (1797, pp. 57–69).

[38] Rambaldoni (De'), Vittorino da Feltre: [letter to Ambrogio Traversari], in Mittarrelli (1779, cols 1207–1208).

discoveries by Alessandro Luzio in 1888,[39] Ludwig Bertalot in 1908,[40] Pietro Torelli in 1911,[41] and D. S. Chambers in 1989,[42] raising the number of letters extant today to nine. In addition, Remigio Sabbadini spent much of the first quarter of the twentieth century researching Vittorino's early days in Padua, in the process uncovering the names of Vittorino's probable teachers and the books they used for teaching.[43] Sabbadini was also able to give a more precise account of Vittorino's relationship to Guarino Guarini Veronese once the latter's correspondence was published.[44]

Scholars researching scholastic and humanistic traditions have identified additional work thought to be associated with Vittorino. In 1876, Stefano Davari,[45] the archivist of the Archivio Gonzaga in Mantua, discovered new materials that shed light on the scholastic tradition in Mantua during the period 1398–1584. In 1897, William Harrison Woodward[46] published a complete overview of Vittorino's pedagogy within its cultural context. Following this research, Antonio Casacci published a treatise on Latin orthography in 1926/1927 that he claimed was probably composed by Vittorino.[47] Mariarosa Cortesi's studies have contributed to the knowledge of Vittorino's intellectual foundation by providing evidence that Vittorino made a gift of 40 books from his personal collection to his former student Gian Pietro da Lucca, who had himself become a teacher.[48] The most painstaking work on Vittorino's curricular approach has been completed by Gregor Müller (1984). Müller placed Vittorino's curriculum within the context of contemporary texts and thoroughly examined the traditions behind it.[49]

Müller, like Woodward before him,[50] takes for granted that the information in the vitae is true. This assumption, now passed down through centuries of scholarship, has led to hypotheses being treated as facts. It is therefore essential to begin to

[39] Luzio (1888).

[40] Bertalot (1908, pp. 39–40). The addressee of this letter was found by Bellodi (1973) to be Andrea Correr.

[41] Letter to Nicolò da Pusterla, in Torelli (1911, p. 217, note 2).

[42] Letter by Vittorino to Paola Malatesta in Mantua from Acqui, dated May 4, 1441 (Archivio di Stato Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, busta 745), in Chambers (1989, pp. 219–221). Vittorino reported to the Marchess on the health of her son Alessandro. He was recovering from an illness.

[43] Sabbadini (1885, pp. 148–179; especially pp. 156–162): I due Maestri Giovanni da Ravenna. Sabbadini (1891, pp. 230–241 [George of Trebizond]). Sabbadini (1964, vol. 2, pp. 49–50): first mention of the autographical manual *De Orthographia*. Sabbadini (1904, p. 253ff). Sabbadini (1905–1914). Sabbadini (1924a). Sabbadini (1924b, pp. 286–290). Sabbadini (1928b, pp. 629–633). Sabbadini (1928a, pp. 209–221).

[44] Guarino Guarini Veronese (1915–1919; letters no. 55, 219, 256, 511, 526, 657, 667, 672, 682, 707, 766).

[45] Davari (1876, passim).

[46] Woodward (1970).

[47] Casacci (1926–27, pp. 911–945).

[48] Cortesi (1981, pp. 263–276); Cortesi (1980, pp. 77–114).

[49] Müller (1984, pp. 123–305).

[50] Müller (1984, pp. 71–111); Woodward (1970, passim).

unpack the points of agreement and disagreement in the existing historical texts. A necessary first step is to establish that the right historical personage is under discussion: only after a given Vittorino has been correctly identified as "the" Vittorino can all of the documents be compiled into a complete account, or the various Vittorinos compared with each other based on historical facts.

The vitae describe a teacher in Mantua as Vittorino of Feltre, who taught both the marquis children and other students, some of whom resided with him.[51] Prendilacqua reported that his surname was Rambaldoni, but Platina claimed it was Romagno.[52] His father was called Brutus by Castiglione, Prendilacqua, and Platina,[53] and Prendilacqua claimed his mother was Munda,[54] while Platina said she was called Lucia.[55] Between 1423 and 1446, Magister Victorinus Feltrensis[56] was named several times in archival notes belonging to the Archivio Gonzaga in Mantua in his role as teacher to the marquis children. Because no other Vittorino da Feltre can plausibly be accounted for, this Magister Victorinus has been identified with another person officially documented in Mantua in 1423 as *egregius vir Victorinus filius quondam Domini Bruti de Rambaldonibus de Feltro*.[57] This document puts to rest the argument over Vittorino's name: his father was Bruto Rambaldoni from Feltre. Presumably, the "da Feltre" in his name refers to a place of origin called Feltre; this, however,

[51] The orthography of this and all following quotations from the manuscripts is kept as literal as possible. Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>), f. 43v (Garin [1958, p. 508]): "seque ad Victorinum optimum: communem que studiosorum omnium parentem conferent · aquo accipientur hospitio (mihi credant) adeo liberali: ut patriam et suos non admodum desideraturi sint." Francesco da Castiglione (<1460>), f. 93r (Garin [1958, p. 540]): "Nam ut omictam quot adolescentes pauperes quos ad discendas litteras ideoneos nouerat domi suis sumptibus retinebat quibus libris domo victu uestituque optime consulebat." Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>), f. 10r (Garin [1958, p. 674]): "Susceptus per benigne ac comiter apud curia domum quam ciues iocosam uocant cum gnatis principis inhabitauit." f. 10v (ibid., p. 674): *gymnasium istituit.* There is no hint that the other students also lived in the *Casa Giocosa,* nor of the location of the *gymnasium*, but: f. 8r (ibid., p. 672): The school in Venice contained "*eruditionem et contubernium,*" there was thus accommodation. Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 26r (ibid., p. 592): A house was provided for Vittorino and his students. f. 27r (ibid., p. 594): Students selected according to their manners, who lived together with the offspring of the marquess. f. 30v (ibid., p. 600): Provision of a second house, in which the new students would live, since no students were allowed to live with the sons of the marquess. Vespasiano (1970, 1976: vol. 1, 1970, p. 574): There was a school with lodging, where the poor students were also allowed to live.

[52] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 20r) (Garin [1958, p. 582]); Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>), f. 3v (ibid., p. 668).

[53] Francesco da Castiglione (<1460>, f. 90v) (ibid., p. 534); Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 20r) (ibid., p. 582); Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 3v) (ibid., p. 668).

[54] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 20r) (ibid., p. 582).

[55] Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 3v) (ibid., p. 668).

[56] Luzio (1888, passim).

[57] Rosmini (1801, p. 69, note (b)): Casali, Luigi: Prose e versi nel giorno natalizio di Virgilio, p. 44, Memoria intorno al luogo natale di Virgilio: Two procure (Rog. del Not. Redordati), of May 27, 1423: "egregius vir Victorinus filius quondam Domini Bruti de Rambaldonibus de Feltro, & nunc civis & habitator Mantuae, & in curia praelibati magnifici Domini." Publication in Nardi (1958, pp. 14–15; he reads the date as May 22, 1423).

cannot be confirmed.[58] Bruno Nardi's 1958 study[59] uncovered additional information about Vittorino's family, including the fact that his mother, Lucina Munda, was descended from the Enselmini, a noble family from Padua.

The only information available regarding Vittorino's year of birth comes from the conflicting claims in the vitae: 1373/1374 (Sassolo), 1376/1377 (Platina), and 1378/1379 (Prendilacqua).[60] The dates therefore remain in doubt and can only be used as a rough guide. Given that Sassolo was living under the same roof as Vittorino when he wrote, his estimate is preferable; Sassolo, moreover, was probably more familiar than the others with the necessity of making precise numerical statements because of the detailed tax declarations that the city of Florence, where he grew up, required.[61]

The large number of assets that passed through Vittorino's hands during the period 1432–1445 stands in marked contrast to the poverty remembered by his biographers, as Nardi pointed out in 1958.[62] Nevertheless, Vittorino obviously died relatively poor, because no one wanted to accept his inheritance,[63] and his books were reclaimed in order to satisfy some of his debts.[64] A document regarding his estate, dated April 27, 1446, serves as *datum ante quem* for his death, which Prendilacqua claimed had already occurred on February 2. The *datum post quem* comes from a letter from Lodovico Gonzaga to Pope Nicholas V dated June 3, 1449, in which he wrote that Jacopo da San Cassiano had assumed Vittorino's position upon his death, a position which he had now held for 3 years. From this, we can conclude that Vittorino's death must have occurred in close proximity to the time of

[58] Rosmini's indication makes this plausible (Rosmini 1801, p. 29, note [a]): "Il Chiar. Signor Abate Luigi Canonici, fra molti preziosi suoi codici, possede pur i componimenti poetici del fecondissimo poeta latino Antonio Baratella di Laureia, di cui altrove diremo, fra quali uno ve n'ha diretto al nostro Vittorino con questo titolo: *ad Victorinum Rambaldonem Feltrensem Oratorem*, della qual notizia tenuti siamo, come pur d'altre molte di cui ci varremo opportunamente, al Chiar. Signor Abate D. Jacopo Morelli, vero modello di gentilezza e d'erudizione. Il Conte Mazzucchelli ha provato (Scritt. Ital. *(= Mazzucchelli, Giammaria: Gli Scrittori d'Italia, 2 vols. in 6 Teilen, Brescia 1753–63, vol. 2, Teil 1, 1758, p. 231, note 5, (note provided by A.G.))* che il Baratella morì in Feltre ov'era professor di Rettorica, onde avea potuto assai bene conoscere la famiglia di Vittorino."

[59] Nardi (1958, p. 4). He bases his opinion, however, on an epigram written later by Nicodemo de'Folenghi. The important relation of Munda with the Paduan Enselmini has no documentary evidence (Nardi 1958, p. 5). The relation is rendered plausible because Vittorino accommodates the former political prisoner Enselmino degli Enselmini from Venice in Mantua, and he also put forth a guarantee of 1,000 ducates (Nardi 1958, pp. 17–20).

[60] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>), f. 47v (Garin [1958, p. 518]), characterized Vittorino in his letter as a 70-year-old man. Since he wrote his letter between May 1443 and February 1444 (see note 7), the birthday of Vittorino might have been 1373/beginning of 1374. Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>), f. 39r (ibid., p. 698) wrote that Vittorino died age 69, but he omitted the year of death. Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 66r) (ibid., p. 662) wrote that Vittorino died at age 68 on February 2, 1447. According to his dates, Vittorino would have been born in 1378 or early 1379.

[61] His father's tax record of 1433 is known: every child is noted with indication of age, see Sect. 3.1, note 35.

[62] Nardi (1958, pp. 20–26).

[63] Rosmini (1801, pp. 236–238, note [c]).

[64] Luzio (1888, p. 339).

the estate document.[65] Alessandro Luzio found archival evidence of expenditures on medications for Vittorino, indicating that his death was presaged in 1444 by a protracted illness.[66]

The vitae expressly refer to Vittorino's studying in Padua and with Guarino Guarini Veronese in Venice, his teaching activity at the University of Padua, and the schools he founded in Padua and Venice before he was invited to Mantua.[67] The evidence for Vittorino's residence in Padua is sparse. He was mentioned at a commencement ceremony on October 25, 1410, as "*mag. Victorino quondam ser Brutii de Rambaldonibus de Feltro.*"[68] A letter written in 1411 by Gasparino Barzizza proves their acquaintance but not, as Rosmini and Woodward[69] would like to claim, a teacher-student relationship; the passage in question says, "*Librum verò tuum dedi Victorino Feltrensi, qui jussu tuo illum à me requisivit.*"[70] In 1422, Vittorino succeeded Barzizza to a professorship at the University of Padua.[71] In addition, Flavio Biondo called him a student of Giovanni da Ravenna,[72] who died in 1408, according to Remigio Sabbadini.[73] Sabbadini investigated Biondo's claim, to which he was able to add details but not to independently confirm.

On the basis of the above documents, we can assume that Vittorino resided in Padua, where he probably studied and attained the academic title of Magister, although Jaitner-Hahner pointed out in 1993 that the title could have been conferred without attending the university.[74] It is not known whether he received support, either financially or through their influence, from his maternal relations, the Enselmini, as surmised by Nardi in 1958.[75] We also have no way of knowing what subjects

[65] Discussion of date of death: Rosmini (1801, pp. 236–238, note [c]).

[66] Luzio (1888, p. 337, note 1).

[67] Francesco da Castiglione (<1460>), f. 90v–91v (Garin [1958, pp. 534–538]) uses the term *magister*; he does not list Guarino and only refers to the founding of a school in Venice. Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>), ff. 5r–8r (ibid., pp. 670–672) refers to the doctoral degree; only mentions the school founding in Venice; and states that Vittorino learned Greek with Guarino. Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, ff. 22v–25r) (ibid., pp. 586–590) implies that Vittorino was active as a *pedagogo* from the beginning of his studies in Padua; that he had been awarded a doctoral degree; that he studied Greek with Guarino; and held a chair in Padua for rhetoric and philosophy with students as housemates; and the same in Venice, where his most famous student was George of Trebizond.

[68] Rosmini (1801, p. 29, note [a]); Zonta and Brotto (1970, pp. 50–51, no. 132).

[69] Rosmini (1801, p. 33); Woodward (1970, pp. 10–14).

[70] Rosmini (1801, p. 33) cites Barzizza and Barzizza (1969, vol. 1, p. 136). See also Sabbadini (1928b, p. 631). The letter to Antonio Fantaxello is not dated. Furietti dates it to 1411 without providing a reason.

[71] Facciolati (1978, vol. 1, pp. LII–LIII): Vittorino is characterized as "Rhetoris … patavini munus suscepit anno MCCCCXXII, stipendio conductus argenteorum LXXX" (previously referred by Rosmini 1801, p. 58).

[72] Guarino Veronese (1915–1919: vol. 3, 1919, p. 54, note 1): This is Biondo's text, it treats Vittorino's studies with Giovanni da Ravenna.

[73] Sabbadini (1885, pp. 148–179, especially pp. 156–162): "I due Maestri Giovanni da Ravenna." He corrects his opinions in: Sabbadini (1928b) and Sabbadini (1924a).

[74] Jaitner-Hahner (1993, p. 191).

[75] Nardi (1958, p. 7).

he studied. According to Remigio Sabbadini, he would have become acquainted with grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, and poetry if he studied with Giovanni da Ravenna, whose curriculum included these subjects.[76] The professorship Vittorino took over from Barzizza in 1422 was associated with the teaching of rhetoric.[77] It has furthermore been said that Antonio Baratella heard Vittorino lecture on astronomy,[78] although this is not attested elsewhere. Francesco da Castiglione, Prendilacqua, and Platina all indicated in their vitae that Vittorino would have liked to study under the mathematician Biagio Pelacani, although he did not.[79] Biagio left Padua for Parma in 1411,[80] giving the episode a *datum ante quem*. In general, it is tacitly assumed that Vittorino studied the subjects he later taught in Mantua, that is, the trivium and quadrivium, and philosophy.[81]

There is no question that Vittorino had a command of Greek,[82] for which he had Guarino Guarini to thank, according to Platina and Prendilacqua.[83] A letter from Guarino to Lodovico Gonzaga establishes that Vittorino studied with Guarino.[84] Afterwards, Lodovico told Guarino that Vittorino called him his teacher; he did not specify the subject. But because Guarino had proven himself an expert in Greek through his studies and a lengthy residence in Constantinople,[85] it does not seem improbable that Vittorino had sought him out expressly on that account.

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[76] Sabbadini (1928b, p. 630).

[77] Facciolati (1978, vol. 1, LII–LIII): "Rhetoris."

[78] Rosmini (1801, p. 250, note [d]).

[79] This episode is repeated almost verbatim by Francesco da Castiglione (<1460>, ff. 90v–91r) (Garin [1958, p. 536]), Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, ff. 5r–6r) (ibid., p. 670), and Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 23r–v) (ibid., p. 588).

[80] Federici Vescovini (1974, p. 7) bases this statement on Valentinelli (1868–1876: vol. 4, p. 153): "Anno 1400 conductus est ad philosophicam scholam regendam in archigymn. patav. Blasius de Pelacanibus (*sic*) qui etsi omnium liberalium artium doctor, famosissimus omnium liberalium artium doctor et monarcha a coaevis sit appellatus, idibus octobris anni 1411 dimissus est, quod minus aptus ad docendum videretur, eiusque schola auditoribus careret"; and on Piana (1963, p. 316. note 5).

[81] Using this assumption, Sabbadini (1928b, passim) creates a list of the many teachers Vittorino might have had in Padua.

[82] Aurispa (1931, pp. 10–15, letter 7): letter from Aurispa to Traversari in 1424. Vittorino is called "Victorinus quidam litteras graecas mediocriter eruditus." He has promised to buy two Greek codices, by Plato and Plutarch, for 50 Fiorini. A letter from Traversari to Cosimo de' Medici in 1435 (Traversari [1759, coll. 332]) says that the 10-year-old daughter of the marquis writes elegantly in Greek.

[83] While Francesco da Castiglione (<1460>, f. 91r) (Garin [1958, p. 536]) mentioned that Vittorino learned Greek at an older age, Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 18r–v) (ibid., p. 680) and Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, ff. 23v–24r) (ibid., p. 588) described Guarino Guarini Veronese as Vittorino's teacher of Greek and put the period of learning into Vittorino's youth.

[84] Rosmini (1801, p. 52f): "quod me tantopere laudet, suumque, ut scribis, praeceptorem appellet, summa hominis probitas facit, & mentis gratitudo … ."

[85] Garin (1967) provides a good introduction with bibliographical information on Guarino's life and work.

According to Prendilacqua, Vittorino's study of Greek with Guarino coincided with both of them staying in Venice,[86] and we can be certain that Vittorino frequently traveled to Venice from Padua. In 1416 Guarino wrote in a letter that Vittorino was expected in Padua soon from Venice,[87] advising his correspondent, Zaccaria Barbaro, to engage Vittorino there as a tutor. This document makes it clear that Guarino was already acquainted with Vittorino in 1416 and took a friendly interest in him, enough to use his connections to secure him a position. Whether this friendship was based on Vittorino's position as Guarino's student, however, remains an open question. The letter from 1416 primarily shows that Vittorino was certainly being considered for employment as a tutor; he must not have been totally averse to such a vocation. Filelfo listed him in a review, alongside Guarino, as a teacher at Venice, and Remigio Sabbadini was able to trace his presence there to the years 1418–1419.[88] An additional piece of evidence for Vittorino's residence in Venice is a document sent from Vittorino in Mantua to the Correr family in Venice in 1423, tasking them with representing his interests there.[89] The fact that he took this step, shortly after accepting Mantuan citizenship in 1423,[90] would lead us to believe that he must have resided there just previously, perhaps even that he had just come from there.[91] Unfortunately, the documents contain no further information on this point.

Prendilacqua reports that Vittorino operated one school in Padua and one in Venice, each of which he depicted as forerunners of the Mantuan *contubernium* (boarding school). At these earlier schools, payment was received according to services rendered and students were selected based on their manners and talents.[92] Beyond that, nothing more is known about these early schools. Discovering the identity of Vittorino's students in Padua or Venice is not an easy undertaking. A letter from

[86] Only Prendilacqua stated that Vittorino went to see Guarino: Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, ff. 23v–24r) (Garin [1958, p. 588]); the place of the meeting remained uncertain. Sacchi da Piadena, Bartolomeo, named Platina (<1462–1474>, f. 18r–v) (ibid., p. 680) wrote instead that Guarino returned from Byzantium to Venice. Platina did not mention at all that Vittorino went to see Guarino. Since Platina moreover assumed moreover that Guarino was the student of Vittorino (and not the other way round), it could very well have been the case that Guarino went to see Vittorino (and not vice versa).

[87] Guarino Verionese (1915–1919, vol. 1, p. 116, letter 55 from Padua to Zaccaria Barbaro in Venice.)

[88] Ibid., (1915–1919, vol. 3, p. 55).

[89] Nardi (1958, p. 15).

[90] Rosmini (1801, p. 69, note [b]).

[91] Segarizzi (1912, pp. 249–50) published an episode that fits very well with this. In 1423, Enselmino degli Enselmini was convicted in Venice (on political motives) to 5 years of prison. Through Gianfrancesco Gonzaga's intervention, he was allowed to stay with Vittorino da Feltre in Mantua after this period of imprisonment. Nardi (1958, p. 14) assumed on top of this that Vittorino had changed cities because his relative was incarcered.

[92] While Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>), ff. 7v–8r (Garin [1958, p. 672]) connected the installment of a school that secured *eruditionem et contubernium* first with Venice, Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, ff. 24v–25r) (ibid., p. 590) emphasized that Vittorino did in Venice what he had done already in Padua, namely teach and provide lodgings for students.

George of Trebizond, the protégé of Francesco Barbaro,[93] to Guarino in 1437[94] indicates that Vittorino was his teacher, but when and where this teaching might have taken place remains unclear; the dates of George's school years are not known. We already know from Guarino's 1416 letter[95] that Vittorino might have considered himself a tutor by this point. We also know that he had teaching experience, at the least, from the professorship he took over from Barzizza.[96] At any rate, he cannot have been completely inexperienced, or the Gonzaga family would scarcely have given him the position of preceptor to its children, the documentation of which goes back to 1423.[97] And although it is known that he was already teaching other children besides the marquis' in 1423, it is still unclear what form this instruction might have taken. The only students who are documented by name from this early period are Ognibene da Lonigo (1423)[98] and Gregorio Correr of Venice (1425).[99]

Traversari reported in his *Hodoeporicon* from 1433[100] that Vittorino's home was also his school. This could have been the "Casa Giocosa" as far back as 1429, because Enselmino degli Enselmini was permitted to travel to join Vittorino at the Casa Giocosa.[101] It is not known, however, whether it was already intended in 1423 for the school to be separate from the palace. In any case, there is documentation that Lodovico had a private schoolroom in the palace in 1423.[102] There is no evidence, however, for Prendilacqa's assertion[103] that Vittorino maintained two separate schools, one for the children of the marquis and one for the other students. Indeed, it is rather unlikely because Vittorino taught not only the children of the Mantuan ruler, but also the children of other leading families, who would have had the same rights to special treatment that would have befitted the children of the Gonzaga family.

In addition to his teaching activities, Vittorino da Feltre oversaw the administration of the Gonzaga library,[104] which was inventoried in 1407.[105] Moreover, it is likely he

[93] Rosmini (1801, p. 256).

[94] Ibid. (p. 256).

[95] See note 87 in this chapter.

[96] See note 71 in this chapter.

[97] See note 1 in this chapter.

[98] See note 1 in this chapter.

[99] Letter by Gregorio Correr to Cecilia Gonzaga in 1435, published by Martène and Durand (1968, vol. 3, pp. 829–842); also in Contarini (1757, vol. 1, pp. 33–44). When she was born, Gregorio started to study in the Casa Giocosa. According to Ambrogio Traversari, in a letter from Traversari to Cosimo de' Medici in 1435 (Traversari [1759, coll. 331–333]), Cecilia was 10 years old. This means that Gregorio Correr had started studying with Vittorino in 1425. See Rosmini (1801, p. 305).

[100] Traversari (1912, pp. 73–74 [my own page counting of the *Hodoeporicon*]). The 1912 edition is a critical revision of the older edition Traversari (1680).

[101] Nardi (1958, p. 18).

[102] Nardi (1958, pp. 14–15): "in domibus palacii residencie et in una camera terena quam ipse magister tenet pro scholis domini Lodovici filij magnifici domini…" (May 22, 1423).

[103] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>), f. 30v (Garin [1958, p. 600]).

[104] Rosmini (1801, pp. 176–177). Vittorino was admonished to give back books; the complete publication list is in Luzio (1888, pp. 338–339).

[105] Girolla (1923).

had his own collection of books, as is documented by his gift of a book to Sassolo da Prato[106] and by Lodovico Gonzaga's attempt to recover some of the debts that Vittorino had left after his death by recovering several books from his estate.[107] Whether he had purchased the books for himself[108] or for the marquis remains an open question, because Vittorino was charged with acquiring books for him.[109] In any case, in 1433 Ambrogio Traversari marveled at Vittorino's extensive library at the Casa Giocosa[110] and even wrote about it to Niccolo Nicoli,[111] who was himself famous for his treasury of books.[112] The letters revealed that Vittorino made the books available to his students,[113] a practice that Sassolo extolled in a letter to Leonardo Dati in 1443.[114]

Ambrogio Traversari, in his *Hodoeporicon* and various letters from 1433,[115] was the first to report on Vittorino's school in operation. His opinion of Vittorino da Feltre's Casa Giocosa – formed on the basis of a half-day visit to the school and correspondence in advance of his visit – was very positive.[116] It is doubtful that this positive assessment was based on the criteria set by the tradition and model of the Benedictine monastery school,[117] because Traversari had a great interest in Latin, and especially Greek antiquity, as he made clear in many different places in the *Hodoeporicon*.

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[106] Gift for Sassolo da Prato: Paglia (1884, p. 155).

[107] Luzio (1888, p. 339); further documents (inventory, legacy to creditors of Vittorino) in Cortesi (1981, pp. 271–272); and Cortesi (1980), pp. 77–114.

[108] Letter by Aurispa to Traversari, in Aurispa (1931, pp. 10–15).

[109] Luzio (1888, p. 338f). The Marquess wrote: "Ancora fu fato manifesto se 'l fusse alcuna persona che havesse uno libro chiamato de Genologia Deorum e chi lo voglia vender lo debia significare a lo p.to Magistro Victurino che gie sarà pagado e sarà reputado oltra el pagamento a grando servicio."

[110] Traversari (1912, pp. 73–74); Traversari (1759, coll. 418–420, letters no. 318, 319, 320).

[111] Traversari (1759, coll. 418–420, letters no. 318, 319, 320).

[112] Müller (1984, p. 159) pointed to Vespasiano da Bisticci's vita of Niccolo Niccoli (Vespasiano da Bisticci [1970, 1976: vol. 2, 1976, pp. 225–242: p. 227]: "e così ragunò grande quantità di libri …"). Rosmini (1801, p. 212f.) refers to a statement made by Poggio Bracciolini, published in Traversari (1759, p. 5, 20 [Vespasiano], pp. 366–7 [Poggio]) and Tiraboschi (1774–1782, vol. 6, p. 129ff).

[113] Traversari (1759, coll. 418–420: letter 319 [1433], coll. 419): "Novem sunt ferme pueri, qui scribunt adeo venuste, ut admiratus sim. Vidi Chrysostomui traductionem ab uno ex discipulis eius factam, satisque placuit. Tres alii provectiores egregie proficiunt."

[114] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>), f. 43v (Garin [1958, p. 508]).

[115] Traversari (1912, pp. 73–74); Traversari (1759, coll. 418–420: three letters to Niccoli; coll. 331–333: letter to Cosimo de'Medici; coll. 707–709: letter to Mariotto).

[116] Traversari (1912, p. 73): "Nusquam ferme plus humanitatis invenimus. Per se ipsum denique; per discipulos, **bonos viros & eruditos, ut facile de illius ludo esse cognoscerentur**, [emphasis: A.G.] nobis ita obsequutus est, ut nullam officiosissimi hominis partem in se desiderari pateretur." A confirmation of the judgment made in 1435 in the letter to Cosimo de'Medici to Florenz can be found in Traversari (1759, vol. 7, coll. 331–333, letter 3).

[117] See, on the other hand, the different opinion uttered by Müller (1969, pp. 38–39): Vittorino would unite the medieval-benedictine tradition of "Bildung" with the "undiluted concerns of newly awakened humanism." Müller (1984, pp. 296–298) contains a comparison of Vittorino's and of Traversari's schools.

Little can be said about Vittorino's teaching activities or his thoughts and ideas on the subject, despite a wealth of archival notes, including five letters to Paola Malatesta, which Alessandro Luzio has dated to between 1437 and 1439.[118] There are six contemporary documents that shed some light on this area, but while they are helpful, they are not exhaustive:

The first of these, a didactic poem by Gregorio Correr (from 1425 to 1429)[119] deals with general problems related to child rearing, but does not particularly address schooling. Although Correr refers in his writing to Vittorino, it is likely that he was more influenced by the Venetian Francesco Barbaro, whose treatise *De re uxoria* from 1415/1416[120] contains certain parallels to Correr's work. Both Correr's and Barbaro's texts show unmistakable borrowings from Quintilian and Plutarch.[121]

Letters and a diary entry by Traversari, written between 1433 and 1435[122] give valuable evidence of the students' very young age, their methods of reciting memorized material, and their transcribing copies of available books; Traversari also praises the good manners of the students. His materials give the impression of the school as a place where students acquire, emulate, and improve prescribed knowledge and manners.

Two additional reports of Vittorino's pedagogical techniques come from authors of the vitae. A letter by Prendilacqua, in which he claims he was saved from drowning by Vittorino and fellow students while on a boating trip,[123] implies that Vittorino and his students engaged in "leisure activities" together. The vita by Sassolo[124] was the first document to describe both Vittorino's activities and the educational system used in his school: for the first time, the educational principles and goals of the subjects of rhetoric, mathematics, and music in Vittorino's curriculum were discussed.[125]

The remaining two contemporary pieces of evidence are more tantalizing, offering only fleeting glimpses of Vittorino the educator. On the medallion, Vittorino is labeled a *Summus Mathematicus* and *Omnis Humanitatis Pater* and is also linked with the Christian symbol of the pelican that sacrifices its blood for the sustenance

[118] Luzio (1888, pp. 331–336). On the nine letters by Vittorino that are known today, see notes 38 to 42 in this chapter.

[119] Rosmini (1801, appendix); Krampe (1895, pp. 226–239) with German translation. The poem is dated to 1752 by Degli Agostini (1975, vol. 1, p. 110) and Rosmini (1801, p. 309). Müller (1984, p. 315) dates the work to 1430, without giving any references.

[120] Barbaro (1915). A reprint of the chapter "De liberorum educatione" appears in Garin (1958, pp. 138–145). The dating of 1415/1416 is supported by a letter by Ambrogio Traversari to Francesco Barbaro in (1416) (Gothein 1932, p. 90) and a letter by Guarino (Guarino Veronese [1915–1919, vol 1, letter no. 55 of 1416]).

[121] Müller (1984, pp. 315–317) refers for Correr to Messer (1897, p. 323). For Barbaro in general, see indications in Gothein (1932, p. 58).

[122] Traversari (1912, pp. 73–74); Traversari (1759, coll. 331–333, 418–420, 707–709).

[123] Mentioned, for example, by Rosmini (1801, pp. 269–270) and Antognoni (1889b, pp. 46–47). Published in Signorini (1983, pp. 117–125).

[124] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>), passim.

[125] See Chap. 3.

of its offspring. These motifs allude to the world of erudition, to which Vittorino supposedly belonged, and at the same time express his self-involving and generous charity.[126] And finally, in a letter to Vittorino in 1443,[127] Francesco Barbaro employed a commonplace formula, saying that with Vittorino, one would really learn "*bene loqui et bene vivere*."[128]

These six sets of documents, as incomplete, problematic, and allusive as they are, are the only contemporary accounts of Vittorino in relation to his school. Outside of Traversari's sober observations, they all have a literary character, making it impossible to determine in any single case what corresponded to reality. We should moreover not forget that, in the Renaissance, literature portrayed the possible while keeping the moral foundation, the *vivere bene*, in view.[129] The language in these documents indicates that Vittorino adhered, at least roughly, to the traditional Western division of the curriculum into the trivium and quadrivium[130] in his teaching and was also a practicing Christian.[131]

These references must serve as the historical basis for Vittorino's educational system, as there are no others. The later vitae, and naturally the other appraisals, must be measured against this evidence, even though it is the vitae that include the epochal statements about Vittorino's educational system and that have induced me (and other scholars) to explore the historical situation.

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Despite the limited contemporary evidence on the nature of Vittorino's school, we do know something about both the school's predecessors and legacies. Vittorino's school was part of a Mantuan school tradition going back to 1398, as shown by Stefano Davari in 1876.[132] After Vittorino's death, the school continued under the direction of Jacopo da San Cassiano (1446–1449),[133] Ognibene da Lonigo (1449–1453),[134] Platina until 1456.[135] The school continued until 1584 under other masters who had not studied directly under Vittorino or one of his students,[136] at which time the Jesuits established a college in Mantua.[137] The type of school Vittorino chose,

[126] Compare Sect. 3.1.

[127] Rosmini (1801, p. 218, Anm [c]); Barbaro (1884, p. 116).

[128] This is a commonplace. See, for instance, Jaitner-Hahner (1993, p. 215ff) and Müller (1984, p. 49f).

[129] Vickers (1988, pp. 715–745), who emphasizes the Aristotle commentaries that evolved in the mid-sixteenth century on poetics, gives an overview. In his argumentation, the fifteenth-century commentaries aim toward the later tradition in a teleological way.

[130] See Dolch (1971, passim, esp. pp. 78, 178).

[131] For the curriculum of Vittorino and its context see also Müller (1984, pp. 123–303).

[132] Davari (1876, p. 4).

[133] Rosmini (1801, pp. 236–238, note [c]).

[134] Davari (1876, p. 8).

[135] Luzio (1888, p. 340f.).

[136] Luzio and Renier (1890, pp. 119–217, esp. p. 172) point to the rupture within the school tradition after Platina had gone in 1456.

[137] Davari (1876, p. 23).

the boarding school-like *contubernium*, was already in common use,[138] so it cannot be said that this was an innovation of his or that the sole source for the idea came from the period when he was purportedly a student of Gasparino Barzizza.

It is possible that Vittorino's school was associated with an unfulfilled university charter in Padua. In 1433 (confirmed in 1439), 1442, and 1445, the marquis was granted a charter by successive emperors for founding a university[139]; in the tradition of the Parisian universities on which the charter was based, the university would contain faculties of medicine, theology, and law.[140] Neither the documents nor the vitae, however, ever mention that the charter was used. To the contrary, there is even counterevidence in the fact that Gianlucido Gonzaga traveled to Pavia in 1438 in order to study law.[141] On the other hand, Gregorio Correr chided Vittorino in a letter from 1437[142] for spending too much time on studying law, which could indicate a planned expansion of the *studio pubblico*. In any case, it is doubtful that a connection between the imperial charter and the school can be made.[143]

What does this historical data, gleaned from a variety of sources, tell us about the vitae of Vittorino da Feltre? At the empirical level, they enable us to see that the vitae are relatively reliable. In most instances, they are in accord with the historic record.

But, the vitae and portraits belong to literary and artistic genres with their own traditions and rules that shaped both the form and contents of the main part of each work. As we shall see, the lives of Vittorino were written in several different genres, which their authors adopted, but also developed in new ways. Thus, Francesco da Castiglione adopts the conventions of Christian hagiography, but applies them to a lay figure, and Platina expands the classical genre of *viri illustres* to include the figure of the teacher.

Finally, the vitae are informed by different pedagogical ideas, which also shape their account of the workings and values of Vittorino's teaching and his school. But before we elaborate on these points, we must first survey the critical reception of Vittorino's work and its subsequent discussion in the secondary literature.

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[138] Jaitner-Hahner (1993, p. 227) provides documentation for the accommodation of students at the public school in Città di Castello from 1401.

[139] Davari (1876, p. 5).

[140] Woodward (1970, p. 61, note 3). For the teaching tradition in Paris see Thurot (1850), and Denifle (1956, pp. 40–132). According to Denifle (1956, p. 734), there was not much difference between universities and town schools because the universities often grew out of town schools. Some of the latter even had faculties of medicine, theology, and jurisprudence. For more recent literature on universities in Italy, especially in Bologna in the fourteenth century, see Maierù (1994). Maierù shows that the model of Bologna established the precedent for how Italian universities worked. He emphasizes the development of the faculty of *artes*.

[141] Rosmini (1801, pp. 335–338).

[142] Bellodi (1973, pp. 342–343).

[143] Müller (1984, pp. 257–258) thinks that Vittorino harbored a general dislike of universities, and that this explains why he did not use the privilege. There is little evidence for this rather emotional explanation in the documents. It is very well possible that external reasons, like the devastating consequences of the war, the death of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, or the death of Vittorino da Feltre impeded the setting of a university in Mantua.

2.2 The Current State of Research Regarding the Sources

Although documentary evidence of it is sparse, Vittorino's ideas were already being examined in the fifteenth century. Our search for evidence of the adoption and discussion of his ideas leads us to two areas: actual life conduct on the one hand, and written discussions on the other. Throughout the analysis, we must keep in mind the distance between a given text's author and Vittorino himself: the texts by his students are likely to represent his ideas the most closely, followed by those that merely mention his name, and, lastly, those that merely reflect a parallel development of ideas. We cannot assume, however, that the ideas of the teacher will be directly accessible through his students, no matter how likely it is that the students critically engaged with their teacher.

The reception of Vittorino's ideas beyond a small group that included his students and Vespasiano da Bisticci is even more difficult to discern. Vittorino was never mentioned by name in connection with any kind of philosophical or educational program. In general, attempts to establish parallelism between ideas are fraught with imprecision and vagueness, particularly in cases such as this where the subject of inquiry left behind no written record of his ideas. With these two groups of sources effectively sidelined, we are left with an examination of Vittorino's students as our primary means of obtaining verifiable results. Of great help are the lists of students that were included in each version of the *Vita Victorini* written by Platina and Prendilacqua[144] and subsequent studies of Vittorino.[145] Carlo de' Rosmini[146] has done an excellent job of using these rosters to compile the facts that can be gleaned from the actions and writings of Vittorino's students. Additional information can be found in the third section of the volume *Vittorino da Feltre e la sua Scuola* (1981), which was dedicated to studies on Vittorino's students[147]; and in

[144] Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, ff. 30v–32v) (Garin [1958, pp. 690–692]); Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, ff. 32r–43v) (ibid., pp. 604–626). Rosmini (1801, pp. 326–328) and Eramo and Signorini (1981, pp. 313–343) point out that Prendilacqua's manuscript of the Codex Vaticana was augmented in the Codex Capilupi. The name and biography of Carlo Brognoli was added.

[145] In addition, Rosmini (1801) lists Antonio Baratella (p. 249), Giovanni Marino Patrizio (pp. 261–265), Marco Soardi (p. 372), Bartolomeo Manfredi (p. 471), and Giovanni Aliotti Aretino (pp. 473–476, see also the text by Sassolo). Other additions include Margherita Gonzaga (Rosmini 1801, pp. 201–202); Guarino Veronese (1915–1919, vol. 3, p. 322); Raffaele and Bartolomeo degli Enselmini (assumed by: Nardi [1958, pp. 29–32]); and Domenico da Pesaro and Francesco Furlani (Signorini 1983, pp. 118, 120, 121). Mancini (1891, p. 12) excludes a studentship by Lorenzo Valla. Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>), f. 32r (Garin [1958, p. 692]) claims that Lorenzo Valla studied with Vittorino da Feltre.

[146] Rosmini (1801, pp. 249–476).

[147] Gianetto (1981, pp. 189–198, 255–276, 285–298, 313–343) does not introduce any new students, but presents new documentation on previously identified students, including Giovanni Gallico (John of Namur) (Gallico [1981, pp. 189–198]), who had been previously mentioned in Ambros (1862–1882, vol. 2, 1864, p. 485); Federico da Montefeltro (Zampetti [1981, pp. 255–261]); Gian Pietro da Lucca (Cortesi [1980], Cortesi [1981]); Bernardo Brenzoni and Antonio Beccaria (Marchi [1981, pp. 285–298]); Carlo Brognoli (Eramo and Signorini [1981, pp. 313–343]).

a few independent articles.[148] We know that Vittorino's students, at least those who held duly recorded public offices, were active in worldly and church affairs as bishops, regents, government officials, secretaries, teachers, and military officers; their activities spanned a wide range of functions within society. It is conceivable that the ideas they adopted from Vittorino might not only be present in their personal attitudes as individuals, but could also be attested in their modifications to structures or traditions within the cultural or social milieu. Both possibilities are advanced in the vitae when the author refers to his teacher-student relationship, whether actual or desired, with Vittorino.

2.2.1 The Teacher-Student Relationship and the Adoption of Ideas

While Sassolo da Prato, Francesco da Castiglione, and Francesco Prendilacqua wrote in their vitae about the adoption of ideas through an individual's emulation of Vittorino's ethical values, Platina referred to the transmittal of Vittorinian traditions to the sociocultural sphere. Because Vittorino's biographers held differing opinions on the adoption of ideas, a circumstance that nicely illustrates the range of fifteenth-century opinions on the relationship between teacher and student, I will describe their positions here briefly.

Sassolo da Prato wrote to Leonardo Dati in the first part of his vita[149] that any reasonably talented person – particularly if he came from Florence, a city that had produced the most talented of men in the past – could become a great orator using Vittorino's methods, which combined the science of words with the science of math, with music, and with philosophy, because rhetoric could only lead to oratory in the presence of its mistress, wisdom. Wisdom comprises virtue and science, both of which Vittorino taught by means of encyclopedic education. Thus, Sassolo implied, it is possible to learn virtue through the study of books. Sassolo pointed to Vittorino da Feltre as an example of a great orator whom Sassolo hoped to introduce via Leonardo Dati to the youth of Florence for them to esteem and emulate. If some few individuals were thereby moved to emulate Vittorino, he would then have performed a useful service for his homeland of Florence. The term "imitare" can be considered the keyword here for individuals' expected reaction to Vittorino.[150]

Francesco da Castiglione wrote at the end of his vita of Antoninus and Vittorino[151]: "Let us turn to God, and God will turn to us; let us imitate holy men, among whom we

[148] See note 145; and in addition Sandri (1941) on Prendilacqua's origins; Tarducci (1897) discusses Cecilia.

[149] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>), ff. 42r–44r (Garin [1958, pp. 504–510]).

[150] Compare the valid hypothesis in Pigman (1980) of three different types of meaning for the notion of *imitation* in Italian Renaissance literature.

[151] Francesco da Castiglione (<1460>), f. 96r–96v (ibid., p. 548): "Convertamur ad dominum, et ipse convertetur ad nos; imitemur sanctos viros quales nuper vidimus Antonium ac Victorinum, et si quos

have just seen Antoninus and Vittorino, and those whom we have noted are similar to these in some way. Even today, there are many religious men and men who shine with many virtues, in whom, if I am not mistaken, the roots and foundation of our faith are preserved." Although Castiglione and Sassolo differed in their conception of the substance of virtue, here, too, the keyword is "imitare," which applies to the individual.

Francesco Prendilacqua singled out three men from among Vittorino's students, men who stood out because of their special relationship to him: Sassolo da Prato, Alessandro Gonzaga, and Federico da Montefeltro.[152] While he describes Sassolo as "made completely of Vittorino," emphasizing the suffering of poverty by which Sassolo hopes to surpass the master in order to be worthy of him,[153] Prendilacqua opines that Alessandro resembled the teacher so strongly in virtue and in "every aspect of life,"[154] having visualized Vittorino as observer and arbiter of everything,[155] that "the whole of Vittorino lives within this student," "as if introduced into his life and revived."[156] In other words, Prendilacqua spoke of Alessandro as the embodiment of Vittorino's virtue, while Sassolo attempted to surpass Vittorino's poverty by emulating it. Prendilacqua's descriptions created a scale of virtue, from the improvement represented by the emulation of a single virtue to the embodiment of Vittorino in all of his virtues. The step from emulation to embodiment is not quantitative but qualitative.

Federico, the third student, was vaunted on his own merits. His successes in battle, his scholarliness, and his modest, generous, loyal, and magnanimous behavior toward his country, citizens, and kin distinguished him from the other princes. His reign was described as being gained through virtue and through virtue retained. This virtue was joined with wisdom and expressed itself in his behavior and his decisions. Vittorino da Feltre, as the teacher who had guided and accompanied him on the path to virtue, has a share in Federico's enduring fame. He continued to live in him and though him, although Federico alone had earned this

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illis aliqua ex parte similes esse intuemur. Sunt enim multi et hac tempestate viri religiosi ac multis virtutibus illustres, in quibus profecto, ni fallor, fides nostra radices suas ac fundamenta conservat."

[152] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 42r–v) (ibid., p. 622) for Sassolo da Prato; Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, ff. 16v, 34r, 35v) (ibid., pp. 576, 608, 610) for Alessandro Gonzaga; Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, ff. 1v–2r, 36v, 37v, 38r, 39r–v) (ibid., pp. 612, 614, 616) for Federico da Montefeltro. The dedication to Federico da Montefeltro on ff. 1v–2r appears only in the manuscript, but extracts are in Zampetti (1981, p. 260, note 2).

[153] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 42r–v) (Garin [1958, p. 622]): "Saxolus pratensis totus, ut ita dicam ex Victorino factus maximus diuitiarum contemptor paupertatem imprimis amauit: qui quom saepe necessarijs indigeret: ita gloriari solitus erat: ut nunquam uoti se compotem futurum diceret nisi praeceptorem patientia superaret" … "haud uictorino dignus essem."

[154] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 16v) (ibid., p. 576): "coeteri enim, ut ita dicam: discipuli extitere: hic etiam filius, atque heres uirtutis fuit: a quo ita institutus est in omni vita: ut unus ipse simillimus uideatur."

[155] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 34r) (ibid., p. 608): "Interrogatus aliquando cur absente praeceptore dubitaret quia semper illum uideo respondit: quem ego mihi ante oculos propono mearum omnium cogitationum spectatorem, ac iudicem."

[156] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 35v (ibid., p. 610): "Totus (mihi crede) o Raymunde in hoc discipulo Victorinus est: quem si recte contemplari uelis, hunc ipsum respice. formam quandam, et imaginem eius aspicies quemadmodum in uitibus, insertam, atque renouatam."

fame through his deeds.[157] Here we see neither emulation nor embodiment, but rather leadership and accompaniment: "He [Vittorino] opened a certain door, so to speak, and showed you the way through it, by means of which you alone will distinguish yourself: to dignity and excellence."[158] Francesco Prendilacqua therefore described the relationship of Federico da Montefeltro to Vittorino da Feltre as more subtle and more distanced than either Sassolo's emulation or Alessandro's embodiment.

Platina, in contrast, stressed cultural change over the transformation of the individual. The primary beneficiary of Vittorino's instruction was not the individual student but rather the culture at large, which experienced the spread of a specific cultural tradition that had started with Petrarch and was gradually pushing its way into other areas of society, modifying their structures in the process. In this case, the individual cedes his importance to the quantitatively ascertainable collective.[159]

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[157] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, ff. 1v–2r): "…quem in tuo (ut dicitur) groemio senem optime de te meritum quiescere: immo etiam tecum ex te uiuere: qui eterna rerum gestarum gloria uiues. quae tametsi tota tua est, propriaque abste uirtute parta: eius tam agnoscendae, atque amplectende socium, ac ducem Victorinum habuisti. hic te optimis et continentissimis moribus, ac litteris ornauit. hic te ad hanc ipsam gloriam currentem puerum suis studiis incitauit. hic tibi ad eam, qua nunc solus flores: amplitudinem, atque excellentiam quandam quasi ianuam patefecit atque ostendit. At tu tanto monitore confirmatus unum in terris numen, atque unicum bellici fulgoris decus inter homines uersaris unus in arma potens:"

Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 36v) (Garin [1958, p. 612]): "hunc igitur Victorinus maxime sibi colendum susceperat agrum (ut ipse dicere gaudebat) fertilem, ac messis plenum."

Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 37v) (ibid., p. 614): "quis illis laudibus, quae diuino principe dignae sunt liberalitate: clementia: magnitudine animi: sapientia, excellentior: caritate in patriam: beneuolentia in ciues: amore in suos feruentior?"

Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 38r) (ibid., p. 614): "Imperium uirtute partum uirtute retinuisti. auctum, ornatumque rebus bellicis locupletasti."

Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 39r–v) (ibid., p. 616): "multa enim fortiter: multa sapienter: multa feliciter: multa generose abste dicta, factaque commemorari possunt: quae te nobis diuinum ac tuomet splendore gloriosum reddant: tua enim ipsa sunt tibi a natura infixa: tecum nata: tecum nutrita: nihil sibi ex his fortuna occupat: nec alium habes laudum tuarum participem [quam] Victorinum sed ita participem ut quantum tu ex eo ornamenti ceperis quod certe magnum fuit tantum ille ex tuo splendore capere uideatur. Nam quom ipse te ad hoc natum, iamque ad summa omnia paratissimum diligencia sua coluerit, illustrauerit ornaverit: tu illum diuinitate quadam ac magnitudine innumerabilium uirtutum tuarum immortalem apud posteros reddidisti."

[158] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, ff. 1v–2r).

[159] Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 4r–v) (Garin [1958, p. 670]): "Romana enim lingua ut coetere artes a barbaris labefacta, et corrupta, dirrepta persepe italia: ablatisque optimis latine eruditionis auctoribus, in situ, et tenebris supra septingentesimum annum iacuit: quam quidem paulo ante uictorini etatem: Franciscus petrarca, et Paulus Vergerius in lucem quoquo modo deducere sunt uisi: Conquisitis undique doctissimorum uirorum uoluminibus: eisdemque uel legendo, uel scribendo in usum, et consuetudinem deducere (f. 4v) sunt uisi *ceteris*. Mox uero Gasparini bergomatis: Guarini Veronensis: Leonardi aretini: poggii florentini: phylelphi: Victorinique item labore, et industria, non solum denuo pullularunt haec studia: uerum eo incrementi deuenere siue elegantes poetas: siue consummatos oratores velis: ut temporum nostrorum foelicitati, nil praeterquam principum, et populorum ingratitudo, atque auaritia obstare uideatur." Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 9r–v) (ibid., p. 674): "uerum cognita uirtute principis, ac uoluntate tantum onus suscepit: cominus [*communis*] (ut ipse dicebat) utilitatis causa quod et principem (f. 9v) optimum formans populis quibus is esset imperaturus bene consuleret quom ad eorum mores, et instituta

Consider, for example, the following significant statement: "All of these, as is said of Isocrates, pour forth as if from the Trojan Horse as the most respected of men, whose works and education are of use to almost the whole of Italy. And better, more scholarly students are not to be found in our time from just any teacher."[160]

Although the vitae by Sassolo, Castiglione, and Prendilacqua are excellent portrayals of how ideas might be adopted within the personal sphere, the transformations they describe are nonetheless beyond the reach of the historian. Given how little we know about Vittorino's personal behavior, we cannot know whether a given person followed him in the area of ethical virtues. Only within the sphere of culture, as Platina suggested, can the adoption of ideas be demonstrated. Owing to the careers of Vittorino's former students, we might see these effects in various parts of society: the military, the government, the church, the school, or even the family. The latter was the subject of a study by Rodolfo Signorini, who researched dietary recipes from the household of the Gonzagas that could possibly have originated in Vittorino's kitchen, though they were not attributed them to him.[161]

Research within the other areas has been confined to the adoption of the curriculum, the one relatively certain source of evidence for Vittorino's activities. In Guarino's case, his written records led many schools to adopt his curriculum (a fate demonstrated by Anthony Grafton and Paul F. Grendler)[162]; no such evidence is known to exist for

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se accomodent: quos uiderint inmagistratibus et imperio preesse: etfacultatem a liberalissimo principe esset habiturus: qua plures, ut ipse semper concupierat, uictu, uestitu, doctrina iuuaret· Mente enim achademiam conceperat omnium bonarum artium, studiorum ue receptaculum." Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 18r–v) (ibid., p. 678): "Nulla enim re magis augeri doctrinam dicebat, quam religione, pietate: quibus optimos ac bene moratos adolescentes imbutos esse oportere asseuerabat: hac ratione optimam parari ad eruditionem viam: quom et deum, et homines tali praeditus ingenio, ac instituto propicios, ac fautores sit habiturus. Tria dicebat pueris necessaria: ingenium, doctrinam, (f. 18v) exercitationem. Ingenium agro comparabat: exercitationem culturae quibus ex rebus ubertas oritur: Doctrinam hoc praestare: ut et uirtute meliores fiant homines, et utriusque fortune, quoad uixerint, receptaculum habeant." Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 31v) (ibid., p. 692): "longum esset enumerare optimatum nobilium dominorum ex tota italia filios: qui Victorini gymnasium frequentarunt. Ad illos uenio, qui ingenio ac doctrina indoctorum numero sunt habendi." Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, ff. 39v–40r) (ibid., p. 698): "Quare qui non omnino humanitatis expers est: quique non saxeum, sed humanum cor (f. 40r) habet: suo que item et aliorum mouetur incommodo. Victorinum eruditionis ac doctrinae parentem: ingeniorum cultorem: morum domicilium: calamitosorum patronum: pietatis, pudoris, constantiae, saeveritatis, ac fidei unicum receptaculum: Virtutum ac musarum sacellum. Postremo saeculi nostri unicum praesidium et ornamentum defleat, ac lugeat."

[160] Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 33r) (ibid., p. 692): "Hi omnes: ut de Isocrate dicitur ex gymnasio Victorini tanquam ex equo troyano principes emanarunt: quorum opera, atque eruditione tota ferme Italia est usa. Nec ab ullo praeceptore pace aliorum dixerim meliores, ac doctiores discipuli nostra etate dicendi sunt uisi."

[161] Signorini (1981, pp. 115–148) connects the recipes with a pythagorean cult in which Vittorino might have participated. This does not prove, however, that the instructions given by Lodovico Gonzaga to his son actually derived from Vittorino. It is much more likely that they are commonplaces, because the instructions only give a very general orientation for losing weight: "Manzare poco, bevere aqua asai et dormire manco."

[162] Grafton and Jardine (1982); compare also Grendler (1989, pp. 188–189; 418–421).

Vittorino. Within the field of education, we can assume that the continuation of the Mantuan *studio pubblico* by Vittorino's students Jacopo da San Cassiano and Ognibene da Lonigo indicates a particularly close cultural and didactic dependence on Vittorino's ideas[163]; their educational system was built on both the training the future teachers had received from Vittorino and their continuing of the traditional structure of the school, in which Vittorino's ideas were embedded. Unfortunately, the only study on this, by Stefano Davari (1876),[164] merely lists the teachers who were working in Mantua. Davari did, however, note a change in pedagogy[165]: starting in 1496, drama was included as a subject; his writings do not show the extent to which the Vittorian concept of a school – if there had ever been such a thing – had been retained prior to 1496. Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier (1890) supplemented this study with their work on Mario Filelfo, who was engaged by the Gonzagas as a teacher from 1478 to 1480.[166] The two scholars published correspondence between Francesco Filelfo and Barbara von Hohenzollern that showed that her son, Federico Gonzaga, was without a teacher from 1456 to at least 1459,[167] making it doubtful that the school continued in the style of Vittorino after 1459. The findings are thus quite sparse.

Platina, as a student of Ognibene da Lonigo,[168] came from the Vittorinian school tradition and was himself the school's teacher from 1453 to 1456[169]; from what he wrote in his *Vita Victorini*, it would seem that his familiarity with Vittorino came from his teacher, Ognibene.[170] Accordingly, it is possible that the memory of Vittorino continued to live on within the school until the time that Platina left it and the school system collapsed. It is difficult to determine from Platina's *Vita Victorini*, though, if this living memory meant that the school continued to follow Vittorino's ideas. From these considerations, it would seem that the most promising approach to discovering Vittorino's lasting influence on the school tradition would be to examine Ognibene da Lonigo's life and achievements. Such an examination is beyond the scope of this study but should be addressed in the course of further research.

The evidence of Vittorino's influence abroad appears to be just as fragmentary as his reception within his immediate circle. Although there is no proof for the assertion, it is possible that Vittorino's ideas were handed down by the Gonzagas, his students, or others. In 1908, Ludwig Bertalot[171] published a copy of one of Vittorino's

[163] Rosmini (1801, pp. 380–388 [Jacopo da San Cassiano]; pp. 319–325 [Ognibene da Lonigo]).

[164] Davari (1876, passim).

[165] Davari (1876, p. 13).

[166] Luzio and Renier (1890, pp. 191–209).

[167] Luzio and Renier (1890, pp. 172ff).

[168] As Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>) himself confirms in his *Vita Victorini* (ff. 3r, 9r, 31v), Garin (1958, pp. 668, 672, 692).

[169] Luzio (1888, pp. 340–341).

[170] Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 9r), Garin (1958, p. 672).

[171] Bertalot (1908, pp. 39–40). According to Bellodi (1973), the addressee for this letter was Andrea Correr.

letters made by the canon of the cathedral at Freising, Johannes Heller, during his stay in Italy sometime between 1445 and 1450,[172] that is, during Vittorino's lifetime; unfortunately, the exact circumstances of the transcription are not known. The letter resides in a collection of letters alongside those of Poggio[173] and Guarino.[174] Beyond the mention of his name, though, the letter contains very little of importance about Vittorino's concept of education, making it impossible to take the transmission of this letter as proof of the transmittal of Vittorino's ideas. Antonio Beccaria, one of Vittorino's students, lived in Britain for a time,[175] but the extent of his influence there is impossible to determine at present. The marriage of Lodovico Gonzaga with Barbara von Hohenzollern opened the way for a relationship based on ties of kinship with Germany.[176] During the reign of their grandson, Francesco Gonzaga, the ruling house founded Viadrina University, the earliest German humanist university, in 1506 in Frankfurt on the Oder, the seat of the Hohenzollern. Here, the first person to be accorded the rank of Master was the notable humanist Ulrich von Hutten.[177] It would be rather presumptuous to speculate on the extent to which Italian standards connected to Vittorino made inroads here, particularly when we consider that Barbara's children were not even educated by teachers affiliated with the tradition of Vittorino's school.[178] The same could be said of the family connections to Württemberg via Barbara and Lodovico's daughter, Barbara Gonzaga, who was married to the Count – and after 1495, the Duke – of Württemberg, Eberhard im Bart, who founded the University of Tübingen in 1477.[179]

2.2.2 The Critical Reception of the Vitae of Vittorino da Feltre

We now enter into a discussion of the critical reception of the vitae of Vittorino da Feltre. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the dissemination of the vitae is limited to the years between 1443 and 1444 (Sassolo da Prato) and 1501 (Bartolomeo Sanvito's

[172] Bertalot (1908, p. 11).

[173] Bertalot (1908, pp. 15–23).

[174] Bertalot (1908, pp. 61–78).

[175] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 41r–v), (Garin [1958, p. 620]); Rosmini (1801, pp. 374–380).

[176] For Barbara von Hohenzollern see Luzio and Renier (1890, pp. 232–235). Barbara married Lodovico Gonzaga in 1433, when she might have been 10 or 13 years old. She also learned at the school of Vittorino, as a letter from Vittorino to Paola Malatesta documents (Luzio [1888, p. 336]). The letter can be dated to 1439, because Vittorino writes that he already stayed in Mantua for 16 years. The letter does not specify Barbara's activity at the school. Barbara could have stayed with Vittorino as long as Lodovico was banned by his father, that is 1436 to winter 1439/1440. For more on this point, see Coniglio (1958, Sect. 1, vol. 1, pp. 451–453).

[177] State Archive of Brandenburg in Potsdam, *Urkunden*. For recent literature on the founding of the university see Targiel (1988).

[178] Luzio and Renier (1890, p. 172ff).

[179] Otto Rombach suggested that Vittorino da Feltre's thoughts on education could have spread in this direction; see Elwert (1981, p. 350). For the historical dates see Weller and Weller (1971).

copy of Prendilacqua's Dialogue).[180] Leonardo Dati[181] wrote that students in Florence took an avid interest in Sassolo's vita, but today only two copies are extant.[182] According to Paul Oskar Kristeller in his *Iter Italicum*,[183] Francesco da Castiglione's *Vita Victorini* still exists as three copies.[184] Antoninus's vita, however, is much more readily available and must therefore have been more widely distributed.[185] Four copies of Francesco Prendilacqua's manuscript are extant, one of which appears to have been marked up by the author himself[186]; its distribution was probably limited to Mantua, Urbino, and possibly Verona, later to Rome.[187] Platina's work is contained

[180] After 1501, when Bartolomeo Sanvito of Rome transcribed a copy of Prendilacqua's Dialogue from the *Codex Vaticano* [Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>)], Vittorino was not, to my knowledge, mentioned again in the sixteenth century. The Sanvito-copy is located in the Vatican (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Patetta 380).

[181] Letter 23 to Sassolo da Prato, dated February 8, 1443 ab incarnatione (=1444), in Dati (1943, pp. 39–42).

[182] Sassolo da Prato: De Victorini Feltrensis vita ac disciplina. (a) Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Cod. Estense lat. R. 8. 15; (b) Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale: Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>). According to Avanzi (1947, pp. 87–103: p. 100, no. 98), Sassolo (a) was first published by Martène and Durand (1968: vol 3, 1724, col. 843–856). Avanzi values Sassolo (b) as the better manuscript. Guasti uses Sassolo (b) for his edition of Sassolo da Prato (1869). A revised version of Guasti's transcription is printed by Garin (1958, 504–533).

[183] Kristeller (1963–1992).

[184] Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, ms Laur. 89, inf. 47, ff. 90–96 (not listed in Kristeller (1963–1992); Kristeller (1963–1992, vol. 2 (1967), p. 162); Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, E IV. 16., ff. 83–93r. (dated 1462). Kristeller (1963–1992, vol. 2 (1967), p. 170): Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, T III, 1. ff. 154v–157v (according to Kristeller, this is the original manuscript). All three manuscripts connect the *Vita Victorini* as an annex to the *Vita Antonini*.

[185] See Orlandi (1962, pp. 1–24).

[186] Prendilacqua, Francesco, Dialogus: (a) Città del Vaticano: Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>); (b) Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, Lat. 6247; (c) Mantua, Biblioteca Comunale, Codex Capilupi, Man. 1374 (see Eramo and Signorini (1981, pp. 313–314). (a) is published without preface in Garin (1958, pp. 552–667). A complete, but very rare publication of this codex is Prendilacqua (1774); extracts of the preface are published in Zampetti (1981, p. 260, note 2). In 1501, Bartolomeo Sanvito of Rome transcribed a copy of the Urbino Codex that is today in the Vatican library: (d) Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Patetta 380. According to Eramo and Signorini (1981, p. 314), (c) bears the same handwriting as (a). The only difference is that (c) has one additional margin note in the same handwriting on the life of Carlo Brognoli, another supposed student of Vittorino. See Signorini (1983, p. 123, note 4). Because of handwriting also corresponds with letters by Prendilacqua, Eramo and Signorini (1981, p. 314) assume that both codices are autograph works by Francesco Prendilacqua. An observation of (b) shows that the dedication to Federico is there, and the transcription was made by someone unfamiliar with the situation in Mantua or Urbino. The scribe made mistakes that altered the meaning of the text. Given that the handwriting is not the same as in the other two codices, it is safe to say that (c) is a later copy.

[187] Francesco Prendilacqua addresses two readers directly: Federico da Montefeltro (Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>,ff. 1r–3r [preface, not in Garin (1958)]), (Prendilacqua [<1469–1470>, f. 38r–v], Garin [1958, pp. 614–616]), to whom the book is dedicated, and Antonio Beccaria (Prendilacqua [<1469–1470>, f. 41r–v] Garin [1958, p. 620]). According to Rosmini (1801, p. 375), Beccaria stayed in Verona. Why was he a reader? In any event, Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>) was brought in 1657 from Urbino to Rome in the Biblioteca Vaticana. See note 193 in this chapter.

in an early sixteenth-century manuscript that was preserved in Urbino.[188] Vespasiano died while composing his vitae, and according to Aulo Greco, it is likely that his vita was never accessible.[189] Unfortunately, none of the vitae found their way into foreign collections, as had happened with Guarino's letters.[190] Investigations into the reception of the vitae abroad have not been successful to date.

Based on what we know today, it must be assumed that the vitae were distributed over a limited geographical area that corresponded, according to the provenance of the manuscripts, to the biographer's circle of acquaintances: Mantua (Prendilacqua, Sassolo), Urbino (Prendilacqua, Platina), Florence (Sassolo, Castiglione), and perhaps also Verona (Prendilacqua) and Ferrara (Sassolo). Federico da Montefeltro's books, and with them the vitae of Prendilacqua and Platina, passed into the hands of Pope Alexander VII in 1657 and made their way to Rome to the Vatican library.[191] There is no evidence that they circulated in Rome or within the church. Nor did the vitae of Vittorino find their way into other philosophical or literary debates, at least not by name. Moreover, the existence of a Vittorinian philosophical and literary tradition grounded in the vitae cannot be proven.

Yet there is the possibility that the reception of Vittorino's work was further developed in literature. Bartolomeo Platina authored works of an ethical and political character in the *Principe* and *Optimo Cive*,[192] which could be compared to his *Vita Victorini* to determine whether he had further developed his thoughts on pedagogy. Alongside the literary contributions, Federico da Montefeltro's inclusion of a portrait of Vittorino da Feltre as part of his personal *viri-illustres* motif within his *studiolo* at the Ducal Palace of Urbino testified to Vittorino's place among Federico's teachers and "role models"; this places the Duke at least partially within the tradition of Vittorino's ideas.[193] We can conjecture that his opinions of Vittorino could have been developed in response to Prendilacqua's vita from 1470; Federico only knew Vittorino for a period of 2 years in the rather distant past around 1433, and it is likely that he retained a rather vague image of him.

From 1501 until the late seventeenth century, not a word was heard about Vittorino. During the period from 1680 to 1778, though, there was a revival of interest: in 1680,

[188] Sacchi da Piadena, Bartolomeo, named Platina. (<1462–1474>, ff. 2–40). For the date of this manuscript, see Stornajolo (1902, 1912, 1921: vol. 2, 1912, p. 632).

[189] Vespasiano (1970, 1976, vol. 1, p. IX). The first publication of the *vita Vittorino* is in Mai (1843); see also Aulo Greco in Vespasiano (1970, 1976, vol. 1, p. XLIII).

[190] Bertalot (1908, pp. 61–78).

[191] Gradi (<1683>, ff. 2–105). See also Moranti and Moranti (1981, pp. 76, 253–259).

[192] For the "Principe" and its date before 1473 see Kristeller (1963–1992, vol. 1, p. 330). The treatise was published in Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina (1637) and Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina (1979). Publication of the "Optimo Cive" is [Sacchi da Piadena, Bartolomeo (named Platina).] (1944).

[193] With this portrait Federico integrates himself into a tradition in which Vittorino played a key role. It might be that the portrait and the vita by Prendilacqua both allude to this same tradition, in which Federico's studentship at Vittorino's school was one of the most important events in Federico's literary biography.

the *Vita Antonini* was published with excerpts from Francesco da Castiglione's *Vita Victorini*; Sassolo's vitae were published for the first time in 1724–1733; Prendilacqua's in 1774; and Platina's in 1778.[194] These were not critical editions of the texts. The primary focus was on making the historical facts available to the scholarly, i.e., Latin-reading, public. The publishers' interests conformed to the ideas of the Italian Catholic Enlightenment, a movement whose goal was to attain equal membership for Italy in the cultural world.[195] In the wake of this movement, interest grew in the sources of Italian cultural history[196]; this interest also included research into literature and was characterized by lively publishing activity.[197]

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[194] Publication history in chronological form:

1680: Francesco da Castiglione (1680a, b).

1680: ["Information about the Vita Victorini Feltrensis by Francesco da Castiglione"]. In Francesco da Castiglione (1680b, Prologue).

1680: Traversari (1680).

1724–33: Ambrogio Traversari ["letters to Cosimo de' Medici (1), Nicolò Nicoli (2), Vittorino da Feltre (3)"]; Aurispa, Giovanni ["letter to Traversari"] (4); Sarazenis, Paulus ["letter to Traversari"] (5); Correr, Gregorio ["letter to Cecilia "] (6); Sassolo da Prato: "Vita Victorini Feltrensis" (7). In Martène et Durand (1968, vol. 3, pp. 451–6 [1]; 491–4; 553–6 [2]; 610–1 [3]; 714 [4]; 722 [5]; 829–842 [6]; 841–856 [7]).

1743: Dati (1943, pp. 13–14 [letter 7 to Sassolo da Prato as of May 12, 1443]; pp. 39–42 [letter 23 to Sassolo da Prato as of February 8, 1443 ab incarnatione (= 1444)]).

1745: Facio (1745).

1755: Giovanni Andrea Bussi (da Vigevano) ["Preface to the edition of Livius"]. In *Bibliotheca Smithiana* (1755).

1757: Gregorio Correr ["letter to Cecilia"]. In Contarini (1757, pp. 33–44).

1759: ["Extracts from the Vita Victorini Feltrensis by Francesco da Castiglione"]. In Mehus, Lorenzo: *Vita Ambrosii Traversarii*, In Traversari (1759, pp. CCCCVIII–CCCCX).

1759: Ambrogio Traversari ["letters to Vittorino da Feltre (1), Nicolo Nicoli (2), Cosimo de' Medici (3) and Ambrogio Mariotto Allegri (4)"]. In Traversari (1759, vol. 5, coll. 269–270 [1]; vol. 8, coll. 418–420 [2]; vol. 7, coll. 331–333 [3]; vol. 15, coll. 707–709 [4]).

1759: Italian translation of the Vita by Francesco da Castiglione (according to Avanzi [1947, p. 94, no. 38]).

1761: Bussi, Giovanni Andrea (da Vigevano) ["Preface for the edition of Livy"]. In Quirini (1761, pp. 150–159).

1764–78: ["extracts from the Vita Victorino Feltrensis by Francesco da Castiglione"]. In Bandini (1961, vol. 3, p. 415ff).

1774: Prendilacqua (1774).

1778: Sacchi da Piadena, Bartolomeo, named Platina (1778, pp. 14–28).

1779: Rambaldoni (De'), Vittorino da Feltre ["letter to Ambrogio Traversari"]. In Mittarelli (1779, coll. 1207–1208).

1797: ["Information about the Codex Capilupi by Prendilacqua"]. Andres (1797, pp. 42f, 57f, 123f).

[195] For an analysis of this predominantly Catholic movement in the first half of the eighteenth century, see Ferrone (1982). For a critical discussion of Ferrone's argumentation, see Manzoni (1992, especially pp. 7–60). Compare also: Bonora (1982).

[196] An example is the broad shaped history of Italy in 12 volumes by Lodovico Muratori (1744).

[197] An example is the history of literature by Girolamo Tiraboschi (1774–82) in 18 volumes.

In 1792 and 1794, calls were issued by the Academy in Mantua for a treatment of Vittorino da Feltre's life and achievements; both went unanswered.[198] It was not until 1801 that Carlo de' Rosmini was able to provide the requested treatise,[199] and even then he was only able to refer to Saverio Bettinelli's summary from 1774 of Prendilacqua's dialogue.[200] Rosmini's work *Idea dell'ottimo precettore nella vita e disciplina di Vittorino da Feltre e de' suoi discepoli*[201] had the long methodological and editorial tradition of the Italian Renaissance behind it, which makes his book an indispensible bibliographical resource, even today. The sources Rosmini collected and organized are still considered a valid basis for every new treatment of Vittorino da Feltre. Because Rosmini's work became the benchmark for scholarship on Vittorino, subsequent work relied less frequently on the vitae.

2.2.3 Historiographical Considerations

Based on its contents alone, Rosmini's work can be characterized, and with good reason, as a late work of the Italian Renaissance; its view of cultural history and pedagogy allow it to be inserted seamlessly into this tradition. Moreover, comparisons with Locke and Rousseau[202] would suggest that the author was striving to integrate his work systematically into the European world of ideas.

On the basis of the vitae by Sassolo, Castiglione, Prendilacqua, and Platina, Rosmini sketched a picture of Vittorino da Feltre's studies, his school, his morals, and his well-known students. His goal was to demonstrate that Vittorino's fame was based on his manners and his erudition; additionally, he presented the principles on which Vittorino's school was founded: the development of the human body, mind, and heart. While the body constituted the foundation for mental development, which could be fostered primarily through the study of literature, the virtues form the internal framework for the contents of one's studies. The fundamental virtues are the mastery of the passions, generosity/charity, and honesty. The teacher, acting as a model, lays down the rules for life in the school and ensures students comply with them. Through habit and practice, the student is expected to become like the teacher and to behave the same way in public as at school. This leads to success, as evidenced by the paths in life taken by Vittorino's students. The rules are formal; they take into

[198] Rosmini (1801, p. 22, note [a]) includes a reference to Memorie della Reale Accademia di Mantua. vol. 1, p. 117. The price question is connected to the literary upswing of the fifteenth century: *In quale stato si trovasse la letteratura de' Mantuani al tempo di Vittorino da Feltre celebre letterato del secolo XV., quali fossero i meriti di quest'uomo, e quale influenza abbia avuto generalmente la scuola ch'egli aprì in Mantua per ordine del Marchese Gio. Francesco Gonzaga.*

[199] Rosmini (1801); Rosmini (1845).

[200] Rosmini (1801, p. 22, note [a]), in reference to Bettinelli (1774, appendix, pp. 1–7). Bettinelli bases his text on the vitae written by Prendilacqua and published in 1774 (Prendilacqua [1774]).

[201] Rosmini (1801).

[202] Rosmini (1801, pp. 79–151, passim).

account each student's individuality and circumscribe each student's personal curriculum. Rosmini's interpretation replaces what had been in the fifteenth century a concern with the divine with an emphasis on the human, composed of body, mind, and heart. He stresses the primacy of rational decision-making, the autonomy of the schoolroom, and a positive attitude toward the passions.

Rosmini's book was soon distributed internationally. Critics put their thoughts to paper, from Johann Kaspar von Orelli (1812) in Switzerland,[203] to Ferdinand Minsberg (1838)[204] and Georg Voigt (1859)[205] in Germany, to Mandell Creighton (1875)[206] in England, and Anatole Morlet (1879)[207] in France. Italy also contributed to Rosmini's literary reception, with works by Vincenzio Antinori (1823 and 1868),[208] Giovanni Racheli (1832),[209] Jacopo Bernardi (1856),[210] Emanuele Celesia (1874),[211] Oreste Antognoni (1889),[212] Domenico Bassi (1894),[213] Giovanni Battista Gerini (1896),[214] Valeria Benetti-Brunelli (1919),[215] and Giuseppe Toffanin (1933).[216] Giuseppe Flores d'Arcais (1981)[217] provided the only critical analysis of Rosmini's theses on the basis of an alternative understanding of the sources or pedagogy; his point-by-point comparison of the sources and text called into question both Rosmini's interpretation of the sources and Rosmini's understanding of Renaissance pedagogy.

The newfound interest of a wider audience in Vittorino's school may have given rise to the following Italian translations of our sources: Cesare Guasti came out with Sassolo's vita in 1869, Giuseppe Brambilla with Prendilacqua's in 1871,[218] Giuseppe Biasuz with Platina's in 1948,[219] and Eugenio Garin with Castiglione's in 1958.[220] The accessibility of the vitae and their Italian translations and the high quality of

[203] Orelli (1812). For a discussion see Elwert (1981, pp. 345–350).

[204] Minsberg (1838).

[205] Voigt (1960).

[206] Creighton (1902).

[207] Morlet (1879, pp. 453–505).

[208] Antinori (1868, pp. 343–358). The work of 1823 is contained in Antinori (1868).

[209] Racheli (1832); Racheli (1844, pp. 18–42).

[210] Bernardi (1856).

[211] Celesia (1874, vol. 1, pp. 222–241).

[212] Antognoni (1889b). See also (but without referring to Vittorino by his name): Antognoni (1889a).

[213] Bassi (1894, pp. 187–188).

[214] Gerini (1896, pp. 42–73).

[215] Benetti-Brunelli (1919).

[216] Toffanin (1933).

[217] Flores d'Arcais (1981).

[218] Sassolo da Prato (1869). According to Avanzi (1947, p. 100, no. 98), Guasti, the editor, used the better manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence for the publication. Martène and Durand (1968, vol. 3, Spp. 843–856) did not know this manuscript. See also Prendilacqua (1871).

[219] [Sacci da Piadena, Bartolomeo, named Platina] (1948).

[220] Garin (1958, p. 535).

the publications, characterized by an admirable degree of faithfulness to the originals,[221] could explain why no one has since attempted to prepare a critical edition of the vitae. Even as late as 1958, Eugenio Garin, while compiling the most important documents concerning Vittorino da Feltre, referred back to the old publications, which he then used to complement Francesco da Castiglione's text.[222]

New discussions that dissociated themselves from Rosmini began with the work of William Harrison Woodward (1897).[223] In addition to the familiar vitae, he took as the basis for his work newly discovered sources that were associated with "humanism," a term coined by Georg Voigt in 1859[224] to describe the whole of fifteenth-century literary and pedagogical currents.[225] Woodward subordinated didactics to a historical focus on culture and literature, asserting that the school or the humanistic teacher was the natural product of the humanistic tastes of the rulers or inhabitants of Milan, Florence, or Ferrara[226]: "For in every period the educational aim obeys the dominant intellectual or religious ideals; at best it personifies them; it can never create them."[227] The precursors of this modified view include Georg Voigt (1859)[228] and Jacob Burckhardt (1860),[229] who both considered the didactic demands of the school to be subordinate to the cultural revival inspired by antiquity.[230] Woodward considered the culture of "humanism" – here, working with texts from antiquity in order to understand Roman and Greek literature, history, and civilization[231] – to

[221] Frati's edition of the vitae by Vespasiano da Bisticci (Vespasiano da Bisticci [1892–1893]), is different. See also Aulo Greco in Vespasiano (1970, 1976: vol. 1 (1970), pp. X–XVIII).

[222] Garin (1958, pp. 504–505) revised and used Sassolo (1869); Prendilacqua (1774) without the dedication (Garin, p. 552); Vairani (1778) and Biasuz (1948) (Garin, p. 668). The transcription of the manuscript by Francesco da Castiglione stemmed directly from the manuscript (Garin, p. 534). Garin wanted to honour the authority of the early researchers and put himself in this long tradition.

[223] Woodward (1970).

[224] Voigt (1960); Woodward refers to the third edition of this work, which was published in 1893.

[225] Notes and bibliography in Woodward provide the best reference list for this. The addition of the new sources makes possible the shedding of more light into the literary formation and, secondly, the political situation.

[226] Woodward (1970, p. 29).

[227] Ibid.

[228] Voigt (1960, passim).

[229] Burckhardt (1860, pp. 198–224). Regarding the use of the term "humanism" as a subterm for scholarship that dealt with classical writings, Woodward used Burckardt (1892). Burckhardt's notion of "culture" is summarized, for example, in Cassirer (1994, vol. 4, pp. 270–276).

[230] In addition, Burckhardt had the opinion that this epoch revealed a new image of mankind (1860, passim; especially p. 354): "… daß man hier zuerst die Menschen und die Menschheit in ihrem tiefern Wesen vollständig erkannt hatte. … Die höchste Ahnung auf diesem Gebiet spricht Pico della Mirandola aus in seiner Rede von der Würde des Menschen, welche wohl eines der edelsten Vermächtnisse jener Culturepoche heißen darf." His opinion concerns man as an individuum and his relation to morality and the state.

[231] Woodward (1970, p. 28).

be the basis for the school curriculum,[232] which itself was the foundation for the dissemination of the revived culture.[233] He emphasized the social competencies[234] that could only be attained through education while retaining a modified version of Rosmini's three-part human, divided into body, mind, and character[235] (with *character* replacing Rosmini's *heart*). Woodward's work was critically received first in France[236] and then, starting with a translation in 1923, in Italy,[237] where it did not meet with much acceptance.[238]

Although almost no one within the international research community has paid tribute to his work – Avanzi (1947) speaks only of "a lively narration of history"[239] – Woodward's approach established the questions that continue to spur on a majority of scholars working in the field of pedagogical theory today. On the one hand, these theorists address the educational goals of the "citizen," partly as sociopolitical components of personhood in relationship to the state, and partly as a method of "orator training" for those going into public office. An interpretation of Vittorino as *maestro per la vita* and of a school education as being useful "for life in general," on the other hand, is associated with an emphasis on apolitical education that is not found in Woodward[240] or Rosmini[241]; such an interpretation encompasses the human being in his outwardly directed, intramundane context as well as his inwardly directed, transcendental – Christian context, but does not include his relationship to the state. Giuseppe Flores d'Arcais (1946)[242] is one of the main proponents of this

[232] Ibid.

[233] Ibid. (pp. 36–37): "As compared with the other great schoolmaster of the time, Guarino da Verona, we may say that whilst Guarino, the better Greek scholar and more laborious reader, bent his efforts rather to turning out clever and eloquent scholars, Vittorino aimed at sending forth young men who should 'serve God in church and state', in whatever position they might be called upon to occupy. But both agreed in this, that the subject matter, the educational apparatus, to be employed, must in the main consist of the literature of Greece and Rome."

[234] Ibid. (pp. 37, 59, 79).

[235] Ibid. (1897, p. 36).

[236] Martin (1912, pp. 121–131, 193–202) used Woodward (1905) and Renier (1897), to compose a synopsis.

[237] Woodward (1923).

[238] One unique mention of praise is referenced in Avanzi (1947, p. 103, no. 119).

[239] Avanzi (1947, p. 103, no. 119); Hay (1961, p. 136) bases this claim on his own assessment of Woodward.

[240] Woodward (1970) merges man and citizen by emphasising "the practical aim of education." For instance, he refers to the harmonic formation of body, mind and character as equivalent to the education of the "fully fledged citizen," who can be effective in any position in society (pp. 36–37); states that the faculty to talk has a practical value for the profession (p. 56); proposes ethics as the guide for the art of living (p. 59); and states that the aim of education is "the patriotic and well-equipped citizen rather than the self-contained scholar" (p. 79).

[241] Rosmini (1801) did not use the term and did not write in any way about education for the purposes of citizenship. However, in chapter four, from p. 249, he does indicate the societal positions that the students of Vittorino achieved later in life as a fruit gained by Vittorino's education.

[242] Flores d'Arcais (1946, pp. 205–215).

school of thought; in 1981[243] he pressed more strongly for the pedagogical foundation of education "for something," that is, "*dignità umana*," human dignity.[244]

This notion of citizenship, defined various ways, has been at the center of historians' and pedagogues' evaluation of Vittorino's importance as a humanist figure. For Woodward, the term refers to man in his social milieu, divided into two organizations, church and state. The term notably does not extend to private life.[245] The value of an education in harmony with the body, mind, and character can be found in each of the possible practical or professional goals: strengthening the body for a military career[246]; cultivating the ability to speak for a political career or for other vocations (unspecified by Woodward[247]); and developing character by reading texts on ethics and religious books and by practicing proper behavior in daily life,[248] for shaping one's conduct in general. The goal of education is "the patriotic and well-equipped citizen rather than the self-contained scholar."[249]

After the end of the Second World War, Guido Gonella (1946)[250] referred to the concept of the citizen in a short political speech on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Vittorino da Feltre's death, but he explained neither the concept, nor its relationship to Vittorino, fully. Eugenio Garin used the concept in a similar way after 1949,[251] even though a few years earlier (in 1941[252]) he had been concerned with the problem of tyranny in humanistic writings. His postwar writing on the development of people and citizenship principally portrayed the new, humanistic view of the person. In 1957, he wrote that the education of the citizenry, as represented by such humanists as Matteo Palmieri, Leon Battista Alberti, and Antonio de Ferrariis, touched on the consciousness of the city as a whole[253]; he described education,

[243] Flores d'Arcais (1981).

[244] Flores d'Arcais (1946, pp. 210–215); Flores d'Arcais (1981, pp. 38, 42, 45, 51).

[245] On the church: see Woodward (1970). Cecilia became a nun: "the religious life was still the one sure refuge to a woman of studious instincts"; Gregorio Correr obtained a position with the church (ibid., pp. 76–77). Through his donations to churches and his guardedness at court (education of princes), Vittorino excelled as the best example of a teacher according to his own theory (ibid., p. 79).

[246] Ibid. (pp. 65–66).

[247] Ibid. (p. 56): "Oratorical ability and ease in writing and speaking Latin were arts of practical value for the youths of that day, especially for those who might fill professional or public positions. And with such practical aim it was taught by Vittorino or Guarino."

[248] Ibid. (pp. 59, 67, for the identification of Christian morals and ethical prescriptions of classical antiquity).

[249] Ibid. (p. 79).

[250] Gonella (1946).

[251] In Garin (1949, pp. 115–174), the thoughts of Matteo Palmieri, Leon Battista Alberti, and Antonio de Ferrariis are interpreted as citizenship education. Garin (1957, pp. 153–156) later summarised these thoughts as: (a) the awareness of a "town unity" in Palmieri and Alberti, (b) education as social function and (c) emphasis on the mother language: "Schulen und Methoden entstehen und gedeihen als Antwort auf ein Bedürfnis des städtischen Lebens, dem sie zugleich Ausdruck verleihen und das sie definieren."

[252] Garin (1941, pp. 247–296).

[253] Garin (1957, p. 153).

the most important social function in civic life, thusly[254]: "Schools and methods arise and spread in answer to the needs of urban life, which they both express and define."[255] In contrast, his discussion of Vittorino's school focuses on the formation of students as ethical beings. Vittorino himself serves as the Christian ascetic[256] who eschews the world. The educational goal of his school is to make the students their own masters and to arm them with the one possession they can retain in every circumstance, namely, inner balance and self-respect.[257] For Garin, Vittorino's "method" amounts to nothing more than the curriculum[258] – particularly the "humanist-ization" of the trivium and quadrivium – and learning rules of behavior.[259] Although the claim is not made explicit, his account ascribes to Vittorino a belief in the higher intrinsic value of personhood over citizenship.

The full range of meaning for the term "citizen" during the fifteenth century was first explicated by Hans Baron (1955).[260] He had previously introduced the term "Florentine civic humanism" in a review published in 1925.[261] Baron's term and exposition are still discussed today, especially among Anglo-American scholars.[262] The main point of discussion is the extent to which political circumstances, such as the internal crisis in Florence caused by the war with Milan (1398–1402), or the type of rule or government affected philosophical texts and the development of "humanism" in Florence.[263] Baron's thesis that the political philosophy of humanism, such as the idea of freedom, developed from republican ideas, an interpretation based on Leonardo Bruni's *Laudatio florentinae urbis* (c. 1403/1404), clearly goes beyond Georg Voigt's concept (1859), which portrays humanism as compatible with every system of government.[264]

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[254] Ibid. (p. 153).

[255] Ibid.: "Scuole e metodi nascono e fioriscono per rispondere a un bisogno della vita cittadina, e, insieme, lo esprimono e lo definiscono."

[256] Ibid. (p. 148).

[257] Ibid. (p. 152).

[258] Ibid. (pp. 150–152).

[259] Ibid. (p. 152).

[260] Baron (1955, vol. 1, passim).

[261] Baron (1925, pp. 136–141). Compare: Fubini (1992, p. 560, note 78).

[262] Witt (1996, pp. 110–118); Najemy (1996, pp. 119–129); Kallendorf (1996, pp. 130–141); Gundersheimer (1996, pp. 142–144).

[263] Baron (1955, pp. 38–66, 366–373).

[264] Voigt (1960, p. 215): "Wie Petrarca für republicanische Freiheit schwärmte, auch in seiner persönlichen Stellung ein freier Mann bleiben wollte und doch gern bei den Fürsten der Welt und der Kirche hofirte, so hat auch die Erbin seines Geistes, die humanistische Schule überhaupt, sich wunderbar allen politischen Formen anzuschmiegen gewußt. Auf der apenninischen Halbinsel konnte man diese Geschicklichkeit üben: da gab es im Laufe der Zeit alle Verfassungen, die demokratische Republik und die oligarchische, die tumultuarische und die perikleische, den Despotismus, die Tyrannis, die volksbeliebte Herrschaft, das kleinste städtische Gemeinwesen und die weltumspannende Hierarchie. Zu einer jeden nahm der neue Stand des schöngeistigen Gelehrtenthums eine besondre Stellung an."

Following Baron, Denis Hay (1961)[265] wrote a short treatment of Vittorino's school as an embodiment of civic humanism. Hay examined how educators from the north, including but not limited to Vittorino da Feltre, acknowledged the Florentine doctrine of a life of activity for the sake of the state without living in a republic themselves.[266] Like Voigt and Baron before him, Hay held that Vittorino's ideas did not develop independently, but rather that they could be traced back to Florence and must therefore be evaluated in Florentine terms. All of these authors, however, are suspectible to the criticism that their work is not based on critical textual comparison. It is conceivable that northern Italian "humanism" sprang from other sources and took a different developmental course from Florentine "humanism."

It should be added that in Vittorino's school, according to the vitae, the education of future princes took place together with that of other nobility and commoners eager to learn,[267] and that outside of this grouping, the school had nothing to do with what today is known as political citizenship. And yet, Woodward's question about the relationship between education and the development of the citizen cannot simply be denied, because there are texts extant not only from the same time period but also

[265] Hay (1961, pp. 136, 150–151).

[266] Ibid. (pp. 150–151).

[267] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, ff. 45v–47r) (Garin [1958, pp. 514–516]) writes about princes and, in a non-discriminative way, of other students, of whom many lacked money; Francesco da Castiglione (<1460>, f. 92v) (ibid., p. 540) mentioned the princes and "other adolescents," without describing them more in detail; for a list of students see Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 31v) (ibid., p. 690): sons of princes, optimates, lords; (f. 35r) (ibid., p. 694): "he loved nobility…" Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 4r–v) (ibid., p. 670): "Romana enim lingua ut coetere artes a barbaris labefacta, et corrupta, dirrepta persepe italia: ablatisque optimis latine eruditionis auctoribus, in situ, et tenebris supra septingentesimum annum iacuit: quam quidem paulo ante uictorini etatem: Francisc petrarca, et aulus Vergerius in lucem quoquo modo deducere sunt uisi: Conquisitis undique doctissimorum uirorum uoluminibus: eisdemque uel legendo, uel scribendo in usum, et consuetudinem deducere (f. 4v) sunt uisi *ceteris*. Mox uero Gasparini bergomatis: Guarini Veronensis: Leonardi aretini: poggii florentini: phylelphi: Victorinique item labore, et industria, non solum denuo pullularunt haec studia: uerum eo incrementi deuenere siue elegantes poetas: siue consummatos oratores uelis: ut temporum nostrorum foelicitati, nil praeterquam principum, et populorum ingratitudo, atque auaritia obstare uideatur." Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>ff. 64v–65r) (ibid., p. 660): "Neque praetermittendum censeo quam diligens in cooptandis discipulis praeceptor fuerit quamquam, ut diximus: neminem aut uitabat, aut aspernabatur: sed alio alium cupiebat magis: eos dico qui bonis in ciuitatibus, bonis prentibus: bono genere: sed paupere nati essent: In quibus facile concitari posse uirtutem existimabat: quasi ad hoc natura iam paratis: et quasi manufactis cum propter bonos ciuitatis mores, paternamque in eos diligentiam, quae maximi extimanda est: tum quod prona imprimis est nobilitas ad gloriam cuius: ut ita dicam, calore studia ipsa litterarum magna exparte foventur, atque inflammantur, modo luxu, et ambitione careant: quae paupertas, atque inopia ipsa castigat humiles tamen, atque obscuro loco natos aptissime consolabatur: Vna eademque ingredi omnes ad uitam uia: cum una, eademque sint omnium inicia: nullam uero in nascituris generositatem esse: sed in natis: quae non a maioribus: sed ab ipsa animi integritate percipiatur: Proinde illam amplecterentur, uiriliterque agerent: (f. 65r.) non defuturam uolentibus nobilitatem· Generosis gloriam, atque amplitudinem maiorum, quasi calcar proponebat: ut turpius multo esse diceret non conseruare: quam non habere generis nobilitatem: quae cum sit in studio virtutis posita, non possit nisi uirtute retineri: quibus rationibus ostendebat, ut quom alterum magis optaret: alterum tamen non diligere minus uideretur."

from the immediate vicinity of Vittorino's school that deal with the relationship between the individual and the state. Primary among these texts is Platina's *De optimo cive*, whose topic is the citizen. Moreover, in his vita of Vittorino, Platina commented upon the different levels of education between the princes and the populace and pointed out the social changes wrought by education.[268] Nevertheless, the definition of the term "citizen" should not be expanded further, to avoid confounding it with modern notions.[269]

There are three points to consider here. First, it is clear that the relationship between the individual and the state was being reconsidered in Renaissance Italy, in part based on a rereading of writings from antiquity. The origin of the semantic field *civis* can be sought in the writings of Roman antiquity, particularly those of Cicero.[270] Second, as evidenced in Platina's work, these new ideas can be found among the texts commenting on Vittorino. Together, these two points lead to a third: that we must consider the relationship between formal education and social position in assessments of Vittorino's schools.

What, then, are the goals of Vittorino's teaching? The claim that Vittorino's students were intentionally trained for state service has been advanced recently by Emilio Faccioli (1981), who has emphasized the orientation of Vittorino and his school toward the needs of Mantua and therefore speaks of courtly education.[271] Similarly, Fabrizio Ravaglioli (1981)[272] has interpreted Vittorino's educational approach as being tailored to society or to the changing needs of society. Following the sociological approach of Max Weber, Ravaglioli has divided education into two parts, a new type of career training based on changing social activities and the formation of the mind. He places what he describes as the "humanistic school" between the two. He does not specify, though, what exactly he means by "in the middle of." Does Vittorino's humanistic school receive something from each of them, is it a synthesis of both, or does it refer to a completely new path?

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[268] Sacchi da Piadena (<1462–1474>, f. 4r–v) (Garin [1958, p. 670]): "Romana enim lingua ut coetere artes a barbaris labefacta, et corrupta, dirrepta persepe italia: ablatisque optimis latine eruditionis auctoribus, in situ, et tenebris supra septingentesimum annum iacuit: quam quidem paulo ante uictorini etatem: Franciscus petrarca, et Paulus Vergerius in lucem quoquo modo deducere sunt uisi: Conquisitis undique doctissimorum uirorum uoluminibus: eisdemque uel legendo, uel scribendo in usum, et consuetudinem deducere (f. 4v) sunt uisi *ceteris*. Mox uero Gasparini bergomatis: Guarini Veronensis: Leonardi aretini: poggii florentini: phylelphi: Victorinique item labore, et industria, non solum denuo pullularunt haec studia: uerum eo incrementi deuenere siue elegantes poetas: siue consummatos oratores uelis: ut temporum nostrorum foelicitati, nil praeterquam principum, et populorum ingratitudo, atque auaritia obstare uideatur·"

[269] For the publication of "Optimo Cive," see [Sacchi da Piadena, Bartolomeo, named Platina] (1944). For a discussion in a pedagogical context see Zanzarri (1994, pp. 193–211).

[270] The term "humanitas," coined in the first century before Christ, shows one of the first attempts in antiquity to present the nature of man through a single concept. According to Cicero, the term connected theoretical knowledge and political practice in the form of the accomplished orator. For more literature on this topic, see Sect. 4.3.2.

[271] Faccioli (1981, pp. 158; 163; 165; 167; 168).

[272] Ravaglioli (1981).

Sociological studies of the concept of the "citizen" in fifteenth-century Italy are lacking; without them, it is difficult to envision what the "education of the citizen" might entail.[273] It is not clear, for instance, whether education would make a difference in attaining "success" in Florentine society. Writing in 1959[274] and 1981,[275] Cesare Vasoli attributed the success of Vittorino's school to the principles and values that it shared with broader society, which also corresponded to those held by humanity in general and which formally centered on familiarity with the written word. Norbert Elias[276] has also inquired into the indicators of class membership, which, he claims, are characterized by a particular type of learned conduct; by the fifteenth century, these did not have much to do with moral values based on metaphysics. A single study, by Jürgen Peterson (1991),[277] attempts to address the question of education and social mobility through vitae written about social climbers.

In contrast to Vittorino's schools, with their emphasis on "education for life," Rosmini (1801)[278] and Garin (1949)[279] described the other commonly known humanistic school, directed by Guarino Veronese in Ferrara, as purely a center for training Latin experts to be career humanists.[280] According to Valeria Benetti-Brunelli (1919),[281] Vittorino's pedagogical achievements extended beyond his school, encompassing life in general; she considers his students' successes in life as proceeding from their moral development under Vittorino. This means that, ultimately, moral conduct and a successful life come to be identified with each other.[282] Benetti-Brunelli explains the "how," but the "what" remains rather vague; she does not allow modifications of the path of "correct conduct" between teacher and student.

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[273] Ravaglioli (ibid., p. 95) emphasizes the inadequacy of his research, but he delivers a very useful start.

[274] Vasoli (1959ff, pp. 385–386): "Vittorino, … l'esempio, in atto, della nuova concezione sacramentale della parola, dell'educazione alle humanae litterae come puro costume di vita ed integro abito morale."

[275] Vasoli (1981, pp. 26–27; 32).

[276] Elias (1993, vol. 1, pp. 65–301).

[277] Peterson (1991, pp. 125–135); compare the same article also in Peterson (1990).

[278] Rosmini (1801, pp. 243–246, p. 245): "Ma come Vittorino non fu niente inferiore al Guarino per l'eccellenza e la qualità de' discepoli, così fu molto a lui superiore nel metodo d'erudirli e di coltivarli, se non per ciò che ha rapporto all'ingegno, certo per ciò che il cuore riguarda, a cui non sappiam che gran fatto il Guarino pensasse." Woodward (1970, p. 37): "whilst Guarino, the better Greek scholar and more laborious reader, bent his efforts rather to turning out clever and eloquent scholars, Vittorino aimed at sending forth young men who should 'serve God in church and state,' in whatever position they might be called upon to occupy."

[279] Garin (1949, pp. 175–192): In his chapter "I grandi maestri," only Vittorino and Guarino are mentioned.

[280] Compare for Guarino: Grafton and Jardine (1982); Grafton and Jardine (1986, pp. 1–28).

[281] Benetti Brunelli (1919, p. 437): "Or tutto il bene ottenne Vittorino, riuscendo appunto a disciplinare l'intero ambiente ove la gioventù cresceva. Onde la conferma palmare che l'opera sua non può essere confinata nella scuola, ma dalla scuola dev'essere risospinta ad abbracciare la vita nella sua interezza."

[282] Ibid. (p. 438).

Giuseppe Flores d'Arcais (1946)[283] had a different understanding of "an education for life:" because human beings are two-dimensional, with both an "inner," mental life and an "outer," physical life that is through the person's deeds empirically and historically concrete, an education for life based on human dignity will encompass both areas. On the one hand, he identifies these areas as Christian principles; on the other, as principles of humanism, based on ideals from antiquity. In 1981, he distilled the concept down to a timeless, personalized education, one intended to allow his students to develop their own mode of living before learning the norms of behavior propounded by society.[284]

By separating the concept of "education for life" from the concept of preparing "citizens," a concept bound up with public life, it becomes possible to subsume public and private life under the broader notion of the individual as a human being. Scholars' discussions of the virtues that must be learned for this "life" make it clear that they are also emphasizing the social – the interpersonal – component of education. Oratory plays an especially important role in this interpretation of education; the "orator" as a type is acknowledged as having achieved the highest level of intellectual training, someone whose practical goal can only be to act properly in a given situation. According to this understanding of preparation for life, training in oratory is subordinated to virtue.

In 1970, Eckhard Kessler[285] portrayed the two goals of formal education, virtue and oratory, as the irreconcilable contradiction, already mentioned by Petrarch, between *virtus* and *eloquentia*. Kessler called for the two to be investigated and discussed because he saw the "dynamics and fertility of such contradictions as the expression of the genesis of new concepts" and wanted to uncover "their underlying commonalities,"[286] which would ultimately be rooted in a modification of the humanists' Christianity based on texts from antiquity.[287]

Placing formal schooling within its historical context has also led to the question, still discussed in the work of Gregor Müller (1984)[288] and Luisa Rotondi Secchi

[283] Flores d'Arcais (1946, pp. 207; 211–213).

[284] Flores d'Arcais (1981, p. 52): "Vittorino non fu, come altri letterati del suo tempo, educatore perché umanista: ma piuttosto, proprio perché educatore, scelse l'umanesimo come la forma di cultura più appropriata alla realizzazione di quell'uomo che egli vedeva proiettato, prima ancora che nel cimento della vita sociale, politica o militare, alla conquista della propria maturità, del suo personale stile di vita." Similar thoughts are already in Flores d'Arcais (1946, p. 207): "…maestro di vita perchè ai risultati pratici egli particolarmente guarda e maestro di dottrina, ma solo in quanto la dottrina è desiderabile in proporzione all'uso che se ne può fare pubblicamente; e ciò perché il sapere ha un suo significato e valore solo in quanto va al di là del motivo puramente egoistico od utilitaristico per affermarsi sul piano della moralità e della socialità."

[285] Kessler (1970, pp. 409–410).

[286] Ibid. (p. 409).

[287] Ibid. (p. 410).

[288] Müller (1984, pp. 275–303): "Vittorino zwischen Tradition und Erneuerung."

Tarugi (1992),[289] of the role of traditional medieval and "new" elements in this type of schooling. In this context, "new" might be best read as "novel," and ultimately, "pointing toward the future." For Voigt (1859), the roots of humanism sprang from attempts to assimilate ideas, including pedagogical techniques, from antiquity.[290] This interpretation, however, was based on a traditional, undifferentiated view of the "Middle Ages" that has given way in more recent research to an emphasis on the historical development of ideas, which recognizes a slow but steady transformation of the traditional structure of education.[291] Scholars have expressed alternating views of Vittorino's position within this question of old-versus-new, with Voigt (1859),[292]

[289] Tarugi (1992, p. 198).

[290] Voigt (1960, p. 6): "… finden wir hierin nicht den tiefsten Grund, so wäre die Erscheinung ganz unerklärlich, daß alle die Beschäftigung Einzelner mit der classischen Literatur, die uns während des Mittelalters nicht selten entgegentritt, doch für die Gesamtbildung desselben völlig unfruchtbar blieb. Das Alterthum ist einmal eine Welt für sich; nur demjenigen, der es als solche auffassen und mit unbeirrter Hingabe betrachten kann, bietet es seinen bildenden Stoff. Kein Theil der Wissenschaft kann gedeihen, so lange er einem andern zu dienen verurtheilt ist;" (p. 102 [second book: "Die Gründer der florentinischen Musenrepublik. Die Wanderlehrer. Erweckung der classischen Autoren aus den Klostergräbern"]): "Petrarca würde sich bitter getäuscht fühlen, wenn er den Ruhm, den er ein halbes Jahrhundert nach seinem Tode genoß, mit demjenigen vergliche, den sein brennendes Herz sich für Aeonen gesichert glaubte. Aber warum setzte er auch den Ruhm in die blinde Bewunderung, in das lärmenden Lob der Menschen! Dieses verhallt und jene wird matt, ja die jungen Generationen, die auf des Meisters Schultern stehen, vergessen gern den Arm, der sie emporgehoben, und meinen größer zu sein, weil sie mit keckem Uebermuth über sein Haupt hinwegsehen. Ein andrer Ruhm dagegen, der freilich nicht so faßlich von Mund zu Mund und von Ohr zu Ohr sich ausbreitet, ist Petrarca in reichem Maße zu Theil geworden: das stille und oft auf verborgenen Wegen beinahe geisterhaft wirkende Fortleben seines Geistes. Die Saat, die er ausgeworfen, hat Tausende von Menschen zu ihrer Pflege gerufen und Jahrhunderte zur Reise bedurft. Nicht nur auf allen Seiten dieses Buches, wohl auch auf allen Blättern, welche die Weltgeschichte der folgenden Jahrhunderte erzählten, wird der feinfühlende Leser den Geist des neubelebten Alterthums und gerade in der Gewandung rauschen hören, die er durch Petrarca empfangen." The quotations show that Voigt's argument is based on an assumption rather than evidence, namely, that the culture of mankind necessarily needs classical antiquity for its existence.

[291] Compare the contributions in Buck (1969) and Hempfer (1993, pp. 9–46).

[292] Voigt (1960, pp. 251–255) portrays Vittorino as a sensitive man who wanted to be usefully active, and who was erudite, peaceful and kind. Voigt mentioned the successes of Vittorino's students; as far as pedagogy was concerned, he only mentioned method and curriculum. His other commentary on Vittorino includes the suggestion that the mind is woken up and not suppressed (main sources for the method: Quintilian, Plutarch); that instruction nevertheless includes religious discipline; and that the curriculum is composed of languages (Latin and Greek), mathematics, and philosophy, with emphasis on humanistic studies (p. 253). He also claimed that the school has encouraged the house of Gonzaga to move toward peace (p. 255). Voigt refers to his sources in Rosmini (1801) and Orelli (1812).

Woodward (1897),[293] Saitta (1928),[294] Calò (1947),[295] Garin (1949),[296] and finally Müller (1984)[297] all contributing to the debate.

The opposing interpretations of Vittorino's system of teaching can be summarized as containing two main strands, which emphasize the development of either old or new traditions. The dominant position characterizes Vittorino's school as being closely connected to the development of a new tradition that was based on Petrarch's ideas. This position has found proponents from Rosmini,[298] who nevertheless was able to name some additional precursors, to Rotondo in 1992.[299] Rosmini,[300] Voigt,[301] Woodward,[302] and Benetti-Brunelli[303] sketch the path for the school tradition from Petrarch to the teachers Giovanni da Ravenna and Gasparino Barzizza in Padua to Vittorino, making Vittorino the second- or third-generation student of Petrarch; in this interpretation, Vittorino would have understood his school system as the didacticization of Petrarch's ideas, which would have found a larger distribution in this way.

Other scholars, notably Giovanni Calò in 1947,[304] have placed Vittorino in the context of the dissemination of Petrarch's ideas from Florence to Northern Italy. Calò divides humanism into a Northern, Venetian strand, and a Florentine tradition. He sees the former as emphasizing education,[305] while the latter was characterized by an emphasis on literature and aesthetics, tending toward Platonism. Christian Bec's

[293] Woodward (1970, pp. 25–29).

[294] Saitta (1928, pp. 105–120, compare p. 106): "Vittorino, guardato così, appare l'ultimo e il più grande educatore dell'ascetismo medievale che vuole immettere in sè con felice sviluppo le idee che gli educatori italiani dell' Umanesimo avevano saputo diffondere ed attuare"; compare also Catalfamo (1981, pp. 109–113).

[295] Calò (1947, pp. 3–32); compare to Catalfamo (1981, pp. 109–113).

[296] Garin (1949, pp. 1–2): "nuovo ideale di formazione umana, che in Italia si affermò con chiarezza dalla fine dell '300 a tutto il '400, dobbiamo sottolineare il tema comune dell'uomo integro, fatto di corpo e d'anima, terreno e celeste, libero eppur condizionato"; he suborganizes Vittorino's school under this ideal (pp. 175–188).

[297] Müller (1984, pp. 275–303) judged Vittorino's school system as occupying an intermediary position between traditional elements and those taken over newly from antiquity; compare to Müller (1969, pp. 37–39), which suggests that Vittorino has merged the medieval-Benedictine education tradition with the newly awoken humanism.

[298] Rosmini (1801, pp. 9–20).

[299] Tarugi (1992, pp. 193–204) suggests that the teaching method since Petrarch developed in a self-study mode.

[300] Rosmini (1801, pp. 9–20).

[301] Voigt (1960. Book 4: Der Humanismus an den Höfen Italiens, p. 215): "Wie Petrarca für republicanische Freiheit schwärmte, auch ins einer persönlichen Stellung ein freier Mann bleiben wollte und doch gern bei den Fürsten der Welt und der Kirche hofirte, so hat auch die Erbin seines Geistes, die humanistische Schule überhaupt, sich wunderbar allen politischen Formen anzuschmiegen gewußt."

[302] Woodward (1970, pp. 3, 13, 25).

[303] Benetti Brunelli (1919, pp. 428–430).

[304] Calò (1947, p. 11).

[305] Ibid. (p. 11).

empirical research (1981),[306] which investigated the other professional activities practiced by fifteenth-century authors, has shown that in the north, there really was a continual development of teachers as an independent profession. It is therefore possible that textbooks and teaching manuals played a bigger role in the territories ruled by and allied to Venice than they did in Florence.

In both the north and the south, Petrarch stood first of all for the search for one's self, which finds expression in subjectivity and in an orientation toward God, and in turning outward toward the world; secondly, for the appropriation of antiquity; and thirdly, for the classification of poetry as philosophy. Petrarch's appropriation of antiquity and the emphasis on poetry may have contributed to a school's curriculum, but his emphasis on the search for one's self points to a school's general orientation toward aiding the achievement of a good life.

The difficulty with interpreting Vittorino as a participant in the broader distribution of Petrarch's ideas is, of course, the idea of cultural change as a "current," unsteered by human hands. What is required is a more exact account of where and how Vittorino's ideas about education originated. David Robey's essay (1981),[307] for example, compares Pier Paolo Vergerio's treatise on education, *de ingenuis moribus* (ca. 1400–1402)[308] with the version of Vittorino's school that can be reconstructed from the vitae. From this comparison he concludes that there was a typical plan of study in Padua that Vittorino and Vergerio drew on; the comparison of Vergerio's and Vittorino's curricula revealed a general agreement that religion was peripheral to formal education, and that formal education should prepare students not only for life as citizens, but also for life as virtuous individuals.

In contrast to an interpretation that emphasizes the novelty of Vittorino's approach, a second strand stresses links between humanist education and medieval tradition. It emphasizes the importance of a synthesis that combines old and new. Some of the proponents of this view trace the organization and principles of Vittorino's school back to medieval traditions. For Gregor Müller (1969, 1984),[309] the Benedictine monastery schools were of great importance for the establishment of the Casa Giocosa; it is unthinkable that this would have happened, though, without an influx of ideas grown in the fertile soil of humanism. An additional tradition, discussed by Maria Teresa Gentile (1981)[310] and Gregor Müller (1984),[311] is that of the education of knights at medieval courts, which, from the standpoint of the design of the curriculum, could explain the inclusion of athletic calisthenics.

Another group of supporters of the continuity thesis have speculated on the adoption of medieval patterns of thought regarding the virtues and standards of life.

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[306] Bec (1981, pp. 151–154).

[307] Robey (1981).

[308] Vergerio (1918, pp. 75–156). For the date 1400–1402 see: Bischoff (1909).

[309] See note 297 for more on Müller's changing characterization of Vittorino's school.

[310] Gentile (1981, p. 215, 225–226) makes this claim on the basis of the chevalier romances that the Gonzaga owned.

[311] Müller (1984, pp. 290–291; 301–302) mentions physical exercises, music, and happiness.

Giuseppe Saitta (1928)[312] extolled Vittorino for his ascetic, unworldly bearing, which resembles the medieval *vita contemplativa* more than any active attitude to life; this bearing was allegedly also reflected in his teaching. Giuseppe Toffanin went on to call Vittorino a "Franciscan soul, who did not assign exercises only from the 'Fioretti,' but also from Cicero and Virgil."[313] Piero Bosio Boz (1947)[314] divided the intellectual world of the fifteenth century into two directions: Christian humanism and secular humanism. Vittorino was assigned to the side of Christian humanism, which was based on the tradition of the Church and its writings and which maintained this tradition, unaltered, in the domain of ethics. From this perspective, humanists who took the side of antiquity were viewed negatively, as an aberration. Gregor Müller (1969)[315] retained the division of Christian and secular humanism, but neglected antiquity. From a pedagogical perspective, he divided the domains within the humanistic school into Christian and ethical and civil moral development, ascribing the Christian moral development perspective to Vittorino.

Giuseppe Flores d'Arcais (1946),[316] on the other hand, valued classical ideas about ethics for human beings positively. According to him, Christian values belong to the inner, spiritual-transcendental aspect of man, while classical writings offer an ethics

[312] Saitta (1928, pp. 105–120, compare especially p. 106): "Vittorino, guardato così, appare l'ultimo e il più grande educatore dell'ascetismo medievale che vuole immettere in sè con felice sviluppo le idee che gli educatori italiani dell'Umanesimo avevano saputo diffondere ed attuare."

[313] Toffanin (1933, p. 178); see also Toffanin (1941, p. 235).

[314] Bosio Boz (1947, pp. 21–22): "Tra gli umanisti troviamo frequentissimi degli esempi del più puro fervore religioso, non meno che nel medioevo … Nessuno vorrà negare poi che la qualifica di umanisti competa a un san Bernardino da Siena, un santo Antonino da Firenze, un Vittorino da Feltre, un Niccolò Niccoli, un Leonardo Bruni … . Quanto poi ai classici esempi di umanisti 'sostenitori del paganesimo' quanti un Lorenzo Valla, un Carlo Marsuppini, un Poggio Bracciolini, anche um Pico della Mirandola se proprio si vuole, ebbene, sotto l'innegabile aberrazione non v'è chi non scoprirebbe l'assillo del cristianesimo che, in essi, stenta a tradursi: anime tormentate—si rammenti che ci troviamo in pieno squilibrio spirituale—di fronte a quelle più saggie in netta maggioranza, ma che confessano la loro esigenza cristiana proprio con le deviazioni."

[315] Müller (1969; about Vittorino: pp. 37–39). Compare Kessler (1970).

[316] Flores d'Arcais (1946, pp. 210–215): (p. 210:) "Dignità umana … fine supremo ed esigenza ineliminabile di ogni processo educativo, ma sovrattutto elemento insopprimibile della concezione umanistica che, come è noto, volle dare dell'uomo la massima glorificazione ed esaltazione … la celebrazione completa della vita dello spirito si attua non attraverso la negazione di quel mondo scolastico, o addirittura religioso, al quale per certi aspetti l'umanesimo sembra opporsi, bensi piuttosto attraverso una intima e profonda correlazione fra l'ideale religioso del medioevo e il nuovo ideale rinascimentale, umano mondano e storico." (p. 212:) "Cristianesimo … piano sovrannaturale: l'uomo si forma mediatamente e riflessivamente ad opera della volontà e della grazia … fine sovrannaturale … interiorità … la vita si giustificava attraverso il rapporto Creatore—creatura. … Umanesimo … nello studio e nell'imitazione dell'antica coltura, risveglio delle energie umane, le quali, realizzandosi sul piano mondano, possono offrire motivi d'arricchimento e di incitamento al miglioramento pratico dell'uomo." (p. 213:) "rivolgersi all'esteriorità della vita." (p. 214:) "completa esaltazione delle forze umane nella piena riaffermazione dei valori etici e religiosi." (p. 215:) "se si vuole affermare veramente l'unità dell'uomo, e considerarne il valore ideale e l'effettiva dignità non si può conforme all'insegnamento di Vittorino, non richiamarsi a quel fondamento assoluto di eticita e di religiosità su cui si erigeva il programma della casa Giocosa."

for the outer, worldly human who is manifest in his deeds. This is his reinterpretation of the concept *Umanesimo Cristiano,* which Voigt (1893)[317] had previously used to suggest that ideas about ethics from antiquity had been adopted into the ecclesiastical canon. For Flores d'Arcais, the concept now described two completely separate domains that together form the basis of the *dignità umana*, or human dignity.

Giovanni Calò (1947) further expanded upon this designation through his own understanding of a pedagogy of *personalità armonica*[318]: he describes the classical virtues as "*sentimento dell'onore, amor della gloria, gara, tendenza a valere e a primeggiare*" and the Christian values as "*ossequio alla legge divina, norma della perfezione cristian,*" subordinating the first to the second and additionally ascribing *caritas* to the teacher in dealing with students. Aldo Agazzi (1981)[319] follows this line of reasoning further: he describes the classical virtues as active and the Christian virtues as passive. The active virtues include "*bravura, abilità, maestria, iniziativa*"; the passive virtues are obedience and asceticism. The virtues are reduced to norms of behavior; the domain of the *spiritual human,* so vividly visualized by Flores d'Arcais, is portrayed as absent or unimportant. But the teacher's love for his students can only be explained through *caritas* as Christian love, which is then further described as a sensation that is essential for action (and therefore not a virtue), and which can only be classified as important for the concept of a school in the unidirectional behavior of a teacher toward his student.

The search for "old" and "new" among the authors who stressed tradition tends to lead to an emphasis on Vittorino's intermediate position, in which it is assumed that he created a synthesis from positive elements from both the Middle Ages and the incipient modern era. This synthesis can be seen, on the one hand, in the joining of traditions from clerical and secular institutions in their common consideration of a new, humanistic curriculum that is based on texts from antiquity, and on the other hand, in a new classification of the canonical virtues, in which Roman virtues are appended to Christian virtues. Moreover, this synthesis can also be seen in an attempt to connect different modes of life: the *vita activa* of the modern era was joined to the transformed *vita contemplativa* of the Middle Ages.[320]

Such debates on the purpose of education suggest a shift about what was, and has been, meant by "pedagogy." Since the early twentieth century, beginning with Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile,[321] new questions about the reformulation of humanist pedagogy were shaped within the framework of the philosophical ethics of neo-idealism. Because the representatives of this line of research grounded their

[317] Voigt (1960, pp. 538–539): "Das Neue im Institut der Giocosa war der antike Geist, der sich hier mit dem christlichen vermählte. … Die Vortheile, welche die antike Erziehung vor der klösterlichen voraushat, wurden wieder aufgenommen. … Andererseits lagen Vittorino heidnische Anwandlungen fern. Im Gegentheil wollte er eine ernstliche religiöse Zucht."

[318] Calò (1947, pp. 23–24): "armonia tra mondo classico e mondo cristiano, tra etica pagana ed etica religiosa, tra natura e grazia." Compare Calò (1932), which already presents similar thoughts.

[319] Agazzi (1981, p. 65).

[320] Compare Böhm (1981, pp. 351–355).

[321] Compare Böhm and Flores d'Arcais (1979, pp. 36–62) with Gentile (1913).

discussion of "pedagogy" in ethics, not connecting it in any way with "curricula," they attributed an ethical orientation to Vittorino in order to be able to speak of a "Vittorinian" pedagogy. These authors therefore emphasize the concept of virtue, which is, naturally, bound up with the systematic question of what is eternally good. Only in the 1940s was the question of pedagogy, with an emphasis on real people, posed in a new and different way; this new approach placed the connection between the student and teacher, as two human beings existing independently of each other, as central to the teaching of ethics.[322]

This is not to say, however, that questions of modern pedagogy have nothing to offer the historian of Renaissance Italian education. One of the most important dialectical tensions in the history of education, after that of the concrete *being human* versus the projected *becoming human*, is the question of dogmatism versus self-creation in an educational relationship, a question that underlies almost every new work on pedagogy. It has become important for historians to consider how students thought about freedom and how a pedagogical space was carved out where relationships such as that of teacher to student, and vice versa, would even be possible. This fundamental shift in the focus of research has, until now, unfortunately only had a peripheral influence on scholarship on Vittorino; it would require research into the teacher-student relationship, the possibility of holding the teacher up as a model, and the position of the pedagogical "space" vis-à-vis the "space" of the outside world.

Only two authors have addressed this in the case of Vittorino: Giuseppe Flores d'Arcais (1946) – who characterized Vittorino's teacher-student relationships on the basis of human dignity, which he redefined in 1981 as the timeless regard for the person – and Winfried Böhm (1981) – who used Vittorino as an example to show, by examining different modes of living, the extent to which pedagogical space can yield different needs than the space of the "outside world".[323] To look at the idea how tutoring is supposed to work and what kind of philosophy of man stays at its basis, is part of this study's key questions about Renaissance educational theory.

Günther Böhme (1984),[324] who associated the idea of the free mind with the concept of education in early humanism, provided the first attempt to construct a "pedagogy of freedom" within fifteenth-century Italian educational texts. Similar ideas have been circulating within political science and philosophy for some time. Hans Baron (1955) built his discussion of Florentine civic humanism and the writings of Leonardo Bruni on them.[325] Walter Berschin's research on the vitae of Plutarch, produced in the fourth and to some extent in the fifteenth century,[326] shows that the contents of fifteenth-century vitae were modeled on the free hero,

[322] Böhm and Flores d'Arcais (1979, pp. 38–50).

[323] See note 320 in this chapter.

[324] Böhme (1984, pp. 114–116).

[325] See notes 261 to 267 in this chapter.

[326] Berschin (1983, pp. 35–43; pp. 40–41).

as promulgated by Plutarch. They are characterized by their tendency to develop ideas about human beings' unconstrained potential for greatness, even if the theoretical concepts for this are lacking.

2.3 Conclusion

Our discussion suggests the following lines of inquiry. It can be supposed that the authors of the vitae created principles derived from a variety of narratives and did not base their educational texts purely on their own experiences, even though experience had its place in the creation. These accounts stemmed from their intellectual assumptions, which came from, among other things, the books they had at hand, particularly those from antiquity.

The vitae are best considered as the end result of the students' attempts to construct their teacher, a construction that is built out of that which is real and historical, along with that which is idealistic and theoretical. As we shall see, their authors were creating a historical precedent for the "educational relationship" through their portrayal of the figure of an idealized teacher, based on the theories and ideas he holds. This understanding of the problem leads us to ask how this special group of authors conceived of the teacher, the student, and their relationship in the fifteenth century. What was the basis for these ideas? How did they differ, and what might account for these differences? These questions, which will form the crux of this book, do not exist in isolation, but rather must be embedded in the context of changing notions of man's relationship to the world and to God.

Chapter 3
Sassolo da Prato's Correspondence with Leonardo Dati, ca. 1443–1444

Sassolo da Prato included a description of Vittorino in a letter that he sent in 1443–1444 to his friend, the humanist Leonardo Dati in Florence. This vita is the first of the vitae of Vittorino da Feltre, and it is the most contemporary: Vittorino was living and teaching when Sassolo wrote it. Because of this closeness, it is the closest to the historical memory of Vittorino. All other vitae were written after his death.

3.1 The Manuscripts and Their Dating, Publication History, and Subsequent Use

Both of the manuscripts we will be considering, one from the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence and one from the Biblioteca Estense in Modena,[1] consist of one letter from Sassolo da Prato to Leonardo Dati. To each, a second letter of Sassolo's to an unknown acquaintance has been added. Sassolo wrote that both he and Dati knew this friend, but that he had chosen to omit his name for the sake of the friend's reputation.[2] The letter to Leonardo acts as a prelude, or sort of cover letter, to the second, longer letter. A task is appended to this prelude: Sassolo suggests that Leonardo pass on the second letter to those youth in Florence who were interested

[1] Sassolo da Prato: De Victorini Feltrensis vita ac disciplina. (a) Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Cod. Estense lat. R. 8. 15. (b) Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale: Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>). According to Avanzi (1947, pp. 87–103: p. 100, no. 98), Sassolo (a) was first published the first time by Martène and Durand (1724–33 1968: vol. 3, 1724, col. 843–856). Avanzi values Sassolo (b) as the better manuscript. Guasti uses Sassolo (b) for his edition of Sassolo da Prato (1869). A revised version of Guasti's transcription is printed by Garin (1958, pp. 504–533).

[2] Sassolo (<1443–1444>, ff. 42r–44r): part 1; Ibid. (ff. 44r–52v): part 2. Headings: part 1: Ibid. (f. 42r): "Saxolus pratensis Leonardo datho salutem"; part 2: Ibid. (f. 44r): "Saxolus pratensis ad. A suum deVictorini feltrensis uita et disciplina."

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in studying the liberal arts – here understood as the trivium, the quadrivium, and philosophy.[3]

In both versions, the two parts of the letter are written by hand in Latin and ordered in sequence; this, together with the missing name, indicates that the second letter is dependent on the first. In the Florentine exemplar, which is the basis of the other versions, the first part of the letter comprises two pages, written through on both sides, and includes an additional half-page of the follow-up text; the second part, which Dati described as a book in his response, comprises nine double-sided pages, beginning in the middle of the first page. The letters found their way with some other manuscripts into a collection in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence. The handwriting in the Florentine exemplar is uniform, yet it differs from the handwriting on the other pages that were bound into this book. It is still unclear if this is an original or if the manuscripts are copies.

The exemplar from Modena can be conclusively classified as a copy. Letters by other authors have been added to that of Sassolo, but they are all written in the same hand. In 1869, Cesare Guasti[4] undertook the first transcription and translation of the Florentine manuscript. Guasti found and corrected errors in this exemplar as well, which indicates that this manuscript is also not the original.

In his response to Sassolo,[5] Leonardo Dati predicted that the little book would be eagerly read and copied by studious young people. That this actually happened cannot be verified because the two manuscripts are the only known exemplars, and their provenance is still unclear, but the possibility remains that the letters could have been copied by contemporaries.

The time period in which the complete letter was sent from Mantua to Leonardo di Piero Dati[6] in Florence can be dated using two letters from Leonardo to Sassolo dated May 12, 1443, and February 8, 1443 *ab incarnatione* (= 1444).[7] In the first letter, Leonardo announced the arrival of his protégé, Giovanni Aretino, whom he recommended to Sassolo.[8] In the second letter, he then referred to Sassolo's text and

[3] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 44r): "Tuum modo est leonarde nostrum anobis adumbratum Victorinum iuuentuti proponere spectandum: atque imitandum:." The question of whether students should imitate the man Vittorino or strive for the inherent ideal of a hoard of knowledge and virtue, and how to do that, is discussed in Sect. 3.3.

[4] Sassolo da Prato (1869, p. 3).

[5] Dati (1943, p. 41): "Saxole mi, non desisto hanc tantam rem praedicare omnibus, neque solum ingenuis adolescentibus, sed illis, qui vel doctissimi haberi solent. Audiunt quidem attentissime; sed multo jocundissime librum captant. Nam et disvolat inter eos undique, et exscribitur avide, et colitur magnifice, tantumque meritum ejus apud omnes, ut qui non videant, haud facile id crediderint."

[6] The name is confirmed by Dati (1943, p. XXXIII) (Salvino Salvinio) and Flamini (1890, pp. 1–4; 8). Müller (1984) calls him Leonardo di Piero Dati in the text (p. 71) and Leonardo di Pietro Dati in the bibliography (p. 354). I am following the older scripts, which also give further references.

[7] Letter 7 to Sassolo da Prato from May 12, 1443, in Dati (1943, pp. 13–14); Letter 23 to Sassolo da Prato from February 8, 1443 ab Incarnatione (= 1444), in ibid. (pp. 39–42).

[8] Ibid. (p. 13): "Johannes, qui has reddiderit, quemadmodum ex Victorino intelliges, isthuc venit ad eius doctrinam imbibendam." … "Eum tuae caritati valde commendo, eoque magis, quod opera mea praesertim apud illum ipsum susceptus est."

praised Sassolo as being worthy of his teacher Vittorino.[9] Despite this evidence, it is still not possible to ascertain the exact date of composition of Sassolo's letter. For one thing, Sassolo referred in the first part to Giovanni Aretino's arrival, meaning that it had already occurred.[10] This means that the first part of the two-part letter was written after Aretino's arrival and therefore after Leonardo Dati had composed his letter. In this first part, Sassolo wrote that he had recently written a letter to a friend, in which he had spoken of the life and achievements of Vittorino da Feltre.[11] This would mean that the second part must have been written before the first part. The word "nuper" actually means "shortly before" or "recently" and indicates a very short time span between two actions; in this context, though, it is completely possible that it is being used as a diminutive, because Sassolo also used diminutive forms in other places in his text, for instance in the characterization of the text as *lucubratiuncula*, the diminutive of "the act of working by night."[12] Using the diminutive form when speaking of "one's own creations" could be part of the author's style, as a kind of coquettish modesty; it therefore cannot be used as a precise indicator of time.[13]

In the second part of the letter, Sassolo claimed to have spent 6 years with Vittorino.[14] According to the documentary evidence, the earliest he could have set off to study with Vittorino was 1438[15]; it is therefore likely that the two parts of the letter were composed in a short timespan.

The wider circulation of Sassolo da Prato's letter can be established from a circle of Vittorino da Feltre's students, as recorded by Guasti in 1869.[16] The letter and its author were mentioned by Giovanni Andrea Bussi (da Vigevano) in 1469,[17] Francesco Prendilacqua in 1470,[18] and Vespasiano da Bisticci during the period

[9] Ibid. (p. 40): "Caeterum in hoc consolor, quod te ipsum inhaesisse homini perspiciam, nec jam minus ab eo, quam Plato a Socrate, enitescere ipse videare."

[10] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 44r) (in the first part of the letter): "DeJoanne autem arretino tuo: cum ualeat ingenio: flagret studio: ametur a Victorino: erudiatur que diligenter benesperare te iubeo. Egoque omnia: si non que debeo: atcerte que possum tua causa ac gratia ei libentissime presto: prestaturus que sum. Vale".

[11] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 42r): "Prouocatus aquodam utriusque nostrum ut arbitror amicissimo: cuius mentionem nominatim nullam facio eius existimationi consulens: scripsi nuper de Victorini Feltrensis magistri mei uita et disciplina:"

[12] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 42r).

[13] See Sect. 3.3 with further insight on how Sassolo used rhetoric rules.

[14] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 48r).

[15] Cesare Guasti in Sassolo da Prato (1869, pp. 11–15).

[16] Ibid. (pp. 24–26).

[17] Bussi (1978, p. 29): "Qui plura voluerit discere de Victorino, sunt enim eius omnis splendoris ac dignitatis plene actiones, Saxoli pratensis inter condiscipulos nostros minime contemnendi, quanquam admodum iuvenis ille fato concesserit, librum legat de vita et moribus Victorini;"

[18] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 42r–v): "Saxolus pratensis totus, ut ita dicam ex uictorino factus maximus diuitiarum contemptor paupertatem imprimis amauit: qui quom saepe necessarijs indigeret: ita gloriari solitus erat: ut nunquam uoti se compotem futurum (ibid., f. 42v) diceret nisi praeceptorem patientia superaret. Obiurgatus ab aequalibus quod semifractos ac debiles calceos haud inuitus ferret: si melioribus inquit gauderem: haud uictorino dignus essem: fuit orator bonus

1480–98,[19] although the last two maintained that the work perished with its author.[20] Francesco da Castiglione also knew Sassolo, as evidenced by the fact that Girolamo Aliotti reported to him the specifics of Sassolo's death in Arezzo in 1449[21]; it is not obvious from his vita, however, whether he was aware of Sassolo's letter. Platina mentioned Sassolo, but not the letter, in his vita.[22] This evidence gives the impression that the letter only lived on in the memory of those who had read it or had it read to them during Sassolo's lifetime and who had a direct connection with the school.

After roughly 230 years of silence, the letter was edited for the first time by Edmundus Martène and Ursinus Durand during the period 1724–1733.[23] Unfortunately, they did not indicate their sources. Cesare Guasti (1869)[24] was of the opinion that the manuscript they had used was the aforementioned Florentine exemplar, which he also used, but that more errors had been introduced in the copy they had made. Giannetto Avanzi (1947), on the other hand, believed they had copied a different manuscript, namely, the Modena manuscript,[25] of which Guasti was unaware. We must await a comparison of the two manuscripts to resolve the issue. Carlo de' Rosmini (1801) used Martène and Durand's edition[26]; in his discussion, Sassolo's letter, along with the other vitae, was given the status of being one of the four basic statements portraying the life and achievements of Vittorino da Feltre.

Although Jacopo Bernardi[27] had already published excerpts of the Florentine manuscript in Italian in 1856, Guasti published the full text of the manuscript in

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ornatus nulla in re non laudandus: magnus antiquitatis inuestigator: commentariolos quosdam fecit maxime ad dicendum utiles. Nam quicquid graeci, latinique doctores eleganter, ornate, copiose scriptum reliquerunt: breuissime in hos congessit libellos singula etiam genera diuidens: quos quom libros uolueret: nihil dicere uolenti quacunque de re ad imitandum defuit. Quid agis Saxole cum libellis tuis interrogatus flores inquit ex ortulis philosophorum colligo. Luculentam scripsit orationem de laudibus Victorini: sed ea: ut arbitror: cum auctore perijt: ipse post mortem praeceptoris adhuc uagus nullo studiorum suorum fructu potitus in ea quam amauerat: egestate pestilentia consumptus est. O miseram tam praeclari ingenij conditionem."

[19] Vespasiano (1970 1976, vol. 1, p. 574): "Furonvi ancora dua Fiorentini pure sua discepoli, uomini degnissimi, l'uno fu meser Francesco da Castiglione, uomo di sanctissima vita et costumi, l'altro fu Sasero figliuolo di maestro Lorenzo da Prato, dotissimo in greco et in latino, et aveva bonissimo istile, secondo che si vede in più sua opere, et maxime nella vita che fece di Vettorino da Feltro, la quale però insieme collui, che morì di morbo, tornando da Mantua."

[20] See notes 18 and 19.

[21] Cesare Guasti in Sassolo da Prato (1869, p. 22; p. 30, note 62).

[22] Sacchi da Piadena, Bartolomeo, named Platina (<1462–1474>, f. 32r): "in copia et ornatu ciceroniano Saxus:"

[23] Martène and Durand (1968, vol. 3, coll. 843–856).

[24] Cesare Guasti in Sassolo da Prato (1869, p. 25): "una lezione non diversa, ma peggiore di quella che ci è offerta dal codice Strozziano;"

[25] See note 1.

[26] Rosmini (1801, p. 21).

[27] Bernardi (1856, pp. 151–174) contains an Italianized and incomplete version of both letter parts by Sassolo da Prato to Leonardo Dati, taken from the Florentine manuscript.

Latin for the first time in 1869,[28] which Eugenio Garin reprinted together with Guasti's Italian translation in 1958.[29] Guasti embellished his reproduction and translation and prefixed them to a study of the life and achievements of Sassolo da Prato. Guasti's publication included a reference to Pestalozzi[30] praising the letter in a speech, something I have not been able to confirm from his written statements; this claim therefore remains, at best, a rumor.

3.2 Sender and Addressees

Sassolo's vita emerges from a specific historical context that includes his own education and experiences, the interests and values of Leonardo Dati, to whom the vita was addressed, and the intellectual climate of Florence in the early fifteenth century.

3.2.1 The Author, Sassolo da Prato

Carlo de' Rosmini was the first to investigate the life and achievements of Sassolo da Prato, making space for him in his list of Vittorino da Feltre's students in the fourth chapter of his book *Idea dell'ottimo precettore nella vita e disciplina di Vittorino da Feltre e de'suoi discepoli* (1801),[31] where he summarized the extant documents referring to Sassolo's life and achievements. Half a century later, Cesare Guasti (1869)[32] was able to expand the corpus of finds with additional letters and archival documents. I will summarize those of Guasti's conclusions, each of which he was able to substantiate with archival documents,[33] that are relevant here.

From the 1433 *Catasto* of the physician Lorenzo d'Angnolo Saxoli da Prato for the Florentine tax authorities,[34] we find that Sassolo was the fourth child and third son out of the fifteen children born to Lorenzo and Piera. According to Guasti,[35] Sassolo's mother, Piera, 36 years old at that time, was a member of the Cavalcanti family. Lorenzo recorded in the Catasto that she was pregnant; she died in 1434,

[28] Sassolo da Prato (1869, pp. 33–72); reprint in Guasti (1899, vol. 5, 2nd part).

[29] Garin (1958, pp. 505–533).

[30] Sassolo da Prato (1869, p. 31, note 71): "E qui pure dirò, che l'avvocato Giovacchino Benini di cara memoria sentì dalla bocca del Pestalozzi, che la Vita di Vittorino scritta dal Sassoli era stimabile sopra tutte l'altre, e meritava d'esser fatta meglio conoscere con una traduzione."

[31] Rosmini (1801, pp. 388–400).

[32] Sassolo da Prato (1869, pp. 3–31).

[33] Ibid. (pp. 26–31 [notes]).

[34] Ibid. (pp. 6–7): extract from Firenze, Archivio Centrale di Stato. Catasto; quartiere S.[anta] M.[aria] N.[ovella], Lion bianco, filza dalla lettera I alla Z, a f. 78.

[35] Ibid. (p. 4), without reference.

presumably shortly after the birth of her 16th child, as Guasti concluded from another source that remains unknown.[36] Sassolo was described as being 16 years old in 1433, making 1417 his approximate year of birth, 4 years after the birth of his oldest brother, Angnolo.[37] Their father, Lorenzo, who was 56 years old in 1433, was in a very good financial situation, as attested by the enumeration in the *Catasto*: He owned many estates in the vicinity of Florence.[38] The physician died in 1437,[39] and his fortune was passed on to and was divided up by his children.[40]

Sassolo began to study the *artes liberales* during his father's lifetime, as attested by the existence of a letter Sassolo sent to his father in 1437 from Bologna.[41] A letter of reference from Francesco Filelfo in Siena[42] to Leonardo Aretino in 1438 shows that Sassolo was a student of Filelfo; in 1437,[43] Poggio Fiorentino gave him a letter of introduction to Guarino Veronese to take along to Ferrara. A letter from Sassolo to his father[44] shows that he was staying in Bologna to study in 1437. In his letter to Leonardo Dati from 1443,[45] he remarked that he had already been in Mantua with Vittorino da Feltre for 6 years, giving us a starting date of 1437 or 1438. The documents cluster around the years 1437 and 1438. Guasti's attempt at creating a chronology for Sassolo's various places of study therefore seems plausible but is not completely conclusive. Guasti[46] proposed the following time line for Sassolo: student of Filelfo's until 1436, in Bologna 1436–1437, student of Guarino's in 1437, and finally, student of Vittorino's starting in 1438. If Sassolo's statement in his letter to Leonardo Dati can be trusted, we can assume with relative certainty that he was in Bologna before he was in Mantua. He could also have traveled to other places of study from Mantua. Given this history, it is possible that he had already acquired his knowledge of Latin and Greek before attending Vittorino's school; he would also have been familiar with the subjects offered at and the structure of both Filelfo's and Guarino's schools, the two humanist schools best known today. The first statement reminds us that Sassolo's acquisition of Latin and Greek cannot necessarily be traced back to Vittorino's tutelage; the second leads us to suspect that he was capable of evaluating Vittorino's merits in comparison to those of his other teachers.

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[36] Ibid. (p. 7).

[37] Ibid. (p. 7): Catasto 1433, Incarichi di bocche.

[38] Ibid. (p. 6): Catasto 1433, extract.

[39] Ibid. (p. 14), reference see note 41.

[40] Ibid. (pp. 14; 28, note 41): Firenze, Archivio Centrale di Stato; carte degli ufficiali de'pupilli e adulti del Comune di Firenze; registro 58, at f. 96. The assets were divided between August 26 and August 30, 1438.

[41] See note 44.

[42] Ibid. (p. 11), original wording. In addition, there are, according to Guasti (ibid., pp. 20; 30, note 60) nine letters by Filelfo to Sassolo. The letters attest to the fact that Sassolo had vivid contact with this humanist in the years from November 1439 to October 1444.

[43] Ibid. (pp. 11–12), in Italian translation, reference is on p. 28, note 35.

[44] Ibid. (pp. 12–13) gives the original wording in volgare.

[45] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 48r).

[46] Sassolo da Prato (1869, pp. 10–15).

In any case, Sassolo left Mantua for Florence during Vittorino's lifetime. His relationship with Vittorino can be established through fragments of surviving evidence. In the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence, there is a manuscript book collecting Xenophon's work that contains a dedication by Vittorino to Sassolo da Prato. The wording of this dedication, transcribed by Guasti, indicates that the book was a parting gift to Sassolo from Vittorino.[47] Sassolo was recognized as a student of Vittorino's in later vitae by Platina,[48] Prendilacqua,[49] and Vespasiano da Bisticci.[50] Prendilacqua described him quite tellingly as a Ciceronian who collected florilegia on every topic and who rivaled Vittorino in his asceticism.

We also know that Sassolo da Prato left a small body of his own writings. During his 29 years, Sassolo da Prato did not create a large oeuvre. His letter on the life of Vittorino da Feltre, a study on orthography,[51] and a translation of Xenophon's *Hercules* with a foreword dedicated to Alessandro Gonzaga[52] were known starting with Rosmini (1801),[53] continuing through Guasti (1869),[54] and up to the *Iter Italicum* of P. O. Kristeller (1963–1992).[55] Judging from archival findings, his writings enjoyed a modest degree of distribution. According to a surviving letter that

[47] Ibid. (p. 19; p. 30, note 56).

[48] Sacchi da Piadena, Bartolomeo, named Platina (<1462–1474>, f. 32r): "in copia et ornatu ciceroniano Saxus".

[49] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 42r–v): (42r) "Saxolus pratensis totus, ut ita dicam ex uictorino factus maximus diuitiarum contemptor paupertatem imprimis amauit: qui quom saepe necessarijs indigeret: ita gloriari solitus erat: ut nunquam uoti se compotem futurum (42v) diceret nisi praeceptorem patientia superaret. Obiurgatus ab aequalibus que sifractos ac debiles calceos haud inuitus ferret si melioribus inquit gauderem: haud uictorino dignus essem. fuit orator bonus ornatus nulla in re non laudandus: magnus antiquitatis inuestigator: commentariolos quosdam fecit maxime ad dicendum utiles. Nam quicquid graeci latinique doctores eleganter ornate copiose scriptum reliquerunt: breuissime in hos congessit libellos singula etiam genera diuidens: quos quom libros uolueret: nihil dicere uolenti quacunque de re ad imitandum defuit. Quid agis Saxolo cum libellis tuis interrogatus flores inquit ex ortulis philosophorum colligo: Luculentam scripsit orationem de laudibus Vicotrini: sed ea: ut arbitror: cum auctore perijt: ipse post mortem praeceptoris adhuc uagus nullo studiorum suorum fructu potitus in ea quam amauerat: egestate pestilentia consumptus est. O miseram tam praeclari ingenij conditionem."

[50] Vespasiano (1970 1976: vol. 1 [1970], p. 574): "Furonvi ancora dua Fiorentini pure sua discepoli, uomini degnissimi, l'uno fu meser Francesco da Castiglione, uomo di sanctissima vita et costumi, l'altro fu Sasero figliuolo di maestro Lorenzo da Prato, dotissimo in greco et in latino, et aveva bonissimo istile, secondo che si vede in più sua opere, et maxime nella vita che fece di Vettorino da Feltro, la quale però insieme collui, che morì di morbo, tornando da Mantua."

[51] Rosmini (1801, p. 399): De accentibus ac diphthongis et formatione praeteritorum, In Vocabulista graecum et latinum Johannis Crassoni, edente Bono Accursio Pisano, Milano, o. J. (fifteenth century, according to Guasti in Sassolo da Prato [1869, p. 23]).

[52] According to Kristeller (1963–1992), the manuscript on Sassolo's *Hercules* can be found in the libraries of the following towns: Bergamo (vol. 1, p. 12); Naples (vol. 1, p. 413) and Vaticano City (vol. 2, p. 408).

[53] Rosmini (1801, pp. 399–400).

[54] Sassolo da Prato (1869, pp. 23–24).

[55] Kristeller (1963–1992, vol. 1, pp. 12, 22, 34, 137, 382, 413; vol. 2, pp. 77, 408).

Girolamo Aliotti wrote to Francesco da Castiglione in 1449,[56] Sassolo, who was sinking into poverty after Vittorino's death, spent the remainder of his life in Rome and Arezzo.[57] It was in this latter city that he supposedly threw himself into the river with a cry and died on the following day.[58]

Today, Sassolo's letter to Leonardo Dati about the life and teaching of Vittorino da Feltre is his only piece of writing that offers a stand-alone discussion of a topic of his choosing. Sassolo's letter can only be compared to the information provided by Guasti about Sassolo or that provided by others about Vittorino in relation to the historical evidence; nevertheless, it is impossible to use the author's other work to substantiate and differentiate the thinking behind the letter, which could contain theoretical considerations that would be of interest to us.

Against the backdrop of Guasti's biography, we can examine the accuracy of some of the autobiographical details that Sassolo allowed to seep into his *Vita Victorini*. First, there is the issue of Prato, a small city annexed to Florence, as the place of origin for Sassolo and his family. Sassolo characterized Prato as his home when he mentioned his "coarse, small-town – Prato-esque – writing style" and drew attention to his father being described as the "Asclepius of Prato."[59] Then he declared that the city of Florence, which had been distinguished by the tradition of its scholars since Petrarch, was his hometown (*patria*); on the basis of this tradition, he declared it a rule that the citizens of Florence were the most capable in all of the sciences.[60] Sassolo's statements about his origins correspond to the historical situation, yet his praise of Florence requires some additional interpretation (see below).

Second, he described his family: his deceased mother, Piera, who had encouraged him at an early age to study the *artes* and who was herself virtuous; his father, Lorenzo, a distinguished physician from Prato who was well read in the

[56] Rosmini (1801, pp. 397–398). Girolamo Aliotti was a cousin of Dati's protegé Giovanni Aretino, who Dati recommends in his letter to Sassolo. See Rosmini (1801, p. 473).

[57] Sassolo da Prato (1869, pp. 15–16; 20–22).

[58] Rosmini (1801, pp. 397–398) says that Sassolo was poor, meager, ill, disillusioned and depressed.

[59] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 42r): "nec omnibus tamen: nam politissimi isti et urbanissimi nostrum hoc oppidanum: rude: atque ut dicam pratense dicendi genus." Ibid. (f. 49r): quod ex laurentio patre: quem tu pratensem esculapium appellabas:"

[60] Ibid. (f. 42v): "Hanc utinam expetant ciues nostri: ingenia quorum (bona uenia ceteri me audiant) adomnem humanitatem uel exomnibus sint aptissima." Ibid. (f. 42v): "Nam cum in toto terrarum orbe penitus extinctum atque deletum nomen ac semen esset poetarum: innostra patria pete duo subito extiterunt: Dantes: Franciscus Petrarcha bonis artibus omnibus: quantum temporibus illis sine grecis litteris effici potuit instructissimi." Ibid. (f. 42r): "Cumque succum illum ueterem dicendi romanum Gotthica iam barbaries penitus inquinasset: nostri primum adsanitatem pristinam reuocare conati sunt Boccacius: Colutius." Ibid. (f. 42v): "hos deinceps subequuti ceteri: qui cum uiderent sine grecarum presidio litterarum: nostras omnino recuperari non posse: illas egrecia: cum octingentesimum iam annum exulassent: inytalia primi reduxerunt: effecerunt que ut et nunc romane scribere pene proprium uideatur nostre ciuitatis." Ibid. (f. 43r): "Inreliquis studijs: que cumceteris communia sunt medicina iure ciuili, quot principes nostra ciuitas:"

classics,[61] and whose fame Sassolo wished to carry on.[62] He also portrayed his inner anguish on receiving a pressing admonition from an unknown friend of the family to return to Prato because his sisters were orphaned, penniless, and alone; this is the friend to whom the second part of the letter containing the vita of Vittorino is directed. Although we have no further information about his mother, Piera Cavalcanti, his father's occupation – but not his erudition – is revealed in the tax declaration from 1433. As Guasti had already noted,[63] we must qualify the interpretation of his sisters' orphanhood. As the third son, Sassolo was not the head of the family after his father's death and was therefore under no moral obligation to take on his sisters' upbringing, particularly in light of the fact that his older brothers lived in or near Florence. His rejoinder that his studies would be of more use to his family's reputation than his presence would have been perfectly acceptable according to the customs of the times, if indeed the accusation had been made that he was abandoning his family.

A third autobiographical element is the reference to his 6-year stay with Vittorino; this is completely plausible, yet cannot be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt. His activity in Mantua remains unclear; we cannot conclude from the fact that he dedicated his letter chiefly to the subjects of arithmetic and music that he had studied these and only these subjects while in Mantua, because, as he himself stated, his main purpose was to rebut his friend's criticism of these subjects. The only thing he confessed to the unknown friend was that Vittorino, in the confusion of Sassolo's life, had become a fatherly guide and the pivotal point to his "humanitas."[64] "Humanitas" for him consisted of an elegance of words that would culminate in eloquence and wisdom, which itself is composed of knowledge and virtue. This statement – if not merely a flourish – indicates that Sassolo had attached himself to Vittorino for the sake not only of his studies, but also for emotional or familial reasons.

Except for the story of the orphaning of his siblings and the associated demand for his return – a demand that could indeed have been expressed by a friend of the family – the sparse biographical references do indicate that the narrator Sassolo da

[61] Ibid. (f. 49r): "quod ex laurentio patre: quem tu pratensem esculapium appellabas: adolescentulus persepe eram audire solitus (lectitabat enim studiose ueteres illos plinium, cassium, cornelium: celsum: quorum sunt demedicina elegantissime scripti libri)." Ibid. (f. 52v): "Etsi Saxolus sum Animus non tamen saxeus et ferreus ille: quem me facis: Moueor enim moueor memoria Piere matris mee dulcissime, mihi que merito semper carissime: quam habuerim (quod paucis contingit) meorum studiorum adiutricem, aduirtutemque cohortatricem assiduam. Moueor optimi uiri Laurentij patris mei Laudibus copiose abs te sane collectis, nec minus amice. Sororum autem orbitate ac solitudine excrucior: non solum moueor."

[62] Ibid. (f. 52v): " Paternas uero laudes ipsa uirtute partas, nisi peruirtutem retinere tueri que non potero".

[63] Sassolo da Prato (1869, pp. 16–17).

[64] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 45r): "ut Victorinum dicturus sis non modo hominem integerrimum sanctissimum: sed doctorem etiam prudentissimum: unam que eius esse exomnibus disciplinam: directam aduirtutem uiam: meque posthac non accusaturum: gratulaturum potius: quod inmeis turbulentissimis tempestatibus tantum gubernatorem (c. 45v) nancisci mihi contigerit."

Prato, immanent in the text and created by the author, corresponds biographically with the author of the text, Sassolo da Prato. There is no indication that the letter is an artificial product in which the author assumes the identity of the narrator. The few intimations point to the letter originating from Sassolo himself. The most telling of these is his rebuttal to the unknown friend's demand for him to return to Florence, which does not deny his sisters' orphaned state but instead cites his own bad financial situation and the wishes of his dead parents.

Sassolo's text includes three preferences that can be described in terms of, but not fully explained by, Sassolo's biography. First, he stressed that the inhabitants of Florence, which of course included his family, were more learned than the inhabitants of any other city. Second, he stressed the importance of arithmetic and music and added that he had not been able to study them in Bologna, nor with Filelfo, nor with Guarino. Third, he averred that oratory was the seat of wisdom and the best education for mankind. In doing so, he indicated that he himself aspired to become an orator. Taken autobiographically, these general statements are intended to place Sassolo in a good light. He stressed that his education was generally considered the best, praised his hometown – which in reality was not quite Florence, actually Prato – as having produced the best scholars since Petrarch, and characterized his current school – namely, Vittorino's – as the only one to offer all of the subjects belonging to the *artes liberales* as described by Cicero. This context is important for understanding what, exactly, has been claimed about Vittorino on the basis of Sassolo's vita.

3.2.2 The Addressee, Leonardo di Piero Dati

Sassolo's text is directed at three potential groups of recipients, only one of which is named explicitly, that is, the person to whom the first part of the letter is addressed and the entire letter was sent: Leonardo di Piero Dati.[65] Leonardo definitely received the letter, which is demonstrated by the fact that he answered it.[66] Beyond this, we cannot name a specific reader. Leonardo was tasked with passing on the second part of the letter to the youth of Florence to read; if we take this task literally, he was supposed to serve as a mediator between Sassolo's ideas and a larger audience in Florence. Leonardo's response implies that he did take the task seriously and that he was not only in agreement with the goals and opinions Sassolo expressed in his letter but also propounded them himself: He professed that he was inspired to make haste to study with Vittorino.

[65] Ibid. (f. 42r): "Saxolus Pratensis Leonardo Datho ·salutem·"; "utriusque nostram"; "ad te igitur mitto"; (f. 43v): "quid Leonarde dicamne ferream?"; (f. 44r): "Tuum modo est Leonarde."

[66] See notes 5 and 8.

The second group of recipients Sassolo hoped to reach is described in the first part of the letter as follows[67]: (c. 42r) "I wanted to satisfy my friend as well as I could and to show those youths who assiduously study virtue and the sciences the wellspring, as it were, from which they can easily draw what they wish for. Now I am sending you this work, over which I burned the midnight oil, and which you may, if you think it fitting, make public, display, and allow to be read, although not to all and sundry: the most intellectually cultivated and well-educated would perhaps, and rightfully so, spurn our small-town, coarse, and – as I would put it – Prato-esque style of speech.… (c. 42v) My address is directed toward those who are not satisfied with enjoying the power and selection of words, but rather wish to conjoin Mistress Wisdom with eloquence; … (43v) Let us therefore remind and encourage the children, in order for them to be inspired to grow up to study virtue and the sciences. If they then hold a conviction that is opposed to the wishes of their parents, that in itself is already enough to nurture piety and virtue.… (c. 44r) But I believe I have now demanded enough of the students; your task, Leonardo, is to introduce the Vittorino we have characterized to the youth for their observation and emulation. If some of these, as I hope, are thereby inspired, both of us will have done a good service to our fatherland." He characterized his intended audience as those youth of Florence who either wished to achieve wisdom in addition to eloquence or were inspired by the letter to strive for wisdom. He proposed that those youth observe and emulate Vittorino da Feltre as the means or method for achieving this goal. His express intention was to address those youth who had not yet taken their places in society.[68]

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[67] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 42r): "Satisfacere tantum amico, quoquo modo possem, ceteris que uirtutis et humanitatis studiosis adolescentulis monstrare quasi fontem uolui: unde que cuperent: facile exhaurire possent. Lucubratiunculam adte igitur mitto: ut eam si uidebitur proferas: ostentes: legendam des: nec omnibus tamen: nam politissimi isti et urbanissimi nostrum hoc oppidanum: rude: atque ut dicam pratense dicendi genus: fortassis non iniuria asperanrentur." … "Adeos enim omnis mea sit oratio: qui cum uerborum uim delectum que gustari(e?)nt: (f. 42v) his non contenti ipsam eloquentie magistram sapientiam adiungere concupiscant:" … (f. 43v) "Moneamus itaque potius: hortemur que liberos adolescentes, uirtutis studio ac litterarum incensos: ut persuasum habeant: huiusmodi parentum uolutati aduersari: ipsam esse pietatem uirtutem que colere." … (f. 44r) " Sed inuitatos iam satis arbitror studiosos. Tuum modo est Leonarde—nostrum anobis adumbratum Victorinum iuuentuti proponere spectandum: atque imitandum: adquod si ut spero excitati erunt non nulli: depatria uterque nostrum bene merebitur."

[68] There was multiple ways of viewing adolescence in the period from the Middle Ages to the late fifteenth century. The best-known model included adolescence as one of four, six, and/or seven steps in a whole human life. A separation of human life into four steps or "ages" could be connected to the four character-forming liquids or humors, and derived from classical knowledge about the sequence of seasons in a year: pueritia (childhood)/phlegma; juventus (youth)/blood; senectus (young man)/yellow bile; decrepitas (old man)/black bile. See for example a treatise from Cambridge from the eleventh or twelfth century: Cambridge, Caius College, MS 428, fol. 27v (see James [1908, p. 500]). This model is described in Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl (1992, pp. 417–419). According to Ariès (1994, p. 79), until well into the sixteenth century it was understood that each age comprised about 20 years. Ariès (ibid., p. 78) also provides a thirteenth-century example of the six ages, a division connected to the zodiac. Joachim Poeschke (in Kirschbaum [1994, vol. 3, coll. 38]) found a twelfth-century example in the cathedral of Canterbury that confronted the six

The second part of the letter contains no direct allusion to any other reader but the unknown friend. In the first part of the letter,[69] Sassolo wrote to Leonardo that he had been (c. 42r) "challenged by someone who, as I believe, has cultivated a very friendly relationship with the both of us." Even with the help of the available documents, the identity of the unknown friend cannot be determined; according to Sassolo's statements, this friend was very close to his family, particularly to his father, Lorenzo.[70] We can deduce certain things, though: he was schooled in the *artes liberales*,[71] which normally did not include mathematics and music in Florence (according to Sassolo)[72]; he must have sojourned in Florence frequently, because he was familiar with Sassolo's family circumstances.[73] Moreover, from Sassolo's statement "after I had left you all," it is likely that the friend, like Sassolo's family, continued to reside there.[74] The anxiety about the orphaned state of Sassolo's sisters certainly suggests that he was very close to the family.[75]

Although the friend's relationship to Sassolo's family somewhat humanizes him, we cannot ascribe any individual characteristics or preferences to this person based on documentary evidence. For this reason, it is difficult to detect Sassolo's personal inclination toward this unknown friend, despite the obvious purpose of the text to clear up the misconceptions held by this unknown friend regarding Vittorino's school. It can be assumed then that the second part of the text – which either does not take personal relationships into account, or transcends them – must be read based on Sassolo's general inclinations, even though the recipient is personally addressed. The second part of the text can therefore be read in both ways: as directed toward the personally addressed recipient and toward a larger audience.

Using the rules of rhetoric, we must determine whether Sassolo was only following a customary practice, which *per definitionem* made humanist letters literature "for the many," or whether he already had a larger audience than just his friend in

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ages of the world, or *aetates mundi*, with the six *aetates hominis* (Infantia, Pueritia, Adolescentia, Iuventus, Virilitas, Senectus). The seven ages of man are in accordance to the planets. The widely spread "Le Grand Propriétaire de toutes choses," book 6, names them by indication of age (Ariès 1994, p. 76): Childhood ended according to Isidor and Constantin on the 7th year, pueritia on the 14th year, adolescence on the 21st (Constantin's "Viaticum"), 28th (Isidor: growth and power increase until the man has the form that nature wanted him to have), or 30th/35th year. Juventus, the period of blossom of powers, was not reached (according to Isidor) until the 45th year; maturity (Isidor), with ponderosity (morals and customs) followed without age limit. Old age begins when man diminishes again and stops at 70, or, alternatively at death. The last part of old age might be separated and called *senies*. The frescoes by Guariento in the Eremitani Church in Padua are yet another example from the fourteenth century in Italy: see d'Arcais (1965, Images no. 115–123).

[69] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 42r): "Prouocatus aquodam utriusque nostrum tu arbitror amicissimo:"

[70] Ibid. (f. 49r): "quod ex laurentio patre: quem tu pratensem esculapium appellabas." (f. 52v) "Moueor optimi uiri Laurentij patris mei Laudibus copiose abs te sane collectis, nec minus amice".

[71] Ibid. (f. 44v).

[72] Ibid. (passim).

[73] Ibid. (ff. 44r–45r).

[74] Ibid. (f. 44r): "post meum auobis discessum."

[75] Ibid. (ff. 44r–45r; 52v).

mind while composing the letter, making the reality of the friend of secondary importance, and raising the issue of whether or not he was a fictional addressee. But before we clarify these questions by delving more deeply into the text, we must first examine the only addressee known by name: Leonardo di Piero Dati.

Leonardo di Piero Dati is not unknown in the humanistic world. His letters were first edited by Laurentius Mehus in 1743.[76] In addition, there are more letters as well as a large number of works he authored, mostly poetry.[77] Mentions of him are to be found in Vespasiano da Bisticci[78] and Cristoforo Landino (1481).[79] In the nineteenth century, Salvino Salvinio[80] and Francesco Flamini (1890)[81] wrote his biography, though Salvinio's should be considered more an encomium from statements made about Dati than an actual biography.

According to the documents collected by Flamini, Leonardo di Piero Dati was born in Florence in 1408, of a noble family.[82] There he studied, as recorded by Vespasiano da Bisticci,[83] the *artes liberales*, later naming one of his teachers for grammar and rhetoric, Sozomeno da Pistoia (1387–1458), in a letter.[84] Afterward, he dedicated himself to the study of law, and in 1431 he was described in a letter as being a notary in Florence.[85] In 1432, he took orders with the Camaldolese Benedictines on the advice of Ambrogio Traversari[86] and accompanied Cardinal Giordano Orsini to Rome as his secretary, which can be verified by a letter from Orsini to Traversari in 1433.[87] Cardinal Orsini died in 1438 or 1439[88]; after 3 years in the service of the prelate Francesco Condulmero, Leonardo Dati returned to Florence at the end of 1441.[89] He spent 1442–1446 there with his ill mother, apparently without any sociopolitical duties or responsibilities; he himself was not in perfect physical or financial health.[90] In 1446 he returned to the papal court.[91] He

[76] Dati (1943).

[77] Kristeller (1963–1992) provides an immense amount of material on this matter.

[78] Flamini (1890, p. 5, note 2).

[79] Ibid. (p. 5, note 1).

[80] Dati (1943, pp. XXXIII–LXXXXII).

[81] Flamini (1890, pp. 1–107).

[82] Ibid. (p. 8), no reference given.

[83] Ibid. (p. 8, note 2).

[84] Ibid. (p. 9, note 6; p. 10, note 1). More details on Sozomeno da Pistoia in Flamini (1890, pp. 9–10).

[85] Flamini (1890, p. 8, note 5).

[86] Ibid. (p. 11).

[87] Ibid. (p. 12, note 6). See also Salvinio in Dati (1943, p. XXXV).

[88] Flamini (1890, p. 13, note 1).

[89] Ibid. (p. 15).

[90] Ibid. (pp. 16–20).

[91] Ibid. (p. 22).

received the title of apostolic secretary in 1455[92] and was named Bishop of Massa Marittima in 1467.[93] He died in 1472 in Rome.[94]

Leaving aside the period 1442–1446, Dati appears to have been not only influential at the papal court, but also recognized as a poet. He distinguished himself with a sonnet about friendship in *volgare* in 1441.[95] Another of his works is the tragedy *Hiempsal*, which was probably also composed around 1441 (it begins in the same way as the poem on friendship); it is only extant in Latin.[96] Flamini also dates a Latin song about the battle of Anghiari, "Tropheum Anglaricum,"[97] to his Florentine period, 1442–1446. Dati's work after 1444 is only of peripheral interest to us; his earlier work, however, should be included in the context of Sassolo's letter, because Sassolo might have had the opportunity to refer to it.

What might lead us to think that the anonymous addressee in the second letter is an imaginary figure, the product of a rhetorical exercise? The second letter expresses values that refer to or are shared by Dati, implying that he is the true target of Sassolo's rhetoric. Christianity and the Church are touched on, and Vittorino's piety is especially emphasized; Leonardo Dati was a member of a religious order and the secretary to two prelates. Second, the letter stresses the advantages of oratory combined with wisdom for the office of judge; Dati was a notary and a poet – orator. Third, the letter demonstrates a general preference for the poverty of a scholar over the ignorance of a rich man; during the period 1442–1446, Dati was in financial straits. Fourth, Sassolo praises Florence as the stronghold of the sciences; Dati was Florentine. And finally, the text places poetry on a par with oratory and emphasizes its value as beauty; Dati was very learned and a poet.

These parallels seem to suggest that Sassolo shaped his letter to appeal to Dati. It is possible that the correspondences are coincidental, but this is not very likely, considering that Sassolo consciously sought Dati out to act as the mediator of his ideas. Dati's letter makes clear that the two men already knew one another; we can therefore assume that Sassolo was familiar with Dati's ideas.

All of this suggests, but does not prove, that Sassolo devised an opponent solely as a rhetorical aid to better express himself to Dati, an inference that awaits archival demonstration. In the lights of the available evidence it is equally plausible to suggest that that the correspondence exhibits generic virtues ascribed to the so-called "society of humanists," to which Sassolo and Dati together with the anonymous recipient all belonged.

Two areas in particular must be examined for their possible role in shaping Sassolo's description of Vittorino: the humanistic context on which the text was based, including readings in common and a preference for studying classical texts; and the city of Florence, which both author and recipient called home.

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid. (p. 29).

[94] Ibid. (p. 31).

[95] Ibid. (pp. 34–36).

[96] Ibid. (pp. 36–48).

[97] Ibid. (pp. 49–56).

There is the possibility that Sassolo drew on historical facts and events that were related to both of these areas; among them, we could name the political situation, the form of government, or the success of humanists within society. Looking at the political situation, the alliance of Florence, Milan, and Mantua and the war they lost against Venice (1438–41)[98] preceded the composition of the text. It is known that Vittorino traveled through Florence in 1443 and visited with Leonardo Dati and others; Dati recollected this meeting in his letter.[99] Sassolo, however, did not mention these facts in his letter. Rather than referring to the real, contemporary history of Florence, Sassolo created for the city a historical mythology that was closely bound up with the humanistic context. He described the continuous cultural advancement of the city of Florence since Petrarch and Dante, whom he numbered among the citizens of Florence despite the fact that they had spent portions of their lives in exile.[100] He described the learnedness of the citizens of Florence, which was on the rise[101]; and he testified to the outstanding achievements of the citizens of Florence in the academic disciplines of medicine and law.[102] Building on the *volgare* of Petrarch and Dante, Florentine scholarship had surpassed mere knowledge of Latin to the mastery of Greek, which would then act as an aid to improving scholars' Latin.[103] Aided by the quadrivium and philosophy, this mastery of language became the expression of wisdom[104]; Sassolo reflected that the academic careers of medicine, civil law, and theology would therefore also profit from such an expansion of the *artes*.[105] In this way, the study of the *artes* would prove to be of service to the native land.[106] Vittorino's expansion of the *artes* to include the quadrivium and philosophy in Mantua was presented as an improvement on the Florentine concept of scholarship that could have positive effects within the political order. Florence was therefore synonymous with a particular goal for education that included, on the one hand, the perfect mastery of language, and on the other, the academic subjects of medicine and law.

The historical mythology that is intertwined with the beginning of a new humanistic age is bound up with the city of Florence; it can also be found in the work of other Florentine authors in the middle of the fifteenth century and is by no means Sassolo da Prato's invention. This is clear if we examine the selection

[98] Ibid. (pp. 49–56).

[99] Bellodi (1973, pp. 337–345: pp. 344–5, note 2). Between April and March 1443, Vittorino came through Florence and visited Leonardo Dati, as Dati (1943, pp. 13–14) recalled in a May 12, 1443 letter to Sassolo.

[100] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 42v). Dante as well as the father of Petrarch were banned from Florence: Dotti (1987, p. 6) refers to Viti (1985, pp. 2–14: pp. 2–5) for this point. See also Mazzotta (1993, pp. 1–14: p. 8) for further discussion.

[101] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 42v).

[102] Ibid. (f. 43r).

[103] Ibid. (f. 42v).

[104] Ibid. (f. 43r).

[105] Ibid. (f. 43r; compare ff. 49r–50r).

[106] Ibid. (ff. 43v; 44r).

of authors from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries discussed in August Buck's collected volume (1969).[107] Sassolo was very much a part of this shared Florentine tradition.

3.2.3 *The Relationship of the Text to the Historical Vittorino and His Historical School*

Sassolo da Prato's letter confronts his friend's abusive language and demands with a description of Vittorino's virtues, his pedagogical system, and therefore Sassolo's need to remain in Mantua with his teacher. But his argument lacks historical detail, referring only to a daily routine that presumably takes place at Vittorino's school in Mantua. Next to Vittorino, the only historical figures included in the text are the members of the marquis' family, who serve as stellar examples of the virtues learned under Vittorino's tutelage[108]; and the scholar who was engaged to teach Greek, Teodoro Gaza,[109] who was even mentioned by name. Gaza was acclaimed as one of the top scholars in his field, and it is therefore possible that he had a certain reputation even in Florence.

As we have seen there are very few contemporary sources beyond the vitae containing information on Vittorino's school. An inspection of the contemporary documents shows that beyond Sassolo, only Ambrogio Traversari, superior of the Camaldolese order, a branch of the Benedictines, left behind any record of Vittorino's school system, and these documents could not be called exhaustive. Traversari's letters to Nicoli in 1433, to Cosimo de'Medici in 1435, and to his brother Mariotto in 1435,[110] as well as in his *Hodoeporicon* of 1433, emphasize the scholarliness and

[107] Buck (1969).

[108] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, ff. 45v–46r).

[109] Ibid. (f. 44r).

[110] Dini-Traversari (1912, p. 74): "Delectati sumus maxime humanitate viri, studioque mirabili non solum adultis, verum pueris atque puellis Graecitatem conciliandi." Vittorino did not only teach Greek to adults, but specially to young boys and girls. "ut legeret jam & scriberet Graecaque & nomina & verba inoffense declinaret." Cecilia writes, reads and knows Greek grammar. On 14 Kalendas Augusti, 1433 (that is, July 19, 1433, but spelled out in a Roman tone), Traversari (1759, col. 418) writes in a letter to the Florentine humanist Niccolo Nicoli about the students of Vittorino. "Non desunt ex his, qui graecis literis ita operam dederunt, ut traducere in latinum coeperint. Vnus ex his Camilli vitam transtulit, & Aesopi fabellas, & Chrysostomi quaedam." Two days later, he writes another letter to Niccoli (ibid., col. 419): „Occurrit ille nobis cum filiis Principis, maribus duobus, & puella VII. annorum. Maior ex his XI. minor V annorum est. Duo item alii pueri X. ferme annorum singuli, Dominorum aliorum filii. Aderant cum illo, & frequentes discipuli. Venimus, ubi graecorum voluminum praeparata erat strues. Vidimus singulatim omnia XXX. ferme erant, notissima omnia, praeter pauca. … Principis filios, & puellam graecas docet literas. Omnesque graece scribere didicerunt. Novem sunt ferme pueri, qui scribunt adeo venuste, ut admiratus sim. Vidi Chrysostomi traductionem ab uno ex discipulis eius factam, satisque placuit. Tres alii provectiores egregie proficiunt…;" Ibid. (col. 332), in a letter to An Cosimo de' Medici on 6 Kalendas Septembris 1435 (that is, August, 27, 1435): "Eo inspecto diligentius, contendimus ad

good manners of Vittorino's students, his hospitality, and his excellent library. In 1435, he counted nine students of Vittorino, although he did not name them individually. He observed the 8-year-old Cecilia Gonzaga reading Greek texts in 1433 and remarked in 1435 that not only was Gianlucido Gonzaga able at the age of 14 to compose a long poem in Latin, but he had also added two propositions to Euclid's *Elements*.[111] In 1435, Traversari visited Vittorino and the marquis' children in Goito; his mention of it extended the place of instruction beyond Mantua.

Traversari's account emphasized scholarship that was the result of two techniques: first, memorizing that which has been read or that which has been learned, i.e., the ability to retain extent texts; and second, the ability to produce new texts on the basis of old texts, i.e., the ability to extend ideas based on predefined rules. Sassolo, on the other hand, made virtue and rhetoric his central concerns[112]; he measured the value of the school according to the *studia humanitatis*. Because Traversari's contemporaries, particularly those in Florence, generally traced these values back to Petrarch, we can conclude that the tradition of the Benedictine monastery schools is peripheral to the *studia humanitatis.* Traversari's laudatory declaration that the Benedictine monastery schools shared the same school tradition with Vittorino's

Castellum Goida, ubi Victorinus cum filiis Principis remorari dicebatur a Mantua XII. millibus passuum disparatum. Offendimus prandentes. … Dedit in conspectum Principis filium Ioannem Lucidum, puerum annorum XIV. ab se educatum, & eruditum. Recitavit ille versus ad ducentos ab se factos, quibus pompa describitur, quando Imperator Mantuam ingressus est, tanta suavitate pronuntiationis, ut miraculum subierit mihi. Vix enim putem Virgilium, quum sextum Aeneidos, Augusto praesente, recitasset, plus gratiae in pronuntiando habuisse. Carmen erat pulcherrimum; sed addebat suavitas dicentis multum dignitatis, & elegantiae. Ostendit Propositiones duas in Geometria Euclidis ab se additas cum figuris suis, ut aestimare plane iam nunc liceat, quam sit valiturus ingenio. Adfuit puella quoque Principis filia decennis ferme, graece adeo scribens eleganter, ut pudori fuerit, quod ex omnibus ferme, quos erudire unquam perrexi, vix ullus tam pulchre scribat. Aderant de schola illius Adolescentes illustes, & equestris etiam Ordinis, summoque honore me exceperunt, auctore Victorino, qui diceret sua omnia esse mihi communia." (Ibid., col. 708): Similar content on II Kalendas Septembris (either pridie Kal. Septembris = August 31, or IV Nonas Septembris = September 2) to his brother Bruder Mariotto.

[111] Baxandall (1971, pp. 127–131) drew on this episode to connect Leon Battista Alberti's art theory *De Pictura*, which Alberti wrote in 1435, and the school of Vittorino.

[112] The way of "thinking further" according to given rules can be compared with the statement by Cennino Cennini (ca. 1400) about imagination, which has the power to assemble that what is already given in a new way: Cennini (1975, p. 29f): "e questa e un'arte che si chiama dipignere, che conviene avere fantasia, con operazione di mano, di trovare cose non vedute (cacciandosi sotto ombra di naturali) e fermarle con la mano, dando a dimostrare quello che non e, sia. E con ragione merita metterla a sedere in secondo grado alla scienza, e coronarla di poesia. La ragione e questa: che il poeta, con la scienza prima che ha, il fa degno e libero di poter comporre e legare insieme si e no come gli piace, secondo sua volonta. Per lo simile al dipintore dato e liberta potere comporre una figura ritta, a sedere, mezzo uomo, mezzo cavallo, si come gli piace, secondo sua fantasia." In the realm of visual art, the booklet by Cennini is seen as the first that includes fantasy, and therefore revalues originality in art. Traversari (see note 111) proceeds one more step. He points not anymore to the tradition of content, but only to the rules, on which bases the human mind can enlarge given content.

school cannot be proven,[113] and seems to have been intended to place Benedictine education in a reformist light.

Of the texts composed during Vittorino's lifetime, Sassolo's is the most comprehensive with respect to Vittorino da Feltre's manners and educational system; otherwise, the sources are too scanty to be able to substantially evaluate Sassolo's text. The extent to which Sassolo "Florentinized" the substance of his text, perhaps by bypassing historical facts, therefore remains uncertain.

3.2.4 Summary

As far as we have been able to ascertain here, Sassolo's letter had a threefold purpose: First, it was intended to spread the word of Vittorino's school to Florence. Second, it attempted to meaningfully integrate the new subjects of mathematics and music into the canon of the *artes*, which was tailored to the use of the individual, with an eye toward the educational goal of becoming an orator. Third, it aimed to introduce the Mantuan school into the Florentine tradition. This threefold purpose was guided by the interests of the author, Sassolo da Prato, and includes the interests of the only known reader of the letter, the addressee, Leonardo di Piero Dati. Dati's response, in which he expressed the wish of hastening to Mantua to study with Vittorino, makes it clear that the interests of both author and recipient were directed toward learning. The school as a place of learning, where teaching materials and appropriate teachers were at hand, took on great importance for both of them – but educating children was not the only concern of the school.

A quick look at the letter's subject matter makes clear that Sassolo saw in Vittorino's methods a possibility for improving Florentine scholarship, which was then primarily synonymous with mastery of the word, by adding wisdom as the highest goal of educating man. His educational goal culminated in valuing a virtue that he conceived of in a certain way, the earthly expression of which was found in oratory and in elegance of the word. The path to achieving this goal could be expediently improved upon by further developing the encyclopedic education meant to prepare students for an academic career. Here, Sassolo simultaneously discussed the differences and connections between the university and the humanistic school by mentioning the subjects of theology, medicine, and law. This concept of education removed considerations of national policy from Sassolo's

[113] Müller (1969, p. 37): "Bei ihm vereinigt sich—um es vereinfachend zu formulieren—die mittelalterlich-benediktinische Bildungstradition mit den echten Anliegen des neuerwachten Humanismus. … Das benediktinische *nihil operi Dei praeponatur* war für ihn ein heiliges Dürfen und Müssen, und in der Ausübung christlicher Werke der Barmherzigkeit und *caritas* ließ er sich von kaum jemand übertreffen." See also Müller (1984, p. 286): "Besonders im Umgang mit seinem Freund Traversari, der in Florenz eine kleine Heimschule leitete und als Camaldulenser die Klosterregel des hl. Benedikt befolgte, konnte Vittorino dieselbe kennen- und schätzenlernen." Müller (1984, pp. 286–290) points to parallels of the rule of Benedict and the rules that Vittorino obeyed in dealing with his students, and that Vittorino made his students obey.

account: the goal of education, which was the same for princes and paupers, could be more successfully achieved using Vittorino's methods. Sassolo therefore described the rules that were part and parcel of the everyday school routine rather than focusing on the daily minutiae. These rules consisted of the virtues of the teacher, Vittorino da Feltre, and his system of instruction or curriculum; the first had an impact on the relationship between teacher and student, the second on the priority given to erudition in general.

3.3 Sassolo da Prato on Vittorino da Feltre and His Concept of Education

3.3.1 The Text Type

As we have seen, Sassolo da Prato's letter to Leonardo Dati comprises two parts, which could be considered separate letters due to their differing addressees and their differing functions. Part I is directed exclusively toward the recipient, Leonardo, who is tasked with disseminating Part II. Part II is a defense of Vittorino, in which unfounded accusations, according to Sassolo, were to be refuted with an account of Vittorino's life and achievements; in this new function and with the help of Leonardo, the letter was supposed to function as a type of promotional material to picque the interest of the young people of Florence in Vittorino. By itself, Part II is an apologia, but in conjunction with Part I, it takes on the appearance of a prosecution speech with a fictitious opponent; moreover, Part I makes no sense by itself because it refers to Part II.

The fact that the letter contains information intended for more than one particular addressee makes it increasingly likely that we are dealing with an artificial product, one that would have to obey certain formal rules. The letter was a common form of communication in fifteenth-century Italy and was used as a receptacle for every possible genre and formal rule.[114] Sassolo described his subject matter, which would determine the genre, as an account of the life and teachings of Vittorino da Feltre, which would commonly have the same content as a vita.[115] However, the letter cannot be characterized as a vita because its historical perspective is too limited. Although Vittorino is not described in much detail as a person, the letter can be thought of, from a certain perspective – that of his public function as a teacher – as being more of a type of portrait. Sassolo's own letter described the document as belonging to the field of rhetoric.

Now that rhetoric has been brought into the discussion, we must explain how Sassolo understood rhetoric. He gave a hint of it himself when speaking of three

[114] Worstbrock (1982).

[115] Compare: Ijsewijn (1983); Berschin (1983).

stylistic forms: the elegant type, which is often devoid of meaning[116]; the historiographic type[117]; and finally, the form that he was employing, the amicable type or letter to a friend.[118] Sassolo discussed rhetoric in several places in his letter. He described it as a means of expression that was a response to the art of dialectics from the opposite side; that is, he described it as a persuasive technique written in response to an opposing point of view.[119] Moreover, he characterized it as a means of communication that could inspire the listener to virtue, if it were paired with wisdom as its mistress.[120] In this relationship, it would be possible for the ultimate goal of education to be the formation of the "orator," because rhetoric, so understood, leads to the betterment of man.[121] According to Sassolo, persuasive technique and the particular means of communication, enhanced by the verbal elegance that is associated with persuasiveness, are important for jurists,[122] for theologians,[123] for philosophers,[124] and most all, for physicians.[125]

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[116] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 42r).

[117] Ibid. (f. 42r).

[118] Ibid. (f. 42r): "satisfy the friend." Aristotle, Rhetorics (1358b): "Thus, there would necessarily be three genera of rhetorics; *symbouleutikon* ["deliberative"], *dikanikon* ["judicial"], *epideiktikon* ["demonstrative"]." If the style is suited for the kind of content, Ibid. (1408a): "The *lexis* will be appropriate if it expresses emotion and character and is proportional to the subject matter."(Aristotle [1991, pp. 48; 235]). Aristotle did not, hence, give single style formats to the individual kinds of texts. Cicero's position is different (Cicero [1988a, no. 20–22]): "Tria sunt omnino genera dicendi. … grandiloqui, … fuerunt cum ampla et sententiarum gravitate et maiestate verborum, … , alii levi et structa et terminata … (21) Est autem quidam interiectus inter hos medius et quasi temperatus nec acumine posteriorum nec fulmine utens superiorum, vicinus amborum, in neutro excellens, utriusque particeps vel utriusque, si verum quaerimus, potius expers; isque uno tenore, ut aiunt, in dicendo fluit nihil afferens praeter facultatem et aequalitatem aut addit aliquos, ut in corona, toros omnemque orationem ornamentis modicis verborum sententiarumque distinguit." Only three styles of oration are named here; the text does not provide a correlation to the different kinds of oration that Cicero then saw as authoritatively binding. Quintilianus (1988) summarizes the predecessors as follows: The style of oration is between history writing (pp. 10, 1, 31–34) and poetics (pp. 10, 1, 27–30). The first is descriptive, the latter wants to evoke sublime sentiments. Oration is separated in three parts according to its function, which Aristotle already knew (pp. 3, 4, 1–16). The three styles that Cicero named can be used in each of the three parts, according to the expected benefit for the oration itself (pp. 12, 10, 63f). Sassolo's judgments about specific styles of oration, his introduction of the way of history writing, and the amicable form, which he wants to use for his oration, thus derive from antiquity but have also some new elements of organization. Sassolo might have had the written expositions, rather than the oral oration, in mind. For this, he had to find categories that classical theory did not cover.

[119] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 50v). This is a classical topos with which Aristotle starts his rhetorics. This topos has secured rhetoric a place among the *artes*, although dialectics and later the scholastic *quaestio* was more important as a form of argumentation.

[120] Ibid. (ff. 43r, 43v, 44r).

[121] Ibid. (f. 43r).

[122] Ibid. (f. 49r).

[123] Ibid. (ff. 49r–50r).

[124] Ibid. (f. 48r).

[125] Ibid. (f. 49r).

Sassolo was able to draw on precursors who had made the theory of rhetoric their study; here should be mentioned, in particular, the discourses by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian.[126] A quick perusal of George of Trebizond's *Rhetoricorum Libri V* from 1433 or 1434 shows that the study of rhetoric was not only once again current in Sassolo's time but had also played a large role in Vittorino's school.[127] According to his own words, George of Trebizond had learned Latin from Vittorino da Feltre[128] and had had a translation of a rhetorical treatise by the Greek rhetorician Hermogenes sent to him in about 1420[129]; in 1421, and on many other occasions, he wrote a panegyric to Cicero the orator.[130]

In his letter to Dati introducing the vita, Sassolo speaks of using this amicable type of address to fill young people with enthusiasm for Vittorino's teaching methods. It is as if he were writing a critical paper about style in order to investigate how precisely he could translate his intent formally and rhetorically into action. But because the true impetus for the text, "education," could only be elaborated on by creating a portrait of Vittorino, it was only dealt with in those places where it was deemed to be appropriate to the subject matter. This occurred in two places: once where the "school lecture" was being addressed; and once in dealing with the role of the adversary, or the friend who must be instructed, the friend whose questions led Sassolo to write his letter. We must therefore determine the degree of difference of opinion that was attributed to this friend, which will then lead us to the question of what underlying values or norms they would have shared.

3.3.2 The Organization of the Text

The text is composed of two parts. The first part begins with the address: *Saxolus Pratensis Leonardo Datho*; it ends with the closing *vale*. Thus, it is a self-contained letter. The second part does not begin by addressing the recipient by name; instead, the title indicates the topic of the discussion to follow: *Saxolus Pratensis ad Amicum suum de Victorini Feltrensis uita et disciplina*. In the first sentence after the title, the recipient, who has been called "amicus," is addressed directly and is therefore an individual, albeit one yet to be named. The second part also ends with the closing *vale*. Thus, the second part is also in the form of a letter, but one in which the heading varies from that of a stand-alone letter.

The first part summarizes the content of the second in nine steps, and then segues into assigning a task to the recipient of this two-part letter. It ends with a mention of Giovanni Aretino, Leonardo Dati's protégé, who had left him to study

[126] Aristotle (1991); Cicero (1988a); Cicero (1991, 1994); Cicero (1993b); Cicero (1977); Quintilianus (1988).

[127] For Trebizond see Monfasani (1976, pp. 261–299).

[128] Trebizond with Vittorino: See Sect. 2.1.

[129] Monfasani (1976, pp. 13, 255).

[130] Ibid. (p. 257).

with Vittorino. Of the nine points, the first concerns the form chosen for the discourse, after which Sassolo asserts, in the second, that wisdom is the mistress of each of us. In the third step, he establishes that the citizens of Florence have the longest tradition of, and the most apt minds for, linguistics, jurisprudence, and medicine. The fourth step contrasts the elegance of the perfected form, expressed in poetry and painting, with wisdom; the fifth connects these works of culture to expressions of wisdom through Vittorino's methods of instruction. In the sixth step, Sassolo claims that the pairing of wisdom with verbal elegance results in eloquence; for this reason, anyone could become an orator with Vittorino's help. In the seventh step, he describes parents and teachers as being responsible for the education of young people, equating children or young people with learners, and differentiates between professional training (e.g., for medicine and the law) and education for the betterment of man. In the eighth step, Sassolo indicates that it is doubtful that the parents' generation would change their morals; his ninth step is therefore a call for action: children must be inspired to study the sciences and the virtues. The desire to develop wisdom, even against a parent's wishes, is sufficient for nurturing piety and virtue. Children should therefore make their way to Vittorino, who would receive them with hospitality and afford them the possibility to study all of the relevant subjects. The arrival of Giovanni Aretino is then brought up as the final point, and Sassolo says he will look after him.

The second part of the text is composed of four parts. The personal closing is in response to the introduction. Between the two, we find the subject matter of the letter, which is divided into a description of Vittorino da Feltre's virtues and his system of teaching. The introduction explains that the letter is written in response to the friend's defamatory statements and is intended to give an account of his own intentions along with Vittorino's manners and teaching. It ends with a reference to the family of the marquis: to Gianfrancesco, who had employed Vittorino as his children's teacher because he was virtuous, and to the children themselves, who through their virtue – even while employed in military service – and erudition bore witness to the success of Vittorino's educational methods. The first section of the body of the letter describes Vittorino's principles of action, which were subordinated to certain attitudes toward life. The principles of action are associated with different spheres: charity is founded in Christianity, that is, in the relationship of man to God; fortitude in the face of internal and external distress is derived from learning to be self-empowered, that is, from a certain relationship to one's self.

Sassolo ascribed Vittorino's virtues to two overriding attitudes that determined his everyday actions: his religious piety,[131] and his fortitude (*fortitudo*).[132] Sassolo derived the worship of God and the Christian duty of charity from this religious piety. Charity, in turn, led to Vittorino's loving, fatherly treatment of his students, for whom he provided generously. Sassolo classified his conduct as falling under the rubric of *magnanimitas* (magnanimity): "Vittorino gives with his heart, so it appears as if he were giving nothing, or as if he were not so much giving as

[131] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, ff. 46v–47r).

[132] Ibid. (ff. 47r–48r).

receiving."[133] His fortitude was evinced in patience and moderation. He carried out his activities, bore strokes of fate,[134] and suffered tribulations,[135] all with patience. He practiced moderation in the unavoidable physical needs of eating and sleeping; he abstained from avoidable needs. He was temperate in taking action against sin, preferring to discourage rather than punish his students. According to Sassolo, Vittorino displayed his fortitude by always remaining master of himself and by not falling prey to the temptation of creature comforts[136]; he also "directed his leisure and labors, his cares and thoughts toward nothing else, nor spent time with anyone else, but to lift men up and to lead them to virtue and the higher arts." With these attitudes to life and an orientation toward duty derived from Christianity, Vittorino was able to avoid the seven deadly sins that Pope Gregory I had compiled into the authoritative catalog of sins[137]: *superbia* (pride), *avaritia* (greed), *luxuria* (extravagance), *invidia* (envy), *gula* (gluttony), *ira* (wrath), and *accedia* (sloth).

This description of the principles inherent in Vittorino's actions shows that Sassolo was not concerned with Vittorino's individual, historical acts; rather, he satisfied himself with subordinating Vittorino's actions to certain values. Furthermore, these principles for action are founded on Christian faith and on learned self-empowerment, that is, on a certain type of relationship to oneself. Sassolo generalized the historical deeds that followed from this spirit and did not further specify the groups that had the benefit of Vittorino's aid beyond generic categories, e.g., the sick, his students, etc. For Sassolo, it was more important to describe an everyday, continually repeating state of affairs that could be explained by Vittorino's virtues, which were directly reflected in the way he led his life, rather than a series of historically specific events that might indicate change over time.

It was equally important for Sassolo to show the basic rules of the school,[138] which were faithfully portrayed over the course of a typical day. He described Vittorino as a teacher of Latin and Greek. The grammar of the two languages was considered the foundation for all other scholarship; Sassolo divided it into four areas[139]: "uerba explicare atque interpretari: pertractare poetas et explanare: hystorias cognoscere: accentu certo pronunptiare" ("to explain and interpret words; to treat and explain poets; to know history; and to master the rules of pronunciation"). In addition, Vittorino taught dialectic and rhetoric, which at that time were placed

[133] Ibid. (f. 47r).

[134] Ibid. (f. 47r).

[135] Ibid. (f. 48r).

[136] Ibid. (f. 47v).

[137] Compare also St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologia* I–II q. 84 a. 4.

[138] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, ff. 48r–52v).

[139] Ibid. (f. 48v). Garin (1949, pp. 187–188) merges Sassolo and Prendilacqua. Vasoli (1981, p. 18) described the curriculum according to Sassolo because Vasoli thought Sassolo was more trustworthy than the other sources. Müller (1984, pp. 154–155) quotes the curriculum according to Platina. Only Vasoli values the testimony of Sassolo higher than the other sources and seems to take into account that Sassolo actually wrote from the school of Vittorino, while the others had to trust their remote memories.

just above grammar and which complemented each other.[140] The third area of instruction, placed just above dialectic and rhetoric, included arithmetic, geometry, astrology, and music,[141] a knowledge of which was prerequisite for advancing to the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle.[142]

Sassolo took refuge in mythology to explain the importance of the quadrivium, which he linked with the history of Greece up to Plato; he also highlighted the traditions of arithmetic and music, but without referring to the metaphysical concepts propounded by Plato or Plotinus. The only purpose given for the quadrivium is to sharpen the mind and give pleasure in the process. Yet for all of this, we have very little actual evidence of the quadrivium at the school. No mathematicians or musicians can be definitely traced directly back to Vittorino; a single piece of evidence is provided by a comment attributed to a supposed student of Vittorino's – Johannes Gallicus of Namur – in music.[143] Thus, it may be possible – although it would make a mockery of the letter and the wish Sassolo expressed in it – that Sassolo and the other biographers merely fabricated Vittorino's use of the quadrivium and philosophy.

Sassolo gave a vivid description of the management of the school: up to forty students, including poor students, were housed, fed, and clothed by Vittorino.[144] His description points up the school's *contubernium*-like character. Unlike Prendilacqua and Castiglione, Sassolo intimates that there were no selection criteria for the school; the only requirement for being accepted by Vittorino was the desire to learn.[145] On the other hand, we have the case of Giovanni Aliotti's admission to the school, mentioned in these same letters. He came to Vittorino with the personal recommendation of Dati, and Sassolo was asked to lend him his support.[146] From this circumstance we can see that it was perhaps not so simple to become Vittorino's student.

To ensure the successful running of the school, Vittorino brought in other teachers. The Greek Theodor Gaza, who can be properly identified,[147] was included by Sassolo by name; Sassolo also stressed that additional teachers gave instruction in other subjects. He listed no other names, though, nor did he mention the physical education that Prendilacqua emphasized. Sassolo referred to the extensive library as one of the school's resources; students were allowed access to its holdings.[148]

Sassolo also emphasized the didactics of playfully learning, since learning should not rob free human beings of their joy in studying the liberal arts; some

[140] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 50v).

[141] Ibid. (ff. 50v–52r).

[142] Ibid. (f. 52v).

[143] Gallico (1981). Johannes Gallicus of Namur was already mentioned in Ambros (1862–1882: vol. 2, 1864, p. 485).

[144] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 47r).

[145] Ibid. (f. 46v).

[146] Dati (1943, p. 13).

[147] For Theodoro Gaza see Monfasani (1976, passim).

[148] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 43v).

of Vittorino's students were still children.[149] The daily workload was quite heavy: the day was divided into hourly lessons, but it is not known how many hours a student would have attended. In any case, Vittorino held lessons for 6 hours a day, even at 70 years of age, and someone read aloud to the students at meals. In addition to the teacher's lecturing[150] and the student's repetition of information,[151] a third method of learning was for students to compose their own texts and to deliver memorized speeches.[152]

This daily school routine does not seem so unusual or unfamiliar, and we can suppose that Sassolo's description was accurate even if it left many questions unanswered. How, for instance, were children of differing ages and genders treated? Were the lessons prescribed, or were students able to make their own selections? How was their free time organized? One can easily understand how Eugenio Garin (1957)[153] arrived at the notion that Vittorino's methods were merely a matter of "new wine poured in old bottles." The divisions and hierarchy of the Middle Ages were retained in the choice of school subjects, but the trivium and quadrivium were completely transfigured with the assistance of classical texts[154]; moreover, the students were free to take pleasure in studying, which implies that the teachers tried to avoid forcing the students as much as possible.[155]

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[149] Ibid. (f. 52r–v).

[150] Ibid. (f. 48r).

[151] Ibid. (ff. 50v, 52r–v).

[152] Ibid. (f. 50v), does not mention that texts were composed by the students, but he mentioned the free oration. His letter nevertheless shows that he had experience in composing texts.

[153] Garin (1966, p. 42) describes the curriculum reported by Sassolo. He judges it as follows: "Wenn Sassolo sich richtig erinnert, hätte Vittorino im Grunde das Schema des Triviums und Quadriviums beibehalten und wäre von den <*sermocinales*> zu den <realen> Künsten übergegangen, wobei er jedoch neuen Wein in die alten Schläuche füllte. Neu war das System, alle Wissenschaften an Hand der antiken Originale lernen zu lassen, neu die Praxis, <höchst gefällig> zu unterrichten und damit dem Bruch der alten Ägypter zu folgen, die <mit Spielen den Kindern die Zahlen einübten>." Dolch (1971) has an overview on the tradition of school disciplines, and Grendler specifies this overview for the Venetian region (1989, pp. 111–141).

[154] For a general overview see Dolch (1971) and more recent empirical studies in Grendler (1989, pp. 111–141). Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 50r) states that grammar is studied by reading texts by Virgil, Homer, Cicero, and Demosthenes. Sassolo's familiarity with classical names can be seen in his "myths" concerning the history of arithmetic and music (Sassolo da Prato [<1443–1444>, ff. 51r–52r]).

[155] Petrarch provides a quotation concerning the image of teachers in the Middle Ages in *Rerum familiarium*, book 12, letter no. 3 from April 1, 1352, written to Zanobi Mazzuoli da Strada (1315–62), here quoted from Grendler (1989, p. 3), who quotes Petrarca (1982, pp. 143–144): "Let those men teach boys who can do nothing greater, whose qualities are a plodding diligence, a rather dull mind, a muddled intellect, ordinary talent, cold-bloodedness, a body tolerant of labor, and a mind contemptuous of glory, desirous of petty gains, and indifferent to boredom. … Let them watch boys' fidgety hands, their roving eyes and confused whispering. … Neither grammar nor any of the seven liberal arts deserves the entire lifetime of a noble talent. … I … pity those who waste nearly all their lives in public school." Grendler (1989, pp. 35–36) does not think that corporal punishments were used often, but he does not exclude the possibility that they could be quite severe. He is clear that knowledge has to be drilled into the students. If, for whatever reason, the students did

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider the different fundamental principles of wisdom inherent in Sassolo's comparison of attitudes to life and the purpose of school education. Wisdom is positioned as the ultimate educational goal, attained after making one's way up the hierarchy of subjects, the contents of which were primarily taken from antiquity. Wisdom remains an unspecified concept, though, sometimes associated with virtue, sometimes with scholarliness. But action in the world, which encompasses all human duty, is derived from the virtues. On the one hand, there is the virtue of faith, which finds expression in charity. On the other hand, there is the virtue of fortitude toward one's self. Taken together, the two lead to patience toward one's fellow man.

3.3.3 An Analysis of the Formal Aspects of the Text

Sassolo adopts several viewpoints that merit further discussion. As a starting point, consider a property that he ascribes to oratory in Aristotle's, Cicero's, and Quintilian's theories of rhetoric.[156] Oratory should move the listener to change his opinion and thereby prompt him to action, whether by deriving arguments from historical examples and rational understanding, or by arousing the listener's emotional involvement, an outcome that could result from outrage paired with pity for the plight of an unfairly convicted person or from a love of truth. Sassolo wrote in several places in his epistolary speech of his intention to awaken or fan the enthusiasm of his readers for Vittorino and his methods.

Sassolo wished to move three different groups of recipients or addressees with the two parts of his epistolary speech. He directed the letter to Leonardo Dati to ask him to give the second part to the young people of Florence to read. Otherwise, he only addressed Leonardo two times. The first time, he uttered a cry of despair over

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not learn, he thought they would be punished. Sassolo's assertion that Vittorino's students were freely introduced into studies and should delight themselves by studying must therefore have been quite uncommon for the time.

[156] On the idea that oration should be able to cause a change of mind, see Aristotle (1354a [1991, p. 30]): "for only pisteis [proof, means of persuasion, belief, A.G.] are artistic." He separates the means of persuasion used in a conclusion into methods to make believable (πιστις) (1417bff [1991, p. 271ff.]) and means to arouse affects (1377b–1403b [1991, p.117–215]). Compare with Cicero (1979, pp. 223): "It is the part of the orator, when advising on affairs of supreme importance, to unfold his opinion as a man having authority: his duty too it is to arouse a listless nation, and to curb its unbridled impetuosity. By one and the same power of eloquence the deceitful among mankind are brought to destruction, and the righteous to deliverance. Who more passionately than the orator can encourage to virtuous conduct, or more zealously than he reclaim from vicious courses? Who can more austerely censure the wicked, or more gracefully praise men of worth? Whose invective can more forcibly subdue the power of lawless desire? Whose comfortable words can soothe grief more tenderly?" Quintilian (1988, book 2, pp. 15; 34) subordinates rhetoric as a means of persuasion under the moral commitment of the orator: "rhetoricem esse bene dicendi scientiam."

the present times having grown soft[157]: "O etatem. quid Leonarde? dicam ne ferream inquam nihil sit: nisi molle: languidum atque eneruatum?" ("Oh, century! What should I call it, Leonardo – the Century of Iron? In which everything is soft, slack, and enfeebled!") The second time, he called for his agreement[158]: "non tu oratores quoque inpatria aliquando futuros putas?" ("Do you not believe that there will actually be orators in our homeland someday?") He made Leonardo his conversational partner only to the extent that Leonardo was supposed to pass on the text before him; in this way he assumed, as is clear in the places where Sassolo addressed him directly, that Leonardo was fundamentally in agreement with the subject Sassolo was championing.

Sassolo proceeded differently with his adversary, the unknown friend, in the second part of the letter; according to Sassolo, it was the friend's abusive commentary that provided the impetus to create the work. The point of the letter is to rebut his objections. In the introduction to the second part of the letter, Sassolo listed three accusations made by his friend[159]: first, that Sassolo was neglecting his orphaned sisters; second, that he had devoted himself to the subjects of arithmetic and music, which the friend did not recognize as belonging to the sciences because they originated in trade (arithmetic) or from herdsmen, if not from the brothel (music); and third, that it was possible that Vittorino, advanced in age, was merely speaking nonsense. The three accusations indicate that the friend feared that Sassolo's choice to stay with Vittorino in Mantua would lead him to ruin. Sassolo merely corrected his friend and disputant without getting into a discussion of opposing opinions. He described Vittorino as a "highly learned and holy man,"[160] and the quadrivium as a necessary addition to the *artes*, which this friend himself cultivated, according to Sassolo.[161] He concluded from this that there was no better place on earth for him than at Vittorino's school. From this type of corrective instruction, we can see that Sassolo assumed that both he and the friend possessed a shared foundation of values and norms, on the basis of which the friend would have to agree with Sassolo's version of Vittorino's virtues and of the curriculum of his school, in particular, the subjects of arithmetic and music.

The third potential audience – the young Florentine reader – would then read a letter addressed by Sassolo to Leonardo, a letter which itself contained a letter from Sassolo to an unknown friend. The latter includes a description of Vittorino, whose life consisted of directing his activity and teaching toward others who arrived as students but were treated as members of a family. Thus we are dealing with statements nested within statements, directed in a friendly manner toward others. The first two statements – his address to Leonardo and to the unknown friend – depend on Sassolo as subject, because he is the conversational partner of each, and also because, as we can assume from our earlier discussion, the first-person narrator

[157] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 43v).

[158] Ibid. (f. 43r).

[159] Ibid. (f. 44r–v).

[160] Ibid. (f. 45v).

[161] Ibid. (f. 44v).

shares the opinions of the author. Sassolo the author is also answerable for the content of the letter. When he wrote that Vittorino took a friendly approach to his students, the substance of this third statement is implicitly just as dependent on the author Sassolo, who, however, is not the subject at this point in the text. In this third case, the subject and the agent are both Vittorino da Feltre.

The idea that Sassolo could treat Vittorino as a character offers an interesting possibility for extending the interpretation of "instructional discourse." This requires a short explanation: According to Sassolo, Vittorino's school was built on the demand for students' freedom. Sassolo wrote of the opposition between studying freely and slavishly seeking profit.[162] Freedom is only possible in the absence of coercion, and is thus defined negatively. Sassolo did not recognize any inherent value in freedom as freedom for something, such as freedom of choice, but rather saw it as the removal of temptation to choose something improper. The absence of pressure is portrayed as pleasure. The rhetorical method would inspire listeners to love studying and Vittorino merely by sparking their enthusiasm; according to Sassolo, this method was free of coercion. Sassolo explained that a person's enthusiasm for both study and Vittorino depended on the recognition that there was only one possible foundation of norms common to all. The connecting link between understanding and action based on knowledge is not the inner teleology of Aristotle[163] but instead the kindled love of Petrarch,[164] that is, an emotional connection that is the only thing that can reach the will, as the power to strive for good. It is not sufficient to learn the particular rules for recognizing truth using a particular method; the student must also love truth in order to want to strive for it. This common foundation, to which Sassolo referred his addressees, points beyond any individual and can therefore also be used to appeal to strangers, because it is inherent to each person. His method of using oratory to inspire, as a method eschewing force, is a legitimate method of address for achieving his goal. Because Sassolo's statements about Vittorino are equally dependent on Sassolo the author and his opinion, we can suppose that he would like to attribute this method of teaching to Vittorino, both because it is a legitimate method and because he was characterizing Vittorino as a wise orator.

Sassolo never put this hypothesis in writing; rather, my assertion here has been inferred from the parallel structure of his statements. But if one chooses to accept it, it can be seen from the nesting of the addressees that if the reader, to whom the entire letter is directed, recognizes the form of the letter – a rhetoric of

[162] Ibid. (ff. 43v; 52r–v).

[163] Aristotle (1926, p. 327): "Now there are three elements in the soul which control action and the attainment of truth: namely, Sensation, Intellect, and Desire. Of these, Sensation never originates action, as is shown by the fact that animals have sensation but are not capable of action. Pursuit and avoidance in the sphere of Desire correspond to affirmation and denial in the sphere of the Intellect. Hence inasmuch as moral virtue is a disposition of the mind in regard to choice, and choice is deliberate desire, it follows that, if teh choice is to be good, both the principle must be true and the desire right, and that desire must pursue the same things as principle affirms. We are here speaking of practical thinking, and of the attainment of truth in regard to action;".

[164] Petrarch (1993, pp. 105–109).

inspiration – and shares the common assumptions built into it, then he would not only find Vittorino's instruction agreeable, but might also embrace him with enthusiasm. The potential reader is drawn into the communicative process in such a way that when he is finished reading, he is no longer merely a reader of the letter, but also a student of Vittorino's. At the same time, this means that Sassolo, as the author of the letter, stands in Vittorino's place. At the end of the text, however, Sassolo distances the reader from the school and the role of student by making a personal appeal on behalf of another student.

Parallels between Sassolo and Vittorino and between reader and student structure the text; they also make it possible for the imagined figure, the teacher Vittorino, to communicate with the reader. This parallel structure could have attracted the attention of Leonardo Dati, who held forth on the basis of this letter on Sassolo's relationship to Vittorino and compared it to Plato's relationship to Socrates (as opposed to Aristotle's adversarial relationship to Plato); Plato elevated Socrates, as it were, through his writings by continuing to hold his ideas.[165]

We can arrive at a following summary of Sassolo's idea of wisdom by tracing the path of his thinking on the subject. Wisdom becomes the mistress of eloquence through Vittorino's method,[166] which rests on the addition of mathematics, music, and philosophy to the *artes*.[167] The philosophers teach wisdom along with virtue.[168] Of all the philosophers, Vittorino taught only Plato and Aristotle.[169] He did not recognize the more recent philosophers John Buridan or William of Ockham.[170] According to Plato, wisdom is critical to state leadership, that is, it has a practical and political purpose.[171] State leadership requires a keen mind, as Sassolo explained when introducing the mathematical subjects, and is therefore tied to the thinking of every one of us. When discussing jurisprudence, he identified wisdom not as the rote memorization of written legal formulas, but as the law of judges in antiquity, which paired erudition with goodness, that is, with justness and equality. In this way, judges are capable of leading a city: "as a consequence, the house of the judge was then seen deservedly as the oracle of the city, he who could and would lead his fellow citizens in work and counsel."[172] Sassolo does not discuss the goodness of the ancient judges further; instead, he confronts the reader with Vittorino's Christian rules of "goodness" for life. Sassolo's vision of justness, too, is based on a Christian

[165] Dati (1943, p. 40): "Caeterum in hoc consolor, quod te ipsum inhaesisse homini perspiciam, nec jam minus ab eo, quam Plato a Socrate, enitescere ipse videare. .. Quippe qui non ut in Platonem Aristoteles, in Victorinum et tu recalcitres, sed quantum in te sit eum afferas dignis laudibus."

[166] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 42v).

[167] Ibid. (f. 43r).

[168] Ibid. (f. 43v).

[169] Ibid. (f. 52v).

[170] Ibid. (f. 48v).

[171] Ibid. (f. 45v).

[172] Ibid. (f. 49v): "Erant preterea boni non minus quam docti. studebant non tam iuri: quam iustitie et equitati. habebatur itaque merito tum iuris consulti domus: tanquam oraculum ciuitatis: qui et ciues suos et posset et uellet opera ac consilio iuuare."

understanding of law; a just man is elevated because he makes himself the servant of others and repays bad behavior with good. "A man who, having nothing, has everything," is how Sassolo described the just man.

The wisdom with which Vittorino acted on the earth is thus a wisdom that is derived from the combination of erudition from antiquity and Christian "goodness." But yet, the simple rules for "Christian wisdom" that Sassolo assembles here have no connection to the philosophical wisdom learned from Plato and Aristotle. Judges in antiquity thought of law and justice in ways different from those prescribed by the Christian faith. Ultimately, Sassolo leaves the reader in the dark as to the contents of Vittorino's "wisdom." In his conclusion, Sassolo encourages prospective students to emulate Vittorino; it remains unclear, though, whether they are supposed to emulate the person of Vittorino, with his Christian rules for life, or the content of his teaching, which culminates in classical philosophy. It seems that Sassolo did not expect any of the students to be bothered by this division between the systems of teaching and virtue. Instead, he propagated the melding of the person (Vittorino) with his teachings (his school).

In Sassolo's letter, the figure of Vittorino is used to develop a notion of humanity. At the same time, humanity is made teachable via a school built on its principles. The letter itself outlines the type of teaching. This structural-analytical approach to the text shows that Sassolo uses a rhetorical technique that both presupposes and has as its goal a *consensus,* based on a common normative foundation, between the author and the ideal recipient. Owing to the parallel structure of the text, the *consensus* can be characterized as a basic element of the educational relationship that goes beyond mere questions of instructional design; instead, it must include the persona and emotional relationship between two people, one of whom inspires, acts as a model, and actively and gladly provides help; the other of whom is inspired, emulates the model, and accepts the help. Given the central position granted to Vittorino's ability to "inspire" such an attitude, we can conclude that this goal is not immediately obvious; rather, it must first be revealed and then loved, as Petrarch had already known. On the one hand, Sassolo was convinced that, within the oneness of the truth, there is an underlying truth that will be emphasized, but not advocated, according to that which is "individual" in each person. On the other hand, this same notion is accompanied by the idea that striving for a goal one is enthusiastic about is a given: Love acts as the compass for the will.

3.3.4 The Account of Vittorino da Feltre

Sassolo accords Vittorino a special position as an exemplar of both the teacher and the perfected man. He divides that which he finds worth emulating into two parts: first, Vittorino's virtues, which are derived from the two attitudes of piety and fortitude and which culminate in charity and patience with his fellow man; and second, his system of teaching, which, in addition to the usual trivium, includes the subjects of the quadrivium and also philosophy and which, beyond the development of

eloquence, also leads to wisdom. Individual characteristics – Vittorino's appearance, preferences, tendencies, or idiosyncrasies – that differentiate him from other people are only mentioned when they fit into Sassolo's framework of rules. Only one personalized detail is given: Vittorino was 70 years old, spry as a young man, and did not suffer from the usual afflictions of old age.[173]

Instead, Sassolo's account characterizes Vittorino in four particular ways: in his attitude to life,[174] as a respectable and holy man; in regard to his knowledge, as a clever or wise scholar[175]; in relation to his students, as a father[176] who was hospitable and dispensed love and lenience; and as a teacher,[177] a role that combined his other virtues.[178] For Sassolo personally, Vittorino held the important position of teacher[179] and perhaps also as guide[180] through the thicket of his life. Basically, Sassolo attributed to him an attitude that was both based in his vocation and, at the same time, encompassed his entire, public life: "For him, his leisure and labors, his cares and thoughts were directed toward nothing else, nor time spent with anyone else, but to lift men up and to lead them to virtue and the higher arts."[181]

If Sassolo characterizes the teacher Vittorino da Feltre as a perfected person, the question arises of that person's individuality: how individual can this "perfected person" be? Because it seems – at least in Sassolo's account – that the details of Vittorino's individuality are hardly worth portraying, we must examine the accounts of the other figures mentioned in the text to see whether they confirm the impression that Sassolo was not interested in the characteristics of individuals.

The account of Cecilia Gonzaga seems appropriate for such an analysis because she is accorded a relatively large share of the text. Because of her virtue, which culminates in chastity, Sassolo preferred to compare her to an excellent or very able man rather than to a woman ("uir potius uel fortissimus quam femina").[182] At the same time, he wanted to portray her as a successor to Mucias and Cornelia, or the daughters of Laelius and Hortensius. On the one hand, he used a masculine vocabulary to differentiate her from her female contemporaries; on the other hand, he referred to female models or objects of comparison from antiquity to dignify Cecilia's learnedness.

The question, then, is whether Sassolo actually attributed to women the same inner attitudes held by men: the answer might reveal some insight into whether Sassolo saw Cecilia as an individual, or merely as representative of a certain type of

[173] Ibid. (f. 47v).

[174] Ibid. (f. 45r).

[175] Ibid. (ff. 45r, 45v).

[176] Ibid. (ff. 43v, 47r).

[177] Ibid. (ff. 42r, 43v, 46r ["Preceptorem: magistrum, paedagogum: educatorem unum habuerunt Victorinum"]; 52v).

[178] Ibid. (f. 52v).

[179] Ibid. (ff. 42r, 52v).

[180] Ibid. (f. 52v).

[181] Ibid. (f. 48r).

[182] Ibid. (f. 46r).

student. Prendilacqua reported that Sassolo was very meticulous in choosing the right expression, which he wanted to perfect through the use of *florilegia*.[183] At the same time, his letter shows that Sassolo sought to emphasize a distinctive, occasionally rustic form of expression.[184] The comparison with contemporary men, which must be called well thought out on the basis of the language chosen, proves that Sassolo attributed the same inner attitude to women and to men, an attitude that rests on their virtue being commensurable. Yet, one might also suppose, that by choosing to compare Cecilia with women from antiquity, Sassolo was in fact making a sharp distinction between the sexes. The case may be instead that Sassolo sought to compare every individual to a model, as Prendilacqua would do some few years later for Vittorino's students in a way that emphasized their different priorities in their choice of subjects and careers.[185] And indeed, in comparing the description of Cecilia with that of Vittorino, it becomes clear that Sassolo did not wish to emphasize the individuality of the person, but rather humankind's shared basis in virtue. On the basis of this letter, it cannot be concluded that Sassolo's concept of education includes the individualization of the person, even if Sassolo presented his own familial situation on the last pages so movingly that we would not wish to deny him his sense of the individual as it applies to himself.

3.4 Sassolo da Prato's Concept of Education

By abstracting from the historical facts and non-philosophical influences in our analysis of Sassolo's letter, we can reach a level of textual interpretation that allows us to conjecture that the foundation of the text is a philosophical framework, on which is erected a conception of education for man living in the world. We are only able to suppose that a philosophical concept can form the basis of Sassolo's description of education because of the way that Sassolo places Vittorino in the role of the perfectly educated person who serves as an ideal to be emulated. His portrait of Vittorino therefore has significance for notions of the perfection of human nature that go beyond the individual.

Sassolo's description of his concept of wisdom, which he set apart from the Christian forms of virtue, was strikingly imprecise. He offered a connection between the two in his discussion of the use of eloquence in theology: "There are some who believe that the *studia humanitatis* (which in the end must lead to wisdom) is, without the Christian element, a kind of inhumanness." In this way, he emphasized that

[183] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 42v): "commentariolos quosdam fecit maxime ad dicendum utiles. Nam quicquid graeci latinique doctores eleganter ornate copiose scriptum reliquerunt: breuissime in hos congessit libellos singula etiam gna diuidens: quis quom libros uolueret: nihil dicere uolenti quacunq de re ad imitandum defuit. Quid agist Saxole cum libellis tuis interrogatus flores inquit ex ortulis philosophorum colligo."

[184] See, for example note 180 in this chapter.

[185] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, ff. 32r–43v).

for some (himself included?), Christianity gave human contours to the *studia humanitatis*. On the other hand, he says explicitly that his concept of wisdom rested on the *studia humanitatis*, i.e., the complete fusion of the subjects of the trivium with those of the quadrivium and with philosophy. Sassolo's abstract and imprecise language leaves a strange cleft between the *studia humanitatis* and Christian acts. This leads to the question of whether Sassolo's point of view had some other basis.

Sassolo's portrait of Vittorino should probably be viewed against the backdrop of attempts to mesh together Stoic and Christian ethics, as had been discussed by religious and scholarly commentators from the time of Paul (1 Corinthians) to the time of Leonardo Bruni (died 1444, Chancellor of Florence).[186] This synthesis rested on the Christian idea of creation, which left room for an ontological conception of the "nature" of man, the perfection of which – the harmonizing or inner ordering of man's tasks by means of insight – is the educational goal of man and is called wisdom.

Sassolo's ideas[187] are somewhat similar to the summary of the Stoics' various orientations offered in the third book of Marcus Tullius Cicero's *De finibus bonorum et malorum* (On the Ends of Good and Evil).[188] According to this account, which only covers the field of ethics, Stoicism deals with the formulation of a practical philosophy, in accordance with the Peripatetic school, that explores the *eudaimonia*, or 'happiness,' of man. Like the Peripatetic school, which was founded by Aristotle, the Stoics believed that every living being should strive for the perfection of its nature. For man, that perfected nature consists of the harmonizing or inner ordering of man's tasks, which are to be conceived by means of insight. Insight into this inner ordering is achieved by reason, which at the same time elicits action from this insight – that is, action is conceived of as practical reason. The goal of living in agreement and harmony with one's nature is therefore a practical goal. The man who has insight into, and lives accordingly to, his nature is characterized as being wise. Thus, wisdom is both insight and its actualization in day-to-day living. In order to perfect this concept of life, also characterized as virtue, man must free himself from internal and external hardships. Thus, man's happiness is determined by the virtue of fortitude in the face of internal and external hardships. This philosophical orientation holds the only legitimate emotion to be joy, which develops along with virtue and creates a love of the self that is like that of one's own nature, which in turn creates a love between friends. All of the other emotions are disturbances within the mind.

The adoption of this doctrine within Christianity was already taking place during the early Christian period; it enjoyed great popularity during the Middle Ages and found a well-known adherent in Leonardo Bruni, the Chancellor of Florence, in the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, some Christian ethicists voiced an opposition between the wisdom of antiquity, on the one hand, and Christian love or emotions,

[186] Kraye (1988, pp. 360–370).

[187] Cicero (1988b, pp. 176–239).

[188] Pohlenz (1978). Compare with Colish (1985).

on the other. Augustine claimed in *De civitate dei*[189] that emotions should be judged by how they are directed; for instance, fear directed toward God would of course be legitimate. This attitude forces us to consider man's stance toward his emotions in a fundamentally new way.

Though Sassolo never actually mentions the Stoics, he seems to be in agreement with them on three points: first, he assumes wisdom, virtue, and reason to be the same thing, all based in ancient philosophy; second, he stresses human self-mastery, which he characterizes as the transcendence of internal and external difficulties on earth; and third, he assumes that the goal of human education is for man to describe himself in a way that is internally consistent, in a way that concentrates on man's being perfected. This background might help to explain the imprecision of Sassolo's terminology; unfortunately, there is much that he did not formulate as precisely as we might wish in a philosophical text.

In examining the nature of Sassolo's Christian worldview, we can say his notion of God privileged the prescribing of Christian duties over the bestowing of grace. These duties are related to people's behavior in society; of these, Sassolo recognized two biblical types: hospitality and charity.[190] Hospitality was also an important concept in antiquity, but charity originated in the instructions promulgated in the Sermon on the Mount[191]; charity is extended to anyone in need of aid, including students. Christian duties, which entail activity, set the norm for human behavior. However, Sassolo does not go so far as to claim that man's happiness is limited to his fame in the hereafter. Quite the opposite: he defines happiness through fame on earth, so the reference to the Christian virtues appears abruptly and is not explained further. In Sassolo's account, the Christian concept of nature can be seen as a bridge leading to God. Nature is of God's creation and is therefore obviously a manifestation of God. Human nature, in the image and likeness of God, has been given to man to perfect.[192]

Sassolo expanded on the "essence" or "nature" of man by explaining man's inner organization to the reader, an explanation that presumed the existence of relationships between man's individual parts. Reason, characterized as practical reason, i.e. reason as related to human acts in the world, is what makes a human human. Sassolo was not interested in any other type of reason. Reason is perfected by thinking precisely, not through dialectic or Aristotelian-Scholastic syllogistics, but rather through mathematical abstraction, adjudged to be the one true way of thinking. Reason requires assistance or other qualities that are part of the nature of man to find expression in the world. These other human qualities include the capacity for speech, which culminates in the perfect elegance of eloquence or rhetoric; and the human body, perfected through beauty, which is distinguished by an elegance of form. Language and body are earthly phenomena; only with the element of wisdom

[189] Augustinus, De civitate dei, IX.5; XIV.6.

[190] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 43v): "aquo accipientur hospitio (mihi credant) adeo liberali:."

[191] Matthew 5ff; Luke 6.

[192] Genesis I, 26–7, also Paul, Cor. III, 18; See also Böhm (1988, pp. 25–48; p. 31).

can they express veracity. Truth in the world can therefore only be sought in the veracity of one's own perfected reason.

In Sassolo's view, the proper springs of human action are different from the principle of wisdom based in reason; man's virtuous actions are a duty subordinate to Christian love (*caritas*). Such action is therefore a divine commandment. It is unlikely that a person acting charitably will be called wise, because wisdom includes more than just the Christian concept of justness, which is illustrated by Sassolo's discussion of the wise judge who must pronounce fair judgments. But making the correct decision on earth has been the task of reason since antiquity; Aristotle called this kind of reason *phronesis*[193] to differentiate it from theoretical reason. If one accepts, as the Stoics did, that the task of reason is the unification of the self or the inner organization of man,[194] then these two contradictory concepts – caritas and phronesis – will somehow have to be connected. Action on the basis of a rational decision must therefore be borne up by love to satisfy both requirements. If practical reason and action seek harmony, it can only be found, according to Sassolo, in the interaction between practical reason and love (*caritas*). If *studia humanitatis* is not accompanied by true Christian belief, it lacks humanity.

I would like to go a step further with this interpretation. The analogies that can be drawn among the relationships of eloquence, love, and practical reason or wisdom can be classified by their *manifestation* – the word, the appearance – as well as by the *activity that emerges from this manifestation* – action within love. This aspect and the activity emerging from it must be anchored in a *substance* that gives them veracity. Sassolo recognizes this substance in wisdom, which according to him rests on reason.[195]

Because Sassolo does not assume that man has an inner willpower that inevitably strives for good, his concept of education is faced with the problem of instilling a will to act in the "pupil" that must arise from knowledge of good. For this, he introduced a different power inherent to man that directs his actions, one that is based on neither the Stoics nor Christianity: the power of love, which he defines as the love of emulating the model of the teacher and the love of learning. He did not expand on his formulation of love, but if we wished to give it a more precise image, it could be called, in comparison with Platonic *eros*, the striving for something that is missing. The only methodological principle in Sassolo's Vittorinian pedagogy is in eliciting a love of the "good." This emotion, which he also calls enthusiasm, can only flourish in an environment where the freedom of man – and therefore the

[193] Aristotle (1926, p. 324–373 [book 6]).

[194] See the interpretation of Maximilian Forschner in Forschner (1993, pp. 45–79, especially pp. 47, 51). On the basis of modern terminologies, he interprets the main aspect of the Stoic theory of happiness to be as *personal identity* because one unique logos determines the nature of man. Man has to recognize himself or get aquainted with himself, step-by-step, to become an entire human being.

[195] Sassolo does accepts them, however; otherwise he would not name David a better poet simply because David knew the truth. See Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 50r): "dauid tamen ea uersibus mandasse: poetam que fuisse constat: eo que melior ceteris habendus poeta: quo uerior fuerit uates".

freedom of the child – is recognized and is the result of an absence of coercion. The reasoning behind this is illogical: the objective of being free of coercion is turned into a prescriptive norm. On the other hand, the students' freedom rests on the teacher's holding charity as a principle of action, which would preclude any form of coercion against his fellow men. The rhetorical method, the purpose of which is not only to make a convincing argument but also to inspire an emotion, is particularly effective here as a method of instructing a love of something. Eloquence as an expression of wisdom is good not only for its own sake, but also as a useful technique in dealing with those who could be taught or inspired in this way.

Sassolo was familiar with two representations of the student-teacher relationship: his own particular case and the more general case of the young people studying in Florence. For him, Vittorino was both teacher and guide, a man he honored as the "father of virtue." Vittorino acted as teacher and father to his students and looked after them with devotion and forbearance. The students, who were supposed to come to Vittorino at a very early age – as in the case of the marquis' children – to begin to learn to put themselves at the service of duty and to be steered by good behavior and erudition,[196] were described as free.[197] This freedom is a constant, on which the dignity of man is based; its presence in Vittorino's school creates a "pedagogical space" in which the children start out from the position of being free. As depicted by Sassolo, Vittorino's basic attitude is to take pleasure in whatever activity he is currently undertaking, whether visiting the sick, playing a number-learning game with cups, or enjoying music; this attitude would, in turn, be passed on to the children through appropriate teaching rather than by coercion.

3.5 Broadening the Context of Sassolo's Account

Sassolo da Prato's text is clearly trying to link an account of a teacher and his concept of education with ideas about schooling as an institution, while also taking into consideration a factor they hold in common, the person willing to learn. As the legitimacy of his assertions is based in certain ethical principles, it is useful to place these in a broader historical context.

From this vantage point, we can venture to analyze the ideas put forth by Eckhard Kessler in his book *Petrarca und die Geschichte* (Petrarch and History). His main claim about Petrarch's philosophy is based on a philological and hermeneutical reading of *De viris illustribus* (On Illustrious Men),[198] which was composed sometime before 1338 but was repeatedly revised by Petrarch during his lifetime[199]; it is a compilation of the vitae of famous men from Roman antiquity. Summarized in a sentence, the main claim of the book is that Petrarch considered man to be the cre-

[196] Ibid. (f. 45v).

[197] See Sect. 3.2.

[198] In Petrarch (1964, vol. 1).

[199] Ibid. (pp. IX–XV).

ator of his own history. By tracing history back to the actions of mankind, thereby identifying the possibility of consequences of individual actions, man gains a certain amount of space for making situation-based rather than norm-based decisions. This move means that it is no longer possible for there to be a single, predetermined position dictated by ethics; rather, a person must come up with his own decision that takes into account both his personal nature and the situation. In this way, Petrarch's thinking about history contains secular features, but still does not diverge greatly from the Bible or Augustine.

Thus, Kessler's reading of Petrarch stresses that it is neither the goal of human education – the *telos* of human life – nor the principles of human action, but rather human striving that calls for context-dependent decisions. Moreover, this human striving, as manifested in the individual, is interwoven into the history of humanity.

In 1486, 43 years after Sassolo da Prato's letter, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola wrote his famous *Oratio de hominis dignitate.* In it, he shifted the problem of educating people further away from the goal of passing on specific information toward the process of life planning within a *telos* of their own determination; this process occurs through the decisions made by unique persons, who, seen as individual human beings in the world, are accorded their own worth.[200] Any form of biographical writing would be prone to record and display these forms of decision-making.

Sassolo occupies a position between that of Petrarch and Pico della Mirandola on the issue of human striving. Following Cicero's example, Sassolo places the *telos* within man by creating a formal structure or a model, the realization of which controls situation-based action. Because Sassolo's specifications lack detail, his depiction of Vittorino's pedagogy can only have an orientational, not a normative, effect on his approach to situation-based action. Unlike Petrarch, who sees human action as informed by historical experience, Sassolo's view of human conduct is more immediate and fails to incorporate an explicite notion of reflection. But as we will see, Francesco Prendilacqua's interpretation of Vittorino's pedagogical technique comes closer to Petrarch's statements. Compared to Petrarch, what is new in Sassolo's depiction of Vittorino is the incorporation of loving practices into the teacher-student relationship, an attitude toward human action that recognizes the child is a free human being who is growing up and has his own worth.

[200] Kessler (1983, pp. 21–34) makes clear that Petrarch, in his *letter to posterity*, had already constructed (in a seminal state) the possibility of this search for man's own telos.

Chapter 4
The Concept of Education in the Second Generation of Vitae and Portraits of Vittorino da Feltre

This chapter uses Sassolo da Prato's concept of education as a starting point for discussing the alterations that appeared in the second generation of vitae and portraits of Vittorino da Feltre. These texts present slightly different versions of Vittorino; an obvious question is whether these changes were the result of philosophical developments taking place in fifteenth-century Italy.[1] Renaissance Florence was a city in philosophical ferment; in addition to the unabated assimilation of the writings of Aristotle,[2] the larger schools of philosophical thought from antiquity were being consciously adopted and brought into line, more or less, with the Christian context, as, for example, happened with neo-Platonism.[3] The embedding of philosophy in theology,[4] a tradition that was primarily carried forward by university institutions and that had its obverse in the dogmatic church philosophy of the theologians, was ended by the advance of the *studia humanitatis* and the resulting secular philosophy. Here we should note that there were changes within the church which led to changes in thinking about mankind and his relation to the world. These included the observance movements of the Franciscans and the Dominicans, led by Bernardino of Siena and Antoninus of Florence; the humanist writings of Ambrogio

[1] For an overview with bibliography see Schmitt and Skinner (1988). In addition, for questions that refer to the fourteenth century, see Kretzmann et al. (1982). Both works are well researched, express the recent developments in historiography, and abandon a narrow focus on known humanists from Petrarch to Alberti in favour of a cross section through the cultural production of the time that includes late scholastic works. Both books also adopt two more problematic approaches: first, the arrangement of knowledge into philosophical arguments that were not separated at that time; and second, a presentation of history that neglects the specifics of each thinker in favor of describing their work as preparatory to thought patterns in the sixteenth century.

[2] Schmitt and Skinner (1988, passim). Kessler (1988, pp. 217–232) provides a bibliography.

[3] Tarabochia (1971–1972); Collins (1974); Allen (1984, pp. 555–584); and Copenhaver (1984). Against this stands Lorenzo Valla's *De voluptate* (1977).

[4] This is an old tradition in the humanities: see Ernst Cassirer's article written in 1943 (reprint: Cassirer (1969)). That what is "new" in the history of ideas is distilled into a "system." Other traditions or ruptures that do not connect to the "new," in this case the further development of religious–philosophical traditions, are often omitted.

A.-S. Goeing, *Summus Mathematicus et Omnis Humanitatis Pater: The Vitae of Vittorino da Feltre and the Spirit of Humanism*, Archimedes 33,
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Traversari and Pius II, the observations on nature by Nicholas of Cusa; and finally the adoption of Greek scholarship transmitted through the Eastern Church.

In fifteenth-century Italy, a third approach (beyond philosophy and theology) played an increasingly important role in formulating ethics: politics. In the universities, politics was traditionally discussed as one of the three branches of moral philosophy – ethics, politics, and economics.[5] An increased emphasis on politics was accompanied by the separation of the transcendental concept of goodness from discourse on behavior and utility, because, as Machiavelli wrote,[6] man is not good by nature and hence requires other means to succeed among his fellow men.[7] The increased prominence of the worldly and, especially, the social sphere, with its own rules and its separation from the divine, had an impact on conceptions of human nature. At the end of the fifteenth century, the image of the Renaissance man, who sat above matters of good and evil, had replaced the image of the polymath humanist of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with his belief in the one good.[8] Naturally, we must ask whether the vitae reflect this general trend or whether they represent their own orientation within this plurality of opinions.

At this point it is necessary to explore the second generation of vitae for historical information pertaining to Vittorino da Feltre. In the case of Sassolo, the discussion of the historical situation was of interest and of relevance for us because he provides the only contemporary testimony of the teacher's accomplishments that originated within Vittorino's direct sphere of influence. In this chapter, however, we have another purpose. The task here is to test whether and to what extent the individual biographies of Vittorino can be connected to a particular philosophical framework, and how those connections might yield a concept of an educational theory. The first question, then, is whether the account of Vittorino provided by the vitae is congruent with any particular idea of human nature whatsoever. The basic attitude of *imitare* ascribed to man as a learning being forms the precondition for such a discussion of man's being perfected, the notion of which varies considerably among the individual authors and which contributes not only to the conceptualization of the student-teacher relationship, but also to the image of the teacher himself.

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[5] See Schmitt and Skinner (1988, p. 303, note 6) for further bibliographic references.

[6] Machiavelli (1986, p. 40): "Dico, adunque, che ne' principati tutti nuovi, dove sia uno nuovo principe, si trova a mantenerli piú o meno difficultà, secondo che piú o meno è **virtuoso** [emphasised by A.G.] colui che gli acquista." Ibid. (pp. 44–47): "Perché, oltre alle cose dette, la natura de' populi è varia; ed è facile a persuadere loro una cosa, ma è difficile fermarli in quella persuasione; e però conviene essere ordinato in modo che, quando e' non credono piú, si possa fare loro credere per forza."

[7] This assumption is based on the work by Norbert Elias. The assumption takes into account that the individual uses a more elaborate comportment to attempt social climbing: Elias (1993, vol. 1, pp. 89–109, 153–157).

[8] Burke offered a recent synthesis from the standpoint of sociological thinking (1984, pp. 194–212). In spite of its novelties, Burke's interpretation is based on the work by Jacob Burckhardt (1860), as Burke writes more than once.

We begin with a short account of the formal design, the course of argumentation, and the main considerations within the substance of the individual texts. We will next analyse the vitae based not on their chronology but instead on the similarity of their ideas. Roughly put, we can see in Prendilacqua's text a continuation of Sassolo's ideas on secular education, while Francesco da Castiglione's vita offers special insights into the religious tradition. Platina's conception must be considered separately; he took education out of the context of "emulating an individual from an ethical standpoint" and judged it by the students' success within society.

4.1 The Saints' Lives of Francesco da Castiglione

4.1.1 The Manuscripts and Their Dating, Publication History, and Subsequent Use

The *Vita Victorini Feltrensis* of Francesco da Castiglione has been preserved in four manuscripts. Two exemplars, one of which is dated 1462, are located in the Biblioteca Comunale in Siena[9]; one, which has formed the basis of all discussions to date, is in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence[10]; and the last is in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan.[11]

All four of the vitae are appended directly to the vita of the Florentine Bishop Antoninus by the same author. This addition was intended by the author, as evidenced by the passage between the texts, "horum quoque temporibus…" By pointing to the similarities between Vittorino's and Antoninus's principles to live by, the author creates a connection between the two vitae, despite the subjects' rather disparate careers: Antoninus was active in sacred life, while Vittorino was active in the secular sphere. The conclusion of the text forms a further connection between the two vitae; it exhorts the reader to follow in the footsteps of good people like Antoninus and Vittorino in contemplation of the Day of Judgment.

The *Vita Antonini* has been preserved in numerous single editions, which were collected together by Father Stefano Orlandi O.P. in 1962.[12] The earliest inscribed date, which is in all probability autographic, is 1461.[13] Castiglione gave a hint as to

[9] Kristeller (1963–1992, vol. 2, p. 162) gives the locations of these manuscripts. The signature for the first manuscript is Siena, Biblioteca Comunale, E IV 16, f. 83–93v (dated 1462). Ibid. (p. 170): The signature for the second manuscript is Siena Biblioteca Comunale, T III 1. 154v–157v.

[10] Garin (1958, pp. 534–551) uses this manuscript. Its signature is Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Plut. 89 inf. 47, f. 90r–96v.

[11] Orlandi (1962, pp. 6–7). The signature for the manuscript is Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, F4 sup, f. 33v–44v.

[12] Ibid. (pp. 1–24, no. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12); the collection does not contain the manuscript of the Bibliotheca Laurenziana Plut. 89 inf. 47.

[13] Ibid. (pp. 5–6) gives a quotes from this manuscript, which has the signature Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Magl. XXXVIII, N. 144, f. 24r–48r. On f. 48r it says: "Ego M… (*white space*) Jo.

the date of composition for the *Vita Antonini* in the text itself. He wrote that he had composed it in the year following the death of Antoninus, the date of which was first reported by Leonardo ser Uberti Martini, who had expanded on Castiglione's *Vita Antonini* on or before 1469 (as evidenced by a surviving manuscript bearing that date).[14] He recorded Antoninus's date of death as May 2, 1459,[15] which has been considered official since Antoninus's canonization in 1523.[16] The date of composition of the original vita would then be sometime between the day of death and May 2, 1460.

If we allow for a certain amount of flexibility, there is a very good chance – especially when we take the signature into consideration – that the 1461 text is closest to the assumed date of composition. It is the only one that does not contain a dedication to the seeds of the Dominican Order in Bologna, a characteristic of all of the later copies.[17] Unfortunately, the "original" letter to the Bolognese monks has not been preserved: it remains unclear whether the original letter to the Bolognese monks contained the *Vita Victorini*. What is known, is that the (copied) manuscripts of the *Vita Antonini*, in conjunction with the *Vita Victorini*, all contain the letter dedicated to the Bolognese monks. On the basis of the fragmentary evidence, it is highly likely that Francesco da Castiglione sent the draft of his *Vita Antonini*, including the dedication, to the Bolognese monks in 1461.

It is possible, although unfortunately not documented, that the Siennese manuscripts were sent to Siena on another and quite particular occasion. There were two important dates for the Dominicans, to whom Castiglione sent the manuscript and to whose order Antoninus belonged. In 1461, the Dominican sister Catherine of

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quondam t. Rector ecclesie sancti Leonardi/… (*missing*) cappellanus sancti lauren-/tii de florentia. hanc vitam beatissimi viri fratris/Antonij archiepiscopi florentini compilavi ac scripsi/anno domini. M.CCCC^{o}LXI^{o}. iiii^{o}. Kalendas ottubris." The author supposes that this is the original signature by Francesco da Castiglione. I share his view. Francesco da Castiglione was canon in S. Lorenzo at the time.

[14] The quote follows the edited version in the *Acta Sanctorum* (1680b). It is based on a transcript of the manuscript from Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, S. Marco, Nr. 408. On f. 56v, the manuscript is dated in the year 1469. At the end, the manuscript contains notes by Leonardo ser Uberti Martini.

Francesco da Castiglione (1680b, p. 313): "Hac ego decori honestique necessitate adductus, vitam sanctissimi viri Antonii Florentini Praesulis, qui hoc anno ex hac vita migravit, litteris memoriaeque mandare constitui."

[15] Orlandi (1962, p. 7f, no. 8) cites a manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, signature Conv. soppr. I. 7. 30; f. 53r: "Epistola domini Francisci Castilionensis presbiteri sacre theologie eximii professoris et grecis atque latinis viri eruditissimi Ad fratres sancti Dominici de Bononia super vita Beati Antonij de florentia ordinis predicatorum Archiepiscopi florentini qui obiit die. ij. maij M.ccccLix."

[16] Ibid. (p. 20f, no. 19) is the citation of a manuscript that is today at Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana and has the signature I 258 inf., f. 99r–106v: Bull of Antonino's canonization. Another copy is in Rome, in the Biblioteca Vallicelliana (H. n. 14, f. 132r–139r) (reference: Ibid., p. 20, note 1). See also *Acta Sanctorum* (1680, p. 313, note a).

[17] Orlandi (1962, p. 6 [no. 7], 7 [no. 8], 11 [no. 9], 12 [no. 10], 13 [no. 11?]), also the codex Plut. 89 inf. 47, which is not referred to by Orlandi.

Siena was canonized by Pope Pius II,[18] and in 1462, the Dominicans held a synod there.[19] Unfortunately, it was not noted whether the manuscripts had been prepared for this synod, although it seems quite likely.

The undated manuscripts of the *Vita Victorini* were dated to the fifteenth century by Kristeller (Siena exemplar), Orlandi (Milan exemplar), and Garin (Florence exemplar),[20] all on the basis of the one dated manuscript. In the final analysis, it is not possible to reconstruct the exact connection between the two vitae, yet we are nonetheless able to determine that the *Vita Victorini* was composed (probably between 1460 and 1462) immediately after the *Vita Antonini* was completed (probably 1459–1460); the second document does not exist separately from the first. With his transitional passage and conclusion, the author created a connection between the lives of the two men under the banner of virtue – goodness.

After excerpts of Francesco da Castiglione's *Vita Victorini* were published in varying combinations in 1680, 1759, and 1764–1768,[21] the vita was finally published in its entirety only after the other vitae of Vittorino were published. Karl Müllner (1905)[22] was the first to undertake a critical edition of the text on the basis of a comparison of the Milanese and Florentine manuscripts. This edition was neglected within academic circles, but this was probably because of the circumstances of its publication as part of the annual report of an Austrian school. The version that is most widely used today is a copy and Italian translation of the Florentine manuscript made by Eugenio Garin in 1958. In comparison with the neglectful treatment the *Vita Victorini* has received at the hands of researchers, the *Vita Antonini* has had a rather different publication history; it was printed in 1680 in Bollandus, including the additions made by Uberti, and served as the basis, with critical commentary, for the bishop's canonization in 1523. Sadly, no further work was done on the text after this canonical edition came out; no new editions were prepared and the vita was not translated from Latin into other languages.

The publication of Castiglione's *Vita Victorini*, which appeared later than the other vitae, was correspondingly marginalized within the framework of the discussions on Vittorino da Feltre. Rosmini (1801) quoted Castiglione only in those few instances where he wanted to describe Vittorino's frugality in food and drink, his mildness, and his worship of God.[23] As in the case of the other vitae, scholars do not

[18] Extended bibliography in Braunfels (1994, vol. 7, coll. 300–306 [W. Pleister]).

[19] Hinnebusch (1990, p. 268): Without declaring his sources, Hinnebusch describes the meeting of the general chapter of the Dominical order in Siena, which had to do with the replacement of the office of general of the Dominican order by Pius II (ibid., p. 128): Martial Auribelli was dethroned in favour of a 3-year office by Conrad d'Asti, who in 1465 had to give way again to Auribelli.

[20] See notes 9–11.

[21] See Sect. 2.1.

[22] Müllner (1905, pp. 8–15).

[23] Rosmini (1801, p. 57 [number of students, and dismissal of inadequate students in Padua], 58 [Venice], 66 [Gonzaga did not find any other teacher], 88 [Vittorino ordered the amount of food and drink], 103 [detention], 104 [according to Quintilian, diligence is dependent of the will (*note by A.G.:* this is not the opinion of Francesco da Castiglione)], 111 [with Prendilacqua: Greek], 118 [with Sassolo against sophisms], 119 [the students should read first a good text, before they start to

identify the historical and intellectual position of the text in their discussions. Given that the author obviously intended the two texts to be taken together, the contents of the *Vita Antonini* immediately suggest themselves as revealing possible points of comparison between the various vitae.

4.1.2 Sender and Addressees

We are well informed about the author, Francesco da Castiglione, since Rosmini (1801) selected him from among the pupils at Vittorino's school as the subject for a biography.[24] A discussion of his work, which comprised the biographies of various church dignitaries – as can be read in Garin[25] or Kristeller[26] – is, however, completely lacking. Based on statements made by Francesco da Castiglione[27] that he had not written anything before the *Vita Antonini*, we can determine that he composed these other works after the *Vita Antonini*.

Francesco da Castiglione was born to a noble Florentine family that had its country estate in the village of Castiglione, as he himself wrote in the *Vita Antonini*.[28] His mother accompanied him to Mantua in 1434, where he became a student of Vittorino's.[29] He described himself in the *Vita Victorini* as studying with Vittorino for 8 years until the latter's death in 1446,[30] so he would have begun his studies in 1437 or 1438. Having returned to Florence, he taught Greek,[31] then was the prelate

write (*note by A. G.*: he interpreted Francesco da Castiglione wrongly)], 141 [against love of pleasure, which does not agree with love for studies], 143 [against disputes among scholars], 142 [together with other vitae: religion], 149 [together with other vitae: worship of God], 156 [lives frugal], 168 [settle disputes], 170 [follows the gospel], 210 [has no enemies]. Woodward (1970) quotes Francesco da Castiglione only twice: Paola Malatesta dedicated her life to helping the poor people (p. 76), and she didn't have any quarrel with Vittorino (p. 80).

[24] Rosmini (1801, pp. 401–404).

[25] Garin (1958, p. 723f).

[26] Kristeller (1963–1992).

[27] *Acta Sanctorum* (1680, p. 313): "Si quid vero minus apte minusque pro dignitate rei scriptum est, in hoc veniam mihi dari postulo, *qui numquam hactenus ad scribendum accessi*; idque partim ex mearum rerum ac totius vitae perturbatione; partim ex instituto fortasse non improbando faciendum putavi."

[28] Ibid. (p. 324): "Illud sane mihi profiteri licet quod in nostra familia experimento didici. Cum enim alio item tempore ecclesias rurales visitaret Antonius, & me alioque propinquo meo impetrante ad *villam nostram Castilionensem* divertisset, ibique pernoctasset." Note by Bollandius in *Acta Sanctorum* (1680, p. 325, h.) says there is more than one place with the name "Castiglione."

[29] Cianfogni (1804, vol. 1, p. 276ff); Della Torre (1902, p. 348ff); Rosmini (1801, pp. 401–404). Compiled in Garin (1958, p. 723).

[30] Francesco da Castiglione (<1460>, f. 90r): "fui enim octo annis sub illius uiri disciplina moribus simul ab eo ac litteris eruditus."

[31] See note 29.

of Bishop Antoninus from 1451 until the latter's death,[32] and finally was a canon of the Church of San Lorenzo.[33] He died in 1484.[34]

From this short report of his life, we can draw certain facts: at the time he was composing the text, he was settled within the ecclesiastical circles of Florence, where the Dominican Antoninus was his immediate superior. Given Castiglione's close relationship with the Dominican order and the connections that he hoped to draw between Vittorino's and Antoninus's lives, we must explore whether the substance of the vita can be classified as fitting within the intellectual context of the Church in general and of the Dominicans in particular, taking into consideration the fact that Castiglione and Antoninus were both sons of Florence.[35]

4.1.3 The Text's Portrayal of Vittorino da Feltre

The conclusion of the text, which admonishes readers to emulate the good men of their time in anticipation of the Last Judgment, shows that the text functionally belongs to the medieval genre of devotional literature.[36] Using the Last Judgment to justify virtue in the sight of God leads to the conclusion that man's moral life on earth will be judged according to God's commandments in the Scriptures. God's commandments, which are expressed as principles to live by, are illustrated in this text by means of the biographies of two outstanding contemporaries, used as models, who were active in the two prevailing areas of life, the sacred and the secular. Yet "biography" does not quite seem to be the correct term, because the chronological order of events in the two subjects' lives is not necessarily important. Since the intent of these biographies is to lead others to virtue through their example, they might be better judged as a form of saints' lives or saints' legends; the two subjects are characterized as holy persons in the sense that they, as virtuous people, fulfill the divine commandements. Classifying them as devotional works makes clear that,

[32] *Acta Sanctorum* (1680, p. 313): "tamen quia apud virum ipsum fui, & domi ejus ultra octavum annum."

[33] See note 29.

[34] See note 29.

[35] Unfortunately, there is very little literature on theological and organizational changes in the religious orders over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a lack that is surprising considering that this period brought forth such famous and controversial figures as Girolamo Savonarola. There are a few works, including Stefano Orlandi's thorough research on Antoninus of Florence and on the Convent of San Domenico in Fiesole (Orlandi 1959a, b, 1960a, b); and the summaries of the history of the Domenican order by Cioffari and Miele (1993), Hinnebusch (1966–1973), d'Amato (1988), and Vauchez (1990). We can therefore consider Eckhard Kessler's suggestion (1970) – that the fifteenth-century Church, in a state of flux, deserves study – to be an as-yet uncompleted task.

[36] For the genesis of the text format see Kech (1977, pp. 117–172). For research about the protestant parts of Europe see Mecking (1983), who works from a twentieth-century theoretical standpoint, and Krummacher (1986, pp. 97–113). The author researches German texts from the seventeenth century from a linguistic perspective and gives many text samples.

beyond merely honoring the persons being described, the vitae portray the principles of virtue by adding specific situations from the lives of the persons exemplified as illustrations of these generalities. The classification of the text as belonging to a particular genre is an important detail, because genres create traditional paradigms of forms and themes. When an author chooses to adopt the paradigm of a particular genre, he automatically accepts the genre's emphases concerning a subject.

Setting forth a particular life as morally exemplary – that is, giving the task of edification to the vita and its contents – has been traditional everywhere that immortal renown on earth was valued, for example in classical rhetoric and its renaissance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Quotations on this from Aristotle, as well as from Cicero and Quintilian, can be found in rhetorical theory.[37] The works of the classical authors Suetonius and Plutarch[38] were seminal for the revived interest in biography in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; Plutarch's idealizations, which tended toward the heroic, were quite popular; the parallel form of biography that he developed was not.[39] In general, we can say that the main characteristics of classical biographies are their invariable political context and their transmittal of general moral and political laws.

Christian traditions of exemplary lives, on the other hand, always refer back to the life of the one god incarnate, Jesus. His acts in the world – derived from the principles of action handed down by God – therefore provide an example for each Christian. The New Testament, which was binding for all Christians, presents the morally exemplary life of Jesus and his followers, whose lives were preserved and handed down in the saints' legends that had been collected since the time of the

[37] Aristotle (1991, pp. 178–181); Cicero (1991, book I, §§ 166–200); Cicero (1988a, §§ 125–127, 140). The classical oration was counsel or court oration and therefore always delivered in a political context. The important oration of encomium is not treated theoretically, but is a subdivision of the political function, to present exemplary lived rules. Morality is here equivalent with faith to the law. Moral improvement, in contrast, is seen a task of literature because it cannot be argumented pro or contra a historical matter of fact. Cicero and Quintilian reduce juridical or counsel oration to its main problem: examples from history are seen as mere precedents. Examples thus don't immediately apply to the case, but they might have a certain similarity and can draw judgment in a certain direction; examples from history as well as examples from fiction work this way. Aristotle, on the contrary, specifies the importance of examples directly connected with the case made in the oration for purposes of argumentation.

Aristotle (1991, p. 181, [1394a]): "If one does not have a supply of enthymemes, one should use paradigms as demonstration; for persuasion [then] depends on them. But if there are enthymemes, paradigms should be used as witnesses, [as] a supplement to the enthymemes. When the paradigms are placed first, there is the appearance of induction, but induction is not suitable to rhetorical discourses except in a few cases; when they are put at the end they become witnesses, and a witness is everywhere persuasive. Thus, too, when they are first, it is necessary to supply many of them [but] when they are mentioned at the end one is sufficient; for even a single trustworthy witness is useful. This concludes the discussion of how many species of paradigms there are and how and when they should be used."

[38] Berschin (1983, pp. 35–43).

[39] Ibid. (p. 42); Ijsewijn (1983, p. 5). In addition, Petrarch already compared two different forms of life, the worldly and the sacred (instead of Greek and Roman life). See Petrarca (1526); but his was not a common point of view.

martyrs. These two roots – classical and Christian biography – also supported later written work on exemplary lives in the context of Western Christianity.

Following the martyrologies of early Christianity, saints' legends represent authors' attempts to incorporate their own time into the Biblical context and to display and document God's activity in the world through people singled out for that purpose.[40] In this way, the legends prove themselves to be oriented toward and meaningful for the lives of those not singled out. Saints' lives therefore demonstrate concern not only for the salvation of the individual, but also for humanity. The Dominican Jacobus de Voragine (born 1230 in Vorago, died 1298 in Genoa), who was made Archbishop of Genoa in 1292,[41] composed a collection of legends in Latin, probably between 1252 and 1260,[42] that are known by the title *Legenda Aurea*.[43] During Castiglione's time, there was additional great interest in the vitae of the Greek and Latin Church Fathers, which had recently been translated from Greek into Latin.[44] Reglinde Rhein interprets the *Legenda Aurea* as a continuous story overlaid with a salvation-historical structure; this structure found its provisional eschatological realization in the mendicant orders of the Franciscans and the Dominicans.[45] The mythological – not historical – saints' lives were arranged in the same order as the Christian liturgical year. In the legends, as Rainer Nickel has explained, "supernatural events that are inconsistent with common experience occur constantly"[46]; these occurrences are based, however, on patterns of human existence that would be familiar to any person. Divorced from the issue of historical verifiability, we can establish here that "the Christian history of salvation is being mythologized in legend,"[47] in which the saints replace the ancient pantheon in their deeds. The *Legenda Aurea* was distributed throughout the Christian world well beyond the fifteenth century and seems to have been treasured at various levels of society, as witnessed in particular by the inclusion of its subjects into pictorial arts

[40] For an introduction to the literature in the complex field of holy vitae: Bernt (1993, pp. 25–31); Delehaye (1955); Günter (1906); Günther (1949) and Nahmer (1994, pp. 131–145). While Delehaye (pp. 107–124) classified the hagiographic texts according to their historic proximity and differentiated them again according to their format (prose, metrical), Berschin (1986, 1988, 1991, p. 20) sees as most important that their presentation of a whole life is somewhat a symbol, which he wants to decifer. With this, he differentiated the vita from biography and drags the focus away from historicity and toward the symbolic content of the text. Nahmer (pp. 57–79), in yet another view, defined the text form of the hagiographic texts as purely defined by its content. First, ancient and Christian virtues are lived in a heroic way; second, the attention of man toward God is visible; and third, both kinds of virtues are connected and merged into the individual life.

[41] For his life and work see Rhein (1995, p. 2, with bibliography).

[42] Ibid. (p. 8).

[43] Bibliography of the "Legenda aurea" in ibid. (pp. 280–307).

[44] As an example, see Stinger (1977, pp. 146–163), with translations of the vitae of Gregor of Nazianz and Johann Chrysostomus.

[45] Rhein (1995, pp. 48–60).

[46] Jacobus de Voragine (1988, p. 270): postscript by the editor R. Nickel.

[47] Jacobus de Voragine (1988, p. 271).

commissioned by noblemen, for example, by a panel by the master Andrea da Firenze portraying Constantine and Pope Sylvester.[48]

Castiglione had access to these various collections of saints' legends while preparing his accounts of holy men.[49] Of these, the *Legenda Aurea* seems to have been particularly important because, on the one hand, it originated with the Dominicans and interpreted the mendicant orders as part of the history of salvation; on the other, it was used in the training of priests, which suggests that it was very well known within the Church community. Castiglione's texts demonstrate both similarities to, and differences from, the *Legenda Aurea*, particularly in the way his text deals with expectations of salvation. Castiglione linked the expected Last Judgment with the exemplary piety of the mendicant orders, but he concluded with a passage from the Book of Revelation that suggested that there will always be good men, who should be followed at all costs.

A more important departure from the genre of saints' lives is that Castiglione does not suggest that God has intervened directly in the lives of his (secular) saints. Although he ascribes a few miracles to Antoninus, Castiglione explicitly stresses that they are only part of the framework for the bishop's virtuous and active life. Contrast this approach to that of the *Legenda Aurea*, which mostly describes action as worthy of censure in comparison to the virtuousness of the *vita contemplativa*. Castiglione accounts for the fact that Vittorino, without any miracles, is counted among the saints by the commonalities between the two men's lives to the benefit of all; this shows a new approach to determining what should be worthy of documenting as "saintly" behavior.

Nevertheless, Castiglione's texts also betray their classical influences. Following in the tradition of Petrarch's pagan *viri illustres*, which Eckhard Kessler has explored thoroughly, the author emphasizes his subjects' public offices.[50] When compared with contemporary accounts of saints' lives, we can see that the approach vis-à-vis the *Legenda Aurea* is new, but that Castiglione can by no means be called original in his weighting of secular and profane values, as witnessed by the existence of vitae from the Dominican context in the fourteenth century, which also include the mundane.[51]

The compilations of the lives of famous men and women within the secular sphere, such as those produced by the important early humanistic authors Francesco Petrarca (i.e., Petrarch) and Giovanni Boccaccio, are part of this context.[52] They

[48] See my book: Göing (1996, pp. 111–115). Rhein (1995, pp. 18, note 65) offers numerous examples. For the history of the reception of the *Legenda aurea* see Fleith (1991) and Reames (1985, pp. 197–209).

[49] Rhein (1995, pp. 15–21).

[50] Kessler (1978).

[51] For precursor vitae in the fourteenth century, see Vauchez (1990, pp. 274–305). Compare also Alberti (1954). [Sacchi da Piadena, Bartolomeo, named Platina] (1913–1932, vol. 3.1); described in Ijsewijn (1983, pp. 10–11).

[52] Petrarca (1527); critical edition: Petrarca (1964, vol. 1); Petrarca (1526); Boccaccio (1983); Boccaccio (before 1976).

integrate contemporary persons into the tradition of great secular figures who had made significant achievements in the world, not through miracles, but in the classical manner, through their actions. This type of collection was very popular, particularly in the fifteenth century, and culminated in three different forms. In the first form, best represented by the work of Vespasiano da Bisticci, the author described the ethical motives for action of important secular and sacred contemporary men and women, in this way offering edification based on Christianity. Niccolò Machiavelli's *Il Principe* introduced a second form by offering what was effectively a blueprint, or instructions, for success based on the great deeds of famous men. Finally, Federico da Montefeltro replaced the biological pedigree with an intellectual one, describing the metaphorical forefathers whose wisdom flowed into and culminated in himself. (This last, a self-portrayal, is technically a form of autobiography.) In all three of these cases, the authors selected famous men to be powerful examples.

The reminiscences found in Dante Alighieri's work *De Monarchia* (1313) are relevant for us here.[53] He integrated the doctrine of natural law into a theory on the nature of the state: The autonomy of the secular government is, in his view, based on the rational and moral competence of human nature (following John Quidort of Paris and Marsilius of Padua[54]). Man, with his dual nature, has two goals, each of which requires a different form of political leadership. The secular ruler leads his people to a state of temporary well-being, acting in accordance with philosophical

[53] Kretzmann et al. (1982, p. 741, 758); Dante Alighieri (1954, p. 92–93 [book 3, 16]): "Therefore man is, so to say, a middle-term between corruptible and incorruptible things, and since every middle-term participates in the nature of the extremes which it unites, man must participate in these two natures. And since every nature is ordered towards some ultimate goal, it follows that man's ultimate goal is twofold – because since man is the only being sharing in both corruptibility and incorruptibility he is the only being who is ordered towards two ultimate goal. One of these constitutes his goal in so far as he is corruptible and the other in so far as he is incorruptible.

Unerring Providence has therefore set man to attain two goals: the first is happiness in this life, which consists in the exercise of his own powers and is typified by the earthly paradise: the second is the happiness of eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of the divine countenance (which man cannot attain to of his own power but only by the aid of divine illumination) and is typified by the heavenly paradise. These two sorts of happiness are attained by diverse means, just as one reaches different conclusions by different means. We attain to the first by means of philosophical teaching, being faithful to it by exercising our moral and intellectual virtues. We arrive at the second by means of spiritual teaching (which transcends human reason), in so far as we exercise the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. These conclusions, and the means towards them, are revealed to us, on the one hand by human reason (in the light of which [p. 93] the philosophers have made one human situation perfectly clear), and on the other hand by the Holy Spirit, who has revealed the supernatural truth necessary for our salvation by means of the prophets and sacred writers, and through the Son of God, who is co-eternal with the Spirit, Jesus Christ, and through Christ's disciples. Nevertheless human cupidity would fling such aids aside if men, like horses stampeding to satisfy their bestiality, were not held to the right path by the bit and the rein. This explains why two guides have been appointed for man to lead him to his twofold goal: there is the Supreme Pontiff who is to lead mankind to eternal life in accordance with revelation; and there is the Emperor who, in accordance with philosophical teaching, is to lead mankind to temporal happiness…"

[54] Johannes Quidort (1968b, p. 5, 13, 17); Marsilius of Padua (1928, Dictio I, f. 4,9. I.9, Sects. 5–9; I. 12. 3); discussion in Gewirth (1951, vol. 1).

teachings that incorporate the real-life use of moral and intellectual virtues; the sacred leader, the Pope, leads mankind to eternal salvation in accordance with the revealed truth. But although both goals are God-given, and one of them is subordinate to the other, they are separate. Thus, Dante combined a theory of state with a philosophy of religion and sharply divided the tasks of the two areas of life.

Because the *Vita Victorini* is extant only in connection with the *Vita Antonini*, we could conclude that this is a rare example of the genre of parallel biography on the model of Plutarch's vitae of famous men, where a Greek was always paired with a Roman.[55] Castiglione himself provided an explicit reason for viewing both lives from one perspective: "I have often compared him [Vittorino] to the Bishop Antoninus, whose biography I have just composed. Indeed, their lives have taken different paths, but they share the same virtue and are similar in their piety and studiousness. One was dedicated to religion since childhood, as we have written; the other, always involved in worldly affairs, showed his religious ethos to have remained intact, which he bore in spirit, in leading a life of activity."[56] Although the two men led different types of lives, both followed the same principles, derived from their piety.

This quote shows that Castiglione partitioned the world into the sacred and the profane, as had been common throughout the entire Middle Ages and therefore throughout Western Christian thinking. The distinction was maintained first for political reasons, as written in the Bible ("Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's"),[57] and then within the philosophy of religion, at least since Augustine's division of the community of man, based on neo-Platonism, into the *Civitas terrena* and the *Civitas dei*, with a bias strongly in favor of the *Civitas dei*.

Castiglione spoke of his subjects mainly in the classical manner of public, active lives, but neutralized the negative valuation of the non-sacred areas of life when he said that divine principles should lead man in both the sacred and the profane. For him, a good man is the person who goes above and beyond God's commandments in the execution of his office on earth, i.e., is active in a particular way. Since Castiglione had a very close relationship with his subjects, not only as their contemporary but also as their student, their exemplary lives reflected well on him. Castiglione described both men as "saints"; he brought the sacred and profane areas of life together under the life principle of "holiness," which he then attempted to illustrate through the account of their lives. In this way, and unlike Dante, he considered only those virtues determined by religion, eliding the virtues of human reason.

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[55] Ijsewijn (1983, p. 5): Reference to Giannozzo Manetti in 1440, who introduced for his *Vitae Socratis et Seneca* the term *Collationes* (comparisons).

[56] Francesco da Castiglione (<1460>, f. 90r): "Assimilaui eum sepius Antonio pontifici. cuius nuper uitam conscripsimus. Dispar tamen uite profexio. sed uirtus par ac pietas studiaque similia. Alter enim ab ipsa infantia religioni ut scripsimus dedicatus. alter semper in negotiis secularibus uersatus. integerrime religionis habitum quem in animo gestabat. in ipsis rerum agendarum operationibus ostendebat."

[57] Matthew 22, 21.

With the text's form established, we may now move on to its content. In his vita, Francesco da Castiglione depicted the erudition, lifestyle, and virtue of his former teacher, Vittorino da Feltre; he wished to juxtapose it with the vita of Antoninus. The introduction establishes several basic pieces of information, including the occasion for the text – Vittorino's similarity to Antoninus; the intended recipients – who should possess virtue and scholarship; the topics to be covered – Vittorino's erudition, way of life, and virtue; and his own relationship to Vittorino – as his student. In addition, the introduction lays out the methods of argumentation. Castiglione claimed that he wished only to write down that which he had seen with his own eyes; this was not, however, a plan he was able to fulfill. It was not possible for him to observe the course of Vittorino's education before Mantua, nor could he have been present for some of the illustrative anecdotes. In reality, only the material from the school in Mantua would have derived from his own experience.

After briefly characterizing Vittorino as having a mind open to scholarship and activity, Castiglione proceeds in the main section of the vita to retrace the course of Vittorino's life through Feltre, Padua, and Venice to Mantua. Feltre was described as his place of origin; Padua was the location where he studied the *trivium* and *quadrivium* and held his first position as a public teacher of rhetoric. Vittorino ran his first school in Venice, where, after his bad experiences in Padua, he accepted only young people of impeccable morals; he spent the last 22 years of his life in Mantua, educating princes for the general good. A description of Vittorino's virtues follows this list of locations; they can be observed in his subsequent actions regarding moderation in his needs for food, drink, and sleep; his celibacy; his generosity; and his meekness.

This is followed by an account of his teaching methods. Castiglione characterized Vittorino's school as a combination of a classical academy and a Christian place of worship; he stressed again that an educated person had to be virtuous. The school itself he described as a new Platonic Academy following the classical model – perhaps borrowing on contemporary ideas from Florence[58]; it was distinguished by a curriculum that included the seven *artes liberales*, which comprised excerpts from texts by select classical authors, physical exercise, and the performance of religious duties. Castiglione listed the individual classical authors included in the curriculum by name and described the best way to approach their readings. In his teaching role, Vittorino read the lessons carefully, listened attentively, and corrected the students' work diligently. His conscientiousness spurred his students to learn. He took instructions for learning from classical material: for grammar, he used

[58] The Platonic Academy was founded in Florence between 1459 and1462, exactly the time that the vita was composed. The Platonic Academy was based on a connection between Cosimo de' Medici, Plethon and Ficino. The standard work is still Della Torre (1902). More recent research on how the academy was developed in Florence in the fifteenth century shows that the Accademia Platonica had precursors (Lentzen (1995)). Societies consisting of members with different social status gather around one or more teachers or other performers and artists. They discuss a variety of different topics. Groups like this are known in Florence already at the end of the fourteenth century, see Dixhoorn and Sutch (2008). James Hankins prepares in the moment a collected volume that will shed more detailed light on the contextual academic background of the Florentine Academy in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Priscian; for dialectic and philosophy, Aristotle; for rhetoric, Cicero; for poetry, Virgil; and for history, Sallust and Titus Livius.

Francesco da Castiglione stressed the importance of students' attempting to understand the text before the lesson. After the lesson, they should review what they had heard and make notes on those sections they would like the teacher to clarify later. He chose to use this method to foster the students' understanding of the text and paid close attention in order to ensure that they were not giving their imaginations free rein. The students were supposed to adhere closely to the model they were given.

Castiglione particularly stressed that Vittorino took action against his students' deviations from virtue; the author of the vita was of the opinion that learning could only occur through repeated habituation and constant correction. The overarching theme of his account is traditional morality, based on Scriptures and therefore infallible. A moral person is created through an education that includes corrections according to the standard or model – that should be as perfect as possible – provided by the teacher. Castiglione concluded his remarks with a saying from Solomon, supposedly repeated by Vittorino, that wisdom will not enter an ill-disposed mind. Castiglione states that virtue cannot be learned through study of the classics alone; it would seem that, unlike Petrarch, he does not include *virtus* and *elocutio* as part of *sapientia* but rather keeps them separate. *Eloquentia*, which is subordinate to deeds, belongs to *elocutio*; Castiglione does not address *sapientia*.

The argument in Castiglione's vita is based on hyperbole; the figure of Vittorino is an ideal. The figure of Vittorino hypostasizes the figure of the teacher. Castiglione progresses step-wise through Vittorino's life until he reaches a certain point: running the school in Mantua. Unlike Sassolo's account, which places Vittorino's behavior toward his students at the center of the narrative, the highlight of Castiglione's text is the equilibrium between Vittorino's moral principles and the education of his students. His description refers to premises that are not explained, but rather are introduced in such a way to make it obvious that they determine the order and choice of the depicted historical events, which are then used to illustrate something else. Vittorino is supposed to act as an exemplar of this "something else": Christian virtue revealed in worldly deeds. This hyperbolic structure allows Castiglione to create a picture of Vittorino, the representative of an edifice of rules based on God's Scripture, as the same Vittorino who grew up in Feltre and taught in Mantua; in this way, Castiglione was able to characterize him as a "saint in the worldly sphere." This description depends on the assumption that a miracle was no longer strictly necessary for the characterization of a saint; saintliness might instead be conveyed by moral and social activities that outweigh the sign of God's direct intervention on earth via the designated person, contrary to all laws of nature. God works through virtuous, active people. Public works are valuable, in that saintly people would guide as many people as possible in a virtuous adoption of the rules; for this reason, certain vocations are better than others. Teaching, for instance, might be a particularly virtuous vocation, particularly educating princes, because a prince will make an impression on his subjects.

Our analysis shows that Castiglione portrays Vittorino as the representative of a moral framework based in God, who used his public office as a teacher of princes to promote his position in the world; he wished to mold his students for a moral life, which is also the highest level of piety, by means of reason accompanied by constraint. The main principle of the biography is neither Vittorino the individual nor the rationality of mankind; rather, it concerns God's law for the spiritual and moral existence of man, on which his actions are based. According to Castiglione, God's grace creates great men; other men could do worse than to follow them. The general outlines of the monastic rule of the Dominicans – to teach and to live a life of strict morality[59] – developed from similar assumptions. This echoes somewhat the *Legenda Aurea's* salvation-historical portrayal of the ideal of the mendicant orders, particularly of the observance movement, as constituting the ideal of man. Yet in contrast with the *Legenda Aurea*, Castiglione assumes that the judgment at the end of the world would be bound up with wordly accomplishments, in the form of a vocation. This emphasis on public life echoes arguments from antiquity without specifically indicating a particular theory by a classical author; rather, it seems to have been taken from the general understanding of the time.

Although Castiglione keeps the description of Vittorino's virtues general, his selection of individual characteristics sketches the physiognomy of an active person. According to Castiglione's description, Vittorino was of small stature with a sinewy build. He had a bright, ruddy complexion, which indicated his choleric nature; Castiglione stressed that a choleric nature was the most appropriate for practical activity. The physiognomy matched Castiglione's description that Vittorino had a sharp mind that took a practical bent and was fit for all sciences and endeavors. In this way, the entire text demonstrates that deeds were valued more highly than words, and that piety and religiosity toward God and generosity[60] toward man were ranked most highly.

This attitude is conveyed, as well, in Castiglione's discussion of Vittorino's curriculum. Theology is supposed to ensure man's inner peace. The classical subjects prepare the mind for the study of theology and therefore have a propaedeutic character. Despite their subordinate role, Castiglione was interested in the organization of these subjects and highlighted their modernness. He stressed that the knowledge of Homer, Euclid, and music is not only the mark of the "learned" man, personified in the form of Vittorino, but rather, stated more generally, the modern learned man.

Castiglione singles out the erudite teacher Vittorino and the Dominican Bishop Antoninus because their public activities were of benefit to all. A comparison of the two vitae gives a more precise characterization of the two men's good acts and

[59] A benchmark for the Dominican history of monastic rule and the definition of members of the order as teachers ("ordine predicatori!") is Hinnebusch (1966–1973, pp. 3–98).

[60] The term *magnanimitas* – high-mindedness – has several meanings that many authors in classical antiquity from Aristotle to Cicero found central for the ideal of human comportment: courage (*fortitudo*), constancy under adversities (*constantia*, *patientia*), benevolent indulgence toward adversaries (*indulgentia*), and generosity and munificence (*liberalitas, munificentia*). Since Polybius, *magnanimitas* has been named a genuine characteristic of Roman nobility. See Ritter (1974, vol. 3, coll. 1147–1150).

shows that both more than fulfilled their public offices in a Christian manner through their charity, and that certain virtues were inherent to both. On the one hand, these virtues developed from their physical asceticism, which was expressed by their patience, abstemiousness, and their adherence to celibacy. On the other hand, they shared an attitude shaped by compassion toward their fellow men: both were generous and benevolent. A third commonality is their special usefulness for their fellow men, as conveyed by their knowledge of written works and their cleverness in speaking and acting, traits that can be categorized under righteousness. Both were led via the study of the *artes* to the study of the Scriptures, from which they took principles and strength for their daily duties ministering to humanity.

There is, however, one important addition made in the text about Antoninus. While both texts praise worldly acts, Antoninus's vita describes the bishop's stillness of mind. Castiglione wrote that in the pauses between services, the Bishop secluded himself to study the holy writ. There, he found "the greatest peace and inner stillness for contemplating divine matters." "He said that it is impossible for most if not all mortals to enjoy the peace or stillness of a composed mind, because cares continually arise from the affairs of worldly life if men do not preserve for themselves a separate and secure space apart from them. Neither the tribulations of one's tasks nor the vexations arising from one's cares or tasks that lie ahead should intrude as a disturbance. In this way, a mind freed of all passion, once its obligations were fulfilled, could betake itself directly to the 'inner person', as characterized by Paul, as to a science."[61] Castiglione did not include any discussion of daily stillness and peace of mind between actions in Vittorino's biography.

4.1.4 Francesco da Castiglione's Concept and Theory of Education

Some of Castiglione's assumptions about the relationship of education, morality and ethics can been gleaned from the text: first, that *elocutio* and *virtus* are formally separate; second, that God's commandments must be heeded; and third, that the worldly sphere, mainly the sphere of man, is subordinate to God's commandments. With these assumptions in mind, it becomes clear that the public teacher legitimizes himself not through his teaching of the *artes*, but by acting as an example for and instructor in his students' morality. This normative framework could explain

[61] *Acta Sanctorum* (1680, p. 317f): "Non est, inquit, possibile plerisque mortalium ac fere omnibus, ob eam quae ex rebus hujus seculi consurgit solicitudinem, aliqua pace ac quiete sedati animi perfrui; nisi ipse sibi aliquem secretum occultumque mentis secessum reservaverit, ad quem nec negotiorum molestia, nec curarum solicitudo, nec omnium rerum agendarum quae fores sunt, perturbatio penetret; quo, cum negotiorum exercitatio cessaverit, statim omni passione nudatus animus, tamquam ad arcem quamdam, & ad hominem, quem Paulus interiorem appellat, confugiat:"

why Castiglione's account stresses the *contubernium*-like character of the school, including Vittorino's method for engaging his students.

In Castiglione's description, Vittorino traverses old paths on the way to adapting his students to ethical rules; his procedures are very reminiscent of the tradition of the monastery schools,[62] even if the curriculum no longer shares any similarities. Castiglione's account also echoes a fourteenth-century Dominican tradition of the spiritual person, known from Augustine and Petrarch – a tradition that was lost during the later Renaissance only to reappear in the Baroque period, for example, with the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. This personal spirituality was elaborated on by other members of the Dominican order, such as Heinrich Seuse (1295–1366),[63] Johannes Tauler (ca. 1300–1361),[64] and then Jakob Böhme (1575–1624).[65]

Francesco da Castiglione's human habit of virtue was derived from the expectation of the Last Judgment. His attention was therefore not directed toward the worldly scholarship of the school but toward the problem of integrating the secular and spiritual areas of life. Even though he respected both as separate areas, Castiglione attempted to integrate them into the higher concept of Christian faith and Christian ethics derived therefrom; this ethics represented the active life, as a principle, as something that came from duties assigned by God for the well-being of all. Because the substance of the virtues is thus already given, Castiglione's ethics requires the individual to adopt traditional systems of thinking that he adapts – and only in this context can they vary – to his own particular situation, depending on whether he belongs to a sacred or a secular sphere. Learning is therefore defined as a method of *imitare*, emulation, in the realms of Christian faith.

Unlike Sassolo, Castiglione did not take man's self-organization into account. Sassolo understood man to be autonomous in this world, with his actions based in himself as a rational being, and based on love, all of which had to be considered under the umbrella of divine instruction. Castiglione, in contrast, spoke of actions of duty arising from faith. In his treatment of worldly actions, he retreated behind Dante Alighieri, who had proclaimed the autonomy of the worldly sphere from the divine; in Alighieri's account, politics existed in a zone autonomous from religion. Consequently, *phronesis* or cleverness did not play a role in education for Castiglione. Erudition is only important in that it leads to the holy sanctuary of theology; reading is only legitimized as inner contemplation and reflection on the principle of action, in which case the value of a given book is determined by its place in the hierarchy of secular and theological spheres. He sees worldly activity as the interrelationship between a Christian way of life and a public career, as something that lies under the

[62] On the organization of Dominican education and its goals see Hinnebusch (1966–1973, pp. 10–98). Since the thirteenth century, the Dominicans' schools have had very detailed rules concerning learning.

[63] More recent literature in Enders (1993).

[64] More recent literature in Libera (1996); Zekorn (1993).

[65] More recent literature in Werner (1986).

duties of virtue and that demands diligence from each person. Castiglione's vita may be read as an attempt to legitimize a secular education in the realm of Christendom, epitomized by the Platonic Academy, through a virtuous life.

4.2 The Commentary of Bartolomeo Sacchi, Named Platina

4.2.1 The Manuscripts and Their Dating, Publication History, and Subsequent Use

The *Commentariolus* of Bartolomeo Sacchi, also called Platina, is contained in a manuscript copy from the beginning of the sixteenth century[66] held in the Vatican Library in Rome. The original text was probably composed between the years 1462 and 1465. The first date comes from a mention in the text of Francesco Gonzaga as cardinal,[67] which would only have been accurate after 1462; the second date is an estimate based on the themes Platina addressed in his other writings. During his early period in Rome under Pius II, prior to 1465, his work concentrated on the praise of the *artes liberales*, a topic that encompassed the *Vita Victorini*. Later, his interests shifted to ethical and historical issues that went well beyond the scope of formal education.

The text under discussion here is a letter about the life and achievements of Vittorino da Feltre directed to Baldesar Suardo, who was, according to the letter's introduction, a former student of Vittorino. The letter was preserved in Urbino and came, with the rest of the Urbino library, into the possession of the Vatican Library in 1657.[68] The fact that the letter is now part of the Vatican Library's holdings is unrelated to Platina's time there as a prefect from 1475 to 1481. How the letter came to be in Urbino or whether it was ever in the possession of Duke Federico da Montefeltro of Urbino, another one of Vittorino da Feltre's former students, is not known, nor could it be determined by an analysis of the handwriting.[69] Little is known about the recipient of the letter. Francesco Prendilacqua included a Suardo

[66] Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Vaticana, Cod. Urb. lat. 915, f. 2–40; published by Tommaso Agostino Vairani (Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina [1778, pp. 14–28]). Vairani's edition was taken over by Giuseppe Biasuz (Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina (1948)) and Garin (1958, pp. 668–699). For dating the manuscript see Stornajolo (1902, 1912, 1921: vol. 2, 1912, p. 632).

[67] Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina (<1462–1474>, f. 30v–31r) (Garin (1958, p. 690)): "Et ne filios Principis omittam: Ludovicum Illu. Francisci Cardinalis parentem: qui nunc mantuanis imperat." Gonzaga was made Cardinal on March 23, 1462; see Medioli Masotti (1977, p. 407, note 1), who refers to [Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina] (1913–1932, vol. 3.1, p. X).

[68] The work by Platina was brought in 1657 from Urbino to Rome to the Vatican Library; see Gradi (<1683>). Moranti and Moranti (1981, p. 76, 253–9) reveal even more evidence. They cite a breve by Alexander VII of August 7, 1657 that refers to the translocation.

[69] Stornajolo dated the manuscript to the beginning sixteenth century; see note 67. In this chapter.

among Vittorino's students in his vita,[70] but his given name was Joannes Franciscus, not Baldesar. Rosmini (1801) was the only person to investigate the matter; his research indicates that this Joannes Franciscus was from Mantua but makes no further reference to the Suardo mentioned by Platina.[71] It is possible that the two Suardos were members of the same family.

The subsequent publication history of this letter is as sparse as that of the other texts. Although Platina's writings had already been published several times in the sixteenth century,[72] the first printing of the *Vita Victorini* did not appear until the eighteenth century: the 1778 edition by Tommaso Agostino Vairani. Rosmini (1801) was the first to make use of the vita while researching Vittorino, but he only used it to corroborate and complement Prendilacqua's text, on which he mainly relied.[73] Since then, it has been included among the other vitae and has, since Woodward,[74] been considered more historically reliable than Prendilacqua's vita. Platina's vita was translated into Italian in 1857 and 1885,[75] but the best translation was by Giuseppe Biasuz in 1948[76]; this was the version on which Garin's new edition (1958)[77] was based.

4.2.2 Sender and Addressees

We can cautiously deduce from certain information – the letter's provenance in Urbino, the presumptive existence of a Suardo family in Mantua, and the statement that Baldesar Suardo had studied with Vittorino – that this letter, unlike Sassolo's "promotional" tract or Castiglione's saint's life of Castiglione, was directed toward the smaller circle of Vittorino's students. As very little is known about this Suardo family, our discussion of sender and addressees must primarily focus on what we can determine of the life and achievements of Platina.

Garin's short introduction in 1958 remains the best source of information on Platina.[78] Bartolomeo Sacchi was born in Piadena in the vicinity of Cremona in

[70] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 40v).

[71] Rosmini (1801, pp. 369–372).

[72] Venezia 1504, 1518 etc.; see notes in [Sacchi da Piadena, Bartolomeo, named Platina] (1913–1932, vol. 3.1).

[73] Rosmini (1801, pp. 21–22): "Finalmente la quarta ed ultima [vita], piú pregevole per avventura di tutte l'altre, è del Mantuano Francesco Prendilacqua." See also his notes passim.

[74] Woodward (1970, pp. XVII–XVIII): "His position [as a schoolmaster following Ognibene da Lonigo] enabled him to gather minute and accurate information upon all details of subject and method adopted by Vittorino."

[75] The Italian edition, published in Torino in 1857, is mentioned by Saitta (1928, p. 114); the one from Feltre of 1885 was published in the journal *Il Tomitano*, ed. by Mons. Antonio Vecellio, mentioned by Garin (1958, p. 730).

[76] [Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina] (1948).

[77] Garin (1958, pp. 668–699).

[78] Ibid. (p. 730).

1421 and died in Rome on September 21, 1481, of the "plague," a term that could refer to any number of serious but specified illnesses. After serving in the military (according to the vita), he studied in Mantua with Ognibene da Lonigo. Ognibene da Lonigo was one of Vittorino's first students, as documented by the marquise's purchase of a shirt for the indigent boy in 1423.[79] Ognibene ran the school in Mantua after Vittorino's death, from 1449 to 1453, after which he returned to his hometown of Brescia for political reasons and took up teaching again.[80] Platina ran the Mantuan school after Ognibene, from 1453 to 1456,[81] but then went to Florence and finally, in 1461, on to Rome and Pomponio Leto's academy. He was arrested and incarcerated in 1465 and again in 1468 for his hostility to Pope Paul II and was only graciously received at court again in 1471 under Sixtus IV. In 1475, he advanced to the position of prefect of the Vatican Library, which was under construction at the time.

His preoccupation with historical issues is a thread that runs through his extensive work. In 1464, he produced a monumental work on the history of the city of Mantua that he dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga[82]; in 1474, he produced another such work on the history of the papacy that was printed in 1479 and found a quick distribution, even beyond the Alps.[83] This last work displays a concise historical style that is particularly unusual for a portrayal of the life of Christ[84]: it covers Christ's youth and includes a digression about Caesar Augustus without ever touching on the teachings or suffering of Jesus. Rather, a verbal dispute between Tiberius and the Roman Senate over Christ is appended to a discussion of Christ's virtuous nobility. These themes demonstrate Platina's interest in placing Christ within the historical period of advanced Roman civilization.

In addition to his historical interests, Platina devoted himself to the *artes liberales* during the years 1461–1464 under Pius II. Under the papacy of Sixtus IV, these interests increasingly turned to the *ars vitae*. His first period in Rome, starting in 1461, gave rise to a eulogy of the erudite Cardinal Bessarion[85] and a dialogic summary of the *Elegantiae* of Lorenzo Valla (*De flosculis quibusdam linguae latinae ad Laelium*).[86] In 1464, he wrote an oration praising the liberal

[79] See note 1 in Chap. 2.

[80] Davari (1876, p. 8).

[81] Luzio (1888, p. 340f).

[82] Kristeller (1963–1992) cites three manuscripts containing Platina's *History of Mantua,* one in Bern (ibid., vol. 5, p. 88a*), one in Venice (ibid., vol. 2, p. 230) and one in Torino (ibid., vol. 2, p. 175). The Venice exemplar is dated to 1464.

[83] Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina (1479). Kristeller counts excerpts and fragments of Platina's *Vitae Pontificum* in many libraries and archives in Italy and abroad, Arezzo (ibid., vol. 1, p. 3), Firenze (ibid., vol. 1, p. 150; ibid., vol. 1, p. 196); Hamburg (ibid., vol. 3, p. 560b), Karlsruhe (ibid., 3, p. 581a), Madrid (vol. 4, p. 526b), Urbania (ibid., vol. 6, p. 247a). For recent scholarship see Bauer (2006, bibliography).

[84] Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina (1912–1932, Preface). For discussion, see Ijsewijn (1983, pp. 10–11).

[85] This is cited by Kristeller (1963–1992, vol. 6, p. 191a). The location of the manuscript is the Biblioteca Vallicelliana in Rome.

[86] Ibid. (vol. 1, p. 299) and ibid. (vol. 6, p. 56a): both manuscripts are in Milano.

arts (*De laudibus bonarum artium*) for Pius II.[87] His writings on the *ars vitae* are from the years following his imprisonment, the period 1471–1481 under Sixtus IV. Among these are *De Principe*, a piece written in 1470 and dedicated to Federico Gonzaga on the training of future rulers, reflecting political and religious ideals; a work on ethics dedicated to Sixtus IV, *De vero et falso bono*, which can be dated to 1471 on the basis of the dedication; a work on civics for Lorenzo de'Medici, *De optimo cive*, in 1474, which repeats the words of *De Principe* almost verbatim[88]; and other works, which are described in the *Iter Italicum*. The dating of Platina's *Commentariolus* on the life of Vittorino da Feltre stems from this periodization; it belongs thematically to the period 1461–1464, during which Platina devoted himself primarily to the *artes liberales* and the city of Mantua.

4.2.3 Platina's Portrayal of Vittorino da Feltre

From a consideration of Platina's treatment of three specific areas – Vittorino's biography, his life's work, and his appearance – we can characterize the work thematically as a profane vita related to devotional writing, a form already familiar from Petrarch's anthology of famous men, *De viris illustribus*.[89] To my knowledge, Platina's treatment of Vittorino marks the first time that a teacher is offered as a proper subject for a *vir illustris*. Placed in the context of the *viri illustres-anthologies*, the inclusion of a teacher reflects a transformation of values in relation to classical writings. Rather than calling attention to the great men of antiquity on the basis of their deeds, as Suetonius or Plutarch did, Platina's focus falls on a man, whose professional responsibilities included pointing to important figures from antiquity, and who relates personally to Platina's own educational and professional environment. Following the style of the classical vitae, Vittorino's "great deeds" were to teach students, who had great success within society later in life. The genre served to

[87] Kristeller locates three manuscripts in Florence: Ibid. (vol. 1, p. 106; p. 207*; p. 209).

[88] Kristeller cites a large number of surviving manuscripts by Platina in Italy and abroad:

- *De vero et falso bono*: Trento (ibid., vol. 2, p. 193 and ibid., vol. 6, p. 232b); Vienna (ibid., vol. 3, p. 60a); Edinburgh (ibid., vol. 4, p. 18a); Glasgow (ibid., vol. 4, p. 30b).
- *De honesta voluptate*: Vatican (ibid., vol. 2, p. 393 and ibid., vol. 6, p. 360a); Paris (ibid., vol. 3, p. 232b); Budapest (ibid., vol. 4, p. 291b and ibid., vol. 4, p. 298a); Bern (with a date 1475) (ibid., vol. 5, p. 91a*); Zürich (ibid., vol. 5, p. 143a).
- *De optimo cive*: Paris (ibid., vol. 3, p. 281a); Poznán (ibid., vol. 4, p. 413b).
- *De Principe*: Mantua (ibid., vol. 1, p. 270); Milano (ibid., vol. 1, p. 330) (transcribed 1473); Vatican (ibid., vol. 2, p. 323 and ibid., vol. 3, p. 463a).
- *Laelius and/or Dialogus de Amore*: Kraków (ibid., vol. 4, p. 410b); Toledo (ibid., vol. 4, p. 638a [1470]);
- *De vera Nobilitate and Vita Nicolai*: Toledo (ibid., vol. 4, p. 648b).

[89] See especially Kessler (1978, passim).

increase Platina's own glory by connecting him, as an intellectual "grandchild," to the great man himself.

In terms of classical rhetoric, following Aristotle,[90] Platina's text takes the stylistic oratorical form of the *laudatio*, in which Vittorino's virtues are exalted after his death. The closing address places the text within this rhetorical genre; it could almost be called passionate, and goes well beyond the conventions of the more historically oriented profane vita: "Thus the person who is not experienced in all of the realms of *humanitas* and who does not have a heart of stone but rather a human heart that is moved by his own misfortune just as he is moved by that of another, this person will mourn and bewail Vittorino as the father of education and doctrine, as the nurturer of talents, as the seat of morals, as the protector of those afflicted by misfortune, as the peerless collector of piety, honor, steadfastness, austerity, and trustworthiness, as a sanctuary for the virtues and the muses, and finally as the unique comfort and jewel of our century."[91]

Platina assigns the Mantuan school – its physical constitution, instruction, teaching methods, subjects, and the later success of its students in the life of society – a primary position in his text. In this way, the text assumes a place within the tradition of educational treatises, ranging from Vergerio (1400–1402)[92] to Johannes Sturm (1539).[93] Neither Sassolo's text nor Castiglione's could be classified in this way, because the institution did not play this role in their writing. We can say, then, that we are dealing with an educational treatise that is nevertheless formally marked by the characteristics of a *vita* of a *vir illustris* and contains the stylistic elements of a *laudatio*, in that it breaks off the historical account and appeals to the emotions of the present listener.

Having established the form, what is the argument? After a dedication that establishes the relationship between the topic (Vittorino da Feltre and his system of education) and the addressee (Vittorino's student, Baldesar Suardo) and offers a justification for composing the text, the letter consists of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. In the introduction, Platina emphasizes that Vittorino belongs to the second generation of scholars who deserve posthumous fame because they spoke Latin and spread the *artes liberales* throughout Italy. The body of the letter

[90] Aristotle (1991, pp. 47–48 [1358b 2] and pp. 84–87 [1367b 32–1368a 41]) gives some rules for the praise oration, however, not for the funeral eulogy. The praise oration aims to show the subject's virtue through the selection and organization of his deeds and achievements, often culminating in a stylistic climax.

[91] Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina (<1462–1474>, f. 40r): Quare qui non omnino humanitatis expers est: quique non saxeum/sed humanum cor *(40r)* habet: suo qui item et aliorum mouetur incommodo: Victorinum eruditionis/ac doctrinae parentem: ingeniorum cultorem: morum domicilium: calamitosorum patronum: pietatis/pudoris/constantiae/saeueritatis/ac fidei unicum receptaculum: Virtutum/ac musarum sacellum. *(1)* Postremo saeculi nostri unicum praesidium: et ornamentum defleat/ac lugeat./.

[92] Vergerio (1918, pp. 75–156). For the date 1400–1402, see Bischoff (1909).

[93] Sturm (1539). For literature on Sturm, see Spitz and Tinsley (1995). For further sources and Italian school treatises in general, see Grendler (1989, pp. 432–441: Bibliography, Primary Sources).

begins with Vittorino's life history, from his studies to his teaching positions in Padua and Venice and on to Mantua, where he was the educator of the children of the marquis, Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, and founded a school. Platina claims that, from the very beginning, Vittorino had planned the establishment of an academy that would provide an education that went beyond the study of literature and included mathematical subjects, physics, and ethics. Platina praised the encyclopedic education of the Greeks and saw the discussion of nature, morals, the stars, geometry, harmony and consonance, and arithmetic as necessary for man's perfection. In addition, the term "friendship," a term that was known to be central to the just-founded Platonic Academy in Florence,[94] was of central importance to many humanists,[95] among them Platina.

Platina equated the school with a monastery school; it provided a rule of morality, similar to the rule of a monastic order, which would encompass all aspects of life. Teaching and morals were supposed to ensure that each student would be able to prosper until the fruit of his education was ripe. To illustrate this, he described the literary program according to its didactic utility. After a thorough appraisal of Vittorino's students and the specific traits they had acquired during their education, Platina moved on to describe Vittorino's appearance, activities, and disposition, emphasizing in particular the steadfastness of his disposition. The concluding summary, in the style of a eulogy, depicts an almost passionate glorification of Vittorino, whose death "left behind a great longing."[96]

4.2.4 Platina's Concept of Education

Platina is primarily concerned with plumbing the depths of the school and placing it within the framework of a theory of education. He begins his topic by explaining the structural criteria for the progression of lessons, the provision of learning aids, the division of time, morals, and methods. To this, he adds a digression on the theory of education, in which he covers man's body and mind, virtue, erudition, and religion, and the proportions of training devoted to each. In this way, he anchors the internal structure of the school within theoretical observations that, with a bit of good will, could be characterized as philosophical. His themes are the relationship between physical well-being and mental dexterity, the subordination of knowledge to religion, the conception of morals as God-given rules, and, following from this, the relationship between virtue and erudition. In his opinion, erudition cannot exist without morals, because both have their ultimate basis and origins in God.

Having clarified the utility of a formal education, Platina next turns to the teacher's behavior toward the student. While for Sassolo, oratory is the universal remedy,

[94] Lentzen (1995, pp. 71–72).

[95] For Leonardo di Piero Dati's sonnet on friendship (1441) see Flamini (1890, pp. 34–36).

[96] Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina (<1462–1474>, f. 39r): "Reliquit Victorinus post mortem magnum sui posteris desiderium:"

Platina is more careful to differentiate the purposes of the teacher's behavior. The teacher should radiate trust, take his students' ages and talents into consideration, instruct effortlessly, foster general understanding, and educate each according to his natural inclinations. Platina concludes his discussion of the school with a selection of authors whose didactic utility he rates primarily on the basis of literary and moral considerations. Cicero holds the highest position, as the most productive source for forming a very good and very learned man.

Platina makes clear his interest in the expanded and modernized *artes* within the context of the Aristotelian canonical university; moreover, he is concerned with taking a differentiated view of instruction within a scholarly environment. We must ask ourselves whether the conceptualization of *homo illustris* Vittorino da Feltre as an idealized teacher and headmaster was part of this broader agenda, or whether there might be some other way of interpreting Platina's Vittorino. Indeed, Platina portrays Vittorino as an active speaker and agent, but does not give further details of Vittorino's opinions and actions. The text gives the impression that Platina arranged the things he had heard about Vittorino, primarily from his teacher Ognibene da Lonigo, as if for an oration, very close in its format to the genre of the *laudatio*[97]: the actions of the person being praised are recorded according to their virtues.

The text's argumentation is unadorned and rather simple. Viewed from the goal of learning, virtue and wisdom belong together because both originate in and have their ultimate basis in God. Platina translated "wisdom" as "erudition," rather than Sassolo's "practical reason," yet both considered the discussion of ethical questions as belonging at the forefront of the struggle for wisdom. Like Sassolo, Platina sees oratory as the expression of erudition; but, unlike Sassolo, Platina did not evaluate a speech according to its cleverness but rather by the breadth of its topics – a particularly erudite speech might talk "about everything." Thus Platina saw an accretion of subjects in school as cumulative and did not ascribe any particular significance to mathematics, as Sassolo had.

Viewed from the perspective of man as the creation and image of God, the students' task is to perfect their virtue and wisdom, according to their individual talents and inclinations. Platina's description of the school depicts it as a place where this rule for life can be consistently followed. The school makes possible the uninterrupted pursuit of this task because its community of students and teachers has dedicated itself to the pursuit of wisdom and virtue. The freedom of the student as a basic human right, following the Greeks, carries over into the teacher-student relationship. The teacher, as part of establishing trust between himself and his students, must design the readings to be comprehensible and verifiable; to achieve this, he might provide didactic details to explain the choice of texts and to aid in students'

[97] Aristotle (1991, p. 84 [1367b]): [After a discussion of praiseworthy virtues] "Since praise is based on actions and to act in accordance with deliberate purpose is characteristic of a worthy person, one should try to show him acting in accordance with deliberate purpose. It is useful for him to seem to have so acted often. Thus, one should take coincidences and chance happenings as due to deliberate purpose; for if many similar examples are cited, they will seem to be a sign of virtue and purpose."

comprehension. Vittorino's special distinction lies in his overachievement in this duty of the teacher, so that he had an effect on public welfare beyond the borders of Italy; he could also claim very many, very famous students who could carry on this form of erudition. Learning a canon of knowledge and how to behave virtuously would guarantee the student a good standing in society after school.

These statements fit into the traditional picture of education, outlined in Vergerio's and Pius II's treatises, as well as that promoted in the other vitae of Vittorino. What is new in Platina's account is the emphasis on the more classically conceived virtues that culminate in the highest value of all, friendship. The direct relationship between friendship and virtue was known from Cicero's *Laelius*, which Platina would also have read, judging from a glance at the list of literature referred to in his text, but also from the newly established Platonic Academy in Florence, which Platina would have known. Also new in Platina's account is the appreciation of Vittorino as the father of erudition and virtue in Italy and beyond, an assessment of Vittorino's fame based on the amount of his influence and the sheer quantity of his public actions. Platina's description of the curriculum, too, contrasts with that presented in the previous vitae (though it must be acknowledged that Platina's discussion of this topic is conveyed only through the recommended literature). On the one hand, Platina emphasizes the philosophy of Aristotle, i.e., the classical university education; and on the other, he suggests that music may help students to derive a feeling for harmony in the classical manner. Vergerio had already mentioned this approach to education ca. 1400–1402,[98] but Sassolo did not mention it in his account of Vittorino's school, despite his description of the philosophical background of the subject.

But Platina's most important pedagogical innovations must be sought outside of the context of theories of education. Platina presents us with a newly articulated understanding of reality within the context of education. Unlike Sassolo and Castiglione, who asserted it as a matter of course, Platina distanced himself from the unreflective equating of book knowledge and reality. Platina suggested – and this suggestion is later reinforced in Prendilacqua's account – that, essentially, a consciousness of reality could not arise solely from learning by books and through language. While Castiglione wanted in a prescriptive way to lead people to principled action by means of establishing moral habits, Platina joins Cicero in creating a model that was sensitive to environmental contexts. And while Sassolo focused on

[98] Vergerio in Garin (1958, pp. 132–135): "Ut enim non omnis vox, sed tantum quae bene consonat, ad soni melodiam facit, ita et motus animae non omnes, sed qui rationi conveniunt, ad rectam vitae harmoniam pertinent. Verum cum ad remissionem animi, sedandasque passiones plurimum valeat modulationis usus, tum vero eius disciplinae cognitio digna est ingenio liberali, secundum quam rationem speculamur sonorum varias naturas ac potestates, ex quibus invicem proportionibus consonantias dissonantiasque causari contingat." "Così non tutti i moti dell'anima, ma solo quelli secondo ragione, contribuiscono all'armonia della vita. Per la singolare efficacia della musica nel placare lo spirito e le sue passioni, la conoscenza di quest'arte è degna di un ingegno liberale; essa indaga la varia natura e potenza del suono, e da quali proporzioni nascono le armonie e le disarmonie."

the shaping of "man", Platina introduced a new idea, in which the circumstances of schooling should be directed towards societal improvement.

This is the first attempt within the vitae of Vittorino da Feltre to establish a larger framework for establishing erudition in the world, a move that might theoretically include the accompanying improvement of the world. Platina's theory was not very sophisticated. Nonetheless, the attempted connection with the interpersonal environment led to a change in his portrayal of the relationship between teacher and student, a relationship that had previously been described as *imitatio*. Platina abandoned the concept of *imitatio*: instead of having a student emulate the example of the teacher, the best way to learn was to bring the teacher and his ideas into the context of the student. Platina does not lead the reader much further than this, since he does not explain his ideas in any more detail, much less address the concomitant problems.

Every one of us is born with different opportunities and abilities, as Platina well knew, therefore every theoretical orientation toward reality must start with the individualization of each student's abilities. Platina implicitly justifies a positive valuing of individualization and creates a connection to the Augustinian concept of the person. The Augustinian metaphysics of the person in the interconnecting of *esse*, *nosse*, and *velle* threads its way through the whole of Western intellectual history. This interconnection between "Being", "Knowing" and "Wanting" already appears in Quintilian's theory of rhetoric, but without the fundamental addendum that man is the image and likeness of God. In Platina's text, "Being" can be read as designating the real, current state of "I am"; "Knowing" can be read as the incorporation of the past, that is, the currently available inherent and learned intellectual abilities; and "Wanting" can be read as representing the free, reflexive will that finds a standard and guide in the *modello* of the teacher rather than in coercive restraints on decision-making or separation from the self-referential giving of meaning. It becomes clear that according to Platina, we can no longer assume that Vittorino shared his own biography or life decisions with his students for their use as a model to emulate, as Petrarch had done with the compilation of his *viri illustres*. Rather, what Vittorino essentially passed on – within a certain framework predefined by wisdom and virtue – was the ability to make a decision, which each student must himself do based on reflection within the familiar areas of theory and practice, the *vita contemplative* and *vita activa*, something that is unimaginable without language and the ideal of oratory.

Unfortunately, Platina only put this view – which must be judged as new within the theory of education – into practice as far as the individuation of each person's abilities within a social framework characterized by friendship and trust, one that the person must constantly create anew. The school was therefore not only a sanctuary, but also a microcosmic incubator that was oriented toward learning and social behavior. This individualization of abilities and social competencies lead Platina to characterize a few of the students in their different offices in society.

If we accept the hypothesized presence in Platina's text of the Augustinian metaphysics of the person, we can ascertain a consequence and a significance in the form of this vita, which is distinct from the genre of the Petrarchian profane vita. We must

ask, first, the general question of why a teacher, who is characterized by a thorough portrayal of his school, is represented using the format of the *viri-illustres* series. According to Petrarch, the *viri illustres* have the task of morally guiding the reader; with Platina, the *imitatio* idea fades into the background, giving way to students' creating their own biographies, based on their own life decisions; this conception in turn leads to the replacement of the example character of the *vir illustris* with the model character, in which case the model is incorporated into students' own lives. Accordingly, the conventional biography of a famous man can no longer perform its original function; a teacher as *vir illustris* must rather – and here we can recognize Platina as a consistent thinker – provide the formal framework for one's own life decisions. For this reason, Platina's treatise on the school can be readily described, in addition to a description of its achievements, as a *vir illustris* without overly crossing the borders of the genre.

4.3 Francesco Prendilacqua's Dialogue

4.3.1 The Manuscripts and Their Dating, Publication History, and Subsequent Use

Francesco Prendilacqua's dialogue is extant in three editions and one annotated copy. They are held, in the Vatican Library in Rome, in the Biblioteca Comunale in Mantua, and in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris.[99] The edition in Mantua is the most extensive, containing additional material about one of Vittorino's students written in the margin that is not found in the other two editions.[100] The version in the holdings of the Vatican passed out of the possession of the dukes of Montefeltro and into the hands of Pope Alexander VII, finally being transferred from Urbino to Rome and into the Biblioteca Vaticana in 1657[101]; this version's decoration and provenance is in agreement with its dedication to Federico da Montefeltro of Urbino. It would appear to be the official, complete version that was dedicated and sent to the Duke of Urbino. As Oreste Antognoni (1889)[102] convincingly argued, the text

[99] Prendilacqua, Francesco: Dialogus. (a) Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>), deriving from Urbino originally; (b) Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, Lat. 6247; (c) Mantua, Biblioteca Comunale, Codex Capilupi, Man. 1374. See Eramo and Signorini (1981, pp. 313–314). Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>), often called the *Codex Vaticano,* is published without its preface in Garin (1958, pp. 552–667). A rare complete edition is Prendilacqua (1774). Extracts of the preface are in Zampetti (1981, p. 260, note 2). In 1501, the scribe Bartolomeo Sanvito from Rome transcribed a copy of the Codex Vaticano: (d) Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Patetta 380. This copy shows that interest in Vittorino da Feltre had not yet ceased at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

[100] See Sect. 2.1.

[101] See note 68.

[102] Antognoni (1889b). This is a letter by Prendilacqua to Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, dated February 1470. Prendilacqua wrote about the biography of Vittorino da Feltre for Federico that he had just

was probably composed shortly before 1470. He spoke of a letter from Prendilacqua dated February 1470, in which he described the dialogue as having been recently completed. In this letter bearing the date 1470, Prendilacqua already referred to Federico as *duca*, although he only officially received the title in 1474.[103] The fact that Prendilacqua already referred to the *conte* Federico as *duca* before he officially assumed the office weakens the argument that, because he calls Federico *duca* in the dedication, the dialogue must have been written after the year 1474. It also remains unclear when exactly the text was given to Federico. The death of Alessandro Gonzaga in 1466 constitutes the *datum post quem*[104]; the dedication pays tribute to him in such a way as to imply that his demise was the occasion for Prendilacqua's taking up his pen.

Like the other texts, the dialogue does not seem to have had any appreciable publication history. The text came to light again in 1774[105] with the edition by Lastesius and was finally translated into Italian by Giuseppe Brambilla in 1871.[106] Eugenio Garin was responsible for the last new edition of the text and translation that came out in 1958,[107] along with the other vitae. After its publication in 1774, this text was considered the most eloquent and the most highly developed study of Vittorino da Feltre; it formed the basis of Rosmini's discussion (1801).[108] Since then, the dialogue has been dealt with in the context of the other vitae. Ever since Woodward[109] judged Platina's text to be more historically reliable, scholars have generally abandoned Prendilacqua.

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finished. He titled Federico as *duca.* Officially, Federico would be made Duke only in 1474; Rosmini (1801, p. 364, note [a]) refers to Muratori (1744, vol. 9, p. 518) on this point. In spite of the term *duca*, which the author used also in his dedication letter to Federico, and which would indicate a date after 1474, the letter shows that the dialogue was already finished in 1470. In the dialogue, Alessandro Gonzaga is mentioned with much affection. In fact, he is one of the protagonists of the dialogue. Alessandro died on January 1, 1466, a date much closer to 1470 than to 1474. While it is not a conclusive argument, the closeness of the date of Alessandro's death seems to suggest that the dialogue was written in its aftermath rather than a long time later. For the date of death, see Schivenoglia (n.d.). Schivenoglia is cited by Rosmini (1801, p. 352, note [a]) and Signorini (1983, p. 123, note 3), who refers to Amadei (1955, vol. 2, pp. 142–144).

[103] See note 102.

[104] See note 102.

[105] Prendilacqua (1774).

[106] Prendilacqua (1871).

[107] Garin (1958, pp. 552–667).

[108] Rosmini (1801, pp. 21–22): "Finalmente la quarta ed ultima [vita], più pregevole per avventura di tutte l'altre, è del Mantovano Francesco Prendilacqua allievo anch'egli di Vittorino."

[109] Woodward (1970, p. XXVII): "Bartolomeo Sacchi, known as Sacchi da Piadena, named Platina (<1462–1474>), is in some respects the most important of all contemporary authorities. … His position enabled him to gather minute and accurate information upon all details of subject and method adopted by Vittorino."

4.3.2 Sender and Addressees

A thorough look at the life and achievements of Francesco Prendilacqua can be found in works by Rosmini (1801),[110] Antognoni (1889),[111] Sandri (1941),[112] and Signorini (1983).[113] Here I will provide a brief summary of their pertinent findings.

From a petition made by Francesco Prendilacqua to the city of Verona in 1469, which was approved and granted by the city's government,[114] we know that his father, Nicolò Prendilacqua, and mother had held citizenship in Verona before moving to Mantua in 1405.[115] Francesco Prendilacqua's intention with the petition was to reacquire this old privilege.[116] According to a statement Francesco himself made in this petition, he was born in Mantua.[117] Unfortunately, he did not include his date of birth in this petition. Despite further research, it remains unknown. Several hints about his age can be found in the petition from 1469, in a letter sent to Ottaviano degli Ubaldini in 1470,[118] and from the dialogue itself. These documents tell us that his son Alessandro studied law in Ferrara in 1469,[119] that he had spent over 30 years at the side of Alessandro Gonzaga, who died in 1466,[120] and that he had been a classmate of Federico da Montefeltro in Mantua[121] for a period of 2 years some time

[110] Rosmini (1801, pp. 266–271).

[111] Antognoni (1889b).

[112] Sandri (1941, pp. 177–189).

[113] Signorini (1983, pp. 117–126). In addition, Iacopo Morelli and Natale Lastesio have edited and annotated Prendilacqua's Dialogue in Prendilacqua (1774). For this, see Morelli (1805, pp. LXVII–VIII) and Morelli (1820, vol. III, pp. 78–79).

[114] See Sandri (1941, pp. 187–188), for the original wording of the document.

[115] See Sandri (1941, pp. 188). The part reads: "recessit de Verona tempore Ducis Mediolani et se contulit ad habitandum Mantuam, ibique ipse Franciscus natus…" The year 1404 is not the date of the move, as Sandri has suggested (p. 180). Until 1405, Verona was ruled by Milan; it then came under Venician rule. The date for moving would have been after Venice took control of Verona.

[116] For the acceptance of the proposal, see Sandri (1941, pp. 188–189).

[117] See note 115.

[118] Antognoni (1889b, pp. 51–56).

[119] Sandri (1941, p. 188): "ex uxore ibi legitime asumpta filios procreavit ex quibus unus habet optimi ingenii in studio ferariensi juri civili studentem nomine Alexandrum."

[120] Antognoni (1889b, pp. 53–54): "Mortuo tandem Alexandro Gonzaga principe meo humanissimo, cum quo nostra simul fortuna sepulta est, confugi ad veteres amicos Ciceronis: ita enim appellare solet studia litterarum, quae iam longo intervallo a nobis intermissa quasi quodam postliminio restituta sunt, neque nos, percusso pastore nostro, dispersos atque afflictos in tanto luctu nostro deseruerunt: nam, ut fieri solet, cetera cum fortuna fugiendo abiere. Quid enim durius cogitari potuit quam optimum vitae ducem, in quo tanquam in portu amoenissimo omnes animi nostri labores ac molestiae conquiescebant, minimo temporis momento a nobis evanuisse? Atque eo gravior calamitas fuit, quod illum multa nobis optantem atque etiam non obscure parantem repentino atque improviso casu infeliciter amisimus: in quo uno colendo atque observando vix exprimere sine multis lacrimis possumus. Anni super triginta consumpti erant. O fallacem spem et inanes labores nostros! Igitur avaritiam atque ingratitudinem multorum experti sumus, qui certe grati esse debuerunt. Sed haec satis."

[121] Antognoni (1889b, p. 51).

around 1433[122] (if we can rely on Bernardino Baldi). It would not be far-fetched to assume a birth year of roughly 1420 or slightly thereafter.

It is plausible, based on Francesco's statements, to believe that he was the secretary to Alessandro Gonzaga until the latter's death in 1466, after Gonzaga and his brothers had assumed the marquisate of Mantua following their father's death in 1444. Prendilacqua's despondency after the passing of Alessandro, with whom his personal and professional fate seemed to be so closely tied, would suggest as much.[123]

The text itself is a letter accompanying the gift of a book to Federico da Montefeltro, sent via the intermediary Ottaviano degli Ubaldini.[124] Antognoni interpreted this gift as an act of job-seeking on Francesco's part[125]; Francesco made it very clear that he was in straitened circumstances, and perhaps he also endeavored to create a feeling of sympathy by sending a reminder of their shared school days.

It is therefore apparent that the author made two attempts to advance his career outside of Mantua, which could be put down to his difficult professional situation, as he himself suggested. First, he applied for citizenship in Verona in 1469; second, he made contact with the court of Urbino and presented his plight wrapped prettily in the laborious dialogue. At this point, a parenthetical remark is in order: In the dialogue, two figures are personally addressed. One is Federico da Montefeltro, to whom the dialogue is dedicated; the other is Antonio Beccaria, his friend from Verona[126] who had to return there from England after a stroke of bad fortune – his patron had died. Beccaria received an encomium overflowing

[122] Franceschini (1970, p. 540), with reference to a statement published by Bernardino Baldi in 1603, see Baldi (1824); see also Franceschini (1970, p. 540, note 42). The reliance on Baldi as the sole source leads to the conclusion that no contemporary source is known. The information should be therefore treated cautiously.

[123] See note 120.

[124] Antognoni (1889b, pp. 54–55): Venio ad vitam Victorini, quam tandem scripsi cum essem otiosus, si tamen otium est maximo in dolore vivere. Quanquam tardior in ea[m] mittendo sum, nam est multo ante absoluta et, si importunitas temporum passa est, afferre cupiebam; ego hanc multis de causis Federico principi nostro illustrissimo dicavi: quae a nobis explicatae sunt in ea quam ad eius Excellentiam mittimus epistola. Quae tamen omnia mittenda prius ad te censui, tanquam ad sapientissimum Apollinis oraculum ut tuo iudicio confirmata, si ita iudicaveris, in forum prodeant. … Quare te oratum etiam atque etiam cupio ut pro tua in omnes clementia diligenter legas et consideres omnia: si minus ineptiae nostrae probabuntur, igni committas".

[125] Antognoni (1889b, p. 59); also Sandri (1941, pp. 177–178).

[126] In the earlier Vatican copy of Prendilacqua's dialogue, two readers are addressed directly: Federico da Montefeltro (Prendilacqua [<1469–1470>, f. 1r–3r] [Preface, which is not printed in Garin (1958)], Prendilacqua [<1469–1470>, f. 38r–v] [Garin (1958, pp. 614–616)]), to whom the book is dedicated, and Antonio Beccaria, in Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 41r–v) (Garin (1958, p. 620)). Beccaria, who therefore might have been a known reader of the manuscript, was, according to Rosmini (1801, p. 375), at Verona at the time. A compilation of the dates connected with Beccaria is in Sandri (1941, pp. 181–184).

with sympathy.[127] This personal address could indicate that a copy of the text was intended for Prendilacqua's Veronese friend.[128]

Rosmini, who had access to more archival material than is available today, also learned in verbal communication with Camillo Volta that, after the death of Alessandro Gonzaga, Prendilacqua became the educator of Lodovico Gonzaga's sons; after the death of Lodovico in 1478, he became the secretary of Margaret of Bavaria, the wife of Marquis Federico, Lodovico's eldest son.[129] After her death in 1479, he became secretary to the Doge of Genoa,[130] but declared in 1483 that he wished to return to his native city – whether he meant Mantua, where he had resided his entire life, or Verona, his later choice, remains unclear.[131] No other documents have come down to us.

In addition to the dialogue of 1470, a number of shorter written texts by Prendilacqua survived, though none replicates its literary density and intellectual depth. In addition to a letter to Ottaviano degli Ubaldini in Urbino that accompanied the delivery of the dialogue in 1470, I would especially like to point out a letter written to Barbara von Hohenzollern on the death of her daughter in which Prendilacqua emphasized their period of schooling with Vittorino,[132] and a text on Francesco's rescue from drowning by his classmates while in the company of Vittorino.[133]

Both the introduction to the Vatican manuscript and the accompanying letter to Ottaviano degli Ubaldini indicate that the dialogue is addressed toward Federico da Montefeltro. Within the text, Federico and Andrea Beccaria are both personally addressed,[134] leading us to the conclusion that Beccaria, Prendilacqua's Veronese friend, was also one of the intended readers. Whether he also received a personal

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[127] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 41v): "*(5)* Aequo animo Antoni patere: quod sors dederat/eripuit. quod a Victorino acceperas uirtutem/integritatem gloriam retinuisti: *(6)* Magnos saepe uiros calamitas afflixit. *(7)* Caesar a pyratis captus est: Plato: Diogenes: Caecilius poeta serui fuere. *(8)* Socratem uenenum bibere sua uirtus compulit. *(9)* Seneca Neronis crudelitatem tulit. *(10)* Scipio exul interijt. *(11)* Difficile (mihi crede) est fortunam cum uirtute habitare: Tu tamen in patria honoratus cum hermolao tuo uiuis praesule omnium sapientissimo/liberalissimo/nobilissimo: quodque consolari maxime te debet: eloquentiae/bonarumque artium studiosissimo: ipsa enim bene dicendi ratio/atque copia tanquam hereditaria in eius familia est a francisco barbaro patruo suo relicta uiro quidem patricio/ac senatorio/rebusque gestis clarissimo/*(42r)* atque oratore elegantissimo.

[128] It seems implausible that this is the Paris copy, see Sect. 2.1 for the arguments.

[129] The latter information stems from Sandri (1941, p. 187). Is it possible that the fresco by Mantegna in the camera degli Sposi in Palazzo Gonzaga in Mantua depicts not Vittorino, but, on the contrary, Francesco Prendilaqua? Without evidence, Alessandro Magnaguti in *Vittorino da Feltre. Pubblicazione commemorativa del V centenario della morte* (1947, between pages 33 and 34) and Gregor Müller (1984, p. 1) assume that the figure dressed in black next to Lodovico Gonzaga depicts the already deceased master Vittorino. I, however, share the assumption, derived from Bellonci (1947, p. 28), that the figure was either the court priest, or, maybe, Francesco Prendilacqua, the educator of princes, who was in Mantua at the time.

[130] Sandri (1941, p. 187).

[131] Sandri (1941, p. 187) decided for Mantua in his interpretation, for the above reasons.

[132] Garin (1958, p. 729).

[133] Signorini (1983, pp. 118–122).

[134] See notes 126 and 127 in this chapter.

copy of the dialogue remains an open question. Based on the fact there are no known cases of an Italian fifteenth-century manuscript being dedicated to two patrons, each with their own copy of the manuscript, we can assume, with the aforementioned qualification, that Federico was the only addressee of the dialogue. Federico da Montefeltro was legitimized on November 27, 1424, at the age of two as son of the lord Guidantonio of Montefeltro[135] and assumed the position of lord over Urbino after the death of his brother on July 22, 1444,[136] until his own death on September 10, 1482.[137] During his childhood, he spent 2 years in the period around 1433 as a hostage in Venice. He was allowed to spend this time under the tutelage of Vittorino da Feltre in Mantua, a city allied with Venice.[138] His lordship over Urbino, crowned by his attaining the title of duke, was marked above all by military undertakings.[139] Starting in 1444, he served as *condottiero* for Francesco Sforza[140] and was later employed by the city of Florence,[141] but he transferred his services to the king of Naples in 1451.[142] As commander-in-chief of the combined armies of Naples, Milan, and Florence, he defeated the papal forces in 1469,[143] but in 1479, he fought on the side of the Papal States against Florence.[144]

This chronicle of his political activities says nothing of his domestic policies or his government, yet he was reported to have been erudite and an art enthusiast.[145] The Ducal Palace in Urbino,[146] the construction of which started in 1466 according to the latest architectural fashions, and his patronage of numerous artists and literati, including Piero della Francesca,[147] bear witness to his interest in the arts. In the preface and within the text itself, Francesco Prendilacqua emphasized the fact that Vittorino da Feltre, as a teacher of virtue and the sciences, had played a decisive role in the prince's future,[148] because both of these traits formed the foundation of

[135] Franceschini (1970, pp. 431–432).

[136] Ibid. (p. 441, note 17).

[137] Ibid. (p. 540, with reference to Baldi (1824); See also Franceschini (1970, p. 540, note 42). The reliance on Baldi as the sole source leads to the conclusion that no contemporary source is known. The information should be therefore treated cautiously.

[138] See note 137.

[139] De la Sizeranne (1979, passim); Franceschini (1970, passim).

[140] Franceschini (1970, p. 443).

[141] Ibid. (p. 456).

[142] Ibid. (p. 464).

[143] Ibid. (pp. 503–508).

[144] Ibid. (p. 528).

[145] De la Sizeranne (1979, passim) includes a much more elaborate discussion on Federico's cultural patronage of Federico than Franceschini (1970). De la Sizeranne had first published his book in 1927 without references. Contrast with Franceschini (1970, pp. 512–514; 529–540; his household is mentioned on pp. 522–523, including scholars and singers).

[146] Franceschini (1970, pp. 512–514).

[147] For the connection of Piero della Francesca with the Duke of Urbino see also Ginzburg (1994, pp. 133–186).

[148] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 1v–2r): "…quem in tuo (ut dicitur) groemio senem optime de te meritum quiescere: immo etiam tecum ex te uiuere: qui eterna rerum gestarum gloria uiues. quae

Federico's leadership and success.[149] He created a link between author and addressee by means of the teacher they had shared. The purpose of the text, which comes through even in the accompanying text to Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, is to win a place at court[150] – even Oreste Antognoni had come to this conclusion. Because of this, we must view the text critically. For it is, of course, quite probable that Prendilacqua subordinated factual knowledge to his purpose.

The digressions in Prendilacqua's account display an interest in history, whether the family history of persons[151] present or absent, or in narrating the history of the city of Mantua.[152] His tone of authority,[153] the frequent mentions

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tametsi tota tua est, propriaque abste uirtute parta: eius tam agnoscendae, atque amplectende socium, ac ducem Victorinum habuisti. hic te optimis et continentissimis moribus, ac litteris ornauit. hic te ad hanc ipsam gloriam currentem puerum suis studiis incitauit. hic tibi ad eam, qua nunc solus flores: amplitudinem, atque excellentiam quandam quasi ianuam patefecit atque ostendit. At tu tanto monitore confirmatus unum in terris numen, atque unicum bellici fulgoris decus inter homines versaris unus in arma potens." Ibid. (f. 36v) (Garin (1958, p. 612)): "hunc igitur Victorinus maxime sibi colendum susceperat agrum (ut ipse dicere gaudebat) fertilem, ac messis plenum." Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 37v) (Garin [1958, p. 614]): "quis illis laudibus, quae diuino principe dignae sunt liberalitate: clementia: magnitudine animi: sapientia, excellentior: caritate in patriam: beneuolentia in ciues: amore in suos feruentior?" Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 38r) (Garin (1958, p. 614)): "Imperium uirtute partum uirtute retinuisti. auctum, ornatumque rebus bellicis locupletasti." Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 39r–v) (Garin (1958, p. 616): "multa enim fortiter: multa sapienter: multa feliciter: multa generose abste dicta, factaque commemorari possunt: quae te nobis diuinum ac tuomet splendore gloriosum reddant: tua enim ipsa sunt tibi a natura infixa: tecum nata: tecum nutrita: nihil sibi ex his fortuna occupat: nec alium habes laudum tuarum participem [quam] Victorinum sed ita participem ut quantum tu ex eo ornamenti ceperis quod certe magnum fuit tantum ille ex tuo splendore capere uideatur. Nam quom ipse te ad hoc natum, iamque ad summa omnia paratissimum diligencia sua coluerit, illustrauerit ornaverit: tu illum diuinitate quadam ac magnitudine innumerabilium uirtutum tuarum immortalem apud posteros reddidisti."

[149] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 1r): "of our teacher." The allusion could mean that both were similar in virtue and disciplines, because they were educated by the same teacher.

[150] Antognoni (1889b, p. 59).

[151] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 15r–v): Franciscus Calcagninus, put in the mouth of Alessandro Gonzaga; ibid. (f. 16r): Poem on Theophilus, the son of Borsius of Este, presented by Alessandro; ibid. (f. 17r–19r): Raimundus Lupi, presented by Alessandro; ibid. (f. 32r–44r): Behind the mention of Lodovico and Carlo Gonzaga follows a list of students, including ibid. (f. 33v–35v): Alessandro Gonzaga, and ibid. (36r–39v): Federico da Montefeltro. The students receive acknowledgement each in a different way, and become famous for their virtue and knowledge. They have to stand tests in situations that are completely different from each other.); ibid. (f. 58v–59r): Franciscus Gonzaga, the grandfather of Alessandro; ibid. (f. 59r–61v): Gianfrancesco Gonzaga.

[152] Ibid. (f. 66v), quotes two traditions, one from hearsay, the other (his preference) according to the exact facts given by Leonardo Aretino. His preference shows his historical interest.

[153] Ibid. (f. 45v): "Ego quamdiu cum hoc sancto uiro uixi: hi testes oculi saepe fuere: quanquam innocentissimus philosophus sine ullis arbitris id ageret: neque ad eum locum quenquam tum admitteret: sed propter eam (quae mihi cum illo erat) familiaritatem: tum quod eius sanctitatis perspiciendae auidus eram) haud facile me latere poterat. Postea uero quam ab eo discessi: nam (ut tu nosti, o Alessandro) patrem tuum auctore Victorino secutus sum: tute testis esse potes: qui cum eo pernoctare solitus eras: tum ex Secretario tuo' qui perfamiliariter' atque intime eodem usus est praeceptore' ac magistro: saepenumero audiuimus." Ibid. (f. 47v–48r): "Quod ego etsi pro certo

of available documents and their locations,[154] and the stylistic use of accumulated facts[155] combine to give his account the appearance of the highest accuracy. And yet there are problems: he mentions different schools and lists subjects different from those that were recounted by Sassolo and the authors of the other vitae.[156] In a few places, he gives the impression of getting slightly carried away with his brightly colored, highly detailed descriptions. Anachronistically, his schools and subjects seem to refer back to the Greek education of the Romans, as recounted in Cicero's version of Scipio's circle. In the house of Scipio Africanus the Younger were teachers for all those disciplines that Prendilacqua also mentions.[157]

Prendilacqua deals with historical events in three ways. He works to be historically accurate, using both written and oral sources. At the same time, he generalizes

affirmare minime ausim: magna quippe res est quae non uidimus' profiteri: illud tamen audeo dicere: nullam in eo incontinentiae suspicionem fuisse:"

[154] Ibid. (f. 19v): "quamquam nonnullae Victorini sint epistolae ad familiares grauitatis quidem plenae: et auctore suo dignae. pauca etiam carmina ab eo adolescentulo edita: et casu a domesticis inuenta:" Ibid. (f. 28v): "extant non nullae ad familiares epistolae' ut tum aetas patiebatur: optime: Vitaque Agesilai ducis) quam Carolus ipse puer latinam fecit." Ibid. (f. 53r): As testimonies are named the bronzes by Pisanellos. Ibid. (f. 53v): As testimony, a text by Quiriacus of Ancona is named. Ibid. (f. 56r): "cuius ad hunc ipsum Ludovicum epistola est de contemptu rerum humanarum aurea quidem: et multi succi plena: <56v> neque auctoris sui grauitate carens. Hanc ipsius Victorini manu conscriptam' diligentissimeque seruatam tuus o Alexander Secretarius in maximis habet delitijs …" Ibid. (f. 59r): "Cuius principis acerbitatem atque iniuriam Paulus Vergerius uir eloquentissimus luculenta quidem' et graui oratione deplorauit."

[155] A list is situated next to the statement that all school disciplines would be taught (ibid., f. 31v; 65r), a second lists contains a roaster of Vittorino's students (ibid., c. 32r–44r).

[156] Compare Müller (1984, pp. 123–303). Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 31v) mentioned the installment of a second academy in addition to the school for the offspring of the Mantuan Marquess. There, he said, selected adolescents learned literature, and many erudite men acted as teachers. Later in the text, Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 65r) gives more details: "De cuius doctrina 'curaque docendi quid nunc attinet dicere? Unum hoc audisse satis erit nullum fuisse genus sapientiae: nullum doctrinae: nullum etiam leuioris artis' atque exercitationis: nullum denique quod ad mores' uitaeque honestatem pertineat cuius audiendi' ediscendique in hac Victorini achademia nulla facultas fuerit. Nam quod paulo ante a nobis dictum est' publicas' priuatasque lectiones in rethoricis: in mathematicis: in philosophicis diligentissimus praeceptor curabat: neque deerant grammatici peritissimi: dialectici: arithmerici: musici: librarii graeci' latinique' pictores: saltatores: cantores: citharedi: equitatores: quorum singuli cupientibus discipulis praesto erant sine ullo premio ad hoc ipsum munus a Victorino <65v> conducti' ne qua discipulorum ingenia desererentur: quae quom uaria' ut nostis' sint: alia alijs alteri generi' alteri labori magis accommodantur: nullum quippe honestae uitae genus abhorrebat: quod in quo quisque uellet optimus esse posset: nullamque bonam esse artem dicebat quae non bonos artifices posset reddere."

[157] For different interpretations of the circle of friends surrounding Scipio Aemilianus, called the "Scipio–circle," and the interconnected rise of the term *humanitas*, see Reitzenstein (1907); Straßburger (1966). Additional testimony for the existence of this circle can be found in Cicero, *De republica*, which was not known in the fifteenth century; and Cicero (1993a). Compare Polybius (1961–1963, pp. 1–3, 20, 28). In school, the Romans adapted and transferred Greekdom. Ziegler et al. (1979, vol. 5, coll. 38–39) provides a basic bibliography. See Oppermann (1977) for further literature on "schools;" the basic account is Marrou (1957). Vergerio (in Garin [1958, pp. 132–133] had already proposed a similar curriculum in 1400–1402.

in a transhistorical way certain repeated statements, but without linking them to particular cases. The classical theory of rhetoric describes just such an approach; normally, an example is placed at the end of the discussion to lend strength to the argument, but not necessarily to prove it empirically. Third, through his choice of subject matter, he conveys value judgments.

His historical perspective begins by reporting on Vittorino's youth, which is marked by learning, love, his first experiences as a teacher, and the founding of schools. This is followed by a description of Vittorino's time in Mantua, a time in which his self-moderation, teaching, and virtuous practices stood out. Finally, the reader learns how Vittorino's health declined as he aged, how he experienced fatigue and the slow waning of his physical needs, followed by his funeral and posthumous fame. Although Prendilacqua probably had firsthand experience of the period in Mantua, he did not enlighten his readers as to his sources for the earlier period of Vittorino's life. He did include historical anecdotes from the Mantuan period that he may have witnessed personally: the dispute between the marquis' children and Gianfrancesco Gonzaga over the way they conducted their lives during the years 1438[158] and 1442[159]; Federico da Montefeltro's time at the court of Mantua in 1433; and the war against Venice, 1438–1441.[160] The biographies of Vittorino's students – historically based personal characterizations accompanied by a catalog of works – comprise a large part of the text. If one assumes, and with good cause after the letter to Ubaldini was made public, that it was generally known that Francesco Prendilacqua held the office of secretary to Alessandro Gonzaga, then his authority as a person in a position of trust at the court must have been highly esteemed. From this, we might be able to ascertain a reason for his poor documentation: His word would simply have been as good as a document.

In comparison, the aphorisms of Vittorino that Prendilacqua cites, and which refer to Vittorino's customs in regard to his teaching, appear to be transhistorical; Prendilacqua considers Vittorino's teaching and his life conduct to be two parts of one whole. We are dealing here with generalized statements that, once placed in Vittorino's mouth, often take the form of an allegory. Vittorino's habitual conduct repeatedly brings to mind the teacher of morals and cannot be separated from it. The unconvincing, unoriginal philosophical discussions on pain and oratory (at the beginning) and appreciation (at the end), both in the form of dialogues, should also be considered transhistorical.

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[158] See Sect. 2.3, note 176.

[159] See Sect. 3.1.

[160] Coniglio (1958–1963, vol. 1, 1958, p. 451: [1437] … "il Gonzaga chiese di essere revocato dalla carica di capitano generale dei Veneziani ed il 4 luglio 1438 passò a militare per il duca di Milano". The break–up with Venice in 1438 and the change of alliance and attachment to Milan is explained in ibid. (p. 458–459, notes 21–24). Gonzaga reaches truce with Venice in 1441, however, Mantua has to pay reparations (Ibid., p. 453). Until his death in 1444, Gianfranceso would be occupied solely with innerpolitical issues. He also starts to deploy a vivid building activity.

4.3.3 Prendilacqua's Portrayal of Vittorino da Feltre

The stated purpose of Prendilacqua's text was to encompass the life of Vittorino da Feltre. The text takes the form of a dialogue, although an actual exchange between two, and then three, historical figures takes place only at the beginning and the end; the largest part of the text, the middle, covers the life and deeds of Vittorino but contains no dialogue. Only one of the three participants in the dialogue, Francesco Calcagnini, speaks in the middle section about Vittorino and his life. The vita is organized according to chronology of events and habits of behavior. The vita is larded with various digressions, such as the list of students or the biographies of the figures participating in the dialogue.

No importance is attached to the events in which the three speakers are embedded. The reader learns merely that the place where the three men happened to meet up and have a little conversation is Mantua; the exact location is not specified further. The timeframe is given only in relationship to Vittorino, the anniversary of whose death is the occasion for the dialogue.

The speakers are Alessandro Gonzaga, Raimondo Lupi, and Francesco Calcagnini. In the text, they introduce each other and their illustrious families in the form of a short *laudatio*. The dialogue begins with two separate introductory discussions, one of which addresses the question of pain as an evil and its communicability, and the other of which addresses oratory and its embellishments. The concluding dialogue discusses whether it is the listeners or the speakers who should now give thanks for what has just been heard.

The dialogue was, of course, a very common form of written discourse during the Renaissance. It made it possible to discuss controversial matters, as the figures of Alessandro Gonzaga and Raimondo Lupi do at the beginning of the text in their discussion of evaluating pain and embellishing speech. As David Marsh showed in his book *The Quattrocento Dialogue: Classical Tradition and Humanist Innovation* (1980),[161] the Platonic dialogues and the writings of Cicero are the classical models for early humanist dialogue.

The discussion of pain and eloquence at the beginning of Prendilacqua's dialogue is reminiscent of Cicero. Gonzaga and Lupi discuss whether or not pain should be considered an evil – as Cicero had commonly done – in reference to the classical schools of philosophy of Epicurus and of the Stoics. In the end, they reject both approaches in favor of a new, quattrocentist solution, one that used intersubjective communication, whose rules could then be discussed separately, to free the experiencer of pain from his subjective suffering. In time, Lupi says, good can come from pain, and all can assist in maneuvering the individual's ship through the turbulent floodwaters of life.[162] This reassuring answer provided the text-immanent reason for presenting the vita of Vittorino, whom they mourned.

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[161] Marsh (1980).

[162] Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 12r): "presto enim nautae sunt idest amici: qui etiam importuni ac rudes aliquam tamen opem ferant. *(2)* Ille uero qui solos nos oppugnat doloris uentus nimbo⁄et

As we are interested in working out the portrayal of Vittorino, the introductory and concluding conversations are only important to the extent that they are models of Vittorinian oratory. In contrast, the main section of Prendilacqua's vita is of particular importance to our analysis as it investigates three of Vittorino's central relationships: the relationship of Vittorino to his school, the relationship of the teacher of morals to his students, and finally the relationship of Vittorino to the prince.

This main section is organized into a preface, a description of Vittorino, and a chronology of his life. In the preface, Prendilacqua has Francesco Calcagnini state that Vittorino left behind no records, thereby justifying the task of reconstructing Vittorino's life. The description highlights Vittorino's familial connections, his appearance, and his behavioral characteristics. The chronology mentions his education in Feltre and Padua, his first experiences with teaching in Padua and Venice, the establishment of his school in Mantua, and finally, his death. The description of the school in Mantua is given special significance through the addition of the student biographies. The portrayal of the school addresses Vittorino's preparation and preliminary considerations before he established the school; the two generations of students; the incorporation of Vittorino's principles for life into the organization and management of the school; and finally, the considerations that structured the school's organization: didactics, the treatment of students, and the topics to be taught.

How does Prendilacqua portray Vittorino? On the one hand, the vita treats Vittorino's individual particularities; on the other, it recounts his public characteristics that could be adapted to a template of values, such as his virtues and the way he conducted his life. Prendilacqua calls him the philosopher who pleases by unselfishly speaking freely; this designation was to distinguish him from the other persons at court. Vittorino embodies the speaker who documents the truth of what has been said by leading a virtuous and modest life.

The unification of philosopher, orator, and defender of truth is reminiscent of the ideal classical orator as called for by Cato and Cicero, as well as by Quintilian: actions are more important than words. A virtuous orator speaks well naturally, but he can still improve himself through education. Prendilacqua rejects the talent of acting more consistently than his classical predecessors because of the teacher's requirement of truthfulness. And indeed, his account also embraces an ideal of the ascetic that must be called Christian, but which is modified in regard to (Aristotelian) moderation. But despite echoes of both classical and Christian oration, Prendilacqua's account does not necessarily present a connection between oratory and the humanities in the sense that education must be sought solely in verbal expression. Man has many talents that can be nurtured, Prendilacqua claims; some of them can be found in non-verbal areas, such as military service. This is the first vita on Vittorino to make this claim.

Prendilacqua's broad characterization of Vittorino as the only philosopher at court deliberately places him outside courtly life, making the question of Vittorino's relationship to the court more pertinent than in the other vitae, which characterize the teacher

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grandine permixtus facile submergit debilem/ac fluctuantem nauiculam/et omni ope destitutam. *(3)* Quidni? ubi gubernator? ubi uela? ubi remiges sunt/si soli nauigamus? idest soli dolemus."

as a model for everyone alike. Vittorino held the public office of teacher, charged with bringing knowledge and especially virtue to the court. His erudition and modest lifestyle lead him to take on the role of a prophet, to offer wise foresight undisguised by worldly desires, even in worldly matters. Prendilacqua therefore emphasizes Vittorino's incorruptible justice, his insight into human nature, and his warning of the dangerous consequences of starting a war. Compared to Prendilacqua's other descriptions of an undifferentiated mass of persons at court, he is very precise in giving the teacher a place: the teacher is a lone fighter who can express a scholarly and knowledgeable opinion relatively independently (he is often described as free). He therefore secures the appreciation of the princely family, who trust him and follow his advice.

Prendilacqua sees the teacher primarily as the bringer of virtue, particularly to the child whose will may not be the will to virtue. Because it could not be assumed that children raised in a court would acquire the good qualities of their parents, it was necessary to have a teacher of virtue who would impart asceticism and diligence as the basis of any education. In children's disputes with their parents, the teacher is the advocate for those decisions the children make that do not defy virtue. According to Prendilacqua, Vittorino was the only person not to forsake the prince's son Lodovico, who served in the Milanese army in 1438 against his father's wishes and was disinherited for it. He also defended Cecilia's decision to take the veil, according to Prendilacqua, against the political interests of her father, who had long ago betrothed her to the lord of Urbino's son, Oddantonio.[163]

As in the other vitae, Vittorino's position toward his students was characterized by his *caritas* – Christian brotherly love or charity – and considerateness. It is implied that the normally quick-tempered man restrained himself from reprimanding the children out of love for them, and that he allowed his temper to cool down before handing out punishments. He organized the school in such a versatile way that each student was supplied with something different according to his individual talents. He was proved right by success, as Prendilacqua's enumeration of students showed: Vittorino's students could be found in the highest echelons of society, covering the entire spectrum of careers available in the fifteenth century. The main characteristic of his educative work, as Prendilacqua described it, was that he always participated in his students' activities and never left them alone as a group. He saw in the togetherness of the group a meaningful way of life for himself and for his students that he could not achieve in solitude. The text sees education in every respect as a public function, one that results in an awareness of public interests.

[163] Cecilia had decided to dedicate her life to chastity, wanting to emulate her patron saint, Saint Caecilia. Only after the death of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga in October 1444, though, did she receive permission to enter a convent, as stipulated in his will. There she no longer called herself Cecilia, but took the name Clara after Saint Clare, who founded what came to be known as the Order of Saint Clare as a female counterpart to the Franciscan order. Cecilia's conflict with her father, which ended with the breaking of her engagement, has been preserved in the correspondence of Oddantonio da Montefeltro, Cecilia's fiancé. Tarducci (1897, pp. 8–44) published the relevant letters by Oddantonio, written between September 1442 and November 1442. Oddantonio released Cecilia from their engagement on September 15, 1442, but he did not send his letter to Mantua until October 17. Vittorino's reaction is described in Prendilacqua (<1469–1470>, f. 55r–v).

Preparation for private life in any form is excluded from every consideration whatsoever.

It is clear that, for Prendilacqua, career – though chosen on the basis of individual inclination – dictates the mode of life. Wisdom achieved through education and a modest lifestyle leads the individual to success within society. Prendilacqua went a step beyond Sassolo, however, in emphasizing the teacher's separate position at court, a position a majority of his students could not attain, even if they had so wished. Students must therefore find a new path to learning, which cannot be based in *imitatio*. An individual's life conduct, which varies according to his situation and talents, must be learned through practice. Vittorino's employment at court provides a motive and a justification for valuing the philosopher not merely as an example to be followed, but as an admired disciplinarian, critic, and prophet, who has a personal freedom that is not granted to any courtier, who, great or small, is compelled to pursue other interests than those related strictly to all of humanity.

4.3.4 Prendilacqua's Concept of Education

Truth sought in God assumes a central role in Prendilacqua's thinking about Vittorino da Feltre, because man's goal of achieving perfection is based in this truth. God grants wisdom only to a worthy man; but no one is worthy who is not good, and no one is good if he does not obey God. Ergo, a bad person cannot be a wise person. Worthiness is linked to the obligation of mass and Christian duties, which are defined here as charity, frugality, and selflessness. But, because it is the power of judgment that allows us to appraise life and hence to act with foresight and appropriateness, one must achieve wisdom to conduct oneself well. Prendilacqua is of the opinion that wisdom can be attained through knowledge, meaning the seven *artes*, philosophy, and holy scripture.

Demanding the use of wisdom in achieving worthiness has transformative implications for theories of education. It clears the way to consider the individual character of situations or people. I do not refer here to empirical investigations; rather, I want to call attention to the preoccupation with one's own self on the basis of the belief in the dignity of man. This perspective also allows for a discussion of situationally determined emotions such as pain and requires self-assessment of one's own nature and body, as well as of talents that will be guided by the steersman of *ratio* and filled with the contents of *ars*. The teacher should not only guide his student in the matters of knowledge and virtue, but should also help him find his individuality, which for Prendilacqua is encompassed by profession and society. Vittorino's pattern of behavior, which determined not only his methods of teaching but also his entire conduct at the court, is that of knowledgeable foresight and disciplinary moderation. He moderated extravagant behavior and brought it back to its original, human purpose, captured in such simple aphorisms as "necessary things are good things." As depicted by Prendilacqua, Vittorino rejected the necessity of desires, reaching back to Stoic ideas.

Chapter 5
Between History and Praise: Approaches on Understanding Humanist Biographies

Having considered all four vitae separately, a comparative synopsis is now in order. The question is why the four biographers – Sassolo da Prato, Francesco da Castiglione, Bartolomeo Sacchi named Platina, and Francesco Prendilacqua – took it upon themselves to write a vita of their teacher, Vittorino da Feltre. The answer can be given at various levels of justification, each of which is based on different traditions or can be explained by different customs. The *text-extrinsic level of reality* provides initial information about the external reasons that a given author might have for writing his manuscript, including the possibility of performing a service through the production of the text. From today's perspective, this alone might be motivation enough for its composition. Among the texts under consideration here, we find Sassolo's "promotional" interests and especially Francesco Prendilacqua's attempt at procuring a position with the duke of Urbino, Federico da Montefeltro, as examples of this level of justification.

Second, the *text-immanent level of reality*, identifies justifications that could be of interest to someone else, namely, the addressee. The form of the letter bears witness to the author's intention. This level of justification explains the social contexts and values identified in each of the letters, for instance the emphasis on the Dominican context in Francesco da Castiglione's account or the context of the court in Prendilacqua's.

In the vitae, the figure of the teacher appears as an example within a larger context that is determined by an underlying normative or philosophical framework: philosophical ideas on a theory of education (Sassolo), a view of school traditions (Platina), or a particular view of ethical considerations (Castiglione). Only Francesco Prendilacqua's text introduces the figure of Vittorino not as a model for the reader and the student, but instead as a guide on the path to virtue in fields that the students would choose for themselves.

The personal teacher-student relationship that is discussed in each of the texts may be understood as the negotiation of identity. In the external principle of *imitatio*, which was conceptualized in different ways by each of the authors of the vitae, we see the projection of the self onto its perfected form. *Imitatio* is

A.-S. Goeing, *Summus Mathematicus et Omnis Humanitatis Pater: The Vitae of Vittorino da Feltre and the Spirit of Humanism*, Archimedes 33,
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founded primarily in a teleological thinking that has the format of a biography. We can plausibly suggest that this conceptualization is a further development of Petrarch's ideas.

The search for an *ars vitae*, the art of life, was based on rhetoric as a system of justification and had its most prominent advocate in Petrarch; it was closely connected with classical literature because that tradition privileged worldly ethics and teleological ethics to a much greater extent than did Christian moral philosophy. As Eckhard Kessler showed,[1] Petrarch had already transformed an ethical emphasis on ends into an ethics that emphasized the individual's own striving: man makes his own history through situationally determined actions that are more goal-oriented than principled. Petrarch, however, could not claim that one should ultimately form oneself in the world, as demonstrated by his famous ascent of Mont Ventoux, during which a look out over the world prompted a look inward to the Augustinian inner person, into the halls of memory.

The image of the person searching for his moral self within his self-created history, in which experience of the self and of humanity enter into a very close relationship, would henceforth be further developed in other, more intimate directions. Each individual person creates an image for himself along a personal-general axis by projecting himself, as it were, onto his target person. Petrarch sought to divide the self into its inner being and the history of humanity; in contrast, the authors of the vitae of Vittorino da Feltre attempted to create, in the image of their teacher, the epitome of a "good person" who could equally thrive as a "philosopher" at court. The self-projection of all of the authors into the vitae goes back to their personal pasts and rests on their personalities, which are characterized as the source of their intellectual development. The individual authors of the vitae compare themselves to and – in case there is any doubt – legitimize themselves through their biographies.

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Do we think of the relationship between history and biography differently if we read the vitae comparatively? The four vitae of Vittorino da Feltre that have been at the heart of this study provide the scholar with a special opportunity to compare a series of lives that focus on a single subject, written by biographers who were of similar origins, all coming from the same writing school. This enables us to undertake a proper comparative analysis, because so many distracting side effects – the different writing schools that might have influenced authors, or the different subjects that might have demanded a different approach by the biographer – do not apply to the case of Vittorino's vitae.

Despite their common subject, all of Vittorino's biographers, though they combined information about his work and conduct, differed in their accounts. Each biographer drew on different material to fit his biography of Vittorino into a variety of literary traditions, including Ciceronian dialogue and epistolary style, the lives of the martyrs, and Plutarchian *viri illustres*. In every case the story of Vittorino's life reflected the author's current position in church and state.

[1] Kessler (1978, pp. 112–113).

Although all the vitae provided important information about the life of Vittorino, their greatest concern was with an overall principle of conduct, based on ethics – hence their pervasive moral tone. This moral vision was twofold: one part always contained Christian *caritas*, in its different forms; the other always embodied an idea of knowledge or wisdom, based on the school readings, and what was useful in politics. What constituted *caritas* or knowledge varied, however, from vita to vita, as did the relation between the two parts.

Similarly, the biographers of Vittorino wrote different accounts of his work, the school and his students, conveying to the reader very different goals ranging from a narrow emphasis on learning to read ancient texts and compose oratory, to a broader curriculum that included painting and sports. The latter studies would lead to a life in court, the former to a profession in a chancellery as a scribe.

One key issue in the vitae's accounts of education was the degree of freedom that Vittorino accorded students and how this contributed to the school and its pedagogy. Of the four vitae, only Sassolo and Prendilacqua described students who were empowered to make their own decisions, protected from the intrusion of their parents' interests and opinions by Vittorino himself. But even here there were distinctions among the accounts. While Sassolo presented Vittorino as the ultimate ideal of what students should aim toward, Prendilaqua rendered their decision-making more subtle, maintaining that the students needed to find their own formulae for how to live. Vittorino's task as a teacher was to guide their way, enabling them to make better choices.

All these differences point to the fact that Vittorino's biographers did not take over the style of writing history that characterized the biographies of Leonardo Bruni, as scrutinized by Gary Ianziti.[2] Where Bruni presumably would have written an account based on a critical comparison of texts, Sassolo da Prato, Francesco da Castiglione and Francesco Prendilacqua write in the classical tradition as eye-witnesses, and Platina writes from inside an oral history. Prendilacqua as well as Platina mix eye-witness accounts with textual remnants by providing more information: both include lists of other students, their writings, and school readings. Textual remains thus add to, but do not critically revise, their observations. However, the vitae have one aspect in common with Bruni that renders them similar in their goals. All of the accounts are aimed toward creating a towering figure within the context of authors and their ideal readers, based on historical events; all of the authors selected and manipulated historical evidence to serve their needs.[3]

We can ask this question another way by comparing the historical accounts of Vittorino's pupils with Lorenza Valla's much-criticized vita about the life and deeds of Ferdinand of Aragon.[4] Like Valla's critics, the authors of Vittorino's vitae would have preferred the cleaned-up version of Valla. Where Valla depicted Ferdinand's torn psychology, the vitae conflate Vittorino with his office (though each in a different way).

[2] Ianziti (2012, Kindle Location 177).

[3] Ianziti (2012, Kindle Location 619).

[4] See Chap. 1.

We don't know why these biographies were never printed during the Renaissance period, but they may have remained in manuscript because of the limited audience that they were originally intended to address, one that, as we have seen, did not extend much beyond the circle of Vittorino's pupils and the court of Mantua. Certainly, the circle of addressees was smaller than that of the biographies of the popes or the biographies of the holy Antonino, and was not as extensive as that for the translation of the vitae of Plutarch, which went into print in 1470, shortly after the installation of the first printing presses in Rome.[5]

Vittorino da Feltre's vitae must be set within a broader frame of biographical writings, starting with Petrarch and ending with a series of biographies of famous artists written by Giorgio Vasari and published between 1550 and 1568. In an overview article, "Biography and Autobiography in the Italian Renaissance" (2002), Martin McLaughlin draws a vivid picture of what happened in this time period in Italy. He differentiates three main types of biographical writing: the collections of lives in the *viri illustres* tradition, the individual biography, and finally, the autobiography.[6] In all three, Petrarch was largely the guiding figure to revived forms and styles from antiquity. According to McLaughlin, the first author to include contemporaries in his *De viris illustribus* was the Florentine humanist Filippo Villani, who wrote his *De origine civitatis Florentie et de eiusdem famosis civibus* around 1395. Villani did not include humanists who were only teachers in his list of famous Florentines; instead, all who were included were poets in at least the broad sense of intellectuals producing literature; he also added semi-poets, who could be "minor writers, mathematicians, musicians, and painters;" and military leaders.[7] McLaughlin shows that the categories opened up during the next 150 years to include other secular offices important in urban life, such as the merchant in Landino's proemium to Dante's *Divina Commedia* (1481),[8] which contained a list of famous Florentine people of the two past centuries. At the same time, the categories of poet and semi-poet changed to include not only writers, but also readers and performers: erudite eloquence in affairs of state was of crucial importance to this new development.[9] At the end of the fifteenth century, Vespasiano da Bisticci was the first to definitely include teachers, among them Vittorino da Feltre, in his "uomini illustri"-series of 1480–1496. Vittorino was included because of his erudition, his qualities as a teacher of all seven liberal arts, Greek, and Christian humility-based customs, and finally, the fact that a great number of future leaders in state and church emerged from his school.[10] However, according to McLaughlin, it was a different type of professional, the visual artist, who underwent the steadiest elevation in status. While Fillippo Villani had characterised visual artists as a type of minor, semi-poet, Landino categorized

[5] Plutarchus (1470).

[6] McLaughlin (2002, p. 38).

[7] McLaughlin (2002, p. 41).

[8] See Sect. 3.2.

[9] Ibid. (pp. 41–42).

[10] Vespasiano da Bisticci (1970, 1976, vol. 1, pp. V–VII; pp. 573–580 [*vita Victorini*]).

them with the poets, and Giorgio Vasari (1966–1997) placed them at their own pinnacle when he wrote a collection of biographies of visual artists creating their own tradition, independent from poets.

Revising the tradition of the individual biography, McLaughlin observes that, "after Bruni, Renaissance biographies of writers become even more hagiographic: there is now not even any criticism of the works, never mind the character, of the subject."[11] His observations chiefly concern the biographies written about Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. McLaughlin concludes his analysis of the individual biography with the observation that "by the early sixteenth century, the critical spirit of a century before has gone, the poet is praised both in human and in artistic terms."[12] Vittorino's biographers are among these rather uncritical authors of the second half of the fifteenth century, whose accounts primarily offered praise – an analysis that fits well with McLaughlin's observations.

One question remains to be answered: If the "autobiographical elements" are why these vitae are important for fifteenth century history of biography, what is the context to which these self-referential parts of the writings belong, and to what extent do the vitae contribute to the history of mentalities in a broader sense?

To what genre do the vitae belong? My suggestion is to see them not only as biographies, but also as instances of the German term "Selbstzeugnis", self-testimony, a terminology that was recently refined and developed by Sabine Schmolinsky.[13] All Lives are self-testimonial because they provide information about values that the authors developed, mixed with reports of events affecting others.

To use the term "autobiography", would be wrong, because the vitae were not strictly autobiographies. In Italy after Petrarch, autobiography emerged as a subgenre of biography.[14] Autobiographies would record data about the author chronologically and develop a narrative along these lines. None of the authors of the vitae of Vittorino did so; they only inserted lively accounts of themselves, and most important, of their value systems, into the treatise.

In addition to the term "self-testimony" as Schmolinsky classified it, there are groups of scholars in European history who refer to the self-referential statements as "ego-documents". Both terms, "ego-document" and "self-testimony", are synonymously used, as Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack have described in their theoretical article on the relation between the "social self" and ego-documents in early modern times (2010). The terms refer to "a source or 'document' – understood in the widest sense – providing an account of, or revealing privileged information about, the 'self' who produced it."[15] It is certainly possible to describe the vitae as ego-documents. Seen from this perspective, the vitae would then be the earliest point on the timeline for comparison with other, later ego-documents, because the researchers who use the term are all scholars of early modern history. This term

[11] McLaughlin (2002, p. 55).

[12] Ibid. (p. 56).

[13] Schmolinsky (2012).

[14] Enenkel (2008); McLaughlin (2002); Misch (1949–).

[15] Fulbrook, Rublack (2010, p. 263).

assignment would therefore only make sense if we wanted to emphasize later developments. Since, however, we are pointing in this book back towards the medieval traditions of biographies, whether in the legends of the saints, or the roots of a humanistic art of writing, the emphasis on the medieval past that is alluded to with the term self-testimony, makes more sense.

Schmolinsky uses "self-testimony" to pose a concluding question about the history of mentalities, that is especially interesting for our account of the vitae, because she raises issues about the different approaches to values of human life. According to Schmolinsky, two main forms of self-testimony shape the meaning of medieval self-referential writing: the self-denomination, when the author identifies himself, and the testimony of presence, when the author indicates she has witnessed the happenings she is writing about. For the latter, Schmolinsky derives her main examples from two kinds of texts, the letter as self-testimony par excellence, and the biography with authorial inserts, what she calls an "inserted self-testimony".[16]

The vitae of Vittorino da Feltre point to a trend that emerged in these early examples, but showed its blossoms only in later medieval biographical writing. When writers in fifteenth century Italy started to pin down biographies about people they knew personally, they were in control of both the evidence by self-testimony, and the story with its moral account. This raises the question of whether these individual stories add up to something like a network of individual value systems in fifteenth century Europe, as approaches like Roger Chartier's cultural history of mentalities would suggest.[17] The account of the various testimonies of Vittorino da Feltre's life and work brings to the surface another question crosslinked to the idea of a network of belief connecting various people from various countries: How does this network of belief incorporate the traditions of writing cultures in print and manuscript format? Both questions could be answered, if we observed not individual scholars, but focused on the dynamics and the reach of groups of scholars, especially those who were like the students of Vittorino da Feltre in the frontlines to orchestrate the move from manuscript to print culture.

The analysis I have offered here could be developed further with more work on the students of Vittorino. The recovery of their poems and epitaphs, mathematical propositions, and translations from the Greek, is becoming easier as many libraries and archives open up their drawers and digitize materials. As this study has made clear, our sense of the work and importance of Vittorino is very much mediated through the writings and work of his pupils. As we unearth more and more of their material, so our sense of the contribution of Vittorino to Renaissance humanist education will be amplified and enriched.

[16] Schmolinsky (2012, pp. 86–117 (letters), pp. 117–129 (biographies with inserted self-testimonies).

[17] Chartier (1988).

Chapter 6
Appendix: The Letter of Sassolo da Prato About Vittorino, Translated into English by James Astorga

The following translation bases on a critical reading of the Florentine manuscript,[1] in comparison with its transcriptions published by Cesare Guasti[2] and Eugenio Garin.[3] It is part of a larger project: A critical edition of all four vitae by Anja Goeing and Sabine Schmolinsky, with translations into German (Goeing, Schmolinsky) and English (James Astorga) is in preparation. Square brackets […] indicate inserts by the translator, either comments, folio numbers of the Florentine manuscript, or the original Latin word. The latter was necessary for the terms "humanitas", "disciplina", and "bonae artes", for which a literal translation is deemed impossible without losing part of the original content.

[Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>, f. 42r)]

Since I was challenged by a certain person, who (in my estimation) is the best friend of both of us (I make no mention of him by name, as I am thinking of his reputation), I recently wrote about the life and teaching of my teacher Victorinus of Feltre. I did not write it in an historical or rhetorical manner – the undertaking of which, as you know, is accustomed to be by far the most difficult task for the most refined and learned men themselves, let alone for me, since I have scarcely any idea what it is to speak in Latin. I just wanted to satisfy a friend, however I was able, and to show the rest of the youth eager for virtue and culture a source, as it were, from which they could easily imbibe whatever they wanted. Therefore I am sending to you the fruits of my late-night's work, so that you may bring it to public notice, show it, and allow it to be read, if it seems right to you. But not to every one. Certainly the most refined and sophisticated of our countrymen would perhaps scorn this work of ours, not unjustly, as "small-town," crude, and reeking of the cow pasture, so to speak [pun on his name affix "Pratense"]. Still I don't care to be read by those who have decided to use up their whole life in hunting down recherché expressions. Although they themselves have proved to be awkward, careless, rough

[1] Sassolo da Prato (<1443–1444>).

[2] Sassolo da Prato (1869).

[3] Garin (1958, pp. 504–532).

A.-S. Goeing, *Summus Mathematicus et Omnis Humanitatis Pater: The Vitae of Vittorino da Feltre and the Spirit of Humanism*, Archimedes 33,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-7531-2_6, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2014

and unfocused in their own writing and composition, I, nevertheless, don't know how their judgment is so rotten and contemptuous that they can't read anything without measuring and testing the words by weight – words which have been arranged with a T square and individually glued together.

So let my whole speech be directed towards those, who, though they have some experience in the power and choice of words, [Ibid., f. 42v] not being content with this, they desire to join wisdom to eloquence as its teacher. Obviously, each one endowed with moderate talent and who has embarked upon the path and the system of Victorinus's teaching will without a doubt pursue wisdom. Behold the ancient Greeks and our own people who have been educated and trained by that wisdom, they have made the memory of their name immortal. Would that our citizens seek it, since out of every one their talents (may everyone else forgive me for this) are most suited for every kind of cultural endeavor. Though indeed throughout the whole world the name and the seed of poets has been extinguished and destroyed in our country, two have suddenly come forth: Dante and Francesco Petrarch. They are most well trained in all fine arts, as can be produced in these times without knowledge of Greek. Even though Gothic barbarism had thoroughly befouled that ancient Roman vitality of speech, our countrymen first have attempted to recall it to its former health. I mean Boccaccio, Coluccio and the rest who then followed them. Since they saw that without the reliance on Greek letters our literature could not entirely be rehabilitated, they first brought Greek back from Greece to Italy after an 800 year exile. In addition through their efforts it seems that even now it is nearly the exclusive distinction of our state to write in the Roman manner. Likewise painters, who seem to have a common bond with the poets, have flourished – especially two, nearly equal to Dante: Giotto and Agnolo [Gaddi]. In their case it is easy to recognize how great was the ingenuity and elegance of this type of art from their paintings, [Ibid., f. 43r] which are still admired by all, especially when you consider that the paintings of the rest of their contemporaries are so dreadful. Even up to our time they are so perfect and polished in composition and painting that it seems that they could rival the well known ancients: Apelles, Protogenes, Phidias, and Lysippus. Now as for the remaining branches of knowledge, such as medicine and law, which we have in common with the rest of the nations, it is notable how many leaders our state has produced.

What if they took up Victorinus's style of teaching, that is to say if they joined mathematics, music, and philosophy itself (the origin and source of all arts) with the art of speaking? Don't you think that then there will also be orators in our country someday? Unless perchance you say that our men lack facility of tongue, the sound of voice, in short all manner of delivery and all the other gifts of nature. But surely all these things are preeminently present.

Now let us take up the following two points: the one concerns bad teachers, the other concerns parents. First, since bad teachers are ignorant of all the fine arts, they are unable to teach them to their students. Secondly, parents are the bane of their children. Since they are blinded by the most shameful desires, they cannot see the splendor of virtue. Indeed, is there a father today who brings his children either to rhetoricians, or mathematicians, or philosophers, so that they may be made better by

them, and attain praise and glory? They all hate literature. But they admire and love law and medicine, in as much as they are the tools most suitable for money-making. Indeed they contend that the study of the rest of the arts is a short-cut to [Ibid., f. 43v] disaster. Yet this is not just the strong opinion of the ignorant masses. A more shameful thing must be endured. It is philosophers, I say, the very instructors of wisdom and the teachers of virtue, who allow their own children to apply their minds to the basest occupation they want – not to mention any servile service, rather than to devote their attention to the studies most fit for free men. Oh these wretched times! Oh what age we are in! What should I call it, Leonardo? Should I call it an age of iron, in which there is nothing except weakness, laziness, and slothfulness? But we make no progress from our indignation. Now the salvation that would come from our ancestors is exceedingly hopeless, due to the antiquity of the disease. So let us instead exhort our children and youth excited by the pursuit of virtue and literature to be convinced that this itself is piety: to oppose the will of (bad) parents of this type and to cultivate virtue. If they should ask me, they will avoid not only conversation with them, but also their sight, as if they were royalty. Furthermore they will go to Victorinus, the best common parent of all the studious. They will be received by him with such generous hospitality (believe you me) that they will not miss their homeland and family so acutely. Besides, they will have the greatest access to whatever interested them. They will especially have an abundance of books both of our authors and of the Greeks. They will not only have one teacher, Victorinus, but many others clearly suitable and learned, whenever they want. And they will be allowed to listen to those who constantly read these very studies: oratory, mathematics, and philosophy. In order that [Ibid., f. 44r] they understand how to join Greek studies with Latin (which Cicero recommended to his son), that here also among us it is possible to do this most suitably, we have recently acquired Theodorus [Gaza], A Greek from Thessalonica, who is not only learned, but also the leading expert of this age in his language.

But I think that I have already given enough encouragement to the studious. Now, Leonardo, it is up to you to hold out our friend, Victorinus (whom we have just discusses in brief) to be viewed and imitated by the youth. And if, as I hope, some will be inspired by this, each of us will earn our just desserts from our country. But enough of this.

Moreover, about your friend Giovanni Arretino, I urge you to have good expectations, since he is strong in talent and is aflame with zeal, is loved by Victorinus, and is diligently educated. I also for my part shall offer him and do offer him, if not just the things that I owe, at least what I can, for your sake. Farewell.

Sassolo da Prato to his friend about the life and teaching of Victorinus da Feltre

Out of those many letters of yours (nearly infinite, in fact), which you sent to me after my departure from you, all of them were most pleasing and most agreeable, as I often very eagerly read and reread them. But these recent ones, written in response to my letters, struck me as so unpleasing and so disagreeable that I was not even able to read them once and then, to be sure, not without aggravation. I had written to you [Ibid., f. 44v] about my studies. I had the greatest leader and professor of

these studies, Victorinus. I was most diligently trained by him not only in philosophy, but also in the rest of the most important arts: arithmetic, geometry, and music. You accused me with clearly very serious and bitter words, calling me a traitor and deserter of my kin, most ungrateful to my parents, who deserved only the best from me. Although I ought to have taken thought for their reputation even though they are dead, I so impiously neglected it, by being a slave to these arts, which will prove to be the destruction of me and mine. Finally you complained about the abandonment of my sisters, and the bereavement and death of my whole family. You said all these things in a rhetorical and tragic manner and, as I interpret it, in a friendly and kindly way. But it was certainly with too little consideration. Indeed it was written in an absolutely shameless and impertinent manner, because you cast such foul aspersions against the most noble and upstanding arts. You said that arithmetic must be left to craftsmen, and moreover that music had first been discovered by shepherds, and afterwards had been perfected and refined in brothels by whores. There is nothing so inimical and hostile to the pursuit of literature than asserting this. You added a third thing (and while I was reading it I couldn't contain my laughter despite my anger) that you didn't know what kind of man Victorinus himself is and what is the method of his teaching. Well, since it is characteristic of old age to be deranged, and since Victorinus is already at that time of life, you say that you are afraid that this affliction is affecting him, and that he was making me crazy and deranged along with him. I reacted more vehemently that such a perverse and idiotic opinion had befallen you, because you have consumed a very great part of your life in these studies, which display by their very name the knowledge of the liberal arts [bonae artes].

[Ibid., f. 45r]

Tell me, what else is culture [humanitas]? Aren't you trying to overturn and topple the very tools of culture? Weren't the intellects of children especially instructed in this way by the most learned of the ancients in arithmetic, geometry and music? They used to think that by these things their minds were most appropriately educated, informed and embellished for the rest of human studies. But if you have never touched these studies themselves, because you were not able to see how great their usefulness was, nevertheless you ought to be moved to think better of them on the authority of the one man you esteem, Cicero. He always had the highest opinion of mathematics, especially since he said those who understood it have been the only ones called learned by the ancients. Now I fear that you only love his appearance, but neglect his essence. But you are unaware that if the essence has been removed, the appearance itself cannot at all thrive or exist. And since these things are so, I have resolved that it is characteristic of our friendly relationship, not to allow, in as much as I can, you to persist in such a great error any longer.

So I was writing about the things, which you say you don't know about the character and life of my friend Victorinus, and about his instruction and teaching (which I do briefly, so that I may not seem to have wanted to make an encomium; since that has not been requested). I do believe that all these things will be approved by you (unless perchance through the fault of time you have been changed, as if by a drink from Circe, into an ox with all your humanity removed), so that you will not only say that Victorinus is a most upright and holy man, but also a most wise teacher and

furthermore that his teaching is above all the one direct path to virtue; and so that hereafter you will not make accusations against me, but rather congratulate me, because it happened that I acquired so great a guide in the most turbulent storms of my life. [Ibid., f. 45v] But examine Victorinus himself now.

Consider Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, a prince not so outstanding for his good fortune as for his virtue, since the majority of his deeds and words have been performed wisely. Further what must chiefly be admired is that in such a great fog of the worst times, he is virtually the only one out of all the princes that has the perspicacity to see that virtue is very much the only thing that can not only enhance and glorify a prince, but can even to a remarkable extent stabilize and fortify his rule. Since he himself has always greatly striven to pursue it, he thus has seen to it with the greatest care and diligence that his sons attained it. After he had heard of the unwavering reputation of Victorinus's incredible virtues, he thought that this man must be enticed to come to him by whatever manner or terms possible. After Victorinus was so respectfully summoned that he could demand whatever he wanted, he would obtain everything from him if he came. What do you think he bargained for? Was it gold, which he always despised and considered nothing? Observe an outstanding soul! He only demanded that he could enjoy a father's rights and power over his sons and a free rule over the servants. It was because he looked to the example of Plato, that the state is blessed because of the wisdom of its princes. He also saw that he could facilitate their acquisition of wisdom, if they had learned to attend to their duty and if they had learned to obey the best habits and teachings from the earliest age.

Indeed the wisest of teachers was in no way frustrated in this hope. In fact who has not heard the name of Lodovico or Carlo Gonzaga, when Italy could not contain the glory of their fame? Through them the military and imperial virtue of old seemed to revive, especially since among so great a multitude of soldiers, [Ibid., f. 46r] they almost alone have learned how to keep their word, to attack the enemy, to shirk no danger to their life, when it is a matter of duty or glory, and to endure bravely and patiently inconveniences, difficulties, annoyance, and all military hardships. These virtues should seem all the more admirable because they were able to be retained amidst such great treachery of the most wicked brigands, the great iniquity of the most foul pimps, and, I might say, the greatest weakness and cowardice of those helmeted whores. Indeed why should I call them soldiers, when there is nothing soldierly about them except their arms? Giovanni Lucido and his brother Alexander have also been trained in mind and spirit so, I may truly predict, that they someday will be a bulwark and support of the fine arts. What shall I say about Cecilia? She has been so well educated in literature that she rightly seems to be able to be counted among those famous highly cultured women of old: the Mucias, and Cornelia, and the daughters of Laelius and Hortensius. Her mind has been truly fortified by such strength of virtue that she ought to be called quite the bravest man rather than a woman. Although she is indeed upstanding in age, most attractive in beauty, most well endowed in all the attributes of nature and fortune, yet because she has spurned and despised these things, has chosen perpetual virginity for herself. She delights only in the following: constantly reading scripture, keeping vigilant in God, and in

praying. Finally let her now declare that she is the keenest rival of the famous [St.] Cecilia, whose virginity has been so renowned. No one includes themself as a partner of this praise with Victorinus. They had one instructor, one master, one tutor, one educator, and that was Victorinus. Since I have said these things, it seems that I have given enough of a demonstration of the most outstanding talent and remarkable virtue of this man. [Ibid., f. 46v] I don't doubt that each one, who knows well what it takes to be a prince, will thus judge, how difficult it is to approach virtue.

But since I desire that you extricate yourself from the mire, in which you are so sordidly wallowing, I shall set forth his virtues a little more extensively and I shall start especially from what he himself always considered to be the first thing in life – devotion to religion and piety toward God. Indeed he worships and venerates God in such a way that he most assiduously observes all things that have been prescribed for a Christian man: consolation of the afflicted, elevation of those who have been laid low, healing of the sick, aiding wretched paupers, and bringing as much assistance as he could to all those who struggle. Indeed he daily puts these acts into practice so willingly, it is as if he has persuaded himself that the whole human race is his family and that he is a blood parent to all in common. In fact he has taken in wards to be defended and protected: some have been entrusted to him by their parents, others he has taken up willingly by himself. He treats them with such love and kindness that they merely grieve the loss of their parents, but they do not notice it. He ransoms foreigners from chains, clothes and feeds them, even though most often unknown to him and has never seen them before. What shall I say about the marriage arrangement of daughters? He arranges marriage-alliances with such attention and care that you would say that he is affected by greater worry than his own children are. Moreover in caring for the sick he is endowed with an incredible attentiveness beyond everyone else, not only in bringing in doctors and medicines to help but also by offering his own attention to them. He does this with such presence of mind and quickness of perception, that the patients themselves admit that they are no less relieved by the sight of Victorinus that by the remedies of the doctors.

Moreover, whom shall I prefer to him in his zeal and desire for human education? Should it be those literary hucksters? [Ibid., f. 47r] I should have done my friend Victorinus a terrible disservice if I thought that he should be compared to them in any thing. Let them hunt and catch the rich and wealthy. Let them fill their treasure chest that they so love. In education our friend should not even be compared with Socrates, but justly should even be preferred to him. Socrates only educated the youth for free. Victorinus not only educates them for free, but also discharges the duty of the best and kindest parent in every thing else. How huge is his family! We number about 40 at most, yet all are nourished and clothed out of his own pocket. Oh the amazing generosity of Victorinus! or should I rather say his high-mindedness and generosity! The man doesn't even own so much as a clod of dirt, yet he surpasses the most valuable possessions and wealth of millionaires. It could truly be said of him that though he has nothing, he has everything. They should be ashamed! Yes, those fortunate friends of yours should be ashamed, who, though they have mountains of gold in income, gripe about supporting a useless man of letters at leisure in their home. Where is that magnificence of theirs, about

which they boast daily? Is it in herds of horses or pack mules? Who does not see how they themselves are also similar to those mules, since they think that cattle are worth far more than humans? But what attention or regard does he give to such things? Do you think you should have called men of that sort your friends, if once they have invited me to dinner, they should think that they have the right to have the power of life and death over me. This man, I say, by pursuing duty for itself and not a reward for his service, gives with such an intent that he seems either to give nothing – or not so much to give as to receive.

What shall I say besides this about his fortitude? He accepts and endures the deaths of those dearest to him, as well as every other severe blow of misfortune so bravely, that it is as if he doesn't feel a thing. Likewise he bears the injuries not only of his enemies, but even of those closest to him, even though he has taught them, educated them, raised them up with honor, [Ibid., f. 47v] and ennobled them with every praise, and even though they have spoken ungratefully about him or attempted to do the most wicked sorts of things to him that would have seemed to anyone except them too harsh to do to even a noxious and deadly enemy. But when Victorinus has endowed them with greater kindnesses, he thinks that he has rightly avenged himself. So from this one can judge how much excellence and generosity of mind are his, since the two things which seem the most difficult of all to everyone else, are most easy for one man, Victorinus – namely: to forget the benefits which have been conferred by him and the injuries which have been received by him. Although he also restrains and governs the rest of the desires of the heart, so that he is never out of control, nevertheless he does get vexed at those who occasionally err, when it is necessary. But he does it so moderately that he seems to borrow anger from the Peripatetics themselves as if it were a whetstone of virtue. When he thinks that someone who is about to sin a second time has been sufficiently frightened away from crime, there is nothing that can become more capable of being placated, more reconcilable and more gentle. The result is that he truly appears to be accustomed to be angry at the sin and not the sinner. Moreover he keeps his sex-drive subdued and under control (as is attested by his peers who lived most closely with him from an early age. In fact it is so under control that this modern day Plato, even at the peak of his virility, seems to have been able to make the same reply in his own right as they say Sophocles did in his old age: that he had escaped from sex most willingly as if from a wild and insane master. This doesn't seem so amazing to me since I know of his moderation in food and drink and, as the Poet says, when these are removed the sex drive tends to dry up. Yeah verily, no table is more humble, none more thrifty, none more frugal than his. Besides he is very sparing of sleep and the most enduring of hard work out of anyone I have seen. Even though he is already 70, he leaves no minute of the day or night free from work. Always after lunch or dinner he immediately sets to reading or teaching, or to some official business, as if to some hobby.

[Ibid., f. 48r]

Nay rather even during lunch and dinner he does not allow even his ears to be free from some reading. Moreover those inconveniences which frequently are accustomed to happen to the elderly, so rarely afflict him that he might rightly boast

along with Cato the elder that he still had his voice, his vigor, his strength sturdy and intact. In fact he is so vigorous that I see few young men who are able to be in such good shape as he is everyday. He is capable of reading out loud 6 h straight at the top of his voice without any physical harm. But lips thick with spittle, nostrils flowing with snot, and all those things, which are customarily plentiful in men of his age, are seen so rarely in him, that you would think that he had been instructed alongside Xenophon's Cyrus in the laws of the Persians. Since as Cicero says an undisciplined youth hands down a feeble body to old age, then all these things prove that his early life had also been led properly. Truly he endures the force of cold and the annoyance of heat so patiently that he never seeks fire or the bright sun to warm himself, nor cold water, shade, or other pleasant spots to cool himself. An infinite number of such things could be listed, But I shall touch on them in brief. As for pleasures, delights and niceties without which the rest cannot live, except with the most acute longing, Victorinus does not feel them, he refuses them, and rejects them entirely, as if he were begotten by an oak, as Homer says. All his leisure and work time, all his concerns, and thought are directed to and consumed by elevating humanity in virtue and raising up the fine arts. He preserves those very excellent traits and the same difficult habits of life so resolutely and seriously that, though I lived with him for 6 years, I never saw him act any differently.

But enough about his life. Now take a look at his teaching which also is consistent with such great virtue.

[Ibid., f. 48v]

These are the four things which are said to be the duties of a grammarian: to clarify and interpret words, to study and explicate the poets carefully, to understand history, and to pronounce words with a correct accent. He judges that all these things must be most diligently carried out first in the education of a youth. As each student has perceived them well, then he may approach the rest of the greater topics easily and correctly. But if these things have been neglected, just as if the foundation has been removed, the whole remaining structure comes crashing down. In his laments over the collapse and destruction of the fine arts, he ascribes the fault to this situation. Yet he believes that though these arts are laid low in misery, they will not be reinvigorated until the diligent care for words is undertaken, even though everyone spurns this.

Indeed who in this age would approach philosophy in absolute ignorance of literature? Who does not flee the adornment of words as taught by these very instructors, as if it were the bane of philosophy? It is as if it should be denied that Jupiter himself thus spoke Greek in the language of Plato on account of the special excellence of this speech, or that Aristotle poured forth a golden stream of eloquence, or that Theophrastus himself acquired a reputation for speaking from infancy, not from divinity. But why should I mention the elegance of oratory, which has been so insistently demanded by our philosopher, when they are so deeply ignorant of mathematics itself. Without its steps the leaders of old assert that an approach to philosophy can in no way be accessible to anyone. But these men of influence of ours reject mathematics as inconsequential, silly and trivial. Why is this? Surely they have even deserted Aristotle themselves as their leader? Instead of him they

prefer these extraordinary prodigies: Esborus, Entisberus, Occham, and Brida. Following these authorities, some assert that men today are accounted to be shrewder in discussion and in investigating the rest of philosophy than in the time of Aristotle. When they have learned to babble most foolishly to the height of impudence, with the crowd looking on, then after they have been judged as suitably learned in wisdom in the estimation of fools, they go home, thinking that they are bringing along with them the most chaste virgin Minerva. But these blind men [Ibid., f. 49r] don't see that she is really the most wanton woman, Calypso.

What about the doctors (so as not to spare my own family's profession too)? Haven't they in their ignorance of the first principles destroyed medicine nearly to its foundations? I shall speak all the more boldly because, when I was a very young man, I had been accustomed to very often listen to my father Laurenzio, whom you used to call the Asclepius of Prato. Indeed he used to read carefully the famous ancients: Pliny, Cassius, and Cornelius Celsus, whose books about medicine were written most elegantly. As a connoisseur of these authors, because of the splendor of their most elegant words, he used to say

> I mourn the darkness and ignorance of our age. I omit to mention how shameful it is, how exceedingly impertinent it is to declare, since you are stuck on the most minute details, that it is entirely the job of an assassin or executioner to ruin the health of a man which is in your trust. This turns out to be the necessary outcome for most due to the mix up and confusion of words. We have failed our age. We have defiled that of the Greeks. We raised what is barbarous to the height of barbarity.

This is what my father said. As to how much we should value his judgment, let the rest who are engaged in the art of medicine see it for themselves.

Hasn't the science of civil law also become so very infantile, when it once in the best of times had been so closely joined to eloquence that it was considered completely crippled and feeble without it? What expert in literature wouldn't wretchedly grieve the lot of the famous authors of old, when he reads that the most ornately composed writings have been so scandalously interpreted by barbarians? How about when he sees the forum, which previously used to echo with the voices of the most learned advocates, now is completely silent and speechless? When all used to come together from all over the state to hear their eloquence, but now no one goes there except defendants, whose cases are being tried? To be sure, they used to come to the forum, not only trained with the arms of eloquence, but also fortified by the protection of the art. So Plato, so Cicero, himself most skilled in the law, considered that the beginning of the law must be sought from philosophy.

[Ibid., f. 49v]

Now there are only legal hairsplitters, since they have learned by heart who-knows-what formulas and legal briefs, when they want to be compared to those great jurists. Nay rather I have even seen several proceed to such a height of insanity that they say that in the understanding and knowledge of civil law Baldo, Bartolo, Azo, and Cino surpass the Scaevolas, the Sulpicii, and the rest, through whom civil law seems to have been made more civil. Besides there were good men, no less than learned ones. They did not just devote themselves to the law, but to justice and equity. At that time the house of a lawyer was thus justly considered to be virtually

an oracular shrine of the state, which might be able and might be willing to help their fellow citizens by their efforts and advice. Now a very many are found who would prefer that it [their case?, the state?] fails rather than commit themselves to the advocacy of their clients.

Theology now remains. For the same reason that everything else has fallen apart, so too truly divine philosophy has slipped so far that it retains no shred of its ancient splendor and dignity. Indeed what kind of magnificence, what light of eloquence do the monuments of the theologians of old not have? What a great comprehension of the poets, what a great comprehension of histories, what a great knowledge of all the fine arts is evident in them! Now a certain class of people exists – I'm not sure whether I should rightly call them theologians – who when they come to the sermon and in the prologue of their oration, have filled the whole church with shouting and wailing. Furthermore after they have spoken most cravenly to the congregation about the poets, the orators, mathematicians, and philosophers, they think that they have discharged the duty of the holiest of orators. Certainly they would not blather about such things so rashly if they were willing to follow those best and most holy orators, whom none of them read, such as the Gregorys, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Basil, and especially Jerome. If they did, they would notice that the writings of the fathers were strewn with verses from the poets, and verily reek of the Muses themselves. In fact the fathers say that they do this on the authority of St. Paul the teacher of the gentiles, who said in his epistles many things taken from Callimachus and Menander. What about Gregory Nazanzenus?

[Ibid., f. 50r]

Did he shrink away in horror from the poets, since he himself also was a fine poet, who related all of sacred history in the most elegant verses? Aren't his poems recited in the churches day and night. What else do you call the psalms? Although there doesn't seem to be a fixed meter in them due to the fault of translators, nevertheless it is agreed that David had entrusted the psalms to verses and that he had been a poet. He must be considered as a better poet than the rest as he was a more truthful prophet. What about hymns? Surely they received them also from the poets? What about the chorus itself, which takes its name from *gaudio* (joy) as Plato interprets the word, which they call *charan* (xapic?). Surely the Muses had a previous lodging? These modern theologians should beware lest they wish to make it impermissible for everyone else to learn, because they themselves have not learned. Indeed how much more suitable for them, how much more useful for the rest, how much more acceptable would it be to God himself, to urge and exhort all those who are students of the orators, poets, and philosophers, to bring finally whatever good they had learned from these authors to religious discourse. They should imitate Lactantius, who has transferred to theology the elegance and volubility of Cicero. They should also imitate Philo, who transferred the grandiosity and eminence of Plato to religious writing. Finally they should imitate all the other most learned and holy men who considered all the culture, in which they were most well educated, to be almost monstrous without the seasoning of the divine.

But now let us return to Victorinus, from whom we have of necessity made so long a digression. He, as I have said, strives with all effort and zeal to bring

medicine against a disease once its cause has been diagnosed. Likewise, he transmits to youth the authors, Homer, Cicero, Demosthenes, and especially Virgil to be learned. When they have been immersed in this as if it were in pure and untainted milk, and as soon as a little strength and vigor has been added to their digestion, he judges that next the historians and others poets can be safely given to them as their daily bread. Thus in these authors he most skillfully discharges the four duties of grammarians. Since the [Ibid., f. 50v] power of speaking has been divided into two areas, dialectic and rhetoric, he believes that the rationale and science of discourse [argument] must be embraced first, as though it were the spokesman and leader of all the rest. He most carefully trains the youth in it. But he does not accustom them to captious and fallacious little arguments or tortured little syllogisms (which is the only thing the youth study nowadays), before they have learnt to define the subject, to distinguish its types, to connect its consequences, and to conclude its completed form. He then leads them to sophistic arguments, not as the sophists proceed to do it, but so that the youth can more readily distinguish and determine what is really true from the false. Next is rhetoric, which, in as much as it is also approved by the Peripatetics, corresponds to the dialectic from the other direction. When they have grasped its worn out precepts, he bids them to practice continually rhetorical exercises – that is to say, he sets forth fictive cases in the legal, public, and legislative spheres for them [to debate]. Of course you are aware that this was the custom of the ancient training of an orator. Since in this way they had become accustomed [to do this] very well at home, they went forth to the court, the curia, and the assembly better prepared to speak.

Mathematics, arithmetic, geometry, and astrology follows after this. These studies seem to be called “disciplines” by a fitting name, because they alone out of all can be learned surely and truly. This is the knot, this is that bond that was praised by Plato both very often elsewhere and very extensively at the very end of his Laws. It is by this bond that which has not been connected nor fastened [a planet] is compelled to wander and roam continuously among the rest. These things call back to the light the keenness of our mind, which has been beclouded by the obscuration of the body. This discipline stirs us, as we lie prostrate on the ground and submerged in the dregs, to pluck ourselves up and it raises us to heaven. But I am getting too carried away. In fact, I have not stated how I should praise mathematics, which is infinite. Nevertheless, if I hear that you desire to learn about it, then I do not take it amiss to undertake the burden of summarizing it for your sake.

Now truly I cannot just keep silent about arithmetic [Ibid., f. 51r] and music, which you have so heedlessly ripped to shreds. Though I shall omit the countless advantages of arithmetic, I shall mention one that Plato used, so that you may understand that it is not only useful for craftsmen (which is your false opinion), when Plato says that the knowledge of numbers sharpens to the highest degree [even] slow and dense intellects and makes the keen ones the sharpest. This can be seen most clearly in the men of Florence, in whom a kind of special acumen exists by the agreement of all. Although some assign the cause of this to the control of their appetite, others attribute it to the thinness and purity of the air. But if I say neither avails them, then I am acting rudely, because I reject the authority of the most

esteemed philosophers. Indeed I am certainly acting more rudely and insolently, if I take into consideration that my fellow citizens are more restrained and more thrifty in their manner of living than the rest, or if I assert that Jupiter himself wanted to make the Florentine people the most remarkable in the world – the one people he took thought for and looked out for. Let us grant this point to numbers on the highest authority of Plato. Let us grant this to the industriousness of the Florentines. We can do this justly, since from their first years to the end of old age, they wear themselves out and exhaust themselves day and night beyond all others in numbers.

You say that music had been invented by sheperds, and afterwards had been completed and perfected by pimps and whores. Why do you admit to being completely ignorant of literature. Do you not understand that it was an invention and gift of the goddesses? They wanted it to be designated and marked by their own name, as if it were theirs alone. Who does not see that music is named after the Muses? Nay even the most learned men judge that through their benevolence it has happened that this one alone of all the disciplines, while [Ibid., f. 51v] it is being learned, is even in the early stages pleasing, charming, and delightful. Although the pleasure and advantage of all the other arts, takes place after the completion of the first steps--truly in their very first steps they seem silly and disagreeable. That Apollo also imparted music to men, is both agreed upon in the writings of many and also on a statue which was reported to have been consecrated in Delphi. In the right hand of the statue, Apollo was holding a bow and in the left the Graces: one of whom was playing a lyre, the other a cithara, and the third a syrinx. Indeed it is said that Hyagnis was the first of men to have made music with the flutes. Then his son Marsyas followed him. Then Olympius himself was taught by Marsyas. Olympius in turn brought those Phrygian melodies themselves to Greece. Aristoxenus says that this same man invented the enharmonic style of music [quarter tone Ps. Plut. De Musica 1134f]. We have learned, however, that Amphion was among the first to play the Cithara after Apollo. After many others followed them, then came Pythagoras himself, who greatly polished this art. Then after him came Timaeus of Locri and Archytas of Tarentum. The entire school of most learned men was always most interested in music. Socrates in imitation of them in his old age learned to play on the lyre, having employed Conon the cytharode as his teacher. Socrates student, Plato, alone out of everyone, most assiduously applied himself to this study. He was taught by Draco, the Athenian, and Metellus of Agrigentum. But why do I mention individual cases when this pursuit was so common to all Greece, that Cicero says that whoever doesn't know music, should hardly be considered to be educated. They used to employ music both publically and privately, in peace and in war: since the Cretans are said to have considered the lyre as their general in war; or that Sparta also, that bravest and most serious state (as well as being a severe and stoic one) is said to have been inspired to fight the enemy by flutes. Will you say that Sparta, because it was seduced by the allurements and enticements of pleasure, studied the rhythms and melodies of music?

[Ibid., f. 52r]

Will you say that so many of those great men – such a Pythagoras, the Pythagoreans, Socrates, and Plato – were pimps?

Will you dare to call the famous state of the Athenians and the wisest teacher of the whole world a whore? Finally, recall the offense you committed – or to name it more accurately, your crime. You should believe that Plato, whom your beloved Cicero (who didn't know how to lie) was always called divine. In fact, Plato says that music has been given to us by the immortal gods as the most secure guardian and leader of our souls, provided that it has be raised (as he bids) in the bosom of philosophy to be well mannered, forbearing, decent, and modest. This is not the music of our day, which is debased, shameless, corrupted and corrupting. According to the opinion of the philosophers and the decree of the Spartiates, this kind of music must be driven out and exterminated from the state, as if it were a public menace. Although music itself had begun to be corrupted already many centuries before. Plato assigned the cause for this to the poets, who first lead music, though it was very chaste, on to the stage among the notorious. Hitherto it had been a *monarchy*. But afterwards, to use the right word for it, it belonged to a *tetrarchy*.

Therefore, Victorinus thinks that the youth must be most liberally and agreeable invited to the finest and most beneficial spa of the quadrivium. Furthermore they must be kept in it without any distress or rather with every pleasure, since he really endorses the well known custom of the most learned Egyptians, who trained their children in numbers through games. In fact they exchanged garlands and crowns of different types and sizes, or golden, silver, and bronze plates among one another in turn in a kind of regulated way. They progressed so easily and freely in the quadrivium, as much as their masters desired. This also is the same course Plato recommends, when he advises that a noble man must be freely and generously trained with out any slavishness, since he emphatically states that nothing can remain in the mind for long that has been driven in by violence. But if you train students in their studies, when they are willing, [Ibid., f. 52v] then you could more easily see what each one is most naturally suited for. Nowadays children are harassed in the schools of our modern day Cerberuses, who not only impede a child's natural talents, but also very often do what Quintilian most sagaciously has warned us to avoid: by torturing them they torture virtue itself out of them.

Finally Victorinus pushes those who have completed this course of study, and whom he judges as ready for philosophy, on to the Academy and the Lyceum, to their heads, Plato and Aristotle. He allows none of them to leave there, until they have most carefully studied their philosophy in every respect. After he thus strengthens them, he dismisses them to pursue at their ease whatever art of discipline they have dedicated themselves to: either to medicine, or law, or theology, and to whatever portion or however much they want.

Since I have spoken about the life and teaching of Victorinus, I rightly hope that I will have offered my advice not to any kind of cattle, and that I will have easily answered the tragic complaints of yours. Even if I am *Saxolus* [a little rock], nevertheless my mind is not made of the stone or iron, which you make it out to be. Surely I am moved – I am moved by the memory of my sweetest mother Piera, justly always most dear to me. I always had her as a aid in my studies (which happens to few) and as a constant encouragement to virtue. I am moved by the praises of my father, the most excellent Laurenzio – praises so abundantly gathered

by you in a no less friendly manner. Moreover I am not just moved, but I am greatly pained at the bereavement and loss suffered by my sisters. Yet I do not doubt that if before my mother herself leaves this life, if she had happened to hear that her Sassolo found a teacher and master of this sort, that she would have died more contentedly in return for her attention to virtue and her children. But as for my father's praises, achieved by virtue itself, I will not be able to maintain or regard them except through virtue. I do not see how I could seek or make up the money, which they need except through virtue, or if some magic wand perchance should appear. So therefore, while I follow Victorinus, as the parent himself of virtue, I judge that it is enough for me to take thought for the wishes, reputation, and advantage of those closest to me.

Farewell

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[1] Quotations from the biographies written by Sassolo da Prato, Francesco Castiglione, Platina and Francesco Prendilacqua were taken usually from the manuscripts cited below. If the date of the manuscript is only my estimate, I have written it in angle brackets "<. . .>". If not noted otherwise, the translations from the Latin in chapters 1 to 5 were produced in collaboration of Anja-Silvia Goeing with Deanna Stewart; the translation of Sassolo's letter in the appendix (Chapter 6) is entirely due to James Astorga.

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