

Session 5: Documents

- Please read the documents in this PowerPoint in preparation for the fifth session.
- The excerpt from Nicoli's biography relates to materialism; Leonardo Bruni's *Panegyric of Florence* and Ficino's *On the Duty of a Citizen* relate to civic humanism; Petrarch's *On the Ascent of Mt. Ventoux* relates to appreciation of Nature; Mario Matteo Boiardo's sonnet and Cristoforo Landino's *An Account of the Great Local Artists* to naturalism. Alberti's *On Painting*, Castiglione's *The Courtier*, and Bruni's comments on education relate to virtù.

Vespasiano on the life of Poggio Bracciolini

usually on his face, and pleasant manner in conversation. His clothes were always of fine red cloth down to the ground; he never took a wife so as not to be hindered in his studies. He had a housekeeper to provide for his wants, and was one of the most particular of men in his diet as in all else, and was accustomed to have his meals served to him in beautiful old dishes; his table would be covered with vases of porcelain, and he drank from a cup of crystal or of some other fine stone. It was a pleasure to see him at table, old as he was. All the linen that he used was of the whitest. Some may be astonished to hear that he possessed a vast number of vessels, and to these may be answered that, in his day, things of this sort were not so highly prized as now; but Nicolò, being known all over the world, those who wished to please him would send him either marble statues, or antique vases, or sculpture, or marble inscriptions, or pictures by distinguished masters, or tables in mosaic. He had a fine map of the world on which all places were given, and also illustrations of Italy and Spain. There was no house in Florence better decorated than his or better furnished with beautiful things. Nicolò was now over sixty-five years of

Leonardo Bruni,
Panegyric of Florence
(4 slides)

I wish that God immortal would bestow upon me an eloquence worthy of the city of Florence, of which I am about to speak, or at least an eloquence that equals my love and zeal for it. One form of eloquence or the other would, I believe, suffice in revealing the magnificence and splendor of this city. Nothing more beautiful or more splendid than Florence can be found anywhere in the world. I must confess that I have never been more willing to undertake anything than the present task. I have no doubt whatsoever that if my wish for either type of eloquence were granted, I would be able to describe this illustrious and beautiful city in an articulate and dignified manner. Since, however, not all our wishes can be fulfilled, I shall do my best, thereby showing that I was lacking not in will, but rather in talent.

The splendor of this city is so remarkable that no eloquence could begin to describe it. We know that a number of distinguished and righteous men have dared speak about God Himself, whose glory and infinite nature a man's words, no matter how eloquent they may be, can never come close to capturing; but regardless of God's ineffable superiority, they still attempt to employ all their rhetorical skills in speaking about such infinitude. I, on the other hand, shall have fulfilled my task of praising Florence if I make adequate use of all the knowledge I have acquired through my ardent study, although I know full well that my ability cannot ultimately apprehend such an extraordinary city.

I now must face something most orators face, namely, that they do not know where to begin their speech. In my case, however, this is not owing to a lack of words, but to the subject matter itself—and not only because of the many things that are relevant to one another, but also because they are all so remarkable that they seem to compete for excellence among themselves. It is, thus, not easy to decide which topic should be discussed first. If you consider the beauty and the magnificence of the city, you would think that there is nothing more deserving with which to begin a speech. If, on the other hand, you take into account its power and wealth, you would think it right to start an oration with these topics. Furthermore, if you look at its deeds both in the

present and in the past, nothing could appear more important than to begin here. But if you focus on its customs and institutions, nothing could seem more worthy of distinction. With all this to think about I am uncertain where to begin; and when I am about to commence with a certain topic, another catches my attention and I cannot resolve which to discuss first. Nonetheless, I shall begin at what I find to be the most logical starting point, although I do not consider the other subjects less worthy of attention.

As it sometimes happens that a son's resemblance to his parents is immediately noticeable, so the Florentines resemble their most noble and illustrious city to such a degree that one is led to believe that they could have never lived anywhere else, nor could Florence ever have had any other kind of inhabitants. Just as these citizens far excel all other people by virtue of their natural genius, prudence, wealth, and magnificence, so Florence, whose site was most carefully chosen, is superior to all others in splendor, beauty, and cleanliness.

First of all, let us note the signs of its wisdom. For one, Florence has never done anything ostentatiously; it has always preferred to reject dangerous and foolish arrogance in order to pursue a state of peace and tranquillity. It was not built on top of a mountain, to show off its greatness; nor, by the same token, was it built in the middle of a plain and open on all sides to attack. Instead, with the discerning prudence of its citizens, Florence attained the best of both situations. They [the Florentines] knew that it was impossible to live on mountaintops without being subjected to the harshness of the elements—strong winds and heavy rains—which are uncomfortable and hazardous to the inhabitants. They also recognized that a city placed in the middle of plains, correspondingly, is necessarily disturbed by the dampness of the soil, the impurity of the air, and fog. Attempting to avoid all these risks, and acting as wisely as always, they built Florence midway between two extremes: it lies far from the discomforts of the mountains and free, at the same time, from the inconveniences of the plains. It has the best of both situations, and a good climate, too. To the north, the mountains of Fiesole, like a kind of fortification, ward off severe cold and the furious gusts of northern winds. To the south, smaller hills protect it from the less violent winds that blow from that direction. In the other areas surrounding the city are sunny fields open to gentle breezes. Florence sits peacefully in an ideal location and climate; when you move away from it in any direction, you will meet with more severe cold or more intense sun.

From the hills to the plains, moreover, the entire city is surrounded by a splendid circuit of walls which are not so excessively imposing to make it appear fearful and dubious of its power; nor, on the other hand, are they so

small or neglected to give the impression of being conceited or indiscreet. And what can I say of the multitude of inhabitants, of the splendid buildings, of the richly decorated churches, of the incredible wealth of the whole city? Everything here, by Jove, is astonishingly beautiful. . . .

Bruni continues his praise of Florence, describing its unparalleled cleanliness, the Arno spanned by impressive bridges, the magnificent palaces before which throngs of people from all over the world gather, the marvelous churches, and the grand villas in the well-cultivated countryside surrounding the city. All these features lead Bruni to assert, "Indeed, the very hills seem to smile and to convey a sense of joy. No one could ever tire of such a sight. This whole region could rightly be considered a paradise whose beauty and joyful harmony are unparalleled anywhere in the world."

He then relates a single fact, which, he believes, suffices to prove the greatness of Florence.

I now wish to mention an aspect of Florence that, I believe, demonstrates the greatness of this city. It fought innumerable wars, opposed mighty enemies, and vanquished threatening powers at the peak of their strength. Through wisdom, wealth, and great courage it has managed to overcome enemies that no one could have ever believed it could have conquered or resisted. It has been vigorously fighting a powerful and rich enemy [Gian Galeazzo Visconti] for the past few years and has earned everyone's admiration. That duke, whose resources and might have filled the people north of the Alps and the rest of Italy with fear, was elated by his victories and hopeful of more, attacking and seizing all places with incredible ease, like a storm. Only Florence opposed him and not only managed to resist his invasion and hamper the course of his conquests but even defeated him after a long war. I shall soon devote time and space to the other deeds of Florence, so let us now return to the topic at hand.

Everyone was so astonished by the scope and duration of the conflict that they wondered how this single city could find so many troops, such massive resources, and so much money to continue the war. Such amazement, however, seizes only those who have not seen Florence and are ignorant of its magnificence. Once they have visited it, all such perplexities and doubts cease. This is what everyone experiences, and no one who has ever been to Florence denies it. As soon as anyone has before his very eyes such marvels, such architecture, the towers, the marble churches, the basilicas, the palaces, the turreted

walls, the villas, the charms, and the elegance of this city, he immediately changes his mind and is no longer astonished by Florence's victories and glorious deeds. On the contrary, he deems it capable of conquering and ruling the entire world. All this helps understand how exceptionally admirable Florence is—a city whose magnificence cannot be adequately imagined or described.

Marsilio Ficino to Piero del Nero: greetings.

Tell me, Piero, why did the fever suddenly strike me after it had attacked your uncle Bernardo? Is it that, as we are so close to each other, when the dog-star belches its flames on one of us it also sets fire to the other? May your uncle quickly recover so that Marsilio may too, or rather so that Florence may enjoy better health. If she always had such medical men as she has in this Medici, she would never be seriously ill. Such men properly perform the function of a citizen, without which the good health of the country is not preserved.

It is the duty of a citizen to consider the state as a single being formed of its citizens who are the parts; and that the parts should serve the whole, not the whole the parts. For when the profit of the part alone is sought, there is no profit at all for either part or whole. When, however, the good of the whole is sought, the good of both is assured. Therefore because of this connection the citizen ought to remember that nothing good or bad can touch one limb of the state, without affecting the others and indeed the state as a whole. And again, nothing can happen to the whole body of the state without soon affecting each limb.

Let no one, then, in this household of city say, "This is mine," and "That is yours," for everything in this vast organism belongs in a way to everyone in common. Rather let him say, "Both this and that are mine," not because they are his personal property, but because he loves and cares for them. Let each man love and reverence his country as he would the founder of his family. Let the ordinary citizen obey the ancient, well-tried laws, just as he would obey God, for such laws are not established without God. Let the magistrate remember that he is subject to the laws in just the same way as the ordinary citizen is subject to the magistrate. Let him understand that when he passes judgment he is himself being judged by God. Let him always have before him the injunction of Plato, to have regard not for himself, but the state; and not just some part of the state but the whole. In short, he should know that Heaven's highest place is reserved for the man who has done his best to model his earthly country on the heavenly one. For nothing pleases the universal ruler of the world more than the universal good.

I think that you know these and similar precepts relating to the true citizen, and I hope that you will abide by them since you lack neither instruction nor prudence. Besides, you have at home a competent teacher in this subject, about whose merits I will write another time.

Farewell. Our Giovanni Cavalcanti commends himself to you.

Francesco Petrarca (6 slides)

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT VENTOUX¹

Today I made the ascent of the highest mountain in this region, which is not improperly called Ventosum. My only motive was the wish to see what so great an elevation had to offer. I have had the expedition in mind for many years; for, as you know, I have lived in this region from infancy, having been cast here by that fate which determines the affairs of men. Consequently the mountain, which is visible from a great distance, was ever before my eyes; and I conceived the plan of some time doing what I have at last accomplished today. The idea took hold upon me with especial force when, in re-reading Livy's *History of Rome*, yesterday, I happened upon the place where Philip of Macedon, the same who waged war against the Romans, ascended Mount Haemus in Thessaly, from whose summit he was able, it is said, to see two seas, the Adriatic and the Euxine.² Whether this be true or false I have not been able to determine, for the mountain is too far away, and writers disagree. Pomponius Mela, the cosmographer—not to mention others who have spoken of this occurrence—admits its truth without hesitation; Titus Livius, on the other hand, considers it false. I, assuredly, should not have left the question

long in doubt, had that mountain been as easy to explore as this one. Let us leave this matter to one side, however, and return to my mountain here—it seems to me that a young man in private life may well be excused for attempting what an aged king could undertake without arousing criticism.

When I came to look around for a companion I found, strangely enough, that hardly one among my friends seemed suitable, so rarely do we meet with just the right combination of personal tastes and characteristics, even among those who are dearest to us. This one was too apathetic, that one over-anxious, this one too slow, that one too hasty, one was too sad, another over-cheerful, one more simple, another more sagacious, than I desired. I feared this one's taciturnity and that one's loquacity. The heavy deliberation of some repelled me as much as the lean incapacity of others. I rejected those who were likely to irritate me by a cold want of interest, as well as those who might weary me by their excessive enthusiasm. Such defects, however grave, could be borne with at home, for charity suffereth all things, and friendship accepts any burden, but it is quite otherwise on a journey, where every weakness becomes much more serious. So, as I was bent upon pleasure and anxious that my enjoyment should be unalloyed, I looked about me with unusual care, balanced against one another the various characteristics of my friends, and without committing any breach of friendship I silently condemned every trait which might prove disagreeable on the way. And—would you believe it—I finally turned homeward for aid, and proposed the ascent to my only brother, who is younger than I, and with whom you are well acquainted.³ He was delighted and gratified beyond measure by the thought of holding the place of a friend as well as of a brother.

At the time fixed we left the house, and by evening reached Malau-cène, which lies at the foot of the mountain, to the north. Having rested there a day, we finally made the ascent this morning, with no companions except two servants; and a most difficult task it was. The mountain is a very steep and almost inaccessible mass of stony soil. But, as the poet has said, "Remorseless toil conquers all." It was a long day, the air fine. We enjoyed the advantages of vigor of mind and strength and agility of body, and everything else essential to those engaged in such an undertaking, and so had no other difficulties to face than those of region itself. We found an old shepherd in one of the mountain dales, who tried, at great length, to dissuade us from the ascent, saying that some fifty years before he had, in the same ardor of youth, reached the summit, but had gotten for his pains nothing except fatigue and regret, and clothes and body torn by the rocks and briars. No one, so far as he or his companions knew, had

ever tried the ascent before or after him. But his counsels increased rather than diminished our desire to proceed, since youth is suspicious of warnings. So the old man, finding that his efforts were in vain, went a little way with us, and pointed out a rough path among the rocks, uttering many admonitions, which he continued to send after us even after we had left him behind. Surrendering to him all such garments or other possessions as might prove burdensome to us, we made ready for the ascent, and started off at a good pace. But, as usually happens, fatigue quickly followed upon our excessive exertion, and we soon came to a halt at the top of a certain cliff. Upon starting on again we went more slowly, and I especially advanced along the rocky way with a more deliberate step. While my brother chose a direct path straight up the ridge,⁴ I weakly took an easier one which really descended. When I was called back, and the right road was shown me, I replied that I hoped to find a better way round on the other side, and that I did not mind going farther if the path were only less steep. This was just an excuse for my laziness, and when the others had already reached a considerable height I was still wandering in the valleys. I had failed to find an easier path, and had only increased the distance and difficulty of the ascent. At last I became disgusted with the intricate way I had chosen, and resolved to ascend without more ado. When I reached my brother, who, while waiting for me, had had ample opportunity for rest, I was tired and irritated. We walked along together for a time, but hardly had we passed the first spur when I forgot about the circuitous route which I had just tried, and took a lower one again. Once more I followed an easy, roundabout path through winding valleys, only to find myself soon in my old difficulty. I was simply trying to avoid the exertion of the ascent, but no human ingenuity can alter the nature of things, or cause anything to reach a height by going down. Suffice it to say that, much to my vexation and my brother's amusement, I made this same mistake three times or more during a few hours.

After being frequently misled in this way, I finally sat down in a valley and transferred my winged thoughts from things corporeal to the immaterial, addressing myself as follows: "What thou hast repeatedly experienced today in the ascent of this mountain, happens to thee, as to many, in the journey toward the blessed life. But this is not so readily perceived by men, since the motions of the body are obvious and external while those of the soul are invisible and hidden. Yes, the life which we call blessed is to be sought for on a high eminence, and strait is the way that leads to it. Many, also, are the hills that lie between, and we must ascend, by a glorious stairway, from strength to strength. At the top is at once the end of our struggles and the goal for which we are bound. All wish to

reach this goal, but, as Ovid says, "To wish is little; we must long with the utmost eagerness to gain our end." Thou certainly dost ardently desire, as well as simply wish, unless thou deceivest thyself in this matter, as in so many others. What, then, doth hold thee back? Nothing, assuredly, except that thou wouldst take a path which seems, at first thought, more easy, leading through low and worldly pleasures. But nevertheless in the end, after long wanderings, thou must perforce either climb the steeper path, under the burden of tasks foolishly deferred, to its blessed culmination, or lie down in the valley of thy sins, and (I shudder to think of it!), if the shadow of death overtake thee, spend an eternal night amid constant torments." These thoughts stimulated both body and mind in a wonderful degree for facing the difficulties which yet remained. Oh, that I might traverse in spirit that other road for which I long day and night, even as today I overcame material obstacles by my bodily exertions! And I know not why it should not be far easier, since the swift immortal soul can reach its goal in the twinkling of an eye, without passing through space, while my progress today was necessarily slow, dependent as I was upon a failing body weighed down by heavy members.

One peak of the mountain, the highest of all, the country people call "Sonny," why, I do not know, unless by antiphrasis, as I have sometimes suspected in other instances; for the peak in question would seem to be the father of all the surrounding ones. On its top is a little level place, and here we could at last rest our tired bodies.

Now, my father, since you have followed the thoughts that spurred me on in my ascent, listen to the rest of the story, and devote one hour, I pray you, to reviewing the experiences of my entire day. At first, owing to the unaccustomed quality of the air and the effect of the great sweep of view spread out before me, I stood like one dazed. I beheld the clouds under our feet, and what I had read of Athos and Olympus seemed less incredible as I myself witnessed the same things from a mountain of less fame. I turned my eyes toward Italy, whither my heart most inclined. The Alps, rugged and snow-capped, seemed to rise close by, although they were really at a great distance, the very same Alps through which that fierce enemy of the Roman name once made his way, bursting the rocks, if we may believe the report, by the application of vinegar. I sighed, I must confess, for the skies of Italy, which I beheld rather with my mind than with my eyes. An inexpressible longing came over me to see once more my friend⁵ and my country. At the same time I reproached myself for this double weakness, springing, as it did, from a soul not yet steeled to manly resistance. And yet there were excuses for both of these cravings, and a number of distinguished writers might be summoned to support me.

Then a new idea took possession of me, and I shifted my thoughts to a consideration of time rather than place. "Today it is ten years since, having completed thy youthful studies, thou didst leave Bologna. Eternal God! In the name of immutable wisdom, think what alterations in thy character this intervening period has beheld! I pass over a thousand instances. I am not yet in a safe harbor where I can calmly recall past storms. The time may come when I can review in due order all the experiences of the past, saying with St. Augustine, 'I desire to recall my foul actions and the carnal corruption of my soul, not because I love them, but that I may the more love thee, O my God.' Much that is doubtful and evil still clings to me, but what I once loved, that I love no longer. And yet what am I saying? I still love it, but with shame, but with heaviness of heart. Now, at last, I have confessed the truth. So it is. I love, but love what I would not love, what I would that I might hate. Though loath to do so, though constrained, though sad and sorrowing, still I do love, and I feel in my miserable self the truth of the well known words, 'I will hate if I can; if not, I will love against my will.' Three years have not yet passed since that perverse and wicked passion which had a firm grasp upon me and held undisputed sway in my heart began to discover a rebellious opponent, who was unwilling longer to yield obedience. These two adversaries have joined in close combat for the supremacy, and for a long time now a harassing and doubtful war has been waged in the field of my thoughts."

Thus I turned over the last ten years in my mind, and then, fixing my anxious gaze on the future, I asked myself, "If, perchance, thou shouldst prolong this uncertain life of thine for yet two lusters, and shouldst make an advance toward virtue proportionate to the distance to which thou hast departed from thine original infatuation during the past two years, since the new longing first encountered the old, couldst thou, on reaching thy fortieth year, face death, if not with complete assurance, at least with hopefulness, calmly dismissing from thy thoughts the residuum of life as it faded into old age?"

These and similar reflections occurred to me, my father. I rejoiced in my progress, mourned my weaknesses, and commiserated the universal instability of human conduct. I had well-nigh forgotten where I was and our object in coming; but at last I dismissed my anxieties, which were better suited to other surroundings, and resolved to look about me and see what we had come to see. The sinking sun and the lengthening shadows of the mountain were already warning us that the time was near at hand when we must go. As if suddenly awakened from sleep, I turned about and gazed toward the west. I was unable to discern the summits of the Pyrenees, which form the barrier between France and Spain; not because of any intervening obstacle that I know of but owing simply to the insufficiency of our mortal vision. But I could see with the utmost

clearness, off to the right, the mountains of the region about Lyons, and to the left the bay of Marseilles and the waters that lash the shores of Aigues Mortes, although all these places were so distant that it would require a journey of several days to reach them. Under our very eyes flowed the Rhone.

While I was thus dividing my thoughts, now turning my attention to some terrestrial object that lay before me, now raising my soul, as I had done my body, to higher places, it occurred to me to look into my copy of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, a gift that I owe to your love, and that I always have about me.⁶ In memory of both the author and the giver, I opened the compact little volume, small indeed in size, but of infinite charm, with the intention of reading whatever came to hand, for I could happen upon nothing that would be otherwise than edifying and devout. Now it chanced that the tenth book presented itself. My brother, waiting to hear something of St. Augustine's from my lips, stood attentively by. I call him, and God too, to witness that where I first fixed my eyes it was written: "And men go about to wonder at the heights of the mountains, and the mighty waves of the sea, and the wide sweep of rivers, and the circuit of the ocean, and the revolution of the stars, but themselves they consider not."⁷ I was abashed, and, asking my brother (who was anxious to hear more) not to annoy me, I closed the book, angry with myself that I should still be admiring earthly things who might long ago have learned from even the pagan philosophers that nothing is wonderful but the soul, which, when great itself, finds nothing great outside itself. Then, in truth, I was satisfied that I had seen enough of the mountain; I turned my inward eye upon myself, and from that time not a syllable fell from my lips until we reached the bottom again. Those words had given me occupation enough for I could not believe that it was by a mere accident that I happened upon them. What I had there read I believed to be addressed to me and to no other, remembering that St. Augustine had once suspected the same thing in his own case, when, on opening the book of the Apostle, as he himself tells us, the first words that he saw there were, "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."⁸

Matteo Maria Boiardo, Sonnet III

Già vidi uscir de l'onde una matina
il sol di raggi d'or tutto iubato,
e di tal luce in faccia colorato
che ne incendeva tutta la marina;
e vidi a la rogiada matutina⁵
la rosa aprir d'un color sì infiamato
che ogni lontan aspetto avria stimato
che un foco ardesse ne la verde spina;
e vidi aprir a la stagion novella
la molle erbetta, sì come esser sòle¹⁰
vaga più sempre in giovenil etade;
e vidi una legiadra donna e bella
su l'erba coglier rose al primo sole
e vincer queste cose di beltade.

One morning I beheld the sun arise
Out of the waves in shining gold attire,
Flushed was his face, and in so deep a wise
That the whole seashore seemed to be on fire;
And I beheld the dew of early morn
Awake the rose to such a vivid hue
That distant vision would indeed have sworn
A flame was kindled on the green stalk too.
And I beheld how for young April there
The tender buds, as is their wont, did blow
Sweetly, O sweetly in their early pride;
And I beheld a lady, kind and fair,
Rose-gathering on the lawn at morning-glow.
She was far lovelier than all else beside.

An Account of the Great Local Artists

CRISTOFORO LANDINO

As was already pointed out in the introduction to the document by Landino in the "Literature" section of this anthology, Landino's proem to his 1481 commentary on Dante's Commedia is a true celebration of Florentine culture. Along with the most distinguished jurists, theologians, men of letters, and merchants, Landino praised the Florentine artists who, beginning with the first half of the fourteenth century, had commonly been credited with rediscovering the elegance of ancient art. By the second half of the quattrocento, this list had grown significantly, to include experts skilled in the use of perspective: Masaccio, Donatello, and Brunelleschi. Landino's short account of the history of art shows the degree to which the endeavors of fifteenth-century Florentine intellectuals and their reworking of the image of their city were interdisciplinary.

Source: Cristoforo Landino, *Commento di Cristoforo Landino fiorentino sopra la Comedia di Dante Alighieri poeta fiorentino*, in *Scritti critici e teorici*, ed. Roberto Cardini (Rome: Bulzoni, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 123-125.

EXCELLENT FLORENTINE PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS

We have the art of painting [left to discuss], a skill which the Ancients held in high esteem. The Egyptians claim that they invented it and that it moved to Greece from Egypt. Some Greeks, however, hold that it was invented in Si-

cyon, others in Corinth. The first paintings were made of a single line which followed the outline of the human body. Painters then worked with only one color; such a painting being called monochrome—that is, of a single color, since *monos* means "one" and *chroma* means "color." Painting was relatively new, as Pliny writes, for at the time of the Trojan War there were not yet any painters.¹ The first painters in Greece were Aricides of Corinth and Telephanes of Sicyon, but it was Parrhasius of Ephesus who elevated and ennobled the art. Many acclaimed artists followed, among whom Apelles was the most distinguished, and he is considered unparalleled to this day. After having reached its apex, this art, like many others, nearly disappeared when Italy was enslaved. At that time, painting became completely devoid of refinement and inspiration. The Florentine Giovanni Cimabue was the first to rediscover a natural style of painting and proportion, which the Greeks called symmetry. He achieved great fame through enlivening the figures in his paintings and endowing them with a variety of expressions. He could have achieved even more fame had he not been followed by so worthy a successor as the Florentine Giotto, a contemporary of Dante.² Giotto was so flawless and accomplished that many have striven in vain to surpass him. Italy is filled with his works, his masterpiece being his mosaic in St. Peter's of Rome, depicting the twelve apostles in a boat, each one of whom has lifelike and vivid gestures, all different from one another, although fitting and appropriate. Out of Giotto's school, as out of the Trojan horse, came several wondrous painters, such as Maso, whose elegant work is highly praised. Stefano is commonly called the ape of nature, for he succeeded in painting whatever he set out to do. We can also see great pieces by Taddeo Gaddi. Masaccio was a distinguished artist with a pure and controlled style, always dedicated to imitating nature and making figures come alive. He certainly was as adept at perspective as anybody else in his time, and he worked with ease. He died when he was only twenty-six. Fra Filippo [Lippi]'s work was extremely skilled; he particularly excelled at multiple-figure works, in the use of color, at relief, and at any sort of adornment, whether modeled on reality or fictitious. Andrea [del Castagno], superb at drawing and relief, reveled in the challenges of art—partial views in particular. He was energetic and worked with great facility. Paolo Uccello, a good draftsman and a versatile artist, was a great master at painting animals and cities; he was skilled at partial views, for he understood perspective well. Fra Giovanni Angelico was a delightful, pious, and refined artist who worked with great dexterity. Pesello ranked above all others in painting animals. The elegant work of Pesellino followed, an excellent painter of small subjects. Filippo Brunelleschi was an architect who was

also a distinguished painter and sculptor. Above all, he had an astute understanding of perspective, so much so that some hold him to have either re-discovered it or invented it. Brunelleschi produced remarkable works of both painting and sculpture. Donatello deserves to be considered equal to the ancient sculptors; outstandingly skilled and versatile, he was able to shape and place figures in such a way as to make them appear to be in motion. He was a great student of the Ancients, and an expert at perspective. Then there is the most worthy Desiderio [da Settignano], whose polished works were delicate, elegant, and graceful. If an untimely death had not snatched him away in his youth, his work, all experts in sculpture hoped, would have become great. Lorenzo di Bartoluccio [Ghiberti] is famous for the bronze doors of our baptistery. And finally, we can see superb works by Antonio Rossellino, and likewise by his brother Bernardo, a commendable architect.

1. Pli., *Nat. Hist.*, 35.15-18. Landino draws on Pliny for this brief section on ancient art.
2. Here Landino probably has in mind the verses of Dante's *Pur.*, 11.94-96, on the transitoriness of glory.

Leon Battista Alberti,
from *On Painting*

19. Up to now we have explained everything related to the power of sight and the understanding of the intersection. But as it is relevant to know, not simply what the intersection is and what it consists in, but also how it can be constructed, we must now explain the art of expressing the intersection in painting. Let me tell you what I do when I am painting. First of all, on the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen, and I decide how large I wish the human figures in the painting to be. I divide the height of this man into three parts, which will be proportional to the measure commonly called a *braccio*; for, as may be seen from the relationship of his limbs, three *braccia* is just about the average height of a man's body. With this measure I divide the bottom line of my rectangle into as many parts as it will hold, and this bottom line of the rectangle is for me proportional to the next transverse equidistant quantity seen on the pavement. Then I establish a point in the rectangle wherever I wish, and as it occupies the place where the centric ray strikes, I shall call this the centric point. The suitable position for this centric point is no higher from the base line than the height of the man to be represented in the painting, for in this way both the viewers and the objects in the painting will seem to be on the same plane. Having placed the centric point, I draw straight lines from it to each of the divisions on the base line. These lines show me how successive transverse quantities visually change to an almost infinite distance. At this stage some would draw a line across the rectangle equidistant from the divided line, and then divide the space between these two lines into three parts. Then, to that second equidistant line they would add another above, following the rule that the space which is divided into three parts between the first divided (base) line and the second equidistant one, shall exceed by one of its parts the space between the second and third lines, and they would go on to add other lines in such a way that each succeeding space between them would always be to the one preceding it in the relationship, in mathematical terminology, of *superbipartiens*. That would be their way of proceeding, and although people say they are following an excellent method of painting, I believe they are not a little mistaken, because, having placed the first equidistant line at random, even though the other equidistant lines follow with some system and reason, nonetheless they do not know where the fixed position of the vertex of the pyramid is for correct viewing. For this reason quite serious mistakes occur in painting. What is more, the method of such people would be completely faulty, where the centric point were higher or lower than the height of a man in the picture. Besides, no learned person will deny that no objects in a painting can appear like real objects, unless they stand to each other in a determined relationship. We will explain the theory behind this if ever we write about the demonstrations of painting, which our friends marveled at when we did them, and called them "miracles of painting"; for the things I have said are extremely relevant to this aspect of the subject. Let us return, therefore, to what we were saying.

Baldassare Castiglione, from Book III of *The Courtier*

And although my lord Gaspar has said that the same rules which are set the Courtier, serve also for the Lady, I am of another mind; for while some qualities are common to both and as necessary to man as to woman, there are nevertheless some others that befit woman more than man, and some are befitting man to which she ought to be wholly a stranger. The same I say of bodily exercises; but above all, methinks that in her ways, manners, words, gestures and bearing, a woman ought to be very unlike a man; for just as it befits him to show a certain stout and sturdy manliness, so it is becoming in a woman to have a soft and dainty tenderness with an air of womanly sweetness in her every movement, which, in her going or staying or saying what you will, shall always make her seem the woman, without any likeness of a man. " Now, if this precept be added to the rules that these gentlemen have taught the Courtier, I certainly think she ought to be able to profit by many of them, and to adorn herself with admirable accomplishments, as my lord Gaspar says. For I believe that many faculties of the mind are as necessary to woman as to man; likewise gentle birth, to avoid affectation, to be naturally graceful in all her doings, to be mannerly, clever, prudent, not arrogant, not envious, not slanderous, not vain, not quarrelsome, not silly, to know how to win and keep the favour of her mistress and of all others, to practise well and gracefully the exercises that befit women. I am quite of the opinion, too, that beauty is more necessary to her than to the Courtier, for in truth that woman lacks much who lacks beauty. Then, too, she ought to be more circumspect and take greater care not to give occasion for evil being said of her, and so to act that she may not only escape a stain of guilt but even of suspicion, for a woman has not so many ways of defending herself against false imputations as has a man.

" Laying aside, then, those faculties of the mind that she ought to have in common with the Courtier (such as prudence, magnanimity, continence, and many others), and likewise those qualities that befit all women (such as kindness, discretion, ability to manage her husband's property and her house and children if she be married, and all those capacities that are requisite in a good housewife), I say that in a lady who lives at court methinks above all else a certain pleasant affability is befitting, whereby she may be able to entertain politely every sort of man with agreeable and seemly converse, suited to the time and place, and to the rank of the person with whom she may speak, uniting with calm and modest manners, and with that seemliness which should ever dispose all her actions, a quick vivacity of spirit whereby she may show herself alien to all indelicacy; but with such a kindly manner as shall make us think her no less chaste, prudent and benign, than agreeable, witty and discreet: and so she must preserve a certain mean (difficult and composed almost of contraries), and must barely touch certain limits but not pass them. " Thus, in her wish to be thought good and pure, the Lady ought not to be so coy and seem so to abhor company and talk that are a little free, as to take her leave as soon as she finds herself therein; for it might easily be thought that she was pretending to be thus austere in order to hide something about herself which she feared others might come to know; and such prudish manners are always odious.

Leonardo Bruni, from *On Learning and Literature*

To sum up what I have endeavoured to set forth. That high standard of education to which I referred at the outset is only to be reached by one who has seen many things and read much. Poet, Orator, Historian, and the rest, all must be studied, each must contribute a share. Our learning thus becomes full, ready, varied and elegant, available for action or for discourse in all subjects. But to enable us to make effectual use of what we know we must add to our knowledge the power of expression. These two sides of learning, indeed, should not be separated: they afford mutual aid and distinction. Proficiency in literary form, not accompanied by broad acquaintance with facts and truths, is a barren attainment; whilst information, however vast, which lacks all grace of expression, would seem to be put under a bushel or partly thrown away. Indeed, one may fairly ask what advantage it is to possess profound and varied learning if one cannot convey it in language worthy of the subject. Where, however, this double capacity exists—breadth of learning and grace of style—we allow the highest title so distinction and to abiding fame. If we review the great names of ancient [Greek and Roman] literature, Plato, Democritus, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Varro, Cicero, Seneca, Augustine, Jerome, Lactantius, we shall find it hard to say whether we admire more their attainments or their literary power.