Session 4: Documents

• Please read the documents in this PowerPoint in preparation for the fourth session. There are still no penalties for failing to do all your reading—except some limits to understanding as the content or importance of some of the documents will be referred to in the lecture.

• The biography of Niccolò Nicolì relates to both individualism and secularism for this session. You’ll revisit it again for Session 5 relating to materialism.

• Machiavelli’s *History of Florence* and Ficino’s work relate to individualism; Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and Vergerio’s letter both relate to secularism.
FROM VESPASIANO’S LIVES

Nicolò Nicoli (d. 1437)

Nicolò was well born, one of the four sons of a rich merchant, all of whom became merchants. In his youth Nicolò, by his father’s wish, entered trade, wherefore he could not give his time to letters as he desired. After his father’s death he left his brothers so as to carry out his aims. He was the master of a good fortune and took up Latin letters, in which he soon became proficient. He studied under [Manuel] Chrysoloras, a learned Greek who had recently come to Florence, and although he worked hard in Greek and Latin he was not content with his progress, so he went to study with Luigi Marsigli [d. 1394, Florentine humanist and political writer], a learned philosopher and theologian, and in the course of some years’ reading gained a good knowledge of the subjects he studied. He here acted like a good and faithful Christian, for, putting all else aside, he studied theology alone. Nicolò may justly be called the father and the benefactor of all students of letters, for he gave them protection and encouragement to work, and pointed out to them the rewards which would follow. If he knew of any Greek or Latin book which was not in Florence he spared neither trouble nor cost until he should procure it; indeed, there are numberless Latin books which the city possesses through his care. He gained such high reputation amongst men of letters that Messer Leonardo sent him his Life of Cicero and pronounced him to be the censor [i.e., foremost critic] of the Latin tongue.

He was a man of upright life who favored virtue and censured vice. He collected a fine library, not regarding the cost, and was always searching for rare books. He bought all these with the wealth which his father had left, putting aside only what was necessary for his maintenance. He sold several of his farms and spent the proceeds on his library. He was a devoted Christian, who specially favored monks and friars, and was the foe of eviscerers. He held his books rather for the use of others than of himself, and all lettered students of Greek or Latin would come to him to borrow books, which he would always lend. He was guileless and sincere and liberal to everyone. It was through his good offices that Fra Ambrogio and Carlo d’Arezzo achieved success, on account of his gifts, the loan of his books, and the fees he paid to their teachers. If he heard of students going to Greece or to France or elsewhere he would give them the names of books which they lacked in Florence, and procure for them the help of Cosimo de’ Medici who would do anything for him. When it happened that he could only get the copy of a book he would copy it himself, either in current or shaped characters, all in the finest script, as may be seen in San Marco, where there are many books from his hand in one lettering or the other. He procured at his own expense the works of Tertullian and other [ancient] writers which were not in Italy. He also found an imperfect copy of Ammianus Marcellinus and wrote it out with his own hand. The De Oratore and the Brutus [by Cicero] were sent to Nicolò from Lombardy, having been brought by the envoys of Duke Filippo when they went to ask for peace in the time of Pope Martin. The book was found in a chest in a very old church; this chest had not been opened for a long time, and they found the book, a very ancient example, while searching for evidence concerning certain ancient rights. De Oratore was found broken up, and it is through the care of Nicolò that we find it perfect today. He also rediscovered many sacred works and several of Tully’s orations.

Through Nicolò Florence acquired many fine works of sculpture, of which he had great knowledge as well as of painting. A complete copy of Pliny did not exist in Florence, but when Nicolò heard that there was one in Lübeck, in Germany, he secured it by Cosimo’s aid, and thus Pliny came to Florence. All the young men he knew in Florence used to come to him for instruction in letters, and he cared for the needs of all those who wanted books or teachers. He did not seek any office in Florence [although] he was made an official in the University; many times he was selected for some governorship, but he refused them all, saying that they were food for the vultures, and he would let these feed on them. He called vultures those who went into the alehouses and devoured the poor. Master Paolo and Ser Filippo were his intimate friends, and there were few days when they would not be found at the monastery of the Agnoli, together with Fra Ambrogio and sometimes Cosimo and Lorenzo de’ Medici, who, on account of Nicolò’s great merits, treated him most liberally, because he had spent in books almost all that he had. His means only allowed him to live very sparingly considering his position. The Medici, as they knew this, gave orders at the bank that whenever Nicolò might ask for money, it should be given to him, and charged to their account. They afterward told Nicolò not to let himself want for anything, but to send to the bank for whatever he needed. So Nicolò, being in sore straits, heartened himself to do what he would not otherwise have done. They supported him in this way till the end of his life, and they showed the greatest
courtesy in aiding him in necessity. In 1420 Cosimo fled from the plague to Verona, taking with him Nicolò and Carlo d'Arezzo and paying all their charges. Afterward, when Cosimo was banished to Venice, Nicolò was deeply grieved on account of the love he had for him, and one day he wrote a letter to Cosimo at Venice, and when he gave it to the horseman who would deliver it, he said in his presence: “Give this letter to Cosimo, and tell him, Nicolò says that so many ill-deeds are committed by the state every day, that a ream of paper would not suffice him to write them down.” And he spoke these words in so loud a voice that all those present could hear them.

His was a frank and liberal nature. One day when he was in company with a friar who was learned rather than pious, he addressed him, saying: “There will be few of your kind in Paradise.” Another friar, Francesco da Pietropane by name, lived with a few others in the mountains near Lucca, in pious community, and was a man well versed in Greek and Latin. Nicolò showed them much favor and let them have all the books they wanted. At his death he had lent here and there more than two hundred volumes, among which were some of the Greek books which had been lent to Fra Francesco. This friar, amongst many other gifts, had that of predicting the future, and before Cosimo was banished he informed Nicolò that the year 1433 would bring great danger to Cosimo; he would either lose his life or be exiled, whereupon Nicolò sent word to Cosimo to be on his guard, for in this same year he would be in peril either of death or exile. Cosimo was loath to believe this, but these words proved true. Nicolò had a pure mind, and his conversation was that of a good and faithful Christian, for he would say that there were many unbelievers and rebels against the Christian religion who argued against the immortality of the soul, as if this were a matter of doubt. That it was a great misfortune to many that they were only able to care for their bodies, thinking of their souls, which are no way concerned with their unbridled lusts, as something which could sit in a chair, as something substantial enough to be seen with the eye. All those who were not good Christians and doubted concerning that religion to which he was so firmly attached, incurred his strongest hatred; indeed, it seemed to him stark madness to have any doubt of anything so noble which had won the support of so many wonderful men in every age.

Beyond his other remarkable qualities he had a wide judgment, not only in letters, but also in painting and in sculpture, and he had in his house a number of medals, in bronze, silver, and gold; also many antique figures in copper, and heads in marble. One day, when Nicolò was leaving his house, he saw a boy who had around his neck a chalcedony engraved with a figure by the hand of Polycleitus, a beautiful work. He enquired of the boy his father's name, and having learned this, sent to ask him if he would sell the stone; the father readily consented, like one who neither knew what it was nor valued it. Nicolò sent him five florins in exchange, and the good man to whom it had belonged deemed that he had paid him more than double its value. Nicolò afterward exhibited it as a remarkable object, as indeed it was. There was in Florence in the time of Pope Eugenius a certain Maestro Luigi, the Patriarch, who took great interest in such things as these, and he sent word to Nicolò, asking if he might see the chalcedony. Nicolò sent it to him, and it pleased him so greatly that he kept it, and sent to Nicolò two hundred golden ducats and he urged him so much that Nicolò, not being a rich man, let him have it. After the death of this Patriarch it passed to Pope Paul, and then to Lorenzo de' Medici.

Nicolò had a great knowledge of all parts of the world, so that if anyone who had been in any particular region, and asked him about it, Nicolò would know it better than the man who had been there, and he gave many instances of this. Nicolò always had his house full of distinguished men, and the leading youths of the city. As to the strangers who visited Florence at that time, they all deemed that if they had not visited Nicolò they had not been to Florence at all. Many prelates and learned youths and courtiers frequented his house, and among those who often went to see him was Messer Gregorio Correro, nephew of the Cardinal of Bologna, who himself was the nephew of Pope Gregory. This Messer Gregorio was a mirror of conduct, well read in prose and in verse, and much devoted to Nicolò. As soon as Gregorio, or any other of these youths, should come to him, he put a book into his hand, and bade him read it. There would often be, at the same time, ten or twelve noble young gentlemen with books in their hands reading, after a time he would bid them put down the books and tell him what they had been studying. Then there would be a discussion on some matter of interest so that no time might be lost. Indeed, with Nicolò the custom was absolutely different from that of other houses, where men would sit down to play or gamble at once. It chanced one day that a scholar brought some of his writings to show to him, but neither the subject nor the style of them was to Nicolò's liking. After he had read separate portions of the work, the writer begged for his opinion, but Nicolò demurred, being unwilling to vex him, and answered, “I have already to deal with several hundred volumes of authors of repute before I shall be able to consider yours” [for every writer of that time would ask him to read his work and give an opinion], and handed the manuscript back to the writer, who was much astonished, and failed to understand what his verdict was. He was very apt at composition, but his taste was so delicate that he could rarely satisfy himself. I have spoken formerly with some who have seen his Latin epistles and other elegant writings, but these were not shown to me for reasons which I fully understood.

Nicolò always encouraged promising students to follow a literary life, and he nobly aided all those who showed merit in providing them with teachers and books, for in his time teachers and books were not so numerous as they are today. It may be said that he was the reviver of Greek and
Latin letters in Florence; they had for a long time lain buried, and although Petrarch, Dante, and Boccaccio had done something to rehabilitate them, they had not reached that height which they attained through Nicolò’s cultivation of them for diverse reasons. First, because he urged many in his time to take to letters, and, through his persuasion, many scholars came to Florence for study and teaching, for instance, he and Palla Strozzi induced Manuel Chrysoloras to come by providing money for his journey. He did the same for Aurispas [another celebrated Greek scholar] and other learned men, and when the question arose of spending money he would say to certain of those he knew, “I wish you would help bring over Manuel, or someone else,” and then he would say what each one might give.

Nicolò patronized painters, sculptors, and architects as well as men of letters, and he had a thorough knowledge of their crafts. . . . He was a true connoisseur of all fine things. Friar Ambrogio, Messer Poggio, and Carlo d’Arezzo were his friends, and it was through him that these men of genius became public teachers in Florence in the time of Pope Eugenius. He was on terms of friendship with all the learned men of Italy, and he corresponded with them both at home and abroad.

After having done so many good deeds, and gathered together a vast number of books on all the liberal arts in Greek and Latin, he desired that these should be made accessible to everyone. He directed that, after his death, they should continue to be at the service of all, so in his will he designated forty citizens to see that the books in question should be made a public library in order that all might use them. There were eight hundred volumes of Greek and Latin. He gave directions to these forty citizens that these books should be given to Cosimo de’ Medici for the library of San Marco, in fulfillment of the wishes of the testator, that they should remain in a public place for the use of those who might want to consult them. Also that it should be written in the cover of every book how it had once belonged to Nicolò Nicoli, and thus they remain to the present day. The value of them was six thousand florins. At the end of his book, De longaevis, Messer Giannozzo [Manetti [1396–1459]] mentions Nicolò and his way of life and the high praise he earned. Among other things he praises most highly the gift of this library, and says that he did more than Plato, Aristotle, or Theophrastus had done, for in the last testament of Plato and Aristotle are named certain goods which they left to their children, and to others, but they made no mention of their books. Theophrastus left all his possessions privately to a friend; Nicolò alone dedicated his to the public use, therefore much gratitude is due to him. Nor was this all, for Giovanni Boccaccio at his death had left all his books to Santo Spirito, where they were kept in chests, but Nicolò decided that they ought rather to be in a library available for all, so at his own expense he built one for their reception and preservation, and for the honor of Messer Giovanni. As they were for public use he made shelves for them, and they may be seen there to the present time.

To describe Nicolò, he was of handsome presence, lively, with a smile 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 vessels 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 age; his life had been occupied with good deeds, and when sickness came he was fain to show how his death might be worthy of his life. He was aware that he was near his end, so he sent for Friar Ambrogio and several other holy men and begged them to stay by him till the end. He was a great friend of Maestro Paolo, who, besides being a physician, was a man of holy life, and he begged him to remain also. As he could not rise from his bed he bade them prepare an altar in his room, and all things necessary for the mass; he also made full confession, and then begged Friar Ambrogio to say mass there every morning. After the mass an epistle of Saint Paul, for whom he had the greatest reverence, would be read, and during the reading, when the friar came to any fine passage, he would beg him to stop and would reflect over what had been read, and according to Friar Ambrogio he rarely heard one of these fine passages without tears. He also told me that his fervor and his devotion were wonderful, the result of a well-spent life. He knew that his conscience was clear, that he had never deprived anyone of wealth or fame; and that he had never desired any office in which he might have to pass sentence on others. His room was always filled with those who were the servants of God; unbelievers kept away, knowing that he did not care for them.

At the end he did his religious duties with great devotion. First mass was said, then he had himself placed on the ground on a carpet, with a large number of persons kneeling around him. When the Host was presented he showed the greatest devotion, and he turned to his Redeemer and accused himself as a sinner, and as one unworthy of this holy sacrament. Those around him could scarcely restrain their tears. This wonderful grace came from his habit of always reading holy books. Having taken the sacred body of Christ from the hands of Friar Ambrogio he seemed greatly consoles, and would only speak of his own salvation or read some book of devotion or discourse with the holy men about him.
Lorenzo, flushed with youth and power, would assume the direction of everything, and resolved that all transactions should bear an impress of his influence. The Pazzi, with their nobility and wealth unable to endure so many affronts, began to devise some means of vengeance. The first who spoke of any attempt against the Medici, was Francesco, who, being more sensitive and resolute than the others, determined either to obtain what was withheld from him, or lose what he still possessed. As the government of Florence gave him great offense, he resided almost constantly at Rome, where, like other Florentine merchants, he conducted extensive commercial operations; and being a most intimate friend of Count Girolamo, they frequently complained to each other of the conduct of the Medici. After a while they began to think that for the count to retain his estates, or the Pazzi their rights in the city, it would be necessary to change the government of Florence; and this they considered could not be done without the death of Giuliano and Lorenzo. They imagined the pope and the king would be easily induced to consent, because each could be convinced of the facility of the enterprise. Having acquired these ideas, they communicated them to Francesco Salviati, archbishop of Pisa, who, being ambitious and recently offended by the Medici, willingly adopted their views.
Considering their next step, they resolved, in order to facilitate the design, to obtain the consent of Jacopo de' Pazzi, without whose concurrence they feared it would be impracticable. With this view, it was resolved that Francesco de' Pazzi should go to Florence, while the archbishop and the count were to remain at Rome, to be ready to communicate with the pope when a suitable opportunity occurred. Francesco found Jacopo de' Pazzi more cautious and difficult to persuade than he could have wished, and on imparting this to his friends at Rome, it was thought he desired the sanction of some greater authority to induce him to adopt their views. Upon this, the archbishop and the count communicated the whole affair to Giovanni Batista da Montesecco, a leader of the papal forces, possessing military reputation, and under obligations to the pope and the count. To him the affair seemed difficult and dangerous, while the archbishop endeavored to obviate his objections by showing how much assistance the pope and the king would lend to the enterprise; the hatred of the Florentines toward the Medici, the numerous friends the Salviati and the Pazzi would bring with them, the readiness with which the young men might be slain, on account of their going about the city unaccompanied and without suspicion, and the facility with which the government might then be changed. These things Giovanni Batista did not in reality believe, for he had heard from many Florentines quite contrary statements.
The Astonishing Glories of Lorenzo de' Medici

Marsilio Ficino to Niccolo Michelozzi, a true man: greetings.

O how difficult it now is, my Niccolo, how very difficult not to be consumed with envy! I for my part, Niccolo, would perhaps be unable to avoid being envious of so many magnificent qualities in a young man, which are usually associated with age, were it not that Lorenzo’s qualities are mine also. Tell me, friend, who speaks more eloquently? Who appraises more shrewdly? Who soothes more gently? Who stirs men more passionately? Poets, you have long since awarded him the laurel; orators, you have recently done likewise; now let us philosophers do the same. By Jupiter, how is it that easy-going veterans are overcome so quickly, so easily, and so completely, by this hustling youngster?

But let others direct their envy elsewhere and be consumed by its gnawing. I for my part greatly rejoice and delight in what is my own; for Lorenzo belongs to me, through his unbelievable humanity. I also am Lorenzo’s, because of the incomparable gift of his soul; he has bought me at a great price, that is, himself.

May God love me, Niccolo! I speak the truth when I say that no one was closer or dearer to me than the great Cosimo. I recognized in that old man not human virtue, but the virtue of a Hero. I now acknowledge within this young man all the qualities of the old man. I see the Phoenix in the Phoenix, the light in the sunbeam. That splendor of Cosimo now shines daily from our Lorenzo in many forms, bringing light to the Latin people and glory to the Florentine Republic. But enough of this for the present.

Now Lorenzo was asking in his letter whose thanks I had conveyed to him, mine or another’s. Reply to him on my behalf that I wished him God’s grace. For I pray that those three Graces described by Orpheus, namely splendor, joy and vigor, will support our Medici, that is, splendor of intellect, joy in the exercise of will, vigor and prosperity of body. These Graces now inspire Lorenzo from on high, and they will do so as long as he only acknowledges that he has freely received these favors from God alone.

Farewell.

21st January, 1473
Florence
Niccolò Machiavelli, from *The Prince* (3 slides)

Coming now to the other qualities mentioned above, I say that every prince ought to desire to be considered clement and not cruel. Nevertheless he ought to take care not to misuse this clemency. Cesare Borgia was considered cruel; notwithstanding, his cruelty reconciled the Romagna, unified it, and restored it to peace and loyalty. And if this be rightly considered, he will be seen to have been much more merciful than the Florentine people, who, to avoid a reputation for cruelty, permitted Pistoia to be destroyed. (*) Therefore a prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty; because with a few examples he will be more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, allow disorders to arise, from which follow murders or robberies; for these are wont to injure the whole people, whilst those executions which originate with a prince offend the individual only.

And of all princes, it is impossible for the new prince to avoid the imputation of cruelty, owing to new states being full of dangers. Hence Virgil, through the mouth of Dido, excuses the inhumanity of her reign owing to its being new, saying:

"Res dura, et regni novitas me talia cogunt
Moliri, et late fines custode tueri." (*)

Nevertheless he ought to be slow to believe and to act, nor should he himself show fear, but proceed in a temperate manner with prudence and humanity, so that too much confidence may not make him incautious and too much distrust render him intolerable.
Upon this a question arises: whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person, it is much safer to be feared than loved, when, of the two, either must be dispensed with. Because this is to be asserted in general of men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, covetous, and as long as you succeed they are yours entirely; they will offer you their blood, property, life, and children, as is said above, when the need is far distant; but when it approaches they turn against you. And that prince who, relying entirely on their promises, has neglected other precautions, is ruined; because friendships that are obtained by payments, and not by greatness or nobility of mind, may indeed be earned, but they are not secured, and in time of need cannot be relied upon; and men have less scruple in offending one who is beloved than one who is feared, for love is preserved by the link of obligation which, owing to the baseness of men, is broken at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails.
Nevertheless a prince ought to inspire fear in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred; because he can endure very well being feared whilst he is not hated, which will always be as long as he abstains from the property of his citizens and subjects and from their women. But when it is necessary for him to proceed against the life of someone, he must do it on proper justification and for manifest cause, but above all things he must keep his hands off the property of others, because men more quickly forget the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony. Besides, pretexts for taking away the property are never wanting; for he who has once begun to live by robbery will always find pretexts for seizing what belongs to others; but reasons for taking life, on the contrary, are more difficult to find and sooner lapse. But when a prince is with his army, and has under control a multitude of soldiers, then it is quite necessary for him to disregard the reputation of cruelty, for without it he would never hold his army united or disposed to its duties.
Pier Paolo Vergerio on Liberal Learning, 1403

We call those studies liberal which are worthy of a free man; those studies by which we attain and practise virtue and wisdom; that education which calls forth, trains and develops those highest gifts of body and of mind which ennoble men, and which are rightly judged to rank next in dignity to virtue only. For to a vulgar temper gain and pleasure are the one aim of existence, to a lofty nature, moral worth and fame. It is, then, of the highest importance that even from infancy this aim, this effort, should constantly be kept alive in growing minds. For I may affirm with fullest conviction that we shall not have attained wisdom in our later years unless in our earliest we have sincerely entered on its search. Nor may we for a moment admit, with the unthinking crowd, that those who give early promise fail in subsequent fulfillment. This may, partly from physical causes, happen in exceptional cases. But there is no doubt that nature has endowed some children with so keen, so ready an intelligence, that without serious effort they attain to a notable power of reasoning and conversing upon grave and lofty subjects, and by aid of right guidance and sound learning reach in manhood the highest distinction. On the other hand, children of modest powers demand even more attention, that their natural defects may be supplied by art. But all alike must in those early years, whilst the mind is supple, be inured to the toil and effort of learning. Not that education, in the broad sense, is exclusively the concern of youth. Did not Cato think it honourable to learn Greek in later life? Did not Socrates, greatest of philosophers, compel his aged fingers to the lute?

Our youth of to-day, it is to be feared, is backward to learn; studies are accounted irksome. Boys hardly weaned begin to claim their own way, at a time when every art should be employed to bring them under control and attract them to grave studies. The Master must judge how far he can rely upon emulation, rewards, encouragement; how far he must have recourse to stern measures. Too much leniency is objectionable; so also is too great severity, for we must avoid all that terrifies a boy. In certain temperaments—those in which a dark complexion denotes a quiet but strong personality—restraint must be cautiously applied. Boys of this type are mostly highly gifted and can bear a gentle hand. Not seldom it happens that a finely tempered nature is thwarted by circumstances, such as poverty at home, which compels a promising youth to forsake learning for trade: though, on the other hand, poverty is less dangerous to lofty instincts than great wealth. Or again, parents encourage their sons to follow a career traditional in their family, which may divert them from liberal studies: and the customary pursuits of the city in which we dwell exercise a decided influence on our choice. So that we may say that a perfectly unbiased decision in these matters is seldom possible, except to certain select natures, who by favour of the gods, as the poets have it, are unconsciously brought to choose the right path in life. The myth of Hercules, who, in the solitude of his wanderings, learned to accept the strenuous life and to reject the way of self-indulgence, and so attain the highest, is the significant setting of this profound truth. For us it is the best that can befall, that either the circumstances of our life, or the guidance and exhortations of those in charge of us, should mould our natures whilst they are still plastic.

In my own case, Ubertinus, you had before you the choice of training in Armes or in Letters. Either holds a place of distinction amongst the pursuits which appeal to men of noble spirit; either leads to fame and honour in the world. It would have been natural that you, the scion of a House ennobled by its prowess in arms, should have been content to accept your father's permission to devote yourself wholly to that discipline. But to your great credit you elected to become proficient in both alike: to add to the career of arms traditional in your family, an equal success in that other great discipline of mind and character, the study of Literature.

There was courage in your choice. For we cannot deny that there is still a horde—as I must call them—of people who, like Licinius the Emperor, denounce learning and the Arts as a danger to the State and hateful in themselves. In reality the very opposite is the truth. However, as we look back upon history we cannot deny that learning by no means expels wickedness, but may be indeed an additional instrument for evil in the hands of the corrupt. To a man of virtuous instincts knowledge is a help and an adornment; to a Claudius or a Nero it was a means of refinement in cruelty or in folly. On the other hand, your grandfather, Jacopo da Carrara, who, though a patron of learning, was not himself versed in Letters, did regretting that opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of higher studies had not been given him in youth; which shews us that, although we may in old age long for it, only in early years can we be sure of attaining that learning which we desire. So that it is no light motive to youthful diligence that we thereby provide ourselves with precious advantages against on-coming age, a spring of interest for a leisured life, a recreation for a busy one. Consider the necessity of the literary art to one immersed in reading and speculation; and its importance to one absorbed in affairs. To be able to speak and write with elegance is no slight advantage in negotiation, whether in public or private concerns. Especially in administration of the State, when intervals of rest and privacy are accorded to a prince, how must be value those means of occupying themselves which the knowledge of literature affords to him! Think of Domitian: son of Vespasian though he was, and brother of Titus, he was driven to occupy his leisure by killing flies! What a warning is here conveyed of the critical judgments which posterity passes upon Princes! They live in a light in which nothing can long remain hid. Contrast with this the saying of Scipio: "Never am I less idle, less solitary, than when to outward seeming I am doing nothing or am alone": evidence of a noble temper, worthy to be placed beside that recorded practice of Cato, who, amid the tedious business of the Senate, could withdraw himself from outward distractions and find himself truly alone in the companionship of his books.

Indeed the power which good books have of diverting our thoughts from unworthy or distressing themes is another support to my argument for the study of letters.
Add to this their helpfulness on those occasions when we find ourselves alone, without companions and without preoccupations—what can we do better than gather our books around us? In them we see unfolded before us vast stores of knowledge, for our delight, it may be, or for our inspiration. In them are contained the records of the great achievements of men; the wonders of Nature; the works of Providence in the past, the key to her secrets of the future. And, most important of all, this Knowledge is not liable to decay. With a picture, an inscription, a coin, books share a kind of immortality. In all these memory is, as it were, made permanent; although, in its freedom from accidental risks, Literature surpasses every other form of record.

Literature indeed exhibits not facts alone, but thoughts, and their expression. Provided such thoughts be worthy, and worthily expressed, we feel assured that they will not die: although I do not think that thoughts without style will be likely to attract much notice or secure a sure survival. What greater charm can life offer than this power of making the past, the present, and even the future, our own by means of literature? How bright a household is the family of books! we may cry, with Cicero. In their company is no noise, no greed, no self-will: at a word they speak to you, at a word they are still: to all our requests their response is ever ready and to the point. Books indeed are a higher—a wider, more tenacious—memory, a store-house which is the common property of us all.

I attach great weight to the duty of handing down this priceless treasure to our sons unimpaired by any carelessness on our part. How many are the gaps which the ignorance of past ages has willfully caused in the long and noble roll of writers! Books—in part or in their entirety—have been allowed to perish. What remains of others is often sorely corrupt, mutilated, or imperfect. It is hard that no slight portion of the history of Rome is only to be known through the labours of one writing in the Greek language: it is still worse that this same noble tongue, once well nigh the daily speech of our race, as familiar as the Latin language itself, is on the point of perishing, even amongst its own sons, and to us Italians is already utterly lost, unless we except one or two who in our time are tardily endeavouring to rescue something—if it be only a mere echo of it—from oblivion.

We come now to the consideration of the various subjects which may rightly be included under the name of "Liberal Studies." Amongst these I accord the first place to History, on grounds both of its attractiveness and of its utility, qualities which appeal equally to the scholar and to the statesman. Next in importance ranks Moral Philosophy, which indeed is, in a peculiar sense, a "Liberal Art," in that its purpose is to teach men the secret of true freedom. History, then, gives us the concrete examples of the precepts inculcated by philosophy. The one shows what men should do, the other what men have said and done in the past, and what practical lessons we may draw therefrom for the present day. I would indicate as the third main branch of study, Eloquence, which indeed holds a place of distinction amongst the refined Arts. By philosophy we learn the essential truth of things, which by eloquence we so exhibit in orderly adornment as to bring conviction to differing minds. And history provides the light of experience—a cumulative wisdom fit to supplement the force of reason and the persuasion of eloquence. For we allow that soundness of judgment, wisdom of speech, integrity of conduct are the marks of a truly liberal temper.