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Forthcoming in the proceedings of the conference, *From the Roman Academy to the Danish Academy in Rome*, ed. H. Ragn Jensen and M. Pade, to appear in *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici Supplementum*.

Humanist Academies and the “Platonic Academy of Florence”

James Hankins (Harvard University)

It is now widely recognized that the student of early humanist academies has to use great care when dealing with the numerous but often ambiguous references to academies and academic life in fifteenth century sources. The second half of the Quattrocento was the formative period for the idea of learned, literary and artistic academies, and it is all too easy to impose on fifteenth-century sources anachronistic assumptions drawn from the sixteenth and later centuries about the purpose, organization, and general character of these early associations of humanists. This is especially a problem when using the older literature on academies, for example Maylender’s *Storia delle accademie d’Italia* and Della Torre’s *Storia dell’Accademia Platonica di Firenze*, which are sometimes misled by the playful and metaphorical ways of talking indulged in by humanists.¹ It is fatally easy to reify into an institution what may only be a humanist’s rhetorical compliment to some prince for his devotion to literature, and it often happens that modern scholars mistakenly interpret references to universities (often called *academiae* or *gymnasia* by humanists) as references to humanist academies. There is also the ever-present danger of

¹ Maylender 1926-1930; Della Torre 1902.

campanilismo, which is partly responsible, it seems, for the excessive importance attributed to Ficino's academy in Florence, and the relative neglect of more influential models in Rome and Naples.² The terminology regarding academies, *sodalitates*, *studia*, *gymnasia*, *coetus litteratorum*, etc. is imprecise and unstable in this period and one has to pick one's way with great care among documents and literary sources that were not always clearly understood by contemporaries, let alone by us.

It is also now well known that the word *academia* was used for a variety of places, things, concepts and associations in the fifteenth century. As the present writer has documented elsewhere, it was used for humanist schools, such as those of Guarino Veronese and Gasparino Barzizza, as a word roughly equivalent to *gymnasium*. It was also widely used by humanists as a classicizing equivalent to *studium* or university, and in this sense was used to denote the universities of Bologna, Florence, Padua, Rome and others. It was also used, in a way clearly modelled on Cicero, to describe rooms in houses devoted to study and discussion, often containing books and portrait busts of ancient writers. Ficino used the word idiosyncratically as roughly equivalent to *libri platonici*, a highly metaphorical use that has led to much confusion in the secondary literature. It was also used to refer to the philosophical tradition of the ancient Academy in Athens, both in its skeptical and in its dogmatically Platonic phases. Finally, the word is used to describe associations of literary men, *sodalitia*, usually gathered around some charismatic or powerful individual who inspires or sponsors the literary activities of the group. It is often hard to say just how coherent and permanent such groups are, and it is sometimes the case that we are dealing with little more than an off-hand compliment, as when a

² Chambers 1995, 3-5.

monastery frequented by Lorenzo de' Medici and Pico is referred to as 'a academy of the Christian faith'.³

One has to add immediately that it is not always possible to draw neat lines between these categories. Humanist schools such as Guarino's were sometimes associated with universities, and it is often unclear whether an author using the word *academia* is talking about Guarino's own classes and students or those of the Ferrarese *studium* of which he was a part. Barzizza's gymnasium, which he also called an academy, was an exclusive boarding house for noble students at the University of Padua, similar to some hospices at Bologna or the halls of medieval Oxford.⁴ On the other hand, one finds literary sodalities that undertake educational activities. For example Pomponio Leto's *sodalitium* organized poetry recitals and oratorical displays in which younger members would perform a program for an audience of older members.⁵ I suspect that we are dealing with just such a hybrid usage in the well-known case of the *Chorus Academiae Florentinae*, 'the band of the Florentine academy', which refers to a group of Argyropoulos' students who were studying at the Florentine Studio (or Academy) but had a separate identity of their own as students interested in studying philosophy and literature with Argyropoulos. Giuseppe Zippel, Arthur Field and D. S. Chambers regard this group as the ancestor of Ficino's later academy and I think this is correct.⁶ In general it is rare for a fifteenth century academy to operate too far from the orbit of the local university. Sometimes academies were residential houses for university students;

³ Hankins 1990a; Hankins 1991, reprinted in Hankins 2003-2004, 187-272; see also Hankins 2002 and Hankins 2007a. For *academia* as a name for the University of Rome, see the article of Concetta Bianca in this volume.

⁴ Mercer 1979.

⁵ See below. A parallel Florentine case is offered by the students of Bartolomeo Scala or of Giorgio Antonio Vespucci who presented ancient plays in Latin or Greek.

⁶ Zippel 1902, 445-46; Field 1988, 107-8; Chambers 1995, 4-5

sometimes their membership merely overlapped with that of poetry and rhetoric masters and students at the university; sometimes the relations were more distant. This fact too is relevant to understanding what Ficino's academy was like.

But I want to postpone to the end of this essay a consideration of just what Ficino's academy was, because I think that that discussion will gain from a comparison with the activities of other humanist academies in the fifteenth century. I shall not discuss academies in the sense of *studia*, *gymnasia*, *libri platonici*, philosophical traditions or rooms in palaces and villas. I shall concentrate instead on the academy as *sodalitas* or *sodalitium literatorum* – terms, by the way, far more widely used than *academia* for the phenomenon we are describing. These *sodalitates* are defined by D. S. Chambers in an important article of 1995 as ‘coteries dominated by one or two charismatic individuals, mainly interested in the literature and ideas of the ancient world’.⁷ Chambers dates the fashion for using the word *academia* to describe such groupings to the Council of Florence in 1439, though clearly informal groups of humanists had met for discussion long before that. An example would be the gathering of Salutati's disciples depicted in Leonardo Bruni's *Dialogi ad Petrum Histrum* of 1402/5.⁸ Chambers gives 1540 as the approximate date for the emergence of the first academy recognizably of the early modern type, i.e., the Inflammati of Padua. It is the quattrocento *sodalitates literatorum* which Chambers sees, correctly I believe, as the true ancestors of the institutions that call

⁷ Chambers 1995, 2.

⁸ Bruni 1994. Poggio refers to the disciples of Coluccio Salutati as an ‘academy’ in his funeral oration for Leonardo Bruni (d. 1444), in Bruni 2007, I, cxvii; Bruni, he says, before his death had been the only one left of that group: ‘Restabat hic unus veterum studiorum et quasi nascentis olim academiae socius.’

themselves academies in early modern Europe – not the largely mythical ‘Platonic Academy of Florence.’⁹

The *sodalitates litteratorum* found in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century can be subdivided into various types. There are, first of all, what might be called the *house academies* – academies that met in the house of a scholar, usually to use his library and to consult with other scholars frequenting the place on matters of mutual interest.

Bessarion’s academy was of this sort, as was that of Alessandro and Paolo Cortesi, and also Aldus’s *Neakademia* in Venice should probably be put in this category.¹⁰ The room or rooms in which they met were sometimes, confusingly, referred to as the Academy (or, echoing Cicero, as the Academy and Lyceum). There were, secondly, *court academies*, elite social gatherings where individuals engaged in more-or-less organized displays of erudition and learned play. This was the sort of gathering depicted by Castiglione in *The Courtier*, but analogous groups are found at the Neapolitan court of Alfonso d’Aragona, and the so-called Academia de San Pietro of Isabella d’Este. These ‘academies’ seem to have been rather impermanent, sometimes confined to a single short period; sometimes, indeed, we may suspect that they were little more than fantasies concocted by courtly sycophants or uncritical scholarship. They are closely related to the Venetian *compagnie di calzo* of the early sixteenth century, which in due course developed institutional notes such as statutes, officers, and regular banquets. Finally, there are the *garden or villa academies*, also called *orti letterari*, again inspired by Cicero, which seem to have been more permanent in character than the court academies. These groups flourished especially in Rome and met to enjoy learned conversation, poetical and oratorical

⁹ Chambers 1995, 13.

¹⁰ Bianca 1999, 19-41; Chambers 1995, 10-11, 12; Lowry 1976.

recitations, and the physical examination of antiquities. We can include in this category the Roman academies of Colocci and Goritz.¹¹

I wish to emphasize strongly that the one type of academy for which we do not have evidence in the fifteenth century is the philosophical academy modelled on the ancient Athenian institution founded by Plato. Plato's academy, like the other ancient schools, was primarily intended to train disciples in the thought of a master. Members of ancient philosophical schools aimed to share their master's special, counterintuitive view of the world, distinct from that of the larger society around them, and to that end engaged in various spiritual and moral exercises. They rejected the values and way of life of ordinary Graeco-Roman society and adopted a distinctive way of life, the philosophical life, and even a distinctive dress, the *tribon*. Disciples read primarily the works associated with the school – in the case of Plato's Academy, the dialogues of Plato. These schools were often described as sects or *haereses* in ancient sources; some of them lasted for centuries as endowed institutions under a succession of masters.¹² I will suggest later when describing Ficino's academy why it was that this type of academy could not have been introduced in the period we are discussing.

Bessarion's academy or sodalitas

The case of Bessarion's academy, however, may already help illustrate the point. Bessarion was the leader of a circle of humanists who from time to time were referred to as an academy or a *sodalitas*, and Bessarion was certainly a Platonist in one sense of that polysemous word. It is also clear that one of the major activities of his house academy in

¹¹ On Roman academies see D'Amico 1983, 89-112; Chambers 1995.

¹² In general see Hadot 2002.

the 1460s was to defend Plato against the scurrilous attacks of George of Trebizond. But as is amply illustrated in an important article by Concetta Bianca,¹³ this apologetic activity in favor of Plato was only one aspect of a wide-ranging activity. Bessarion and his circle, for instance, were actively involved in various reform projects within the church and the Basilian order. Among their major activities was also the collection and translation of a wide variety of Greek literary and philosophical texts – including Demosthenes, Xenophon, Aristotle, and the Greek Church Fathers. Bessarion's house also became a temporary refuge for a number of Greek scholars who had emigrated from the East and were seeking employment in Italy. We still lack a comprehensive study of Bessarion's theology, but it is clear that this too was a major preoccupation of his *équipe*, and much of Bessarion's theological activity was unrelated to his Platonism, for example, his studies of the late scholastic problem of future contingents. Bessarion's learned friends were, furthermore, deeply committed to his project to organize a crusade for the recovery of Constantinople from the Turks. He may have been engaged in some informal educational activities as well, for Platina tells us that Bessarion '*suos non religione tantum et moribus ad bene vivendum instituit, verum etiam litteratura, eruditione, doctrina ita imbuit ut idem ... multi et quidem docti continue prodeant.*'¹⁴

It has also been postulated that the early publishing program of the first Roman press, that of Sweynheim and Pannartz, reflects in part the agenda of Bessarion's circle, which, if true, would show that the interests of the academy ranged well beyond Platonic studies.¹⁵ It is clear that Bessarion, in a way that is significant for the future history of

¹³ Bianca 1999, 19-41; see also her article in this volume.

¹⁴ Platina 1866, cxv.

¹⁵ Bianca 1999, 37, 92-104; Bianca 2001. For a bibliography on the early printing press in Rome and its relationship with the academies and the Studio, see Miglio 2002, 189-203.

academies, was exceptionally quick to realize the propagandistic possibilities of printing, as is shown in an important recent study by Margaret Meserve on the circulation of his letters and speeches against the Turks by Guillaume Fichet in a Paris imprint of 1471.¹⁶ In this context it is striking that Bessarion did not see fit to have printed the translation of Proclus' *Platonic Theology* made by his familiar Pietro Balbi, and its survival in two manuscripts shows that its circulation was extremely limited. This is no surely no accident.

So it would be hard to qualify Bessarion's academy as a 'Platonic academy' without doing considerable violence to the evidence and without invoking in a highly misleading way the model of the ancient academy founded by Plato. The word 'academy' as applied to Bessarion's circle in contemporary sources is still very much in the realm of metaphor and was never the exclusive, official title for his circle. It was never seen as exclusively philosophical in its interests. In Niccolò Capranica's funeral oration for Bessarion, for example, we see that one of his closest associates clearly saw his group as a literary academy.¹⁷

Domum suam, academiam rectius quis dixerit tot tantisque ingeniis utriusque
linguae gnaris ac peritissimis in omni litterarum genere viris refertam atque
ornatam?

¹⁶ Meserve 2003.

¹⁷ Cited in Johann Rammingen's *Neulateinsche Wortliste*, s.v. *academia*, on line at www.neulatein.de.

What more correct name could there be for his house, filled and embellished with so many great minds knowledgeable in both languages, men highly experienced in every kind of literature, than an academy?

We find Bessarion himself qualified as *princeps* of the academy, but we also find Theodore Gaza so styled,¹⁸ so one wonders whether this word can refer to an official title. There is no evidence that Bessarion's academy ever drafted statutes, elected officers or had regular academic exercises or banquets of any kind.

The first Roman academy and Leto's sodalitium or sodalitas

A rather different picture is presented by the slightly later academy associated with Pomponio Leto, sometimes called the 'Roman Academy'. Some of the membership of this academy overlapped with Bessarion's, to be sure. But before the so-called Academic conspiracy of 1468, this group appears to have been considerably more transgressive than Bessarion's or any other academy of the fifteenth century. They were accused, at least, of Epicureanism, republicanism, irreligion, neopaganism, sodomy, denying the immortality of the soul and plotting against the life of Pope Paul II. The Milanese ambassador described them as 'una certa secta', a group of 'docti gioveni, poeti e filosofi' who had chosen for themselves 'una vita achademica et epicurea'. It is probably not an accident that this was the first academy to adopt academic names in place of their real names. Leto's group was indeed far more consistent than Bessarion's in

¹⁸ Pugliese Carratelli 1996, 806: 'Quid de Theodoro Thessalonicensi meo dicam, Bessarionis Academiae facile princeps'; see also Monfasani 1995, VI, 99, note 8, where Gaza is also called the 'princeps Academiae'.

calling itself an academy and in addressing each other as *fratres academici*.¹⁹ After the academicians had been arrested or driven into exile, the word *academia* started to have a conspiratorial ring in the ears of Paul II. According to a report of the Milanese ambassador, the pope had declared that ‘they would be considered heretics who hereafter shall mention the name *academia* either seriously or in jest.’²⁰ The fate of the early Roman academy needs to be borne in mind when discussing the case for the so-called Platonic Academy of Florence, the alleged evidence for which begins to accumulate around the same time, in the 1460s.

In the early stage of its existence, then, some members of the Roman academy may have had radical philosophical beliefs, but the academy as such promoted no particular philosophical viewpoint. Filippo Buonaccorsi (Callimachus Experiens) held views which seem to reflect Epicurean and ‘Averroistic’ influences; despite being later addressed as ‘complatonicus’ by Ficino, his views were decidedly not Platonic and might even be described as anti-Ficinian.²¹ But he is the only member of the group whose philosophical profile can be traced with some confidence. It may well have been his reputation that gave color to the charges that the group was ‘academic and Epicurean’ in its tendencies.

When the Roman academy was revived in the papacy of Sixtus IV (1478), it seems to have been a far more staid affair. It was organized as a religious *sodalitium* or *sodalitas* under the patronage of Ss. Victor, Fortunato and Genesio and was devoted to the study of Roman literature, inscriptions, and antiquities; the members referred to each

¹⁹ See especially Chambers 1995, 7-8.

²⁰ Hankins 1990b, 211-14. On the transgressive character of the first Roman academy see also the article of Bianca in this volume.

²¹ See Vasoli 1991, 142-172. This case alone should make us suspicious of identifying as a Platonist everyone whom Ficino calls a ‘complatonicus’.

other as *sodales* or comrades.²² There is little or no evidence that it was interested in philosophy.²³ There is a good deal of overlap between this second group and the teachers at the Studium Urbis, of whom Leto was one, and there is some evidence of a coordinated publication program between the two groups.²⁴ Leto is still the leader, referred to in contemporary sources as *princeps sodalitatis letterarie*.²⁵ The diarist Jacopo Gherardi gives us a famous description of one of its meetings which will also provide an illuminating parallel to a text describing Ficino's academy: Gherardi writes, under the date 20 April 1483:

In Exquiliis prope Pomponii [Leti] domum, die dominico qui sequutus est, a sodalitate litteraria celebratum est Romanae Urbis Natale. Sacra solemniter acta, Demetrio Lucensi, bibliothecae pontificiae prefecto operante, Paulus Marsus orationem habuit. Pransum est apud Salvatoris sacellum, ubi sodalitas litteratis viris et studiorum studiosis elegans convivium paraverat. Sex antistites convivio interfuere et eruditi ac nobiles adolescentes quamplures. Recitatum est ad mensam Federici III Cesaris privilegium sodalitati concessum, et a diversis iuvenibus eruditis versus quamplures etiam memoriter recitati. Actum etiam de laurea danda Fasto Foroliviensi, quae non tam ei negata est, quam in aliud tempus dilata cerimonia.²⁶

²² It is perhaps significant that Callimachus after fleeing to Poland founded a *sodalitas litterarum Vistulana* rather than a group styling itself an *academia*.

²³ D'Amico 1983, 91-97.

²⁴ Blasio 1986.

²⁵ Gherardi 1904, 98.

²⁶ Ibid., 117.

On the Esquiline hill near the house of Pomponio [Leto], on the following Sunday, the birthday of the City of Rome was celebrated by a literary sodality. The ceremony was solemnly enacted by Demetrius of Lucca, the prefect of the pontifical library, and Paolo Marsi gave an oration. There was a dinner at the church of San Salvatore de Cornelis, where the sodality had prepared an elegant symposium for literary men and scholars. Six bishops took part in the symposium and numerous érudits and noble youths. A privilege granted to the sodality by the Emperor Frederick III was read out at table and numerous verses were recited from memory by various learned youths. They discussed the laurel to be given to Fausto Andrelini of Forlì, a ceremony which was not so much denied him as put off to another time.

A number of features in this description are worth noting. The group seems to have had enough of an institutional character as a *sodalitas* that it had obtained a charter from Frederick III.²⁷ It had appropriated to itself the right to confer the laurel. It had funds to hold a symposium and attract numerous noble participants. And it had a sort of educational function, in that it provided a venue within which young aspirants to cultural prestige could win the approval of their elders.

Pontano's Porticus or academy

The 'academy' in Naples traditionally associated with Antonio Beccadelli (il Panormita, 1394-1471) and later Giovanni 'Gioviano' Pontano (1429-1503) seems at first sight to have fewer institutional notes and a more distant relationship with the local

²⁷ Though the imperial registers for this period preserve no such document. See *DR* and Chmel 1962.

studium than Leto's Roman *sodalitium*. One has to put the word 'academy' in quotation marks since this word was never in fact used for the gatherings of learned men presided over by Beccadelli; the usual word in Pontano's dialogues and other sources for this earlier, rather notional phase of the Neapolitan academy was the Porticus or Porticus Antoniana (after Beccadelli's first name, Antonio). The same word was also used initially as the preferred name for the literary circle that met later under the leadership of Pontano. The use of the word *academia* to identify this later group is attested no earlier than the 1480s²⁸ and the word becomes the regular name for Pontano's literary circle only after his death in 1503 – mostly, it would seem, through the influence of Galateo and Pontano's disciple and successor, Pietro Summonte. Pontano himself preferred the style 'Porticus', presumably to emphasize the continuity with the earlier group.²⁹ Sometimes 'Porticus' is used of the actual, physical arcade near the statue of the Nile (now Piazzetta del Nilo) in Naples, where Beccadelli used to hold forth on literary topics with his friends and admirers, but it is more often used as a metonym for the group or for the discussions held by his or by Pontano's circle. The circle kept the name Porticus even when it met elsewhere: in the monastery of S. Giovanni a Carbonara, or at Pontano's house (which had an arcaded area on the ground floor), or at his villa in Antignano in the Vomero, or in

²⁸ Furstenberg-Levi 2006, 41-42, states that the term was first used in the mid-1480s, but see the letter of Galateo (c. 1481) to Ermolao Barbaro in De' Ferrari 1959, 85-96, esp. 93.

²⁹ Furstenberg-Levi 2006, 40-44. In Summonte's dedicatory letter to Pontano's *Actius* (1499), written after Pontano's death in 1503, the term *Pontana Academia* is used, but in the dialogue itself, as in Pontano's other dialogues, the term used for Beccadelli's and Pontano's own group is always Porticus. (I searched the electronic files of the five dialogues prepared for the edition and translation of these texts by Julia Haig Gaisser, forthcoming in "The I Tatti Renaissance Library.") Furstenberg-Levi notes that Pontano himself only used the word *academia* of his group after 1496. Galateo in general seems to prefer the word *academia*.

the elegant family chapel or *tempietto* he built in the classical style (1492) on the via de' Tribunali, a few minutes' walk from his palazzo.³⁰

This metonymy alone shows that Pontano's literary friends shared a certain group identity, though it should be borne in mind that most of the evidence for the *Pontani Porticus* or academy comes from the period after Pontano's retirement from public duties in 1495. Beccadelli and Pontano certainly had numerous literary friends in Naples who met together socially from time to time – so much is vividly brought to life in Pontano's dialogues and poetry – and there must have been informal literary discussions at the court of the Aragonese kings from the 1450s onwards, but whether the Neapolitan academy had a group identity much before the death of Panormita is at least open to doubt.³¹ Beccadelli's 'academy', called the Porticus Antoniana by Pontano, may well have been a largely invented tradition, especially its earlier phase when it was supposedly centered in the court of Alfonso I of Aragon.³² And Pontano himself in the *De prudentia* (1499/1500) modestly cautions his reader not to suppose that his own literary circle amounted to an Academy or Lyceum of the type found in ancient Greece:

³⁰ Santoro 1980, 159-60.

³¹ Santoro 1980, 162, cites a letter of Galateo to Girolamo Carbone (1503) with the key information: 'Academiam nostram, vivo adhuc illo *sene* Antonio Panormita, cui bonae litterae tantum debent, legibus et institutis adornavit et auxit' (my emphasis) which seems to imply that the academy was given an institutional character by Pontano only in the last years of Panormita's life. See also De' Ferrari (=Galateo) 1959, 101-103 (after 1498), who lists as part of the *vetus academia* 'Hermolaus Barbarus, Georgius Maonius, Ladislaus [de Marco], Joannes et Paulus Attaldi', all of whom were *sodales* in Pontano's academy and not (as far as we know) Beccadelli's; See Santoro 1980, 162.

³² Chambers 1995, 8-9: 'What was envisaged [in a letter of 1447 mentioning a proposed *academia* to be founded by King Alfonso] is not clear, but the reality probably did not amount to more than *ad hoc* readings, debates and orations in the presence of the king, and the implication that it was something more is probably owing to Giovanni 'Jovianus' Pontano ... and his friends who wanted to provide some ancestry and continuity for Pontano's own 'academy' in his retirement in the 1490s'. I suggest below that the proposal for an 'academy' mentioned in this letter of 1447 from Martorell to Beccadelli was probably a reference to the Neapolitan Studio, then in abeyance.

In Lycio deambulabat philosophans senex ille philosophorum omnium
 disertissimus, audiendumque ad eum universa etiam Graecia confluebat, nominis
 eius admiratione commota ac disciplinae. Nobis vero, Tristane Caraciale tuque
 Francisce Puderice, haudquaquam parentes sunt Athenae, neque ulla utique
 Campania in ter(r)a est Academia, ipsique haud magna sane cum mentis atque
 ingenii re; senes tamen sumus philosophamurque et quidem cum paucis [ac] nunc
 domestica in porticu, nunc fanulo in hoc, deambulationeque, quod si per
 religionem liceret, libenter id quidem fecissemus—ne Lycium tamen
 appellaremus, tanti viri memoria nos deterruit—quodque et si nequaquam in
 Academia, in celeberrima tamen urbis huius parte nostris est sumptibus positum
 ac dedicatum.³³

*That most eloquent of all the philosophers as an old man used to philosophize
 walking about in the Lyceum, and all Greece used to flock together to hear him,
 drawn by wonder at his reputation and learning. But we, Tristano Carraciolo and
 Francesco Puderico, are by no means subjects of Athens, and there is no
 Academy for us anywhere in Campania, and we ourselves, really, have no great
 supply of understanding or wit; yet we are old men and we do, certainly,
 philosophize with a few men, now in the portico of our house, now in this little
 chapel; and we should have willingly have made an ambulatory [for the chapel] if
 religion permitted—the memory of that great man nevertheless deters us from*

³³ Pontano, *De prudentia*, in his *Opera* I, 147. The expression of ideas here is uncharacteristically obscure and the passage is possibly corrupt, though Pontano's old age may be responsible for the last wandering period. Pontano also seems to be confused in this passage about which philosopher taught in the Lyceum and seems to mean by 'that most eloquent of the philosophers' Plato rather than Aristotle (see p. 148 and the editor Summonte's gentle note on p. 226).

calling it a Lyceum—and the chapel, even if it is by no means sited and dedicated in the Academy, is nevertheless sited and dedicated at our expense in a very famous part of this city.

The group of about eighteen men plausibly identified by Santoro and Furstenberg-Levi as the core group of his academy or Porticus are similar in age and social profile to the *sodales* of Bessarion's and the second Roman Academy. They too most often refer to each other as *sodales* or simply *amici*.³⁴ They are not *in statu pupillari* but are adults associated with the Neapolitan regime, 'illustrious men of rare erudition' as Giles of Viterbo called them.³⁵ They include some noblemen but also secretaries, diplomats and tutors in the royal household who within the academy treat each other on a footing of equality. There are few institutional notes, but the group does adopt classical names, celebrate the birthdays of members and hold feasts. They are an informal study group that reads and discusses classical literature, history and moral philosophy together; they also read aloud their own poetry. Sometimes classical poetry is performed, sung to the lyre. There is a regular structure to their conversations in that each member speaks in order. They seem to have been particularly interested in emending classical texts. Their discussions of moral philosophy do not promote the views of any particular ancient sect, but invoke the ancient philosophers eclectically, in the usual manner of humanists, to support general moral sentiments.³⁶

³⁴ Furstenberg-Levi 2006, 55. See also Sannazaro's *Epigrammata* II, ix, xv, and his liminal poem to the *Actius*; Pontano's *Antonius*, where the regular terminology for the members is *sodales*; Pontano's *Baiae* (see Pontano 2006, 26 [1.10.4]); and Marullo 1951, 24 (*Epigrammata* 1.54, "Ad Sodales").

³⁵ Furstenberg-Levi 2006, 52.

³⁶ Tateo 1972.

The most vivid account we have of the meetings of Pontano's academy, apart from his own dialogues (whose literary dress raises questions about their historical authenticity), appears in the *Dies geniales* of Alessandro d'Alessandro (1522), a work that bears some resemblance to Poliziano's *Miscellanea*. Several times in the course of this work we are given vignettes of learned life in Naples in the circle of Pontano or Sannazaro. In the first such passage d'Alessandro recounts how 'a passage from Suetonius on the will of Caesar was discussed together on the birthday of Jovianus Pontanus.' He describes how Pontano used to summon them into his delectable gardens where he had built a small house or lodge (*aedicula*); quite a few men interested in the *bonae artes* would gather and spend the whole day together with Pontano, who 'sweetened them with his witty and beautiful discourse.' On the present occasion a feast was being set out, and while the tables were being prepared, the group gathered by the fire and Pontano asked a youth to read out a passage from Suetonius. The group then proceeded to discuss problems with the passage far into the night.³⁷

Here we seem far from the world of the university classroom, but in fact Pontano, and Panormita before him, had numerous ties with the Neapolitan Studio, and both men left their mark on that institution indirectly, even if neither ever taught there. Beccadelli indeed seems to have been the prime mover in the refounding of the Studio. This institution struggled for life throughout much of the reign of Queen Joan II (reigned 1414-35), especially in the politically unstable decades between 1423 and 1443. It is significant that there is a gaping hole in the documentation between 1435 and 1451, the

³⁷ D'Alessandro 1522, f. Ir (Book I, chapter 1).

year when the university was refounded by Alfonso of Aragon.³⁸ Between 1451 and 1455 we have some sparse records of appointments in theology and medicine (1451) and in civil and canon law (1453-55), but the health of the institution does not appear to have been very robust. Its true golden age during the early Renaissance came in the time of Ferdinando I (reigned 1458-1494), between 1465 and 1488, when documents exist showing regular instruction in both laws, medicine, astrology, philosophy, logic, grammar, rhetoric and poetry.

Beccadelli's role in the refoundation of the institution emerges in a letter of Francese Martorell, Alfonso's chancellor, to Panormita. Datable to around the first half of 1447, the letter has been cited in recent scholarship as evidence that Panormita's literary academy was founded around that date.³⁹ But closer inspection of the document, hitherto unpublished, shows we are dealing with another case in which the ambiguity of the word *academia* has proven to be misleading. The letter must in fact refer to the refounding of the Studio, since it is inconceivable that Panormita or Alfonso would have considered supporting the expenses of a literary academy from ecclesiastical revenues. And we know from other sources that the Neapolitan Studio was always directly administered by the king and not by an intermediate body such as a board of *Riformatori* (as in Bologna) or *Ufficiali dello Studio* (as in Florence).⁴⁰ So the situation revealed below, in which the King would be personally responsible for the refoundation of the Studio, is precisely what we would expect given the patterns of governance of the Neapolitan Studio.

³⁸ Cannavale 1895, 13; De Frede 1960, 15, cites a document showing that a doctorate of medicine was awarded in 1454. In general see Grendler 2002, 42-43.

³⁹ Bentley 1987, 94; Furstenberg Levy 2006, 63, note 48.

⁴⁰ Grendler 2002, 42.

Martorellus Antonio viro suauiissimo /109r/ salutem.

Negocium quod mihi de achademia conficiunda commiseras Regi benefactori nostro plane explicaui, illudque sibi, ut talem principem decet, gratum periocundumque fuit atque id omnino efficere statuit, neque id sumptibus aecclesiarum, ut tu narraueras, sed suis ipsius ut tota huius achademiae gloria se solum atque alium attineret neminem. Quare aduentum tuum expectamus ut negotium hoc quod inter arandum somniasti expleri possit. Ex hocque intelligere poteris me sanum hactenus atque nunquam fuisse insanum qualem tu cum uerberum illius legulei insimulatum te scriberem iudicasti. Velim igitur ad nos venias cum primum cura rei uxorie te respirare sinet: tum ut achademiam perficias tum uel maxime ut coram Alfonso Caesare accusationis illius quam non tam parui momenti ac tu facio causam [*post corr.*] dicas. Vale.⁴¹

Martorell to Antonio, sweetest of men, greeting.

The business about the academy that you entrusted to me I have explained in distinct terms to the King our benefactor, and he found it a welcome and pleasant proposal, as befits such a prince. He has decided to carry it out entirely at his own expense and not at that of the churches, as you were saying, so that he and no one else should have the glory of this academy. Hence we await your arrival so that this business that you dreamed up in writing can be carried out. And from this you will be able to understand that, up to this point, I am sane and was never insane, as you thought I was when I wrote that you had been charged

⁴¹ Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3372, ff. 108v-109r. See Kristeller 1963-1997, II, 362.

with attacking that pettifogging lawyer. Please then come to us as soon as your charge regarding the business of the marriage lets you breathe again, both so that the matter of the academy can be brought to a conclusion and especially so that, in the presence of King Alfonso, you might plead your case concerning that accusation which I consider to be of great import, as you do. Farewell.

In fact there is no evidence known to the present writer of any literary academy in the time of Alfonso I (reigned 1443-1458) or in the early years of Ferdinand I. Sources such as Panormita's *De dictis et factis Alfonsi regis Aragonum* (1455) as well as Bartolomeo Facio's *De viris illustribus* and *Rerum gestarum Alfonsi regis libri X* (1457) give Alfonso due credit for assembling a great library and for acting as a generous patron of men of learning, but they are completely silent on the founding of a literary academy. It is hard to imagine why Panormita and Facio would omit such an ideal topic of praise if an academy had really existed. The only institution of learning mentioned in the *De dictis et factis Alfonsi regis* as an object of royal munificence was the Studio, 'the schools and auditoria in which theology, chiefly, was read', and Panormita states that not only did Alfonso refurbish the schools but that he also attended the lectures personally, providing a model even for the learned.⁴² It seems to be the case that for Alfonso I and Ferdinando I, as for

⁴² Beccadelli 1585, 32: 'Scholas et auditoria in quibus maxime Theologia publice legeretur, magnifice adornari curavit. Nec adornari solum, sed interfuit ipse lectioni, non pallio et crepidulis inambulans in gymnasio, ut Scipio ille, sed attentissimo animo ut toto, ut aiunt, pectore incumbens, quodque et doctis imitandum et ignavis rudibusque pudori sit, pedes, et si satis longo distaret auditorium, ad lectionem venire non dubitaret.' Further accounts of Alfonso's devotion to learned men are found on p. 58 (he subsidizes the studies of *pueri* inclined to literary careers and theology) and p. 60 (he summons to Naples and rewards literary men, theologians, doctors, musicians, and jurists).

Lorenzo de' Medici later, the chief focus of his patronage of arts and sciences was not a literary academy but the local university.⁴³

Once he established his authority in Naples in 1465, Ferdinando I became a great patron of the Studio, and indeed spent far more generously on the Studio than his father had ever done. It is hardly speculative to suppose that the influence of Panormita as well as that of Ferdinando's former teacher and prime minister, Pontano, was decisive in the much more prominent role given to humanistic subjects in the Studio when it was refounded in 1465.⁴⁴ Pontano, we know, had been a highly successful private teacher of Latin poetry and ancient history to the upper classes of Naples before he was taken up by Alfonso in the late 1450s.⁴⁵ And the document appointing the first professor of Greek, Constantine Lascaris, shows that it was the university through which Ferdinando expected to revive the arts and sciences of ancient Rome.⁴⁶ Ferdinando saw to it that the humanistic subjects rhetoric and poetry (called *humanità* only after 1509) were taught regularly, and between 1465 and 1488 he supported the teaching position of Giuniano

⁴³ Hankins 2003-2004, 251. It is of course implausible in the extreme that any literary academy might have been founded under royal patronage in the years between 1458 and 1465, before Ferdinand established control of the Kingdom.

⁴⁴ Grendler 2002, 43, remarks that the four humanists teaching in the Studio in 1465 was 'a large number for the times'.

⁴⁵ Monti Sabia 1998, 12, 51. Tristano Caracciolo in his life of Pontano (ibid., 46) says, 'Et iam cum admiratione audientium audiri celebrarique coeperat confluebantque ad eum, privato aliquo in loco poetas historicosque enarrantem, plerique decuriones et nobilitatis principes viri'. Interesting documents of Pontano's career as a private teacher have been published by Iacono 2005 and Cappelletto 1988.

⁴⁶ Cannavale 1895, 13, XXI (document 13) quotes the document with its interesting use of *gymnasia* for *universitas* and the important if longwinded justification for adding Greek studies to the curriculum: '... opere pretium arbitrati sumus studiorum Gymnasia, que maiorum incuria et temporum socordia (?) ac propter bellorum turbines in hac inclita urbe desiverint, instaurari, verum cum nostri animi sit studia hec solida integraque ac omnium bonarum artium flore virentia instituere, non ab re arbitrati sumus fore si inter ceterarum artium doctores grece quoque discipline profexorem ad studiosorum iuvenum ingenia excolenda exercendaque preposuerimus, cum primo maximum studentibus ornamentum sit non romane modo verum etiam grece lingue gloriam adipsici, quibus non parum esse debet si ex unius lingue limite educti liberrimum campum habeant per quem varie possint ingenii sui equos exercere, demum grecorum litterarum peritia latinis lictis accedens non minimum utilitatis fructus que confert utpote a quibus veteres illi nostri omnia deprompserint, postremo si ad veterem illam romanam liberalium studiorum amplissimam atque florentissimam domum respiciamus, inveniemus tum publice grecis magistris redundasse tum privatim doctissimos quosque apud se grecos preceptores habuisse'.

Maio, a competent grammarian and rhetorician and an epigone of Tortelli and Valla. As far as we know Maio was never a member of Pontano's academy, though he was the teacher of Sannazaro and Alessandro d'Alessandro.⁴⁷ The poet Porcellio Pandoni taught in the Studio briefly in 1465-66,⁴⁸ and the teaching of poetry long remained a strength of the Neapolitan Studio. Two important alumni of Pontano's academy, Pomponio Guarico and Pietro Summonte, both later taught poetry there, in 1512-20 and 1519-25 respectively. It seems that the foundations of Naples' deserved fame as the greatest center of Neo-Latin poetry in the High Renaissance were laid in the University of Naples as well as in Pontano's academy. But the Studio was a place for the young to learn the rudiments of the humanities, while Pontano's Porticus was clearly intended for the literary *otium* of cultivated gentlemen and men of state.

Ficino's academy or gymnasium

The foregoing discussions of the academies of Bessarion, Leto and Pontano should be kept in mind as we turn to the evidence for Ficino's academy, most of which comes from the period between the late 1460s and the mid-1480s. The present writer has argued elsewhere that the best depiction, indeed almost the only depiction, we have of Ficino's academy in action is the little *Declamationum liber* written by Benedetto Colucci of Pistoia (b. ca. 1438) and dedicated to Giuliano de' Medici in 1474.⁴⁹ Colucci, an old school friend of Ficino's, later a grammar teacher in Colle and Florence, was well acquainted with Ficino and in a good position to know the habits of his circle; Ficino himself recommended the *Declamationes* to Giuliano's notice. The *Declamationes* depict

⁴⁷ De Frede 1960, chapter II.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 57-59.

⁴⁹ Hankins 1991. For the *Declamationum liber*, see Colucci 1939.

the activities of Ficino's academy during three days around Christmas of 1473. The scene of the action is, significantly, referred to twice as Ficino's *gymnasium*, which is a chamber in Ficino's house (*domus Marsilii*).⁵⁰ During the three days, five noble Florentine youths ("quinque praestantes ex nobilitate huius inclitae civitatis iuvenes") deliver school orations (*declamationes*) in which they encourage the princes of Italy to take up arms against the Turk. Ficino, who is referred to once as *tamquam Academiae princeps* and again simply as *Academiae princeps*, is clearly the mentor of the five youth: it is Ficino who, fifteen days earlier, had allotted to each the task of delivering his oration; it is he who commends the youths after their performance and who sets the order of delivery. As in ancient Greek gymnasia and in the Roman rhetorical schools, there are also present a number of older men and distinguished spectators who watch and comment informally on the performances. These include the poets Naldo Naldi, Alessandro Braccesi and Poliziano, as well as Lorenzo de' Medici's secretary Niccolò Michelozzi.

I have argued in earlier publications (Hankins 1992, 2004) that the five noble Florentine youths giving orations (Bindaccio Ricasoli, Francesco Berlinghieri the Younger, Carlo Marsuppini the Younger, Paolo Antonio Soderini and Giovanni Cavalcanti) are all to be considered *academici* in the sense of being students at Ficino's gymnasium (and not *sodales* of his Platonic Academy). Three of them are in fact explicitly referred to as *academici* in Ficino's correspondence. This is part of my larger argument that there was no Platonic Academy of Florence as it has been traditionally understood by Della Torre and most twentieth century scholarship, but that Ficino kept a

⁵⁰ Colucci 1939, 3: 'Sorte igitur Iohanni Cavalcanti prima oratio ad Pontificem Romanum contigerat, qui cum iam sublimiorem quandam locum ascenderet, ego et Marianus Pistoriensis, quibus semper Marsilii domus patuit, divino numine ad Michelotium tendebamus ut aliquid certi de casu Theanensis principis audiremus.' The must have taken place in Ficino's house on via S. Egidio, not at his villino near the Medici villa in Careggi.

private gymnasium (and perhaps a few boarders) closely associated with the Florentine Studio (also called a gymnasium by Colucci),⁵¹ where students taking classes could find additional instruction and guidance. In this sense Ficino's gymnasium, which he sometimes called his academy, would bear some resemblance to Barzizza's, except that Ficino's own association with the Studio was much slighter, probably because he had never received his doctorate. I have further contended that Ficino did not teach Platonic philosophy to most of the students who came under his tutelage but only to a select few, more advanced students.⁵²

Robert Black, while accepting the main points of my interpretation, has recently argued against my reading of the Colucci *Declamations*.⁵³ The key passage in dispute comes from the end of the *Declamations*, which will have to be quoted *in extenso*:

Postquam tribus diebus quinque praestantes iuvenes declamationes suas habere,
Marsilius omnes pro contione laudavit sicque eos est exhortatus: Virtus, o
generosi iuvenes, cum aetate crescat. Timete immortalem omnium rerum
Auctorem, eiusque sancta religio primum semper apud vos locum teneat.

Defendite patriam et civibus de re publica bene sentientibus sine invidia favete,
nostras colite perpetuo Musas, ut magnifice fecistis. Nos humili loco natos non
dedignemini. Nam P. Scipio Africanus qui solus omnibus praestabat, Ennium
vatem magis fide quam sapientia pollentem in sepulchro suo condi voluit.

Honestatem utilitati praeponendam et pro communi salute animam effundendam
esse censeatis. Et veluti a nobis ad immortalitatem excitati et lacessiti estis, sic

⁵¹ Colucci 1939, 17.

⁵² Hankins 2002 and 2007a.

⁵³ Black 2007.

virtute vestra et monumentis memoria nostri apud posteros celebretur. Vos autem Achademici animadvertistis, qua arte haec iuventus usa sit, quae nostros principes summis extulit laudibus ut sanctissimum suaderet inceptum. De gloria profecto eorum et immortalitate agitur. Utinam sapiant quod votis et oratione hortamur! Hi optimi adolescentes pietatis officio satisfecisse videntur. Reliqua sibi assumant egregii oratores quibus nostra civitas maxime pollet. Nam quid Donato Acciaiuolo facundius, quid Marco Parenti eruditius, quid Renuccino gravius optaretur? Bartholomaeus vero Scala qui nuper huic civitati ob facundiam civis ascriptus, Landinus clarissimus vates vesterque sanctissimus praeceptor, Bernardus elegantissimus rhetor, quam admiratione digni sunt! ...

Tum ego [i.e. Benedetto Colucci] inquam: Princeps noster Marsili vosque facundissimi socii, nihil meminisse valerem ob gravem moestitiam qua sum confectus. ...

After the five outstanding youths had delivered their orations in the course of three days, Marsilio praised them all for the assembly and exhorted them thus: 'Virtue, noble youths, grows with age. Fear the immortal Author of all things and may His holy religion ever hold first place among you. Defend your country and show favor without envy to right-thinking citizens of the republic. Continue to cultivate the Muses as you have so magnificently done. Do not disdain those of us born to humble station. Indeed, Publius Scipio Africanus, who alone excelled everyone, wished the poet Ennius, more potent in faith than in wisdom, to be placed in his own sepulchre. Believe that honor is to be preferred to utility and that your life should be expended for the common welfare. And as you are roused and challenged by us to achieve immortality, so our memory shall win fame among posterity through your famous acts of virtue. And take note, you

Academics, of the skill these young men have displayed, which extols our princes with the highest praise so as to persuade them to this most holy enterprise [i.e. the Crusade]. It is surely a matter that concerns their glory and immortality. Would that they may be wise concerning that which we urge them to with our prayers and speech! These fine youths seem to have satisfied the claims of piety. The distinguished orators with which our city abounds should take the rest upon themselves. For what could be more eloquent than Donato Acciaiuoli, what more learned than Marco Parenti, what more authoritative than [Alamanno] Rinuccini? And how much admiration is due to Bartolomeo Scala, recently made a citizen on account of his eloquence, and the celebrated poet Landino, your most holy teacher, and Bernardo, the most elegant of speakers.'

Then I [Benedetto Colucci] said, 'Our leader Marsilio, and you, most eloquent associates: I am able to remember nothing thanks to the grave sorrow with which I am afflicted ... '.

Black thinks that in this passage Ficino is addressing two separate groups in turn: (1) the five noble youths who have delivered the declamations (*o generosi iuvenes*), and (2) the older spectators mentioned above as well as the grammarians Benedetto Colucci and Mariano da Pistoia (*vos Achademici*). If this is the case, he argues, Ficino's academy does not consist of his pupils, but primarily of the older figures who witness the declamations. We would have, in other words, a situation much closer to the *sodalitas* of Leto as described by Gherardi, where young aspirants to literary glory perform before older academicians.

I am not convinced by this reading. There is at least one other occasion in the *Declamations* where Ficino seems to be addressing the entire group of declaimers and witnesses as members of the academy.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Colucci 1939, 19.

His dictis Marsilius assedit. Iubeo, inquit, tamquam Achademiae princeps, omnes sequenti die ad nos reverti, ut hos quoque audiamus qui forte parati venerant.

Tum Michelotius ad nos conversus: Videte, inquit, de magnis quid sit viris orationem habere. Marsilius noster imperio fungitur. ...

Postera Phoebea lustrabat lampade terras

Humentemque Aurora polo dimoverat umbram,

nos vero unanimes ad gymnasium Ficini reversos, Bindaccius Ricasolanus aspiciens, cui ad Regem Latinorum oratio evenerat, sic orsus est.

After these remarks Marsilius sat down next to him. He said, 'As though leader of the academy [or 'an' academy], I bid you all return to us tomorrow, so that we may also hear those who, perhaps, had come prepared [to speak today].'

Then Michelozzi turned to us [i.e. Colucci and his fellow grammarian Mariano of Pistoia, Ficino's former teacher] and said, 'You see what it is to have the ear of great men.⁵⁵ Our Marsilio is exercising his imperium.' [...]

When the following Dawn had irradiated the lands with Phoebus' lamp
And driven the dewy shadows from the skies,⁵⁶
we came together of one accord to Ficino's gymnasium, and when Bindaccio Ricasoli, to whom the oration to the King of the Latins had been assigned, caught sight of us, he arose thus [and delivered the oration that followed].

Here Ficino seems to address the whole group, not just the older men, when adopting the role of leader of the (or 'an') academy – a role that Michelozzi, Lorenzo's secretary, treats ironically. It is hard to understand why Ficino uses the expression *tamquam*

⁵⁵ Ficino at the time was tutoring Lorenzo de' Medici in philosophy. See Hankins 2003-2004, II, 317-330.

⁵⁶ Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.6-7

Achademiae princeps, ‘as though leader of an academy’, and why this provokes ironic wit from Michelozzi, if the gathering were a regularly constituted society and he its recognized head.

In any case it is unlikely, in the passage cited by Black, that Ficino means to exclude the young men from membership in this academy. As stated above, three of the declaimers are referred to elsewhere in Ficino’s correspondence as *academici*, whereas none of the older witnesses are ever so styled. It also seems unlikely that phrase *vester sanctissimus praeceptor* applied to Landino would refer only to the older men, since we know from Armando Verde’s documentation of the Florentine Studio that at least three of the declaimers, Ricasoli, Marsuppini and Cavalcanti, attended Landino’s lectures, and that Soderini was student rector of the Studio in 1474, the year the *Declamations* were published, and is highly likely to have attended Landino’s lectures.⁵⁷ It seems on balance a more plausible reading of the passage that the *iuventus* and the *academici* are not two separate groups, but are related as species and genus; i.e., that the phrase *vos academici* refers to the entire group, not just the older members of the audience.

One must also consider the fact that Ficino’s pupils are repeatedly referred to, both in Colucci’s text and in Ficino’s own letters, as young men attending his gymnasium, as I have documented elsewhere.⁵⁸ Ficino’s gymnasium was a place as well as a school, and Ficino in his letters speaks of people visiting his *academia* and mentions the frescoes of Democritus and Heraclitus painted *in gymnasio meo*. This seems to sit ill with the view that Ficino’s academy can be classed with a *sodalitas* such as Leto’s or Bessarion’s or with the Porticus of Pontano and its *sodales*. Neither in Colucci’s

⁵⁷ Hankins 2003-2004, II, 243-244, note 78.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 235, 238

Declamationum liber nor elsewhere in Ficino's correspondence is his gymnasium ever referred to as a *sodalitas* nor his associates as *sodales*.⁵⁹ This, I believe, is highly significant, as *sodales* was the commonest word used to describe members of the Roman and Neapolitan academies, literary gentlemen, mostly adults, united by a common love of antiquity. The word *academia*, as Concetta Bianca shows in her article in this volume, tends to be used more when referring to the work of formal educational institutions. The word *academia*, used as a synonym for a private gathering of *literati*, had likely been tainted by the experiences of the first Roman academy. From the 1470s onward Leto's private association was referred to as a *sodalitas* (or in one text, significantly, as a *religiosa litteraria sodalitas*), and Pontano's group was not styled an *academia* till the 1480s, more than a decade after the Roman conspiracy.⁶⁰ Although Leto's *sodalitas* had an informal interest in education, as we have seen, the fact that Ficino refers to his group assembled in the Colocci book alternatively as a *gymnasium* or *academia* but not as a *sodalitas*, and to his followers as *academici* and not *sodales*, suggests that the primary function of Ficino's gymnasium was educating young men and not providing a venue for adult discussions of philosophy and literature. In striking contrast to the Roman and Neapolitan sodalities, Ficino did not give his students academic names or hold elaborate name-giving ceremonies and feasts.

But Black's reading is still suggestive, and it might be worth testing the hypothesis that Ficino's academy consisted not only of young men under his tutelage but also included a few older men interested in literary exercises and in cultivating talent in

⁵⁹ I am grateful to Sebastiano Gentile for checking the digital files of Ficino's complete works prepared for the *Pubblicazione integrale delle opere di Marsilio Ficino, edizione critica e digitale* to be published by Nino Aragno. Ficino uses the words *sodalis* and *sodalitas* and their inflections only a few times, all in his translation of the Platonic dialogues.

⁶⁰ Furstenberg-Levi 2006, 41.

the next generation. This would explain neatly the frequent presence of the Averroist Bernardo Bembo in Ficino's academy, which I have discussed elsewhere.⁶¹ What is without any foundation in the evidence is Black's view (following in this respect Arthur Field) that Colucci's little book entitles us to describe Ficino's academy as a philosophical academy. To conclude, because Ficino is once styled a philosopher and in a throwaway phrase recommends control of the emotions to his academicians, that these declamations depict a philosophical academy in action, is not a remotely plausible reading. The *Declamations* are not the *Camaldulensian Disputations* or a Platonic symposium like the *De amore*. They depict nothing more than school orations being given by young students of rhetoric (Landino's official subject) who are associated with the Studio and Ficino's gymnasium. Their speeches do not reveal the slightest tincture of philosophical learning, not even on the broadest construction of what might count as philosophy.

I am not of course trying to say that Ficino's work with university students in his gymnasium was the sum total of his 'academic' activities in Florence. He worked in his *academiola* at Careggi on his 'academy' of Platonic books, producing a Latin 'academy,' i.e. a collection of Platonic texts, which could be studied by Western Christians. Many of his contemporaries credited him, and justly so, with reviving the ancient Academy, i.e., Platonism as a tradition of philosophical wisdom.⁶² He taught briefly at the Florentine Academy, i.e. University of Florence.

⁶¹ Hankins 2003-2004, II, 356-57.

⁶² Already in Bartolomeo Scala's *Epistola de sectis philosophorum* of 1458, in which Scala remarks on the revival of Platonism without mentioning Ficino: see Scala 1997, 257: 'Ita usque in hodiernum diem vetus exsuscitata Academia maiore ex parte perdurat, etsi haec Platonis divinissima de philosophia praecepta nonnihil obscurasse videtur Aristoteles, quem quidam ob rerum maxime ordinem ita sequuntur ut a magistro dissentientem, ut illis videtur, non tantum concordantem anteponant.'

At the same time, much of Ficino's activity as a philosopher was never styled 'academic' in any sense of the word, by him or anyone else. Ficino produced a literary description of himself presiding over a symposium at the house of Francesco Bandini—retroactively converted to a symposium at Lorenzo's house—but this was nowhere described as an academy. He and the intellectuals of Lorenzo's circle are depicted by Landino, in an idealized way, as engaging in informal literary and philosophical discussions at Camaldoli, but these discussions, too, are not called an academy. On another occasion his presence is reported at a theological debate in Lorenzo's palace in 1489, but this is not called an academy. He gave lectures on Plotinus at Santa Maria degli Angeli in the late 1480s which scandalized the General of the Camaldolese Order, Pietro Delfino, but these too are nowhere described as exercises of an academy. He had an enormous correspondence where he promulgated Platonic wisdom to his many friends and correspondents, but these did not constitute an academy. Ficino was undoubtedly dedicated to the task of promulgating Platonic philosophy, but he did not organize a Platonic Academy to do so.

The larger point to be made concerns the inherent implausibility of humanists in the fifteenth century organizing a philosophical academy and especially a Platonic Academy. It was, in the first place, not in keeping with the generally eclectic approach to philosophy favored by the humanists to found an academy or philosophical school of the ancient kind, dominated by a single philosophical point of view. Non-dogmatic eclecticism had been the rule among humanists from the time of Petrarch, who condemned exclusive adherence to one school; and the skeptical, eclectic approach to

philosophy was also favored by the most important humanist authority, Cicero.⁶³ Despite being a champion of Platonic philosophy against integral Aristotelians, Ficino himself was a concordist rather than a dogmatist. Wisdom was to be sought from all sources, not from just one philosophical tradition.⁶⁴ Even his magnum opus, the *Platonic Theology*, was no work of dogmatic Platonism. A glance at the *apparatus fontium* of the recent I Tatti edition of this work will show that Aristotle and Aquinas are second only to Plato as sources of arguments and philosophical conclusions.⁶⁵ It shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the character of philosophy in the fifteenth century, and Ficino's activity in particular, to believe that it ever aimed at the refounding of philosophical schools of the ancient, dogmatic type. That way to wisdom had had been foreclosed long ago. As Augustine argued throughout the *De vera religione*, the coming of the Christian religion had made obsolete the philosophical school, for Christianity had brought the only real truth through Revelation and the only real means to achieve real virtue, which was the grace of God.

The religious obstacles to setting up a philosophical school or academy were not of course just doctrinal, but practical as well. In a Christian society patrolled by the Inquisition, a philosophical academy would inevitably be seen by outsiders as a hotbed of heresy, impiety and sedition, as Leto's early academy had been. As educated people in the Renaissance well knew—as Ficino certainly knew⁶⁶—the ancient Platonic academy

⁶³ Hankins 2007b.

⁶⁴ See Celenza, forthcoming.

⁶⁵ Ficino 2001-2006, VI, 343-375.

⁶⁶ See in particular his *De christiana religione*, cap. 11 (Ficino 1576, I, 16): 'Neque silentio praetereundum arbitror, quod Celsus Epicureus, Porphyrius quoque et Iulianus Proculusque [i.e. Proclus] platonici, et nonnulli alii doctrina insignes, qui partim insana quadam arrogantia, partim ut suis populis ac potentibus obsequerentur, contra Christianam pietatem, linguam suam calamumque impie armauerunt, dum contra illam potentium mundi arma saeuirent, proculdubio reipsa declarauerunt, neque illos religionis nostrae patres ullo pacto contemnendos fuisse'.

had been a vocal opponent of the Christian religion, the center of a philosophical defense of paganism, an institution dangerous enough to be suppressed in the end by the Christian Emperor Justinian. To have organized a sectarian school explicitly to study and disseminate Platonic philosophy in the manner of the ancient Academy would have been a provocative act. It is hard to imagine the Medici, whose patronage of philosophy was eclectic and designed to win the support and admiration of the public, encouraging such an institution.⁶⁷ Ficino in his heart of hearts might have wanted to start such a school (for all we know), but the experience of the early Roman academy and the paranoid denunciations of Cardinal Bessarion by George of Trebizond must have acted as a powerful deterrent. It would be another two centuries before the religion of the philosophers could take the risk of exposing itself to the public gaze.

⁶⁷ Hankins 2003-2004, II, 187-217, 273-316. Bartolomeo Scala, in a literary dialogue presents Cosimo de' Medici as eclectic of the Petrarchan type, who finds wisdom in certain select ancient philosophers so long as their views accord with Christianity; see Scala 1997, 274-300, esp. 278-279, 284.