**AP Euro: Chapter 12 – Renaissance Humanism, excerpts from Leonardo Bruni d’Arezzo**

On Humanist Education – *De Studiis Literis, circa 1470s* (Source: Hanover Historical Texts)

*This treatise is probably the earliest humanist tract on education, is addressed to the noble lady Baptista di Montefeltro, daughter to the Count of Urbino, who may stand as the first of the succession of studious women who were a characteristic product of the Renaissance.*

… The foundations of all true learning must be laid in the sound and thorough knowledge of Latin: which implies study marked by a broad spirit, accurate scholarship, and careful attention to details. Unless this solid basis be secured it is useless to attempt to rear an enduring edifice. Without it the great monuments of literature are unintelligible, and the art of composition impossible. To attain this essential knowledge we must never relax our careful attention to the grammar of the language, but perpetually confirm and extend our acquaintance with it until it is thoroughly our own… To this end we must be supremely careful in our choice of authors, lest an inartistic and debased style infect our own writing and degrade our taste; which danger is best avoided by bringing a keen, critical sense to bear upon select works, observing the sense of each passage, the structure of the sentence, the force of every word down to the least important particle. In this way our reading reacts directly upon our style…

… Of the classical authors Cicero will be your constant pleasure: how unapproachable in wealth of ideas and of language, in force of style, indeed, in all that can attract in a writer! Next to him ranks Vergil, the glory and the delight of our national literature…

…The literature of the Church will thus claim her earnest study. Such a writer, for instance, as St Augustine affords her the fullest scope for reverent yet learned inquiry…

But we must not forget that true distinction is to be gained by a wide and varied range of such studies as conduce to the profitable enjoyment of life, in which, however, we must observe due proportion in the attention and time we devote to them.

First amongst such studies I place History: a subject which [Page 128] must not on any account be neglected by one who aspires to true cultivation. For it is our duty to understand the origins of our own history and its development; and the achievements of Peoples and of Kings. For the careful study of the past enlarges our foresight in contemporary affairs and affords to citizens and to monarchs lessons of incitement or warning in the ordering of public policy. From History, also, we draw our store of examples of moral precepts.

In the monuments of ancient literature which have come down to us History holds a position of great distinction. We specially prize such authors as Livy, Sallust and Curtius; and, perhaps even above these, Julius Caesar; the style of whose Commentaries, so elegant and so limpid, entitles them to our warm admiration…

The great Orators of antiquity must by all means be included. Nowhere do we find the virtues more warmly extolled, the vices so fiercely decried. From them we may learn, also, how to express consolation, encouragement, dissuasion or advice. If the principles which orators set forth are portrayed for us by philosophers, it us from the former that we learn how to employ the emotions--such as indignation, or pity--in driving home their application in individual cases. Further, from oratory we derive our store of those elegant or striking turns of expression which are used with so much effect in literary compositions. Lastly, in oratory we find that wealth of vocabulary, that clear easy-flowing style, that verve and force, which are invaluable to us both in writing and in conversation.

On Civic Humanism – Excerpts on various topics from selected works (Source translations are from *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: Selected Texts*, Gordon Griffiths, James Hankins, and David Thompson, trans. and introductions, (Binghamton, 1987).

 Virtue

*An Isagogue of Moral Philosophy,*p. 271: Man is naturally constituted to perform a certain activity proper to himself alone. But this activity cannot be the simple act of living, since that is shared with the plants; nor is it sensation, since even the brute animals possess sensation. It is, rather, life and action according to reason. Whoever uses his reason with ability and excellence fulfills proper work for which he was naturally constituted. To live and act well: that is the highest good of man we are seeking....

p. 272: Virtue alone they considered sufficient for happiness: neither imprisonment, nor torture, nor any pain whatever, nor poverty, nor exile could stand in the way of the happy life. The wise man and the brave man (in the true sense of the word), armed with a great and unconquerable spirit, relies on himself alone and is never frightened by the mischances of humankind or the threats of fortune....

*A Letter to Lauro Quirini*, p.298: ...[A]ll virtues are habits formed by training and practice. Hence it is obvious the virtues are produced by training and practice.... Virtue, properly speaking, is an established habit built through training and practice. As a man becomes a builder by building, and a lutenist by playing the lute, so he becomes just by acts of justice, and brave by acts of bravery. Hence it is clear that the virtues exist in us neither naturally nor preternaturally, but that we are naturally suited to receive them, and bring them to perfection by training and habituation.

Reason

*A Letter to Lauro Quirini*, p. 293: The proper activity of man can therefore only consist in rational activity. This rational activity you take to be contemplation and happiness, which is wrong; for on that view everyone would be happy. Every man, surely, possesses reason and acts with it, since he is a rational animal. So if you ask me what the proper activity of man is, I shall reply, 'rational activity.' If you ask me what happiness is, however, I shall tell you that happiness is activity in accordance with perfect virtue in a perfect life. All men have reason and act with it; very few possess perfect virtue. The proper activity of man and happiness are therefore not the same thing. So your exposition is incorrect and the contemplative life is *not* the proper life of man, but the active life. A man does not contemplate *qua*man, but rather *qua* something divine and separate. Justice, temperance, fortitude, and the other moral virtues he exercies as a man. The life, then, of moral virtue is properly the life of man.

Wealth

p.275: What about avarice? Is it not a difficult passion to bridle? There is a virtue called liberality which combats this species of immoderation. It is a certain mean between getting and spending, removed on the one hand from sordid avarice, and equally from thoughtless prodigality.... The liberal man is midway between these two: he understands where, when, and how much to take in and pay out, and by following reason and by practice he soon forms a habit of so acting.

*Preface to Book I of the Aristotelian Treatise on Economics, or Family Estate Management Addressed to Cosimo de' Medici*: p. 305: Wealth is indeed useful, since it is both an embellishment for those who possess it, and the means by which they may exercise virtue. It is also of benefit to one's sons, who can by means of it rise more easily to positions of honor and distinction....

Therefore for our own sakes, and even more for love of our children, we ought to strive as far as we honourably can to increase our wealth, since it is included by the philosophers among the things that are good, and considered to be related to happiness.

Florence

*Laudatio* of the City of Florence: p.116: … First, every consideration is given to providing that justice shall be held sacred in that city, for without that, no city can exist or deserve the name; secondly, that there be liberty, without which this people never thought life was worth living....

It is for the sake of justice that the magistracies were established, and endowed with sovereign authority and the power to punish criminals, and above all so that they may see that no one's power in the city will be above the law....