The rediscovery of republican values

The Italian city-republics first began to develop their distinctive political systems as early as the closing decades of the eleventh century. It was then that a number of northern communes took it upon themselves, in defiance of papal as well as imperial suzerainty, to appoint their own 'consuls' and invest them with supreme judicial authority. This happened at Pisa in 1085 (the earliest recorded instance), at Milan, Genoa and Arezzo before 1100, and at Bologna, Padua, Florence, Lucca, Siena and elsewhere by the 1140s. During the second half of the twelfth century a further important development took place. The consular system was gradually replaced by a form of government centred on ruling councils chaired by officials known as podestà, so called because they were granted supreme power or potestas in executive as well as judicial affairs. Such a system was in place at Padua by the 1170s, at Milan by the 1180s, and at Florence, Pisa, Siena and Arezzo by the end of the century.  

By the opening years of the ducento, many of the richest communes of Lombardy and Tuscany had thus acquired the status of independent city-republics, with written constitutions guaranteeing their elective and self-governing arrangements. For all their self-confidence, however, these urban communities remained deeply anomalous within the legal structures of thirteenth-century Europe. Technically they were mere vassals of the Holy Roman Empire, which vigorously pursued its claims over northern Italy (the so-called Regnum Italicum) throughout the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Frederick Barbarossa mounted five invasions between 1154 and 1190, while Frederick II continued the fight from 1237 until his death in 1250. By this time, moreover, the emperors were able to support their traditional demands by invoking the authority of Roman law, the study of which had become a leading academic discipline in the course of the twelfth century, initially under the inspiration of Ubertino and his followers at the University of Bologna. To these early Glossators it seemed incontestable that the Codex of Justinian viewed the Imperator as sole princeps and 'lord of the whole world'. Equating this figure with the Holy Roman Emperor, they concluded that, despite the de facto independence of so many of the Italian cities, they must be altogether subject de iure to the imperial power. As the Bolognese Glossator Lothar explained in a judgement solicited by the emperor Henry IV, if the Imperator is the solv dominus mundi, he must at the same time be the sole bearer of imperium, the one authority capable of making laws and commanding obedience.  

Even more anomalous than the de facto independence of the cities was their republicanism, the fact that they placed their highest executive and judicial functions in the hands of salaried officials elected for strictly limited periods of time. The basic assumption of most writers on statecraft at this period was that all government must be viewed as a God-given form of lordship. As John of Salisbury had put it in his Policraticus of 1159, all rulers constitute 'a kind of image on earth of the divine majesty'. They not only stand above the laws but 'can be said to partake in a large measure of divine virtue themselves'. From these assumptions it was widely agreed to follow that hereditary monarchy must be not merely the best but the only conceivable form of legitimate rule. This is taken for granted by John of Salisbury and such followers as Helmhardus of Froidmont, who opens his De Domo Regimine Principis of 1190 with the assertion that kings are directly chosen by God himself. Gerald of Wales asserts in similar vein in his De Principis Instructione of c.1120 that 'the establishment of a princely form of power is actually a matter of necessity among men, no less than it is among the

2. The twelve chapters of Helmhardus's De Domo Regimine Principis are largely taken, often word for word, from Book IV of John of Salisbury's Policraticus.  
7. For a valuable survey of the socio-economic foundations of the communes and their views about citizenship see Colman 2000, pp. 195–218.
No one doubts that the revival of Aristotelianism and the rise of Florentine humanism were of vital importance for the evolution of republican thought. It is misleading, however, to suggest that it was only with the emergence of these intellectual movements that an ideology of self-governing republicanism came to be formulated in the communes of the Regnum Italicum. We are still too much in thrall to Jacob Burckhardt’s vision of the Renaissance, still too ready to suppose that there must be one particular moment at which we can hope to contemplate the dawn of humanism and the recovery of classical values, including the values of republican self-government. As I shall try to suggest in what follows, the reassertion of these values and their accompanying practices was a long and incremental process, one that stretches back to the era in which the communes were originally founded. More specifically, I want to argue, the recovery and adaptation of Aristotle’s texts largely served to confirm and underpin two earlier traditions of thought in which the distinctive arrangements of the early communes had already been very effectively celebrated and legitimised.

The authority chiefly invoked by the city-republics in their earliest attempts to defend their way of life was the Codex of Roman law. By the end of the twelfth century, a number of Glossators were beginning to reinterpret the passages on public law in Justinian’s Digest in such a way as to support rather than to question the autonomy of the cities and their elective forms of government. The first of the leading Glossators to expound the law of Rome in this fashion was Lothair’s great opponent Azo, a native of Bologna and a celebrated teacher of civil law at the university in the opening years of the thirteenth century.

Glossing the concepts of iusdicitio and merum imperium in his Summa Super Codicem, Azo wrote in such a way as to vindicate the sovereignty of all communities possessing de facto independence. ‘We must begin,’

---

8 Walter 1981, p. 8: ‘secundum in aquis, aditus et brutis animalibus, venam in hominibus principalis potestas est necessaria’. For the date of composition see Berge 1938, p. 294.
10 For a survey of the development of city-state culture, and for a number of comparative perspectives, see Emanon 2000.
13 On this allegedly ‘new ideology’ and ‘new outlook’ see Baron 1966a, pp. 28, 48, 121. For references to other scholars who have put forward similar views see Skinner 1978a, pp. 27, 79 and notes.
14 For an effective critique see Graffin 1991, pp. 15–20.
17 On the former theme see Ullmann 1977 and the valuable series of essays collected in Davis 1984. For the impact of Aristotelian studies on civic activity see Coleman 1984. On the latter see the classic accounts in Baron 1966b and Pocock 1977. For an attempt to survey both strands of thought see Skinner 1978a, pp. 49–112 and Skinner 1978b, pp. 113–84.
18 See, for example, Baron 1966, pp. 6, 143, 449 and Pocock 1973, p. 52, both of whom see a ‘decisive break’ and a crossing of the threshold between the medieval and the Renaissance around the year 1400.
20 Molinara 1960 discusses the analogous reinterpretation of the Decretals undertaken by a number of communes in the same period.
he announces in his section De Jurisdictione, 'by considering the meaning of the term jurisdicction' itself. 'It is a power', he goes on, 'publicly established as a matter of necessity, of stating that which is lawful and right and establishing that which is equitable.' So far this was orthodox doctrine. But as soon as Azo turns to ask who can lawfully possess such power, and hence exercise merum imperium, he announces a radical new departure. 'I admit', he writes, 'that the very highest jurisdicction rests with the princeps alone.' However, it cannot be doubted 'that any magistrate in a city has the power to establish new law.' So my position', he concludes — in a direct allusion to his debate with Lothair — 'that it must be lawful for merum imperium to be wielded by these other higher powers as well.'

If we turn to Azo's Quaestionis we find him defending the sovereignty of independent kingdoms in the same terms. He states his position most clearly in commenting on the dispute between King John of England and Philip Augustus of France, in the course of which the latter had been criticised for ceding certain rights of vassalage. Azo remarks that the first observation to be made in defence of the French king is that 'because it is evident nowadays that every ruler possesses the same power within his own territory as the emperor, it follows that it must have been for the king to act in this matter just as he pleased.' A proposition with momentous consequences for the defence of national autonomy, as the legal pretensions of the Holy Roman Empire is thus announced as if it were already accepted in practice as the merest commonplace.

From the point of view of the Italian city-republics, however, Azo's greatest contribution was that he also defended a doctrine of popular sovereignty. For this aspect of his argument he relied on a distinctive analysis of the term universitas, the central concept in the Roman law theory of corporations. The earliest Glossators had originally invoked this theory to furnish an account of the place within cities or kingdoms of such lesser institutions as guilds, monasteries and the new phenomenon of universities. But by the end of the twelfth century — especially in the writings of Azo's teacher Bassianus — they had also begun to use the term to denote any collectivity possessing its own juridical standing. As a result, they came to speak of entire bodies of citizens as instances of universitas, as political bodies and hence as legal personae capable of speaking with a single voice and of acting with a unified will in the disposition of their affairs. It was this application of the term that Azo went on to put to such revolutionising use.

First he argued that the consent of the whole people considered as an universitas is always necessary if the highest powers of imperium and thus of jurisdicction are to be lawfully instituted. He derived this conclusion from his interpretation of the Lex regia mentioned in Book I of the Digest. According to this enactment, 'what pleases the emperor has the force of law, the reason being that, by way of the Lex regia, which has been passed concerning his authority, the people confer upon him, and place in his hands, their own entire authority and power.'

Glossing this alleged decree in his Lectura Super Codicem, Azo concludes that 'the power of the emperor to make law' arose lawfully because 'it was assigned to him by the people' in whose hands it must originally have reposed. So far this too was orthodox teaching among the Glossators, who must unquestionably be regarded as a leading source of the doctrine — later so central to contractarian as well as scholastic political theory — that all legitimate political authority must derive from an act of consent. Azo parts company with his teachers, however, when he goes on to argue that, even after the establishment of a prince with full imperium and jurisdicction, 'the power to make laws, if it was a power that the people possessed before that time, is one that they will continue to possess afterwards.' As Azo himself observes, the accepted interpretation of the Lex regia had always been that 'although the Roman people at one time possessed the power to make laws, they no longer possess it, having transferred all their authority to the emperor by means of the Lex regia itself.' This had been Imerius's view, subsequently endorsed by such distinguished Bolognese Glossators as Rogerius and Placentinus. But Azo

---

20 Azo 1665a, III, 13, p. 67: 'vindicamus ergo in prinis quod sit jurisdiccion ... est potestas de publico introducta cum necessitate jurisdiccionis et acquisitis statutis'.
21 Azo 1665a, III, 13, p. 68: 'impleniremur jurisdictiionem soli principi competere dico'.
22 Azo 1665a, III, 13, p. 68: 'qualibet magistratus in sua civitate suum statutum potest'.
23 Azo 1665a, III, 13, p. 69: 'sed merum imperium etiam alieni ministrius potestatem competere dico'. On the significance of this contention see Calasso 1967, pp. 85-158.
24 Azo 1888, pp. 86: 7: 'qualibet hicdile videtur censud potestatem habere in suo terra, quam imperator, ergo potuit facere quod ali placet'.
26 Digest 1958, L, 4, vol. 1, p. 14: 'Quod principi placuit, legis habet vigorem; ut potestum legem, quae de imperio eius hic est, populus ei et in eum omne suum imperium et potestatem conferat'.
27 Azo 1666b, IV, XIV, 11, p. 44: 'potestas [imperatoris] legum condendae ... in eum transit pulchre'.
29 Azo 1666a, IV, XIV, 11, p. 44: 'potestas legum condendae ... si populus ante habebat, et adhuc habebat'.
30 Azo 1666b, IV, XIV, 11, p. 44: 'populus Romanus non habet potestatem legum condendae, quod ellipsis habebat eum legem regia in eum transit pulchre omne his quod habebat'.

the right to exercise that power as being transferred to them only in the sense of being conceded, because the people will not in the least have abdicated the power themselves. The true status of rulers is merely that of rectores, officials whose authority is assigned to them not in the form of a donation but merely as a matter of administrative convenience. The other implication is that the people must retain the capacity to depose their rulers and resume the exercise of their sovereignty should their rectores fail at any time to discharge their duties satisfactorily. This in fact happened, as Azo remarks, at more than one moment in the history of the Roman people, ‘for even after they had transferred their power to make laws, they were nevertheless able to revoke that transfer at a later stage’. Azo’s way of defending the people’s authority to set up and set down their own chosen forms of government remained an important element in the ideology of the Italian city-republics throughout their later history. Hugolinus and his pupils at Bologna continued to explore the implications of Azo’s argument in the later thirteenth century, while a number of canonists followed Huguccio of Pisa’s lead in deploying a parallel theory to elucidate the relationship between the pope and the universitas of the church. During the early decades of the fourteenth century Bartolus of Sassoferrato reformulated the defence of the city-republics in still more radical terms with his doctrine of sibi princeps, the doctrine that each independent civitas may be regarded as ‘a princeps unto itself’ and hence as the bearer of its own sovereignty. While these later developments are well known, however, the point on which I have sought to insist is that we already find a legal defence of the independent and sovereign status of the Italian city-republics fully articulated in the opening decades of the thirteenth century.

By the time of Azo’s death in c.1230, a yet further body of ancient texts was beginning to be pressed into service to defend the independence of the Italian city-republics and their elective forms of government. A number of writers began to invoke the authority of the moralists and

---

34 Azo 1666b, I, XIV, II, p. 44: ‘et dicendum non transmutati sunt quin sibi retinere ter.
35 Azo 1666b, I, XIV, II, p. 44: ‘hic non excolitur populus, sed sanguis de populo . . . idem sanguis excolitur, non universitas sive populus’.
36 Azo 1666b, VIII, LIII, 2, p. 171: ‘abrogandum per dessemuriam, hodie est omnis potestas et omne ius ex imperatorvm’.
37 Azo 1666b, VIII, LIII, 2, p. 69: ‘sed nec est intra translati quisibi retinere’.
38 Azo 1666b, VIII, LIII, 2, p. 69: ”unde non est major potestas imperator quam totus populus, sed sanguis quidem de populo”.
39 Azo 1666b, L, I, p. 9: ‘potestas . . . dicetur enim transita si est concassa, non quon homin omissa o se abdicavit’.
40 Azo 1666b, I, IV, p. 9: ‘nec comitum transfersetur, sed tamen postea revocavit’.
41 Torey 1955, pp. 132–33.
The rediscovery of republican values

The authorities on whom they chiefly relied were Sallust and Cicero, later the favourite political writers of many leading humanists of the quattrocento. So extensive, indeed, was the reliance of the earliest spokesmen for the commune on these sources that it would not be inappropriate to describe them as the originators of a humanist literature - or at least a recognisably pre-humanist literature - on the problems of city government.

We need to consider two closely related bodies of texts produced by these pre-humanist commentators. First there were the numerous treatises on the Ars dictaminis issued by those who acted as dictatores or teachers of rhetoric in the law-schools of the Regnum Italicum. These treatises generally comprised a set of model speeches and letters, often preceded by a theoretical discussion of the rhetorical arts. A small number of these writings survive from as early as the beginning of the twelfth century. Hugh of Bologna's Ratiores Dictandi, for instance, appears to have been produced around the year 1120. For the most part, however, the earliest surviving examples date from the opening decades of the thirteenth century, by which time the genre had become well established, not to say highly repetitious in content. Among the leading examples from this era are Raniero da Perugia's Ars Notariorum of c.1215, Thomas of Capua's Ars Dictandi of c.1230, Boncompagno da Signa's Rhetorica Notissima of 1235 and Guido Faba's numerous writings of the same period, including his Dictamina Rhetorica of 1226-8, his Epistles of 1239-41 and his Parlamenti et Epistles of 1242-3. We should also note that, by the end of the thirteenth century, a number of similar treatises had begun to appear in the volgare. Matteo de' Libri's vernacular Arrìughe dates from 1275, Giovanni da Vigano's Pone de Perlino from c.1290, Filippo Cetti's Dicere from 1330.

The other body of writings to be considered are the pre-humanist treatises on city government designed specifically for the guidance of podestà and other magistrates. This genre was originally an offshoot of the Ars dictaminis, with most of the early treatises still containing model letters and speeches in addition to general advice on how to manage city affairs. The earliest surviving work of this description is the anonymous Osilia Pastoralis, which has usually been dated to the 1220s. This was followed by Orino da Lodii's De Sapiencia Politiae, an advice-book composed in Leonine verse during the 1240s. The next such work to survive - by far the fullest and most important - was Giovanni da Viterbo's Libro de Regime Civitatem, probably completed in the course of the 1250s. This was in turn followed - and to some degree plagiarised - by Brunetto Latini in his Livres dou trésor of 1266, a widely used encyclopaedia that concludes with a section entitled 'On the government of cities'.

These writers are all committed to the view that the best form of constitution for a commune or civilitas must be republican as opposed to monarchical in character. If a city has any prospect of attaining its highest goals, it is indispensable that its administration should remain in the hands of elected officials whose conduct can in turn be regulated by the people and their established customs and laws. To understand how this conclusion was reached, we need to begin by asking what...
these writers had in mind when they spoke about the gods or ends of communities, and in particular about the highest goal to which a city can aspire.

The goal they emphasize above all is that of attaining greatness – greatness of standing, greatness of power, greatness of wealth. This preoccupation is in part expressed in a distinctive literature devoted to celebrating the magnificia or signs of greatness in cities. By far the most celebrated contribution to this genre, Leonardo Bruni's _Laudatio Florentinae Urbis_, is a much later work, composed in 1403–4 in the highest humanist style. But there are several examples dating from the period in which the pre-humanist ideology of the city-republics was first articulated. One of the earliest is the anonymous poem in praise of the city of Lodi, _De Laude Civitatis Laudae_, probably written in 1250. Perhaps the best known are Bonvesin della Riva's panegyric on Milan, _De Magnitudinis Mediolanorum_ of 1288, and the _Liber de Laudibus Civitatis Ticinensi_, an anonymous panegyric on Pavia of 1320.

The same preoccupation with glory and greatness suffuses the pre-humanist treatises on city government. The main inspiration for their claim is that these are the highest ends of civic life derived from the Roman historians and moralists, most notably from Sallust. Not only do they draw on his account in the _Bellum Catilinae_ of how the Roman republic grew to greatness – how the res publica creavit – but they also like to quote the passage from the _Bellum Jugurthinum_ in which the king of Numidia congratulates Jurgutha on the honour and glory won by his deeds, while admiring him at the same time to remember how small communities succeed in rising to greatness – how _per ardua crescant._

All the pre-humanist writers speak in similar terms. The _Oedus Pastorialis_, which opens with a set of model speeches designed for incoming podestà, particularly advises such officials to promise that their government will serve to increase both glory and honour, thereby ensuring 'that the city grows to greatness'. The model speeches included in Giovanni da Viterbo's _Liber de Regimen Civitatum_ likewise emphasize the value of 'increase', as well as the importance of ensuring

---

61 Bruni 1968, Baran 1966, pp. 191–224 gives a classic analysis of this text. But he marks too sharp a break with pre-humanist discussions, especially when he speaks (pp. xvii and 403–4) of a new ideal of "greatness" in the _Laudatio_. For a contrasting appraisal see Seigel 1966, pp. 43–48.
62 _De Laude_ 1872. For the suggested date of composition see Hyde 1959, p. 540.
63 Sallust 1931, 4, 1, p. 16.
64 Salut 1913, 6, p. 148.
65 See Gellie 1968, pp. 25, 27 on conducting "ad incrementum et gloriam et honorum" and on the hope that "eux riech civilia".

---

70 By the end of the thirteenth century we find the same ideas beginning to be expressed in the vernacular. Matteo de' Libri advises both ambassadors and podestà to promise that they will ensure increase and growth, while Giovanni da Vignano's model speech for outgoing podestà bids them express the hope that the city they have been administering 'will at all times grow and increase', above all in prosperity.

72 At the same time, the vernacular writers begin to invoke a new concept to describe their vision of the proper ends of civic life. They speak of _grandezza_, using a term evidently coined to supply the lack, in classical Latin, of an expression at once denoting grandeur and magnitude. We already find Guido Faba speaking in this fashion in his _Parlamenti ed Epistole_ of the early 1240s. In his model speech intended for the use of newly elected podestà, Faba advises them to promise 'to do whatever may be necessary for the maintenance of the standing and _grandezza_ of the commune, and for the increase of the honour and glory of those friendly to it'. Shortly afterwards the same terminology recurs in one of the vernacular passages in Giovanni da Viterbo's _Liber de Regimen Civitatum_. An incoming podestà, he advises, should vow to uphold 'the honour and _grandezza_ and welfare' of the city given into his charge. By the next generation, we find the same terminology in standard use among the writers of vernacular _Dictionia_. Matteo de' Libri instructs outgoing magistrates to proclaim that they have in fact succeeded in upholding the city's _grandezza_, honour, good standing and repose. Giovanni da Vignano echoes the same sentiments in virtually the same phraseology, urging ambassadors and magistrates alike to speak of their city's 'exaltation, _grandezza_ and honour', of its 'good standing, _grandezza_ and repose', and at the same time of 'the honour, _grandezza_, unity and repose' of all its citizens.
prominence in quattrocento humanist histories designed to celebrate the
to liberty. The fear that long periods of peace may
lead to enervation and decadence is forcefully expressed, for example, in
Poggio Bracciolini’s Historiae Florentini Populi. A love of peace, he implies
in a passage closely modelled on Sallust, may sometimes pose a threat
to liberty. If freedom and self-government are to be upheld against the
encroachments of tyranny, it may sometimes be necessary to fight for
liberty instead of insisting on peace at any price.

There was one aspect of this debate, however, on which all the pre-
humanist writers were agreed. Even if it may sometimes prove necessary
to wage war on others in the name of liberty and grandezza, the preser-
vation of peace within one’s own city must never be jeopardised. The
avoidance of internal division and discord is regarded by everyone as
an indispensable condition of civic greatness. Once again, it is Sallust
who is most often quoted to this effect. The passage invariably cited is
the speech from the Bellum Jugurthiense in which the king of Numantia
addresses Jugurtha and his other two heirs:

I bequeath to all three of you a kingdom that will prove strong if you conduct
yourself well, but weak if you behave badly. For it is by way of concord that small

These sentiments had already become proverbial when Sallust voiced
them, but his authority had the effect of turning them into one of the most
widely quoted dicta on politics throughout the era of the Renaissance.
The negative aspect of Sallust’s admonition was strongly echoed in
the pre-humanist treatises. ‘It is due to the fact that all cities nowadays are
divided within themselves’, Giovanni da Viterbo declares, ‘that the good
effect of government is no longer felt.’

Brunetto Latini makes the same observation in the course of advising magistrates on what to do if they
find themselves in charge of a city ‘at war with itself’. ‘You must point out
how concord brings greatness to cities and enriches their citizens, while

---

77 Oecus, 1560, p. 37: ‘Per quies et tranquillitatem et pacem Jesu exercet civitas.’
79 Medici, 1534, p. 79: ‘Quanta magis et securer et securitatem.’
80 See Cetti, 1942, p. 37 for the claim that, if your city ‘possidet anima in buono e paesano stato’,
this will conduct ‘a vostro onore e grandezza.’ For other formulae to the same effect cf. Cetti
1942, pp. 36, p. 61.
81 On the contrast between peace and liberty see Veleri, 1942.
82 Sallust 1951, VI-XIII, pp. 10-22.
83 For a classic survey of this transition see Enzo, 1909.
84 This is pointed out in Rubinstein, 1957, p. 172 and note.
85 See the discussion of Poggio’s republicanism in Oppel, 1974, pp. 221-65.
87 Sallust 1951, b, X, 7, p. 132: ‘Equidem, ego volo regnum tranquillum, si boni eritis, sin mali,
imbecillum. Nam concordia parvae res crescent, discordia maxime diabantur.’ The passage
is strongly echoed by a number of the pre-humanist writers. See, for example, Losch, 1889, p. 37
and De Laude 1572, p. 372.
88 The last sentence is quoted as proverbial in Scocca, 1907-10, XCV, 46, p. 40.
89 Viterbo, 1901, p. 221, cols. 1-2: ‘Nam cum civitates amnes hodie sunt divise . . . cesserunt
hoscent regimini.’
war destroys them; and you must recall how Rome and other great cities ruined themselves by internal strife. Matteo de’ Libri offers precisely the same advice in a model speech designed for captains of city militias to declaim in order to stiffen the resolve of ruling magistrates to deal with internal faction fights. ‘Think of Florence and Siena, and of how they have destroyed themselves by internal war; think of Rimini, and of many other places throughout this country, and of how internal hatred has ruined them.’

More optimistically, many of these writers also take up the positive aspect of Sallust’s argument. ‘Cities that are ruled and maintained in a state of peace’, Giovanni da Viterbo proclaims, ‘are able to grow, to become great, and to receive the greatest possible increase.’ Brunetto Latini underlines the argument, referring his readers directly to Sallust for the judgement that, just as discord destroys the greatest undertakings, so ‘small things, through concord, are able to grow great’. Matteo de’ Libri, in a model speech designed for capitani to deliver if civic discord impends, similarly advises them to remind the parties involved that ‘concord and unity cause everything to advance and grow great’.

One of the problems that most preoccupies these writers is accordingly that of understanding how civic concord can best be preserved. The authority to whom they invariably turn at this juncture is Cicero, for whom the ideal of a concordia ordinum had been of overriding importance. Cicero had laid it down in a much-cited passage from Book I of his De Officiis that ‘anyone who looks after the interests of only one part of a citizen body, while neglecting the rest, introduces into the government of a city the most pernicious element of all, namely sedition and discord’. He inferred that the key to preserving civic concord must therefore be to give precedence to the ideal of the common good – the bonum commune or communes utilitates – over any considerations of selfish or factional advantage.

Both these suggestions were eagerly seized upon by the pre-humanist writers on city government. We already find the author of the Oscaudus Pistoriadis including in the model speech for incoming podestà a demand that all magistrates should treat it as their duty ‘to promote the welfare of the whole community’, thereby guaranteeing it ‘honour, exaltation and benefit, and a happy state’. Giovanni da Viterbo quotes the entire passage in which Cicero had explained the connections between the avoidance of discord and the promotion of the common good, while Brunetto Latini repeats in his chapter ‘Of Concord’ that, if this virtuous condition is to be attained, ‘we must follow nature and place the common good above all other values’.

This still leaves the question of how to ensure in practice that the common good is followed, and thus that no member of the community is ever neglected or unfairly subordinated to anyone else. Here again the pre-humanist writers remain in complete agreement with their Roman authorities. These results can only be brought about, they declare, if our magistrates uphold the dictates of justice in all their public acts. They define the ideal of justice, in accordance with the teachings of Roman law, as the principle of giving to each their due, ius suum cuique. But to ensure that everyone receives their due, they argue, is the same as ensuring that no one’s interests are excluded or unfairly subjected to those of anyone else. The ideal of justice is accordingly seen as the bedrock. To act justly is the one and only means of promoting the common good, without which there can be no hope of preserving concord and hence of attaining greatness.

59 Cicero 1949, p. 794: ‘dicebatur concordia esse necessare dictis et propriis, et rem publicam esse esse dictis et desiderio et non alio modo’.
60 Matteo de’ Libri 1974, p. 147: ‘Pensativo de Florenciae, de Sena, comuni sunt in tempore concordiae, et communi sunt in tempore discordiae’.
64 Cicero 1949, I. XXV, 85, p. 86: ‘qui autem pari civium consulunt, parce neglegunt, rem publicam sinunt in civium inductum, seditionem atque discordiam’.
65 Cicer 1949, I. XXV, 89, p. 86: ‘Unum, ut utilissimum vivantur, ut, quaecumque agant, ad eam referant oblitur commodorum suorum, alium aut suum corpus rei publicae correret, ut, duam partem alipiam tuentur, reliquis discam’.
66 See Oscaudus Pistoriadis, p. 78 on the need to act ‘pro utilitate communis actio’ in order to bring it ‘ad hocorum, exaltationem, et communem se fecerit status’.
68 Cicero 1949, I. XXV, 85, p. 86: ‘Qui autem pari civium consulunt, parce neglegunt, rem publicam in civium induecit, seditionem atque discordiam’.
Once again, Sallust provides one of the main inspirations for this argument. As he had put it with characteristic succinctness in his Bellum Catilinarium, it was 'by acting with justice as well as with industry that the Roman republic grew to greatness'. But the pre-humanist writers are even more indebted at this juncture to a similar passage from the start of Cicero's De Officiis. When introducing the topic of justice, Cicero had begun by declaring that it constitutes the primary means 'by which the community of men and women and, as it were, their common unity, is preserved'.

The sentiments are frequently transcribed by the pre-humanist writers almost word for word. Giovanni da Viterbo begins his treatise by laying down that the prime duty of chief magistrates is 'to render to each person their due, in order that the city may be governed in justice and equity'. The importance of this principle, as one of his model speeches later explains, stems from the fact that 'when cities are ruled by these bonds of justice, they grow to greatness, become enriched and receive the greatest possible increase'. Brunetto Latini likewise argues at the start of his chapter on the government of cities that justice ought to be so well established in the heart of every signor that he assigns to everyone his right. The reason, he too explains, is that 'a city which is governed according to right and truth, such that everyone has what he ought to have, will certainly grow and multiply, both in people and in wealth, and will endure for ever in a good state of peace, to its honour and that of its friends'.

By the time we come to the writers of vernacular Dictamina at the end of the century, we find these connections between justice, the common good and the attainment of greatness presented almost as a litany. 'He who loves justice', as Matteo de' Libri proclaims 'loves a constant and perpetual will to give to each his right; and he who loves to give to each his right loves tranquility and repose, by means of which countries rise to the highest grandezza.' Giovanni da Vignano writes in virtually identical terms, thereby furnishing yet a further summary of the ideology I have been anatomising. The essence of good government is to act justly; to act justly is to give to each their due; to give to each their due is the key to maintaining civic concord; and it is by means of all these things', Giovanni concludes, 'that countries are able to rise to grandezza'. With this injunction to love justice and treat it as the foundation of civic greatness, we reach the heart of the ideology articulated by the early dictatores. But there still remained one question of the highest practical importance. Under what system of government have we the best hope of ensuring that our leading magistrates do in fact obey the dictates of justice, so that all these benefits flow from their rule? It is at this point that the dictatores respond with their celebration of the system of government most familiar to them, the system based on ruling councils chaired by elected magistrates. If justice is to be upheld and civic greatness attained, they all agree, government by hereditary princes or signori must at all costs be avoided; some form of elective and self-governing system must always be maintained.

Once again, the authorities most often invoked in support of this basic commitment are the apologists of the Roman republic in its final phase. The vehement anti-Caesarism of Cicero's De Officiis naturally made it a key text. But the most frequently quoted argument against hereditary rule was yet again taken from Sallust's Bellum Catilinarium. The danger with kingship, Sallust had warned, is that 'to kings, good men are objects of even greater suspicion than the wicked'. The reason is that 'to kings, the good qualities of others are invariably seen as a threat.' This explains why 'it was only when the city of Rome managed to become liberated from its kings that it was able, in such a short space of time, to rise to such greatness'. Only when everyone is permitted to contend for honour, without fear of exciting envy or enmity from their rulers, can the heights of civic glory be scaled.

Among the pre-humanist writers, it is Brunetto Latini who reiterates this argument with the strongest emphasis. His chapter ‘Of Signories’
opens with the briskest possible statement of the case. "There are three types of government, one being rule by kings, the second rule by leading men, the third rule by communes themselves. And of these, the third is far better than the rest."144 At the start of his chapter 'On the Government of Cities' he proceeds to give his grounds for this conclusion. Where kings and princes enjoy ultimate control, as in France and in most other countries, they consider only their own interests, 'selling offices and assigning them to those who pay most for them, with little consideration for the good or benefit of the townsfolk'. But where the citizens themselves retain control, as in Italy, 'they are able to elect, as podestà or signore, those who will act most profitably for the common good of the city and all their subjects'.145

The pre-humanist assigns no distinctive name to the form of government they most admire. They are content to describe it as one of the types of regmen or reggimento by which a civitas or commune can lawfully be ruled.146 When they are more specific, they merely add that the regimen in question can be described as one in which power remains in the hands of the commune itself:147 Save for one or two remarks in Giovanni da Viterbo,148 and later in Albertino Mussato,149 there is no sign of the later disposition to use the term res publica to distinguish such elective forms of government from hereditary monarchies. Still less is there any hint of the suggestion canvassed by Cicero in De Officiis to the effect that self-governing regimes are the only forms of res publicae truly worthy of the name.150

There is one point, however, at which a number of these writers make use of a concept that was later to be central to the political vocabulary of quattrocento republicanism. As we have seen, they treat it as a distinctive virtue of elective systems that they guarantee the equality of all

144 Latini 1948, p. 211: "Seigneuris sont de telle maniere, l'une est des rois, la seconde est des hommes, la troisieme est des communes, laquelle est la plus soulier entre ces autres."
145 Latini 1948, p. 392: "et in Francia et in aliorum regnicis regna, quae vendunt personas et dictam a classe ista plu comparant (populare suo honore et pro domo borgerum)."
146 Latini 1948, p. 392: "et in Italia il communitas de vilis saeclis et signorum ut regnum quod ille quod sit eloquentia atque personam atque corporum de vilis et de totis suis.
147 See, for example, Fabia 1942, p. 66; Viterbo 1901, p. 222, col. 1; Ceffi 1943, p. 45.
148 See, for example, Latini 1948, pp. 311, 392.
149 Viterbo 1901, p. 355, cols. 2; 396, col. 1; and p. 472, col. 1 uses the term res publica to describe self-governing cities.
150 Mussato 1973, col. 792: "De res publica tenendum in civitate, ut figura regis diplomatico ad honorem civitatis.
151 Cicero 1935, II. VIII. 29, p. 196. This passage, implying that Rome was only a true res publica under its traditional constitution, is crucial to understanding the process by which the term res publica eventually ceased to be used to refer to any type of body politic, and instead came to be used specifically to describe elective systems of government such as Cicero had in mind.
152 For the contrasting understanding of freedom in terms of privileges see Harding 1980.
153 See, for example, his distinction between living under tyranny and living 'in libera civitate' in Giorgi 1953, II. VII. 23. 4, p. 190. Cf also Giorgi 1913, II. XXII. 79-8, p. 234 on the liberty of citizens.
154 It is thus an exaggeration to claim, as does Witt 1971, p. 175, that a republican concept of libertas only re-emerges in 'the early years of the Quattrocento'. But cf. Witt 1971, pp. 158-69 for an interesting discussion of some earlier accounts.
156 Riva 1974, p. 186: 'De commendatione Mediolani ratione libertatis.'
157 See, for example, Mussato 1573, p. 652: 'pro patria libertate decerem.'
158 Ceffi 1941, pp. 37-38.
159 Ceffi 1941, p. 41: 'che poi possiamo imparare e vivere liberamente sotto la vostro signoria.'
The rediscovery of republican values

Aristotle gave these writers a new confidence as well as a new armory of concepts with which to challenge the orthodox Augustinian assumption that all governments are imposed by God’s ordinance as a remedy for human sinfulness. Generally they begin by affirming that ‘to live a social and political life together’, as Aquinas puts it, ‘is altogether natural to mankind’ and that ‘living in a city is living in a perfect community, one that is capable of supplying all the necessities of life’.

When they turn to consider the purposes served by such communicaciones politicae, they generally offer a purely Aristotelian – and hence a strongly positive – account of the values that such communities are able to promote. ‘First among these’, in Aquinas’s words, ‘is the preservation of the unity of peace’, a sentiment strongly echoed by Remigio and Marsilius in the titles of their treatises. As well as maintaining peace on earth, however, there is an even greater blessing that well-ordered political societies can bring. By preventing strife, they are able to supply us with a...

...number of other Italian members of the Dominican Order, many of whom attended his lectures at Paris as well as studying his commentaries. These included Remigio de’ Girolami, a native of Florence and the author of the Thomist tracts De Bono Pacis and De Bono Communis; Poleney of Lucca, whose De Regimine Principum was long assumed to be the work of Aquinas himself; and Henry of Rimini, author of a major treatise of moral and political theory, largely Thomist in inspiration, entitled Tractatus de Quatuor Virtutibus Cardinalibus. By the end of the thirteenth century the path from Italy to Paris and back again was being trodden by philosophers and theologians of all persuasions, including the two famous writers on politics of early fourteenth-century Italy. One of these was Giles of Rome, whose De Regimine Principum remained one of the most widely cited contributions to its genre for many generations. The other was Marsilius of Padua, the author of perhaps the greatest work of political Aristotelianism, the Defender Pacis of 1324.

The texts I have been considering were mostly in circulation by the middle years of the thirteenth century. A few years later, William of Moerbecke’s pioneering translation of Aristotle’s Politics also began to circulate in the Regimnum Italicum. Starting from that point of origin, there rapidly arose a new intellectual movement of even greater significance for the defence of the Italian city-republics and their distinctive way of life. Although Aristotle’s Politics was first seriously studied at the University of Paris, it soon became obvious that its central doctrines were of special relevance to the Regimnum Italicum, particularly his emphasis on city-states as the appropriate units of political analysis and his special enthusiasm for elective systems of ruling and being ruled. So it is not surprising to find that, in the half-century after Moerbecke’s translation became available, most of the influential adaptations of Aristotle’s ideas came from Italian writers on the newly named subject of ‘political science’.

The first and greatest of these scholastic commentators was St Thomas Aquinas, scion of a noble Neapolitan family, who composed his unfinished De Regno as well as beginning his Summa Theologiae in the course of the 1260s. He in turn exercised an overwhelming influence over a...
framework of security within which we can hope to pursue our chosen ends and thereby attain a life of happiness. As Marsilius explains—quoting directly from the Politics—the highest goal of any political community is ‘that of enabling us not merely to live together, but to live the good life in the manner most appropriate to mankind’.  

The authority of Aristotle’s Politics also enables these writers to mount a new challenge to the belief that all properly constituted political societies must take the form of hereditary and God-given lordships. Aristotle had devoted much of Book 3 of the Politics to considering the relationship between different styles of regimen and the goals of public life. Far from concluding that monarchical rule is indispensable, he had argued that three different kinds of government are all capable of realizing the supreme goal of enabling us ‘to live together and to live well’. These he had listed as monarchy, aristocracy, and what William of Moerbeke was to translate (or rather, transliterate) as politia, ‘the case where the body of the people acts in the name of the common good’. In Book 2, moreover, Aristotle had even thrown out the further remark—fully explored in Book 4—that ‘there are some experts who maintain that the very best form of polity will be one in which there is a mixture of all these various different forms of government’.  

Confronted with these novel typologies, the schoolmen at first continued to insist that a virtuous monarchy must still be regarded as the best form of rule. This remained Aquinas’s view, both in De Regno and the Summa, and in this judgement he was followed without hesitation by such early disciples as Henry of Rimini and Giles of Rome. Even in these theorists, however, we already find the terms of the debate entirely transformed by the impact of Aristotle’s arguments. The reasons now given for preferring a regimen regni are no longer connected with the suggestion that God ordains kingly power as a natural form of lordship. Instead the rule of princes is defended on the naturalistic and explicitly Aristotelian grounds that, as Aquinas puts it in De Regno, ‘experience shows that those provinces or cities which live under the rule of a single king are above all able to rejoice in peace, flourish in justice and delight in abundance of wealth’.  

The precise form of monarchical government defended by Aquinas and his followers is also far removed from the traditional image of hereditary lordship. They argue for a system of elective monarchy in which there are strong elements of aristocratic and popular control. Aquinas presents the classic statement of this commitment in the course of his long analysis of the concept of law in the Summa Theologica. He begins by reiterating that the best form of government is monarchy, the next best aristocracy. This, he claims, is one of the two major points that Aristotle makes about the good ordering of political societies. But Aristotle’s other point is that ‘the only way to ensure peace among the people is for everyone to play some part in the business of government’. Putting these two contentions together—in a chain of reasoning not to be found in Aristotle—Aquinas goes on to commend a very specific form of limited rule:

It follows from this that the best form of government, whether of a kingdom or a city-state, must therefore be one in which a single individual is placed in command of everyone else and rules them virtually, but in which there are others under him who are also capable of governing virtuously, and in which all the citizens are involved in public affairs, not merely as electors of their rulers but as potential members of the government themselves.

The best type of polity, in short, is said to be a ‘well-mixed’ or bene commixtum form of monarchy, one in which the virtues of all the pure types of regimen are combined while their shortcomings are balanced out.

We need finally to note that several of these early Thomists show a new and remarkable willingness to criticize the institution of monarchy itself. They generally do so, moreover, from the perspective of the very different arrangements prevailing in the Italian city-republics. Aquinas himself concedes in De Regno that ‘men living under a monarchy are often
slower to exert themselves on behalf of the common good', and that 'in consequence of this, as we see from experience, a single city governed by an annually elected rector is sometimes capable of achieving more than any king, even if he is ruler of three or four cities'. Henry of Rimini goes even further. Although he begins by defending monarchy as the best form of government, he not only follows Aquinas almost word for word in arguing that the best species regni is an elective form of mixed monarchy, but he proceeds to add the wholly novel suggestion that 'if we consider all the politics of Christendom at the present time, the one that appears to approximate most closely to this ideal of a regimen mixtum is the government of the people of Venice'. The Venetian system, he goes on to explain, is based on a Dux who is elected for life and supported by a group of four hundred nobles and gentlemen who take part in public debates, as well as by an advisory body of forty leading citizens known as the consiliiarii. The presence of the Dux means that 'this can properly be called a monarchical form of government', but the addition of the consiliiarii 'make it resemble a regimen optimatum', while the fact that they are elected by the nobles and by many honourable citizens supplies 'an element of a popular regime' and allows us to conclude that 'all three forms of government are represented'.

To this analysis Henry added the immensely influential claim that this unique constitution serves to explain why 'the people of Venice flourish so much, peace and security'. This is why 'no one opposes anyone else' and why 'you seldom if ever hear of murders or even the shedding of human blood' in Venice. From this moment we can date the unfolding of one of the most potent myths of early-modern political theory: the myth of Venice as the serenissima, together with the attribution of this condition to her distinctive form of elective government.

Once Aristotle's authority began to be invoked to criticize prevailing conceptions of monarchy, it proved a short step to the repudiation of the belief that monarchy in any form deserves to be accounted the best type of government. This step was duly taken by a number of Italian schoolmen in the early decades of the fourteenth century. They arrived at a vision of politics in which the self-governing arrangements of the city-republics were not merely defended as legally viable forms of government, but were celebrated as nothing less than the best means of bringing about the highest ends of public life.

Polamy of Lucca warmly embraces this conclusion in the final book of his De Regimine Principum. He begins by setting out the three forms of government agreed by Aristotle to be based on right reason. These are said to be monarchy, aristocracy and rule by the many, a form of regime known as a polity (from the Greek word polis) because of being especially well suited to cities, as we see above in various parts of Italy. Later in his discussion, however, Polamy drastically alters Aristotle's typology, claiming that the fundamental distinction is between 'polities' on the one hand and 'despotical' forms of government on the other, 'if with monarchy being included under the heading of despotism'. This prepares us for his novel and dramatic conclusion that 'wherever you encounter a people confident of their own intelligence, you will never find them being ruled except by such a political form of government'. This in turn explains, he ingeniously adds, 'why it is that this form of political authority flourishes above all in Italy.'

A similar commitment lies at the heart of Marsilius of Padua's Defensor Pacis. It is true that in Book 1 chapter 8 he assures us that 'it forms no part of my present purpose to decide which of the well-tempered
forms of government is the best.'\textsuperscript{65} But in chapter 12 he introduces a categorical distinction between the location of the sovereign power to enact laws and the purely administrative duty of ensuring that they are duly carried out. Marsilius concedes that the\textit{ pars principis} — the executive and administrative functions of government — can equally well be discharged by a popular or an aristocratic assembly, and even allows in chapter 9 that ‘a better method might conceivably be to institute an elective form of monarchy’.\textsuperscript{66} But the commitment he wishes above all to emphasise — ‘in line with the truth as well as with Aristotle’s doctrine in the\textit{ Politic}’ — is that ‘the legislator, that is to say the primary and proper source of the authority to make laws, must be equated with the people, the\textit{ universitas} of the citizens as a whole’.\textsuperscript{67}

Marsilius places only one restriction on this otherwise unqualified doctrine of popular sovereignty. The powers of the legislator, he adds, can alternatively be confined to the weightier part (\textit{valenter pars}) of the citizen-body, ‘taking into consideration the quality as well as the quantity of the persons involved’.\textsuperscript{68} But in essence his conclusion is that, if peace and the means to live the good life are to be preserved, the body of the people must remain sovereign at all times. They must ensure that the\textit{ pars principis} is elected (chapter 9); that our magistrates are granted a minimum of discretion to vary the laws (chapter 11); and that they are capable of being removed from office by the electorate at any time (chapter 18).

As we have seen, Ptolemy of Lucca had already arrived at a similar conclusion. But whereas he had merely asserted it, Marsilius offers a careful argument in favour of equating the\textit{ legislator humanus} with the\textit{ universitas civium}.\textsuperscript{69} His strategy is to examine the causes of discord within communities, thereby isolating the main enemies of peace that need to be overcome. One such enemy is said to be faction and the formation of political splinter groups. The danger here is that ‘if the law is enacted merely by one or a few citizens, they will consult their own good rather than attending to the good of the community as a whole’.\textsuperscript{70} But the gravest cause of discord arises when the powers of jurisdiction within a community are in any way divided. This can easily happen when there is no clear judicial hierarchy, as was often the case in the Italian city-republics. For in such circumstances a citizen may appear before a given judge, ignoring the others, and may be able to obtain an acquittal, only to find himself convicted for contempt by the judges he has ignored.\textsuperscript{71} Even worse, however, are the divisions that arise from a source of discord unknown even to Aristotle, a source Marsilius isolates in chapter 19 of Book 1 and discusses with a boldness that won him instant excommunication and lasting notoriety. This further source, he declares, is the papacy, ‘whose lust for power, based on the so-called\textit{ plenitudo potestatis} allegedly handed down by Christ, makes it the leading cause of intranquillity and strife in all cities and kingdoms everywhere’.\textsuperscript{72}

It is Marsilius’s central contention that, once these enemies of peace are identified, we can see that our only hope of vanquishing them lies in placing all power in the hands of the people. Chapters 12 and 17 of Book 1 argue that, if we are to forestall the development of factional or divided jurisdictions, the people must serve as the sole judicial as well as executive authority within their own community. The whole of Book 2 goes on to add that, if the lusts of the papacy are to be bridled, the people must at the same time strip the church of all coercive powers of\textit{ justicia}, transferring them to ‘the faithful human legislator’ within each individual polity. The effect of taking these steps will not only be to restore peace; it will also return the church to the condition that Christ originally intended, the condition in which the sole function of the priesthood is to preach and practise the Christian faith.

\textsuperscript{65} Marsilius 1928, I. VII. 4, p. 29: \textit{‘quae autem bene temperamentum principium sit optimissimum... non habet praestamem apud eciam’}.
\textsuperscript{66} Marsilius 1928, I. IX. 5, p. 33: \textit{‘fortasse perfectior est regalis monarchia... vel institutur per electionem’}.
\textsuperscript{67} Marsilius 1928, I. XII. 3, p. 49: \textit{‘nos autem dicamus secundum veritatem acque consilium Aristotelis III\textit{ Politic}e capitulio 6, legislatorem seu caustum leges effectum esse principem esse populum seu civium universitatem’}.
\textsuperscript{68} Marsilius 1928, I. XII. 3, p. 49: \textit{‘valentiam inquam potest et quodam personam ei qualitate in communis’}.
\textsuperscript{69} But for a critique of this comparison between Ptolemy and Marsilius see Blythe 2000.
\textsuperscript{70} Marsilius 1928, I. XII. 5, p. 51: \textit{‘et per unum aut paucos quodam magis quam commune attendentes comendum, lex ipsa feratur’}.
\textsuperscript{71} Marsilius 1928, I. VII. 5, p. 91: \textit{‘quod si tamen apparent causam uno, reliquis specieris, et ab illo foras imo abeatur a culpae et poena civilis, a reliquis tamen damnabilis propter comuniam’}.
\textsuperscript{72} Marsilius 1928, I. IX. 12, p. 108: \textit{‘affectionem principum, sub quibus sit aequum ex eisdem (ut dictum) per Christiana tradita plenitudine potestatis, causa est singularis illa quae intranquilissimae seu discordiae civilitatis aut rei publicae dixit’}.
challenge to the belief that government should be viewed as a God-given form of lordship, and they were able to instil with a new assurance that the best type of government need not be a form of lordship at all. The point I have sought to emphasise, however, is that these values had already been inculcated by Azo and his pupils in their treatises on the duties of city magistrates. Although they had no access to Greek philosophy, these writers were able to recover from the legal and moral philosophy of ancient Rome an eloquent and powerful defence of civic freedom, self-government and popular sovereignty. While the recovery of the Aristotelian corpus was undoubtedly of great importance, it was by no means as crucial as some scholars have supposed to the construction of a full-scale defence of republican self-government. As I have tried to show, the articulation of a civic ideology suited to the defence of the communes can in fact be traced to a period scarcely later than the formation of the communes themselves.

3

Ambrogio Lorenzetti and the portrayal of virtuous government

Between the early thirteenth and mid-fourteenth centuries, the city-republics of the Regnum Italicum engendered a distinctive political literature concerned with the ideals and methods of republican self-government. As we saw in chapter 2, several of the most eminent philosophers of the age took part in the argument, including St Thomas Aquinas and Marsilio of Padua. But it was an artist, Ambrogio Lorenzetti of Siena, who made the most memorable contribution to the debate. This took the form of the celebrated cycle of frescoes he painted between 1337 and 1339 in the Sala dei Nove of the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena. Although it is obvious that these paintings do not constitute a text of political theory in the conventional sense, it is equally obvious even to the casual observer that they are basically intended to convey a series of political messages. It is with the question of how to read and interpret those messages that I shall principally be concerned.

I wish in particular to re-examine the central section of the frescoes, the section that occupies the middle level of the northern wall (see Plate 3). As the verses inscribed beneath this part of the painting explain, the

This chapter is a revised version of an article that originally appeared under the title 'Ambrogio Lorenzetti: The Artist as Political Philosopher' in the Proceedings of the British Academy, 72 (1987), pp. 1-26.

See Bowles 1951, pp. 287-90 for the commission and cf. Rowley 1958, vol. 1, pp. 190-1, for lists of payments. These suggest that the work was mainly undertaken between April 1338 and May 1339. There have been three major modern restorations of the cycle. The first was undertaken in the early 1930s, while the other two date from the 1960s, the latter of which having been completed in 1981. My original description of the paintings was written before the two most recent restorations, but I have specifically noted all relevant points at which they have had the effect of changing what can now be seen.

4 The paintings are generally known as the Buon Governo frescoes or as the 'allegory of good government'. But I have preferred to avoid these descriptions. The proposed title is definitely not original, and strictly speaking the paintings are not allegories.