

CRAIG KALLENDORF

AENEAS SYLVIUS PICCOLOMINI'S *DE LIBERORUM EDUCATIONE*:
AN EDUCATIONAL CLASSIC

Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's *De liberorum educatione* is not one of his best known works today: it lacks the whiff of scandal that has accompanied *The Tale of Two Lovers* ever since the author of this work became Pope¹, or even the intrinsic interest of the *Commentaries*, which remains the only autobiography to have been written by a sitting occupant of the See of St. Peter². To be sure, it is one of five treatises on education from the Italian Renaissance, known at least to specialists in the field because they were studied more than a century ago by William H. Woodward³ and in four cases (the treatises by Pier Paolo Vergerio, Leonardo Bruni, Piccolomini, and Battista Guarino) were edited by me seventeen years ago for the I Tatti Renaissance Library⁴. Each of these treatises has its own distinctive flavor. Vergerio's treatise, for example, goes back to the Greeks for a scheme that divides education among letters, gymnastics, music, and drawing, and this work stresses to an unusual degree the need to adapt any general program to the individual strengths and weaknesses of each student. Bruni focuses on which authors to read and how to read them, while deemphasizing rhetoric and foregrounding religious writers, probably reflecting the fact that it alone was addressed to a woman, whose professional opportunities were limited in relation to the men of the day. Battista Guarino's treatise in turn reflects the fact that its author was a teacher, so that greater attention is paid to elementary instruction and orderly method than in the other books. They drew from different sources – Piccolomini follows Quintilian closely, while Bruni favors Cicero, and Vergerio draws from his Aristotelian roots – but the treatises reflect a common set of educational values and goals.

¹ A.S. PICCOLOMINI, *Storia di due amanti*, translated by M.L. DOGLIO, Turin 1973, offers a nice Latin edition with Italian translation, along with a valuable introduction by Luigi Firpo on the author's activities as humanist and pope. A.S. PICCOLOMINI, *The Two Lovers. The Goodly History of Lady Lucrece and Her Lover Eurialus*, edited by E. O'BRIEN-K.R. BARTLETT, Ottawa 1999, presents a scholarly, modern-spelling edition along with a lengthy introduction analyzing the text and placing it into the context of the development of Elizabethan prose fiction.

² A scholarly text and readable translation can be found in A.S. PICCOLOMINI, *Commentaries*, edited by M. MESERVE and M. SIMONETTA, 2 vols., The I Tatti Renaissance Library 12 and 29, Cambridge, MA 2003-2007.

³ W.H. WOODWARD (ed.), *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*, Cambridge 1912, is still sometimes cited, but the translations are very free, to the point that entire sections are sometimes omitted. Valuable information on the group of Italian educational treatises can be found in W.H. WOODWARD (ed.), *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance 1450-1600*, Cambridge 1906, rpt. New York 1967.

⁴ C.W. KALLENDORF (ed.), *Humanist Educational Treatises*, The I Tatti Renaissance Library 5, Cambridge, MA 2002.

Someone who sits down to read *De liberorum educatione* today, however, will probably find it a frustrating experience, at least initially. A detailed discussion on the correct spelling of Latin words, for example, is buried in a longer analysis whose structure is obscure because it rests on premises that were much clearer in the fifteenth century than they are now. Why does *De liberorum educatione* treat some subjects at length and others only briefly or not at all? What actually went on in a classroom whose activities derived from this curriculum? What kind of social and educational system was an education like this designed to support? And what relevance does all this still have today? After providing a brief summary of the contents of the treatise, I shall answer each of these questions in turn, in an effort to show that Piccolomini's treatise was designed to serve as a blueprint for humanist self-fashioning, a sort of manual on how to gain the skills that were necessary both to live well and to position oneself successfully in a changing world in which new abilities were required to obtain jobs like those that Piccolomini himself held.

* * *

De liberorum educatione, which was composed while Piccolomini was bishop of Trieste, was written as a Christmas gift for Ladislas, king of Hungary and Bohemia and duke of Austria. To rule well, Ladislas needed to be able to follow the example both of his ancestors and of such famous rulers of antiquity as Pericles and Dion of Syracuse among the Greeks and the Scipios, Catos, and Caesars of Rome. To do this, he needed to acquire virtue, and to acquire virtue, Ladislas had to gain wisdom. The curriculum set out in this little Christmas gift was designed to give the future king the education he needed to rule well. Both the body and the mind had to be properly trained. In the former area, moderation and balance were to prevail: too much fine food, strong drink, and concern for one's appearance detracted from the body's ability to endure labor, but periods of exertion had to alternate with periods of rest.

Training the mind was more difficult than training the body, but if "philosophy, which is the study of virtue" (p. 81)⁵, was mastered, then the king would be equipped to handle whatever fortune brought him. The starting point for wisdom is religion, since even Socrates and Cicero understood that this life only offers preparation for the one to come. A king has to be able to address all his subjects in their own language, so education proper begins with grammar. Grammar has three parts. The first involves speaking correctly, which requires the ability to distinguish native words from foreign ones, simple from compound, proper from metaphorical, and common usage from new coinages. Errors are to be avoided by reference to logic, precedence, authority, and usage (an appeal to and imitation of the learned). The second part of grammar involves the interpretation of literature – not all literature, but the "ancient and modern authors who have written with practical wisdom. Through zeal for virtue you will make your life better, and you will acquire the art of grammar and skill in the use of the best and most elegant words, as well as a great store of max-

⁵ References to *De liberorum educatione* are to Kallendorf's edition (see note 4) and will be placed in the text.

ims" (p. 111). Virgil, Lucan, and Ovid among the epic poets; Horace, Juvenal, and Persius among the satirists; Plautus, Terence, and Seneca among the dramatists; Cicero the orator, supported by Ambrose, Lactantius, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory; and Livy, Sallust, the Bible, and Valerius Maximus among the historians need to be read, but not Martial, the elegists, or Suetonius, for they stimulate vice, not virtue. The study of grammar should conclude with orthography, which includes handwriting as well as spelling. This section ends with an exhortation to study rhetoric, for "there one finds figures of speech, embellishments, and maxims; men are praised and blamed; judgements and arguments are to hand. Every part of rhetoric is thoroughly cultivated by the poets and historians" (p. 88). Some study of music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy is recommended, but the Renaissance predecessors of today's STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) were not to distract from "the moral conduct which is to be learned from philosophy. This is why we once again send the boy back to moral philosophy at the conclusion of our book" (p. 130).

From this bald summary, the disciplinary overview may appear to be in line with what we expect today, but this in fact is not the case. The first sign that something is amiss, at least from a modern perspective, lies in the number of pages devoted to each subject. Grammar receives twenty-four pages in my ITRL edition, while science and mathematics (focused here on astronomy and including, curiously, music) receive only four pages in total and come accompanied by a warning not to devote too much attention to them. This makes sense when we place *De liberorum educatione* in the broader history of education. Medieval education focused on the seven liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic from the *trivium*, the 'three roads' of the language arts; and music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, the *quadrivium* or 'four roads' of mathematics and science⁶. As Paul Oskar Kristeller pointed out some time ago, however, humanism, the intellectual engine that drove the Renaissance, effected an educational revolution. The *quadrivium* was deemphasized, exactly as it was in Piccolomini's treatise, and the *trivium* was revised and expanded to give prominence to the disciplines that nurture what makes us distinctively human. Grammar and rhetoric retained pride of place as the disciplines that we need to communicate with one another. Dialectic was replaced by moral philosophy, the study of how we should act in relation to one another; and history, the record of human achievement, was added along with poetry, the fruit of our common aesthetic sensibilities⁷.

As the summary above indicates, the authors who were recommended for guidance in the five humanistic disciplines were primarily from antiquity. Not all classical authors are suitable to an educational context, however, and Piccolomini explicitly rejects several writers whose works he believed did not foster the moral wisdom whose attainment should be the goal of a proper education. The authors he cites are primarily classical, as Table 1 indicates:

⁶ For the classic discussion of the Latin culture of the Middle Ages, see E.R. CURTIUS, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Princeton 1953, with the liberal arts discussed on pp. 36-61.

⁷ P.O. KRISTELLER, *Renaissance Thought*, 2 vols., New York 1961-1965.

Table 1: Authors Cited in *De liberorum educatione*

AUTHOR	NUMBER OF TIMES CITED	AUTHOR	NUMBER OF TIMES CITED
Albericus	2	Ovid	1
Aristotle	1	Phocas	1
Augustine	2	Plato	7
Aulus Gellius	14	Pliny the Younger	1
Basil of Caesarea	10	Plutarch	7
Bible	17	Pomponius Porphyrio	1
Boethius	2	Pseudo-Plutarch, <i>De educatione</i>	24
Cicero	21	Quintilian	88
Clement of Alexandria	1	Sallust	1
Hesiod	1	Servius	2
Homer	3	Status	3
Horace	6	Suetonius	4
Jerome	13	Theognis	1
John of Salisbury	14	Valerius Maximus	2
Juvenal	8	Vegetius	2
Macrobius	6	Velius Longus	2
Marius Victorinus	1	Virgil	13

This list of authors cited positions Piccolomini as a humanist who had clearly received exactly the kind of education he was sketching out in his treatise. Some of the authors he references, like Virgil, Juvenal, Statius' *Thebaid*, and the *De inventione* of Cicero, had been mainstays of medieval education, but Piccolomini's citation list includes a noticeable number of works that had only returned to general circulation as a result of the manuscript-hunting efforts of Petrarch and his followers. References to Plato, for example, include *Republic*, *Laws*, *Gorgias*, and *Apology*, and we find citations to *De finibus*, *De senectute*, *Tusculanae quaestiones*, *De officiis*, *De oratore*, *De fato*, and *Orator* as well as *De inventione*; in addition all the works of Horace, including *De arte poetica*, are cited, and it is clear from the number of citations that Piccolomini had access to the full text of Quintilian's *Institutiones oratoriae*, which was crucial for his topic, instead of the fragmentary version that had circulated in the Middle Ages⁸. The list is tilted heavily toward Latin authors, which suggests that, like many humanists, Piccolomini's Greek might have been weaker in practice than it should have been, and he may well have read authors like Plato and pseudo-Plutarch's *De educatione* in Latin translation⁹. Nevertheless *De liberorum educatione* results from exactly the kind of broad reading in the classics that is recommended in the treatise.

⁸ See R. SABBADINI, *Le scoperte dei codici Latini e Greci ne' secoli XIV e XV*, Florence 1905; R.R. BOLGAR, *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries*, Cambridge 1954; and J.F. RUYS-J.O. WARD-M. HEYWORTH (ed.), *The Classics in the Medieval and Renaissance Classroom. The Role of Ancient Texts in the Arts Curriculum as Revealed by Surviving Manuscripts and Early Printed Books*, Turnhout 2013.

⁹ As F.M. PADEFORD, *Essays on the Study and Use of Poetry by Plutarch and Basil the Great*, in *Yale Studies in English* 15 (1902), pp. 99-120 pointed out long ago, texts like St. Basil's *Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature* and pseudo-Plutarch's *The Education of Children* were important sources in Renaissance educational theory. See E.G. BERRY, *The De liberis educandis of Pseudo-Plutarch*, in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63 (1958), pp. 387-399; and G. ABBAMONTE, *Guarino of Verona Translator of Plutarch's De liberis educandis (1411) and the Last Legacy of the Pope Alexander V (Peter Filargis)*, in *Mediterranean Chronicle* 7 (2017), pp. 15-30.

Piccolomini's treatise is firmly situated within the humanist educational revolution, and a close examination of his text adds nuance to Kristeller's understanding of this educational shift. The humanist movement was launched by a group of scholars in whose best professional interest it was to stress their differences from the scholastic writers who preceded them, but current scholarship is emphasizing that the intellectual transformation was not quite so radical as Petrarch and his associates would have us believe¹⁰. The first author Piccolomini referenced, for example, was not Cicero or Virgil, but John of Salisbury, and his next two citations were to Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. Juvenal appears next, but he was followed immediately by John of Salisbury again and then Boethius. What is especially interesting here is that, while John of Salisbury was admittedly the only medieval writer to play a significant role in *De liberorum educatione*, the Bible was quoted frequently, as were the Church Fathers. This is because, for the humanists, antiquity included the centuries when pagan culture became Christianized¹¹. This, more than the fact that Piccolomini was a bishop at the time when he wrote the treatise, explains why wisdom and virtue in *De liberorum educatione* were clearly anchored in Christianity. Not everyone in the early modern period was particularly pious, but the mental framework of the time did not really allow for analysis outside of Christian parameters. The emphasis on the pagan classics was indeed new, but for most of the humanists, it developed within, rather than outside of, the Christian tradition¹², a point that does not always appear clearly enough in the writings of Jewish emigré scholars like Kristeller.

* * *

De liberorum educatione tells us what to study, but it does not really tell us how to study it. The emphasis was clear: "The marks of virtue have not been set forth completely in the poets, orators, and historians; they are merely adumbrated. From these studies you must rise higher and give yourself passionately to philosophy..." (p. 129). But how precisely were the poets, orators, and historians read in pursuit of these "marks of virtue?" Piccolomini offered some hints: "Allow yourself to be imbued with the best *precepts*..." (p. 65); "Something must be committed to memory daily, whether verses or important *maxims* from illustrious authors" (p. 91); "...you will acquire the art of grammar and skill in the use of the best and most elegant words, as well as a great store of *maxims*" (p. 111; in each case, the emphasis is mine). Piccolomini did not explain why he kept repeating the words 'maxims' and 'precepts' throughout his treatise because the readers of his day knew the system to which he referred. We do not, but the system that Piccolomini is referencing can be recovered.

Anyone who has looked at a number of early printed editions of the classical authors that Piccolomini recommended is struck by the number of underlined passages in them. As an example, we might look at a copy of a 1567 octavo edition of Virgil that was published in Frankfurt by Georg Rab the Elder, the heirs of W. Han,

¹⁰ For elaboration of this point, see C.W. KALLENDORF, *Renaissance*, in *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, edited by C.W. KALLENDORF, Malden, MA 2007, pp. 30-44.

¹¹ See C.L. STINGER, *Humanism and the Church Fathers: Ambrogio Traversari (1386-1439) and the Revival of Patristic Theology in the Early Italian Renaissance*, Albany 1977.

¹² This point emerges clearly in D. ROBICHAUD, *Renaissance and Reformation*, in S. BULLIVANT-M. RUSE (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, Oxford 2013, pp. 179-194.

and S. Feyerabend and is found now in a private collection in which I have been working. At the beginning of *Aeneid* 5, an anonymous early reader has underlined “superat quoniam fortuna, sequamur / Quoque vocat, vertamus iter” (“’Tis Fate diverts our course; and Fate we must obey”; *Aen.* 5, 22-23; f. 114v, p. 378), and then a little later, “Extremos pudeat rediisse hoc vincite cives, / Et prohibete nefas” (“But to be last, the lags of all the Race, / redeem your selves and me from that Disgrace”; *Aen.* 5, 196-97; f. 117v, p. 385)¹³. These underlined passages are typical of those selected by Renaissance readers of the classics, in accordance with Piccolomini’s instructions: they are proverbs or maxims, pithy sayings that encapsulate the moral wisdom that students in the humanist schools were taught to seek out and retain. In the margins, early readers would often leave ‘indexing notes’, words like ‘Fate’ and ‘Disgrace’ that would remind them of why they had underlined the passages in the first place. They would retain these bits of moral wisdom in commonplace books, where the indexing notes provided the subjects (Fate, Disgrace) and the proverbs extracted from the classical texts constituted a storehouse of virtue, to be accessed and reused as needed. Sometimes the commonplace books themselves, like the *Osservazioni... sopra l’opere di Virgilio* of Orazio Toscanella, were published, as an *aide memoire* for lazy readers; more often, however, the commonplace books served as sources for the students’ own compositions when they were called on to write something themselves (the third part of grammar)¹⁴. The habit of keeping a commonplace book to draw on while writing often stayed with the students from humanistic schools throughout their lives – indeed *De liberorum educatione* itself exemplifies this technique in its own composition. My ITRL edition identifies 272 bits of received wisdom buried within its confines. Most of them are not signaled as extracts from another author, but such signaling was largely unnecessary when everyone was receiving essentially the same education, which allowed them to recognize the common references easily. Today, we would call citing without acknowledging plagiarism, but this just shows that sometimes, early modern culture is not very modern at all¹⁵.

* * *

The question that ultimately arises is, what kind of social and political order was an education like this designed to support? Some thirty years ago, Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine wrote a now-famous book, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, that argues that a humanist education was designed to produce people who could take their place as courtiers, bureaucrats, and church officials in the political structures that were emerging in early modern Europe. Although basing their argument in the educational theory and practice of the day, Grafton and Jardine postulate a division within the ideal that moral excellence invariably went hand in hand with training in eloquence. The former, they argue, gradually withdrew to the background, which

¹³ The Latin text is from the Frankfurt edition and is indicated with a folio number; the translation is that of John Dryden, taken from *The Works of Virgil*, London 1697, and indicated with a page number.

¹⁴ This process is explained in greater detail in C. KALLENDORE, *The Protean Virgil. Material Form and the Reception of the Classics*, Classical Presences, Oxford 2015, pp. 88-106.

¹⁵ P. KEWES, *Plagiarism in Early Modern England*, London 2003, does a good job of historicizing and contextualizing the concept of plagiarism in the early modern period.

allowed the latter to come forward. Able to read and write in classical Latin with facility and embedded within a common classics-based culture, individuals who had received a humanist education were positioned for professional advancement and successful careers. I think that both the educational theory of the day, as seen in treatises like Piccolomini's, and the records of reading practice as seen in the widespread use of commonplace books, makes their division between virtue and eloquence questionable, but Grafton and Jardine are certainly correct to stress that a humanist education was designed as training for specific jobs. Those who had gone to humanist schools populated the ranks of chancelleries and church offices for generations, occasionally rising to the top of the hierarchy: Leonardo Bruni became chancellor of Florence, and Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini became Pope Pius II¹⁶.

I would like to pause for a moment over this last observation. Pius II's papacy has been examined from many different perspectives¹⁷, but I think it would be interesting to ask how, as pope, Piccolomini could embody the educational principles he had articulated earlier in his career. His earlier years were clearly lived within the cultural environment of Renaissance humanism, but when he became Pope in 1462, he issued an official retraction in a bull, *Aeneam suscipite, Pium recipite*, that played on his given name, Aeneas, to suggest that he was leaving behind his humanist past in order to take on his new responsibilities as pope. Many historians of the last century painted a picture of Pius as a backward-looking idealist, a defender of the universal powers of papacy and empire whose pet project, the crusade against the Turks, was a naïve attempt to revive a dying medieval concept¹⁸.

Now, however, in *The Commentaries of Pope Pius II (1458-1464) and the Crisis of the Fifteenth-Century Papacy*, Emily O'Brien is able to paint a new picture of Pope Pius II as an astute politician who saw clearly what was happening to the old order and had a plan for launching the papacy into the new age¹⁹. I would like to suggest that this astuteness reflects his grounding in the new educational principles of Renaissance humanism and that his actions as pope remained grounded in his previous life, official

¹⁶ A. GRAFTON-L. JARDINE, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe*, London 1986.

¹⁷ E. GARIN, *Ritratto di Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, in *Bollettino senese di storia patria* 65 (1958), pp. 5-28 offers the best short introduction to Piccolomini's entire career for those who read Italian. Of several intellectual biographies in English, the best is the oldest, C.M. ADY, *Pius II (Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini), the Humanist Pope*, London 1913, which interprets Piccolomini's public career as a manifestation of his humanist ideals. The classic biography, originally published in 1856, remains G. VOIGT, *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini, als Papst Pius der Zweite, und sein Zeitalter*, 3 vols., Berlin 1967, to be updated by G. PAPARELLI, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini. L'umanesimo sul soglio di Pietro*, 2nd ed., Ravenna 1978. Specifically focused on the papal years is B. BALDI, *Pio II e le trasformazioni dell'Europa Cristiana*, Milan 2006. More information on Piccolomini can be found in C. KALLENDORF, *Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini*, Oxford Bibliographies Online: Renaissance and Reformation, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0065.xml?rskey=eeYwP8&result=251>, accessed 12 June 2018.

¹⁸ J. G. ROWE, *The Tragedy of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II): An Interpretation*, in *Church History* 30 (1961), pp. 288-313 argues that Piccolomini was unable to negotiate successfully between the old medieval order and the new principles of the emerging Renaissance papacy.

¹⁹ E. O'BRIEN, *The Commentaries of Pope Pius II (1458-1464) and the Crisis of the Fifteenth-Century Papacy*, Toronto 2015. References to this book will be placed in the text.

retraction notwithstanding²⁰. The desire to defend Christianity against the infidels had deep roots in the Middle Ages, but it quickly became clear to Pius that considerable powers of persuasion would be necessary if he were to launch a crusade at this point in time. Diplomacy, especially papal diplomacy, was conducted in Latin at this time, so Pius and his secretaries used the classical grammar and rhetoric they had learned in school to move this project forward. The *Commentaries* presents itself as a sort of memoir or diary that is to be taken at face value as a reliable record of historical fact, but anyone who has read Livy and Sallust understands that history is always someone's history, and that everyone sees events through the filter of their values and ideals.

Before becoming pope, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini had made a name for himself as a radical conciliarist who argued that church councils should significantly constrain the power of the papacy, but in composing the *Commentaries*, Pius strips himself of the views and actions that threatened his record as pope. He mined his sources selectively, eliminating some parts and amplifying others, to advance a specific political agenda, and he did so against the background of Italian politics. The image he constructed for himself drew from the figure of the contemporary Italian *signore*, which allowed him to shore up both his temporal and spiritual power. As O'Brien concludes, "[f]or Pius the historian, truth did not consist of an impartial account of events. Truth meant *his* truth, and not simply his own subjective perceptions of the past: it meant a history that served a particular set of interests that he himself had defined. In the *Commentaries*, that truth was first and foremost the story of Pope Pius II's convincing triumphs as a spiritual and temporal monarch; and it was the story of his tireless dedication to defending papal authority in the years before he reached the papal throne" (p. 221). It would be a mistake, I think, to take all of this too cynically, since we are still a couple of generations away from Machiavelli. Humanist education was rooted in the pursuit of moral philosophy, and there is no reason to assume that Pius did not see the crusade against the Turks as the right thing to do. But his humanist education allowed him to fashion himself as pope in the way that he wanted the world to see him and to pursue this goal persuasively and eloquently. In this he was very much typical of his age; what was atypical is how successfully he was able to implement these educational ideals, even though the plans for the crusade died with him.

* * *

As Piccolomini's ecclesiastical career demonstrates, *De liberorum educatione* teaches historical perspective, the capacity to reason through political problems, and the rhetorical skills to persuade others to follow a particular path. What was true then, I would

²⁰ N. SEEBER, *Enea Vergilianus. Vergilisches in den 'Kommentaren' des Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Pius II)*, Innsbruck 1997, is an interesting study of how Piccolomini used passages from Virgil's poetry to help shape his *Commentaries*, which refutes his claim to have abandoned humanistic studies in his retraction bull; while W. REINHARD, "Papa Pius: Prolegomena zu einer Sozialgeschichte des Papsttums," in R. BAUMER (ed.), *Von Konstanz nach Trient. Festschrift A. Franzen*, Munich 1972, pp. 261-299 uses Piccolomini's choice of a papal name to show that the nexus of social relationships that *pietas* predicates for a pope includes both Christianity and the classical world. A. TRAGLIA, *De Aenea Silvio Piccolomini, qui fuit Pius II Pont. Max., humaniorum litterarum cultore*, in *Latinitas* 13 (1965), pp. 243-277 offers a broader argument that Piccolomini continued to cultivate the same humanist style as Pope and that he continued to patronize the humanist writers he had known earlier.

submit, is also true now. For our modern western democracies to work, we need citizen-voters who know the lessons of history, who can communicate clearly with one another, and who have a solid grounding in and commitment to virtue as the basis for decision making, both individually and corporately. It seems to me that the training described in *De liberorum educatione* can continue to produce this kind of citizen-voter. To be sure, times have changed, and some adjustments must be made. The most obvious one is that the education of girls is just as important as that of boys, so that any updated version of *De liberorum educatione* must be retitled and revised accordingly. The STEM subjects that Piccolomini deferred to the end of his treatise and warned against must be given their due at the beginning of the twenty-first century; the common grounding in the Christian faith cannot be taken for granted in all settings; and the Greek and Latin classics must now be supplemented with readings from the last five hundred years that have also stood the test of time. But these adjustments can be made.

To a certain extent, these ideals have survived in the French *lycée*, the Italian *liceo classico*, the English public school, and the German *Gymnasium*. Their presence in American government-supported education has always been more problematic, but in the United States we are seeing a growing number of charter schools and private institutions that go under the name of 'classical academies,' whose goals, structures, and curricula would look familiar to Piccolomini. One of them, Live Oak Classical School, is flourishing in the shadow of Baylor University, a Baptist institution whose ideals are in many ways compatible with Piccolomini's. As its website explains,

The academic program is guided by two primary forces – an adherence to the classical tradition of education and a desire to teach students to think Christianly about all subjects. Live Oak Classical School embraces the liberal arts and scientific arts of classical education in grammar, logic, and rhetoric schools. Education should not be indoctrination, but rather the equipping of students to love God with all their minds (Matt. 22:37), to ask probing questions and to fearlessly explore arenas of knowledge from the conviction that all truth is ultimately God's truth. Live Oak Classical School is a learning community where children are trained to know, love and practice that which is true, good and beautiful. ...Most notably, students here enjoy a curriculum that emphasizes great literature and a chronological study of history²¹.

Some 240 institutions belong to the Association of Classical Christian Schools, whose principles should sound familiar by now: «Education is the cultivation of virtue: We teach children to think well (Intellectual Virtues), we train them to lead (Cardinal virtues), we transform them with a love of goodness (Moral Virtues), we train them to be winsome as they write and speak with eloquence (Rhetorical virtues), we deepen their knowledge of God, history, and our world (the virtue of Wisdom) and we immerse them in a Christian view of all things»²². Education, in other words, rests in the Christian pursuit of virtue, and the path to virtue leads through grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, logic and moral philosophy, just as Piccolomini suggested.

²¹ <https://liveoakclassical.com/>, accessed 12 June 2018.

²² <https://classicalchristian.org/the-mission-of-the-accs/>, accessed 12 June 2018. The irregular capitalization of 'virtues' is *sic*.

In the end this neglected treatise turns out to be more important than we had thought, for it leads us to an understanding of the intellectual foundations of Renaissance culture and society while simultaneously providing a pattern for an education that in many ways works as well now as it did five hundred years ago.

ABSTRACT

Questo articolo cerca di determinare perché il *De liberorum educatione* di Piccolomini sia stato così influente e quale rilevanza potrebbe avere per la crisi educativa di oggi. Perché il *De liberorum educatione* tratta alcuni argomenti a lungo e altri solo per poco o per niente? Che cosa è effettivamente successo in un'aula le cui attività derivano da questo curriculum? Che tipo di sistema sociale ed educativo costituì un'educazione come questa progettata per supportare? E che importanza ha ancora tutto questo? Dopo aver fornito un breve riassunto dei contenuti del trattato, rispondo in ordine a ciascuna di queste domande, nel tentativo di dimostrare che il trattato di Piccolomini è stato progettato per servire da modello per il self-fashioning umanistico, una sorta di manuale su come ottenere i mezzi necessari al vivere bene e posizionarsi con successo in un mondo in evoluzione in cui erano richieste nuove abilità per ottenere lavori come quelli che lo stesso Piccolomini deteneva.

This article seeks to determine why Piccolomini's *De liberorum educatione* was so influential in its own time and what relevance it might have for today's educational crisis. Why does *De liberorum educatione* treat some subjects at length and others only briefly or not at all? What actually went on in a classroom whose activities derive from this curriculum? What kind of social and educational system was an education like this designed to support? And what relevance does all this still have today? After providing a brief summary of the contents of the treatise, I answer each of these questions in turn, in an effort to show that Piccolomini's treatise was designed to serve as a blueprint for humanist self-fashioning, a sort of manual on how to gain the skills that were necessary both to live well and to position one's self successfully in a changing world in which new abilities were required to obtain jobs like those that Piccolomini himself held.

KEYWORDS: education; humanism; commonplace; self-fashioning; classical school.

Craig Kallendorf
Department of International Studies, Texas A&M University
kallendrf@tamu.edu