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Рецепции платонизма в европейском Ренессансе

Iurii Rudnev

Renaissance Neo-Platonic Artist as an Ideal Type: Benvenuto Cellini and His *Vita**

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Abstract. This paper is based on the idea that some Renaissance artists deliberately reinforced the exclusive nature of both their creative process (*ingegno*) and the masterpieces they produced by using elements of Platonic philosophy in order to appropriate the representation of the Divine beauty by *disegno*. It is no discovery that these artists were the first who intentionally elevated their craftsmanship to a new socio-cultural level; however, an important question needs to be asked. How and through what means did artisans understand their own transformation into artists? I will demonstrate that these means were adopted from Ficino's *Commentary* on Plato's *Symposium*. Ficino's interpretation of *amor Socraticus* and the diabolic/divine frenzies had a particularly strong influence on Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571) and later on became viewed as intrinsic parts of an artistic personality. Thus, Cellini designed an outstandingly long

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autofiction to legitimize the transcendent origins of his foremost masterpiece, *Perseus*, and to show off the exceptional learnedness of his *maniera*. Cellini's *Vita* and other literary works, which have not been studied from such an angle, make it possible to substantiate the "Renaissance Neo-Platonic artist" as an ideal type. This model would explain the self-representations of many prominent Florentine artists of the 15th–16th c., namely, Botticelli, Raphael, Michelangelo, Pontormo, Bronzino, Cellini, and others.
Keywords: Renaissance Platonism, Marsilio Ficino, Benedetto Varchi, Benvenuto Cellini, melancholy genius.

I. Renaissance Artists and Renaissance Platonism

The phrase "Platonic artist," what does it really mean? Is it just a scarecrow from Plato's *Republic*, or perhaps a "real" historical entity?[1]

The basic historiography of the Renaissance Platonism has been established around the middle of the previous century, and, nearly simultaneously, Italian artists inspired by those ideas have been identified, yet still nobody dares to call them by this "title."[2] Although the scholarly understanding of the Renaissance has been hotly contested and reconsidered by the 2000s, the list of these artists, introduced by Panofsky, has remained unchanged. The recent scholars rather closely examine the masterpieces of the cohort defined long ago.[3]

[1] This rare concept, as used in the literature (I checked the terms "Platonic artist" and "Neoplatonic artist," as well as their Italian equivalents), refers back to Plato's *Republic* discourse. In a few other cases, it intuitively characterizes the Florentine artists (Botticelli, Michelangelo, Bronzino, and others), although Erwin Panofsky, whose studies are the inception of this intuition, originally avoided using it in an essentialist way.

[2] The scholars who laid the foundations are still famous, their surnames have already become the hallmarks of scholarly traditions: Panofsky, Saxl, Gombrich, Kristeller, D.P. Walker, and Yates. In this essay, along with the concept "Renaissance Platonism," I use the term "Neo-Platonism" 1) referring to Panofsky's and Gombrich's conclusions and 2) to accentuate the particular historico-cultural situation of Renaissance Italy, which gave birth to a particular type of art and artist, although I understand clearly that it is not an "aboriginal" concept.

[3] Among others, the voluminous collective work *The Artist as Reader* (2013), which I refer to later, is an example of this kind of scholarship. (Damm, Thimann, & Zittel 2013) Curiously, the scientific evolution of the Renaissance studies seems to have de-

The chapters "The Neoplatonic Movement in Florence and North Italy" and "The Neoplatonic Movement and Michelangelo" in the *Studies in Iconology* (1939) by Erwin Panofsky mention Botticelli, Raphael, Mantegna, Michelangelo, Piero di Cosimo, Andrea Riccio, Bandinelli, Vasari, Bronzino, Sebastiano del Piombo, Veronese with the members of his workshop, Lomazzo and Zuccari, as the artists who either depicted Platonic themes or communicated them to each other.[4] If they were united by this common discourse, why not define the latter more precisely? However, no such attempt has been made so far.

Two obstacles in studying the Renaissance Neo-Platonic artists as a group, and possible ways to overcome them

This lack of precise definition is perhaps due to the eternal problem formulated by Gombrich in 1948:

> Unfortunately we still know too little about the way in which philosophical ideas percolate, the way in which they are first distilled into slogans which in turn direct the attitude of men towards certain values and standards.[5]

In the previous decade, a similar concern was metaphorically addressed by Panofsky, in the aforementioned piece of work, regarding Michelangelo's connections to Neo-Platonism:

> The symbolical creations of geniuses are unfortunately harder to nail down to a definite subject than the allegorical inventions of minor artists.[6]

veloped deductively, from general to particular, against the views of Gombrich's famous friend, Karl Popper.

[4] Panofsky 1939: 129–230. He elaborates on the connection between the Renaissance Neo-Platonism and Renaissance artists further in his work *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (1960), esp. in Chapter IV, "*Rinascimento dell'Antichità*: The Fifteenth Century".

[5] Gombrich 1948: 184.

[6] Panofsky 1939: 228.

The most ambiguous concept legitimizing Panofsky's claim for *non liquet* seems to be "genius". However, in so far as many Renaissance artists perceived the origin of their ingegno to be Divine, or at least promoted this idea, there hardly were any "minor artists," or non-geniuses. Moreover, the concept of "genius" is fluid *per se*, as it is determined by social conventions and intellectual judgments particular to every period.[7] Thus, drawing a more detailed intellectual-cultural picture might work better than just romanticizing the "genius" concept.

My essay will continue disputing that these are genuine obstacles. They not only draw artificial boundaries between intellectual history and art history, but also prevent scholars from distinguishing the "Neo-Platonic artist" as an historical entity. My typification of the latter will use the example of the famous artist Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571), whom scholars have almost always considered a "minor artist," but who in his own understanding was a "melancholy genius," and nowadays, paradoxically, is the hallmark of Mannerism. If his claim is placed within the framework of Ficino's concept of melancholy genius, perhaps the more recognizable image of a Neo-Platonic artist will emerge.

What can be gained from elaborating on such an ideal type? First, it would alter our understanding of the so-called "minor" artists who were less able to disguise the intellectual sources they used. Second, it would contribute to our understanding of the so-called "giants," binding them to the intellectual ground from which they inevitably grew. Moreover, it also would shed more light on the Platonic tradition of the 16th c. Although scholars claim the latter to have gradually deteriorated by the end of the *Cinquecento*, it might have just dissolved into the non-literary and vernacular discourses.

Could Renaissance artists read Ficino? If yes, how and where?

Coming back to the hardly known ways in which philosophical ideas "percolated" in the minds of Renaissance artists, a bit more extensive commentary is in order. Panofsky mentions several Neo-Platonic

[7] Later, Panofsky himself attested this together with other co-authors of the *Saturn and Melancholy* (Klibansky, Panofsky, & Saxl 1964).

works that could have directly impacted the œuvres of the Renaissance painters and sculptors either through being read or discussed, or, finally, directly communicated by the authors. The most significant of these works are by "the founder of the Neoplatonic movement in the Renaissance," Marsilio Ficino, in particular his eighteen-volume opus magnum *Theologia Platonica* (c. 1469–1474), the "most popular and influential" Commentary on *Convivium Platonis*, also called *De Amore* (1469), *De vita triplici* (c. 1480–1489), and his various other commentaries and translations. Additionally, Panofsky mentions "Pico della Mirandola's Commentary on a long poem by Girolamo Benivieni which is in turn a versification of Ficino's doctrine" (c. 1486–1487), as well as the poem itself (c. 1486–1487), and Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'Amore* (c. 1501–1502).[8]

Discussion of Ficino's *Convivio* continued in the 16th c. in Bembo's *Asolani* (c. 1497–1504), Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano* (1528), and Tullia d'Aragona's *Dialogo della infinità d'amore* (1547).[9] The *Platonica familia* also included such authors as Francesco Cattani di Diacceto, Angelo Poliziano, and Lorenzo the Magnificent himself.

By listing these works, Panofsky charts out the textual space for an iconological interpretation of the influence of Platonic ideas on Renaissance art for a period of almost a century. Scholars' critique of Panofsky's approach to Neo-Platonic artists might be summarized in Charles Hope's words. In 2005, the former director of the Warburg Institute (2001 to 2010) and specialist in the art history of the Cinquecento, said:

> To read Marsilio Ficino is not for most people a pleasure... It is all in Latin, for a start. It is in quite difficult Latin. It is extremely long—if you have ever looked at the collected works of Ficino... And it is fairly technical. No artist in the Renaissance, that I am aware of, would ever read it.[10]

[8] Cf. Panofsky 1939: 50 n. 53; 1960: 183 n. 1; 1939: 145. "There is a similarity between Michelangelo's vocabulary and that of Benivieni," remarks Panofsky (1939: 179, n. 24).

[9] Cf. Panofsky 1939: 146–7.

[10] Bragg, Healy, Hope, & Welch 2005 (the transcription is mine). An even more radical position is held by Piers Britton: "There is no correspondingly clear evidence that Ficino's work was known at first hand by those who wrote on the arts during the

This argument recapitulates Gombrich's disquiet even more pessimistically. In Hope's words, it seems that Renaissance artists were Plato's genuine artists who never could have grasped and then represented the true philosophical ideas.

Yet, Hope's assertion is obviously incorrect: already Panofsky's list shows that the Renaissance Neo-Platonic tradition was not perpetuated exclusively in the long and difficult Latin. Moreover, the Neo-Platonic current dedicated to the subject of love deliberately established itself in the vernacular Italian, beginning with Ficino, who himself vernacularized *De Amore* almost immediately after having written it: *Sopra lo amore* was recurrently printed during the 16th century.

In addition to the broad textual discourse, the fact that ideas can percolate through people orally, not only as written texts, should not be undervalued. The *Platonica familia* of the 15th c. was an "imagined community": the "Florentine Academy" of Ficino never existed in reality, as demonstrated by James Hankins.[11] However, in the course of the 16th c., academies became social networks that gradually united more and more Renaissance intellectuals and rapidly imbued them with certain ideas. Thus, the genuine "Florentine Academy" was established by Cosimo I de' Medici in Florence, in 1540. In scholarship, the role of Renaissance academies in disseminating knowledge has been underestimated, so there is a need "to demonstrate how deeply embedded these institutions were in the society, culture and intellectual outlook of the period," as Jane Everson and Lisa Sampson have stated in the introduction of *The Italian Academies 1525–1700: Networks of Culture, Innovation and Dissent* (2016).[12] Furthermore, I would call attention to the historiographical misbalance between the two Florentine academies: for the most part they have both been studied only as textual communities. What is more, the Florentine Academy that emerged in 1540 has

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sixteenth century. Given its esoteric nature and the fact that it was available only in Latin, this is not particularly surprising" (Britton 2003: 658).

[11] According to James Hankins, the word "academy" was used by Ficino either in reference to the *Corpus Platonicum* and work on its translation, or to his private gymnasium. See further Hankins 1990.

[12] Everson & Sampson 2016: 3.

been regarded as only a predecessor of the Accademia della Crusca, predominantly emphasizing its linguistic studies. However, if the literary production of some affiliated lecturers and artists is examined more thoroughly, it becomes evident that this academy, at least in the initial seven years (1540–1547), was fairly Neo-Platonic.

I argue that the new Florentine Academy was a broader and more stable intellectual network than the former one, thus it fostered the dissemination of Platonism in the second half of the 16th c. in Florence. It is precisely there where such artists as Benvenuto Cellini, Baccio Bandinelli, Agnolo Bronzino were exposed to the Ficinian legacy. The recent collective volume *The Artist as Reader* (2013), which demonstrates the various ways in which intellectual tradition has impacted artistic production, points out that those artists often learned some Platonic lyrics by heart and even competed in memorizing Petrarch's sonnets.[13] Besides having access to public libraries, artists often had copies of poetry and letters, including philosophical ones, in their private possession, and even carried with them the exemplars of popular books, for example Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano,* which contained Ficino's vulgarized philosophy.[14]

Furthermore, since artistic enterprise shared the social ground with other types of intellectual activity, they were organized similarly and often surpassed "the limits of autonomous authorial production," and even those of workshops.[15] For instance, Bronzino's approach to imitation, while collaborating with Michelangelo and Pontormo, transcended "rational" boundaries and took him to self-immersion in the paragon living through it.[16]

II. Benvenuto Cellini as a true Neo-Platonic artist

This subsection will demonstrate how Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571), the aforementioned Italian Mannerist, might have been a bridge

[13] Petrarch was a Platonic poet, for instance, according to Benedetto Varchi.

[14] See, e.g. Damm, Thimann & Zittel 2013: 78–79.

[15] Campbell 2014: 196–197.

[16] Ibid.: 218.

between the 15th c. and 16th c. Neo-Platonic revivals in Florence, as well as between the two corresponding groups of the Neo-Platonic artists listed by Panofsky (the earlier included Boccaccio, Leonardo, Michelangelo, and the later, Bronzino, Pontormo, Cellini). Thus, by contrasting Cellini's Neo-Platonic self-representations with some elements of that of Michelangelo, one can distill the "ideal type" of a Neo-Platonic artist.

Scholars agree that Michelangelo's case was crucial for all the Mannerists. This artist had outstanding characteristics: incredible fame, exceptional duration of life (he witnessed the two Florentine academies), and his commonly agreed upon exposure to Platonism. Benvenuto Cellini, on the other hand, is much more exceptional. One reason for this is his alleged indifference to intellectual discourse, despite his extensive literary work. His most prominent work is his famous life writing, the *Vita*, created between 1558 and c. 1567 while he was under house arrest after being condemned for sodomy.[17]

My hypothesis is that this voluminous autofiction demonstrates Cellini's complex understanding of the various contemporary intellectual traditions, the most prominent being the Platonic one. The will to refashion his own life in accordance with Platonism might have been due to his attempt to be reinstated at the Florentine Academy. He, together with Bandinelli, Bronzino, and Pontormo, used to attend it, but they all were dismissed in 1547, due to "radical" and "authoritarian reform".[18]

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[17] Full title: *La Vita di Benvenuto di Maestro Giovanni Cellini fiorentino, scritta, per lui medesimo, in Firenze* (Engl.: *The Life of Benvenuto, son of master Giovanni Cellini, written by himself in Florence*), or simply the *Life* or *Vita*. I prefer not using such a theoretically biased concept as "autobiography," as the Cellinian work radically differs from the autobiographical genre which appeared later, in the modern period. The *Vita* is better described by using the notions "spiritual exercises," "techniques of the Self," or "self-fashioning". See further: Foucault 1986; Greenblatt 1980. Quoting from the *Vita*, I use the English translation of J.C. Bondanella and P. Bondanella (Cellini 2002), instead of Symonds' one, which is widely quoted but outdated (Cellini 1910). Referring to the text, in brackets I provide the number of the *Vita*'s book and corresponding chapter.

[18] Simoncelli 1995: 510, 513.

Debunking the myth of Benvenuto Cellini's "natural simplicity"

But what about the famous myth that Benvenuto Cellini was a psychopath and a criminal? How can that be squared with my hypothesis? An outdated, mistaken, and truly Romantic view of the great goldsmith and sculptor still persists in the literature. For example, Ben Yagoda, a writer and science popularizer, in *Memoir: A History* (2009), describes Cellini's *Vita*, which is one of "the two most notable Renaissance autobiographies," as following:

> the first autobiography that feels utterly modern... In fact, the lack of almost any manner of reflection in the book is startling; it takes place almost entirely on the surface of events, as perhaps one should expect from a sculptor.[19]

However, thanks to Paolo Rossi, the myth of the "natural simplicity" of the *Vita*, which relies on the 1728 printed edition, was substantially debunked by 1998. By carefully studying the manuscripts—the "preprint," or *bella copia,* and the penultimate version that survived only on pages glued to the former—Rossi concludes that, first, the original text was substantially revised many times, and, second, it could have by no means resulted from spontaneous dictation as Cellini asserts. The *bella copia* consists of 1019 pages and has a very sophisticated structure; in addition, it "is set out neatly—with wide, even margins on each page—by hands that were quite definitely not working at speed".[20] Moreover, Rossi points out that a "deep personal religious crisis, compounded by professional disappointment, disillusionment, and disgrace," intensified the process of writing.[21] That mental state surely impacted Cellini. The author in the 1560s was impoverished, and thus could only acquire relatively cheap marble—in the *Vita*, though, he mitigates his miseries by treating them as opportunities for self-improvement and greater freedom.[22]

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[19] Yagoda 2009: 37.

[20] Rossi 1998: 59.

[21] Ibid.: 60.

[22] Cole 2004: 64–65.

Besides the *Vita*, Cellini's literary production includes various sonnets and treatises. In the Romantic scholarly paradigm, they were either ignored or interpreted in a commiserating way—as simple speculations of poor quality. However, the groundbreaking *Benvenuto Cellini: Sculptor, Goldsmith, Writer* (2004) changed many elements of this misleading picture. The editors of "the first anthology in English of the great Italian Renaissance artist and autobiographer" have done a truly great work in delineating the more considerate perspective.[23] Here, Rossi also redefined the role of the *Trattati* (1568), concluding that they embodied Cellini's "intention to refashion himself from sculptor/goldsmith into a courtly *erudito*".[24] Moreover, since it was his only book that was printed in his lifetime, he self-censored it significantly to put it in accord with the political situation.[25]

Cellini and the most "noble" and "wonderful School" (1545–1547)

Still, the most neglected yet striking feature of Cellini's biography is his recurrent participation in Renaissance intellectual life, at least as presented in the *Vita*; although, considering the Italian communities of *literati*, this can be supported only by a single semi-official record. The Florentine *Marucelliana* library contains the *Annals of the Umidi*, later *Fiorentina*, which document the Florentine Academy's activities. In the second volume of the *Annals*, there's a record that on Thursday, April 23, 1545, the Academy's *consolo*, i.e., its temporary leader and Cellini's close friend, Benedetto Varchi, gave a private lecture on Petrarch's poetry, in particular, on his *canzone* devoted to the appraisal of Laura's eyes.[26] "After that, the new academicians were nominated," and the name of Benvenuto Cellini is listed amongst them.

This record by now has been viewed as so unimportant that the corresponding remarks about the Academy, given in Cellini's *Vita*, have never been contextualized, though they express his highest respect and

[23] Gallucci & Rossi 2004: 1.

[24] Rossi 2004: 174, 188.

[25] See further Gamberini 2013.

[26] Annali, Vol. 2 (B.III.53), fol. 25r.

enthusiasm. The most characteristic remark refers to the initial period of the Academy's intellectual activity (1540–1547) and to Cosimo I's approval of *Perseus* in 1545 and, apparently, to the *paragone* debate (1547) to which he contributed a small treatise and, from his own words, was also going to contribute *Perseus* itself. The latter debate about which of the arts was the most noble, was kicked off by Benedetto Varchi's lectures on Michelangelo that afterwards were contested by the answers of Pontormo, Bronzino, Vasari, Antonio da Sangallo, Michelangelo himself, and some others.[27]

Cellini describes these times as following (*Vita* 2.53):

> Poor, unlucky creature that I was, wanting to demonstrate to this wonderful School that, although I had been away from it, I was skilled in other crafts besides that branch which this School did not esteem very highly, I answered my Duke that I would most willingly execute for him, either in marble or in bronze, a large statue for that fine piazza of his.[28]

In another place, he recollects how angry the "brilliant School" was at his personal enemy Baccio Bandinelli when he misused the piece of marble primarily designated to another member, Michelangelo: "[the School] is still crying out about the great wrong that was done to that beautiful marble" (*Vita* 2.99).

Cellini's friend Benedetto Varchi, who many scholars believe to have been without a doubt an Aristotelian, and who introduced the sculptor to the Florentine Academy and started the *paragone* debate, was neither a simple nor a univocal humanist. I would not dare to call him the "grey eminence" of the Florentine Platonism in the 1540s, but his home library demonstrates the rich selection of Neo-Platonic and even Hermetic works.[29] Furthermore, in his early lectures given in the

[27] This debate is considered as one of the first where "artists were no longer humble craftsmen but cultivated *letterati* whose opinions were worth having" (Hecht 1984: 125).

[28] "Although I had been away from it, I was skilled in other crafts" may refer to his works for Francis I in Fontainebleau when Cellini just began to cast from bronze.

[29] The question of how Varchi uses Marsilio Ficino's theory is a complicated one

Florentine Academy, he used Ficino's theory to develop his views of Petrarch's sonnets. Also, it is worth noting that when asked by Tullia d'Aragona "Have you read Plato and *Convivio* of the maestro Marsilio Ficino?" in her dialogue, *On the infinity of Love* (1547), Varchi answers with sophistication, "Yes, madam. And they both, I think, are wonderful: but I like Filo more."[30]

However, this begs the question of how intense could Cellini's exposure to the Platonic influence have been, both as Varchi's friend and as member of the Florentine Academy? Many textual parallels of his literary contribution whether to the Renaissance Platonic tradition or to the Platonic concerns of the Academy suggest that it was fairly deep.

Cellini's "Savage Philosophy and Poetry"

Cellini's *Trattati* describe in length the technical aspects of the arts, but along with his more humanist approach in the *paragone* debate, there are two small philosophical and even esoteric writings, the *Dreams*. Composed c. 1560 (i.e. while he was writing the *Vita*) these works have also received little attention by scholars. They, however, comprehensively testify to Cellini's transformation to *letterato* and perhaps to his attempt to come back to the Florentine Academy (possibly in the role of a lecturer?).[31]

Introducing his "Philosophy," he says modestly:

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and will be partly considered later on. While Panofsky calls him "the great Platonist," there is the more balanced designation "Ficinian Aristotelian" (Devlieger 2004–2005: 107). In addition to Ficino's own writings, such as the two versions of the *Convivium*, Varchi kept *Poimandres*, the Areopagite's *De mystica theologia*, *De divinis nominibus*, Iamblichus's *De mysteris Aegyptiorum, Chaldeorum, Assyriorum*, Psellus's *Introductio in sex philosophiae modos* and *De Daemonibus*, Macrobius's *Saturnalia*; Nostradamus' *Orus Apollo*, various treatises of Ramon Llull, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, Girolamo Fracastoro, et al. (cf. Siekiera 2009: 343–348).

[30] "Filo" is Leone Ebreo who composed the *Dialogues of Love* (1501–1502); quoted in Italian in Kyunghee 2008: 90.

[31] Diletta Gamberini, the editor of Cellini's *Rime*, characterizes them as having "the great importance in the literary production of Benvenuto Cellini"; Dubard de Gaillarbois points out their "manifesto" character, as far as the Savage Philosophy seemed to have been explaining his Savage poetry (Cellini 2014: 133–134).

> All people of any sort and language are born as philosophers and poets. Which means, our renowned Signor, that, born as a human, I am a philosopher and poet too. Though, as these arts are of many sorts, mine is not so exquisite because I have not been trained in it; and understanding that difference, I have put the name "Savage" on my Philosophy and Poetry.[32]

Comparing the structure of Cellini's *Dreams* with Varchi's lectures (especially with those of 1543–1544), the same pattern of narrative emerges: it begins with a sonnet, which the "lecturer" analyzes first by providing a general philosophical model, and then by explaining the meaning verse by verse and sometimes word by word.[33] For instance, Cellini starts analyzing the second dream by referencing the Aristotelian division of souls into vegetative, animal, and human, concluding from this that creatures can dream though their dreams are less noble than those of humans: "as more noble, human's soul has more noble dreams."[34] From there, since his dream happened at the edge of a day (in other words, "the golden dream"), it must be a "true one" or at least a "beautiful one," as granted with Apollo's glimpse.[35] Then, Cellini recollects the dialogue between Savage Philosophy and Poetry about the mystic Capricorn and Cancer.

The beginnings of Varchi's lectures similarly display careful attention to the soul and its characteristics. The lecture on "Painting and Sculpture" (1547) contains a passage explaining how a man can receive knowledge of angelic or demonic nature while dreaming. There, Varchi writes that dreams not only reveal the future, but also give real skills to the dreamer thanks to angelic or demonic support. In particular, according to Averroes' view, a person can learn in dreams the "practical

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[32] Cellini 2014: 135. Such *declaratio modestiae* is the rhetorical figure that allows an unprofessional to speak on behalf of the educated persons (ibid., lii–liii). In respect to the general Platonic context, it may also refer to the popular image of Socrates-philosopher, who was neither ignorant, nor wise, according to his own judgement.

[33] Varchi's lectures were all published in 1590 as *Lezioni sopra diverse materie poetiche e filosofiche*; cf. Varchi 2008 and Varchi 2005: 704–705.

[34] Cellini 2014: 145.

[35] Also see footnote 68 of this paper.

sciences," namely medicine.[36] (Cellini was certainly aware of the lecture's content, since his answer to Benedetto Varchi had been printed together with it in 1549.[37])

Overall, from these and similar reflections, Cellini must have recognized the significance and divine nature of *ingegno* ascribed to the great artists, such as Michelangelo and Leonardo. Moreover, Varchi in his several treatises elaborates upon how they were working "in fatica d'ingegno".[38] Cellini's awareness of this also finds confirmation in the way of how he, having reworked his letter on *paragone* for *Trattati* as a concluding chapter, expresses his highest opinion of Michelangelo and Leonardo.[39] Thus, to his treatises Cellini also attaches the sonnets where "the most ingenious men praised him for the bronze statue of Perseus and marble Crucifix made in Florence," to promote his own *ingegno*.[40] Furthermore, Cellini's understanding of sculpture's prominence among the arts, expressed in a sonnet, relies on the claim that the God himself was a sculptor, a view also shared by Varchi and Pontormo.[41]

Benedetto Varchi's Neo-Platonism in the Florentine Academy: "peripatetico pariter & platonico"[42]

The topic of the arts in Varchi's lectures had a quite meticulous development, which correlated with the popularizing vocation of the Renaissance academies. Besides the question of primacy in poetry, paint-

[36] Varchi 1834: 122.

[37] Varchi 1549.

[38] Barocchi 1960: 38.

[39] Cf. Cellini 1568: 60b–61b. He also talks about "il mirabile ingegno del detto Lionardo," and Michelangelo, who had "il bel modo del fare, che era quasi smarrito" (Cellini 1857: 226, 84).

[40] Cellini 1568: 62b.

[41] See further: Gallucci, & Rossi 2004: 24–25; 37. Cf.: "onde come mi fu scritto da uno eccelentissimo ingegno [Pontormo], che Dio, avendo a fare l'uomo, lo fece come scultore, non come pittore" (Opere 1834: 130). Also, Cellini, with the same *declaratio modestiae*, characterizes his own *ingegno* as "weak" (*debile ingegno*) (Gallucci & Rossi 2004: 25).

[42] Damm, Thimann, & Zittel 2013: 382–383.

ing, and sculpture, resolved by reflecting on Petrarch's and Michelangelo's examples (1540s), Varchi's later course of lectures, "Questions of Love" would be devoted to the peculiar art of court culture, which is the art of love, or *arte dell'amante.*[43]

For Varchi, those subjects were bound together by a variety of common threads, ranging from the role of the intellect to the exaltation of the soul through art, and the problem of contrasting beauty and grace. They also demonstrate how Platonic doctrine worked for Varchi when he approached composite and non-standard matters. I argue that, quite naturally, Varchi's understanding of love developed along with its vernacularized Renaissance tradition (which he himself would sketch later, in 1554) and, overall, stands within the Platonic framework, whereas the more cultivated and speculative elements, namely, the inner mechanics of the soul and the work of the intellect, accord with the elaborated Aristotelian tradition.

In a nutshell, this ambivalence manifests itself in two consequent lectures of 1547, given on the "Divine Michelangelo," "Pittore, e Scultore, e Architetto, Filosofo, e Poeta Fiorentino," in the words of another academician Anton Francesco Grazzini. "The first lecture was an exegesis of one of Michelangelo's sonnets that incorporated selections of over a dozen of his poems, while the second lecture compared the merits of painting and sculpture."[44]

The first lecture that attempted to resolve the question of why lovers suffer, using Michelangelo's example, opens with the exposition of a purely Neo-Platonic "ascent to the divine" possible for a man in love:

[43] Similar lectures were already given in 1540 in the Academy of the Burning Ones. The thematic scope of Varchi's lectures, as grasped by the intellectual environment of the Florentine Academy, is represented in the table of contents of their posthumous edition (Varchi 1590): "Della Natura; Della Generazione del corpo humano; Della generazione de' Monstri; Dell' Anima; Della Pittura, e Scoltura; De'Calori; Dell' Amore; De gl'Occhi; Della Belezza, e della Grazia; Della Poetica; Della Poesia." It is worth noting that the eight "Lectures on Love" comprise the biggest section of more than ¼ of the book; also, the subtitle, *Diverse Materie, Poetiche, e Filosofiche,* indicates the general category which the lectures of Varchi fall under in this intellectual community; cf. Cellini's "Savage Poetry and Philosophy".

[44] Carlson 2014: 170.

> According to the opinions and beliefs of the most learned philosophers, as well as to the truths and certainty of all the theologians... [man] can, yet alive and with earthly body, fly to Heaven and not even become an Angel, but nearly God... what is this instrument, given us by nature, a means, by which we can transform this potency into an act...? Without any doubt, this instrument is Love.[45]

"The wings of Love" can help a man to ascend to Heaven and to contemplate God with "the eye of intellect".[46] These metaphors are truly Platonic, yet Varchi, using them, constantly refers to the Aristotelian "potency/act" distinction and to "nature". Moreover, in explaining the verse of Michelangelo "The excellent artist has no *concetto* That a marble alone does not include With its superabundance," Varchi intentionally demonstrates the "extraordinary plasticity of the word [*concetto*], its fundamental polysemy" fluctuating between "a poorly elucidated Platonism and Aristotelianism".[47] In the context of the lecture, even the name "Michel Angelo" (*Michel'Agnolo*) acquires an additional sense, in so far as angelic nature connects the human and divine spheres.

Another striking example emerges in Varchi's reflection on the question of whether beauty can exist without grace in an answer to Leone Orsino (1543). Here, his argumentation divides into two propositions corresponding to the Platonic and Aristotelian currents respectively. While saying that beauty cannot exist without grace, he refers to the spiritual beauty described by the former (namely, by Plotinus, Cattani da Diacceto, and Bembo), whereas claiming that grace can manifest itself without beauty he is referring to Aristotle and his concept of bodily beauty.[48] Both lines of argumentation, as Varchi says, result from the "mysteries of love that are not less immense than the divine ones."[49]

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[45] Varchi 1549: 9–10.

[46] Ibid.: 10.

[47] Groulier 2014: 168; translation of the verse ("Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto Ch'un marmo solo in sè non circonscriva Col suo soverchio") by the same author.

[48] Barocchi 1960: 89–90.

[49] Ibid.: 89.

Overall, regarding questions of love, Varchi remarkably subdues the Aristotelian conception of the intellect in favor of Platonism in his conception of senses and passions. In full accord with Ficino, the first two out of the five exterior senses, i.e. sight and hearing, are the most noble, as they are situated at the top of the body.[50] Thus, they are almost incorporeal and can better perceive the genuine beauty and reality. Varchi explains further that because of this, "Petrarch, a true Platonic poet and lover, desired more than anything first to see and then to hear his most beautiful and chaste Laura," and accordingly "he was greatly displeased and tormented being deprived... of seeing her."[51] Thus, while loving, the human intellect is sometimes guided by quite bodily manifestations and should manage to co-exist with them.

Varchi's lectures display this hierarchical apprehension of beauty from the very beginning of the 1540s. In general, such fluctuation between the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition is characteristic of Ficino himself, as well as of Pico, who claimed that "they simply present different methodologies, but not fundamentally different opinions."[52] However, strangely enough, the truly Platonic interpretations, which during the period could not originate other than from Marsilio Ficino's influences, had not been attributed to his name. This seems extraordinary since Varchi knew well the textual tradition of *arte dell'amante*—it is coherently described in his "Questions on Love" (1554), after an introduction of the two famous Venuses, "celestial" and "vulgar".

For him, "Plato was first among the ancients who spoke of love profoundly examining its deepest mysteries"; then, after a huge time lapse, Dante and Petrarch rose up to the task.[53] Ficino followed the "vestiges" of the latter, and, "in his Commentary on Plato's *Convivio*, very compe-

[50] Cf.: "the mind, the sight, and the hearing are the only means by which we are able to enjoy beauty, and since Love is the desire for enjoying beauty, Love is always limited to [the pleasures of] the mind, the eyes, and the ears" (*Convivio* 1.2). Here and elsewhere, I quote Ficino's *Convivio* (or *Commentary* to Plato's *Symposium*, or *On Love*) from Ficino 1944, giving the numbers of oration and its chapter.

[51] Varchi 2008: 147.

[52] Damm, Thimann, & Zittel 2013: 376–377.

[53] Varchi 1834: 201.

tently wrote many things"; Varchi does not "even know whether [he] is worthy of judging him, affirming that he had demonstrated in this commentary more theory than all the others have so far elaborated together."[54] Afterwards, there were Giovanni Pico, commenting on Girolamo Benivieni's verse on love, Catani da Diacetto, Pietro Bembo, and, finally, Leone Ebreo.

So, if Varchi knew this whole tradition and praised Ficino enormously, why would he have hardly referred to the philosopher by name during the 1540s? To my mind, among some other possible reasons, it might have happened out of a confusion. Since Varchi sometimes cites Ficino nearly word for word when speaking of Plato's *Convivio* (he had two versions available), it might mean that, initially, he could not distinguish it from Plato's original works. In fact, Cosimo Bartoli, another academician, introducing the fresh 1544 edition of Ficino's *Convivio*, says that it is nearly equivalent to Plato's original work, yet even better as "Ficino has provided the best interpretation... which is in strict conformity with Christian dogmas."[55]

Benvenuto Cellini's Neo-Platonism: Socratic love, melancholy genius, and divine/diabolic frenzies

Recognizing Varchi's exposure to Platonic tradition, some similar cases might be expected in the literary production of other academy members, especially the artists since they had no scholarly education and hence could demonstrate trendy ideas more vigorously. Indeed, Cellini's "Savage Philosophy and Poetry" and "studies" percolated the *Vita* with truly Neo-Platonic images, characteristic of Ficino's *Convivio*.

To demonstrate that, I will examine several episodes where the artist presents his passions most Platonically, as I argue, relying on

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Quoted in McGinn 1998: 195. It seems to have been not only practical but also indulging: Varchi's *Inventario* lists only one original work of Plato, the *Timaeus*, more specifically, fragments thereof (c. 294v). Cf. the titles of Ficino's *Convivio* in Varchi's possession: "*Il commento* di Marsilio Ficino sopra il convito di Platone" versus "Marsilio Ficino sopra lo Amore, *o ver' convito* di Platone" (italics mine).

the melancholy genius teaching. Anticipating a possible critique of the precision of this attribution, I would like to point to another comment by Gombrich about the difficulty of interpreting Neo-Platonic images: "This doctrine... may hardly be capable of completely rational exposition, because it is by the nature of the argument an irrational doctrine."[56]

The first case, which finds many parallels with *Convivio*, is depicting the Platonic relations between Cellini and his fourteen year old apprentice (*Vita* 1.23; italics mine):

> Paulino was the most well educated, the most honest, and the most handsome young fellow I had ever seen in my life, and because of his honest actions and habits, his enormous beauty, and the great love he bore for me, it happened that for these reasons I bore as much affection for him as it would be possible for the breast of a man to contain. This tender love was the reason why I wished to see his marvellous face, which was by his nature virtuous and *melancholic*, brighten up; especially, whenever I took up my cornett, there immediately arose a smile so honest and so beautiful that *I am not at all surprised by those foolish remarks that the Greeks write about the gods in the heavens.*

In this passage, the classic representation of Platonic lovers is being construed: there are two men, a younger and an elder one, who respectively bear affectation for each other. They do not desire any kind of sexual pleasure and only want to be together, as when the young melancholy boy listens to the Cellinian cornett and Cellini just looks at his marvelous face pleased by music.[57] Moreover, to elucidate this loving connection, it must be remembered that Cellini fashioned himself as melancholy too.[58]

[56] Gombrich 1948: 172.

[57] Some of my colleagues have a similar idea that Cellini's allusions to the Platonic love might be ironic or even very sarcastic, yet substantial research is needed to test this hypothesis (e.g., what kind of "cornett" is Cellini talking about—is it a vulgar metaphor?).

[58] "Essendo io per natura malinconico, come io mi trovavo a questi piaceri, subito mi si rallegrava il cuore, e venivami meglio operato e con piú virtú assai, che quando io

"In the blood, therefore, we rightly place the fever of love; that is to say, in the melancholic blood, as you have heard in the speech of Socrates" (*Convivio* 7.7). This sentence from Ficino explains why Cellini's bosom was quite literally overfilled with affection, in other words, with feverish melancholy blood. Such love of two melancholics could become very dangerous.[59]

This intemperate affectation, in other words, the boiling humour of melancholy, can produce the instability of the whole organism: either of its soul, or of the body. Thus, as Ficino advises in *Convivio*, music becomes an aid and a release (*Convivio* 7.14; italics mine):

> the whole soul is filled with discord and dissonance; therefore the first need is for the *poetic madness*, which through musical tones arouses what is sleeping, through harmonic sweetness calms what is in turmoil, and finally, through the blending of different things, quells dissonant discord and tempers the various parts of the soul.

Here, Cellini very much follows the recipe of the philosopher: he calms his own and the boy's passions by the means of music. In this way, the earthly love, which in Ficino can lead to *bestial madness* (or *diabolic fury*), is transformed into its antipode, which is *poetic madness/frenzy* that further ascends to the divine love.[60] Certainly, in the Ficinian paradigm, all types of love support a man on his way to the divine.[61] Diotima's instruction, given to Socrates, accords with this idea.[62]

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continuo stavo a' miei studii ed esercizii…" (*Vita* 1.27) In other words, Cellini's "natural melancholy" was intensified by "studies," so that he had to take some "pleasures" to tame it.

[59] "Perhaps someone may ask by whom especially and by what means lovers are entrapped, and how they are freed… Melancholic people, in whom black bile dominates, are seldom caught, it is true, but once trapped, they are never released" (*Convivio* 7.11).

[60] See further Ficino's *Convivio*, especially the chapters "On Bestial Love, Which is a Kind of Insanity," "Earthly Love is a Certain Bewitchment," and "How Useful is Divine Love and The Four Kinds of Divine Madness" (7.3; 7.4; and 7.13).

[61] In *Convivio*, Ficino says that man's ascension to the Divine starts very materially, as it is possible due to the exercises with the tangible matters of the body: "So that Socrates might avoid this death, Diotima led him from Body to Soul, from that to the Angelic Mind, and from that back to God" (6.17).

[62] "I ask you, Socrates, to esteem other things with a definite limit and restriction;

However, Benvenuto Cellini truncates this spiritual exercise, as can be inferred from his irony about the "foolish remarks" of the Greeks. Obviously, it is a reference to Plato's teaching, most likely in Ficino's interpretation. Thus, Cellini's idyllic depiction of the classic Platonic love drifted to a more modernized version, which included a sister of the boy: a beautiful young girl "called Faustina who was even more beautiful, in [his] opinion, than the Faustina about whom the ancient books are always rattling on" (*Vita* 1.23). Cellini makes a bitter remark that her presence made him "play… music more than [he] had previously." Such a frank and explicit picture demonstrates how in the artist's imagination the traditions of Platonic love collated both the homoerotic Ficinian model and the iteration of a new, courteous one, delivered with a "dirty" innuendo.[63]

Although divine madness, induced by true love, or the daemon of Heavenly Venus, always has positive implications, the opposite type, *devilish madness*, leads to furious anger and uncontrollable behavior. Therefore, when Cellini encounters his arch-rival who spoiled his work on *Perseus*, he decides to follow and kill Bandinelli. This passage clearly demonstrates to the reader how devilish madness arises and then can get released. In essence, this description of the events is full of very bodily details—both on the side of Cellini and Bandinelli. First, Cellini loses control over his melancholy, showing warning symptoms, listed by Ficino: he cries, screams "in high tone of voice," and then rushes upon whoever he meets (*Vita* 2.66, cf. *Convivio* 7.3). The concept of virtue is the key for deciphering the "release". Only re-entering the sphere of ethics with the help of God could Cellini withdraw from his animal

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but you must worship God truly with infinite love, and let there be no limit to divine love" (*Convivio* 6.18).

[63] Though elsewhere, while mentioning the other apprentice, Cellini follows the Ficinian model further, by saying that not just music, but even his speech could heal a boy of some malady, presumably, melancholy (*Vita*, "Proemio"). Cf. "For Alcibiades said that the words of Socrates were sweeter and moved him more than the melody of the music of Marsyas and the wonderful Musicians of Olympus" (*Convivio* 7.2).

intentions and discover another way of revenge—by the means of his art.[64]

The following case, where Cellini uses the phrase "diabolico furore," occurs while casting the statue of *Perseus*. The artist was so involved in work and so dissatisfied with the unlucky events accompanying it, that he became "deadly ill". He began seeing visions of death and could not control his affects (*Vita* 2.76):

> As I was suffering these boundless tribulations, I saw a certain man entering my room; his body seemed to be as twisted as a capital S; and he began to speak in a particular tone of sorrow or affliction, like the men who give comfort to those who are condemned to death… to the servants, my shop-boy, and everyone who drew near to help me I gave either kicks or punches…

Then, next day, his servant brought him a lot of food, jokingly saying (ibid.; italics mine):

> Oh! Is this the man who felt like he was dying? I think those kicks and punches you gave us yesterday evening when you were in such *a fury* (infuriato), with that Devilish madness (diabolico furore) you showed [to bear], perhaps struck so much terror into that *immoderate fever* (tanto smisurata febbre) that it took flight for fear of such a beating…

A man, entering the state of diabolic madness, therefore, looks like someone possessed by demons: he is prevented from the true way of reasoning and behaves like a furious beast. Accordingly, in these passages, *diabolico furore* induces in Cellini's body such fever that he becomes wild. The immoderate fever can be relieved with sleep and good food: such recipes of dealing with melancholic madness we may find again in Ficino.[65]

[64] Furthermore, in the original, the phrase "vera virtute" is used: St. Augustine, for example, says, that having the true fortitude (*vera virtute*), "one should be neither too fearful nor too reckless" (Diekstra 1971: 81).

[65] In *Convivio*, Ficino barely develops this subject—in contrast to the *De Vita* (*Convivio* 3.3, 6.9). "Natural" moderation of melancholy by the proper food is supposed by

Though Cellini never ascribes any creative power to diabolic madness, conversely, he admits its destructivity and tries to calm it down upon the first appearance of the symptoms. Therefore, Michael Cole's conclusion that "to complete the task [*Perseus*], he had entered into a 'diabolico furore"' and, furthermore, transferred this state to the statue, seems to be inaccurate.[66] Cellini only "transferred" his devilish frenzy to the people from the workshop, whom he vigorously punched.

However, I do agree that magical art is involved here and that, as far as the artist is concerned, "the work, to be expressive, must be possessed."[67] Socrates, as Ficino says, was a magus who communicated with demons and could appropriately channel their energies, especially in the *art* of love. The latter, in a mystical way, is taught to him by Diotima in the last part of *Convivio* together with the divine *scientia*.

Here, the "nature" is, first, "body," being "an undetermined multitude of parts and circumstances subject to motion and divided into substance, points, and moments," and, then, the human soul, often distracted by the senses and distraught by melancholy (*Convivio* 7.13). Accordingly, the "art" capable of managing this disorder is the spiritual practice based on true love, which is directed by the virtues: only it can transform devilish madness into the divine kind. The latter, in turn, "raises the soul to the heights" (ibid.).

Thus, finally, I would like to recall the situation where Cellini's vision transforms into the highest type of divine madness, which leads, according to Neo-Platonists, to the union with God, or "the sun, which is the heart of the universe," or the Love itself (*Convivio* 7.4). In the passage, which logically concluded the incarceration in Castel Sant'Angelo, proving Cellini's innocence and later resulting in a halo above his head, the artist draws a very complex depiction of his vision

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"the regulation of the six 'vital things' (air, food, drink, sleeping and walking, evacuation and retention, rest and movement)" characteristic to the Platonic tradition of curing melancholy (Klibansky, Panofsky & Saxl 1964: 85).

[66] Cole 2002: 631; cf. "the goal… should be not so much to eradicate as to regulate melancholy so that it can better fulfill its God-given role as a material aid for the enhancement of human genius" (Brann 2002: 19).

[67] Ibid.: 635.

of Christ and Madonna, who appeared to him in the solar sphere (*Vita* 1.122):

> I saw the entire force of those enormous rays cast itself to the left side of the sun when the sun was left clear, without its rays, I gazed upon it with the greatest delight; and it seemed a marvel that those rays had been removed in that way. I remained there, considering the divine grace that I had that morning from God, and I was crying out loudly: "O, how wonderful is Thy strength! O, how glorious is Thy power!"[68]

Cellini was preparing this contemplation far in advance. First, composing self-propaedeutic sonnets, he calmed down the melancholy spirits calling him to suicide (*Vita* 1.119). Then, he "was adoring a figure of God the Father surrounded by Angels" and Christ, which he "had drawn on the walls with a bit of charcoal," and, as a result, he started seeing angels in his dreams (cf. with his esoteric *Dreams*) (*Vita* 1.120). This ritual may be considered very close to the mystery animation of an "idol," calling down angels and summoning prophetic visions. Therefore, the ultimate vision, which united the previous steps of the ascension on high, reasonably provided him with the contemplation of the sun, "because just as [it] illuminates and warms the body, so God provides to our spirits the light of truth and the ardor of love" (*Convivio* 2.2).

III. Conclusion

Finally, what is the essential feature that allows us to consider Benvenuto Cellini an exemplary Renaissance Neo-Platonic artist? I think that, paradoxically, it is precisely what, in Jane Tylus' words, sets him apart "from being a normative and exemplary" case with his project of "making of the perfect man" in his *Vita*.[69] The same project, I would

[68] It is not coincidental that Cellini represents the Sun thoroughly. In Ficino, we may read in detail how its rays penetrate the soul when it acquires "a pair of wings" (*Convivio* 4.4). Cf. with Varchi's metaphor of "the wings of Love" (Varchi 1549: 10).

[69] Tylus 2004: 21.

add, which has been carried out with the support of Marsilio Ficino's philosophy and ensuing from Michelangelo's example.

Even Cellini's other rival, Vasari, acknowledged its success in the *Vite*: if Michelangelo is described there as "terribile," the sculptor and goldsmith becomes "terribilissimo" with the note to further inquire into his literary works.[70] Thus, Cellini managed to use his "shot" quite successfully.[71] Among other artists who created *una terribilissima arte* and who also had, according to Vasari, bad but "seminal" humors, i.e. melancholy, are Filippo Lippi, Michelangelo, Rafael, and Leonardo.[72] Certainly, while describing the *Vite* (himself aware of Ficino's ideas) Vasari was not aiming at enumerating all the Renaissance Neo-Platonic artists (nor am I), but he deliberately grasped the particular genial complexity.

As evidenced by Cellini's and Michelangelo's examples, the most attractive element of Ficino's philosophy in the eyes of artists was not something extremely complex and inaccessible. It was a popularized exposition of the Platonic love (or *amor Socraticus*) with Socrates' image at the core. As Ficino puts it, "Socrates, whom Aristotle judged melancholy was as he himself avowed, more inclined to the art of love than other men" (*Convivio* 6.9).[73] The same image also excited Varchi's imagination because Socrates was "the best man in the world," "the most saint and wise one," "who, while deformed and wretched bodily, was beautiful in his soul," yet unjustly suffered incarceration because of envious people.[74]

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[70] Ibid.: 22; "Terribile" is not an equivalent of "terrible" or "monstrous" though. A more precise meaning can be described by such words as "sublime," "exalted," "transcendent," etc.

[71] Although the *Vita* became famous, mostly, due to the 1728 edition.

[72] Vasari 1550: see corresponding biographical entries, esp. pp. 651, 864; the other cases are few in number (for instance, Francesco Francia).

[73] Another lovely passage from Ficino's *Convivio* reads as: "Put the figure of Socrates before your eyes. You will see him thin, dry, and squalid. He was a man undoubtedly *melancholy by nature*, and rough, thin from fasting, badly groomed from carelessness..." (7.2; italics mine).

[74] Varchi 1844: 217, 239, 252, 265, et al.; Cellini, referring to himself, mentions several times that he had been imprisoned unjustly—he did not steal papal gold.

My observations agree to some extent with Wittkowers's conclusion that "the alliance between Platonic 'madness' and Aristotelian 'melancholy' postulated by Ficino… was this alliance that many Renaissance artists regarded as essential for their creativity."[75] However, I would elaborate it further saying that the Neo-Platonic artists, inclined more to *vita activa* than *vita contemplativa*, were imitating not an abstract concept but Socrates' example, vividly described by Ficino.

Both Michelangelo and Cellini, focusing on this image, carved their own ones beginning with the very bodily level, because to be "melancholy by nature" means to have a particular composition of bodily fluids and a corresponding sensitivity. Furthermore, even having a broken nose (Michelangelo) or being poor, badly groomed and sleeping at any old place (Cellini) seemingly reminded them of Socrates.[76]

Yet, Cellini was more elaborate in fashioning himself in a Socratic mould as he executed his "project" in lengthy prose, supported by Savage Philosophy, Poetry and other literary works. Thus, he managed to demonstrate to the reader all the possible correspondences of his *Life* to the performance of melancholy genius—from the diabolic madness to the divine one, which is the most esoteric part of Ficino's teaching and can hardly be traced in another artistic form unless the proper intellectual context can first be established.

From there, it becomes clear that *amor Socraticus*, characteristic for many Renaissance Neo-Platonic artists, should be understood as an intermediate step of their ascension to the Divine beauty, or even an *unavoidable path* to accessing it. So, at the top of the ladder of love, we would know that Socrates was not only "bold," "courageous," "a trickster," "a lover of wisdom all his life," and the best lover overall, but also "a sorcerer, enchanter, magician" (*Convivio* 7.2). Exactly the latter qualities made the works of Neo-Platonic artists seem to their beholders to be living lives of their own: as Gombrich says, "the true artist

[75] Wittkower, & Wittkower 1963: 105.

[76] See further: "A Socratic Satyr" in Barolsky 1990: 19-20; *in the prison cell*, Cellini's nails grew uncontrolled, giving him "great distress" and wounding him; "nor could [he] dress, because they turned inwards or outwards, causing… great pain," the "teeth also died in [his] mouth," etc. (*Vita* 1.119).

should not copy nature—he must ennoble, 'idealize' it by representing not crude reality but the Platonic idea behind it." Thus, statues become "a storehouse of the Platonic ideas".[77]

Although, in Gombrich's opinion, the corresponding discursive space soon changed beyond recognition, such explication of the work of *ingegno*, made possible by the example of Cellini, helps us understand the real meaning of "genius" within the framework of the Neo-Platonic art, which comprised the variety of specific subjects and the different ways to learn them. Hence, both in thoroughness of self-fashioning and in the resulting *terribilità*, Cellini could have surpassed even Michelangelo, as regards his contemporary intellectual culture and regardless of Panofsky's distinction between the minor artists and geniuses, which makes him perfectly fit for the role of an "ideal type".

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[77] Gombrich 1948: 187; one may read further about such "tricks" of Cellini's art in Cole 1998; 2002.

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