INTRODUCTION

Isaiah Berlin's reconstruction of the fable of the hedgehog and the fox, in which the former knows one big thing and the latter many little things, does of course admit the logical possibility of a species that knows one little thing. The fear of that possibility is at the center of this book, which began as an extension into the sixteenth century of the work I had begun with my first volume, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence*.[1] Further research into the hospital's archives and in the state archives of Florence began to reveal an institutional pattern that the Innocenti shared with many other charitable institutions during the sixteenth century: the subversion of its original charitable mission to receive orphans and foundlings by increasing attention to the limited choices female foundlings had to face when they reached marriageable age. Even if their destiny was not irrevocably fixed, they shared with the nun of Monza the consequences of an age in which the enforcement of the rule of patrilineal inheritance became less flexible and in which competition for inheritance seemed to leave both boys and girls with institutions rather than families as their last resort.

As a result, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Tuscany (and, for that matter, much of Catholic Europe) can be described as a landscape consisting of self-enclosed charitable and conventual communities responding, much like the urban world at large, to a monastic vision of discipline. However, this book argues that the process of creating a disciplined urban civilization based on aristocratic values, the "civilizing" process, also created throughout northern Italy (at the very least) "cities of women" in the same sense that Augustine understood the community of Christian believers to be a city of God: one in which *cultura femminile* added a dimension of femininity to

[1] Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1510–1536* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990).

the larger humanist program of defining what it meant to be human. In this sense, what Constance Jordan has defined as "Renaissance feminism"[2] was not an attempt to carve out separate space or to subvert discourse, but an attempt, often undertaken by the male writers Jordan herself cites, to amplify both the definition of humanity and to add more ample descriptive categories to the world of nature. The larger project of redefinition was in many senses a neo-Aristotelian project: a sixteenth-century reappropriation of Aristotle to understand the relationship of femininity and feminine roles to discipline and to Christian upbringing. It is not without irony that this neo-Aristotelian project deliberately aimed to reinforce that same noble culture to which Manzoni's historical novel *I promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*) alluded and which, in practical terms, continued to fill the terrestrial and institutionalized cities of women with more citizens.

Thus, one of the most absorbing difficulties of this project has been the unavoidable blurring of the distinction between gender history and institutional history. Indeed, there is now a plethora of authoritative studies on the history of gender and gender roles during medieval and early modern periods. In addition, the work of Michel Foucault has inspired among some historians extremely creative, even fertile, conceptions of the areas of intercourse between public and private life. In this one respect, Foucault, as well as those historians who have benefited from the discipline of anthropology, have rescued social history from the sort of schematic Marxism and epistemological pessimism that attempted to separate the lives of the individuals from the political and institutional structures with which, at the very least, they had to contend daily and personally, perhaps even more intrusively than the impersonal, bureaucratic, early modern state. Decentralized government, in other words, may have been a more powerful and coercive force in daily life precisely because it was based on personal bonds and jurisdictions that frequently overlapped. By consequence, even though historians are far away from what Fernand Braudel thought of as "total history," the blurring of public and private, of gender history and institutional history, suggests that the Enlightenment project envisioned by Vico and the French Enlightenment of the possibilities of a science of humankind is neither politically nor epistemologically incorrect. Indeed, Nancy Struever has been right to locate this project in the Italian Renaissance, the communitarian stance itself of which implies that the private self, the individual, defines the essence of humanity incompletely: that only confidence in social institutions and social

[2] Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

groups permits a full definition of "human." Humans, according to this early Renaissance model, derive their humanity from being in the divine image, a responsibility that implies individual action moderated by the associative *and* coercive nature of community and authority.

Although Burckhardt defined the major characteristic of the Italian Renaissance as individualism, the term works more easily for the sixteenth century than the fifteenth, not because men and women shed their associative bonds as the veil of corporatism was lifted but because the discovery of the individual is the discovery of the power to fashion actively the public self – the individual, in short, not the state "as a work of art." Here, then, is the key confusion engendered by Burckhardt's work: the confusion between individuality and privacy. Burckhardt's Renaissance individual was above all a public and a civic individual and an active individual. "God does not want to do all things, so as not to take away our free will or any part of that glory that belongs to us," argued Machiavelli, meaning that as for Aristotle, virtue consisted in repeated teleological action that approached perfection.[3] In this sense, to argue that the durability of corporative ties undermined Burckhardt's emphasis on the individual is to miss the larger link that Burckhardt himself made between the construction of the individual and the craftsmanship that went into making the state a work of art.[4]

Thus, the relationship of discipline to charity is at the center of this book. However, I wish to take great pains to define discipline, because Max Weber's concept of discipline in *Economy and Society* is that discipline is the vehicle for the "rationality and calculability of human conduct."[5] For Weber discipline consists of two parts: the routinization of human behavior through training combined with the "appeal to strong motives of an ethical character." Although Vittorio Frajese sees this as an ambiguity, it in fact has much in common with the classical and humanist paradigm of continued repetition of discrete virtuous acts that constitutes movement towards virtue itself. For Weber, for example, the defects of classical military discipline,

[3] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Opere*, ed. Mario Bonfantini, La Letteratura Italiana: Storia e Testi, vol. 29 (Milan/Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1954), 84: "Dio non vuole far ogni cosa, per non ci tòrre el libero arbitrio e parte di quella gloria che tocca a noi." English translation from *The Prince*, trans. William Connell (New York: Bedford St. Martins, 2004), 121.

[4] See the judicious conclusion of John J. Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 124–33, esp. 126: "Both Burckhardt's individualist self and Greenblatt's postmodern self are forms of anachronism."

[5] Vittorio Frajese, *Il popolo fanciullo: Silvio Antoniano e il sistema disciplinare della controriforma* (Milan: F. Angeli, 1987), 111–12, citing Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich; trans. Ephraim Fischoff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 2:1149–50.

traces of which he discerned in Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, were that it provided only for routinized training and failed to make an ethical appeal. Key to more recent treatments of discipline is the individual's role and the autonomy in the face of institutions of social control. If external institutions provide the training and the routinization of virtues, what compels or moves individuals to heed or respond to the implicit ethical appeal? What kind of social contract, in other words, is implied, and to what extent does the school, the parish, or the educational institution work to impose disciplinary systems?

Indeed, the mention of social contract is centrally relevant to the question, especially when one remembers that for Rousseau, virtue, that concept so beloved to Renaissance humanism, "is nothing more than this conformity of the particular wills with the general will. . . . We ought not to confound negligence with moderation, or clemency with weakness. To be just, it is necessary to be severe; to permit vice, when one has the right and the power to suppress it, is to be oneself vicious." Rousseau's claim that of his contemporaries, he alone understood Machiavelli, finds vindication in this quotation. Bronowski and Mazlish are certainly correct to cite in the same breath Calvinism and Catholicism as the roots of Rousseau's severity but neglect to tie Calvin and Machiavelli together as products of Christian humanism, as Christianized and, in Calvin's case, confessionalized virtue.[6]

The origins of sixteenth-century discipline, in which the schoolmaster had a precisely defined moral as well as pedagogical role, undoubtedly find their roots in medieval conceptions of Aristotelian order. Their fusion with Renaissance humanism can certainly be detected in Valla as well as such fifteenth-century *trattatisti della famiglia* as Alberti, Palmieri, Rucellai, and Barbaro. Even before the wholesale embrace of the Aristotelian corpus in the mid-sixteenth century, the period from 1490 to 1520 in Florence was pivotal in working out the implications of order, discipline, and society. Machiavelli's *Discourses* (written sometime between 1515 and 1519) themselves praise the Egyptians, who despite their warm climate and fertile soil managed to fashion an entire society around military discipline. Even Livy's *History of Rome*, the primary text on which Machiavelli's *Discourses* constitute a gloss, laments how, "I would then have [the reader] trace the process of our moral decline, to watch, first, the sinking of the foundations of morality as the

[6] J. Bronowski and B. Mazlish, *The Western Intellectual Tradition* (New York: Harper, 1960), 302–3. Rousseau's admiration of Calvin is clear in *The Social Contract*; cf. Rousseau: *The Basic Political Writings*, trans. D. Cress (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 164, n. 7. On Machiavelli, cf. the 1782 edition of *The Social Contract*, translated in Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings*, 183, n. 5.

old teaching was allowed to lapse, then the rapidly increasing disintegration, then the final collapse of the whole edifice, and the dark dawning of our modern day when we can neither endure our vices nor face the remedies needed to cure them." Robert Black, in his introduction to a collection of documents concerning pedagogy in Arezzo, also notes an important change that occurred in masters' hiring contracts at Arezzo in the period of the Savonarolan reforms in Florence: for the first time, these contracts specify that the moral character of masters must be beyond reproach, a development that ironically coincides with a growing preference for clerical rather than lay pedagogues.[7]

Thus, even in the late quattrocento, educational authorities began to forge links between political and religious discipline. Both Protestant and Catholic confessionalization contained the ambiguity implied in Weber's model: *The Spiritual Exercises*, for example, were exercises in noncoercive self-examination and self-discovery but governed and responded to the imperatives of coercion and conversion. In this respect, the coercive power of Church and State paradoxically amplified and extended individual repression but did so by mutual agreement between believer (or subject) and institution. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's previously mystifying paradox in *The Social Contract* that individuals who were unable to abide by the Social Contract had to be "forced to be free" is much more understandable in the light of early modern disciplinary systems. Rousseau had certainly not only read his Machiavelli but had understood him better than most: coercion and freedom of the will depended on one another.

Thus, I do not define discipline as Michel Foucault would define it – that is, as only the increasing encroachment of social and institutional order on the prerogatives and behavior of individuals. For Foucault, regimentation was the key to early modern pedagogy: power structures in schools reflected the vocabulary of military hierarchy. Indeed, this theme tends to run through French historiography in general and has much to say about the interests of French historians and their relationship to the state in the 1960s. Philippe Ariès, to take a prominent example, argued that the new "Renaissance" distinction between adult and child made things much worse for the child, who became confined and defined by increasingly coercive

[7] Machiavelli, *Discorsi* 1:1.4, in *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Turcov (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 9; Livy, *The Early History of Rome: Books I–V from The History of Rome from Its Foundation*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (London: Penguin Books, 1960, repr. 1971), 34. On the moral language of schoolmasters' contracts, see Robert Black, *Studio e scuola in Arezzo durante il medioevo e Rinascimento* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1996), 127.

educational institutions. Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* posits a similar "ideal" environment of the Middle Ages insofar as the mad wandered freely among the rest of us and only when they became the "lepers" of a more rationalistic age did they suffer the constraints of both physical and mental imprisonment.[8]

Yet it is certainly not wrong to see the genesis of the modern and even the totalitarian state in these developments. To argue that such development hardly constitutes progress in any meaningful sense of the term does not preclude the importance of tying the earlier to the later stages. Indeed, one might argue, harshness of the treatment of marginalized groups is inversely proportional to the actual effectiveness of the state. In a somewhat similar vein, as recent historians of discipline and confessionalization have argued, stable political orders are dependent on a highly developed sense of *civiltà*, a virtue appropriated by the aristocracy during the Renaissance and presumed in theory not to extend to other social groups until the Enlightenment. However, it is extremely important not to forget that the roots of *civiltà* are in Italian humanism, and in Italian civic humanism in particular. At stake here is the deliberate cultivation of self-discipline not in the sense of self-coercion or coercion by others but the kinder, gentler regime described in Erasmus's *Colloquies* as discipline through the republic of letters, discipline through appeal by positive reinforcement to the divine features of human nature – discipline, in short, appealing to "strong motives of an ethical character."[9] It is precisely because the prince's role is pedagogical that Erasmus pays so much attention to the education of Christian princes. Not very far apart in spirit is Machiavelli's *Prince*, whose study of classical example makes the prince fit to lead by example, and in particular to teach virtue by example.

In this sense, the present work is closer in spirit to the work of Norbert Elias, for whom the discipline of perfectibility linked the individual to the state in early humanist thought.[10] Virtue could be taught, and once again the

[8] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962), 241–68; Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 5.

[9] Erasmus, *Colloquies*, translated and annotated by Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 1: 88–108, in *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami opera omnia*, ed. J. Le Clerc (Leiden: Pieter van der Aa, 1703–06), 1: 648.

[10] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 42–178. Nonetheless, I am in agreement with both implicit and explicit critiques of Elias's work, such as those proffered by Dilwyn Knox, "Disciplina: The Monastic and Clerical Origin of European Civility," in *Renaissance Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Eugene F. Rice, Jr.*, ed. John Monfasani and Ronald G. Musto (New York: Italica Press, 1991), 107–35, and by Hans-Peter Duerr, *Der Mythos vom Zivilisationsprozess* (5 vols., Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1988–2002), esp. vol. 1, *Nacktheit und Scham*.

associative nature of teaching also provided the bonds that tied authorities to their subjects. Indeed, the closeness of "discipline" and "disciple" suggests not only totalitarian regimentation, but also correction. Correction concerned itself with the process of bringing the marginalized back from the edges and into the mainstream. This will appear a strange observation to those familiar with the increasing intolerance of early modern social policy toward the poor, especially the tendency of municipal regimes to throw them out of the city for begging and the increasing reluctance to provide direct subsidies indiscriminately. This will seem even a stranger position to take when one observes that it is precisely in the semantic hedging involved in modern-day "correctional centers" (that in fact function as warehouses in which any hope of correction has been abandoned) that permits the modern state to flourish in a much more totalitarian fashion than it otherwise might.

For this reason, it is important not to push the "kinder, gentler" aspects of discipline too far back into the past. Neither Machiavelli nor Erasmus would have been in the least inclined to diminish the importance of the pervasiveness of human evil nor the important role that secular authorities had in correcting it, by coercion if necessary. On both sides of the Catholic–Protestant confessional divide, Augustine's condemnation of the notion that infants were innocent found a sympathetic audience among moralists, and its implications were clear for household management. Discipline, according to the treatise printed by Silvio Antoniano for Carlo Borromeo in 1584, could not wait for the child to attain the age of reason but had to begin even in the crib.[11]

Moreover, the Tridentine Reformation appears to have marked some sort of divide, at least in Antoniano's work, from a liberal humanism (based on Quintilian and Plutarch) in which discipline was taught not by blows but by example and its imitation, to a harsher correctional regime that coincided with the expansion of ecclesiastical authority into matters that connected confessionalization to political obedience. Thus, Antoniano compared punishment in the family to punishment in a small city, in which the father assumed the role of magistrate, using the rod and the whip for the correction of children, "either for making them retreat from evil, or to change them for the better."[12] Further, where Machiavelli saw love and fear as a choice, Antoniano saw mixed love and fear as necessary for stable political order. More important, as Frajese points out, what was new about the Tridentine

[11] Silvio Antoniano, *Tre libri dell' educatione cristiana de' figliuoli* (Verona: Sebastiano delle Donne, 1584), 20.
[12] Ibid., 123v.

disciplinary system is that the family became the vehicle for confessionalization and obedience.[13] Even so, the temptations and wiles of Satan were omnipresent. For this reason, Antoniano argued, in language reminiscent of Elizabethan notions of the body politic, education should be a cooperative project between Church and State:

> Finally it is important that between the temporal and spiritual governor there should be the greatest possible unity and concord, not only for education, but in any other matter relating to the public good. The secular governor should remember that he must minister and provide help to the ecclesiastical governor just as the left arm acts in unison with the right for the benefit of the entire body. The more that temporal government makes itself conform to the spiritual, and favors and promotes it, the more it will be useful for the conservation of the Republic. While the spiritual governor's task is to make a good Christian, in carrying out this task he necessarily makes a good citizen, which is just what the temporal governor claims to do. This happens because the Holy Roman Catholic Church, City of God, placed on a mountain, and consisting of all those baptized and regenerated in Christ, are citizens of a most holy City and most perfect Republic, of which the ancient philosophers could only dream. The same is absolutely true of the good citizen and nobleman. Therefore those who distinguish between things that are so closely tied together, are in serious error, when they think that good citizens can be had under other rules than those that define the good Christian.[14]

This passage combines virtually every element of the complex fabric of discipline, state-building, and confessionalization that was the culmination of post-Tridentine reflection on the relationship between reform and the *respublica Christiana*. Such a combination is hardly revolutionary, however. The connection between education and governance was the legacy of the polis. Even in practical terms discipline describes a process that in many north Italian centers had begun well before even the first session of the Council of Trent in 1545. In Florence, this sort of ideology drove Cosimo I to undertake reforms of charitable and conventual institutions simultaneously, to bring them into the orbit of territorial and institutional consolidation. This process and this passage reflect another important social development that was the outcome of fifteenth-century humanism and its fortunes under courts rather than republics: the equation of the *buon cittadino* and the *huomo da bene*. The

[13] V. Frajese, *Il popolo fanciullo*, 55; see also Adriano Prosperi, "Intellettuali e Chiesa all'inizio dell'età moderna," in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, ed. Corrado Vivanti, vol. 4, *Intellettuali e potere* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), 248.

[14] Silvio Antoniano, *Tre libri dell' edcuatione christiana*, 26a.

appropriation of Renaissance humanism by courtiers as a means of defining their status as elect nobility is a process that is a common element in the evolution of dialogues and treatises on domestic economics and education.[15] It is a process, moreover, closely aligned with changes in inheritance practice that tightened the enforcement of norms of patrilineal succession, norms that constituted another form of preserving definitions of nobility.

As coercive as sixteenth-century theories of noble discipline might be, they nonetheless had to distinguish between what was effective and what might be counterproductive. In this respect, it is important to make a distinction between charitable institutions and prisons. Indeed, the Council of Trent worked diligently to eradicate abuses through which women were forced into convents against their will.[16] Obviously, as Manzoni's example in this book's epigraph shows, coercion could take such subtle forms that young women might believe they were pursuing their own free will when they were being coerced (and convents did serve, as we shall see, as charitable institutions, in the sense that what family structure and property could not provide, even in aristocratic families institutions had to supplement). However, Sandra Cavallo's exemplary cautions in her study of Turin apply more broadly: not until the Enlightenment, that age of great faith in the unlimited powers of human reason, did secular authorities employ methods of confinement that were truly and effectively totalitarian.

Female foundlings, for the most part, faced such a hostile world by the mid-sixteenth century that hospital officials no longer allowed them to venture out into it. The fifteenth-century practice of sending small girls into household service had ceased by the 1530s, prohibited on the well-founded grounds that such girls, even at a very young age, were vulnerable to sexual exploitation.[17] The only legitimate alternatives, marriage and the conventual

[15] For this important point, see Daniela Frigo, *Il padre di famiglia: governo della casa e governo civile nella tradizione dell'<<Economica>> fra Cinque e Seicento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985), 34. Frigo persuasively argues that this process is signaled in the domestic literature beginning in about 1540, when Alessandro Piccolomini translated Xenophon and reinforced in 1552 with the publication of his own treatise addressed to the noble father of a newborn son.

[16] *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Twenty-fifth Session, 17:228, cited in Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Legal Remedies for Forced Monachation in Early Modern Italy," in *Heresy, Culture, and Religion in Early Modern Italy*, ed. John Jeffries Martin (Kirksville MO: Sixteenth-Century Essays and Studies, 2006), 232 n3. On coerced monachation and patrician family strategy in Venice, see Jutta Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 29–38, 301, n. 229.

[17] That the Innocenti's boys were also subject to sexual exploitation seems not to have concerned the guardians of the Innocenti. When the Ufficiali della Notte had begun to take an interest in sodomy, in the 1480s and 1490s, adolescent *fanciulli* of the Innocenti were frequently implicated. I thank Michael Rocke for this information. On patterns of child sexual abuse in Renaissance

life, became increasingly circumscribed by the inadequacy of the dowries the Innocenti offered. Until 1561, the Innocenti provided a dowry of 150 lire di piccioli, which was doubled to 300 lire di piccioli because

> up to today the number of girls of marriageable age has increased quite a bit, and seeing that little by little the number still multiplies, [it is clear that] an impossibly large census will result, causing great expense, and running counter to the major purpose of this institution.[18]

Even at three hundred lire, the Innocenti offered considerably less than the average artisan dowry of approximately eight hundred lire, so that not surprisingly, even this hard-won concession had little effect.

At least one testator, Giovanbattista di Ser Andrea di Cristoforo Nacchianti (who would later become bishop of Chioggia), in 1518 had already seen this as a sufficiently pressing problem that his will provided funds for the construction of a convent that would house the Innocenti's girls who could not marry nor find a place in one of the city's convents.[19] The first building contracts were signed and work begun in 1528 on renovating the houses that stood along the Via de' Fibbiai southward toward the monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli. Another enlargement for the same purpose was undertaken in the 1540s, so that by the early 1570s, the Ospedale degli Innocenti finally had enough space to house its adolescent girls and its wet nurses separately. By the 1580s, nonetheless, the hospital's resident female population outgrew the debt-ridden institution's ability to support it, and women who had reached age thirty-six were transferred to the widows' asylum of Orbatello, which had been founded by a member of the Alberti family in the 1370s. As Richard Trexler has documented, the sixteenth century was an era of unprecedented expansion for the Orbatello as well. In Florence and Venice, as well as many other northern Italian cities, convents had always been refuges for the younger daughters of wealthy families anxious to preserve their shrinking patrimony.[20]

Florence, the reader is directed to his excellent study, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 162–3.

[18] Archivio dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti (AOIF) Giornale L (XIII, 18) fol. 80v, 10 March 1560: "che essendo infino ad hoggi in questo nostro spedale cresciuto assai il numero delle fanciulle di età nubile; et vedendo che di mano in mano e multiplica tuttavia più: talche se ne viene a fare una ragunata insopportabile, con grande spesa, et contro le prime intentioni di questa casa; et considerando dell'altra parte la pocha dote et i cattivi riscontri, et la mala qualità dei tempi che è corsa, et corre, la quale oltre all'altre areca particular difficoltà di maritarle, o monacarle."

[19] Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Diplomatico, Spedale degli Innocenti, 22 February 1517.

[20] Richard Trexler, "A Widows' Asylum of the Renaissance: The Orbatello," in *Old Age in Pre-Industrial Society*, ed. Peter Stearns (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 119–49. In Genoa, for example, Edoardo Grendi notes the increasing emphasis in municipal charity on the fate of young