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A humanist in the kitchen. Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudine*

1. Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudine*: a collection of recipes or a dietary work?

Bartolomeo Platina was a leading figure of the Italian Renaissance. In the course of his eventful life he wrote many philosophical, political and historical works, the most important of which were a dialogue on love known as *Contra amores* (1469), a treatise on the perfect prince (*De principe*) which he wrote in 1470 and reworked as the *De optimo cive* the following year, the consolatory dialogue *De falso et vero bono* (1472), the dialogue *De vera nobilitate* (1474), and a collection of the lives of the popes, *De vita Christi ac omnium pontificum*, dedicated to Sistus IV (1475). Despite the fact that these works played a key role in the development of Renaissance thought, only *De honesta voluptate et valetudine,* has been deemed worthy of a critical edition[1].

At first glance, *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* seems to be a *literary work*[2] rather than a philosophical one. It was first published in Rome around 1474[3] and, between the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, became hugely popular throughout Europe thanks to a number of Latin editions and vernacular translations into German, French and English[4]. The history of its reception reveals that it was a *hybrid work*[5] which was read in two different ways. On the one hand, as the title and the frontispieces of the vernacular translations show, it was considered to be a cookbook or a kitchen handbook[6]. On the other, as the Latin titles under which it circulated reveal, it was also viewed as a medical book dealing with dietetics[7]. It is as if the link between enjoying eating and maintaining good health, which Platina

made in the title of his work and elaborated in the course of his analysis, became invisible[8].

Why was Platina concerned with both the pleasure of eating and health? Why did he write hybrid work of literature that can neither be considered solely a collection of recipes nor solely a book on dietary matters? What were the reasons that led him to believe that the pleasure of eating had important consequences for human health? Finding an answer to those questions requires a close examination of Platina's sources.

The brief summary of Platina's life in the following section will help to shed light on his impressive erudition, while the third and fourth sections will show how he wove together a number of ancient and modern sources to create a new entity: a literary work in which the pleasure of eating is closely connected with the maintenance of good health. The sources which are most easily discernible allow us to explain the structure of his work, while the most obscure enable us to illuminate the philosophical assumptions of his ideas. This close examination will show that by drawing a connection between the pleasure of eating and the preservation of health, Platina developed an intriguing set of notions about how to live well, which I will address in my concluding remarks. But first I wish to emphasise another reason why Platina's work is so intriguing. *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* serves as an emblematic example of how a close examination of the sources that influenced a work combined with a careful investigation of its reception – in other words, a philological analysis – can help to clarify the theoretical contexts in which it can be placed and even provide a clearer grasp of its philosophical assumptions. In this sense, philological analysis is not intended to serve as a pretext for raising particular philosophical questions nor to veil any philosophical interpretation. Rather, it is simply intended as an aid to understanding the meaning of the work.

2. Who was Platina?

As shown by a famous fresco by Melozzo da Forlì in the Vatican Museum, in 1475 Pope Sistus IV appointed Platina prefect of the

Vatican library, but before being offered this secure position Platina had lived an eventful life[9]. Bartolomeo Sacchi was born in 1421 in Piadena, a small town near Cremona from whose Latin name he derived the pseudonym Platina. Between 1445 and 1449 he served as a mercenary soldier under the *condottieri* Francesco Sforza and Niccolò Piccinino, but gave up his military career to acquire proficiency in *studia humanitatis* under Ognibene da Lonigo, the humanist who had replaced Vittorino da Feltre as teacher of the humanistic school in Mantua. In 1453 Platina himself succeeded Lonigo and in this capacity tutored the sons of Ludovico Gonzaga, the Marquis of Mantua, who had been his patron for many years.

Thanks to Gonzaga's wife, in 1457 Platina obtained authorisation to travel to Greece in order to learn Greek but, after hearing that the Byzantine scholar John Argyropoulos had been appointed as teacher of the language (and moral philosophy) at the *Studium Florentinum,* he chose to study under him instead. He stayed in Florence until 1462, enjoying the patronage of the Medici family and mixing with Marsilio Ficino, Poggio Bracciolini and other eminent humanists. Comparatively little is known of his Florentine years, but it seems that he was influenced more by Bracciolini's view of nobility[10] than by Ficino's teachings on Plato. In 1462 or thereabouts he moved to Rome to follow his pupil, Federico Gonzaga, who had been made cardinal. His hopes of being chosen as the cardinal's secretary came to nothing, but probably through the agency of Cardinal Bessarion, in 1464, he became a member of the College of Abbreviators, a body of writers whose task was to draft bulls and briefs for Pope Pius II.

When Paulus II decided to close the college, Platina opposed his decision so forcefully that the pontiff had him imprisoned in the Castel Sant'Angelo for four months. After his release (in 1465) Platina continued to take part in discussions held by Cardinal Bessarion's academy, a heterogeneous circle of humanists who shared the aim of rescuing ancient literature to pass on to future generations. The academy was based in the Roman home of the cardinal, a Byzantine exile who made his extensive library of ancient codes and Greek manuscripts available to his guests. About that time Platina also became a member of the Roman academy, a fraternity of humanists gathered

around the *philologist* Julis Pomponius Letus. Letus and his companions had a reputation for being voluptuary Epicureans although, according to James Hankins[11], apart from Filippo Buonaccorsi (known as Callimachus Experiens), who held philosophical views that seem to reflect Epicurean influences, they had little interested in philosophy but instead devoted themselves to the study of Roman literature, inscriptions and antiquities. They appeared to have been more transgressive than the members of Bessarion's Academy since they revived Roman republican ideals and pagan ceremonies and thus raised the suspicions of the pope, who was persuaded that their interests in antiquity had deteriorated into heresy and a republican conspiracy against his life. Thus in 1468 Platina was once more imprisoned, this time together with Letus's other companions. Irrespective of the actual existence of the conspiracy, which has neither been proved nor disproved by scholars[12], Platina remained in prison until 1469 and was not completely rehabilitated until 1475, when Pope Sistus IV appointed him Prefect of the Vatican library.

The majority of Platina's works were written in Rome between 1469 and 1475. There is no doubt that the most influential was *De vita christi ac omnium pontificum,* a collection of the lives of the popes from St Peter to Sistus IV which enabled Platina to gain the favour of his new patron. This work marked a turning point in medieval historical writing on the papacy since, unlike Jacopo Zeno, who was the first to try to recast the medieval *Liber pontificalis* in light of humanistic ideas, Platina not only described the lives of the popes in simple, elegant Latin, but also supplemented the biographies with discussions on wars, negotiations, and effective government. What is more, he depicted the popes as heirs to the Roman emperors[13]. His analysis combined modern sources, including Flavio Biondo's *Decades of History from the Deterioration of the Roman Empire* (c. 1453), with a variety of ancient works, albeit without offering a critical evaluation of them. In spite of this limitation, his work enjoyed extraordinary success throughout Europe[14]. However, it was less popular than *De honesta voluptate et valetudine,* in which the interweaving of numerous ancient and modern sources was more apparent.

3. The structure of Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudine*: Apicius, Maestro Martino and Pliny

The extraordinary success of *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* can be attributed to Platina's systematic treatment of the culinary arts and dietetics. As we have already seen, after 1475, the work spread through Europe thanks to a number of Latin editions, which presented it as a medical book, and several vernacular translations, which treated it as a kitchen manual. To shed light on this fact, it should be pointed out that gastronomic literature flourished in Italy in the fourteenth century[15]. The earliest works devoted entirely to the subject were anonymous compilations of the practical knowledge of cooks who collaborated with authors writing in the vernacular. Platina's work can certainly be compared to the *Libro della cocina*, a kitchen manual written by an anonymous Tuscan author between the late fourteenth early fifteenth centuries, or to the *Libro per cuoco*, a cookbook written by an unknown Venetian author in the same period[16]. However, it stands apart from all these works on account of its more complex structure.

According to Bruno Larioux, Platina's work is divided into ten books that correspond more or less exactly with those of Apicius's *De re coquinaria*[17], a recipe book attributed to a Roman gourmet famous for his love of luxury, who lived during the reign of Tiberius and is, even today, the main source of information about cooking in ancient Rome. However, as Larioux has noted, Platina's book did not revive Roman cooking since the recipes collected in book six, part of book seven, books eight and nine, and part of book ten of *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* were abridged from Maestro Martino da Como's cookbook and presented in the same order. At the beginning of his work, Platina reveals that he had learned the art of cooking from the *prince of cooks* of his age,[18] and at the end of the recipe for a blancmange once again credited Martino as the authority behind his work and praised his extraordinary ability:

> *What a cook, oh immortal gods, you bestowed in my friend Martino of Como, from whom I have received, in great part, the thing of which I am writing. You would say he is another*

> *Carneades if you were to hear him eloquently speaking ex tempore about the matters described above.*[19]

Martino can be considered the first *celebrity chef* of the Western world. In the first part of his life, he worked for Francesco Sforza until, between 1460 and 1470, he made his way to Rome to cook for the Patriarch of Aquileia, the so-called Cardinal Lucullo, who was famous for his lavish banquets and opulent receptions. He then went on to serve the Milanese *condottiere* Gian Giacomo Trivulzio. Platina probably met Martino in Rome, where the latter wrote *Libro de arte coquinaria* as a technical guide targeted at a wide range of readers. In it he presented many original recipes, combining medieval traditions with Catalan and Arabic flavours. Although his cooking was essentially butter-based, his treatise records the presence of sugar, then considered the new spice of the century and used with, or in place of, traditional spices. It is noteworthy that he insisted on the importance of colours in the preparation of food and measured cooking times as fractions of hours rather than against prayers such as the *paternoster* and *miserere* thereby beginning to view cooking from a secular perspective and to take into account the aesthetic aspects of eating.[20]

The *Libro de arte coquinaria* survived in only three manuscripts, but its recipes became famous all over the Europe thanks to Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* and the *Epulario*, a cookbook by Maestro Giovanni de Rosselli printed in Venice in 1516. Unlike the *Epulario*, Platina's book cannot be considered a mere act of plagiarism because its author did not limit himself to giving a Latin version of Martino's recipes but, as his dedicatory letter made clear, in fact wrote in imitation of many Latin authors: not only the aforementioned Apicius, but also Celsus, Cato, Varro, and Columella. It is well known that Pomponio Letus had a keen interest in Latin authors of works on agriculture and agronomy and had started to write a commentary of Varro's and Columella's treatises in the 1460s.[21] However, the influence of Letus's study and the preoccupations of his academy should not be exaggerated, for Platina's references to the ideas of Columella, and the arguments of Varro are vague and infrequent. Moreover, a number of passages in the first five books (and also in parts of books seven and ten) of *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* were drawn from another and

much more common classical source, which Platina implicitly quoted in his work: Pliny's *Natural History*[22]. As Milham has already suggested, Platina's instructions regarding the planting of specific crops and rearing of domestic animals, as well as his thoughts on the geographical distribution of food were based in the main on the sections of Pliny's encyclopaedic work dedicated to geography, botany, agriculture and horticulture. Larioux has confirmed Milham's suggestion by means of a more systematic analysis, irrefutably demonstrating that Pliny's *Natural History* was the main source of the first part of *De honesta voluptate et valetudine*, while Martino's cookbook was the principal derivation of the second part of the work[23].

The use of those sources serves to explain the structure of Platina's reflections, but does nothing to clarify why he was concerned with the pleasure of eating and with health too. To shed light on this, it is necessary to consider the lesser-known sources used by Platina in the course of his analysis, which also help to clarify the philosophical assumptions of his reflections. However, before beginning such an examination, it should be noted that Platina also drew on Pliny's *Natural History* for a number of classical examples which he merged with numerous anecdotes on the eating habits and tastes of his friends in the Roman academy[24]. In this way, he confirmed that the classical past was viewed not as a remote and distant age, but rather as an exemplar and point of comparison for day-to-day life. This comes to light in an interesting passage that offers clear proof of Letus's vegetarianism:

> *Do not eat the meat of a she-goat or smelly he-goat. Eat kid, for nothing else is considered more nourishing among the domestic animals, for it has little indigestible residue in it, is easily digested, nourishes well, and generates good blood, balanced between warmth and coolness. This food is suitable to those living magnificently, like Augustus and Fosforo, but not for Pomponius, who praises the piety of the Pythagoreans and pursues the rural life.*[25]

4. Platina's philosophical assumptions: Roman stoicism, Epicurus, and Galen

Most of the examples and anecdotes used by Platina illustrated his belief that the pleasure of eating had nothing to do with gluttony or greed and should always be pursued in moderation. Indeed, he constantly stressed the importance of sobriety and temperance. As is known, Vittorino da Feltre, the first teacher of the humanistic school in Mantua, paid close attention to physical as well as academic education and encouraged self-restraint in all matters of food, dress and manner of living[26], but Platina appeared to have been influenced more by the Stoic view of food and drink than by the precepts of humanistic pedagogy. In particular, rather than reiterate Zeno and Chrysippus's insistence on strict simplicity in diet, he revived and revised the theses of Seneca, Musonius, and Epictetus, according to which the purpose of eating and drinking is to maintain health and strength[27]. Platina followed the lesson of the Roman Stoics who had deemed eating habits to be key components of morality and emphasised the need for nutrition to be oriented towards health, but on this basis he offered a theoretical justification of the pursuit of moderate pleasure, which is well summarised by the Socratic aphorism that *we should eat to live and not live to eat*[28].

Since Platina believed that the pleasure of eating never implied over-indulgence but always *arises from the right action*, he was able to maintain that it *leads to happiness, as the doctor's skill leads a sick man to health*[29]. In other words, given that the search for pleasure was subordinated to and balanced by the Stoic ideal of moderation, pleasure could be considered a basic element not only of a healthy life, but of a happy one as well. This was the crux of Platina's entire viewpoint: happiness implied good health, which in turn hinged on nutrition and relied on eating habits appropriate to the pursuit of non-excessive pleasure.

The moderate nature of pleasure comes to full light in the dedicatory letter to Cardinal Roverella and in the opening chapters of book one. The cardinal of Ravenna was invited to be the judge of a work that aimed to help *any citizen seeking health, moderation and elegance of*

food rather than debauchery[30]. Platina proved to be fully aware that his mission was dangerous because pleasure was a treacherous topic with dissolute and immoral overtones, and thus he made every effort to remove its negative connotations. To understand his ideas, it should be borne in mind that, in the early fifteenth century many humanists were involved in a controversial debate on the role of pleasure in moral life. Its strongest defender was Lorenzo Valla. In his *De voluptate*, a long dialogue between an Epicurean, a Stoic, and a Christian which was published in 1431 and revised two years later under the title *De vero bono*, he treated Epicurean doctrine as a stepping stone to the development of a form of Christian morality based on the belief that pleasure, rather than virtue, was the true good and ultimate end of human life since it was sought for its own sake. *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* had little to do with this view since Platina's attention on the role of pleasure was limited to a specific aspect of life, that of nutrition, and thus it focused on eating habits rather than moral issues[31]. Moreover, he did not attempt to harmonise Epicurean doctrines and Christian morality.

Platina's approval of pleasure seems to have been influenced by the rebirth of Epicureanism, but even though he mentioned Epicurus among his ancient sources in the dedicatory letter to cardinal Roverella, his analysis never dwelt on Epicurean ideas. His reference to Epicurus is nevertheless noteworthy because he went so far as to describe him as *the best and holiest of men* in the tradition of Seneca, Lucretius, and Diogenes Laertius[32]. It is well known that a few decades before Platina wrote his work, Poggio Bracciolini had brought to Italy a manuscript of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* (1417) and Ambrogio Traversari had translated Diogenes Laertius's *Live of Epicurus* and other eminent philosophers (1424–1433)[33]. But it is less well known that in his *De vita beata*, Seneca praised Epicurus for his *sobria ac sicca voluptas*[34]. The circulation of Lucretius's poem and Traversari's translation began to challenge the traditional image of Epicurus's voluptuary lifestyle[35], but in my opinion it was in Seneca's work that Platina might have found a view of Epicurus not at variance with the Stoic ideal of moderation.

To show that pleasure was part and parcel of a happy life, Platina limited himself to arguing that it contained no particular fault or vice

and insisted that his understanding of it was limited to *only that pleasure which derives from continence in food and those things which human nature seeks*[36]. This perception was opposed to two different, but related, ways of thinking. On the one hand, Platina rejected the traditional view according to which pleasure was evil and wrong because it is inevitably related to lack of restraint, intemperance, lust and licentiousness. This perspective echoed the Christian conception of gluttony as one of the seven capital sins, but Platina made no explicit reference to Christian morality. This was not surprising since he wrote from a secular point of view: as he stated in the dedicatory letter, he was a *layman*, familiar with the teaching of even *the greatest philosophers*, and deserved more honours than a brave soldier because he wanted to save citizens *by setting out a rational plan of food*[37]. On the other hand, he criticised *those voluptuaries, who pretend to be Stoics* and make judgements *with raised eyebrows* only about *the sounds of the words*, since they believe that things were not pleasant or unpleasant in themselves, but only in relation to a correct or incorrect judgement of reason[38]. The critique of the *Stoicidae*, which was developed in the dedicatory letter, was probably based on the second satire of Juvenal[39]. As in Alberti's *Profugiormum ab aerumna libri*[40]*,* this can be seen as an attempt to avoid a stern, dogmatic and hypocritical morality rather than as a rebuff of Stoicism, and it is therefore not surprising that Platina disapproved of fake Stoics but still adopted the Stoic idea that pleasure was a neutral term, neither good nor bad.

Pleasure can be considered good if it is moderate and arises from virtuous actions or if, in a word, it is honest. The adjective *honesta*, which is connected to *voluptas* only in the title of the work, instantly recalls Cicero's distinction between what is honourable and what is expedient. However, the very idea of pleasure's neutrality may have been drawn from *De finibus bonorum* and *malorum*, in which Cicero revised the Stoic doctrine of indifference (*adiaphora*), arguing that some things – including pleasure and health – that are neither virtuous nor vicious should be preferred to others. Not by chance, Platina referred to Cicero before Plato, Aristotle and other ancient philosophers who did not condemn pleasure[41]. Nevertheless, one has to bear in mind that Cicero's view of pleasure as something neutral was a commonplace

idea for fifteenth-century humanists, being present, for instance, in the letter on the highest good written by Francesco Filelfo to Bartolomeo Fracanzani in 1428. In the letter, Filelfo argued that pleasure (*hedone*) could be either honourable or shameful, depending on whether it was subservient to reason. He also held that when moderated by reason pleasure allowed man to enjoy that tranquillity of mind that Epicurus called *alypia* (freedom from pain). In the course of his analysis, however, Filelfo followed Aristotle rather than Epicurus and claimed that the greatest good was not physical or sensual pleasure but rather that of the mind. Since Filelfo was named as one of Platina's dining companions, Mary Ella Milham has included the letter to Bartolomeo Fracanzani in the inventory of Platina's sources[42]. Be that as it may, Filelfo's letter is certainly worthy of emphasis because it sheds light on the eclectic attitude that characterised many humanists who tried to harmonise different and often contrasting lines of thought[43]. While in his letter Filelfo kept to an Aristotelian framework, Platina's work developed its view of pleasure by moving from the dietetic tradition which was based on the Galenian theory of bodily humours in the Renaissance as well as in the Middle Ages.

The opening chapter of *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* sought to show that there was a correspondence between the four basic elements of matter (air, fire, water, earth), the four seasons, and the four bodily humours[44]. Blood, choler or red bile, black bile or melancholy, and phlegm or *pituita* (slime or rheum) were described in terms of elemental qualities, being composed of some combination of heat, moisture, coldness or dryness. In accordance with Galen's theory, Platina argued that a person was healthy if the four humours were in balance, and maintained that the imbalance of any one humour determined an individual's complexion, which was continually altered by the consumption of foods and condiments. Warm foods, for example, tended to produce yellow bile, while cold foods were apt to produce phlegm, and red pepper promoted choler. In more general terms, one could say that a healthy diet restores the balance of humours and this is the reason why, from Galen to Platina and beyond, dietetics is seen to have played a key role not only in preventing but also in curing illnesses[45].

Galen's theory of the humours informed the whole of *De honesta voluptate et valetudine*, since Platina concluded the majority of his recipes with a very short medical section in which he explained whether the recipe was healthy, was suitable for a phlegmatic or melancholic men, which illness might be treated by it, and so on. The influence of Galen's theory was particularly evident in chapter ten of book one, *On what ought to be done to ensure pleasure in life*, in which Platina clarified that:

> *Not all foods suit all people, but as there are various elements and various appetites of men according to their humours, as well as various tastes, so ought there to be various foods, so that each may acquire what is agreeable, flavourful and nutritious*.[46]

The quotation suggested that taste was a personal matter since it hinged on a specific and individual balance of humours. It also made plain that eating well meant not only eating in moderation but also eating in accordance with one's nature. Yet Platina did not dwell on this intriguing aspect. He limited himself to recalling general healthy precepts concerning digestion, such as advising readers not to swallow food before chewing it sufficiently, and asserted that those who carefully observed the strictures placed on them by the humours would have no need for doctors and would live a pleasant life. In the opening chapters of his work, Platina also explained that activities and physical exercise which help digestion should be alternated with rest, calling to mind the precepts of the *Taccuinum sanitatis*, a medieval handbook on health based on the Arab medical treatise written by Ibn Butlan in the eleventh century[47]. However, when he insisted on alternating sleep and wakefulness, he echoed the *Regimen sanitatis*, the Flower of Medicine of the school of Salerno that revolved around Galen's category of *six non natural things* or hygienic factors: air, motion and rest, food and drink, sleep and wakefulness, filling and elimination, and the accidents of the mind[48]. Platina's brief opening section on copulation can be related to the fifth of the non-natural things[49], while the final chapter of his work, dedicated to the alleviation of the passions that trouble human life, offered a brief analysis of the accidents of mind[50].

Even though in his dedicatory letter Platina declared that he would follow a Greek dietetic, both Milham and Larioux have shown that he depended on the mediation of the Medieval dietetic tradition. They have been unable to find the sources used by Platina not only because he made no mention of them, but also because there is a number of Latin and Italian works from which Platina might have implicitly drawn, from the *Flores dietarum* (1160–1170) to Giovanni Michele Savonarola's *Libreto de tutte le cose che se manzano* (c. 1455)[51]. In fact, as Ken Albala has demonstrated, early Renaissance dietary works did not differ greatly from their Medieval predecessors and continued to depend primarily on popular books strongly influenced by the *Taccuinum Sanitatis* and the *Regimen sanitatis*[52]. What is worth emphasising here is that Platina was so indebted to the dietetic tradition that Albala has included his *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* in a first group of dietary works, printed between 1470 and 1530, that highlighted the importance of correct eating. Within this group there is not only Savonarola's *Libreto de tutte le cose che se manzano*,[53] but also Girolamo Manfredi's *Liber de homine* (1474, better known in its vernacular translation as *Il perché*), Benedictus de Nursia's *Opus ad conservationem sanitatis* (1475), as well as other works of physicians who as a rule addressed their advice to a prince. Even though Platina was not a doctor and directed his ideas towards citizens, *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* cannot be thought of only as a cookbook because it was also planned as a dietary work. As such, it is based on the Galenian theory of bodily humours, which it combined with Stoic thinking, and tried to harmonise the pleasure of eating with good health.

5. Final remarks: Platina's view of living well

The dietetic tradition provided the theoretical framework into which Platina placed his reflection on the pleasure of eating as an essential element of human health and therefore as a crucial aspect of a happy life. Within this setting he developed an intriguing reflection on living well. What does living well mean? In their moral works, humanists answered this question in very different ways, indicating which virtues helped men to attain happiness. But instead, in his hybrid literary work,

which was both a cookbook and a dietetic manual, Platina focused not on moral virtues but on eating habits and highlighted how they could foster good health. By means of his impressive erudition, he crossed the threshold of the kitchen, a room generally ignored by philosophers, treasuring the lesson of Roman Stoicism, which he viewed as not being in conflict with the pursuit of moderate pleasure, and the teaching of medieval dietetics based on Galen's theory of bodily humours. In doing so, he revealed that living well concerned and implied physical wellbeing[54].

Even in the section of his work in which he seemed to get close to moral questions, Platina still in fact remained within his set theoretical framework. Indeed, as we have already noted, he dealt with the passions only because they fell within Galen's category of accidents of the mind. His analysis was clearly based on the *Tusculanes disputationes,* but unlike Cicero, he laid his emphasis on the effects that passions – described not only as *perturbations* but also as *illness of the mind* – produce on the human body[55]. He did not limit himself to highlighting that *when the spirit is troubled, it is necessary that the body also be tormented by some frequent and serious disturbance*, but went as far as to claim that *even death* arises from passions *when the heart is suffocated and oppressed, and the flow of blood and spirits is upset on account of fear*[56]. Accordingly, then, he concluded his analysis on passions by underscoring that they should be kept in check in order to preserve good health.

Since Platina was basically interested in physical wellbeing he gave comparatively little attention to the social and aesthetic dimension of eating. In his *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* there are some sections in which he gave advice on how to set a table in elegant ways[57], praised the beautiful colour of certain dishes and explained how to make them appear more pleasing to the eye[58], but they are not prevailing. Moreover, the chapter on play and games, in which he turned the biological necessity of consuming food into a cultural exercise and a form of sociability[59], is a brief digression between the longer chapter on physical exercise helpful to digestion[60], and a series of chapters on sleeping, one of Galen's non natural things. For this reason the differences between Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* and

Pontanus's *De conviventia* are of greater consequence than their similarities[61].

De conviventia was one of the five treatises on the so-called social virtues that Pontanus wrote before 1469. According to Amedeo Quondam, the treatise formed a coherent system of virtues in which *conviventia* was closely correlated to *liberalitas*, *magnificentia*, *beneficentia*, and *splendor* since it required wealth to be practised and was conceived as a virtue of honourable expenditure (*dispendio onorato*)[62]. *Conviventia* involved both hospitality and friendliness and was defined as the virtue of coming together in an atmosphere of familiarity to enjoy a meal. Like Platina, Pontanus dissuaded his readers from eating beyond repletion and extolled frugality by using many classical examples. Unlike Platina, however, he viewed eating as an expression of social aspiration, civility and splendour: he turned the banquet into a ritual of aristocratic hospitality through which princes, nobles, and the elite in general could communicate honour, affluence and power[63]. Furthermore, in this view, the sociability of dining was connected with civil conversation and thus was also a matter of etiquette and decorum designed to display a shared and distinctive form of moral superiority. In contrast, Platina neither thought of eating as an indicator of power nor insisted on good manners. To the intellectual elite, such as the members of the Roman academy and religious dignitaries, he simply made proposals on how to eat well.

It is as if splendour and the social implications of eating that Pontanus placed in the foreground remained in the background in Platina's work, and the reason for this should be obvious: Platina made use of a number of ancient, Medieval, and modern sources to develop an intriguing reflection, according to which living well depended essentially on eating correctly and healthily.

Note

* This article is a revised version of the paper I presented at the Colloquium Philosophers in the Kitchen hosted by the Warburg Institute on 20 February 2015.

1 B. Platina, *On right pleasure and good health*, critical ed. and transl. of *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* by M.E. Milham, Medieval & Renaissance texts & studies, Tempe 1998, henceforth DHVV.

2 See Milham's introduction in DHVV, p. 47.

3 The main Latin editions were as follows: Venice, 1475, 1484, 1487, 1498, 1508, 1516 and 1517; Rome, 1517; Leuven, 1498; Strasbourg, 1517; Cologne, 1529 and 1537; Paris, 1530, Basel, 1541. For a complete list see M.E. Milham, *The Latin Editions of Platina's* De honesta voluptate, in "Gutenberg Jahrbuch" 52 (1977), pp. 57-63. On the vernacular translations see M.E. Milham, *The Vernacular Translations of Platina's* De honesta voluptate, in "Gutenberg Jahrbuch" 54 (1979), pp. 87-95.

4 As pointed out by Milham, the *editio princeps* can be attributed to the Roman publisher Udalricus Gallus and was followed by a second edition published in Venice in 1475.

5 The hybrid nature of Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* is emphasised in B. Larioux, *Gastronomie, humanisme et sociétè a Rome au milieu du XVe siècle. Autor du* De honesta voluptate *de Platina*, Sismel, Florence 2006, pp. 53-55.

6 The German translations are the most interesting: see Platina, *Von allen Speisen un Gerichtes* (Strasburg 1530), Bartholomaeus Platina, *Von allen Speisen un Gerichtes. Koch und Kellere* (Augsburg 1530), Bartholomaeus Platina, *Von allen Speysen unnd Gerichten* (Augsburg 1542), the frontispieces of which always show a cook working in a kitchen. As for the French translations, *Le grand cuisinier de B. Platine de Crémone, contenant en soy la manière d'habiller toutes sortes de viandes, tant chair que poison avecques la vertu des herbes, fruicts, graines et autres Traduit de latin en françois par Derdier Christol* (Paris 1588) is emblematic.

7 See, among others, *Caelii Apitii Svmmi Advlatricis Medicinæ artificis, De Re Cvlinaria Libri x. recens è tenebris eruti, & à mendis uindicati, [...] P[er] Platinæ Cremonensis Viri Vndecvnqve Doctossimi, De tuenda ualetudine, Natura rerum, & Popinæ scientia Libri X [...] Ad Haec, Pavli Æginetæ De Facvltatibvs Alimentorvm Tractatvs, Albano Torino Interprete* (Basel 1541) and Platina, *De teuenda sanitate, natura rerum, et popinae scientia* (Lyon 1541), whose title recalls Galen's *De sanitate tuenda*.

8 For the scholars of food history, cultural history and gastronomic literature, the most intriguing aspect of Platina's reflection is precisely this link: see at least B. Larioux, *Gastronomie, humanisme et sociétè*, pp. 34-44; B. Platina, *Il piacere onesto e la buona salute*, ed. E. Faccioli, Einaudi, Turin 1985, pp. VII–XIII; A. Capatti and M. Montanari, *La cucina italiana: storia di una cultura* Laterza, Rome-Bari 2003, pp. 14-16; K. Abala (ed.), *A cultural history of food in the Renaissance* Berg, London 2012, pp. 14-15.

9 A more detailed account of Platina's life and works can be found in A. Ceron, *Bartolomeo Sacchi, detto Platina*, in *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. M. Sgarbi, Springer, Dordrecht, forthcoming.

10 Regarding Bracciolini's influence on Platina see F. Tateo, *Tradizione e realtà dell'umanesimo italiano*, Dedalo, Bari 1967, pp. 355-421 and A. Rabil, *Knowledge, goodness, and power: the debate over nobility among Quattrocento Italian humanists*, Medieval & Renaissance texts & studies, New York 1991, pp. 262-275.

11 See J. Hankins, *Humanist academies and the Platonic academy of Florence*, in M. Pade (ed.), *On Renaissance academies*, Quasar, Rome 2011, pp. 31-46, which insists on the differences between Bessarion's and Letus's academy.

12 On the conspiracy P. Medioli Masotti, *L'Accademia romana e la congiura del 1468*, in "Italia medievale e umanistica" 25 (1968), pp.189-204 and A.J. Dunston, *Pope Paul II and the humanists*, in "The Journal of Religious History" 7 (1973), pp. 207-306 and are still crucial.

13 On the features of Platina's *De vita Christi ac omnium pontificum* see the introduction to B. Platina, *Lives of the Popes*, ed by F. D'Elia, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass. 2008, pp. IX-XXVII.

14 See S. Bauer, *The censorship and fortune of Platina's Lives of the Popes in the Sixteenth Century*, Turnhout, Brepols 2006.

15 For a detailed survey of the kitchen manuals written in the fourteenth and fifteenth century see K. Albala, *A cultural history of food,* pp. 1-28.

16 On the former see E. Faccioli, *Arte della cucina*, Edizioni il Polifilo, Milan 1966, pp. 21-57; on the latter see L. Frati (ed.), *Libro di cucina del secolo XIV*, Giusti, Livorno 1899.

17 See B. Larioux, *Gastronomie, humanisme et sociétè* … cit., p. 56.

18 DHVV, 1.11, p. 119: *Novicomensi nostra aetate coquorum principi, et a quo obsoniorum conficiendorum rationem accepi, sit omnino, si fieri potest, persimilis*.

19 DHVV, 6.41 p. 293. The Latin text is as follows: *Quem coquum, dii immortales, Martino meo Comensi conferens, a quo haec quae scribo magna ex parte sunt habita. Carneadem alterum dices si de rebus propositis ex tempore disserentem audieris*.

20 On Martino's life and work see *Maestro Martino da Como e la cultura gastronomica del Rinascimento*, Terziaria, Milan 1990, and Maestro Martino, *The art of cooking: the first modern cookery book*, ed. by L. Ballerini, transl. and ann. by J. Parzen, University of California Press, Berkeley 2005.

21 Previously known only in fragments, Columella's complete treatise was among works discovered in monastery libraries in Switzerland and France by Poggio Bracciolini between 1414 and 1418. Letus's commentary on book ten of Columella's *De re rustica* was printed in 1471. In the earliest editions, Columella's work was printed alongside the works on agriculture by Marcus Priscus Cato and Marcus Terentius Varro: see, for instance, the *Libri de re rustica* (Giunta, Florence 1521), which included Filippo Beroaldo Senior's commentary.

22 Platina wrote a compendium of Pliny's work between his imprisonments.

23 B. Larioux, *Gastronomie, humanisme et sociétè* … cit., p. 73.

24 For this reason, for Milham and Larioux *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* is an important source to highlight the structure of Letus's academy.

25 DHVV, 4.24, p. 233. This is the Latin text: *Capellae nec hirci fetidi carnem ne degustato. Haedinam qua nulla inter domestica animalia potior habetur edito; parum enim recrementi in se habet, facillime concoquitur, bene alit, sanguinem bonum generat calido et frigido contemperatum. Hic cibus convenit laute viventibus, ut Augusto et Phosphoro, Pomponio non item qui Pythagoreorum pietatem laudat, et rem rusticam sectatur*. It should be

pointed out that Letus actually insisted on his moderate way of life to defend himself against the pope's charge of Epicureanism.

26 See W.H. Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and other humanist educators*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1996, pp. 43-73. Platina's life of Vittorino da Feltre is an important source to disclose his teachings and identify his students.

27 On the Stoic view of food and drink see P.A. Brunt, *Studies in stoicism*, ed. M. Griffin and A. Samuels, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, pp. 140-142, which is to be complemented by the view of the Latin Satirists analysed in M. Colish, *Stoicism in classical Latin literature*, rev. and exp. Ed., Brill, Leiden 1990, vol. 1, pp. 159–204.

28 DHVV, 1.10, p. 116: *meminerit unusquisque dicti illius Socratici edendum esse ut vivamus nos, non propterera vivere ut edamus*. Neither Milham nor Larioux have discovered Platina's source, but in V.E. Grimm, *From feasting to fasting. The evolution of a sin. Attitudes to food in late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 32–57: 52, it is argued that this saying was attributed to Socrates by a few authors, including Musonius Rufus (Disc. 18b) and Aulus Gellius (Noctes Atticae 19, 2, 7).

29 DHVV, *Ad amplissimum et doctissimum D.B. Roverellam*, p. 100: *Ad felicitatem einim voluptas illa quae ex honesta actione oritur, ut medicina ad santitatem egrotantem hominem perducit.*

30 DHVV, *Ad amplissimum et doctissimum D.B. Roverellam*, p. 102: *scripsi ego … sed quo et civili viro veletudinem medicoritatem lautitiem victus potiusquam luxum quaerenti prodessem*.

31 Platina's *De falso ac vero bono* is also quite different from Valla's dialogue since it is a consolatory work that draws extensively form Cicero's *On the ends of good and evil* and Seneca's *Moral letters*. For a more detailed analysis of this work see B. Platina, *De falso et vero bono*, ed. M.G. Di Blasio, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome 1999.

32 DHVV, *Ad amplissimum et doctissimum D.B. Roverellam*, p. 100: *Valebit et apud me Senecae Lucretii Laertii auctoritas, qui Epicurum ut virum sanctissimum atque optimum miris laudibus extollunt*.

33 See M. Gigante, *Ambrogio Traversari interprete di Diogene Laerzio*, in *Ambrogio Traversari nel VI centenario della nascita*, ed. by G.C. Garfagnini, Olschki, Florence 1988, pp. 367-459.

34 See Seneca's *De vita beata*, 12, 4, in which Seneca distinguished between Epicurus's sober notion of pleasure and the distorted notion of it followed by licentious men that exploited his name.

35 A brief, but detailed account of the new view of Epicurus's life and thought developed by fifteenth-century humanists can be found in J. Kraye**,** *Moral philosophy*, in *The Cambridge history of Renaissance philosophy*, ed. by Ch.B. Schmitt and Q. Skinner, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988, pp. 375-382**.** According to E. Garin, *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento*, Sansoni, Florence 1979, pp. 72-92 in the middle of the fifteenth century, the rebirth of Epicureanism developed along three different tendencies: the first connected Epicurean theses with a materialistic view of reality (see for instance, Panormita's works), the second considered Epicureanism as a serious moral system (see for instance, Beroaldo's *De felicitate* and Filelfo's *De morali disciplina*), and the third emphasised the cosmic value and the divinity of *voluptas* (for instance Marullo's poem and some parts of Valla's dialogue on pleasure). As should be clear, Platina's praise of Epicurus aligns with the second tendency.

36 DHVV, *Ad amplissimum et doctissimum D.B. Roverellam*, p. 100: *De illa voluptate quam ex continentia victus et earum rerum quas humana natura appetit loquor.*

37 DHVV, p. 102: *Tatum enim abest ut hoc institutum a viro civili sit alienum summorum etiam philosophorum auctoritate et praecepto, ut queamadmodum in praelio qui civem olim, sic qui in in pace multos nunc cives reationem victus afferando servaverit, plures civicas merere videatur*. Christ is briefly mentioned only in DHVV 10.46, p. 453 with no reference to his religious teaching.

38 DHVV, *Ad amplissimum et doctissimum D.B. Roverellam*, p. 100: *Sed dicant, quaeso, hi Stoicidae qui elatis supreciliis non de vi sed de nominum vocibus tantummodo diiudicant, quid mali in se habeat considerata voluptas*.

39 On the meaning of Juevnal's criticism of the *Stoicidae* see M. Colish, *Stoicism … cit.*, vol. 1, p. 207.

40 See L.B. Alberti, *Opere volgari*, ed. C. Grayson, Laterza, Bari 1966, pp. 115-118.

41 DHVV, *Ad amplissimum et doctissimum D.B. Roverellam*, pp. 101–103.

42 DHVV, 8.3, p. 353. On Filelfo's letter as a source for Platina's work, see Milham's introduction in DHVV, pp. 47-48. According to D. Robin, *Filelfo in Milan*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1991, pp. 47-50, the letter was a discourse on pleasure, in which Filelfo attempted to demonstrate that the teaching of Epicurus were not incompatible with the teachings of Aristotle and the Church Fathers.

43 While G. Gentile has judged Filelfo's attitude to be a pale syncretism of ideas obtained from different sources with no shade of philosophical criticism (in E. Garin, *History of Italian philosophy*, transl. and ed. by G.A. Pinton, SEPS, Bologna 2007, p. 187), J. Hankins (*Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, Brill, Leiden 1990, vol. 1, pp. 91-95) has argued that Filelfo's syncretistic attitude relied on Stoic and Middle Platonic sources, according to which wisdom was held to be unitary and universal. Bruni's *Isagogicon moralis disciplinae* is another interesting example of humanistic eclecticism: even thought this introduction to moral philosophy resulted in a standard account of Aristotelian ethics, it was intended to reconcile the Peripatetic, Stoic and Epicurean views of the supreme good.

44 DHVV, 1.1 and 1.8, pp. 105–107 and 115–117.

45 The most important of Galen's dietary works were *De alimentorum facultatibus*, *De sanitate tuenda* and *De probis pravisque alimentorum succis*, on which see M. Grant, *Galen on food and diet*, Routledge, London 2000.

46 DHVV, 1.8, pp. 115–117. This is the Latin text: *Non enim omnes cibi omnibus conferunt, sed ut varia sunt elementa, variae hominum ex humoribus appetentiae, varii quopue gustus, sic varii debent esse cibi ut quod convenit, quod sapit, quod nutrit, unicuique tribuatur*.

47 DHVV, 1.2, pp. 107–109.

48 DHVV, 1.5–1.7, pp. 111–113.

49 DHVV, 1.7, p. 113.

50 DHVV, 10.70, pp. 467–568.

51 See DHVV, pp. 52–53 and B. Larioux, *Gastronomie, humanisme et sociétè* … cit., pp. 75-89, but note that on pp. 227-230 Larioux also suggests that scholars should seek out other sources for Platina's dietetic ideas in the library of Bessarion.

52 See K. Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2002, pp. 14-48 and 246-248. According to Albala a second group of dietary works, written between 1530 and 1570, replaced the Medieval sources with Greek editions and Latin translations of Galen's works. On the spread of Medieval dietary works in Italy during the fifteenth century a crucial work is M. Nicoud, *La dietetica medievale, testi e lettori*, in "Minerva. Revista de filología clásica" 23 (2010), pp. 15–34, in which Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudinte* is considered to be a dietary work.

53 On Savonarola's *Libreto* see E. Past, *'Una ricetta per longo e iocundo vivere'. Il Liberto de tutte le cosse che se magnano*, in C. Crisciani and G. Zuccolin (eds.), *Michele Savonarola. Medicina e cultura di corte*, Sismel, Florence 2011, pp. 113-127. For an in-depth examination of Savonarola's thought see C. Crisciani, *Michele Savonarola medico: tra Università e corte, tra latino e volgare*, in N. Bray and L. Sturlese (ed. by), *Filosofia in volgare nel medioevo*, Féderation internationale des Instituts d'études médiévales, Louvain-la-Neuve 2003, pp. 433-449.

54 This is emphasised in K. Bergdolt, *Wellbeing. A cultural history of healthy living*, transl. by J. Dewhurst, Polity, Cambridge 2008, pp. 176-179, in which Platina's work is contrasted and compared to More's *Utopi*a, which describes health as the greatest pleasure of the body.

55 DHVV, 10.70, p. 467 and p. 469.

56 DHVV, 10.70, p. 469.

57 For instance, see DHVV, 1.12, p. 119.

58 See, for instance, the recipes for sauces.

59 DHVV, 1.4, pp. 109-110.

60 DHVV, 1.2, pp. 107-109.

61 The analogies are highlighted in F. Tateo and G. Vitto, *Arte e virtù del mangiare*, Chiriotti, Pinerolo 2013.

62 A. Quondam, *Forma del vivere: l'etica del gentiuomo e i moralisti Italiani*, il Mulino, Bologna 2010, pp. 384-431. But on Pontanus's social art of dining see also K. McIver, *Cooking and eating in Renaissance Italy: from kitchen to table*, Rowman & Littlefield, London 2015, pp. 137–147.

63 On the social and cultural function of court banquets see also K. Albala, *The banquet: dining in the great courts of late Renaissance Europe*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana-Chicago 2007.