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Perugino's Justice.

The Frescoes for the Collegio del Cambio

Between Legal History, Iconography, and Iconology

La giustizia di Perugino.

Gli affreschi del Collegio del Cambio

tra storia del diritto, iconografia e iconologia

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ABSTRACT. At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the *Sala dell'Udienza* of the *Collegio del Cambio* in Perugia was decorated thanks to the collaborative work of two of Renaissance Italy's leading intellectuals, both profoundly linked to the city: Perugino (at that time defined as "the best painter in Italy"), and the humanist Francesco Maturanzio. On the basis of the assumption that there is a need to reconstruct the unity of the human and social sciences in order to break the isolation of legal studies, this paper analyzes the iconography and iconology of the frescoes in the *Sala dell'Udienza* (i.e. the tribunal of the *Cambio*) within the wider context of the political role and jurisdictional function of the guild of money-changers in order to understand the "visual language" that the merchants of Perugia used to communicate their own idea of law and justice.

ABSTRACT. Alla fine del XV secolo, la Sala dell'Udienza del Collegio del Cambio di Perugia fu decorata grazie alla collaborazione di due intellettuali di spicco dell'Italia rinascimentale, entrambi profondamente legati alla città: il Perugino (all'epoca definito «Il meglio maestro d'Italia») e l'umanista Francesco Maturanzio. Prendendo le mosse dall'esigenza di ricostruire l'unità delle scienze umane e sociali al fine di rompere l'isolamento degli studi giuridici, il presente lavoro analizza l'iconografia e l'iconologia degli affreschi della Sala dell'Udienza (ovvero il tribunale del Cambio) nel contesto del ruolo politico e della funzione giurisdizionale della corporazione dei cambiavalute, per tentare di comprendere il "linguaggio visivo" che i mercanti perugini utilizzarono per comunicare la propria idea di diritto e giustizia.

KEYWORDS / PAROLE CHIAVE: Mercanzia; Collegio del Cambio; Perugino; Iconography of Justice; Cardinal virtues / Mercanzia; Collegio del Cambio; Perugino; iconografia della giustizia; virtù cardinali

Perugino's Justice.

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### 1. Introduction

Today more than ever, the isolation of the various branches of knowledge is being challenged in favor of an interdisciplinary approach that does not separate phenomena from their context<sup>1</sup>. For centuries, law was studied as an integral part of the so-called *artes sermocinales* (in particular rhetoric). Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, however, this intellectual unity has been called into question and legal studies have experienced periods of isolation alternating with periods of strict interaction with other disciplines, in particular with the humanities. In some cases, the two “methods” overlapped. In the very period of the foundation of the Bolognese *Studium*, for example, while Irnerius was teaching Roman law and inaugurating a methodology of legal studies based on brief notations (glosses) to Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, other centers (so called *Scuole minori*),

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both in northern Italy and in Provence, maintained a stronger relationship with the liberal arts. This is the case of authors such as Placentinus, who taught in Piacenza, Mantua and Montpellier (and for a couple of years in Bologna too), who used to mix prose and poetry in his works, or of the *Quaestiones de iuris subtilitatibus*, a work probably produced in northern Italy in the late 1150s or early 1160s, with its fascinating allegory of the *templum iustitiae*<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, the idea of a self-sufficient law soon developed within the environment of the new “law schools” and was efficaciously summarized, by the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, by the Bolognese glossator Accursius: «omnia in corpore iuris inveniuntur»<sup>3</sup>.

In the following centuries, this isolation was alternatively challenged or supported. For example, legal humanism introduced a historical and philological approach to the study of law, and in particular to the study of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, which reached its peak in 16<sup>th</sup> century France (*mos gallicus iura docendi*)<sup>4</sup>. On the opposite side, an example of isolation can be found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Pandectist School, which, further developing Savigny’s idea of a “system of modern Roman law”, conceived of (private) law as a coherent body of rules, without the influence of any ideological or political assumption<sup>5</sup>.

The problem of the isolation of legal studies in the course of history cannot, of course, be properly treated here. What has to be stressed, though, is that we are still heirs of 19<sup>th</sup> century interpretations of legal studies, and that this heritage has been recently called into question (again)<sup>6</sup> in favor of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of law<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Cortese (2000), pp. 276-281.

<sup>3</sup> Gl. *notitia* in D.1.1.10, *de iustitia et iure*, l. *Iustitia*. According to this statement, the jurist could find everything he needed in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. Any knowledge of other disciplines, and in particular of theology, was not necessary anymore: Bellomo (2002), p. 256; Cortese (1995), II, p. 185, footnote 98. See also: Cortese (1964/2020), p. 7, footnote 14.

<sup>4</sup> Cortese (2000), pp. 398 ff.; Padoa Schioppa (2007), pp. 250-264.

<sup>5</sup> Padoa Schioppa (2007), p. 560; see also: Wieacker (1996), pp. 430 ff.

<sup>6</sup> The most evident peculiarities of this last “wave” are probably two: on one hand, legal studies are nowadays divided into a number of hyper-specialized sub-disciplines,

Legal institutions are, in fact, artificial creations, which have to be well thought out in order to be accepted by society. At the origins of law there is the aesthetic creation of an artificial environment in which human disputes can be sublimated into a rational liturgy. Within the Western Christian tradition, such a liturgy developed by mobilizing the arts and the humanities: «literature to proclaim the Word, architecture to build temples, paintings and sculptures to display the sacred, music to praise the Lord»<sup>8</sup>, not to mention fashion to dress the clergy. The law has its liturgy too. Public buildings, paintings, frescoes, murals, and statues, for example, create a strong link between political power, law, and images<sup>9</sup>. No one would claim to understand religion without paying attention to liturgy and worship, but the majority of jurists seem to be sure that they can understand the law by completely neglecting its formal and symbolic environment<sup>10</sup>.

In the most classical of definitions, starting with Ulpian's «*suum cuique tribuere*»<sup>11</sup>, the semantic scope of law overlaps with that of justice, i.e. its ultimate goal. Law, often perceived as an alien element to society because it is considered complex and almost unknowable, barricaded behind impenetrable technicalities, has been made tangible, and therefore knowable, through art, first and foremost fine arts and architecture. According to Ernst Cassirer, man is not only an *animal rationale*, as Aristotle claimed, but, given his symbolic nature, he is rather an *animal symbolicum*<sup>12</sup>. Access to and progress towards the symbolic, which is some-

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which makes the danger of isolation evident; on the other hand, the dialogue with other disciplines is extremely diverse and includes social and hard sciences.

<sup>7</sup> Including commercial law: Cian (2016), pp. 7-12; Mignone (2022), pp. 26-29. Not to mention the development of the “Law and...” fields of research and teaching such as “Law and Economics” and “Law and Humanities”. See Emanuele Conte in Conte/Gialdroni (2020), pp. 314-315.

<sup>8</sup> Conte/Gialdroni (2020), p. 315.

<sup>9</sup> Douzinas (2000).

<sup>10</sup> Conte/Gialdroni (2020), p. 315.

<sup>11</sup> D. 1.1.10pr.

<sup>12</sup> Cassirer (1944), pp. 44 ff.

thing uniquely human, creates the possibility of phenomena such as ethics and law.

This essay aims at treating law, and in this case merchant law, not as a dogmatic discipline but as a multiform phenomenon and therefore (first and foremost) as an experience. The idea of a self-sufficient and self-referential law will be challenged by analyzing the language that has always been used to communicate to a vast audience that is not necessarily versed in the requisite technicalities: the language of images. If the existence of a body of customary laws uniformly adopted across medieval and early modern Europe (*lex mercatoria*) is still a subject of debate<sup>13</sup>, the mechanisms of merchants' justice are equally controversial, since the procedures applied were by definition brief and informal<sup>14</sup>. By means of the study of the iconographical program of the *Sala dell'Udienza* of the *Collegio del Cambio* in Perugia (fig. 1), which, according to the guild of money-changers, was to be rendered "wonderful" (*pulcherrima*)<sup>15</sup> thanks to the frescoes of the great Renaissance artist Pietro Perugino, we will link legal history, art history, and history of architecture in order to analyze the "visual language" that the merchants of Perugia used, at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, to express their own idea of law and justice.

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<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive and up-to date analysis of the never-ending historiographical debate on the *lex mercatoria*: De ruysscher (2020).

<sup>14</sup> The latest historiography has underlined, though, that, especially between the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, the mercantile procedures became more complex and tended to uniform with the *ius commune* procedures. See for example the case of the *Universitas mercatorum, camporum et artificum* of Bologna in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century: Legnani Annichini (2008), pp. 85-86. Or the case of the *Mercanzia* in Siena: Ascheri (1989), pp. 35-36. For a synthesis of the interesting case of the summary justice of the fairs, see Fortunati (2008).

<sup>15</sup> See *infra* the minutes of the *Cambio* assembly dated January 26, 1496. The best descriptions of the frescoes can be found in Canuti (1931), I, pp. 134-142 and Scarpellini (1998b).



Fig. 1 – Sala dell'Udienza of the Collegio del Cambio (Perugia),  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pietro\\_Perugino\\_-\\_View\\_of\\_the\\_Sala\\_di\\_Udienza\\_-\\_WGA17225.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pietro_Perugino_-_View_of_the_Sala_di_Udienza_-_WGA17225.jpg)

## 2. Mercanzia and Cambio: *Their Role in the Government of Perugia*

Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century (and until the French Revolution), artisans, merchants and workers who exercised the same profession or trade, were organized into guilds in the main trading centers of Europe<sup>16</sup>. In Italy, these guilds were often called *arti*, they had their own statutes (*brevia, statuta, matricula*) and had a direct influence on the city's administration. Perugia was no exception. At a crossroads between Rome and Florence and between the Tyrrhenian and the Adriatic seas, it developed market and financial facilities.

The number of the guilds of Perugia has been a matter of discussion

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<sup>16</sup> The problem of the continuity or discontinuity of the late medieval guilds with the *collegia* of the Late Empire and the *ministeria* of the Early Middle Ages has long been discussed: Cortese (1995), II, pp. 256-257; Nico Ottaviani/Regni (1998), pp. 13-14. For a very extensive bibliography on the topic, see Legnani (2005), pp. 30-31.

among scholars but it is possible to affirm with a certain degree of surety that they were 44 in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>17</sup>.

The most ancient statute of Perugia is dated 1279<sup>18</sup> but it was in 1296 that it was stated that, in case of conflict between the legislation of the commune and the *ordinamenta artium*, the latter had to prevail<sup>19</sup>. According to John Grundman, this was the moment at which Perugia became a «guild republic»<sup>20</sup>, a process that was perfected by the creation of the *Consiglio dei Priori* in 1303<sup>21</sup>, which represented the city and exercised what we would call today “executive power”. The priors, in fact, were chosen by the guilds<sup>22</sup>. The former political prerogatives of the *Podestà* and of the *Capitano del Popolo* were substantially downsized, while their administrative and judicial powers were enhanced: at the apex of the government of the commune there was now the collegial magistracy of the *Priori delle Arti*. This institution, within the limits imposed by the changing political conditions, survived (at least formally) the progressive decline of communal freedoms, the *signoria* and the definitive integration of Perugia within the Papal States after 1540<sup>23</sup>.

Not all guilds were considered equal, however: in fact, two priors had to belong to the merchant guild or *Mercanzia* (*Ars mercantiae*) and one to the guild of money-changers or *Cambio* (*Ars campsorum*), while the other

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<sup>17</sup> Nico Ottaviani/Regni (1998), pp. 14-15; Mira (1959), p. 120. The distinction between two categories, the *arti grosse* and the *arti minute*, was made explicit in the 1366 Statute and was based on the minimum number of members: 60 for the first ones and 30 for the second ones: ASP, *Statuti*, 3, c. 90, cit. in Nico Ottaviani/Regni (1998), p. 20, footnote 20. See also Mira (1959), pp. 125-126, and Irace (2000), pp. LXXV-LXXVI.

<sup>18</sup> Caprioli/Bartoli Langeli (1996).

<sup>19</sup> Irace (2000), p. LXXXI.

<sup>20</sup> Irace (2000); Grundman (1992), pp. 206 and 228-231.

<sup>21</sup> Vallerani (2010), p. 130.

<sup>22</sup> Mira (1959), pp. 132-133.

<sup>23</sup> More precisely, the magistracy was suspended from 1540 until 1552, when it was restored by Pope Julius II with the same name, but with greatly diminished powers.

guilds chose, on a rotational basis, the remaining seven<sup>24</sup>. The appointment was extremely brief: only two months, until 1494 when it was extended to three months<sup>25</sup>. During this period, the priors resided in the *Palazzo dei Priori*.

In order to accomplish their legislative and administrative duties, the priors were supported by several councils. One of the most important ones was the *Consiglio dei Camerlenghi*, which was made up of all the representatives of all the guilds. Each guild had, in fact, one *camerlengo* (chamberlain), except for the two most important ones: the *Mercanzia*, which had four (called *consoli*) and the *Cambio*, which had two (called *uditori*)<sup>26</sup>. They represented the guild, took care of the administration, controlled the activities of the members, chaired the meetings and, most important, administrated justice within the guild<sup>27</sup>.

It has been affirmed that no important matter was decided in Perugia without the intervention of this council: peace and war, alliances, abrogation or enactment of laws, etc.<sup>28</sup>. Considering all those facts, it becomes clear that the guilds, and in particular *Mercanzia* and *Cambio*, played a pivotal role in the city's administration as a whole.

In 1416, the popular government had to surrender to the military power of Braccio da Montone, who became *signore* of the city. Soon afterwards, the guilds had to admit whoever asked to become a member, without any reference to their profession. As a consequence, the noblemen started to gain political power by means of their affiliation to the *ar-*

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<sup>24</sup> For the requisites, including being at least 25 years old and being native of Perugia or of the surroundings, see Mira (1959), p. 132-133. See also: Severini (2000), p. XXVIII.

<sup>25</sup> Irace (2000), p. LXXIV.

<sup>26</sup> Crispolti (1648), p. 235; Nico Ottaviani/Regni (1998), p. 24; if we agree that the guild were 44, at least in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, this council had 48 members: Mira (1959), p. 132, footnote 26.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Nico Ottaviani/Regni (1998), pp. 20-21. In some cases, as we will see, the jurisdiction was extended to non-members but only for matters related to the competences of the guild.

<sup>28</sup> Marchesi (1853), p. 35.

*ti*<sup>29</sup>. The new elite has been defined as a mixture between a “gentrified” aristocracy and an “ennobled” bourgeoisie<sup>30</sup>. *Mercanzia* and *Cambio*, therefore, maintained in Perugia a central role in the appointment of the most important city’s magistrates even when the nobility gained power: noblemen began to be admitted as members in order to take part in the city’s government<sup>31</sup>.

### 2.1. *The Merchant Guild’s Jurisdiction*

The *Collegio della Mercanzia* was first mentioned in a 1218 document regarding a *pax et concordia* with the merchants and the commune of Florence<sup>32</sup>. As in many other Italian cities, the *Mercanzia* of Perugia was an entity separate from the *comune* – although connected to it in many ways – which had competencies nowadays typical of different business networks, like chambers of commerce and commercial tribunals, while at the same time being a public body governing the economy and a guild<sup>33</sup>. This is, of course, a general definition. Each *Mercanzia*, in fact, had its own peculiarities that, in the case of Perugia, are nowadays far more accessible thanks to the critical edition, published in 2000, of the statutes of 1323, 1356, 1377, 1403 and 1599<sup>34</sup>. We now have the possibility to analyze and compare several statutes of an incredibly powerful and long last-

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<sup>29</sup> Nico Ottaviani/Regni (1998), p. 25. This “opening” to the nobility in the year 1416 is considered an oversimplification by Giuseppe Severini as it presupposes that noblemen never exercised the *mercatura*, which, in turn, makes it necessary to define to what kind of nobility (only feudal?) we are referring to: Severini (2000), pp. XX ff.

<sup>30</sup> Severini (2000), p. XIX.

<sup>31</sup> Severini (2000), pp. XXXI-XXXII.

<sup>32</sup> Irace (2000), p. LXXIII.

<sup>33</sup> Chiantini (1996), *Presentazione* by Mario Ascheri, p. IX; Ascheri (1989), p. 29. For a bibliographical overview of the other *Mercanzie* which developed in the medieval *comuni* of central-northern Italy, see Legnani (2005), p. 48.

<sup>34</sup> This precious work also contains valuable introductory essays by Giuseppe Severini, Erminia Irace and Mirko Santanicchia, apart from those written by the editors: Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langeli (2000).

ing guild. Its 800 years of history can be divided into two periods: the period of the mercantile city bourgeoisie (the *arte* of the *mercatores*) and the period of the aristocracy (*collegio dei nobili*). However, it is not possible to exactly date the passage from one structure to the other: it was a slow development that was formalized in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1670) but was already established at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>35</sup>. Its functions were: to regulate the access to the guild (limiting it, in the first period, to those who exercised mercantile activities); to administer mercantile justice; to hinder the creation of societies with foreigners for the import of certain goods; to mediate transactions; to check weights and measures; to regulate the way in which goods were shown and sold; to certify documents; to liquidate assets after bankruptcy; and many others<sup>36</sup>.

As far as the administration of justice in the 15<sup>th</sup> century is concerned, the 1403 statute of the *Mercanzia* devoted a very long and systematic chapter to *De iurisdictione dominorum consulum et de modo procedendi*<sup>37</sup>. The first paragraph (*Quod procedatur de veritate et equitate*<sup>38</sup>) stated that the consuls had to administer justice («...sedere et curiam retinere ...») in their audience hall at the *Palazzo dei Priori* every day devoted to this task («... ad reddendum ius postulantibus in omnibus diebus iuridicis et non feriatis ...»), in the morning and in the evening («... bis in quolibet die, videlicet de mane et de sero horis congruis et consuetis ...») according to law, truth and equity as well as according to the customs of the *Mercanzia* («... de iure, veritate et equitate et secundum bonam consuetudinem audientie Mercantie predictae ...»).

Their jurisdiction was, according to the statute, very wide. It is described in a sort of “crescendo”: not only were they in charge of hearing and deciding any kind of disputes between members (no matter what the

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<sup>35</sup> Severini (2000), pp. XV-XVI and XXVII; Cutini Zazzerini (1992), p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> Severini (2000), pp. XVII-XVIII.

<sup>37</sup> Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langelì (2000), I, *Statuto del 1403*, c. 5, pp. 183-197.

<sup>38</sup> 5.1, Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langelì (2000), p. 183.

object was)<sup>39</sup> as well as mercantile related controversies between members and non-members<sup>40</sup>; they also had jurisdiction on any dispute referable to mercantile activities («... de et pro factis mercantile ...»), no matter who the person was<sup>41</sup>. This extensive jurisdiction ended up provoking the other leading guild of the city, which tried (and finally managed) to expand its own jurisdiction throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century: the guild of money-changers.

## 2.2. *The Guild of Money-Changers' Jurisdiction*

Very few Italian cities had a guild of money-changers because, usually, the *mercatores* of the *Mercanzia* were also in charge of the exchange of money. According to Antonio Ivan Pini, this separation into two guilds took place in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in cities involved in important international (trade or cultural) networks, where the *campsores* developed a stronger political role: Bologna, Firenze and, of course, Perugia<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> 5.10, Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langeli (2000), p. 188: «De questionibus vertentibus inter artifices. Habeant etiam domini consules mercatorum cognitionem et iurisdictionem cognoscendi, videndi et terminandi lites, causas questiones et controversias vertentes et que verterentur coram eis inter artifices sue artis de omnibus et singulis litibus et questionibus que inter eos verterentur tam occasione artis, etiam si appareret instrumentum, quam alia quacumque de causa de qua non appareret instrumentum».

<sup>40</sup> 5.11, Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langeli (2000), p. 188: «De questionibus vertentibus inter artificem et non artificem. Item habeant cognitionem et iurisdictionem videndi, cognoscendi et terminandi lites, causas, questiones et controversias vertentes et que verterentur inter artificem et non artificem de et pro factis artis mercantie et ad ipsam artem et eius exercitium, ministerium et seu negotiationem spectantibus et pertinentibus, vel dependentibus ab eadem».

<sup>41</sup> 5.13, Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langeli (2000), p. 189: «De questionibus vertentibus inter quascumque personas occasione artis. Item habeant cognitionem et iurisdictionem videndi, cognoscendi et terminandi lites, causas, questiones et controversias vertentes et que verterentur inter quascumque personas de et pro factis mercantie et ad eius exercitium, ministerium seu negotiationem spectantibus et pertinentibus [vel dependentibus] ab eadem».

<sup>42</sup> Pini (1962), pp. 42-44. Pini added to the list also Prato, but the guild, in this case, included also goldsmiths.

Even though the first mention of the *Cambio* dates to the year 1259<sup>43</sup>, it is reasonable to date its establishment back to, at least, some decades before<sup>44</sup>. Its function was to monitor and regulate the circulation of money in a broad sense, from the control of coins, to money-exchange, to the lending with interest<sup>45</sup>. Its members were called *campsores* or *cambisti* or *cambiatori* or even *banchieri* (bankers). As we have seen, though, at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, noblemen started to be admitted in order to legitimate their election to public offices and not all members were also *campsores* anymore<sup>46</sup>. The Archives of the *Cambio* preserve two statutes of the guild: the first one is dated 1377, the second one 1600<sup>47</sup>.

The two *auditores*, elected by the general assembly, were *caput et duces*<sup>48</sup> of the guild and were in charge of “hearing” (Lat. *audire*, It. *udire*) the parties and judging the cases. In synthesis, they had all the competences of the *camerlenghi* of the other guilds. They also elected, with a restricted number of members, the *rectores*, who, in general, represented the interests of the guild<sup>49</sup>. When the *auditores* were appointed (for six

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<sup>43</sup> The *comune* delegated to the *consules campsororum* the appointment of the officials in charge of safeguarding the metals for the new mint: Cutini Zazzerini (1992), pp. 17-18.

<sup>44</sup> Marchesi (1853), pp. 55-56 and 206.

<sup>45</sup> Nico Ottaviani/Regni (1998), pp. 20-21. For example: «Merchants returning to Perugia with ducats and florins from Venice and Florence would exchange these gold for the silver coins based on the Perugian *lira* employed in small local transactions»: Banker (1997), p. 45. For a comparison with the Bolognese *Arte del cambio*, which had very similar competences, see Pini (1962), p. 59.

<sup>46</sup> At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century *Cambio* and *Mercanzia* arrived to limit the membership to representatives of the oldest noble families of the city: Cutini Zazzerini (1992), pp. 17-18.

<sup>47</sup> Cutini Zazzerini (1992), pp. 61-64.

<sup>48</sup> ACP, *Statuti*, 1, rub. 1, c. 4r, cit. in Cutini Zazzerini (1992), p. 25.

<sup>49</sup> Cutini Zazzerini (1992), p. 27; Marchesi (1853), p. 187; Nico Ottaviani/Regni (1998), p. 21. Furthermore, the general assembly of the *Cambio* elected a *priore*, who administered the assets of the guild and was in charge of the accountability. The guild also needed the collaboration of people able to write down the minutes of the meetings and elaborate the legal documents like notaries and accountants: Cutini Zazzerini (1992), p. 29. Finally, jurists, so called *consultores*, were asked to provide legal advice,

months only), they had to swear on the Gospel that they would «well and faithfully exercise the office with good faith and without any fraud»<sup>50</sup>.

As far as their jurisdiction was concerned, the 1377 statute limited it to the cases in which one party was a guild member<sup>51</sup>. A bit more than 100 years later, Pope Sixtus IV extended this jurisdiction to all money-related matters and to non-members. The papal brief (*breve*), dated January 31, 1482<sup>52</sup>, first recalled the fact that once the jurisdiction of the *auditores* was limited to money-exchange matters («... solum ad controversias cambiamonetarum concernentes ...») but that gradually it was extended («... paulatim eorum jurisdictio extensa et ampliata fuit ...») to all money-related matters («... cognoscere soliti sunt de quibuscumque causis pecuniariis, in quibus pecunia quomodolibet peteretur ...»). The Pope then confirmed («... approbamus et confirmamus ...») this extended (and exclusive) competence for the future, notwithstanding laws to the contrary («... non obstantibus constitutionibus et ordinationibus apostolicis ceterisque contrariis quibuscumque ...»), under penalty of incurring in the indignation of God and of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul («... indignationem omnipotentis Dei et BB. P. et P. Apostolorum ...»).

Two 1441 documents<sup>53</sup>, testify the attempt of the *Cambio* to expand its jurisdiction («... iurisdictione augenda et amplianda ...») long before Sixtus IV's brief, without success. The 1441 documents make both reference to a papal bull by Pope Eugene IV that leaves no other trace<sup>54</sup>. This bull, requested by the *Cambio* («... pro parte auditorium Cambii civitatis

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even though the 1377 statute does not include a specific paragraph on them: Cutini Zazzerini (1992), p. 29.

<sup>50</sup> Marchesi (1853), p. 61.

<sup>51</sup> ACP, *Statuti*, 1, rub. 4, c. 5rv: *In quibus causis auditores sint iudices competentes*, cit. in Cutini Zazzerini (1992), p. 32, footnote 82.

<sup>52</sup> Text in Marchesi (1853), pp. 319-321. The papal brief was then included in the 1600 statutes: ACP, *Statuti*, 2, rub. 4, cc. 9v-13v: *De iurisdictionem dominorum auditorium*, cit. in Cutini Zazzerini (1992), p. 32, footnote 83.

<sup>53</sup> They are published in Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langeli (2000), II, pp. 782-786.

<sup>54</sup> Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langeli (2000), II, p. 782.

Perusii ...»), apparently extended its jurisdiction to the detriment of the *Mercanzia*. Gaspare, bishop of Naples and governor of Perugia, in a decree dated May 24, 1441<sup>55</sup>, first affirmed that the competences of *Cambio* and *Mercanzia* shouldn't change and that they had to remain those established in the statutes («Item decernimus ac mandamus quod predicti consules et auditores non debeant quovis modo aut quesito colore cognoscere vel iudicare nisi solum et dumtaxat de his rebus et causis eis permisis ex forma statutorum ...»); then he arrived to declare void the papal bull («Item declaramus atque decernimus ... dictam bullam pro parte dictorum auditorium impetrare et sanctissimo domino nostro concessam, ex certis causis et rationibus mentem nostrum moventibus nullam et nullius roboris et momenti esse et fuisse, que afferre potuisset et posset, si non annullaretur et tolleretur ...») – which seems, at the very least, “peculiar” – because it brought scandal and disadvantage to the city («... in hac civitate maximum scandalum et detrimentum ...»).

The second document is a letter by the same Eugene IV ordering Gaspare to suspend the bull and is dated 26 July, 1441<sup>56</sup>. He seemed quite concerned about the *dissensio* between the members of the two guilds («... dilectos homines Artiis Mercantie et Cambii civitatis nostre Perusii ...») caused by his order to grant the *Cambio* an extension of its jurisdiction, about which he didn't provide any detail, referring only to “certain cases” («... de cognoscendis quibusdam causis eidem Arti Cambii ...»).

According to the 1377 statute, the *auditores* had to administer justice at least three days a week (on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays), in the morning and in the afternoon. They had to: hear the reasons of the parties, briefly and simply review and discuss the cases, and take a decision within two months<sup>57</sup>. The procedure should take place «...summarie,

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<sup>55</sup> Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langeli (2000), pp. 782-784.

<sup>56</sup> Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langeli (2000), pp. 785-786. It is very peculiar that this document follows the one by which the bishop declared the bull to be void. There could be an error in the dates but, if so, it would have been logical for the bishop to quote the order of the Pope.

<sup>57</sup> Marchesi (1853), pp. 94 ff. For a comparison with the jurisdiction of the consuls of

simpliciter et de plano, sine strepitu et figura iudicii...»<sup>58</sup>.

All guilds had jurisdiction over their members, and they all needed, therefore, a place to administer their justice or, more generally, to meet. In case they had no other choice, they used the house or shop of a member, a church or a capitular hall, or the audience hall (*udienza*) of another guild. The *Cambio* used for a long time the church of Santa Maria del Mercato or some buildings belonging to the guild in the area of Porta Sole<sup>59</sup> while in the 14<sup>th</sup> century they were already meeting in a room in the old part of the *Palazzo dei Priori*<sup>60</sup>.

Everything changed when the *campsores* decided to build a new headquarters with its “*pulcherrima*” Audience Hall<sup>61</sup>.

### 3. Mercanzia and Cambio: *Their Headquarters in the Palazzo dei Priori*

Considering the importance of both *Mercanzia* and *Cambio*, it comes as no surprise that the headquarters of the two most important Perugian guilds were located inside the *Palazzo dei Priori* (fig. 2), the “city hall”<sup>62</sup>. Built over a period of 150 years (1292-1443), with particularly important enlargements carried out between 1429 and 1443<sup>63</sup>, it is considered one of the most beautiful examples of the civic architecture of late medieval Italy, but it is particularly famous for one room: the *Sala*

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the *Arte del cambio* of Bologna in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (summary justice based on the statutes of the guild, cases to be decided within 30 days, etc.), see Pini (1962), pp. 60-61.

<sup>58</sup> ACP, *Statuti*, 1, rub. 3, c. 4v, cit. in Cutini Zazzerini (1992), p. 33.

<sup>59</sup> Santanicchia (1998), p. 29.

<sup>60</sup> Magliani (1998), p. 51.

<sup>61</sup> See *infra* the minutes of the *Cambio* assembly dated January 26, 1496. The *Sala dell’Udienza* decorated by Perugino was also used, until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by the *Collegi dei medici, dei filosofi e dei teologi*: Nico Ottaviani/Regni (1998), p. 24.

<sup>62</sup> For the 14<sup>th</sup> century renovation and extension works as well as for a comprehensive bibliography, see Silvestrelli (2003), pp. 119 ff. For a general overview of civic architecture in Renaissance Europe, see Svalduz (2010).

<sup>63</sup> Magliani (1998), p. 45.

*dell'Udienza* of the *Collegio del Cambio*, far more interesting, from an iconographical point of view, than the adjoining *Sala dell'Udienza* of the *Collegio della Mercanzia* <sup>64</sup>, which, in the first decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, had its walls entirely covered with an elegant veneer of carved walnut and poplar wood, probably the work of craftsmen from beyond the Alps, maybe Germans <sup>65</sup>.



Fig. 2 – Perugia, Palazzo dei Priori (photographed in 2013),  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Perugia\\_-\\_palazzo\\_priori\\_3.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Perugia_-_palazzo_priori_3.jpg)

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<sup>64</sup> The *Mercanzia* obtained from the *Conservatori della Pace e della Libertà* two rooms in the *Palazzo dei Priori* to be used as Audience Hall already in 1390 as a sort of payment for a debt of 1400 golden *fiorini* that the commune could not payback. The document, dated February 27, 1390, is published in Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langeli (2000), II, pp. 721-729. The consuls of the *Mercanzia* made explicit reference to the necessity of meeting in a public and honorable place: «Supplicatur vobis, mag.cis viris dominis quinque Conservatoribus pacis et libertatis Comunis Perusie pro parte consulum mercatorum et artis Mercantie dicte civitatis quod, cum ipsi non habeant propriam mansionem, dom(um) et locum pro eorum audientia, et pro honore et magnificentia Comunis Perusie et conveniens sit audientiam Mercantie in loco publico et honorifico residere ...»: Cardinali/Maiarelli/Merli/Bartoli Langeli (2000), p. 723.

<sup>65</sup> Guerrieri (1962), p. 33.

On the other hand, the *campsores* carried out the structural works on their new seat between 1452 and 1457<sup>66</sup>, but it was only from 1490 that they began to decorate the rooms. First came the fine carved wooden desk, the benches and the wall panels designed by the Florentine<sup>67</sup> artist Domenico del Tasso<sup>68</sup>. A terracotta statue of Lady Justice, now attributed with certainty to Benedetto da Maiano, arrived from Florence and was put in place on January 25, 1493 (fig. 3)<sup>69</sup>. Next to the golden terracotta statue, to whom a crown was soon added, there are two inscriptions referring to the function of the *uditori*, with an emphasis on truth and equity<sup>70</sup>. Under the statue we can read that Justice rules the heavens as well as the underworld, that she judges among mortals and that therefore she must be worshipped («coelos rego inferis impero iudico inter mortales ergo me colite») while inside the niche, behind the head of Justice, we can

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<sup>66</sup> Bon Valsassina (1987), p. 21; Magliani (1998), pp. 52 and 60.

<sup>67</sup> The connections between Perugia and Florence, at least from an artistic point of view, are very evident, starting from the education of Perugino at Verrocchio's atelier. It is interesting therefore to notice that a few decades before (1469), the *Mercanzia* of Florence (the institution that established and maintained the city's commercial court) commissioned, for its *Sala dell'Udienza*, paintings representing the seven virtues: the cardinal ones and the theological ones. Six were accomplished by Piero del Pollaiuolo (the role of his brother Antonio is still debated) and one by Sandro Botticelli (Fortitude). A masterpiece which is now preserved in the *Uffizi*.

<sup>68</sup> On the exquisite wooden decorations and furniture of the *Sala dell'Udienza*, see Fidanza (1998).

<sup>69</sup> Caglioti (2007), pp. 18-20. The first one who attributed the statue to Benedetto da Maiano was August Schmarsow (1889) but many others thought it was to ascribe to his atelier. Giovan Battista Fidanza listed the authors who supported the attribution to Benedetto and those who pointed to the atelier: Fidanza (1998), pp. 208-209. Francesco Caglioti demonstrated that the *Cambio's* Lady Justice (1476-1480) was the autograph terracotta model of the marble *Giustizia* that the artist made for the *Sala dell'Udienza* of *Palazzo della Signoria* in Florence (1477-1481) and was then painted and decorated by Bartolomeo Caporali (1492-1493). According to Caglioti, Benedetto da Maiano used, in fact, to "recycle" his terracotta models as autonomous works of art: Caglioti (2007), pp. 18-20, p. 29.

<sup>70</sup> Bon Valsassina (1987), p. 34.

read that she embraces truth and justice («veritatem aequitatemque amplector»). We will go back to these inscriptions in the conclusion.



Fig. 3 – Benedetto da Maiano, Giustizia, Sala dell'Udienza, Collegio del Cambio (Perugia), terracotta, 1476-1480 ca. Photo courtesy of the Nobile Collegio del Cambio

Finally, on January 26, 1496, the *Collegio* decided that the ceiling and the walls should be decorated too <sup>71</sup>. A few months later, the two *auditores* Amico Graziani and Mario Monaldi <sup>72</sup>, together with a specially appointed commission of six delegated members <sup>73</sup>, hired one of the most extraordi-

<sup>71</sup> The document (ACP, *Adunanze*, 6, c. 61rv) is available here: Scarpellini (1998), p. 247.

<sup>72</sup> Sartore (2013), p. 528.

<sup>73</sup> The members of the commission were: Francesco di Niccolò di Montemellini, Teseo di Bernardo della Corgna, Alberto di Mariotto de' Baglioni, Carlo di Cinaglia dei Cinagli, Monaldo de' Boncambi, Ser Ghiberto di Bartolomeo di Andrea: Bon Valsassina (1987), p. 37.

nary artists of the Italian Renaissance, Pietro Vannucci, best known as Perugino (1446-1523)<sup>74</sup>, who was at the peak of his career<sup>75</sup>, and had at the time among his pupils a very promising young painter: Raphael<sup>76</sup>.

Compared to the triumph of colors of Perugino's frescoes, the audience hall of the *Mercanzia* was monotonous, characterized by the brown tones of the wooden panels. With one exception: over a small pulpit in the middle of the left wall, the figures of the four cardinal virtues (Prudence, Fortitude, Justice and Temperance) are rendered very striking, as they are covered with a gold leaf on a blue background. Interestingly, their iconography is not the same as the one that would be chosen, almost one century later, by Perugino for his frescoes. In particular, Fortitude and Justice are represented in a quite unusual way<sup>77</sup>: the first one holds not only a column but also an anvil while the second one

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<sup>74</sup> Pietro Vannucci was born in Castel della Pieve (now Città della Pieve) around 1450. His nickname, which means "from Perugia", was probably given because he came from the region of Umbria and Perugia was far more famous than the little village of Castel della Pieve: Martelli (2020).

<sup>75</sup> As it is well known, Perugino played a major role in the decoration of the Sistine Chapel in 1480-1482. «Pietro Perugino (...) tra il nono e l'ultimo decennio del Quattrocento fu, se non il più grande, certo il più ricercato pittore italiano»: Marabottini (2004), p. 387. About Perugino's life and artistic achievements, Fiorenzo Canuti's classic work still seems to be one of the most complete and fascinating: Canuti (1931). See also the catalogue of the exhibition on Perugino which took place at the *Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria* in 2004 (28 February-18 July): Garibaldi/Mancini (2004).

<sup>76</sup> The role played by Raphael in the *Collegio del Cambio* has been long debated: Bon Valsassina (1987), pp. 12-13. In 1913 two works were published, one supporting the active participation of Raphael, in particular in the Prophets and Sybils and in the virtue Fortitude and one limiting it, in practice, to the traits of Fortitude. The first one is one of the volumes devoted by Adolfo Venturi to the *Quattrocento* within his huge history of Italian art (24 volumes): Venturi (1913), p. 764 (on Fortitude, but he wrote a lot about Perugino and the *Cambio* frescoes, e.g. pp. 546-554 or 822 ff.). The second one is a short article by Umberto Gnoli, who criticized Venturi but agreed with him as far as Fortitude was concerned (Gnoli, 1913, p. 82). Others, like Scarpellini, are much more skeptical about Raphael's contribution, also considering that he was still very young when the frescoes were realized and that Perugino proudly signed, adding his very portrait, the frescoes: Scarpellini (1998b), pp. 91-92 and 102.

<sup>77</sup> About the iconography of Justice, see *infra*, par. 3.1.

doesn't hold a scale at all but rather a sword in the act of piercing an animal below (symbolizing wrong), and a shield, where the words *suum iustitia* are engraved.

But what was the role of allegories in general and of the cardinal virtues in particular in Renaissance Italy?

### 3.1. *Symbols and Allegories in the Early Modern Period: The Cardinal Virtues*

If iconography deals with the subjects of figurative art and their meaning, iconology has the aim of uncovering the reasons why a work of art was produced, or better still, why it was produced in a certain way<sup>78</sup>. This essay deals with questions typical of both fields<sup>79</sup>, focusing on the peculiar early modern language of images, rich in symbols (which represent a concept) and allegories (which 'are' the concept). For example, the griffin "represents", in Christian art, the double nature (divine and human) of Jesus, while Lady Justice 'is' Justice itself<sup>80</sup>.

Human beings have always felt the need to express themselves by means of images<sup>81</sup>. However, it was only in the Early Middle Ages that a "language of images", in the sense of a system (*System der Bildsprache*<sup>82</sup>), developed, at least in Europe. This system, initially imbued with theology and philosophy, reached its peak in the Early Modern Period, when it

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<sup>78</sup> Van Straeten (2009), pp. 17-19.

<sup>79</sup> For iconography, in particular: What is the subject of the work of art? What is its meaning? What are the sources of the artist? How was the subject represented in the course of history?

<sup>80</sup> About the iconography of Justice, see for example Sbriccoli (2003), Curtis/Resnik (2007), Prosperi (2008), and Simone (2015).

<sup>81</sup> In 2018, the news that an Italian archaeologist, Luca Pollarolo, had found in the South African site of Blombos Cave a 73000-year-old drawing, spread around the world. This abstract drawing (six straight lines that are intersected by three wavy lines) not only predates any other known drawings by 30,000 years but could have a symbolic meaning: Henshilwood *et al.* (2018).

<sup>82</sup> Warncke (2005), pp. 8-9.

experienced a process of secularization<sup>83</sup>. The early modern theory of the image, consisting in a synthesis of Aristotelian and Platonic conceptions, found its densest expression in media based on a collaboration between words and images<sup>84</sup>. This, as we will see, is exactly what was done in the *Sala dell'Udienza* of the *Collegio del Cambio*.

One of the most common genres in early modern paintings was “personification”<sup>85</sup>, in the sense that abstract concepts were made “visible” in the form of a human being. But if the ultimate goal of figurative art is communication, then the person representing (or maybe interpreting) the concept has to be immediately recognizable. In order to reach this goal, personifications were usually represented, especially from the Early Middle Ages onward, with the same attributes. Even today, when the meaning of most personifications that an early modern observer would have immediately recognized are lost, a blindfolded female figure with a scale and a sword in her hands is clearly an allegory of Justice. Justice is female just as the Latin word *justitia* is feminine: the blindfold means impartiality<sup>86</sup>, the scale equity, while the sword refers to the capacity for punishing the guilty.

Justice is one of the cardinal virtues, together with Prudence, Fortitude and Temperance. The first mention of this scheme can be found in Plato's *Republic* and was afterwards used within the framework of Neoplatonism as well as in Greek and Roman Stoicism. The phrase “cardinal virtues”, though, is absent from classical sources. This name was coined

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<sup>83</sup> Hall (1983), p. 422. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that this is not always the case. In particular, Francesco Maturanzio, the humanist behind the iconographical program of the *Collegio del Cambio*, considered the most orthodox Catholicism to be the foundation of his method and the final goal of his whole work, especially as an educator: Zappacosta (1970), p. 34.

<sup>84</sup> The mediation between Aristotle and Plato, by the way, is considered one of the main efforts of Maturanzio: Zappacosta (1970), p. 49.

<sup>85</sup> Warncke (2005), pp. 79 ff.

<sup>86</sup> The blindfold of Lady Justice has a very peculiar history that cannot be summarized here. In any case, this new iconography started to spread only in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, just a few decades after Perugino's frescoes: Prosperi (2008), p. 34 ss.

within the early patristic literature (Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine), which considered them to be divine gifts<sup>87</sup>. At the time of Perugino, therefore, the distinction between moral virtues (the ones that Saint Ambrose called cardinal virtues) and the theological ones (Faith, Hope, and Charity) was already well established by means of a rich medieval literature opposing virtues and vices, i.e. good and evil. The attributes of the cardinal virtues were fixed during the Carolingian era<sup>88</sup>: Prudence was associated with a book, to distinguish good from evil (*scientia scripturarum*); Justice with a scale (even though the scale as a symbol of justice dates back to ancient Egypt<sup>89</sup>); Temperance with a torch and a jug of water (a symbol of the capacity of extinguishing the flame of passion); Fortitude, finally, was often represented as a female warrior, holding a shield and a spear. Starting from the 11<sup>th</sup> century some variations began to develop: Temperance could be represented with two jars, while mixing water and wine; Justice could hold a sword in addition to the scale, and/or some tool to trace exact lines, like a compass; Prudence could hold a serpent (a reference to St. Mathew's Gospel<sup>90</sup>) or a mirror, or could be depicted with two or three faces, a reference to time: past, present and future. In the *Sala dell'Udienza* they are represented as follows: Prudence holds what seems to be a mirror with several faces while a serpent is twisting around the rod supporting the mirrors; Justice holds a scale and a sword; Fortitude is dressed like a warrior and Temperance is mixing the liquids contained in two jars (fig. 4). These are classic representations, easy to understand and recognize.

But who decided the iconographical program, and how<sup>91</sup>?

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<sup>87</sup> Bejczy (2011), pp. 1-4.

<sup>88</sup> Alcoy (2003), pp. 836. See also Katzenellenbogen (1989).

<sup>89</sup> Prosperi (2008), p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Mt 10,16: «prudentes sicut serpentes».

<sup>91</sup> Even though we know the names of the *uditores* and of the members of the specially appointed commission in charge of implementing the decoration of the Audience Hall (see *supra*, par. 3) as well as the content of Perugino's preliminary draft contract (see *infra*, par. 3.2), further research could potentially reveal more details about the hows and whys



Fig. 4 – Pietro Perugino and workshop, *Fortezza e Temperanza, con gli Uomini Illustri*, Sala dell’Udienza, Collegio del Cambio (Perugia), fresco, 1498-1500. Photo courtesy of the Nobile Collegio del Cambio

### 3.2. Perugino, Maturanzio, and the Cambio’s Udienza

The minutes of a meeting of the *Cambio* held in January 1496 testify that the Audience Hall had to be entirely decorated with some paintings by the hand of “master Pietro” or another master («... ornamentum audientiae utrum debeat ornari per totum aliquibus picturis manu magistri Petri vel alterius magistri ...») in order to “make it wonderful” in any possible way («... audientia debeat ornari, pinghi aut quovis alio modo pulcherrima fieri ...»)<sup>92</sup>. Only recently, though, the preliminary draft of the

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of the iconographical program, e.g. analyzing the biographies, cultural backgrounds, and networks of the members of the commission. These aspects will be developed within the framework of the Project IUSTITIAM (Grant FARE 2020 of the Italian Ministry of University and Research), of which the present essay represents the very first outcome.

<sup>92</sup> Teza (2004), p. 116. A leading role in the choice of Perugino as the artist and of the humanist Francesco Maturanzio as the iconographer was played by Amico Graziani, appointed *uditore* in 1496: Sartore (2004), p. 590.

contract for the *Cambio* frescoes was discovered in the *Archivio di Stato* of Perugia and published by Alberto Maria Sartore<sup>93</sup>. It was written in vernacular by the *Cambio*'s notary Pietro Paolo di Ser Bartolomeo and is dated May 11, 1496. Interestingly, it does not say anything about the virtues and wisemen that made the room famous. The contract mentions a Nativity («... la natività di nostro Signore Yeshu Cristo ...») and a Transfiguration («... la Trasfiguratione del prefato nostro Signore ...») as well as planets and animals for the ceiling («... le secte pianete figurate con quilli animali et altri ornamenti ...») <sup>94</sup> but, when referring to the other walls, it just says that Perugino had to paint all those figures that could fit («... pegnere in muro tucte quelle figure le quali ce anderanno ...»), according to the order of the story given by the *commissari* («... secondo l'ordine de la istoria la quale li serà data da dicti commissari ...»). Perugino then added a third religious painting to the ones commissioned, the one representing six Sybils and six Prophets overlooked by God.

The frescoes, probably carried out between 1498 and 1500<sup>95</sup>, were immediately recognized as a masterpiece. Giorgio Vasari underlined that it was praised more than any other work accomplished by Perugino in his hometown<sup>96</sup>. This was a judgment shared, a few years later, by Raffaello

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<sup>93</sup> Sartore (2013).

<sup>94</sup> In this essay, we will exclude the analysis of the allegorical representations of the planets, which decorate the ceiling: the Moon, Mercury, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Venus and the Sun (Apollo). They are all linked to the animals of the zodiac and are completed by a grotesque decoration inspired by the frescoes of Nero's *Domus Aurea*, which had been recently discovered: Dacos (1998).

<sup>95</sup> Some authors date the beginning of the works to the year 1496, when the decision to decorate the room was taken. Many interesting details have been recently added by Sartore who published the 1496 draft contract between the *Cambio* and Perugino. He agrees that much of the program was accomplished between 1498 and 1500: Sartore (2013), p. 532.

<sup>96</sup> Vasari (1967), II, p. 607. Starting from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though, the frescoes of the *Sala dell'Udienza* were sometimes harshly criticized (as, in general, Perugino's later works) only to be celebrated again in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the historiography on the *Cambio*: Scarpellini (1998a), pp. 10-11. On the artistic value of the frescoes: Scarpellini (1998b), pp. 84-88.

Borghini, who, in 1584, provided the first, very basic, iconographical description of the frescoes<sup>97</sup>. The work soon became a point of pride for the entire city.

Perugino was one of the most talented pupils of Andrea del Verrocchio in Florence, together with other giants such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Sandro Botticelli. Opinions about his work, though, are (and were) very diverse. During his lifetime he was celebrated as “the best painter in Italy”<sup>98</sup> and soon afterwards he was harshly criticized by Giorgio Vasari<sup>99</sup>, only to be “rehabilitated” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>100</sup>. For Vittoria Garibaldi:

Pietro Vannucci, il Perugino, was considered by his contemporaries to be perhaps the greatest of the protagonists responsible for renewing Italian art at the height of the Renaissance. The level he achieved in his art and the historic importance of his innovations were in fact so well understood in his own time that already by the end of the quattrocento he was unanimously regarded as “the best painter in Italy” [...] <sup>101</sup>.

On the contrary, according to Lionello Venturi, Perugino was the most traditionalist of modern painters and the most modern of traditional painters<sup>102</sup>. He was not capable of real innovation as, for example, Leonardo was. What is certain is that he excelled in the use of colors and chiaroscuro, looking for the perfection and elegance of the bodies as well as of the landscapes. His unmistakable style was at the same time his glory and his limit. Every figure in Perugino’s world is young, delicate, graceful, and a bit shy (even Cato!)<sup>103</sup>. This repetitiveness (which was al-

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<sup>97</sup> Borghini (1967), p. 365.

<sup>98</sup> «Il meglio maestro d’Italia» was the definition given by Agostino Chigi. See for example Venturi/Carandente (1955), p. 18.

<sup>99</sup> Paolucci (2004).

<sup>100</sup> Marabottini (2004).

<sup>101</sup> Garibaldi (1997), p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Venturi/Carandente (1955), p. 14.

<sup>103</sup> The fact that Perugino’s “heroes” are not heroic at all is an opinion efficaciously

ready criticized by Vasari) is at least in part due to the fact that he was not only a great artist but also a businessman: he “mass-produced” his paintings with the help of his assistants, which has been extensively shown<sup>104</sup>. In general, an impressive level of classicism is achieved in these paintings, combined with brilliant colors such as orange, green, yellow, blue, and pink. The figures dominate the scene while the landscape in the background is extremely simplified and luminous.

Francesco Maturanzio (1443-1518), on the other hand, was a very prominent humanist, a Latin and Ancient Greek scholar, a rhetorician and a poet, and (probably) a native of Perugia<sup>105</sup>. He completed his education in Ferrara, Vicenza, and, most importantly, in Greece, in order to study the Greek language and improve his pronunciation. After having traveled in Italy and abroad for many years, he was asked to come back to his hometown to teach oratory and poetry in 1498. It is certain that he is the author of both the iconographical program of the frescoes and of the inscriptions that “complete” them<sup>106</sup>.

### 3.3. *The Iconographical Program*

Even though the 1496 draft contract says that the iconographical program of the frescoes had to be decided by a specially appointed commission of delegated members and even though they were all «noble, wealthy

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expressed by Pietro Scarpellini: «Comunque in questa galleria di eroi c'è ben poco d'eroico. Tanto che, soffermandomi talvolta dinanzi a questi strani uomini d'arme dondolanti, con in testa complicati cimieri che assomigliano a vasi rovesciati, dinanzi a questi prodi alquanto femminei nelle fattezze e nei gesti stessi – vedi ad esempio il greco Leonida il quale va rinfoderando la spada con movenze da ballerina –, m'è sorto il sospetto che Pietro avesse voluto fare un po' d'ironia, magari pensando ai vari Bruto, Muzio Scevola, Camillo ed agli altri severi campioni di virtù repubblicane dipinti dal collega Ghirlandaio in Palazzo Vecchio. Ma era poi il Perugino capace di ironia? Resta il fatto che questa sfilata di uomini saggi, dotti, forti, giusti non è molto convincente circa la sua efficacia dimostrativa»: Scarpellini (1998b), p. 102.

<sup>104</sup> Mozzati (2004); Teza (2004), p. 118.

<sup>105</sup> Zappacosta (1970), pp. 8-9.

<sup>106</sup> Teza (2004), p. 115.

and cultured citizens from Perugia's ruling oligarchy»<sup>107</sup>, there seems to be no trace of their active participation in the development of the iconographical program, while there is unanimity in recognizing Francesco Maturanzio for this creative role.

On one side of the original main entrance to the *Sala dell'Udienza*, we can find Cato Uticensis, while on the opposite side a Transfiguration and a Nativity scene<sup>108</sup> can be immediately admired on entering the room. On the long walls the cardinal virtues and the wisemen of antiquity as well as the six Prophets and six Sybils are depicted.

Cato is one of the most celebrated symbols of moral liberty and justice<sup>109</sup>, having chosen to commit suicide rather than submit to the tyrant, Julius Caesar. According to the reconstruction proposed by Alberto Maria Sartore, Cato represents Maturanzio himself, who criticized the nonsensical fratricidal war between the two most powerful Perugian families, the Baglioni and the Oddi. Cato, in order to defend republican liberties against Caesar's tyranny, chose first exile and then death: his steadiness and bravery were examples to be followed. He is isolated from the rest of the great men depicted, in a certain way introducing them. Or better, he introduces the whole iconographical program, defining the moral standards that had to inspire the judges<sup>110</sup>. Furthermore, he is not represented as an old man (fig. 5), according to an iconography which spread by means of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, but as a man in his prime, following the *Dialogi* (1401) of the humanist Leonardo Bruni who challenged Dante by underlining that Cato died aged forty-eight. Cato, in a way, can be interpreted as Maturanzio's signature<sup>111</sup>. Finally comes the inscription, which seems to address the *auditores* directly

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<sup>107</sup> Sartore (2013), p. 529.

<sup>108</sup> The literary reference for the religious scenes is, according to a widespread opinion the *Divinae Institutiones* by Lactantius (beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent.): Guerrini (1998), pp. 126-127 and Guerrini (1992-1993).

<sup>109</sup> Guerrini (1998), p. 108, footnote 7. For example, see Dante, *Conv.* IV 6, 9 ff.

<sup>110</sup> Guerrini (1998), p. 108.

<sup>111</sup> Sartore (2004), p. 591.

(«Quisquis vel celebri facturus verba corona / surgis vel populo reddere iura paras»). It is in fact an invitation to leave out private affections because whose soul is troubled by love and hatred cannot maintain the right path («privatos pone affectus cui pectora versat/ aut amor aut odium recta tenere nequit»).



Fig. 5 – Pietro Perugino and workshop, *Catone*, Sala dell'Udienza, Collegio del Cambio (Perugia), fresco, 1498-1500. Photo courtesy of the Nobile Collegio del Cambio

Perugino was certainly helped by his assistants<sup>112</sup>, even though their roles, especially that of Raphael, are still debated. In general, though, there is agreement on the fact that Perugino coordinated the whole project and played a major role in realizing the frescoes, with the exception of the ceiling. Notwithstanding the success of the cycle, it was only in 1788 that someone thought it useful to transcribe the inscriptions that

<sup>112</sup> On the role of the group of local painters known as *Società del 1496*, see Sartore (2013), p. 531.

match the frescoes<sup>113</sup>. This combination of frescoes and inscriptions perfectly represents the entrance of humanism into the “real life” of law as early as the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The idea behind the inscriptions is typically Neoplatonist: perfection can only be achieved by combining the secular virtues celebrated in antiquity with the Christian ones.

The sources used by Maturanzio for the iconographical program have been successfully identified, with Cicero’s *De officiis* and *De inventione* being the most important. Raffaello Marchesi focused on the first<sup>114</sup>, partly on the basis of the theory that Maturanzio could have been the owner of an illuminated manuscript of the *De officiis* that Marchesi found in the municipal library of Perugia and dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, where the four virtues were represented together with eight wisemen of the past<sup>115</sup>. These wisemen, though, do not coincide with those chosen for the *Collegio del Cambio*<sup>116</sup>. Quite recently, it has been demonstrated that Maturanzio wrote, on the copy of the *De inventione* he possessed, some notes next to the parts devoted to the four moral virtues; it was therefore hypothesized that this was his main source for the iconography of the *Sala dell’Udienza*. In this youthful work, Cicero first defines virtue as a habit of mind in harmony with reason and the order of nature and then states that it consists of four parts: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance<sup>117</sup>. The first one, in turn, is made up of three parts: memory, intelligence and foresight<sup>118</sup>. These are the “qualities” that should be embodied by three great men of the past: Fabius Maximus, Socrates, and Numa Pompilius. The same is done for all virtues depicted in the *Sala*

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<sup>113</sup> Mariotti, in his *Lettere pittoriche* addressed to Baldassarre Orsini, wrote that he did it because they could not be easily read on the spot: Bon Valsassina (1987), p. 10.

<sup>114</sup> E.g. Cicero, *De officiis*, I, 5.

<sup>115</sup> Marchesi (1853), p. 358.

<sup>116</sup> Prudence (Fabius Maximus and Socrates); Justice (a Roman emperor and a French king); Fortitude (Mucius Scaevola and Hannibal); Temperance (Fabius Maximus again and Plato).

<sup>117</sup> Cicero, *De inventione*, II, LIII, 159.

<sup>118</sup> Cicero, *De inventione*, II, LIII, 159.

*dell' Udienza*, always choosing one Greek and two Romans, as if to underline the superiority, or the closer link, with classical Roman culture (fig. 6). In the inscription, Prudence reveals that she prevents humankind from doing things that one could regret and that she teaches them to look for truth and for hidden causes <sup>119</sup>.



Fig. 6 – Pietro Perugino and workshop, *Prudenza e Giustizia, con gli Uomini Illustri*, Sala dell'Udienza, Collegio del Cambio (Perugia), fresco, 1498-1500. Photo courtesy of the Nobile Collegio del Cambio

Next to Prudence, Perugino depicted Justice. The description of this virtue in Cicero's *De inventione* is the longest and most complex one <sup>120</sup>. He writes that Justice is a habit of mind («*habitus animi*») preserving the common advantage («*communi utilitate*»). He then defines the law of nature («*naturae ius*») as the law which is not born of opinion («*non opinio*

<sup>119</sup> «quid generi humano prae/stas dea dic age praesto / ne facias quae mox / facta dolore queas / scrutari verum doceo / causasque latentes / et per me poterit / nil nisi rite geri».

<sup>120</sup> Cicero, *De inventione*, II, LIII-LIV, 160-162. For the English translation, see Hubbell (1960), pp. 329-331.

genuit»), consisting of a kind of innate instinct which includes religion, duty, gratitude, revenge, reverence and truth («religionem, pietatem, gratiam, vindicationem, observantiam, veritatem»). Then comes customary law, which is a principle loosely linked to nature, fed and strengthened by usage («quod aut leviter a natura tractum aluit et maius fecit usus»). Finally, statute law is written law, the one which is published for the people to observe («Lege ius est, quod in eo scripto, quod populo expositum est, ut observet, continetur»). According to Francesco Sartore, the first “part”<sup>121</sup> of Justice, i.e. natural law, is represented by Furius Camillus; the second one, i.e. customary law, by Pittacus of Mytilene; and the third one, i.e. written law, by Trajan. We will explore this point in more depth later. The inscription related to Justice reveals that if the gods would create every man to be similar to the three depicted, no evil deed would exist anymore in the whole world, and that when she is honored peoples flourish, while without her, what was once great is ruined<sup>122</sup>.

As far as Fortitude is concerned, Cicero defines it as the quality by which one undertakes dangerous tasks and endures hardship. It is divided into four parts: high-mindedness (Lucius Siccus), confidence/patience (considered to be a single attribute in the frescoes<sup>123</sup> and represented by Leonidas) and perseverance (Horatius Cocles)<sup>124</sup>. The inscription that matches Fortitude says she does not fear anything while defending the homeland and beloved relatives and that death, which terrifies others, is welcome to her<sup>125</sup>. Finally, Temperance is described as the firm control exercised by reason over lust and other improper impulses. Its parts are: continence (Scipio Africanus), clemency (Pericles), and modesty (Cincin-

<sup>121</sup> Sartore (2004), pp. 591-592.

<sup>122</sup> «si tribus his cunctos si / miles pia numina gignant / nil toto sceleris nil / sit in orbe mali / me culta augentur / populi belloque togaque / et sine me fuerant quae / modo magna ruunt».

<sup>123</sup> Sartore (2004), pp. 591 and 593 (footnote 34).

<sup>124</sup> Cicero, *De inventione*, II, LIV, 163.

<sup>125</sup> «Cedere cuncta meis pulsa / et disiecta lacertis / magna satis fuerint / tres documenta viri / nil ego pro patria timeo / charisque propinquis / quaeque alios terret / mors mihi grata venit».

natus)<sup>126</sup>. The last inscription says that this “goddess” rules the customs and moderates the passions of the soul<sup>127</sup>.

### 3.4. *The Wisemen*

The inspiration for the choice of the wisemen (or famous men, or virtuous men) to be depicted, as well as their connection with the different virtues, is not clear. According to widespread opinion, the main source used by Maturanzio to identify the wisemen was the classical work *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri IX* by Valerius Maximus<sup>128</sup>, which has to be understood within the context of Augustus' appeal to ancient morality (*mos maiorum*). The author provided a repertoire of *exempla* that was destined to be used for centuries<sup>129</sup>. Most chapters are divided into two parts, one providing the Roman *exempla*, the other foreign ones. We will focus here only on the virtuous men linked to Justice<sup>130</sup>.

Furius Camillus can be found, for instance, in Book VI.5, the one entitled *De iustitia*. While the consul Camillus was laying siege to Falerii, a teacher of the besieged city took a group of boys belonging to the best families to the Roman encampment. He convinced the students that they were going for a walk but, in reality, he wanted to surrender to the enemy. The Roman Senate, however, did not take advantage of this situation. The Romans sent the boys back to their families while the teacher was brought back to his city in chains. As a consequence, the

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<sup>126</sup> Cicero, *De inventione*, II, LIV, 164.

<sup>127</sup> «dic dea quae tibi vis mo/res rego pectoris aestus / tempero et his alios / cum volo reddo pares / me sequere et qua te su/peres ratione docebo / quid tu quod valeas / vincere maius erit».

<sup>128</sup> Guerrini (1985). On the role of Maturanzio, pp. 59-60.

<sup>129</sup> Faranda (1971), pp. 22 ff.

<sup>130</sup> The connections between the virtues and Valerius Maximus' *Memorabilia* have already been described by Roberto Guerrini: Guerrini (1985), pp. 50-60. This article, though, wants to provide a more in-depth analysis of the iconography of Justice, taking into account the function of the *Sala dell'Udienza* and the important discoveries by Alberto Maria Sartore (first of all Maturanzio's copy of the *De inventione* and Perugino's 1496 preliminary contract).

Falisci were conquered but not by means of weapons but because of the righteous behavior of the Romans. According to the above-mentioned scheme, Furius Camillus should represent natural law. Pittacus from Mytilene (Book VI.5.ext. I), on the other hand, was the “foreign” virtuous man in the chapter of Valerius Maximus’ masterpiece devoted to justice. Pittacus refused to remain a tyrant after having obtained the desired victory against the Athenians and also refused to be rewarded with half of the re-conquered territory. He should be taken to represent customary law, according to Cicero’s division. The choice of Trajan to represent written law is even more puzzling. Trajan, who died in 117 AD, cannot be found, of course, in Valerius Maximus’ work, which was composed at the time of emperor Tiberius. However, there is a long tradition linking Trajan to justice<sup>131</sup>. The story of Trajan postponing his military campaign in order to hear the case of a poor widow whose son was unjustly slaughtered was told in various versions throughout the Middle Ages. It was so successful that Dante included this story in the *Divine Comedy* (Purg., X) and put the *optimus princeps* in Paradise among the righteous ones (Par., XX), even though he was a pagan, because, according to a widespread view<sup>132</sup>, Trajan’s soul was admitted in Paradise thanks to the prayers of Pope Gregory the Great who heard about the story of the widow and prayed to God for his salvation<sup>133</sup>. Why Trajan should represent written law, though, is not easy to understand. Why not Justinian, for instance? And what about Furius Camillus and Pittacus? Is it possible that Maturanzio used sources that historiography has not thus far taken into account?

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<sup>131</sup> And he was very often represented as the personification of fair justice: «Between the years 1320 and 1550, over 80 representations of the pagan ruler were created, narrating the legend of the Emperor who earned his own salvation by demonstrating a sense of empathy»: Jonca (2020), p. 55.

<sup>132</sup> For example, in Jacopo da Varagine’s *Legenda Aurea* (13<sup>th</sup> century): Jonca (2020).

<sup>133</sup> Trajan can be found also in the town halls and courtrooms of the Southern Netherlands in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century, but the story told was slightly different: Martyn (2006), pp. 346-347.

#### 4. Conclusion

On the basis of the description provided, what kind of “visual language” can we say that the money-changers of Perugia chose to decorate their brand new headquarters within the most important public building of the city at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century? Possible answers must take into account three factors: the position of the guild's headquarters within the city landscape, the choice of painter, and the choice of iconographical program. Obtaining some rooms in the *Palazzo dei Priori*, and appointing Perugino, one of the most famous painters of the period and a point of pride for the whole city, demonstrated the economic and political power of the guild. The iconographical program was entrusted entirely to one of the leading intellectuals of 15<sup>th</sup> century Perugia, an internationally renowned humanist. The cardinal virtues were represented in the most traditional way. They were (and still are) immediately recognizable. Not so the wisemen, whose names were written below the figures. Their connection to the cardinal virtues is sometimes puzzling<sup>134</sup> and was probably not clear even to a 16<sup>th</sup>-century audience, but it was clear that the frescoes made reference to high learning (the one possessed by educated scholars like Maturanzio) and noble virtues (the ones that the *uditori* should possess).

But what about law and justice?

In the very same period, in the Southern Netherlands, town halls were typically decorated with paintings able to inspire the judges by means of *exempla iustitiae*<sup>135</sup>. According to Georges Martyn, they had to have a didactic aim, showing the consequences of both just and unjust decisions; they had to tell a story, providing a narrative of events including several actors; and, finally, they had to be commissioned by an institution with judicial power<sup>136</sup>. Examples of this iconography include the Last Judgment, the Judgment of Salomon, and the Judgment of Cambyses. The

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<sup>134</sup> Guerrini (1998), p. 107.

<sup>135</sup> Gialdroni (2019).

<sup>136</sup> Martyn (2006), pp. 336-337.

Last Judgment though, was by far the most common *exemplum* in Germany and the Low Countries in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century while in France one of the most common representations was the crucified Christ<sup>137</sup>. Martyn arrives at the conclusion that these *exempla* – intended for judges, counsellors of the provinces, and aldermen – demonstrate the strong influence of the Church on secular justice and also a kind of connection with former magical and mystical settings where justice was administered in the Middle Ages<sup>138</sup> (at least in Northern Europe).

Nothing like this can be seen in the *Sala dell'Udienza* in Perugia. There is no example that might have warned the *uditori* of the terrible consequences of an unjust sentence. In the *Udienza* of the *Cambio* the Christian religion is clearly very present but not to warn nor to frighten the judges, only to inspire them<sup>139</sup>. According to Caterina Bon Valsassina, the religious scenes represent the humanity of Christ (Nativity), which means Justice; his divinity (Transfiguration), which means Grace; and the eternity of God's Church (Prophets and Sybils)<sup>140</sup>. The same frescoes can also be interpreted as representing the three theological virtues: Faith (Transfiguration), Hope (Prophets and Sybils), and Charity/Love (Nativity)<sup>141</sup>. This last interpretation of the room depicting all seven virtues would have a precedent in the paintings by Piero del Pollaiuolo and Botticelli for the *Sala dell'Udienza* of the Florentine *Mercanzia*<sup>142</sup> and would perfectly match Maturanzio's ideal of the *christianus*

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<sup>137</sup> Martyn (2006), p. 345.

<sup>138</sup> Martyn (2006), p. 340.

<sup>139</sup> «dovendo queste (le virtù cardinali) essere fondamento d'ogni legislazione [...] bene sta, che le si veggano qui delineate, quasi ispiratrici del retto e del giusto, sia nelle ragioni del traffico pecuniario, sia nelle controversie e nei giudizi»: Marchesi (1853), pp. 441-442.

<sup>140</sup> Bon Valsassina (1987), p. 42.

<sup>141</sup> The only author to explicitly propose this interpretation seems to me to be Elvio Lunghi: Lunghi (2004), p. 16.

<sup>142</sup> *Supra*, footnote 67. Florence and Perugia had a very strong connection and Perugino himself was apprenticed to Verrocchio's workshop, together with Botticelli, in the very same years.

*vir*, who must pursue both cardinal and theological virtues, on the basis of the assumption that Christianity showed the world true justice and rebuilt human life on the two fundamental pillars of *pietas* and *humanitas*<sup>143</sup>.

For the money-changers of Perugia, “true justice” was not to punish criminals but rather to rapidly solve the disputes on the basis of mercantile customs and equity. According to the statutes of the Perugian merchants, judgments should take place «...summarie, simpliciter et de plano...»<sup>144</sup>, «...de iure, veritate et equitate et secundum bonam consuetudinem...»<sup>145</sup>. In the *Sala dell’Udienza*, Lady Justice told the judges that she “embraces truth and equity” («veritatem aequitatemque amplector»), while Cato invited them to leave behind passions in order to follow the right path. This is the message that the merchants wanted to give, this is the image of mercantile law and justice that they wanted to “project”: no violent scenes, no punishments, no references to the “law books” (i.e. to the *ius commune*), but rather a kind of harmony, an invitation to moderation, or better “temperance”. The *Cambio*’s whole decoration, including the inscriptions, seem to visually represent what the Ragusan merchant Benedetto Cotrugli wrote in 1458 about mercantile justice: «Et però uno de li precepti mercantili deve essere che li giuditii loro non debbano essere de rigore iusticie, né prociedere ad pene, ma di equietà et co’ moderatione»<sup>146</sup>.

In a period in which books were available to a quite restricted elite,

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<sup>143</sup> Zappacosta (1970), p. 40. However, we must underline that the 1496 draft contract already foresaw a Nativity and a Transfiguration but not the cardinal virtues. Roberto Guerrini, who analyzed the *exempla virtutis* of the *Cambio* before the recent discoveries by Alberto Maria Sartore, also recognized in the combination of religious and lay paintings a typical humanistic attitude, even though he did not propose a correspondence between the three religious paintings and the three theological virtues: Guerrini (1985), p. 59.

<sup>144</sup> According to the 1377 Statute of the *Cambio*: see *supra*, par. 2.2.

<sup>145</sup> According to the 1403 Statute of the *Mercanzia*: see *supra*, par. 2.1.

<sup>146</sup> Cotrugli (1573, ed. 2016), p. 54. The book was written in 1458 but first published only in 1573.

thanks to figurative art, the members of the *Cambio* successfully communicated to a vast audience their own understanding of what ‘their’ justice was (or should be).

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