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BY
LAURA ROSADA BEVILACQUA

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List of abbreviations

DAGR:	DAREMBERG C. and SAGLIO E., <i>Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines</i> , Akademische Druck, Graz 1969.
DELL:	ERNOUT, A. and MEILLET, A., <i>Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine</i> , Klincksieck, Paris 1967.
DRR:	ADKINS, L. and ADKINS R. A., <i>Dictionary of Roman Religion</i> , Facts on File, New York 1996.
EO:	AA.VV. <i>Enciclopedia oraziana</i> , Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, Roma 1996
EV:	AA. VV., <i>Enciclopedia virgiliana</i> , Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma 1984-1991
LGRM:	ROSCHER W. H. (ed.), <i>Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie</i> , B. G. Teubner, Leipzig 1902-1909.
LIMC:	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> , Artemis, Zürich-München 1981-1997.
OLD:	P. G. W. GLARE (ed.), <i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> , Clarendon Press, Oxford 1994.
RE:	PAULY, A. F. and WISSOWA, G. (ed.), <i>Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Druckenmüller, Stuttgart 1893.
TLL:	BAYERISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN (ed.), <i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> , München 1894-.

The abbreviations for Greek authors are those found in the Liddell-Scott-Jones, while those for Roman authors are the same as in the Oxford Latin Dictionary.

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And now, on to the next chapter (hopefully one with less footnotes)!

Introduction

The Roman world, with its uniquely intricate blend of religion and politics, has long fascinated scholars seeking to understand how ancient societies conceived of the divine, the moral, and the civic. At the center of my dissertation is a set of eight personified and divinized figures—*concordia*, *fides*, *honor*, *mens*, *pietas*, *salus*, *victoria*, *virtus*—which Cicero refers to collectively through the recurrent term *utilitas*. Hence, I labeled them “*utilitates*.”

These figures, often dismissed as mere rhetorical abstractions or “minor” deities, held a unique position within the Roman religious system: they were civic virtues divinized, worshipped in official cults, and integrated into the ethical life of the Republic. This dissertation re-examines these *utilitates*, and I argue for their centrality in Roman religious thought and their significance as active agents in shaping public morality and civic identity.

For much of the history of scholarship, Roman personifications like Cicero’s *utilitates* have been misinterpreted and misunderstood through the lens of Christian theology. Early Christian polemicists, most notably Augustine, framed these deities as superfluous or absurd, the product of God’s gifts or an otherwise fragmented view of the divine. This dismissal profoundly shaped the reception of Roman religion in later centuries, where the *utilitates* came to be seen not fully as gods, but as abstract ideas, devoid of cultic or civic significance. The scholarly tradition, influenced by this legacy, has often continued to treat personifications as mere literary devices or cultural curiosities rather than as fully-fledged divine figures.¹

¹ See the full discussion starting at p. 28ff. Contrary to standard academic practice, the literature review is not situated in the introduction but is instead integrated into the first chapter, following a renewed contextual analysis of the primary sources. This structural choice reflects the centrality of the historiography to the research problem: past interpretations of Cicero’s *utilitates* have often been shaped by anachronistic assumptions and have failed to account for their function as personified virtues and divinities within late Republican religious and philosophical frameworks. A reexamination of the primary evidence was therefore necessary before positioning this study in relation to prior scholarship.

This rather Christianized perspective had two major consequences. First, it has led to the categorization of these deities as “abstractions,” thereby stripping them of their religious reality and reducing them to rhetorical flourishes. Second, it has obscured the emic, or internal, logic of Roman religion, which was grounded not in belief but in practice, not in “doctrine” but in action. The Roman gods—including the *utilitates*—were not distant, ineffable beings, but active members of the civic community, shaping and reflecting the moral order of the *res publica*.

While many studies of ancient religion tend to emphasize the continuities between Greek and Roman systems, this dissertation deliberately focuses on Roman personifications in their own cultural and religious context, without engaging in systematic comparison with their Greek counterparts. Although figures such as *Homonoia* or *Pistis* may appear analogous to *Concordia* or *Fides*, a closer examination reveals that these concepts functioned differently within their respective societies, shaped by distinct political, philosophical, and ritual frameworks. Moreover, the Roman *utilitates* form a unique, cohesive group, explicitly identified by Cicero and deeply embedded in Roman civic religion, without a directly comparable set in Greek culture. Comparative analysis, while valuable, risks obscuring the specific emic logic that governs Roman thought and practice.² As such, I have chosen to privilege depth over breadth, offering a detailed reconstruction of Roman perspectives on divine personifications, which I argue can only be fully appreciated within the specific social and religious fabric of the *res publica* from the viewpoint of time and space.

This dissertation seeks to somehow correct this misreading by adopting an emic approach to the *utilitates*, treating them not as inconsequential abstract concepts, but as divine agents within the Roman religious and social framework. Drawing on methodologies from historical anthropology and the study of Roman religion as orthopraxy, I argue that these

² I was guided by the principles in Lincoln (2018).

personifications were essential to Roman civic life. They were not passive symbols, but dynamic forces that embodied and enforced the values of the civic community of Rome. This is true within the limits of the late Republic: with the advent of the empire, everything changed, including the perception of these divinized virtues. Before that, however, their divinity was not just a literary conceit, but—perhaps primarily—a religious fact, attested by temples, rituals, and official cults.

On many levels, literary, religious and pragmatic, central to my argument is the concept of metonymy: the names of these deities—*fides*, *virtus*, *concordia*, and so on—refer to the abstract quality, to the god who embodies and enacts that quality, and to the correspondent literary personification. This multilayered metonymic structure allowed the Romans to somehow “experience” their moral ideals as living presences within the city, to see the divine not as separate from the human, but as immanent in the practices and values that sustained the community, and to employ these figures in their poetry and allow for more nuanced texts.

A central concept underpinning my analysis of the *utilitates* is Maurizio Bettini’s notion of “distributed identity” (2015b), which offers a powerful lens through which to understand Roman divine figures that lack traditional mythological narratives. Yet this absence of narrative does not imply insignificance. Roman deities, and especially personified virtues like the *utilitates*, are best understood through their multiple manifestations across various cultural domains. This approach challenges the assumption that a god’s significance must be tied to narrative elaboration, and instead proposes that identity can be dispersed and reconstituted in different, yet complementary, spheres of Roman life. Bettini’s model posits that divine identity in Roman polytheism is not unified or essentialized, but rather constructed through a network of associations—onomastic, ritual, legal, spatial, and—I add—ethical. A deity such as *Fides*, for example, does not require a mythic cycle to be recognized and venerated; her identity is “distributed” across the practices that invoke her,

the temple that houses her cult, the language that names her, the legal contracts or the solemn promises sworn in her name, and the moral expectations associated with her virtue. *Mens*, *Salus*, and *Virtus* function similarly: their divine status is affirmed not through storytelling but through presence—in temples, public rituals, oaths, laws, and civic commemorations.

This distribution allows the *utilitates* to function simultaneously as moral ideals, divine forces, and practical mechanisms of social regulation. Their divine identity is experienced rather than narrated, making them immanent in Roman daily life. A Roman citizen encountering *Concordia* was not necessarily engaging with a mythic figure, but with a divine embodiment of social harmony, publicly visible in statues, invoked in political speeches, evoked in poetry and commemorated in acts of religious devotion.

By applying this model, I argue that the *utilitates* should be recognized as central figures in Roman religious thought, whose “distributed identity” reflects and reinforces the integration of religious, ethical, and political life in the Republic.

This dissertation is organized into three substantive chapters, each addressing a specific dimension of the *utilitates*, followed by a brief epilogue.

The first chapter challenges the Christianized readings of Roman personifications that have dominated scholarship since Late Antiquity. It begins with an analysis of the interpretive frameworks introduced by early Christian authors, particularly Augustine, who sought to diminish the significance of Roman civic deities. This chapter then turns to Cicero’s *De natura deorum* and *De legibus*, reading six fundamental passages through an emic, anthropological lens that focuses on religious practice (orthopraxy) rather than belief. Here, I demonstrate that Cicero’s use of *utilitas* and his discussion of *fides*, *virtus*, *concordia*, and others are grounded in a specifically Roman understanding of divine agency as embedded in civic life. I also analyze the cultic evidence for these deities, showing how temples, rituals, and public vows affirmed their status as gods. The chapter concludes by

developing a theoretical framework that integrates the “distributed identity” into our understanding of these figures, establishing them as religious facts rather than rhetorical fictions.

The second chapter then explores the literary representation of the *utilitates*, with a focus on Latin poetry, especially the Aeneid. I examine how Virgil in particular used these personifications to evoke civic and moral ideals, often exploiting the ambiguity between abstract quality and divine presence. A central concern of this chapter is the editorial challenge of capitalization in modern texts: should *virtus* be rendered *Virtus* when it may be both a concept and a god? I propose a typographical compromise, following Anna J. Clark’s suggestion of using small caps to signal the multilayered nature of these figures, and edit it VIRTUS. Through close readings of key passages, I show how Virgil may have sustained this ambiguity deliberately, allowing his audiences (who listened to this poetry, other than reading it) to experience the *utilitates* as both ethical principles and divine forces. This chapter argues that the poetic use of the *utilitates* reflects their “distributed identity,” reinforcing their relevance across multiple discursive registers—religious, civic, and literary.

The third chapter shifts from textual and cultic analysis to the ethical function of the *utilitates* in Roman society. Drawing primarily on *De officiis*, I explore how these personified virtues served as moral compasses, guiding Romans in their public duties and private decisions. I analyze particularly the figure of Marcus Atilius Regulus, who embodies *fides* through his self-sacrifice. This chapter demonstrates how the *utilitates* operate within a framework of social mechanisms, helping individuals navigate competing obligations and reinforcing the primacy of communal well-being over private interest. I argue that by worshipping these deities, the Romans were not merely honoring divine forces but internalizing the civic values they represented. The chapter concludes with a discussion on

how *utilitas*, as a concept, encompasses not just what is useful, but what is fitting—aligning personal action with collective good.

In the epilogue, I consider the figure of *Pudicitia* as a potential addition to the group of *utilitates*. Although Cicero does not seem to include her explicitly in the list, she shares key features with the other personifications: she is a moral ideal, a literary figure, and a goddess with an official cult. I explore how *Pudicitia* functions both as a personal and public virtue, and how her cult influenced Roman conceptions of gender, honor, and civic participation. This reflection broadens the scope of the dissertation, suggesting that the category of *utilitates* may be more expansive and dynamic than Cicero's texts alone suggest.

While this dissertation is grounded in the study of ancient Rome, its implications extend beyond the historical context. The civic virtues embodied by the *utilitates*—loyalty, honor, concord, justice, and the like—remain central to modern debates about citizenship, governance, and the role of shared values in sustaining political communities. In an era marked by polarization, the question of how societies define and uphold common ideals is as urgent as ever.

The Roman model, with its emphasis on the integration of religious, moral, and civic life, offers a perspective on how virtues can be both collective and divine, both aspirational and institutionalized. By recovering the *utilitates* as vital components of Roman civic religion, this dissertation invites reflection on the ways in which public virtues are cultivated, personified, and sustained in contemporary societies.

Moreover, the methodological stance of this study—rejecting anachronistic categories, embracing emic perspectives, and attending to the intersections of religion, language, and politics—offers a model for engaging with ancient cultures on their own terms. It challenges modern scholars to reconsider the boundaries between the sacred and the secular, between

belief and practice, and to recognize the fluid and dynamic nature of divine agency in historical contexts.

Chapter I: Cicero's *utilitates* and their role within Roman religious context

In this first chapter, I explore the group of personifications that I refer to as *utilitates*, following a suggestion in Cicero's wording, i.e., the recurrence of the notion of *utilitas*. It is crucial to re-examine the primary sources with a fresh perspective to assess whether previous scholarship has attended to the relevant religious and philosophical context. To present the material clearly throughout the chapter, the discussion occurs on two levels:

- (1) that of Cicero himself as a politician, philosopher, and augur, and
- (2) that of previous and current scholars who analyzed his writings and wrote about the *utilitates* in particular, and the Roman personifications in general, both in their literary and religious aspects.

Returning to Cicero's primary texts is essential because contemporary interpretations of the *utilitates* have been significantly influenced by faulty critical analyses that scholars have sometimes presented as facts, even though they have occasionally been inaccurate. This chapter aims to deepen the understanding of these personifications, both in their philosophical discussions and in the context of Roman religion. By thoroughly examining six important sections from Cicero's writings, which interact with existing scholarly discussions about personifications, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of his views on *utilitates*. While the quantity of primary sources might appear restricted, a thorough examination of these excerpts can uncover significant insights.

This chapter moves away from the conventional literature review format. In a later section, we will discuss the hermeneutical issues related to these personifications, emphasize the importance of avoiding anachronistic interpretations, and promote culturally sensitive methodologies for studying ancient religions. This chapter seeks to eliminate any biases or misconceptions that might have obscured the reader's comprehension of the *utilitates* by presenting the key sources alongside their earlier scholarly evaluations in a clear and structured manner.

De-Christianizing the *utilitates*

The widely accepted perspective in the contemporary understanding of Roman religion, particularly following research conducted during the 1980s, is that it focused on rituals rather than beliefs (*sur le faire plutôt que sur le croire*), or on the interplay between the two aspects, as John Scheid has famously pointed out. This viewpoint highlights a critical reality, especially before the empire's establishment and the rise of imperial cults. Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand that this viewpoint mainly emphasizes the way ancient Romans perceived the practical elements of religious observance. Belief or faith was not central to Roman religion; instead, the emphasis was on the actions undertaken as part of religious observance.

Understanding how scholars came to this conclusion is crucial because this results from weighing up the information we possess about the Romans, primarily against Christian beliefs. The contrast cannot but show, as Mackey (2022, 3) simplistically yet effectively puts it, that

through hundreds of years of their history, Romans like Petilius and Cornelius just did stuff because that was the stuff they were supposed to do. Roman religion was a matter of objective institutions that prescribed physical gestures. To look for emotion or cognition, especially belief, was to import “Christianizing” prejudices about what religion was supposed to be and to ignore the empirical realities of Roman practice.

Recognizing that various preconceptions have become deeply rooted in how particular academic subjects are taught and studied is critical. For this reason, I title this section of my chapter “De-Christianizing the *utilitates*.” My research aims to challenge the inherited biases of Christianity by adopting the approach of Jesper Svenbro, who was the first to apply the concept of “decolonization” to a topic related to ancient religions. His approach involves maintaining a critical distance from ethnocentrism when studying any subject from antiquity. Specifically, I seek to disentangle the personifications I, following Cicero, define *utilitates* within Roman religion from extraneous cultural influences (primarily Christian) and, finally, examine them through the lens of historical anthropology.

The discussion developed in the following piece of scholarship is worth mentioning as it provides a methodological basis for my arguments. In Palme and Svenbro (1979), the discussion revolves primarily around the problem of hermeneutics, i.e., the science of interpretation, intended as the action of explaining the meaning of something first on a personal or subjective level and later, and more importantly, on the level intended by the author or the original context. This pretext allows Palme to interview Svenbro on his book *La parole et le marbre. Aux origines de la poésie grecque*, about Aristotle's *Poetics* and his views of this particular text as a watershed moment after which the literature becomes an "autonomous object."¹

In his critique of the academic practice of categorizing authors under a singular label of "literature," Svenbro presents a compelling argument against the historical and geographical ethnocentrism underlying this tendency. As per his example, he considers it a limit to have under the same category of "literature" both Homer and Saint-John Perse, the pseudonym of Alexis Léger, a French diplomat and writer who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1960. Svenbro points out—and with good reason—that there is little in common between Homer and Saint-John Perse and that even grouping Homer and Pindar in the same category would be problematic, given how each of them experienced very different poetry functions in, again, very different contexts, in their time and society.

Svenbro's explanation for this phenomenon is presented with a compelling metaphor: classical antiquity has often been used as a mirror for later societies to recognize themselves, leading to a colonization of the past. In other words, investigating cultures in former times has served as an instrument of reflection rather than an object of study.

In this same vein as Svenbro, therefore, I seek to analyze the subject matter, Cicero's *utilitates*, without superimposing Christian or contemporary interpretative assumptions upon them,

¹ Cf. Palme and Svenbro (1979, 98ff.). The interview has been translated into Italian; the original version can be found in the Swedish journal *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*, n.45, 1976, 340-50.

i.e., trying to explore the sources for what they are *per se*, rather than seeking a reflection of such assumptions.

Achieving such a goal is feasible but presents some challenges. The most significant obstacle is that, unlike ethnographers, as philologists, we can only rely on written records to produce a scientific and hypothetical description of the Romans and their culture rather than direct interaction or interviews. However, the valuable methodology developed by Georges Dumézil and subsequent scholars in the field of religious anthropology provides a practical solution. Merely turning to philological interpretation is insufficient; instead, we must adopt an emic perspective and analyze texts within the cultural context of the city of Rome at a specific point in time.² I approach my research with this mindset, conducting a supplemented philological reading of primary sources that respects the Roman mentality as much as possible.

The divine nature of Cicero's *utilitates*

In this section, I intend to discuss how Cicero's *utilitates* fit into the system of Roman polytheism. Cicero addresses this topic in several sections of his *De natura deorum*. However, the nature of this work presents its own set of challenges, which I lay out before delving into the texts as a *caveat*.

"On the Nature of the Gods," written in the autumn of 45 BC as an Aristotelian dialogue, comprises three books. Despite the delicate nature of Cicero's personal and public life during its creation, this dialogue remains one of his most important philosophical works, featuring speeches at Cotta's cottage.³ Cicero significantly contributed to Roman culture by making Greek philosophy

² The concept of "emic" that I refer to is borrowed from cultural anthropology, specifically from Kenneth Lee Pike. This term was derived from the linguistic opposition of phonetic/phonemic, which refers to the function of a sound in a word phonetically and semantically, respectively. When we read texts emically, we are approaching the study or description of a language or culture in terms of its internal elements rather than relying on any external scheme. Essentially, we aim to interpret our primary sources in a way that is meaningful to the native point of view rather than relying on a theoretical framework provided by our cultural categories. See Pike (1967), Geertz (2008) and the paragraph "Emic and Etic" in Bettini and Short (2018, 11-17) with relative bibliography.

³ This philosophical treatise was composed between 45 and 44 BC, a period marked by Cicero's tumultuous personal life, which included a divorce from his second wife and the tragic loss of his daughter. Against this backdrop of instability, Cicero was also actively engaged in various anti-Caesarian plots.

more accessible. He effectively utilized his experiences as a foreign student in Greece to create a tailored Latin philosophical vocabulary. While his intention was presumably to inform and support the *res publica*, combining his personal experiences and Roman traditions inevitably affected his translation and thought process. He quoted poetry, *exempla*, juridical, and even religious traditions that belonged to Rome and were, consequently, more relatable to Roman readers.

Cicero's main focus was on the importance of Greek philosophy for Rome, and he worked to connect Greek and Roman cultures. It is vital to recognize his secondary objective—which feels more like an obligation—to educate his fellow citizens and uphold the state's decorum. Notably, although many philosophical debates in this work relate to what we now call “theology,” they are approached with a focus on Rome's socio-political backdrop. This should guide our understanding.

Before delving into the sources, it is also of great consequence to note that Cicero's personal beliefs are apparent in his views, but this is not necessarily disadvantageous to our examination. In the dialogue, Cotta respectfully challenges the Stoic philosophy represented by Balbus and the Epicurean principles expressed by Velleius. Cicero's philosophical views are in harmony with the Academics and their rational skepticism; however, as a Roman citizen and augur, he deeply respects the religious traditions of the state. He recognizes the significance of Stoic teachings within the framework of Roman life. More specifically, he recognizes the literary tension of the dialogue between Balbus and Cotta, which according to Wynne (2019, 112), “puts the spotlight on the adequacy of Stoic theology to moderate Roman religion.”⁴

The first text to be considered is Balbus's. The overall theme of discussion revolves around the relationship between the gods and their names, or more specifically, the names associated with the benefits the gods bestow upon humans. Balbus elaborates on this:⁵

⁴ Wynne (2019, 112-113) also remarks —and I agree— that “both Balbus and Cotta are theists and supporters of the traditional religion, but Cotta is the arch-traditionalist, and Balbus is the would-be reformer of related beliefs.” Cf. note 2 for assumptions against this.

⁵ Cic. N.D. 2.60-61. Cf. Pease (1968, *ad loc.*). Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

Multae autem aliae naturae deorum ex magnis beneficiis eorum non sine causa et a Graeciae sapientissimis et a maioribus nostris constitutae nominataeque sunt. quicquid enim magnam utilitatem generi adferret humano, id non sine divina bonitate erga homines fieri arbitrabantur. itaque tum illud quod erat a deo natum nomine ipsius dei nuncupabant, ut cum fruges Cererem appellamus vinum autem Liberum, ex quo illud Terenti “sine Cerere et Libero friget Venus,” tum autem res ipsa, in qua vis inest maior aliqua, sic appellatur ut ea ipsa vis nominetur deus, ut Fides ut Mens, quas in Capitolio dedicatas videmus proxime a M. Aemilio Scauro, ante autem ab <A.> Atilio Calatino erat Fides consecrata. vides Virtutis templum vides Honoris a M. Marcello renovatum, quod multis ante annis erat bello Ligustico a Q. Maximo dedicatum. quid Opis quid Salutis quid Concordiae Libertatis Victoriae; quarum omnium rerum quia vis erat tanta ut sine deo regi non posset, ipsa res deorum nomen optinuit.

Many other natures of the gods, thanks to their great favors, were established and given a name by both the wisest of Greeks and our ancestors, not without good reason. For they reckoned that anything which brought great benefit to humankind would not happen without the favor of the gods toward men. Thus, on the one hand they called by the same name as the god what was born from the very god, e.g. when we call the crops “Ceres” and the wine “Liber” whence that line of Terence (Eun. 732) “without Ceres and Liber Venus freezes”; on the other hand, the very matter, in which there is some greater force, is called “god,” like Fides, like Mens, whose temples we see on the Capitoline Hill recently dedicated by M. Aemilius Scaurus, while *Fides*’ had been consecrated before by A. Atilius Calatinus. You see the temple of Virtus, you see the renovated one to Honos by M. Marcellus, which many years before, during the Ligustic war, was dedicated by Q. Maximus. What about the temples of Ops, Salus, Concordia, Libertas, Victoria? Since the strength of all of them was such that it could not be administered without a god, the very matters obtained the name of gods.

Balbus starts his argument by referring to the gods as benevolent, as he counters the Epicurean doctrines on the matter; in the previous sections of the speech, the discussion was around the proof of divine existence and then about the divine nature, intended as its form and in its providential activity.

Moving on to the specific topic of the passage—the correlation between the names of the gods and what they produce or bestow—the overarching concept is that the gods bring benefits (*utilitates*) to humanity. Then, the reasoning appears to center on the connection between the type of reality and quality, as if there were a metonymic relationship between the divinity and their name. This nomenclature feature makes the *utilitates* unique and distinguishes them from other Roman

gods: from an aural perspective,⁶ the god and the matter they confer share the same name.⁷ The *utilitas* is what provides the divine status of such matters.

The examples are crystal-clear and show how other types of personifications—which do not share the same name as their corresponding matter—still belong to this same metonymical category of gods: Ceres-crops and Liber-wine present the same interdependence there should be between the name of the god and the matter it represents.⁸ Apparently, the wisest among Greek and Roman ancestors were aware of it, meaning they recognized the gods as gods manifesting through their benefits.⁹ This is congruent with Roman religion: there is a process to recognizing divinity as such, and it is an entirely human undertaking. Unless men acknowledge their existence, there are no gods.¹⁰

In the passage, the nexus *tum autem* introduces the *utilitates* as matters (*res*) which have in themselves a *vis maior*. So far, qualities such as *fides*, *mens*, *virtus*, *honos*, *ops*, *salus*, *concordia*, *libertas*, and *victoria* are deemed human and are divinized because men acknowledge that they are indeed gods, dedicate temples to them, and worship them accordingly. When associating Ceres with

⁶ On the importance of orality and aurality in Roman culture, see now Bettini (2022b).

⁷ This rhetorical device is standard when a word, a name, or an expression is used as a substitute for something else with which it is closely associated. It can be employed for any number of reasons, whether a mere question of style to show off a more elevated tone, a metrical or textual necessity, or even the simple willingness to employ a peculiar image. Philologists, using their own cultural and professional criteria, in a sense, applied an exchange of name, or, instead, of the first letter to these personifications, indicating them, respectively, with the majuscule letter when intended as gods and with the minuscule letters when reckoned as human: the next chapter is entirely dedicated to this issue and the consequence this convention had on Cicero's *utilitates*. More specifically, this association may be considered a subcategory of a metonymy, i.e., a synecdoche connecting the divine force with its human correspondent (almost like cause-effect). But for clarity purposes, the metonymy will do.

⁸ Cf. the same example of Ceres and Liber later in the text, Cic. *N. D.* 3.41 and see Pease (1968 *ad loc.*)

⁹ The ability to recognize a god was crucial and required a great degree of attention. Cf. the formula *sive deus sive dea*, which originated as a safety measure in case the presence of a god was perceived, but the name was unknown. Cf. Arn. 3.43: *usque adeo res exigit propriatim deos scire, nec ambigere nec dubitare de uniuscuiusque vi, nomine, si alienis ritibus et appellationibus fuerint invocati, et aures habeant structas et piaculis nos teneant inexpiabilibus obligatos.*

¹⁰ Varro notably discussed the priority of *res humanae* over *res divinae*; see the passage as quoted by Aug. C.D. 10.11. These gods' correspondence between the name and the bestowed benefit almost creates a sense of "inception" (I refer to the idea conveyed by Christopher Nolan's movie in 2010). By calling them based on their *utilitas*, one may be led to believe they were automatically associated with their inherent attributes when, in fact, their name was established *a posteriori*. Cf. Wynne (2019, 144), with whom I agree here, as he notes that "these gods, then, are classified not by their intrinsic properties, but by their origin in human culture. They were wisely or traditionally *established* as gods at some time in Greek and Roman history, and they were *named*. They were picked out by the benefit they bestow, and named after their power to bestow it" (italics by the author).

crops and Liber with wine, no one would think that eating the crops and drinking the wine literally means eating and drinking a god. Crops and wine are the benefits that correspond to Ceres and Liber. Similarly, the qualities mentioned in the passage should be seen as benefits corresponding to divinity.

Since the time of Augustine, as we will see in the next few pages, these personifications were considered nothing more than “gifts” donated by God in a Christian sense, but that perspective undermines the native account of the correspondence. The heart of the passage lies in the *quicquid* as the subject of the sentence, with *utilitatem* as the object. One may be led to think that by using the selfsame name of the personification to indicate both the divinity and the benefit they confer, there is no distinction, or, if there is one, the benefit is somehow logically subordinate to the divinity. But this is not, in fact, the case. The passage indicates clearly that something indefinite (*quicquid*) is in operation and not without divine intervention.

There are two levels of difficulty at play:

(a) the first is in the name of the gods, which is juxtaposed to the abstract concept and the conferred benefit, and

(b) the second is in both the target language and the target culture.

Let us understand the hurdle using Cicero’s examples. Ceres was the goddess of fertility and birth and presided over nature as a whole; she is often associated with the Greek goddess Demeter, thanks to another feature of Roman polytheism: the “translatability” of the gods, i.e., the opportunity of translating a god to or from the pantheon of other peoples (Assman, 1996). For a native ancient person, much like any multilingual child, the context would make it perfectly clear when one is referring to the goddess Ceres or ceres-crops. Today, the stories and features of Ceres are widely recognized by those familiar with mythology. Even though modern readers may be culturally distant from ancient individuals, they can still grasp similar insights.

On the other hand, *Fides* is not quite as popular with non-classicists, even though, like Ceres, she has a cult and a specific iconology. The perspective of a Roman citizen was not comparable to that of a modern reader, who is also unfamiliar with such details.

What is the difference between Ceres and *Fides*, in this respect? To discern the distinction, I find it helpful to refer to the notion of “distributed identity” developed by Maurizio Bettini.¹¹ In a concise yet thought-provoking essay, he addresses the question: did the ancient gods possess an “identity”? He develops a category of divinities’ identity, calling it “distributed.” If they did possess an identity, Bettini maintains it must be represented not as a unique, consistent, and essentialized one but rather as a “network” of distributed configurations. Taking the human mind’s representations of the gods as a starting point, Bettini explains that any divine agency, when thought of as “humanlike” (to use his wording), does not have a univocal identity but, instead, a “distributed” one thanks to what he calls an extended network of metaphorical threads. Time after time, gods simultaneously reveal onomastic, linguistic, narrative, visual, cultic, topographic, and other types of identities—always according to the different fields of cultural experience shared by a given community.

To go back to our question, what makes Ceres and *Fides* so different from modern eyes is that Ceres possesses a widely known narrative identity, while *Fides* does not. And the same can be said about the rest of the personifications mentioned in Cicero’s passage above, among which *Fides* is undoubtedly the most popular. Having a weaker narrative identity did not seem particularly influential to the eyes of a Roman citizen, so much so that the correspondence Ceres-crops, for them, is easily comparable to *Fides-fides*. The identity of a god is manifold; not having a mythic narrative dimension may make a god’s conceptualization less rich but does not erode its divine nature. Today’s readers (as we are no longer “listeners”) face a different challenge: distinguishing between *fides* and *Fides* is not always straightforward, even with contextual clues. In the specific

¹¹ See Bettini (2015b), I am translating the Italian “identità distribuita.”

case of the *utilitates*, we may recognize the personification, their *vis*, and the *utilitas* they confer under the heading of one name. As I will show in the next section, this “one-name-issue” —as I may call it—is the precise feature that led to the many different and divergent scholarly perspectives.

The initial step in reading the passage we just explored, along with the next one, is to recognize that Latin—at least regarding this set of personifications—frequently employed the same names for both the gods and the benefits they provided. This practice was not fundamentally philosophical or religious. In this instance, such a theoretical framework does not influence the religious significance of the argument. In Balbus’s words, the following is the conclusion of the passage quoted above, and it reads:¹²

Utilitatum igitur magnitudine constituti sunt ei di qui utilitates quasque gignebant, atque is quidem nominibus quae paulo ante dicta sunt quae vis sit in quoque declaratur deo.

Those gods therefore who were the authors of various benefits owed their deification to the value of the benefits which they bestowed, and indeed the names that I just now enumerated express the various powers of the gods that bear them.

According to this account, the gods whose names correspond to themselves as subjects and their *utilitas* as objects are called *utilitates*. Once again, this line of reasoning may apply to all gods that present this metonymical relationship with the matter they confer. However, our focus is solely on those whose names and *utilitas* correspond and who also possess a cult.

Some of the same qualities, namely *mens*, *fides*, *virtus*, and *concordia*, are mentioned later in the second book of *De natura deorum*, again through the words of Balbus, in the context of the universe’s providential government by the gods:¹³

Atqui necesse est cum sint di (si modo sunt, ut profecto sunt) animantis esse, nec solum animantes sed etiam rationis compotes inter seque quasi civili conciliatione et societate coniunctos, unum mundum ut communem rem publicam atque urbem aliquam regentis. sequitur ut eadem sit in is quae humano in genere ratio, eadem veritas utrobiquesit eademque lex, quae est recti praeceptio pravique depulsio. ex quo intellegitur prudentiam quoque et mentem a deis ad homines pervenisse

¹² Cic. N.D. 2.62, transl. Rackham (1933). I signal that unfortunately there is a lacuna in Book 3 of *De natura deorum*, right in correspondence of the reply to this section of Book 2: cf. *Ibid.* 3.63-65.

¹³ Cic. N.D. 2.78-79. Cf. Fin. 3.64. Ovid, too, in a satirical passage in Met. 1.168-176, pictured the gods living in a “Palatine of the sky.”

(ob eamque causam maiorum institutis Mens Fides Virtus Concordia consecratae et publice dedicatae sunt.)

It is necessary, since the gods exist (if they exist at all, and they certainly do) that they be animated, not only animated but also possessing reason and united among themselves as if united in a civil association and society, governing one sole world like a common state and a city. It follows that in them there is the same intelligence as the humankind, in both parts there is the same truth and the same law which is to pursue what is right and reject what is wrong. Consequently, one understands that even wisdom and intelligence came to men from the gods (for that reason, according to the ancestors' customs, Mens, Fides, Virtus, and Concordia have been consecrated and honored publicly.)

This text is fundamental to understanding how the *utilitates* are fully integrated within the civic religion of Rome. Once again, the philosophical nuance of the text does not invalidate his previous arguments, as Balbus is solely describing how these personifications are classified.¹⁴ The *utilitates* are designated here as gods forming a community with men and possessing the same social virtues men understand to be derived from them. Naturally, the image portrayed here is intended to convey an idealized version rather than an accurate depiction of reality, and this is not only due to Balbus making a point about the gods being good in the universe. After all, Cicero is writing a philosophical treatise. While he is, in this case, representing the Stoic doctrine, he cannot help but understand them through the lens of his own cultural experience. In his role as an augur, Cicero deeply understands his city's religious institutions. While he may hold personal and philosophical beliefs, he remains committed to Stoic principles on these matters, highlighting the presence of a shared ethical code within traditional civic religion.

Rome and its religion are intricately linked, shaping an ideal of shared existence. The consequences of this unity are conspicuously perceptible in a religion that is—as much as it is possible to conjecture—based on a “social” community, above all else. The individual is always part of a community, whether the closest family, the family clan, the more prominent family of

¹⁴ Wynne (2019, 139ff.) illustrates Balbus's classification in a thought-provoking table (see Appendix 3, 283). In Wynne's analysis, Balbus distinguishes five types of gods, all five of which are distributed in two categories. He defines the first category of gods, namely the Sun, the Moon, other planets, and stars, as “paradigmatic;” and he calls the other ones, i.e., the *utilitates*, immortal heroes and the ones connected to “physical facts,” e.g. Ceres, “cultural.” This is very interesting terminology: the reason for describing these gods as “cultural” is that “Balbus is most interested in the *origin of their place in human culture*.”

fellow citizens, or even legions, priestly colleges, etc. In a sense, the gods are fellow citizens, thus part of the same community as human beings.¹⁵ Naturally, the presence of the gods can be detected as they are worshipped privately or publicly. Still, they permeate the city to the extent that, for instance, the magistrates enquired of the gods, interpreted their responses, and supposedly acted upon their will (or what they essentially decided their will to be).

The passage above gives us another structural piece of information on the *utilitates*: men and gods lived according to the same rules (*recti praeceptio pravique depulsio*). Roman religion does not have an ethical code *per se* in that the moral laws are the same as those of any other category of social relations, and they make sense only when shared and abided by a community. This is the primary reason why Roman religion is defined as a civic (and, in a sense, political) religion.

To balance the discussion and understand Cotta's skeptical counterargument, let us read about some of the *utilitates*, specifically *Honos*, *Fides*, *Mens*, and *Concordia*. The following passage is in a section of the third book of *De natura deorum* presenting general notions on the cult of immortal beings, such as heroes, and information whose sources are the pontifical law and the ancestors' tradition:¹⁶

Ut enim in iure civili qui est matre libera liber est, item iure naturae qui dea matre est deus sit necesse est. Itaque Achillem Astypalenses insulani sanctissime colunt; qui si deus est, et Orpheus et Rhesus di sunt Musa matre nati; nisi forte miritumae nuptiae terrenis anteponuntur. si hi di non sunt, quia nusquam coluntur, quo modo illi sunt? Vide igitur ne virtutibus hominum isti honores habeantur non immortalitatibus; quod tu quoque Balbe visus es dicere. Quo modo autem potes, si Latonam deam putas, Hecatam non putare, quae matre Asteria est sorore Latonae? an haec quoque dea est; vidimus enim eius aras delubraque in Graecia. sin haec dea est, cur non Eumenides? quae si deae sunt, quarum et Athenis fanumst et apud nos ut ego interpretor lucus Furinae, Furiae deae sunt, speculatrices credo et vindices facinorum et sceleris. quod si tales dei sunt ut rebus humanis intersint, Natio quoque dea putanda est, cui cum fana circumimus in agro Ardeati rem divinam facere solemus; quae quia partus matronarum tueatur a nascentibus Natio nominata est. ea si dea est, di omnes illi qui commemorabantur a te, Honos Fides Mens Concordia, ergo etiam Spes Moneta omniaque quae cogitatione nobismet ipsis possumus fingere.

For just as by the civil law one whose mother is a freewoman is a freeman, so by the law of nature one whose mother is a goddess must be a god. And in the island of Astypalaea Achilles is most

¹⁵ Cf. Sheid (1985; 2011; 2013, 95-120); Scali (2017).

¹⁶ Cic. N.D. 3.18.45-47. Transl. Rackham (1933), I only left "Moneta" untranslated as it is better than rendering it "The Sprit of Money": this divinity comes from the verb *moneo* and is the translation of the Greek Μνημοσύνη, the mother of the Muses.

devoutly worshipped by the inhabitants on these grounds; but if Achilles is a god, so are Orpheus and Rhesus, whose mother was a Muse, unless perhaps a marriage at the bottom of the sea counts higher than a marriage on dry land! If these are not gods, because they are nowhere worshipped, how can the others be gods? Is not the explanation this, that divine honours are paid to men's virtues, not to their immortality? as you too, Balbus, appeared to indicate. Then, if you think Latona a goddess, how can you not think that Hecate is one, who is the daughter of Latona's sister Asteria? Is Hecate a goddess too? we have seen altars and shrines belonging to her in Greece. But if Hecate is a goddess, why are not the Eumenides? and if they are goddesses,—and they have a temple at Athens, and the Grove of Furina at Rome, if I interpret that name aright, also belongs to them,—then the Furies are goddesses, presumably in their capacity of detectors and avengers of crime and wickedness. And if it is the nature of the gods to intervene in man's affairs, the Birth-Spirit also must be deemed divine, to whom it is our custom to offer sacrifice when we make the round of the shrines in the Territory of Ardea: she is named Natio from the word for being born (*nasci*), because she is believed to watch over married women in travail. If she is divine, so are all those abstractions that you mentioned, Honour, Faith, Intellect, Concord, and therefore also Faith, Moneta and all the possible creations of our own imagination.

The initial section highlights that some immortal beings, born of both a divine and a human parent, are worshipped through cults. It specifically mentions the *ius civile*—rather than general logic—stating that if the mother is free, her child is likewise free. The same formula holds for an eventual divine status: if the mother is divine, the child is, by right, divine.¹⁷ Ultimately, this reasoning reinforces the point made earlier: both humans and gods are subject to the same civic laws, indicating their equivalent status as citizens, albeit in this case within a context of mockery.¹⁸ Beyond this joke, the argument against Stoic doctrines is that worshipped immortal beings are honored neither in light of their immortality nor their virtues.¹⁹ Balbus, however, did not specifically talk about the *utilitates* being worshipped as an expression of a general virtue; instead, he made the point that these personifications were perceived as possessing a *maior vis*, recognized as gods, and then honored publicly. A cult's existence distinguishes a personification as a god, since many recorded personifications are only rhetorical tools.

¹⁷ For a definition of *ius civile*, see Cic. Off. 3.69. Cf. also Pease's commentary (1968, 1066.)

¹⁸ Bettini (2022b) defines this relationship between Roman citizens and the gods as “stile culturale umano” (see Chapter 11). The argument advanced here is that the Romans were scrupulous in honoring the gods, but they still had agency over them, and, in a sense, when it came to juridical matters, they considered them peers.

¹⁹ Lind (1973-74, 114) underlines that Cicero “proceeds in the following sentences to discuss the deification of human beings for merit, an idea common among the Stoics (see Cic. N.D. 1.38); but this has no relation with his discussion of the abstracts except as a parallel phenomenon. In general, Cicero presents us with Stoic doctrine on the problem of the abstract.”

The final argument is around *Natio* and whether she represents a legitimate divinity. Not only, as stated here, is this personification worshipped in Ardea,²⁰ it also conforms to the typical “segmentation” of gods’ provinces in Roman polytheism. This segmentation applies to many aspects of life and many specialized personifications oversee each given detail of a more complex endeavor. In this case, other small personifications are in charge of birth, such as *Partula*, *Uterina*, and *Lucina*.²¹ If *Natio* is eligible—so to speak—to be a goddess, so are all the personifications mentioned by Balbus and *omniaque quae cogitatione nobismet ipsis possumus fingere*.

Another passage from the third book of Cicero’s *De natura deorum*—by far the most quoted and problematic about the *utilitates*—has troubled scholars the most because of the difficulty in drawing the line between what is divine and what is not, and because it seems that the metonymic aspect that is intrinsic (and, arguably, distinct) about these specific personifications has not been considered.²² This time, the interlocutor is Cotta, criticizing once again the positions of the Stoics. This section is more challenging to put into context because it comes right after a digression concerning the deified personifications and their seemingly strained nomenclature based on metonymy and etymology. Stoic doctrines indeed support this position, but, more importantly, it is a religious fact in the city of Rome. Cotta argues:²³

Nam mentem fidem spem virtutem honorem victoriam salutem concordiam ceteraque huius modi rerum vim habere videmus non deorum. aut enim in nobismet insunt ipsis, ut mens ut spes ut fides

²⁰ In truth, there is no confirmation of this cult elsewhere, but there is also no reason not to trust Cicero (via Cotta) with this information. Some inferences about the truthfulness of this can be made considering, for instance, CIL 14.2863, where a mother is grateful to another divinity, *Fortuna primigenia*, because the birth of her child was successful, on account of giving birth (*nationu gratia*): cf. Kočovska-Stevović (2016, 5-6). See also Lind (1973-74, 111): in the absence of more information, he states that *natio*, along with other abstract concepts, was popular but not “officially worshipped.”

²¹ For a comparative example of agricultural gods working according to the same strategy within Roman religion, cf. Bettini (2022a).

²² While elsewhere I agree with Wynne (2019), I see his analysis of this specific problem as quite confusing and inconclusive: cf. the lengthy discussion at pp.138-147.

²³ Cic. N.D. 3.61. Pease (1968, *ad loc.* 1134) maintains *spes* should be expunged. Pease reports that *ut spes* is omitted by certain *deteriores*, as well as the Roman and Venice editions of the work; Walker and Heindorf argue that it should be kept and moved after *optandae nobis sunt*, on the ground that hope is not something men possess, but a gift from the gods; Clark thought it was in the archetype, and then it was inserted in the wrong place. Mayor and Allen, on the other hand, refuse the expunction altogether. Fontanella (2012, 68) argues for keeping her as well by comparing the following passage from Cicero, considering it somehow legitimizing: Leg. 2.11.28: *expectatione rerum bonarum erigitur animus, recte etiam Spes a Calatino consecrata est*.

ut virtus ut concordia, aut optandae nobis sunt, ut honos ut salus ut victoria; quarum rerum utilitatem video.

We see that *Mens, Fides, Spes, Virtus, Honos, Victoria, Salus, Concordia*, and everything else of that kind have the value of matters, not of gods; for they are either resident in ourselves, as is the case with *Mens, Spes, Fides, Virtus*, and *Concordia*, or they are things to be desired by us, like *Honos, Salus*, and *Victoria*; I see their *utilitas*.

The syntagm *vis rerum non deorum* has produced much perplexity, leading, for example, Harris Rackham (1979) to translate the personifications as “abstractions, not personal deities.” The text, however, says that the *utilitates* (mentioned in the last line, confirming the label once again) have or possess the value of things or matters, not of gods.²⁴ There is no mention of abstractness; quite the contrary. Cotta is, in fact, answering the point made in the previous part of the discussion (see above 2. 60-61) and is essentially saying it is absurd to consider the *utilitates* as divine because “they have a value of matters.” Cotta, therefore, is challenging the divine status of the qualities and sees the two as alternatives, as opposed to the Stoic perspective, which recognizes the coexistence of a worldly and a divine quality based on facts. After all, these qualities were honored publicly in the city of Rome.

This passage is responsible for the failure to understand the philosophical context of these personifications, leading many scholars to debate the alleged abstractness of *utilitates*. The distinction in the text, namely that some of the *utilitates* are inborn or aspirational, is a consequence of Cotta’s argument. If one considers the Stoics’ take on it, however, the text could be revised as *vis rerum et deorum*, hence no longer putting the qualities mentioned in the passage in contrast with each other.

The four passages analyzed so far have opened a window into Cicero’s *utilitates*’ integration into Roman religion. Their *utilitas* is effectively the benefit the gods afforded to humans. Such

²⁴ While no one seems to have given the passage this precise meaning, some translations support the sense I propose, cf. Marinone in Lassandro-Micunco (2007) “valore materiale, non divino”; Calcante (2002) translates *res* as “oggetti.” Cf. also Bruwaene (1981, 112-114) rendering “nous voyons qu’elles sont l’expression de la vie, non celle des dieux.” To support my argument, I note that when the term *res* occurs together with the gods, there is usually a qualifier or further detail that helps to clarify another value as opposed to “things”: see, for instance, Cic. N.D. 3.24.63; Off. 1.43,153; Sen. Nat. 6.32.5. I interpret the absence of supplementary indications as a confirmation of the regular sense.

affordability is relatively unrelated to the theory of divine gifts, seeing the personifications (considered as “minor gods”) as an extension of “greater gods” or as handouts by the Christian God, as illustrated by Augustine and resumed by Georg Wissowa, both of whom I shall discuss in the next section of the chapter.

The name and the benefit appear to correspond straightforwardly, and this is the peculiarity of these personifications; moreover, the *utilitates* fit into the framework of a civic religion whose moral code is shared like any other social relations. The features of the qualities mentioned in the passages above, whether expected in a cultural horizon or as the goal within said cultural horizon, are formulated with an idealized life of collectivity in mind.

In an emic analysis, this is why these personifications were viewed as so significant that they were divinized and acknowledged as gods, complete with suitable civic cults. In other words, the moral qualities emphasized in these passages were embodied by gods because they needed to be distinguished in light of their prominence.

***Utilitates* as religious actions**

In the previous paragraph, I focused on what the *utilitates* are, according to Cicero. They are divinities that share the name with the corresponding matter they bestow upon men (i.e., their *utilitas*), and they are moral qualities in an ideal of collective life with the gods as fellow citizens. Let us now focus on what they do, particularly within the context of Roman civic religion.

Based on the analysis conducted so far, Cicero, a Roman citizen and augur, presented a Stoic representation (corroborated by the relevant philosophical counterarguments) of the *utilitates* that showcased their virtuous values in a civic context. While his perspective might have been too idealistic, a compelling interest exists in examining how various sources choose to self-represent their cultural identities. In this subjective cultural vision, I imagine the *utilitates* more as setting a standard, an ideological model used as an example to follow, imitate, or even deter specific behaviors.

Either way, through the words of Cicero in the fictional conversation, Cotta, as an excellent opponent to Stoic theories, leaps at the opportunity to show how unreasonable such an indulgence in idealized fantasy may be. In the third book of *De natura deorum*, an entire section is in open contrast with the Stoics' views on the gods' providential care for men. The discussion centers on comprehending divine justice, the gods' concern for humanity, and the reason behind the fact that not all people are inherently good. Indeed, numerous examples suggest that, in reality, virtuous individuals often go unrecognized while the wicked frequently escape consequences.

Cotta argues, contrary to the Stoic perspective, that the gods do not govern the world. Therefore, divine justice does not exist, leading him to reject the idea of praying to indifferent gods for the sake of virtues. In essence, without divine intervention, there is no incentive to uphold virtues—or vices—because there are neither rewards nor consequences.²⁵ Cicero replies through the persona of Lucilius and says:²⁶

“Vehementius” inquit, “Cotta, tu quidem invectus es in eam Stoicorum rationem quae de providentia deorum ab illis sanctissime et providentissime constituta est. Sed quoniam advesperascit, dabis nobis diem aliquem ut contra ista dicamus. Est enim mihi tecum pro aris et focus certamen et pro deorum templis atque delubris proque urbis muris, quos vos pontifices sanctos esse dicitis diligentiusque urbem religione quam ipsis moenibus cingitis; quae deserui a me, dum quidem spirare potero, nefas iudico.”

“You have indeed made a slashing attack upon the most reverently and wisely constructed Stoic doctrine of the divine providence. But as evening is now approaching, you will assign us a day on which to make our answer to your views. For I have to fight against you on behalf of our altars and hearths, of the temples and shrines of the gods, and of the city-walls, which you as pontiffs declare to be sacred and are more careful to hedge the city round with religious ceremonies than even with fortifications; and my conscience forbids me to abandon their cause so long as I yet can breathe.”

Cicero's preference for the Stoic interpretation of the *providentia deorum* stems undoubtedly from the city's religious facts. To understand how the *utilitates* affected the city, I now intend to analyze a different work of Cicero's, his *De legibus*, and focus more on religious actions.

²⁵ Cf. Cic. N.D. 3.85: *invita in hoc loco versatur oratio, videtur enim auctoritatem adferre peccandi; recte videretur, nisi et virtutis et vitiorum sine ulla divina ratione grave ipsius conscientiae pondus esset, qua sublata iacent omnia. ut enim nec domus nec res publica ratione quadam et disciplina dissignata videatur, si in ea nec recte factis praemia extent ulla nec supplicia peccatis, sic mundi divina in homines moderatio profecto nulla est, si in ea discrimen nullum est bonorum et malorum.*

²⁶ Cic. N.D. 3.40.94, transl. Rackham (1933).

The following passage represents the referral of some archaic legal expressions (*certa legum verba*) which are not as ancient as the Twelve Tables but still quite respected. Cicero is reporting and summarizing them to his brother Quintus and will later comment on them:²⁷

Diuos et eos qui caelestes semper habiti sunt colunto et ollos quos endo caelo merita locauerint, Herculem, Liberum, Aesculapium, Castorem, Pollucem, Quirinum, ast olla propter quae datur hominibus ascensus in caelum, Mentem, Virtutem, Pietatem, Fidem, earumque laudum delubra sunt nec ulla uitiorum.

May those who were always thought of as celestial and those whose merits have located in the sky be honored as gods, Hercules, Liber, Aesculapius, Castor, Pollux, Quirinus, and those (qualities) for which men can ascend to the sky, *Mens*, *Virtus*, *Pietas*, *Fides*, and of those may there be temples, and none of the vices.

This is a legal prescription, a recommendation authoritatively put forward to explain which gods should be honored. Later in the text (2.23), the same *magna lex* is defined as *ista constitutio religionum* to confirm its religious pertinence and sounds similar to Numa's formulation and *nostris mores*.²⁸

The divine agents are sorted into three categories:

- (a) those who have always been considered “godly”;
- (b) the heroes who became gods on account of their merits; and
- (c) the qualities thanks to which men can “ascend to heaven” (*olla propter quae datur hominibus ascensus in caelum*), or, in other words, be elevated to a divine status.

The ascension is easily understood as ethical and immediately classifies such qualities as morally uplifting.

²⁷ Cic. Leg. 2.19. See Dyck (1996, 295ff.). Zorzetti, in Ferrero and Zorzetti (1974, 484-485), reads *delubra sunt ne uncula vitiorum* on the grounds that Cicero used here a proverbial expression, whose sense would be “recisamente negativo: ‘che non si dedichi assolutamente nulla’ alle ipostasi dei vizi.” I imagine *uncula* would be used in lieu of the morphologically correct *ungula* to make the text sound more archaic. While I agree with the general sense of the sentence, I disagree with this intervention in the text, which is a correction and is not present in any critical apparatus. Such conjecture is implausible: in a text as archaic as this, I doubt this style would be appropriate; moreover, there is no helpful documentation in any work of reference to confirm the existence of such a proverb, which is a metaphorical (and relatively coarse) use I recognize in Italian but does not seem to be attested in any Latin text.

²⁸ As Fontanella (2013, 57ff.) pointed out, this complex work shows Cicero's awareness of the changes and revisions to the *religio* happening during his time, with particular attention to the consensus of a new educated élite. It is the philosophical knowledge of the Republican élite that triggered a project of moral reform, which was almost more critical of the laws themselves to save the State.

The law discussed here states that all three categories of gods—which are grouped instead of ranked—should be honored equally. This is one more confirmation of the *utilitates* being as much divinities as any other in the Roman pantheon. A few lines later, Cicero argues about this law and further clarifies, again to the benefit of his brother’s understanding:²⁹

Bene uero quod Mens, Pietas, Virtus, Fides consecrantur <hu>man<ae>, quarum omnium Romae dedicata publice templa sunt, ut illas qui habeant (habent autem omnes boni) deos ipsos in animis suis conlocatos putent.

It is good that *Mens, Pietas, Virtus, Fides*—specific of men—are deified, by order of the state there are dedicated temples in Rome of all of them (*scil.* the deified qualities), so that those who own them (for all the best of men possess them) believe they have actual gods in their hearts.

By associating the divinized virtues with gods and heroes, Cicero not only shows their legitimate divine status but also emphasizes their effect on human ethical behavior. These moral qualities belong to men, especially to the best of them. Believing that these qualities are so powerful makes it seem like those who have them embody a kind of divinity within themselves. The focus is not on the performer but on the “godliness” of the action.³⁰ Once more, human beings and gods are described as part of one community, conforming to the same behavioral code.

Therefore, the argument I intend to put forward is that, for a Roman citizen, possessing these specific *utilitates* equates to putting them into practice. In a virtuous cycle, to practice the *utilitates* means worshipping the corresponding divinized personifications as much as in other regular cultic circumstances. This is due to the very nature of the *utilitates*, qualities that correspond to human actions, behaviors, and even intentions, and, simultaneously, to the personification and the divinity with its cult.³¹ Engaging in behaviors linked to the *utilitates* can reflect a facet of the “distributed identity” of these particular gods.

²⁹ Cic. Leg. 2.28. I read *consecrantur* as per Bake, and *humanae* following the intuition of Ziegler, in place of *consecratur manu* as per some manuscripts. See Dyck (2004, 332ff.). It is shocking that Powell (2006) does not consider this variant to the point that he does not even include it in the critical apparatus. Cf. Cic. *Rep.* 3.14 with a similar expression; Clinton W. Keyes, in his translation for the Loeb Classical Library—see Henderson (1928)—reads *consecratur manu* and renders it “should be arbitrarily deified,” a suggestive interpretation, but not supported by the use of *manus* in other texts or contexts, unfortunately.

³⁰ Cf. Fontanella (2012, 67): “il culto delle Virtù non viene collegato alle doti di particolari individui, ma viene usato per sottolineare la divinità dell’animo umano [...] ed in particolare di quello degli *omnes boni*.”

³¹ See above, p. 8-9; cf. Bettini (2015b).

When men act in fulfillment of the qualities mentioned above, they behave so exceptionally that they either have a god in themselves or are prompted in their virtuous endeavors by a god. The human qualities analogous to their divine counterparts, specifically the group of *utilitates*, serve distinctly as desirable models of behavior.

In redefining the boundaries of Roman religion, John Scheid developed his renowned theory and effectively explained it through a French neologism: *orthopraxie*. Orthopraxy is a religious system based on the rites and their correct execution.³² The term encompasses a series of principles of Roman religion that resonate with the *utilitates*: in the context of the civic religion of Rome, they can be considered a specific mode of action according to cultural prescriptions.

Roman religion traditionally features rituals that resist change in the same way the *utilitates* are associated with famous men who acted in conformity with their fixed (in the sense of socially expected) corresponding behavior; these *exempla* are collected all over Roman literature and were well-known, at least to the educated population.³³

Roman religion separates religious practices from faith as we know it in Christian terms; the *utilitates* are worshipped publicly and “summoned” when necessary. Behaving or performing cultic prescriptions implied no specific belief in their existence nor did it require a personal relationship with the divinity (versus the Christian God). In official Roman religion there is neither preaching nor initiation; there is just duty at an individual and collective level. The same can be said about the *utilitates*, qualities that any citizen can potentially perform, besides participating in the regular cults. If these moral prescriptions are put into practice, they benefit the community, and, in a sense, they represent a duty, or at least a responsibility, since they are mentioned in a text relaying legal obligations.

³² Cf. Scheid (2003; 2015). Notably, he created the term *orthopraxie* via the mirroring of “orthodoxy.” While the latter is an authorized or accepted doctrine, the former is bound to indicate the right mode of action according to a doctrine.

³³ See now Roller (2018) and related bibliography.

Literature review

Typically, the literature review appears in the introduction to help readers understand the relationship between existing research and the current study. However, in this instance, the literature review is included in the second section of the first chapter, following a fresh contextual analysis of the pertinent primary sources. The rationale behind this decision stems from the fact that prior interpretations of Cicero's *utilitates* have been overlooked and distorted by biases that are largely unrelated to the era, culture, and philosophical backdrop in which these concepts were viewed as personifications and even revered as deities before the rise of the empire. A thorough review of primary sources was essential to connect the reader's grasp of previous scholarship with the new theoretical framework introduced in this research.

The group of *utilitates* at issue are, in fact, part of a larger group of personifications; scholars have commonly referred to them as "abstractions," "abstract concepts," or, in some cases, "*Söndergötter*."³⁴ Many scholars have devoted attention to this larger group of gods in the last century, making valuable contributions. Nevertheless, these analyses often reached broad-ranging conclusions detrimental to the smaller subcategories of personifications.

In the following pages, I organize the relevant scholarship in three chronological waves to highlight the academic foundations of the present study on Cicero's *utilitates*. The first wave began

³⁴ The *Söndergötter* are gods who specialize in a determined function. Hermann Usener proposed this term within an evolutionary and pre-deistic scheme for the development of ancient personifications in three stages: *Augenblicksgötter* (anonymous deities connected with one sole activity), *Söndergötter* (functional gods, whose function was described by their name), and, finally, personal deities; cf. Usener (1896, 276-301); cf. Phillips (2006). This theorization is now refuted. The *Söndergötter* could be found in the *indigitamenta*, i.e., the lists of invocations of gods to celebrate determined rites. This is relevant because some of the *utilitates* (namely *Mens*, *Honos*, *Victoria*, and *Virtus*) are present in those reconstructed lists; see RE, s.v. *Indigitamenta*, and Prescendi (2006). On the labyrinthine bibliography about the *Söndergötter*, see the still dependable Perfigli (2004). What makes her research invaluable is its unprecedented focus on the ritual practices of Roman polytheism. Her primary argument comes in the form of a demonstration. Traditionally, scholars claimed that learned antiquarians and grammarians authored the books containing the *indigitamenta*, as opposed to them having been compiled by Roman priests; these lists are problematic as they were kept secret by the state in view of their compelling authority. Since they were supposed to have been composed by antiquarians and not by priests, and—most importantly—at a much later stage, scholars deduced they held no actual elements of Roman ritualism. Perfigli, on the contrary, illustrates that there is some reality behind such erudite speculations. First, she proves the usefulness of exploring the gods' personalities and *modus operandi* within polytheistic systems; then, she traces an immensely helpful history of the *indigitamenta*.

in 1881 and lasted until the 1970s; the second encompasses works up to the early 2000s; and the third extends to the present day. In this critical discussion, I will also follow a criterion of relevance.³⁵

The first wave

The first wave, starting as early as the eighteenth century, established a few pieces of pioneering information that have been powerfully influential on later scholarship and, to some extent, still are.

The seminal point of departure in the study of Roman personifications dates back to the end of the 19th century with Deubner's entry "*Personifikation abstrakter Begriffe*" in Roscher's *Ausführliche Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*.³⁶ This article aims primarily at elucidating what these personifications of abstract concepts are not, as opposed to what they are: in essence, they are gods without a recognizable narrative identity (i.e., the stories told about them as well as their figurative representations) in that they are "personified" as opposed to "personal" gods. The outstanding value of this work is the "list of cult facts" (*Liste der Kultusthatsachen*): the personifications are organized in two units, Greece and Rome, and are presented in alphabetical order. The Roman personifications indexed here are no less than sixty, and no further detail shows the criterion employed to include them other than abstract concepts that had a cult (thus proving their divine status). This list, as shown below, gathers a heterogeneous number of gods and sets the ground for any future discussion on Roman personifications:

Abundantia
Aequitas
Aeternitas
Amicitia
Annona
Bonus Eventus
Civitas

³⁵ For the purpose of this dissertation, I will not be considering the scholarship related to the reception and fortune of these personifications in other cultures or periods. My focus is primarily on their significance and representation within the specific frame of reference that is relevant to this study.

³⁶ Cf. LGRM III, 2, (1902-1909) 2068-2169. Deubner employs Usener's wording (1896).

Clementia
Concordia
Constantia
Copia
Disciplina
Fama
Fas
Favor
Fecunditas
Fides
Fines
Fors Fortuna
Fortuna
Gloria
Honos, Virtus
Iucunditas
Iustitia
Indulgentia
Iuventas
Liberalitas
Libertas
Maiestas
Mens
Moderatio
Mors
Natio
Ops
Pallor, Pavor
Patientia
Pax
Pietas
Providentia
Pudicitia
Quies
Salus
Sanctitas
Securitas
Senatus
Spes
Triumphus
Tutela
Ubertas
Ultio
Valetudo
Victoria
Vis

Another scholar preceding Deubner was interested in the “personifications of abstract ideas” and seems to have used this terminology before anyone else: Herman Usener. In his distinguished collection of essays, *Götternamen*, one succinct chapter is dedicated to “*abstrakte Gottesbegriffe*

personifiziert.”³⁷ Unlike Deubner, however, no specific section is devoted to Roman personifications.

After listing numerous examples of personifications in Greece and Rome, Usener—with patent resignation—allows that abstract concepts could be elevated to the rank of gods in antiquity because of the ancients’ “excitable religious sensitivity.”³⁸ Despite the scornful tone of the argument, Usener insists on a crucial point, with which I concur: the “abstract concepts” possess as great a degree of divinity as the *Söndergötter*.³⁹ The emphasis, in Usener’s analysis—as per the title of the book—is on the gods’ names: in this case, he examines the question of whether languages intrinsically possess original abstract concepts (i.e., if the words designating abstract concepts were created for the very purpose of naming the correspondent gods), or, on the contrary, whether the concepts received such a divine value later on (thus implying some evolution of both language and religion).

As far as the Latin language is concerned, Usener observes that the feminine form of the adjective retains the designation of the abstract representation drawn from the concrete word. While this is true for most personifications, there are many exceptions, and this mere grammatical fact does not entirely solve the problem. Besides, the supporting illustrations are primarily drawn from the Greek language, making the conclusions on Roman personifications blurry.

In the end, Usener admits that the very conferment of personification to a noun belongs to the elementary and unconscious process of mental representation, leaving the difficulty at that.⁴⁰

³⁷ See Chapter 22 in the original edition, Usener (1896, 364-75).

³⁸ Cf. Usener (2008, 402ff.) The subject is treated in a slightly confusing form since Usener reiterates the distinction made by Deubner and Stössl between personal and functional gods. Still, the passage is abstruse with its profusion of (at times groundless) Greek and Roman parallels. Although keeping the categories of gods separate, Usener claims that, for instance, Ἀθηνᾶ, the personal god, and Νίκη, the functional one, become connected and united so that Νίκη is not thought of as “victory,” but only as “she who bestows the victory.” The two acceptations do not conflict with each other in either the Greek or the Roman polytheistic system; thus, I see no reason to complicate the matter further.

³⁹ Usener’s concept of *Söndergötter* refers to “special gods” or “particular gods” with specific functions or associations, as opposed to being general deities. These special gods were often linked to specific tasks, phenomena, or objects. Cf. Usener (2008, 286ff.)

⁴⁰ Cf. Usener (2008, 408ff.)

Based on Deubner's list, Stössl proposes an alternative in his entry in the *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, shortening the designation of “personification of abstract concepts” into the less detailed “*Personifikationen*.”⁴¹ Again, there is an insistence on what “personification” means: giving personal characteristics, typically attributed to human beings, to an impersonal or soul-less being. Stössl, following Deubner, argues that what confirms whether a personification is a divinity or not is—respectively and ultimately—the presence or absence of a cult, at least as much as the extant sources can let us infer, and I concur with this. Naturally, the cultic element is stressed to supply a reasonable boundary between personifications that only had a literary character and gods that received some form of religious reverence. They are two different instances of personifications.

The most salient section of this entry, concerning Roman personifications specifically, is the careful examination of the primary sources, which still validly portray Varro's and Cicero's accounts.⁴² As Augustine explains, Varro was the first to form theories on Roman personifications.

Unfortunately, one of the well-known difficulties in the study of Roman personifications is the lack of—so to speak—“native” manuals of ancient religion. It is worth stating, when it comes to the study of Roman personifications, that the field has often developed thanks to the sole practices of interpretation and derivative inference from primary sources. Both Deubner and Stössl realized, early on, that discussing the personifications as a blanket phenomenon was problematic, as was finding an umbrella term able to encompass the many different elements they feature.⁴³

Stössl wisely suggested that a more promising methodology for studying these peculiar gods would be analyzing them individually rather than as a solid unit, as had been the norm for Greek religion. Indeed, it is possible to find the *fil rouge* connecting these personifications. Still, it is

⁴¹ Cf. RE XIX, 1 (1937) 1042ff. Unsurprisingly, most of the bibliography reported in this article refers to Greek personifications.

⁴² Cf. RE XIX, 1 (1937) 1054.

⁴³ Further discussion on this, with additional bibliography, can be found in Fears (1981a, 831, n.19). One piece of analysis that has some merit to this day is Preller in his *Römische Mythologie* (1883, 178-268).

crucial to administer them according to a determined set theory, i.e., in terms of their overlapping qualities.

In the early 20th century, let us remain in Germany as it was the center of research on this topic: Georg Wissowa dedicated a brief section of his renowned handbook *Religion und Kultus der Römer* to the same personifications as his predecessors.⁴⁴ This group of personifications of abstract concepts, as theorized by Cicero and influenced by Greek philosophy, is already acknowledged by Wissowa. The chapter reports on those personifications by giving general details of their visual representation and cult, primarily in the imperial age. It flattens the analysis of a period that evidently provides the wealthiest amount of information, yet it glosses over the numerous and powerful changes that influenced their respective worship then, rather than at the time of Cicero or even earlier. In those few pages, however, Wissowa traces what the primary guidelines for these personifications will be from that point on, as framed by Cicero. Wissowa's analysis of this category of gods does not differentiate between *virtutes* and *utilitates*, for he does not consider them as virtues elevated to the degree of gods nor a way for men to show respect to the personifications corresponding to such virtues. Instead, these personifications, identified as human virtues, are more similar to divine "gifts."⁴⁵

Wissowa acknowledged that the list of deified concepts consists of gods with diverse ages and cult origins. However, he seemed to have a Christian bias when he claimed that some of the personifications listed by Cicero are not "abstract in the strict sense of the word." He used *ops* as an example, saying it is the "embodiment of the harvest." This type of analysis sees the qualities examined as a tangible extension of the corresponding gods. This approach is precisely what Svenbro would have called a "colonization" of the past.

⁴⁴ Cf. Wissowa (1902, 327ff.). The personifications of abstract concepts (*Personifikation abstrakter Begriffe*) in the fourth section of the book are additionally under-categorized as "*Neugeschaffene Gottheiten*," lit. newly made divinities, hinting at the fact that Wissowa regarded them as belonging to the *Di novensides* (and not *indigetes*, because he claims they no longer existed in Rome after the monarchic phase). About the *Di novensides* see Bendlin (2006); on Wissowa's organization in under-categories see Pfaff-Reydellet (2003).

⁴⁵ Cf. Wissowa (1902, 327).

Perhaps showing an even more preconceived and “Christianized” notion of Roman religion, Wissowa continues to describe these personifications as “gifts” and explains that these divinities have somehow been split off from the ancient gods as time passed. Either they became independent or mere representations of specific aspects of these gods’ efficacy: for example, *fides* or *victoria* in relation to Jupiter. In other words, what used to be an epithet attributed to a god (e.g., Jupiter *Fidius* or *Victor*) detached and developed into a separate personification.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Wissowa describes some of these personifications of abstract concepts as being included in Roman religion as deifications of free ideas whose cult of origin is impossible to trace.⁴⁷

On the part of Wissowa, such views mirror those already made by Augustine in the 5th century AD. In his *De civitate dei*, particularly in Book IV, Augustine commented extensively on the personifications of “pagan” gods. He makes no secret of his disdain, defining them as *ridenda figmenta poetarum*, i.e., risible representations of poets.⁴⁸ However, we ought to be grateful for his scorn: had he not felt it, paradoxically, we would have much less sense of their existence.

⁴⁶ This reveals an evolutionary notion of Roman religion that is not accurate. Moreover, one ought to be aware not to mix into the same pot, for instance, Jupiter, *Dius Fidius*, and *Fides*: while all three of them are connected by a shared association with oaths, they are distinct entities. Jupiter is, in general, the god in charge of protecting the Roman people, and the citizens’ loyalty to one another naturally falls under this umbrella. *Dius Fidius* (represented as Zeus Pistios by Greek sources, also known as *Semo Sancus*) is reckoned to be a divinity of Sabine origin, imported to Rome at a remote time. It is associated with Jupiter because *me Dius Fidius* is a typical oath formula; he was also worshipped on the Quirinal in Rome. Like Jupiter, however, he oversaw other fields of action, such as sowing, but scholars disagree on this, but he is also known by the name of *Semo*, which some associate with *semen*; others derive his name from the verb *sancire* or the Sabine word for “heaven.” Truthfully, the matter is far from being settled. Still, one can see the association with Jupiter and *Fides* in light of his role as an avenger of dishonesty and a guardian of good faith (on account of this, he is at times also associated with Hercules). Dionysius of Halicarnassus (4.58.4) tells us that the treaty between Rome and Gabii, an ancient city of Latium, was preserved in *Dius Fidius*’ temple and was perhaps the first, in ancient Rome, to be recorded and kept in written form. Evidently, it was important for this treaty between the two cities to be “guaranteed” by a divinity. See now a well-put-together dossier on this god in the contribution of Freyburger in Deproost and Meurant (2004). Finally, *Fides* is the personification of an ideal of collective loyalty and is a goddess because she has an official cult in Rome. Like *Dius Fidius*, some primary sources suggest she may be of Sabine origin, but most agree that Numa is the founder of both the cult and the temple in Rome. While the latter is situated near that of Jupiter, the mere fact that they have each their own clarifies they are indeed distinct divinities.

⁴⁷ In the following chapter, I will delve into the historiographical information available on the origin of the cults of the utilitates. While these are not historical accounts, they provide valuable insights into the social understanding of how cults were believed to have originated. The narrative element in historiography, though it has its limitations, can help us envision the birth of a cult and the agency of the divinity involved.

⁴⁸ Aug. C.D. 4.17. Indeed, the Romans, who publicly honored them as gods as much as any other divinity, laughed not in the least.

Let us use *Victoria* and Jupiter to illustrate these arguments: Augustine makes the same remark as Wissowa, but more wittingly. As a Christian, he finds it—to say the least—unusual that *Victoria* should be a goddess contributing to the success of war efforts because it leaves Jupiter “*feriatus*,” i.e., without occupation, keeping holiday.⁴⁹ This line of reasoning is understandable by a Father of the Church. Beyond the famous polemic against the *minutorum deorum turba* hindering each other, he senses these personifications as “inferior” gods, as opposed to the grander ones of the Roman pantheon.⁵⁰ Based on this one-sidedness, Augustine’s argument on *Victoria* does not come as a surprise. Since he does not acknowledge the unfamiliar hierarchy of *Victoria* in relation to Jupiter and manifestly wishes to trace all the “inferior” gods back to the one and only God, he wonders whether God may not dispatch the goddess *Victoria* to do his bidding.⁵¹

Naturally, a monotheistic approach cannot but misinterpret a typical element of polytheism, i.e., segmenting and deifying single aspects of the human experience instead of tracing them all back to one God: *victoria* is no exception to this within Roman religion.

The issue at hand is that Augustine, and again Wissowa centuries later, juxtaposed the categories of their religion—intended here as systems of thought, not necessarily as faith—to that of the Romans, ending up misconstruing a phenomenon in connection with the native culture.⁵² They failed because of their inability to think as a polytheist (i.e., because their monotheistic mental

⁴⁹ Aug. C.D. 4.15.

⁵⁰ Cf. Aug. C.D. 4.9, and 4.18; see also Perfigli (2004). The opposition of inferior/superior gods is common; see Ovid, *Met.* 1.168-176 *nobiles/plebs*, or Pl. *Cist.* 522, who distinguishes the gods into *magni*, *minuti*, and *patellari*. This polemic is frequent among Christian authors: cf. Arnobius, in his work *Against the gentiles* (1-12), attacks the Romans as “pagans” in view of their needless multiplication of divinity.

⁵¹ More specifically, Augustine (C.D. 4.17) argues that God would not send out the victory, which has no substance but its angel. He concludes his rationalization as follows: “If Victory is a goddess, why is not Triumph also a god, and joined to Victory either as husband or brother or son? Such indeed were the fancies they had about their gods; if the poets invented such fancies and we attacked them, they would reply that the fictions of the poets were only ridiculous stories, not to be taken seriously of the real deities. And yet they did not find themselves ridiculous when they were worshipping such absurdities in the temples, and not merely reading about them in the poets. Therefore, they ought to have prayed to Jupiter for everything, and made supplication to him alone. For wherever he had sent Victory, if she were a goddess and subject to him as king, she could not possibly venture to oppose him and act by her own volition instead” (transl. Green 1963).

⁵² See Bettini (2014, 41-47) with reference to Jan Assman’s Mosaic distinction.

framework limited them) and to integrate different personifications within a polytheistic system.⁵³

In such a system, the prerogatives of the gods, which are numerous and varied, do not necessarily exclude one another, and the gods can amalgamate their powers despite having shared functions.⁵⁴

It is worth appreciating how even Wissowa, at this point in time, is doubtful about using the adjective “abstract:” such a label will prove to be particularly complex, problematic, and even controversial in future scholarship. Since then, this choice of words has been extensively used in scholarly literature, including common expressions such as “abstractions divinisées” in French, “deification of abstract ideas” in English, and “divinità astratte” in Italian.⁵⁵ While, at first sight, this definition might have seemed satisfactory or at least helpful, it later became an issue. Fears (1981a, 831) notes that this wording “has little beyond convention to recommend it” since it implies a feature of abstraction that does not quite belong to Roman personifications. The implication, nevertheless, produced several foundationless arguments, based on a small but ever more faulty assumption.

Drawing mainly on Wissowa’s *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, in the United States Axtell’s dissertation (1907) titled *The deification of abstract ideas in Roman Literature and Inscriptions*, supervised by Prof. Gordon J. Laing, provided an interesting discussion.⁵⁶ Axtell lays out the main facts about what he called the “deified abstractions” and discusses what he then identified as some “obscure and disputed points.”⁵⁷ In the first part of his dissertation, Axtell analyzes numerous

⁵³ By “mental framework” I refer to a notion developed by Bettini (2014) precisely about matters related to the opposition of monotheism and polytheism, in Italian “quadri mentali,” which are, per his definition, “configurazioni di pensiero che (all’interno di una certa cultura) vengono messe in opera al momento di elaborare, organizzare e far funzionare un determinato comportamento, prescrivendo certi percorsi mentali e interdicendone altri.” The English translator of his book rendered it by “ways of thinking.”

⁵⁴ See Usener (2008, 117-118) and Bettini (2015a, 52) on this peculiar aspect of Roman religion: “colpisce infatti che, oltre agli dèi maggiori, i Romani disponessero anche di una vasta schiera di divinità che si occupavano un po’ di tutti gli aspetti delle attività e delle esperienze che caratterizzano la vita umana: dando ad essere la forma di rappresentazioni religiose.”

⁵⁵ Cf. respectively Dumézil (1977), Axtell (1907), and Turchi (1939).

⁵⁶ I wish to note a fortunate stroke of serendipity here: my scrutiny, when I originally searched bibliographical entries on Roman personifications, had in fact begun from Axtell’s dissertation, defended more than a century ago in the very Department of Classics at the University of Chicago. A hundred years later, space for further inquiry and new answers can be found thanks to the support of the same department.

⁵⁷ See Axtell (1907, 2).

examples of personifications: what makes his contribution innovative is that he did not limit his investigation to the ones whose cults were widely known but instead made inferences on those whose religious context was less certain. Regarding the latter, there is a section on *Abstracts popularly but not officially worshiped* and one on *Doubtful examples* (*ibid.* 1907, 43ff.; 50ff., respectively). In the second part of his work, he surveys the personifications he discussed as a defined class in Roman religion. The originality of his work lies in the clarification of his terminology: he talks about personification and “deification,” claiming that “to personify is to give personality to an object or power; to deify is to ascribe superhuman attributes” (*ibid.* 1907, 7).

Axtell makes a decisive compromise in referring to Roman personifications as “deifications;” nevertheless, the entire second section of his dissertation is dedicated to—although deified—“abstracts” as a category, which leads him to discuss their “abstract” qualities and conclude that these abstractions were useful to the state to control the masses. For this reason, Axtell’s work is something of a watershed, and his study at once concludes the first wave of scholarship and yields the way for the next one. The second wave, thus, begins in the wake of the scholars who expressed disapproval or quarreled with “deified abstractions” or similar formulas.

The second wave

The earliest in the order of time and the first to be concerned explicitly with divinized virtues is Mattingly (1937), with an essay on *The Roman 'Virtues'*—the title being appropriately transparent, including the use of quotation marks.⁵⁸ This concise paper spells out, in an almost

⁵⁸ Mattingly put out a challenge: “I am convinced that a close study of them [scil. The Virtues] will not only explain several curious points in the tradition of early Roman religion but will be an essential aid to the understanding of the Roman imperial cult and of the subsequent transition from pagan to Christian thought.”

revolutionary way for that time, the shifted difference between “us” and the Romans in terms of attitude towards the personifications.⁵⁹

When we talk of ‘personifications,’ we feel ourselves at once in the realm of poetic or artistic imagery and fancy; the ancient Roman, when he spoke of similar figures, felt himself in the realm of religious fact. There is a difference here between ancient and modern thought so profound that, in spite of the simplicity with which it can be stated, few moderns succeed in appreciating the ancient point of view.

Roman virtues were indeed religious facts, honored and worshipped with cults, not mere literary or ornamental figures. Following Wissowa (1902), Mattingly ponders over the term “virtues” and says that it “is a general and inexact one, but is probably the best name that one can find to cover both the good qualities and the *res expetendae* of Cicero’s.”⁶⁰

Mattingly underlines the importance of the public cult of Roman virtues, as opposed to their private veneration, and declares, once and for all, that these virtues, which he generally refers to in the majuscule letter, are a “normal mode of Roman religious thought” and indeed not primitive conceptions. He adds with a remarkably witty insight: “But how hard it is to grasp with certainty an obsolete mode of thought!”

With this type of sensitivity, Mattingly could not abstain from drawing attention to the issue of abstraction and observes that such a categorization is “not happy, as it suggests a false idea to the

⁵⁹ Cit. Mattingly (1937, 103). Fittingly, in the footnote, Mattingly accounts for the fact that indeed the Romans too knew the poetic and artistic ‘personifications’ in the same way we (modern readers) do, and he supports this claim quoting Quintilian’s theorization of the *fictio personae* (Quint. 9.2.36). I concur and add that even Cicero describes the representation of these personifications as *omnia quae cogitatione nobismet ipsis possumus fingere* (N.D. 3.18.47). Cf. also Mortara Garavelli (2002, 103). See discussion in the next chapter.

⁶⁰ Mattingly refers to Cic. Leg. 2.11.28. Although admitting that the passage presents problems due to the bad shape of the manuscripts, Mattingly sees the general sense as clear. Cf. Mattingly (1937, 104).

modern mind and obstructs the full realization of the fact that the ‘Virtues’ were objects of cult.”⁶¹

This essay should be appreciated as groundbreaking in the study of Roman virtues, and its methodology sets forth a sound basis to focus on the Roman native account of these particular divinized virtues, as opposed to only considering the early Christian and later comments.

Strongly influenced by Mattingly, Lind (1973-74) establishes a productive framework. His article, titled *Roman religion and ethical thought: abstraction and personification*, maintains that “Cicero intended no distinction between *virtutes* and *res expetendae*, but thinks of them as *numina* which will provide worshippers with what they desire.”⁶² In this second wave of studies, these personifications start to find themselves limited to providing a particular quality, that of being virtuous. Furthermore, other than engaging with them directly as virtues, scholars start considering them more attentively as human *res* and divine *numina* concurrently. Naturally, this twofold and complementary feature raises several issues about the interdependence of these personifications as objects of cult on the one hand, and human beings and their worship experiences on the other.

Still on the topic of abstraction of Roman deities, Lind tackles the problem of abstraction with the following premise, in the wake of Mattingly’s analysis:⁶³

[scil. Roman abstracts] occur in a social context and acquire meaning from the use to which they are put in that context. One of the most important of these contexts is religion. It is extremely

⁶¹ Cf. Lind (1973-74, 108). See also Mattingly (1937, 108-109). A similar insight is expressed by Latte (1960, 233-42ff.), although he does not add much to the arguments and provides an overall disappointing discussion. Most criticisms were aimed at Preller (1883, 178-268,) who makes some considerations in the tenth section of his *Römische mythologie*, applying monotheism categories to the general personifications in a somewhat extremist manner. In short, he presents the personifications under exam, which he calls “consecrated Virtues” despairingly, overlooking their cult and considering them as the result of belief in the “*Dämonische*” as opposed to the most ancient polytheism of the natural religion (*Ich stelle unter dieser Ueberschrift die Götter zusammen, welche ihren Cultus mehr der Abstraction und dem Glauben an das Dämonische als dem älteren Polytheismus der Naturreligion verdanken*); see Preller (1883, 178). Particularly interesting is the fact that he calls the *Sondergötter* “*Hilfsgötter und Personifikationen des praktischen Lebens*,” i.e., helping-gods and personifications of practical life. I wish to underline here the “practical” adjective to describe what a few lines above are called “abstractions,” emphasizing once more how ill-suited, plainly contradictory, and even confusing such a metaphorical field can be with regard to these personifications.

⁶² Cf. Lind (1973-74, n.19), where Lind comes into a minor conflict with Mattingly (1937), disagreeing on his distinction between *Concordia* and *Spes* and deeming it unnecessary because *Concordia* is not mentioned in Cic. Leg. 2.11.28. Indeed, *Concordia* is not featured in the passage (which is corrupted in more than a point; it should be noted). Still, it is present elsewhere in Cicero on the same topics of gods concerned with Roman ethical and religious thought: cf. *id.* N.D. 2.31.78-79; 3.16.41; 3.18.45-47; 3.24.61. In any event, Lind seems to have misinterpreted Mattingly’s point, with which I concur: since “the distinction between *virtus* and *res expetenda* is a vanishing one” (1937, 104), there should be no distinction between *Concordia* and *Spes*, even if *Concordia* is not mentioned in all passages.

⁶³ Cit. Lind (1973-74, 108).

difficult to trace the process of abstraction in any form of Roman culture. Rome reached a high level of self-consciousness in her development so quickly that there is little evidence of her struggle toward intellectual maturity.

This essay explores fundamental issues on the identity of abstractions and whether it is right to consider them objects of religious worship instead of philosophical speculations or the result of literary imagination. Lind tries to solve the problem by comparison with the Greeks, as he maintains they were the first to worship abstractions. He suggests the necessity of making further distinctions within the abstractions and claims that the Greeks greatly influenced the Romans, specifically in that they worshipped personifications that used to be gods and then became abstractions. On the contrary, “the reverse process was characteristic of the Romans,” or, in other words, the abstractions they venerated ended up becoming recognized gods.⁶⁴ Lind articulates the problem as follows, quoting Mattingly:⁶⁵

Roman abstractions arise against a Greek background and are apparently quite early in their origin, although “the realization of the personality of the god was never as vivid among the Romans as among the Greeks, aided, as they were, by the imaginative genius of their poets and sculptors.” There is little doubt that deified abstractions belong to a very early stage in Roman religion; this is borne out by a study of the *numina*, or divine powers, by the fact that primitive Roman elements are mingled with advanced elements as they are in modern religions.

While I am no devotee of simplistic evolutionary interpretations, I understand the logic behind this argument and why it could be compelling. Most conspicuously, Lind fails to consider—in comparison with the Greeks—that while some Roman personifications did not possess a known narrative or figurative identity, some others, in fact, did.⁶⁶ I do not think establishing a direct derivation of Roman personifications from the Greek ones is necessary. However, it is entirely

⁶⁴ Cf. Lind (1973-74, 109-110): “among the Greeks, who were the first to make cult-worships of abstractions, they were gods to begin with and only later became abstractions; the reverse process was characteristic of the Romans: these divinities were first abstractions and later became gods among them. The Roman divinized concepts, in general, however, did not become fully personalized, remaining colorless and characterless.”

⁶⁵ Cit. Lind (1973-74, 109-110 and n.7) quoting Mattingly (1937, 108).

⁶⁶ To examine this problem using an anthropological methodology, see again Bettini (2015b) on the concept of “distributed identity” of ancient gods.

possible that the two religious systems had strong interrelations. More precisely, the influence of Greek personifications on the Roman ones varies.⁶⁷

The most remarkable piece of scholarship in this second wave, and the one upon which this research builds directly, is Fears (1981a) with his historical, literary, and even anthropological approaches.⁶⁸ As the title indicates, *The Cult of Virtues and Roman Imperial Ideology*, the focus is on the role of the personifications under analysis in the imperial age. However, there is a section on the religious life of the Roman Republic, which is highly relevant to this research.

Like Lind, Fears's study opens by comparing the worship of some personifications in Greece and Rome and referring to them as they had been identified in the past: "the deification of abstract ideas."⁶⁹ Fears considers personifications as objects of cult and more than mere names or images employed in poetry and art.⁷⁰ What Fears deems less evident about the phenomenon of divine powers' worship, such as the personifications of virtues, is how to name it best:⁷¹

'Personification' is of dubious value. As a technical word it satisfies few. It is a modern derivation from the ancient *prosopopöie*, ultimately the practice of giving an actor's mask to and thus creating a character of a fictitious figure like Agonia or Elenchos: *personarum ficta inductio*.

Fears immediately saw a flaw in these impressions of "personifications" and "abstractions" and did not refrain from defining them both as "modern scholarly inventions." While I appreciate

⁶⁷ While in some cases comparison is justified, especially where there is clear evidence of mutual influence between Greek and Roman personifications, such parallels cannot be assumed universally. Apparent analogies often conceal significant divergences in meaning, ritual context, and civic function. Given the aim of this dissertation to reconstruct an emic understanding of Roman religious and civic life, each figure is examined primarily within its own cultural framework. Comparative analysis is thus employed with caution, only where it illuminates rather than obscures the distinctive logic of Roman polytheism. This methodological choice allows for a deeper appreciation of how personifications operated specifically within the Roman *res publica*, without being conflated with superficially similar but contextually different Greek concepts.

⁶⁸ More specifically, I try to take up the challenge proposed by Fears (1981a, 831). There is a desideratum for a term that will specifically define the distinctive cult phenomenon inherent in deifying qualities or conditions like *Concordia* and *Pietas*.

⁶⁹ See Fears (1981a, 828-829); to be fair, even if just *en passant*, Fears also mentions some of the same personifications in other cultures, such as Egyptian, Vedic, and Norse. The reason for this breadth of views on his part is because "the personification and worship of abstractions is thought to have been a marked feature of the cult life and mythology of the various Indo-European speaking peoples, a process facilitated, it is argued, by Indo-European grammar with its rich assortment of largely feminine abstract suffixes."

⁷⁰ Cf. Fears (1981a, 830).

⁷¹ Cit. Fears (1981a, 830 and n. 14-15).

Fears's awareness of the categorization problems regarding these personifications, I must argue against the personification label being unsatisfactory.

Indeed, Axtell (1907), Lind (1973-74), and Fears himself did resort to the perhaps better term “deification” or even “godheads.”⁷² Nevertheless, even “deification” is further from a native account of this phenomenon than “personification,” a category employed by the Greeks and the Romans and, thus, fitting to describe it.⁷³ In any event, regarding the abstraction, Fears explained himself clearly and is worth quoting in full (1981, 831-32):

These divinities were not abstractions. Quite the opposite: Pax was a concrete condition brought about by the concrete manifestation of a concrete divine power. ‘Abstraction’ is the antithesis of the Roman conception of divinity; for the Roman, in cult matters, the divine is by definition concrete, and each godhead is an object exercising will and bound by temporal, spatial and functional specifics.

In this lengthy and detailed essay, Fears opposes any definition hinting at abstraction and thus proposes Cicero's wording, “*utilitates*”—a choice I intend to preserve—or what he reckons to be the most satisfactory English equivalent: “Virtues” (capitalized).⁷⁴

Fears shifts the focus from the appropriate way to address these personifications to their pragmatic qualities, recognized as such in reference to the Stoic designation of some Greek personifications and the analysis of the benefit (*utilitas*) they bestow to human beings. Like Mattingly (1937) and Lind (1973-74), Fears recognizes *utilitates* as *numina*, possessing “a specific divine power defined by the production of a specific divine benefit: the establishment of a state of

⁷² Fears also uses the term “godheads,” which would be suitable in English, but harder to translate into other languages (1981a, 832).

⁷³ Cf. for instance what Quintilian says about this subject (Inst. 9.2.36): *Formas quoque fingimus saepe, ut Famam Vergilius, ut Voluptatem ac Virtutem, quem ad modum a Xenophonte traditur, Prodicus, ut Mortem ac Vitam, quas contendentes in satira tradit, Ennius. Cf. Lausberg (1998, 830): a special category of this figure [scil. fictio personae] - regarded by many theoreticians as belonging to the figurae elocutionis - is formed by the personification of concepts. Cf. also Quint. 9.39.89: etiam in personae fictione accidere quidam idem putaverunt, ut in verbis esset haec figura: crudelitatis mater est avaritia. See the next chapter for a more meaningful discussion on the matter.*

⁷⁴ Cf. Fears (1981a, 832): “Cicero labeled such divinities *utilitates*, and Augustine understood fully the concrete nature which the pagans attributed to these gods.”

harmonious cooperation among fellow citizens.”⁷⁵ It is regrettable that Fears does not delve into this any further.

This piece of scholarship represents the peak of the second wave. It pinned down the previous controversial issues on the topic and supplied plenty of data to deconstruct them and find new answers to old questions.

The third wave

Finally, the third wave of scholarship can help us understand why the subject is still trendy and why it is worth paying more attention to the *utilitates* today. The list of contributions in this last wave opens up the discussion in multiple directions, since scholars are concerned with this topic even as this literature review is being put together.

Philologists have always had trouble deciding whether to capitalize the names of personifications in Latin literature and philosophy. With the *utilitates*, the problem is ever more crucial. The broader question, of course, is not about capitalization *per se*, as the Romans did not consider this at all, but about understanding why it is so difficult to map Roman divinized virtues onto contemporary understandings of Roman customs and thus come to terms with the issue of capitalization, which is only one way to approach the problem.

In his book *Literature and Religion at Rome* (1998), Denis Feeney argues that Roman literature was an essential component of religion, and the two cultural practices should interact with each other. His input into this interconnection, which is at times complex, provides a theoretical ground for any future work. Chapter 3 is of particular interest as Feeney introduces what he calls “divinized humanity,” which, in his words (1998, 76), is: “a category of divinity which was

⁷⁵ Cf. Fears (1981a, 833). See also p.835: the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the individual cults of Virtues should themselves suggest to us that we are dealing not with colorless allegorical figures and abstractions but rather with objects of profound and sincere religious piety, *numina* invoked by men in critical moments in sincere expectation of divine salvation.

prominent in the late republic and the Empire.”⁷⁶ Feeney hints at a taxonomy of divine representation in Roman cults, explaining that from very early times some of what he calls generically “qualities” seemed “to be honored by the Romans as divine, to be worshipped in the hope that the power inherent in their name might be attracted if beneficent, or averted if malevolent” (1998, 88).

Regarding capitalization, Feeney makes an outstanding contribution, referring to the Roman “personifications” as being “conventionally but clumsily labeled” as such.⁷⁷ He says the following about *Pax*, which is worth considering even if this is not a personification at issue in this research:⁷⁸

From a modern point of view, the problem of abstracts seems to be compounded by the Romans’ lack of distinction between majuscule and minuscule letters. Thinking about the difference between Pax and pax is not easy, but it would appear to be a good deal easier than thinking about the difference between PAX and PAX. The clarity enforced by modern printing conventions, however, may obscure the advantages accruing to a mentality that did not rigidly impose demarcations between words, qualities, and instantiations.

The problem is indeed well-situated. Nevertheless, on the same page, Feeney registers the process of identifying a quality as a god as having some “randomness behind the whole operation, since any imposing abstract word can indeed look awfully like a divinity in the right context.” I agree that an abstract concept could potentially “look” like a divinity in a given context, but not “any” abstract word. Still, I challenge this position because only a quality that does possess a cult is worshipped. There is nothing random in official religious cults.

In conclusion, Feeney leaves us aware of two problems: (a) that capitalization is a central issue when it comes to Roman personifications, and (b) that it is necessary to be respectful of

⁷⁶ Among other arguments Feeney puts forward, the most relevant to our purposes is that in the past scholars have mistakenly searched Roman religion expecting to find the same “mythology” of the Greek gods; cf. Feeney (1998, 78-79): “For a Roman writing about his own religious tradition, the system was provided not by texts of poetry with their vivid divine personalities, but by whatever categorisations could be teased out of the bewilderingly diverse facets of civic activity. [...] The sheer range of number and type of divinities, after all, is very characteristic of Roman polytheism, and may help to explain some distinctive features of their religion—the rich elaboration of their ritual system, the ease with which they accommodated competing systems, and the lack of pressure for a consistent unifying theology.”

⁷⁷ Cf. Feeney (1988, 85).

⁷⁸ Feeney (1998, 88).

Roman frames of mind when envisaging them, whether it be for the edition of a text or other types of speculations.

Anna J. Clark's book (2007) investigates another aspect of what she calls "divine qualities:" she considers Concord, Faith, Hope, Clemency, Fortune, Freedom, Piety, and Victory, which received public cults in Rome during the Republican period. She draws on a wide range of evidence (literature, drama, coins, architecture, inscriptions, and graffiti) to show that the Romans did not simply bestow these qualities official cults on account of their intrinsic power. Instead, such qualities became "Roman" through different individuals' claims, counterclaims, appropriations, and explorations. Temples, altars, coin images, statues, and votive inscriptions were accessible to many. In other words, divine qualities were relevant to a broader social spectrum than is usually appreciated, and is significant for our understanding of Roman society.

I cannot entirely agree with many arguments made by Clark, but I admit that had I not read her work, I would not have proposed some of mine. She beautifully lays out that divine qualities had more levels of meaning depending on which group within Roman society addressed them as objects of worship. Particularly innovative are the arguments developed in the third chapter, using Plautus's comedies as her primary sources: she makes the point that, even in texts like these, every single invocation of a divine quality is not to be understood as a personal prayer, but as a reference to the state cult. That is to say that every time, for instance, *concordia* is mentioned, there is always a reference to the cult of *Concordia*. I will challenge this in the next chapter, but one ought to recognize that this argument allowed the field to move forward in analyzing Roman personifications.

Not only is this tome an impeccable supply of resources to study rituals in Republican Rome, it also finally gives justice to the earlier "abstractions," focusing on their concrete and tangible role within Roman civic religion. Clark makes a radical decision, which will be thoroughly discussed in

the next chapter: she resolves to print the names of any divine quality in small caps on the grounds of their ultimate indeterminacy.

Belonging to this last wave are also two pieces of scholarship that are not directly concerned with the divine element of Roman personifications; nevertheless, they provide material for further consideration. The first book that significantly helps to unfold new arguments is that of Morgan (2007), “Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire.” Morality is one of the fundamental conceptions of any society, enabling heterogeneous groups to form, negotiate their internal differences, and persist through time. In this comprehensive study of Roman popular morality, Morgan argues that it is possible to recover much of people’s moral thinking across the Empire. Her analysis draws on proverbs, tales, exemplary stories, and gnomic sentences to explore how morality worked as a system for Roman society. She investigates various ideas and practices and their value, questioning the authority and the relationship with morally elevated philosophy and the ethical choice of words in documents and inscriptions. The Roman Empire included diverse groups, at times displaying overlapping features. Accordingly, their ideas varied because of social status, geopolitics, gender, and other determinants. Nevertheless, the empire held together as an ethical community, a notable factor in its socio-political achievements.

Fundamental to the development of this dissertation is an article by Rebecca Langlands (2011) that introduces the concept of “situational variability” and applies it to the Romans. The primary argument exposed here is that *exempla* may be understood as moral tools mediating between a universal and a particular. According to Langlands, the Romans utilized situational variability when reading exemplary stories and used them as a key to making ethical decisions. This means that they decide whether to consider an action “right” by observing the circumstances in which it is performed. This principle is not universally applicable because what is appropriate for one person in a given situation may not be the same for another in a different setting. Some articulations of situational variability are found in Valerius Maximus’s *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*.

Comparison with Cicero's *De officiis* suggests that situational ethics was a key feature of Roman thinking. I will use her application of situational variability in the third chapter.

Finally, the piece of scholarship that is most engaged in the achievement of new results in the field of Roman religion in general is the French volume *Dieux de Rome et du monde romain en réseaux*, edited by Yann Berthelet and Françoise Van Haepern.⁷⁹ More outspokenly than others, the editors lament the neglect the Roman gods have undergone in the last decades and invite readers to both leave behind a “personal” approach to single gods and consider the contexts, or “networks” (*réseaux*) as they call them, with an effective heuristic metaphor.⁸⁰ While the contents of this book are miscellaneous and not particularly relevant to this research, the methodology is tremendously pertinent. The system implemented here encourages the examination of divinity not solely concerning their specific field of action but rather to the relational structures between the god and the notion of their network (i.e., the contexts in which they evolve together with the other gods they may be related to by way of their modes of action and interaction).

Concluding remarks: Cicero's *utilitates* as religious ideals and facts

In this chapter, I contextualized Cicero's *utilitates* within the larger group of Roman personifications, shedding light on the critical need to avoid imposing anachronistic Christian values onto these personifications. To this end, I analyzed the primary sources, keeping Cicero's viewpoint in mind as a Roman citizen. The most important passages, if read together, barely amount to two pages, and yet, they unfold new meaning once some prejudices of the past are cleared. Through a concise analysis of historical scholarship, I have exposed the misjudgments and mislabeling that I believe have pervaded the discourse surrounding these personifications over the decades. This investigation serves as a testament to the impact of misinterpretations, emphasizing

⁷⁹ This is only the first book of what promises to be a series of studies of the same type on Roman polytheism.

⁸⁰ Cf. Berthelet and Van Haepern (2021, 7): “ces enquetes precedent pour la plupart d'une demarche essentialiste ou les dieux sont census comme des personnes, et de l'illusion selon laquelle il serait possible de comprendre la nature d'un dieu par la connaissance de ses origines.”

how they can lead to erroneous conclusions and hinder a genuine understanding in the long run.

Wherever possible, I have tried to rectify misreadings, enriching the academic discourse and paving the way for a more accurate and nuanced comprehension of the subject matter.

Examining diverse scholarly perspectives and nomenclature about Roman personifications in general, and the *utilitates* in particular, provides a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of this complex subject. Scholars have approached this topic from various angles. Those who delve into the concrete aspects of these gods tend to focus on the practical benefits. In contrast, those who explore the abstract ones are primarily concerned with how these benefits are named and conceptualized. It is crucial to acknowledge a common limitation in the existing body of scholarship: many of these studies have been conducted through the lens of cultural categories external to Roman culture. In light of this issue, I have highlighted these challenges and aimed to make a methodological statement. It is necessary to adopt an emic approach, especially when investigating religious beliefs and practices.⁸¹

Following this line of reasoning, I conclude that Cicero's *utilitates* are eight personifications: *concordia*, *fides*, *honor*, *mens*, *pietas*, *salus*, *victoria*, and *virtus*. They are distinct from other Roman ones because, simultaneously, (a) they are abstract concepts in that they are, from a grammatical standpoint, abstract nouns describing human qualities: more specifically, they are virtues; (b) they are personifications, according to the general understanding of this standard rhetorical device or rendition in figurative arts, because they are attributed human features even though they are forces, rather than people; and (c) they are gods because they possess official cults in Rome.

To summarize, the *utilitates* are eight personified virtuous human qualities whose names simultaneously refer to the corresponding divinity. A metonymy is at play: these personifications manifest through the matter they confer. In other words, the *utilitates* are, at once, gods as subjects

⁸¹ Cf. Bettini and Short (2018).

and the corresponding benefit (“*utilitas*”) as objects. Beyond this linguistic feature, which will be analyzed in further detail with regard to poetry in Chapter II, those personifications function as an idealistic ethical code that everyone should aspire to and abide by in Rome’s civic context; this will be discussed in Chapter III.

Chapter II: A middle path between the divine and the human: navigating the capitalization conundrum around Cicero's *utilitates*

In this chapter, as we transition from exploring the *utilitates* as viewed by Cicero in Roman religion, our focus turns to the broader *corpus* of Roman literature. In the past, the personifications within the *indigitamenta* (invocation lists), as well as the so-called “abstract concepts,” were often dismissed as a mere trace of primitive Roman religiosity, and they have often been used only as an argument to show how underdeveloped Roman religion was thought to be compared to other cultures.¹ The field is now ready to move on. In the hope of overcoming this conception, since some of the *utilitates* belong in that list, I aim to show how these personifications, typical of Roman polytheism, were much more complex than previously understood, and there is still space for interpretation of literary texts, specifically Virgil's *Aeneid*, rather than in Cicero.²

The literary examination in this chapter offers a more holistic understanding of the *utilitates*, taken as a case study out of the larger pool of all Roman personifications. It provides insight into the intellectual and cultural dimensions that shaped their literary use in ancient texts. This exploration opens up exciting possibilities for new interpretations, encouraging us to approach the *utilitates* with fresh perspectives and an open mind.

The *utilitates* are personifications of divinities that have their *vis* and manifest concretely through the matters they confer, which primarily concern humans. These elements, i.e., the human and the divine, fuse all together in one noun, which can, in turn, be imagined as a loom weaving together threads of meaning, creating a tapestry of interconnected concepts. Such an image reflects

¹ It is worth noting and avoiding a common misconception regarding the term *indigitamenta*, the lists of invocations of specific Roman personifications within the celebration of determined rites. The etymology is still debated. Often, *indigitamenta* is used synecdochically to refer to “minor” gods in a general sense when, in fact, the term specifically pertains to the Roman personifications included in that list, with the relative invocations. Cf. Appendix I in Bettini (2022). As for the list, I refer to the one in RE s.v. *Indigitamenta*, which is an attempted reconstruction of the list of *dei certi* by Varro (as it is possible to infer by the writings of Augustin and Tertullian): of Cicero's *utilitates*, only *Mens*, *Victoria*, *Honos*, and *Virtus* are on this list.

² For a summary and lucid arguments on this problem and the general logical organization of these personifications within Roman polytheism, see Scheid (1999, 184-203).

Cicero's definition of the *utilitates* as *res humanae*, considering *res* as the signifier of a cluster of relations built within these personifications, both in their internal and external values. Keeping this metonymy—the primary feature of the *utilitates*—in mind when analyzing the *utilitates* can present us with a more substantial fabric of meaning, enhancing the comprehension we already have of a text.

Other than the Christian prejudices analyzed in the previous chapter, a factor that impacted our understanding of ancient personifications in literary texts, and particularly of the *utilitates*, is scholars' use of capitalization, i.e., the use of upper-case letters to designate a non-human noun with humanlike features.³ While this has long been a fundamental aspect of modern writing, such a practice did not apply to ancient writing. In my methodological statement, I articulated a commitment to an emic perspective, emphasizing the importance of understanding phenomena from within the cultural context under study. Undoubtedly, the issue of capitalization presents itself as an etic concern; despite its etic nature, this issue cannot be overlooked, as it represents the most conspicuous aspect of the emic problem I am investigating. Thus, addressing the capitalization issue is essential to comprehensively understanding and accurately interpreting the cultural nuances embedded within the emic context. In fact, an aspect that should always be considered is that neither the Greeks nor the Romans distinguished between majuscule and minuscule letters in their writing process. Such an issue is of course irrelevant in oral poetic composition and performance.⁴ The problem we are concerned with arises as modern scholars' use of capitalization on personifications has left space for some confusion, particularly in light of its inconsistent use over time, so much so that commentaries are often filled with debates and arguments about whether

³ In some of the earliest writing systems, there was no concept of capitalization as we understand it today. These systems did not distinguish between uppercase and lowercase letters. During the Middle Ages, capitalization rules in writing started to be established in Europe. Scribes and scholars began to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for proper nouns like names of people and places. However, the rules were not standardized, and capitalization practices varied between regions and manuscripts. The first attempt to standardize this practice happened only with the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, which arguably required consistency.

⁴ Cf. Fears (1981a, 944).

nouns should be capitalized. While capitalizing personifications likely served as a means to denote their extraordinary value within a text, provide clarity or specification, or otherwise acknowledge their value, such an inconsistency raises the question of whether ancient authors considered the features that come with modern capitalization important (or as important as are valued today).

The general convention that emerged from this scholarly practice is that personifications are only recognized as such, that is to say qualities with human characteristics, when capitalized. In contrast, the same nouns expressed in minuscule letters only indicate abstract qualities whose evocation of the corresponding divinity and humanlike features is not necessarily acknowledged.

Clark (2007, 18), in her book about Roman personifications, argues that:

Once LIBERTAS was worshipped, for example, any reference to LIBERTAS, however mundane, was theological, in the strict sense of the word.

I am afraid I disagree with this assessment as there are situations, particularly non-literary and everyday ones, in which one may be referring specifically to the human element corresponding to divine personification. In other words, I believe there are three possible case records:

- a) Reference to the human value of a Roman personification;
- b) Reference to the personification as a literary presence or divinity;
- c) Overlap between human and divine implications of the term.

The context must guide one's interpretation, following a criterion that considers the agency of these words, i.e., what effect their presence is supposed to produce. It is true that on many occasions—and certainly as far as the *utilitates* are concerned, given their metonymic aspect—for the personifications whose name also indicates the corresponding object or matter, to mention the one is indeed to think of the other. In other words, the personified aspect, the divinity, and the worldly matter are conflated in one noun. Capitalization—I agree with Clark on this—causes too much of a distinction and, I add, disorientation. But there are at least as many cases in which the referent is unilateral, and any hint to the one or the other aspects is absent. There is no need to be so rigid with subjects that are by nature so fluid, and this is true for Clark's position.

This is also true for the opposing view, namely that of Jacotot (2013, 507), who, on the contrary, is confident that one can easily and unfailingly discern between human and personified occurrences in any given context. He thus suggests that using the capitalization is appropriate because “*les textes d’époque républicaine où il est totalement impossible de trancher entre l’objet humain et le dieu sont rares.*”

This entire chapter is essentially a counterargument to these two antithetical statements and—for that matter—to the whole body of scholarly analyses, which seem unconscious of the possibility and opportunity of mediating between Clark’s and Jacotot’s two polarized positions. Capitalization is an interpretive tool that can only work with binary options and, therefore, cannot accommodate the *utilitates* as they function in three ways.

The conversation on the middle ground of this crossway was started by Rufus J. Fears, who touched on the problem of capitalization concerning Roman personification. Besides the capitalization, the more substantial issue under scrutiny is recognizing the value of these personifications when they occur, considering both their worldly and religious frames of reference. Fears (1981a, 944) wisely wrote:

In much recent scholarship there has been a tendency to distinguish between, for example, *concordia* as a concept and Concordia as a divine form or personification. We are becoming accustomed to thinking of the concepts of *pax* or *libertas* as enjoying separate existences from Pax and Libertas as personifications. It might be suggested that such distinctions are more obvious to the modern than to the ancient. For the Roman the frontier separating the world of the gods from that of men was not impassable. The gods were frequent visitors in the world of mortals. With far more fluidity than a modern philologist, the Roman’s mind moved between the socio-political and the divine orders. And the vividly pictorial quality of his language attests to his ability to envision divine power operating in what seems a mere concept to modern man.

I agree with Fears, and I explore this “capitalization conundrum” as it relates to the *utilitates* in Roman literature by proposing a compromise model that considers how different the ancient Roman attitude was towards these personifications and how modern writing has been dealing with them. By examining a range of ancient texts concerning the *utilitates* as a case study, I aim to shine a light on the significance of the editorial choices made about them. While I understand why

scholars opted to capitalize them, I wonder at what cost these interventions came and whether there is something we may have lost in the process.

Ultimately, I intend to demonstrate that in some instances (namely, those in which the context does not indicate, specifically, whether the focus is on the human or divine value of a Roman personification), capitalization—however useful a tool in modern interpretations—does not apply to the best of efficiency to the *utilitates*, both when it is used and when it is not. It is, in fact, a modern worry that of charging the *utilitates* with a divine or human power exclusively. As I shall show, by respecting the Roman emic account of these personifications, the divine and human elements do not contradict or exclude each other but can rather coexist and provide access to a greater degree of meaning. This argument is all the more relevant to the *utilitates* because the personifications belonging to this group are unique; they are qualities and divine beings that mirror the fundamental ethical values of Roman society. Thus, when used in literature, these personifications' function is to evoke a particular yet comprehensive context made of social conventions and (idealistic) expectations: the literary employment of these personifications is a way to give immediate elevation and—so to speak—"Roman" context to what one is trying to say.

The same sentiment may not apply to other personifications that are less pertinent to a society's ethical framework and the expected functions or conduct of the society itself. However, it is indeed possible that different subgroups of divinities within the *indigitamenta* might have a similar function connected to another system of values. In other words, the same line of reasoning may apply to different subgroups of Roman personifications, which are, at once, things or abstract concepts and also gods. This is true even when lacking the ethical and virtuous connotation—as well as the Stoic influence—of Cicero's *utilitates*.

Before we begin, let us clearly define the case study to be analyzed in this chapter: Cicero's *utilitates* are *concordia*, *fides*, *honor*, *mens*, *pietas*, *salus*, *victoria*, and *virtus*. It is helpful to visualize them as a unique group (the grey area) in a Venn diagram:

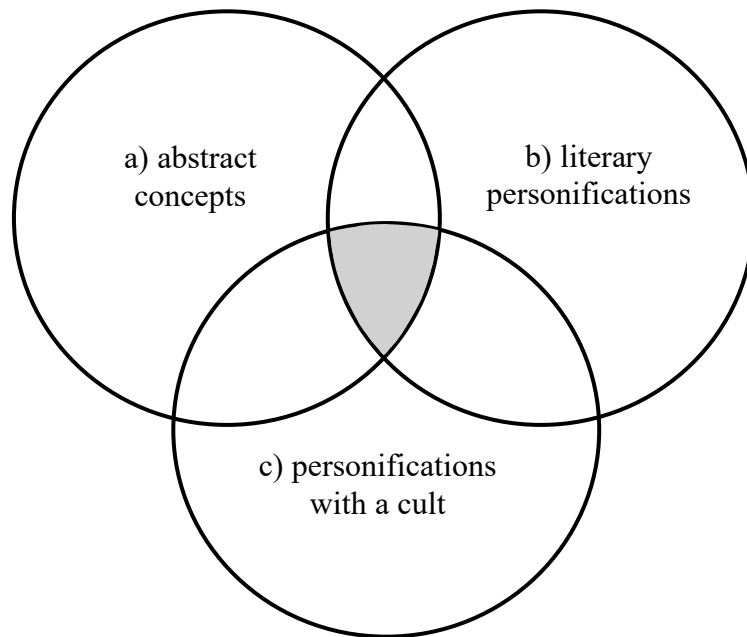


Figure 1: Venn diagram illustrating the *utilitates*

The occurrences of these terms, to which I intend to apply my compromise model, are inside the grey zone of the diagram above, resulting in the intersection of the following three sets:

- a) Abstract concepts because, grammatically, they are abstract nouns describing human qualities (in the case of the *utilitates*, civic virtues);
- b) Literary personifications: that is, the abstract concepts are attributed humanlike features even if they are not human (a common practice and rhetorical device);⁵
- c) Finally, personifications possessing a publicly recognized cult in Rome.

Following this schematic representation, the occurrences to be analyzed here, namely Cicero's *utilitates*, are abstract qualities tallying with human virtues; they are also personified on account of their characteristic metonymy of human matter and its corresponding divinity. They also possess a cult that makes them stand out against all Roman personifications. Therefore, to employ "Concordia" as a personification in a text is different than, for example, using "Fame": both can be

⁵ This is also true for the figurative arts, but this literary analysis is strictly textual, and non-literary representations are outside the scope of this research.

personified, but only the former has religious significance in Rome; the latter is not subject to any particular metonymy, even less a religious one, as far as we know.

With capitalization, scholars have sometimes misunderstood the inherent metonymy of the *utilitates*, leaving loose threads of meaning behind. Wherever possible, I will attempt to reassemble them in this chapter.

The personification as a rhetorical device in Latin literature

From a literary viewpoint, the first question at issue is: what does “personification” mean in the eyes of Roman authors? Is it possible to compare the Romans’ use of this figure of speech to the modern use of it? Did the Romans have a word to refer to the category of *utilitates* as personifications?

In the study of personifications as rhetorical devices, these characters are usually described as non-personal beings becoming persons or having a particular agency, whether it be in light of their figurative attributes, ability to speak, or—and this is primarily a case in point—other forms of symbolized behavior. The technique of personifying a noun is a powerful tool in the hands of a writer, both ancient and modern, and it is generally used to evoke emotion and create vivid imagery, as well as to make conceptual notions like behaviors, as per the *utilitates*, more tangible, relatable and accessible to the reader. In Republican Rome, the *utilitates* represent a deified model according to which one is expected to conduct oneself.

Naturally, many elements of figurative arts strengthened the presence of personifications in literature, especially poetry; however, the nature of this analysis, in this chapter, is purely textual, with a focus on the literary qualities of the analyzed personifications. The subject of our inquiry are Cicero’s *utilitates*. In the previous chapter, I identified them as the personifications of expected societal and religious norms in the Roman civic context, and it is as such that I consider them in this new examination. To see how the *utilitates* are personified in Latin literature—as opposed to being

discussed from a philosophical and religious viewpoint, as Cicero does—it is essential to trace the personification as a figure of speech back to its meaning as ‘unedited’ by scholars.

Miano, in an essay about *salus* (2019, 137), summarizes the problem as follows:

The goddess Salus is one of the deities who take their names from concepts; modern scholars have defined these gods and goddesses as Virtues, Qualities, or conceptual deities, although in antiquity these categories did not exist.

I am afraid I have to disagree. The Romans possessed a grammatical category for this phenomenon, namely the *fictio personae*. This fact demonstrates an awareness of the rhetorical relationship between the gods and their conceptualization even though, at the time, the issue did not revolve around capitalization at all.

Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*, his guide to the study and practice of rhetoric, provides an emic and scholarly discussion of the matter in book IX. The section at issue is specifically devoted to the distinction between tropes, examined in the previous book, and figures. The author further distinguishes the figures in “figures of speech” and “figures of thought” (Inst. 9.1.15-18), with the *fictio personae* falling into the latter category.⁶ The larger context of the discussion concerns how the language (in this case, Latin) is structured and how it can be used effectively.

Fictio personae is one of the many expressions Quintilian suggests using to be persuasive and to strengthen one’s argument. He categorizes the personification as a figure and explains what he means by “figure.” It is an arrangement of words far from ordinary and spontaneous expressions (*figura, sicut nomine ipso patet, conformatio quaedam orationis remota a communi et primum se offerente ratione; ibid. 9.1.4.*) This general statement forms the essential basis for the entire critical discourse in this chapter about poetry. Figures of speech are utilized to communicate messages more effectively. When writers use a figure of speech, it is reasonable to conclude that they aim to add extraordinary value to their texts, thereby enhancing their meaning and creating an immediate

⁶ By far, the most comprehensive and recent analysis of this phenomenon, complete with Greek terminology, can be found in Lausberg (1998, 369-372). The few pages devoted to personification provide a bird’s eye view of how this grammatical category is distinguished from similar ones, such as the *sermocinatio* and the allegory, and an interesting sub-categorization of the *fictio personae* through speech and other forms of personified behavior (see §§828-829).

impact. Quintilian distinguishes between trope and figure: trope replaces words, while figure retains them unchanged.⁷

As previously mentioned, the use of *utilitates* as personifications can be perplexing because the same spelling refers to the personifications, the divine forces, and worldly effects simultaneously. In addition to this triple ambiguity, there is a peculiar overlap between two figures of speech: homonymy and metonymy.⁸

Following Quintilian's line of reasoning, metonymy—i.e., a word used as a substitute for something else with which it is closely associated—is considered logically as a trope and not a figure (cf. *ibid.* 9.1.5); however, the *utilitates* present homonymy between the human quality and the related god, which is what makes them so unique and worthy of attention. Accordingly, this fact does not contradict Quintilian's arguments. It gives us all the more reason to try and understand the mechanics behind the *utilitates* as personifications in literary texts other than in Roman religion.

Having clarified what Quintilian means by “figure,” let us now consider, as per his categorization, the personification (*fictio personae*) as a figure of thought (*figura sententiae*):⁹

Fictiones personarum, quae προσωποποιία dicuntur: mire namque cum variant orationem tum excitant. His et adversariorum cogitationes velut secum loquentium protrahimus (...), et nostros cum aliis sermones et aliorum inter se credibiliter introducimus, et suadendo, obiurgando, querendo, laudando, miserando personas idoneas damus. Quin deducere deos in hoc genere dicendi et inferos excitare concessum est. Urbes etiam populi que vocem accipiunt.

Personifications, which the Greeks call προσωποποιία: for they both vary and animate a speech with great efficacy. By means of these, we expose the thoughts of the enemies as if they were talking to themselves (...); and we introduce conversations with others and of others with themselves credibly; and we give appropriate characters to those advising, scolding, complaining, praising, pitying. Indeed, it is allowed to fetch the gods down and rouse up the dead in this genre of speech. Even cities and peoples receive a voice.

⁷ Quint. Inst. 9.1.5; 7: *in tropis ponuntur verba alia pro aliis... horum nihil in figuras cadit: nam et propriis verbis et ordine conlocatis figura fieri potest.*

⁸ Synonymy does not apply here: with the *utilitates*, there are no words that mean exactly or nearly the same as another word in the same language. I do not consider these terms polyvalent or multipurpose: the name that designates the *utilitates* indicates both human quality and divine power. From a linguistic viewpoint, there is one and only referent.

⁹ *Ibid.* 9.2.29-31.

Quintilian clarifies here that this way of speaking, to personify, is how an author provides characters with shape, credibility, and the ability to have agency, i.e., produce a particular effect. This applies to the *utilitates* since they represent specific and expected behaviors within Roman society.

Pliny's take against Cicero

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the *utilitates* as considered by Cicero; the only other author who references them together, rather than separately, is Pliny, who groups them similarly to Cicero in his writings. Pliny partially clarifies why these personifications are depicted in this way, reflecting how people of his time would have 'lived' and 'understood' them as religious facts of life, considering he lived during the imperial era, roughly a century after Cicero's republican period. The passage reads (Plin. 2.5.14-15):¹⁰

Quapropter effigiem dei formamque quaerere inbecillitatis humanae reor. quisquis est deus, si modo est alius, et quacumque in parte, totus est sensus, totus visus, totus auditus, totus animae, totus animi, totus sui. innumeros quidem credere atque etiam ex vitiis hominum, ut pudicitiam, concordiam, mentem, spem, honorem, clementiam, fidem, aut, ut Democrito placuit, duos omnino, poenam et beneficium, maiorem ad socordiam accedit. fragilis et laboriosa mortalitas in partes ita digessit infirmitatis suae memor, ut portionibus coleret quisque quo maxime indigeret.

Therefore, I believe that seeking the image and form of divinity is peculiar to human weakness. Whoever the god is, if he is really other, and wherever he is, he is all sensation, all sight, all hearing, all soul, all spirit, all self. Indeed, to believe that the gods are innumerable and even derived from the vices of men, such as *pudicitia*, *concordia*, *mens*, *spes*, *honor*, *clementia*, *fides* or, as Democritus preferred, only two, *poena* and *beneficium*, constitutes greater foolishness. The frail and strenuous mortal being—mindful of its weakness—divided into parts so as to worship in portions what each needed in greater measure.

Pliny's discussion of these matters is significantly influenced by the context of Vespasian's rule, shaping his views on religion in connection with the emperor and his political choices and endeavors.¹¹ This excerpt from Book II of Natural History belongs to the encyclopedia section

¹⁰ This is the only other passage that mentions the *utilitates* grouped together besides Cicero. Other authors mention them individually, but not as a homogeneous group.

¹¹ Cf. Beagon (1992, 26ff.).

focused on cosmology, cosmography, and general superstitions, encompassing subjects such as meteorology, astronomy, and celestial phenomena. Sections 1 to 31, from which we draw the passage, explicitly describe the celestial sphere as one of the four “regions” of the universe.

In order to facilitate a comprehensive comparison, ensure clarity, and enable a detailed analysis of the linguistic and stylistic differences between the translations, three selected versions in different languages are presented in the following synoptical table:

Conte, G. B. et al. (1982). *Storia naturale: Cosmologia e geografia (Libri 1-6)*. Einaudi: Torino. Translation by Barchiesi.

Pertanto, dal mio punto di vista, è un frutto di debolezza umana cercare l'immagine e la forma di Dio. Chiunque egli sia - se davvero è un'entità separata - e dovunque si trovi, è tutto sensazione, tutto vista, tutto udito, tutto anima, tutto spirito, tutto se stesso. E credere a una serie infinita di dei (tratti persino dai vizi umani) come Pudicizia, Concordia, Intelligenza, Speranza, Onore, Clemenza, Fedeltà, o, come preferiva Democrito, a due soltanto, Castigo e Beneficio, porta verso una stupidità anche maggiore. Fragile e tormentata, la condizione umana, memore della sua debolezza, ha compiuto questo frazionamento in modo da venerare, frammentariamente, ciò di cui ciascuno via via necessitava in maggior misura.

Henderson, J. (1938). *Natural History, Volume I: Books 1-2*. LCL: Cambridge MA. Translation by Rackham.

For this reason I deem it a mark of human weakness to seek to discover the shape and form of God. Whoever God is—provided there is a God—and in whatever region he is, he consists wholly of sense, sight and hearing, wholly of soul, wholly of mind, wholly of himself. To believe in gods without number, and gods corresponding to men's vices as well as to their virtues, like the Goddesses of Modesty, Concord, Intelligence, Hope, Honour, Mercy and Faith—or else, as Democritus held, only two, Punishment and Reward, reaches an even greater height of folly. Frail, toiling mortality, remembering its own weakness, has divided such deities into groups, so as to worship in sections, each the deity he is most in need of.

Litré, É. (1848). *Pline L'Ancien, Histoire naturelle, Livre Deux*. Dubochet : Paris.

Aussi c'est, je pense, le fait de la faiblesse humaine, que de chercher l'image et la forme de Dieu. Quel que soit Dieu, si tant est que ce n'est pas le soleil, et en quelque région qu'il réside, il est tout sensation, tout œil, tout oreille, tout âme, tout vie, tout lui-même. Croire qu'il y en a un nombre infini, et quelques-uns même imaginés d'après les vertus et les vices des hommes, tels que la Pudicité, la Concorde, l'Intelligence, l'Espérance, l'Honneur, la Clémence, la Foi, ou croire avec Démocrite qu'il n'y en a que deux, la Peine et le Bienfait, c'est passer les bornes de la stupidité. L'humanité débile et souffrante, se souvenant de sa faiblesse, a établi ces divisions, et voulu que chacun pût adorer celle dont il avait le plus besoin.

Table 1: Synoptic translations of Pliny, *Natural History* 2.5.14–15

The manuscripts all title section 5 “*de deo*,” but it is not completely clear about which divinity the discourse is precisely about, as vague—in fact—as it identifies *deus* in *quisquis est deus*.¹² Scholars ascertained at least three possibilities: the first, motivated by the presence of *quapropter* as a connector to the previous sentence, links *deus* with *sol*, the subject of the paragraph just above;¹³ the second, more palpable than the previous one from the viewpoint of content, is that *deus* refers back to *Mundus*, the first divinity mentioned by Pliny at the very opening of the second book, interpreting *quapropter* as a cross-reference to where the discussion had begun;¹⁴ finally, *deus* can be a mere generic term for divinity—as I would also argue—given the debate that follows, as well as the generic statement with which the paragraphs opens, about finding out the image and form of divinity, and, ultimately, about what is a divinity or what has been considered as such. However, without considering the precise understanding of who this *deus* is, all translators surprisingly capitalize the term, which I find bizarre since Christianity only started spreading out at the time of

¹² I decide to render ‘*deus*’ with a general divinity/god to reflect such doubtfulness, contrary to popular previous readings. Comparatively, *quapropter effigiem dei formamque quaerere inbecillitatis humanae reor. quisquis est deus...* is translated by Alessandro Barchiesi in Conte (1982) as “Pertanto, dal mio punto di vista, è un frutto di debolezza umana cercare l’immagine e la forma di Dio. Chiunque egli sia...”; by Rackham in Henderson (1938) as “For this reason I deem it a mark of human weakness to seek to discover the shape and form of God. Whoever God is...”; by Littré (1848) as “Aussi c’est, je pense, le fait de la faiblesse humaine, que de chercher l’image et la forme de Dieu. Quel que soit Dieu...” ; by Beaujeu (1950) “Aussi est-ce à mon sens un trait de la faiblesse humaine de rechercher une image et une forme de Dieu. Quel que soit Dieu...” While I understand the conventional reasons that may have led these authoritative scholars to make this choice, I would not go as far as Beaujeu’s commentary (1950, 126-127): “Plin ouvre alors une longue parenthèse dans laquelle il combat les croyances et les superstitions populaires. Il commence par définir les attributs de son Dieu, qui n’a pas de forme, de silhouette et s’identifie probablement avec le *mundus* : Dieu, pure substance active à la cime de l’être, est tout entier sensation et intellect, âme et esprit indivisible ; cette conception, qui d’accorde bien avec la théologie stoïcienne, remonte au fondateur de l’école éléatique, Xénophane de Colophon, qui, au VI^e siècle, enseignait l’unité absolue du monde et de Dieu, force inhérente au monde, et disait de lui : « οὐλος ὅρᾳ, οὐλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὐλος δὲ τ’ἀκούει ». Après avoir ainsi nettement affirmé sa position monothéiste, Plin s’en prend à la fragmentation de l’Être divin en une foule ridicule de divinités, par la faute de notre pusillanimité et de notre égoïsme.” While some Stoic influence is definitely there, the rest of the considerations is rather aleatory; most of all, I would be cautious in referring to Pliny as a monotheist. For the influence of Stoicism in Pliny, cf. Beagon (1992, 34-36).

¹³ Cf. Plin. Nat. 2.4.12-13. Pliny seems to consider the sun as being positioned in the middle with respect to the other planets and refers back to the quasi-formulaic lines on the sun in Hom. Il 3.277 “Ἡελίος θ’, ὃς πάντ’ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούει”; Od. 11.109, 12.323: “Ἡελίου, ὃς πάντ’ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούει.” Cf. Conte (1982, 219). Beaujeu (1950, 127) disagrees with this interpretation and argues: “Il faut évidemment comprendre : ...*deus*, si modo est alius [*ac mundus*], avec Mayhoff (éd. *N.H.*, I, p. 533), non *ac sol*, comme le proposait Ulrichs (éd. *Chrest.*, ad loc.) ; la digression se rattache logiquement aux premières lignes du livre (d’où le *quapropter*) ; lorsque l’auteur découpa le texte primitif, il ne refit pas la couture.”

¹⁴ Cf. Plin. Nat. 2.1.1: *Mundum et hoc quodcumque nomine alio caelum appellare libuit, cuius circumflexu degunt cuncta, numen esse credi par est, aeternum, immensum, neque genitum neque interiturum umquam*. Cf. Beaujeu (1950, 127) and see the previous footnote.

Pliny. At that point, it was not as popular as to make it feasible to have a reference to the Christian (and thus capitalized) God.

I am inclined to interpret *deus* as a general divine being because of another puzzling issue of this text, i.e., the incidental *si modo est alius*: scholars have different opinions on how to render it best. Littré (1848) thought that *deus* was the sun and thus translated “*si tant est que ce n’est pas le soleil*,” an understanding that I would factor out. The problem lies, of course, in the adjective *alius*: it might have simply meant “another one” with respect to the one mentioned, or, more likely, it can be “other” in the sense of denoting a different nature, of exceptional nature. Beaujeau (2002) renders it “*si toutefois il est distincte du monde*,” evidently identifying *deus* with *mundus*. Rackham in Henderson (1938) paraphrases “provided there is a God,” taking *si modo* as “if only, provided that,” but ignores *alius*. Barchiesi in Conte (1982) deciphers it as “*se davvero è un’entità separata*,” taking *modo* as a somewhat reinforcing adverb (‘indeed’), which does not seem to fit, but having *alius* meaning “a separate entity,” which is sensible. I favor uniting the two latter readings since I agree with Rackham’s understanding of *si modo* and Barchiesi’s interpretation of *alius*. Therefore, I translate “provided that he is of a different nature,” “on the understanding that the god presents an exceptional feature” with respect to everything else, as per the discussion.

The introductory sentence of this passage has already presented us with difficulties regarding a text that shows no particular variants in the manuscripts;¹⁵ there is, nevertheless, a textual vexed question in direct connection with the personifications mentioned by Pliny, among which most coincide with Cicero’s *utilitates*. The text is quite unusual, as Pliny disdainfully observes that aside from seeking a tangible representation of the deity and considering that gods could be numerous and even stem from human vices—seemingly referencing the personifications mentioned shortly after as examples—this notion carries an even greater level of absurdity. One may even agree with

¹⁵ The textual tradition of Pliny’s work presents a notably intricate scenario, given the difficulty of its content and style. The reconstruction of a cohesive framework proves unattainable. Preeminent manuscripts, in this regard, exhibit either incompleteness or solely comprise fragmentary excerpts. Cf. Reynolds (1984, 307-313) and, more recently, Reeve (2007.)

the concept expressed here, except that the very illustrations are counterintuitive. None of the nouns used as examples resemble anything evoking immoral or wicked behavior. Pliny lists virtues and not any type of vice: apart from *clementia*, all the personifications mentioned here received cult in Rome. The text—at face value—seemed not to be working here, soliciting interventions: as noted by Beaujeau (1950) in the critical apparatus, manuscript E, one of the most ancient, dating back to the IX-X century and accessible at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, reads *etiam ex virtutibus vitiisque*, with a later handing correction by the addition of *virtutibus* and the enclitic *-que*.¹⁶

Beaujeau (1950) notes that Pliny does not mention any vices, and, as a solution, suggests to place the whole *atque etiam ex vitiis hominum* in brackets, rendering “(pris même parmi le vices des hommes).”¹⁷ Barchiesi, in Conte (1982), seems to agree as he translates the sentence “(*tratti persino dai vizi umani*).” Littré (1848) and Rackham in Henderson (1938), on the other hand, both disagree and integrate the text, respectively translating “corresponding to men’s vices as well as to their virtues” and “*et quelques-uns même imaginés d’après les vertus et les vices des hommes*.” I agree with Beaujeau and Barchiesi in this particular case for two reasons, one being the consequence of the following: the list following *ut* needs not to be the clarification of *atque etiam ex vitiis hominum*, and can reasonably be the illustration of *innumeros* (scil. *deos*) *quidem credere*; if one indeed brackets the sentence, it can easily be interpreted as a witticism on the part of Pliny. The line of reasoning is clear: to believe that the gods are countless is stupid, as if there may even be gods deriving from men’s vices, which I am not going to be listing, and other gods of the like of *pudicitia*, *concordia*, etc. Therefore, I see no reason to intervene in the text.

In a concluding remark of disdain, Pliny explains the workings of traditional polytheism. Recognizing their own fragility, mortals break down reality into fragments to worship the aspects they genuinely require within these very fragments. Despite its contemptuous tone, this depiction

¹⁶ The manuscript in question is Paris. lat. 6795 (E). Cf. Beaujeau (1950, 12).

¹⁷ Cit. Beaujeau (1950, 127 n.3): “Pliny ne nomme pas de vices, mais on peut garder le texte des mss. en plaçant *atque etiam ex vitiis hominum* entre parenthèses.” Then there is a reference back to Cic. Nat. D. 2.23.61.

still comes from an author who likely recognized the evolving relationship between political power and religion occurring before him: an inevitable shift from the cult of ideal virtues developed into the cult of a virtuous (at least, in theory) person, i.e., the emperor.¹⁸ Thus, it is unsurprising that after addressing these absurd matters, he reserves his sole commendation in his writings for his current emperor, Vespasianus (Plin. Nat. 2.5.18):

Deus est mortali iuvare mortalem, et haec ad aeternam gloriam via. Hac proceres iere Romani, hac nunc caelesti passu cum liberis suis vadit maximus omnis aevi rector Vespasianus Augustus fessis rebus subveniens. Hic est vetustissimus referendi bene merentibus gratiam mos, ut tales numinibus adscribant. Quippe et aliorum nomina deorum et quae supra retuli siderum ex hominum nata sunt meritis.

To be a god is, for a mortal, to aid a mortal, that is the path to eternal glory. The greatest of the Romans have walked upon it, and now, with superhuman step, the greatest ruler of all time, Vespasian Augustus, advances upon it, with his children, bringing relief to the weary state. This is the ancient custom of giving thanks to benefactors: to inscribe them among the ranks of the deities. Indeed, even the names of other gods and the stars mentioned above have sprung from the meritorious deeds of men.

In this passage, Pliny describes the “prize” of apotheosis, i.e., the elevation of someone to divine status, as part of the official Roman ideology at that time. After all, before Vespasian, the Senate of Rome had already glorified two emperors, Augustus and Claudius, with apotheosis. It is not hard to imagine why, then, Pliny treated the personifications in the passage above (2.5.14-15) by the same standards as popular superstitions: there has been a profound shift, and he is making an effort to make sense of the current state of imperial cults.

As ridiculous as he may have found the weak attitude of people towards divinity, searching for the image and form of the gods, a personification of what was needed is how Roman religion used to work for the longest time: it is how the Romans seemed to have traditionally entered a relationship with the gods.¹⁹ The *utilitates*, as described by Cicero, and—to a certain degree—as

¹⁸ Cf. Scott (1932); (1936).

¹⁹ Bettini (2019a, 274ff.) considers Pliny’s passage and explains that “les humains se « morcèlent » eux-mêmes, ils morcèlent leur condition, et ils attribuent à chaque fragment le nom ou le statut d’une divinité : ils pourront ainsi interagir religieusement avec les « portions » de leur condition humaine.”

testified by the even earlier birth or performance of their civic cults, are an excellent case study to illustrate the profound religious shift from the time of Cicero to that of Pliny.

As explained in Chapter I, the moral qualities personified and worshipped during the early Republic operated within a community governed by collective rules. These personifications belonged to that same community, which adhered to specific shared guidelines that ultimately evolved into social norms and expectations. These divine beings had a fundamental human and morally uplifting agency: they exemplified the ideal behavior or aspiration, yet only men could enact the corresponding actions.²⁰

Cicero, evidently shaped by Stoic influences, exhibited a notable acceptance of virtue worship, aligning with the conventional religious practices in his city. Similarly, Pliny feels the need to reject the cult of virtues to endorse the political and religious transformations of his time: the key is perhaps that *reor* at the end of the first sentence, placed there with a clear intent to be cautious and prudent even when delivering a tirade, which this passage, to all intents and purposes, is.²¹ This difference between Cicero and Pliny, between virtues that used to be a collective ideal and then became associated with the *princeps*, ultimately determines the change of paradigm occurring with the *utilitates* as they were known from the Republican age well into the empire. As objects of interest, the former are very different from the latter, whence the restriction of this research for literary sources with the limits of the age of the principate.

²⁰ In a chapter on anthropomorphism, Bettini (2019a, 263ff.) analyzes this phenomenon through the words of several ancient authors and argues that both the ancients and modern scholars have a faulty understanding in putting too much attention on the “morphism” and not enough to “anthropo” part of the term. In other words, the argument is that the humanlike characteristics of the gods are less important than the fact that they have a human agency. On p. 269, Bettini explains how, even according to the Roman viewpoint, humanization (rather than ‘anthropomorphism’) seems to have used the same cognitive and emotional resources as any other social relation. Regarding the *utilitates*—he refers to Cicero’s passages where they are mentioned, although he does not refer to them as *utilitates*—he argues: “*Il s’agit de qualités morales qui ont une signification aussi bien individuelle que collective, civique : comme telles, elles tracent l’espace dans lequel s’inscrit l’honnête homme, le citoyen romain intègre. Nous savons que certaines de ces divinités disposaient des véritables temples et de représentations figuratives. Mais leur caractère est garanti par la nature profondément humaine des différentes agences morales que ces divinités doivent figurer. Seuls les hommes—ou plutôt les Romains—peuvent exercer fides, iustitia, honos et ainsi de suite.*”

²¹ The long speech of criticism continues for a few pages, with touches of irony and sarcasm, and Pliny is fully explicit about it, as he concludes “*in haec divertisse non fuerit alienum, vulgata propter adsiduam questionem de deo.*” Cf. Plin. Nat. 2.5.14-27.

Arguably, everything had changed: Cicero and Pliny lived in two very different phases of Roman history, in which religion—accordingly—played a different role. Nevertheless, in the passage analyzed above Pliny describes rather candidly the Roman system of thinking in religious terms: Traditionally, Roman polytheism partitions reality into smaller divine segments, allowing individuals to identify and connect with them more easily. Personification is one effective way of achieving this that, and it is indeed what happens with Cicero's *utilitates*, some of which are mentioned directly in the text. According to Pliny, the existence of these deities constitutes the fruit of human weakness and some foolishness. Indeed, the gods are ineffable beings, and humans do what they can to try to grasp their identity.

These personifications have been used in literature as images, and they are represented in extraliterary evidence, such as statues or on coins, but also, and most of all, they represent pragmatic behaviors. Their corresponding actions must have been so essential even to the pre-Republican Roman society that they have personified them to clarify the proper code of conduct.²² The fact that such personifications—and not many others in the cultural horizon of the Romans—were also divinities is a testament to their unique value insofar as ethical norms were concerned. Cicero referred to the *utilitates* as *res optandae* and *res expetendae*: they were models to aspire to, a guide for the Roman citizen.²³

Lost in translation: the cost of capitalization in editorial choices

In this chapter section, I aim to explore the factors that may have shaped the Roman attitudes toward the *utilitates* from a cultural and specifically literary standpoint. With their complex societal and religious norms, the Romans held a unique worldview deeply intertwined with their language and cultural practices. As such, understanding the cultural and linguistic nuances is crucial in

²² Cf. a brief and rather exciting discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the scholarly categorizations of Greek personifications in Beumer (2022, 40-42).

²³ See Cic. N.D. 3.61 and Leg. 2.11.28.

comprehending their attitudes toward various aspects of communication, including how these personified virtues were “thought of” and envisioned in literature.

Through the examination of selected literary sources, I aim to show how ancient Roman cultural and linguistic factors seem to have influenced their treatment of the *utilitates* in written texts, providing insights into their native (that is, emic) perception of these personifications and illustrating the significance of scholarly capitalization as applied (or not applied) to them. The goal is to understand how capitalization practices may have influenced later interpretations without considering ancient specific cultural features. This cannot be done without considering the historical features characterizing the *utilitates* as divine beings: to understand their place within a text, one ought to understand them in the context of their cult’s birth, whenever it is possible to trace it back, as well as their placement in the topography of the city. As rightly pointed out by Hölscher (2018, 143):²⁴

Much more than in Greece, these temples [scil. of the Roman personifications] preserved forever the memory of their origin, their initiators as well as their historical feats. They added up to a complex topography of the Roman religion and ideology of victory and power. The political and social impact of this sacred architecture was twofold: first, such public buildings in Rome remained connected, much more than in Greece, with the historical circumstances of their origin: with famous army leaders, glorious events, exemplary achievements and virtues. Second, these memories were not only made present for visual perception but could be incorporated by the citizens of the capital through concrete participation in regular official cult rituals.

Unlike many other Greek and Roman personifications, these figures demonstrate a strong connection to the historical circumstances that made them relevant and to the location of their cult. The temples dedicated to the *utilitates*, along with certain textual sources, have helped preserve the cultural memory of these events, enhancing our understanding of their value within the civic context in which they existed. Furthermore, the *utilitates*, in contrast to the many other

²⁴ To be precise, Hölscher (2018, 143) mentions seven out of eight *utilitates*: “Concordia, civic ‘harmony’; Salus, the state’s ‘safety’; Victoria, ‘victory’; Fides, ‘faithful relations’ with foreign states; Virtus, ‘military prowess’; Honos, ‘public renown’; Pietas, ‘pious care’ for gods and men.” *Mens* is left out of this list, and that is because the context of Hölscher’s discussion revolves around general political power. What he says, however, remains applicable and relevant.

personifications belonging to the Roman pantheon, are not deifications specific to a segment of life, like the agricultural ones, nor to particular moments of public engagement as opposed to the private sphere.²⁵

The *utilitates* serve as divine figures that link the people of Rome both personally and publicly, and they are tied to important events that the State engaged in, usually coinciding with the establishment of their cult. This connection during the Republic is particularly noteworthy, as the *utilitates* symbolized the society's evolution at that time. By personifying these qualities, events and social norms within the civic community's current context became visually and tangibly relevant. Although these idealized behaviors might seem removed from the present due to their traditional roots, personification rendered them immediately applicable and “up to date.”

As discussed in Chapter I, the city's gods were integral to this ideal community “in the making,” embodying social practices. Their presence—whether as statues in temples, through cultic rituals, or as deities referenced in language—served a crucial role in Republican Rome's cultural lifestyle: they acted as reminders of the valuable ideals they represented.²⁶

Before delving into the analysis of individual *utilitates*, it is essential to establish a foundational *caveat*. As depicted in ancient sources, the representations of these personifications should be viewed as idealized constructs, bearing the indicators of a culture's self-representation rather than historical reality.²⁷

²⁵ Cf. Bettini (2022a).

²⁶ I disagree with Litchfield (1914, 19ff.) as he states that “the Romans, throughout the historical period, recognized and strove hard to remedy a defect innate in their ancestral religious system.” He then deems the creation of some personifications, namely *Fides*, *Concordia*, *Pudicitia* “and the like” as “supplementary deities, purely moral (...), perhaps testimony at once to the original incompetency in this respect of the elder divinities, and to the inadequate success of the Roman state in their reformation.” I do not see the *utilitates* as a result of any type of failure of the past, nor do I see any “defect” in their religious system. Quite the contrary, I see them as an attempt to progress towards a better future within the existing religious framework.

²⁷ See Brelich (1955, 9ff.) about the perspective of Rome in polemic against other *civitates* (e.g. Praeneste).

While the actual manifestations of the *utilitates* within Roman society may have diverged considerably from the idealized portrayals, one ought to recognize that these representations offer profound insights into the values, aspirations, and self-image of the culture in question.

Additionally, when we explore sources from the Augustan cultural sphere, we should recognize a purposeful tendency towards mythological revisionism. This inclination typically involves reinterpreting ancient myths to celebrate past virtues and commend the new political and social order set by Augustus. Although this context can introduce some bias and manipulation, it does not make the information completely unreliable for our needs. With the *utilitates* being identified by Cicero as morally uplifting values, the fact that the literature of the Augustan period places a decisive emphasis on morality and civic duty is critical to note. The poetry produced at this time perfectly aligns with the nature of ‘ideals’ the *utilitates* carry out so evidently during the Republican age.

In the following paragraphs, I will analyze a few passages in which the *utilitates* are referred to individually. My argument is that, in these precise instances, the personifications were not charged necessarily with a human or divine value, as if these two nuances were mutually exclusive. Most of the passages come from the literary production of Virgil in the Augustan age, a time of cultural and societal development and *transition* in which Republican values are still strong despite the change in political structure. With the advent of the empire, the changes will be ever more drastic and will impact even literary works in a way that makes them unproductive to analyze in this light: *stricto sensu*, the virtues that were qualified as belonging to the citizenship funneled down to the virtues of the *princeps*. Whenever possible, I selected occurrences in Virgil’s *Aeneid*—in the critical text established by Conte (2019)—since this epic poem intends to celebrate Rome (and, indeed, Augustus). To do that, Virgil at times glorified the city’s fundamental values in every respect, and the *utilitates* represent them precisely.

I will deliberately overlook any clear instances where the context indicates a personification as explicitly divine, such as when it is accompanied by the term “god,” the adjective “divine,” or references to temples and shrines. Additionally, I will not consider any passages widely accepted by scholars in which a personification is evident, particularly in Roman comedy.²⁸

As for the instances of *utilitates* intended in their worldly value, i.e., as abstract concepts, referring to their human-only qualities, they will be the object of the next chapter.

Throughout this textual inquiry, the analysis draws extensively from authoritative critical editions, notably Les Belles Lettres, Loeb, Oxford, Teubner, and other pertinent sources. My references will encompass the comprehensive body of available commentaries. To streamline the discussion, I will selectively cite and reference commentaries and editions that present divergent perspectives and refer comprehensively to the consensus of such sources. Unless otherwise indicated, the texts I will be quoting are from the Teubner edition, and the translations are my own.

Cicero’s *utilitates* unveiled: a literary and religious analysis in eight case studies

In this chapter section, I analyze the individual personifications that constitute Cicero’s *utilitates* group, focusing on their use in the poetry of the Augustan age. From a religious standpoint, i.e., in terms of cultic worship, these deities are considered equal. Cicero does not propose a strict categorization, yet there is a subtle differentiation: he identifies *concordia*, *mens*,

²⁸ Clark (2007) analyzed many occurrences of the large use of personifications in Plautus, for instance. Her third chapter, titled “*Staging divine qualities*,” provides plenty of illustrations of how relevant these divine qualities were in both ordinary and entertainment contexts. I wish to draw attention to parallelism with Greek comedy, where the Greek gods have the very same role, and this is how ancient polytheisms worked: the gods were utterly a part of life and were not confined to what we define “religion” or “theology” today. On this matter, I wish to reference an intelligent book born after (and perhaps because of) the tragic events of Paris, the Charlie Hebdo shootings in 2015. Gunmen attacked the offices of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, known for its controversial cartoons, particularly those depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The attackers, claiming to be acting on behalf of Islamist extremist groups, killed twelve people, including cartoonists, journalists, and police officers. The incident sparked a wave of global solidarity with the victims and a renewed debate on freedom of speech, religious extremism, and the limits of satire. The book by Bettini and Raveri (2020) is about the so-called “joking relations” with the gods and the workings of religions where laughter has a place when it comes to the divine. While this is out of the terms of reference of this dissertation, and indeed of this chapter about Latin poetry, I include these facts because the study of literature transcends disciplinary boundaries, serving as a lens through which to comprehend not only the nuances of poetic expression but also the complex interplay of societal forces. While rooted in academic discourse, it underscores the notion that scholarly pursuits are ultimately driven by an intrinsic need to cultivate the intellectual and cultural tools necessary for engaged and informed citizenship.

fides, *virtus* as inherent in human nature (*in nobismet insunt*), whereas he views *concordia*, *honos*, *salus*, and *victoria* more as aspirations to which citizens should strive (*optandae*).²⁹ Without specific criteria for subdivision, I will thus present them here in alphabetical order.

***Concordia* personified: parsing the public and private perspectives**

The goddess *Concordia* was worshipped in Rome as early as the 4th century BC,³⁰ and her popularity reached its zenith during the two-century-long pursuit of the *concordia ordinum*.³¹ *Concordia* is indeed a deity of exceptional importance in relation to social stability in Rome. Such a prominence becomes immediately evident when considering that the birth of her cult is directly connected to one of the most significant moments in Roman institutional history, namely the promulgation of the Licinian-Sextian laws in 367 BC, which effectively marked the peace concluded between the *ordines* of patricians and plebeians under the dictatorship of Marcus Furius Camillus, after centuries of conflicts.³² It was Camillus himself, despite his old age, who devoted a temple to the goddess *Concordia* as a reminder of the accomplished reconciliation.³³

Camillus erected the first temple in the northwest corner of the Forum and strategically used it for propagandistic purposes. Records show that there had been two restorations: the first in 121 BC by the consul Lucius Opimius, who sought to revitalize it as a symbol of renewed peace following

²⁹ See Cic. N.D. 3.61 and the analysis above, p. 21.

³⁰ See the discussion in Lobur (2008, 47ff.; 92ff.).

³¹ Cf. Turchi (1939); LGRM s.v. *Personifikationen (römische)*; RE s.v. *Concordia*. As for the cult of *Concordia* outside of Rome, see the few but important references in Axtel (1908, 13) and Fears (1981b, 833ff.). On the *concordia ordinum* specifically, see the analysis by Pina Polo (1994).

³² In this case, and with regard to every personification that constitutes the object of my inquiries, I shall use the masculine and feminine English pronouns when I am referring to the gods, as opposed to the neuter. These personifications were given human features not only through the words in which they were referred to, but also through images, specifically dedicated statues.

³³ About the historical context, see Mommsen (1960) and Cary and Scullard (1981). Cf. Plut. Cam. 42.4; Ov. Fast. 1.637ff. See also Axtell (1907, 11-13). Cf. Momigliano (1942) for data on temples dedicated to the goddess *Concordia*; see, in particular, his indications on the figure of Marcus Furius Camillus (p. 111 n. 2). Regarding the political implications of *concordia*, see Jal's article (1962) on its relation to the *pax civilis*. Dumézil (1977, 350 ff.) also devotes much space to this goddess in his reflection on what he calls "personified abstractions." *Concordia* is regularly depicted on coins; numerous examples can be seen in LIMC s.v. *Homonoia/Concordia*.

the persecution of Caius Gracchus;³⁴ the second in 7 BC, prompted by Tiberius, who then later re-dedicated it to *Concordia Augusta* during his reign as Emperor.³⁵

In the Republican era, the Senate sometimes gathered in this very temple, where Cicero delivered the fourth Catilinarian oration. Regarding the significance of the personification of *Concordia*, with a clear aim to sway public opinion, the praetor Lucius Manilius vowed to dedicate a temple to her (according to the text, *in religionem*, i.e., out of religious scruple) during a military revolt in Gaul in 218 BC.³⁶ It is unclear whether he ultimately built this temple, and the same applies to the one pledged by Caesar to the Senate in 44 BC.³⁷

In ancient Rome, especially before the empire, concord was an idealized way of life.³⁸ The late-Republican sources are often seen as the basis for the flourishing of Roman civilization, bringing together individuals from various backgrounds and beliefs while promoting harmony and cooperation among its citizens. One does not need to look far to demonstrate this since the very mythical foundation of the city of Rome—or, at least, the accounts we possess about it—provides us with a powerful metaphor for the significance of concord among diverse peoples: a ditch, called *mundus*, filled with plots of land from different peoples.³⁹ Regardless of the truth of this narrative (since truthfulness is not what is at scrutiny here), Roman writers seem to have wished to

³⁴ Cf. Plut. Vit. C. Gracch. 17.8; Dumézil (1977, 352ff.) and now Clark (2008, 55.)

³⁵ See Suet. Tib. 20; Flory (1984, 312ff.). Incredibly, the temple was still standing during the papacy of Adrian I (772-795) and was finally razed to the ground around 1450, a fact that can be inferred thanks to the direct account given by the Italian humanist and historian Poggio Bracciolini: during his very first visit to Rome, he reports to have seen the temple of *Concordia* almost intact (*aedem fere integram*) in its white marble. Afterwards, the structure was demolished and mercilessly transformed into a lime kiln. Only in 1817 some architectural decorations were recuperated. Today, we can still see two pieces left of that temple: a small fragment of the trabeation in the *Porticus deorum consentium* within the monument of the *Tabularium* in the Capitol; and one of the cell's capitals hosted in the Palazzo dei Conservatori, where the Musei Capitolini have their headquarters. The presence of the capitol is explained because this *cella* was supposed to host some masterpieces by Greek artists.

³⁶ See Fears (1981a, 834).

³⁷ Cf. Cic. Catil. 4.14-15.

³⁸ Cf. the section on *Concordia* by Santi in De Martino and Santi (2021, 151ff.)

³⁹ Plutarch provides us with a quick but very effective description, see Plut. Rom. 11.2-5: βόθρος γὰρ ὠρύγη περὶ τὸ νῦν Κομίτιον κυκλοτερής, ἀπαρχαί τε πάντων, ὅσοις νόμῳ μὲν ὡς καλοῖς ἐχρῶντο, φύσει δ' ὡς ἀναγκαίοις, ἀπετέθησαν ἐνταῦθα. καὶ τέλος, ἐξ ἧς ἀφίκτο γῆς ἕκαστος ὀλίγην κομίζων μοῖραν, ἔβαλλον εἰς ταῦτα καὶ συνεμίγνυον. καλοῦσι δὲ τὸν βόθρον τοῦτον ᾧ καὶ τὸν ὄλυμπον ὀνόματι μοῦνδον. While there is no explicit mention of concord, the image is very telling. In light of the still great questions raised and arguments proposed, see De Sanctis (2012) focused on the *pomerium* with a nonetheless interesting discussion of the ancient sources.

convey that Rome was inclusive from its very ground, as opposed, for example, to the very exclusive Athens, and that people from different backgrounds could bring in their unique traditions and values.⁴⁰ Although the elements of economic opportunity and innovation could be viewed as the most persuasive aspects in this depiction, the image also reflects that a city welcoming newcomers must genuinely value promoting social cohesion and unity both within and outside its community, thereby presenting a united front. Once again, this is the articulation of a norm or an ideal meant to guide human behavior, i.e., how historians may have wished to characterize life during specific periods in Rome, and this can, in turn, reflect a common sentiment.

With this in mind, I intend to analyze the words of Sallust about the foundation of Rome concerning the concept of *concordia*. Referring to a mythical past, the historian explains how the Trojans, led by Aeneas, found life in common with the *aborigines*, i.e., a *genus hominum agreste, sine legibus, sine imperio, liberum atque solutum*, surprisingly easy (Sal. Cat. 6.2):

Hi [scil. The Trojans and the *aborigines*] postquam in una moenia conuenere, dispari genere, dissimili lingua, alii alio more uiuentes, incredibile memoratu est quam facile coaluerint: ita breui multitudo diuorsa atque uaga concordia civitas facta erat.

It is incredible to mention how easily the Trojans and the *Aborigines* coalesced after they came together within the same walls, being of different stock, different language, and living according to different customs: in such a short time, a diverse and unsettled multitude of people had become a community, thanks to *concordia*.

Different people, coming from different cultures and speaking different languages, managed to cohabit civilly: this happened thanks to *concordia*, which made it possible to have a peaceful commixture of profoundly different identities. The passage above is exemplary in showing why

⁴⁰ I refer to the Greeks' cultural persuasion that their people were deep-rooted in the land they themselves inhabited, as much as their ancestors did before them for generations. Rome and Athens, in this respect, could not be any more different. The citizens of Athens boldly laid claims on the pure identity of their community, born in the same piece of earth where the ancient Athenians had lived forever; their king was born out of the literal earth (Gaia), after all: this shows the self-assertive intolerance against any "mixture" with other peoples. On the other hand, Rome has no problem accepting its Trojan foundation (i.e., "non-Roman," non-autochthonous origin). Indeed, the early citizens of Rome lay claims on their openness, e.g., welcoming anyone in Romulus' *asylum*. This sort of "inclusive policy" is in direct contrast with the exclusivity of Athens. These two different models are not the only cultural alternatives that happened in antiquity. However, this quick and simplistic comparison is helpful in conveying the distinctive feature of *concordia* in Roman culture, starting from the myths around its very foundation. Cf. Santi (2014, 179-184) on the openness as reflected in Rome's society and politics. Interesting discussions about the concept of autochthony can be found in Bickerman (1952) and more recently in Detienne (2004). Cf. also Bettini (2011, 71ff.).

scholars could reasonably exchange views around the nature of *concordia*, specifically about whether the reference characterized the worldly quality or its divine manifestation. Nevertheless, no scholar here identifies *concordia* as even possibly a personification.⁴¹

I propose to follow the model compromise I suggested earlier: the divine and human elements of *concordia* in this passage are not in conflict or mutually exclusive; they can coexist harmoniously. Once this coexistence is established as a possibility, a decision about capitalization becomes dispensable, and this is precisely why it is so essential to have shown, in the previous chapter, the religious nature of the *utilitates* before encountering them in literature.

Let us see two poetry cases from the same author, Catullus, in which scholars have had divided opinions about whether *concordia* is the concept or the personification, focusing on the worldly and divine element and their possible concurrency. The passages in question are both from Catullus' *carmina docta*. Scholars have dedicated endless pages to the immense craftsmanship of this particular literary work, and it is central to remember that each word is chosen with meticulous care. I hope to contribute to unveiling one more layer of meaning hidden within Catullus' verses.

The first passage is the following (Catull. 64.334-336):

Nulla domus umquam tales contextit amores,
Nullus amor tali coniunxit foedere amantes,
qualis adest Thetidi, qualis concordia Peleo.

No home has ever sheltered such great loves,
no love has united lovers with a pact of such a kind,
as the *concordia* which is present with Tethys and Peleus.

The relationship between Peleus and Tethys, the primary subject of this epyllion, is described here in a section of the poem commonly known as "The Song of the *Parcae*" (ll.323-81). The tone of the lines quoted above is undoubtedly epithalamic, i.e., about the marriage motif. The term

⁴¹ No edition capitalizes *concordia* here. The only one to recognize her as a personification, although this is not reflected in the translation, is Storoni Mazzolani (1976, 87 n.5): "Concordia, leitmotiv del pensiero politico sallustiano, come avviene a chi è vissuto in tempi di violenza e di guerre civili, è una di quelle idee astratte alle quali i Romani, deificandole, dedicarono templi." In other words, the scholar writes *concordia* off as a typical god for any Roman citizen who needed this type of divinity (and relative temple) to overcome war and civil wars.

concordia in this context may refer to the ideal close bond between a married couple (as per the perfect nature of such virtues).⁴² Nonetheless, it is crucial to consider that Catullus may have intended something different using the term. Since *Concordia* was also a goddess in Roman religion, Catullus may have been presenting his interpretation of the myth of Peleus and Tethys by evoking her, thus fixing the myth with a Roman background. In the construction of these three lines, Catullus crafts two precise images to portray the couple's *concordia*: the first through the use of the vivid verb *contego*, which literally means "to cover," and thus projects a meaning of protection, or, as suggested by Merrill (1951, 157,) privacy;⁴³ the second with the combined use of *coniungo*, "to bind together" (evoking a yoke, frequent metaphor with marriage,) and the *foedus*, a term that, when used beyond the political sphere, can also indicate the marriage, and refers back to the notion of *fides*. These images let us envision a private dimension of marriage, indeed idyllic. This aspect is often undervalued in the cult of *Concordia*, a fact perhaps understandable given the solid public drive of such a virtue and its broad momentousness in politics. Marleen B. Flory (1984) takes this aspect seriously and highlights a peculiar coincidence: the *dies natalis* of the shrine of *Concordia*—wanted by Livia, Augustus' wife—is June 11th. Among other festivities, on the same day, there are the celebrations in honor of *Mater Matuta*, a special moment for family relationships (especially for maternal aunts and their nieces and nephews).⁴⁴ Flory (1984, 313) proposes the following hypothesis:

To my knowledge, the dedication date of June 11 for the Aedes Concordiae has not been considered in references to Livia's shrine, yet this important evidence clarifies the purpose of her shrine. Once we recognize the religious associations of this day with which Livia linked her shrine, a day on which were annually celebrated religious rites focused on women and family life, we can also trace the inspiration

⁴² As noted by Nuzzo (2003, 163), "il motivo della *felix domus* è ovviamente tipico dello statuto epitalamico."

⁴³ Cf. also Ellis (2010, 277), who translates and glosses "'has roofed in,' i.e., safe from prying eyes." Nuzzo (2003, 163) pointedly reminds the reader that "la locuzione *contegere amores* è un *hapax*, suggerito dall'immagine della casa come luogo dell'intimità coniugale. (...) L'estrema rarità della locuzione (in Catullo si ha di solito *coniungere amores*, come più oltre ai vv. 335 e 372) indusse Lachmann a correggere *contextit* in *conexit*, sulla base di Prop. 3. 8. 37, dove *nexisti* è adoperato in luogo del più comune *nexuisti*."

⁴⁴ Cf. Ov. Fast. 6.637ff. and Simpson (1991).

for the shrine's construction in two interrelated concerns of Augustus: the revival of traditional moral values and the symbolic role of Livia in Roman society.

Even though Flory admits there is no direct connection between the cults of these two divinities, I concur with her in saying there is credibility to the fact that this *aedes Concordiae* was instituted to join rites and celebrations dedicated to general family life, specifically marriage. While this may have stemmed from personal and political objectives, there must have been a supportive system of customs and traditions to make this not only permissible but also feasible and compatible with the people's common sense.⁴⁵ Catullus was active before this shrine was rebuilt and, therefore, cannot possibly be referring to this specifically.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the connection was acceptable later on: this prompts the question of whether his employment of *concordia* could be used metonymically here and also whether there is a reference to both exemplary marital harmony and the personification that lies behind it as the warrantor. I argue that Catullus romanizes the myth through his portrayal of the story and the rhetorical devices he decides to use. The marriage between Peleus and Tethys, thus between a human and a Nereid, a fact that already signifies the closest vicinity between men and gods, is summed up by Apollodorus:⁴⁷

Σπερχειοῦ τοῦ ποταμοῦ. αὐθις δὲ γαμεῖ Θέτιν τὴν Νηρέως, περὶ ἧς τοῦ γάμου Ζεὺς καὶ Ποσειδῶν ἤρισαν, Θέμιδος δὲ θεσπιωδούσης ἔσεσθαι τὸν ἐκ ταύτης γεννηθέντα κρείττονα τοῦ πατρὸς ἀπέσχοντο. ἔνιοι δὲ φασὶ, Διὸς ὀρμῶντος ἐπὶ τὴν ταύτης συνουσίαν, εἰρηκέναι Προμηθεά τὸν ἐκ ταύτης αὐτῷ γεννηθέντα οὐρανοῦ δυναστεύσειν. τινὲς δὲ λέγουσι Θέτιν μὴ βουλευθῆναι Διὶ συνελθεῖν ὥς ὑπὸ Ἥρας τραφεῖσαν, Δία δὲ ὀργισθέντα θνητῷ θέλειν αὐτὴν συνοικίσειν. Χείρωνος οὖν ὑποθεμένου Πηλεΐ συλλαβεῖν καὶ κατασχεῖν αὐτὴν μεταμορφουμένην, ἐπιτηρήσας συναρπάξει, γινομένην δὲ ὅτε μὲν πῦρ ὅτε δὲ ὕδωρ ὅτε δὲ θηρίον οὐ πρότερον ἀνῆκε πρὶν ἢ τὴν ἀρχαίαν μορφήν εἶδεν ἀπολαβοῦσαν. γαμεῖ δὲ ἐν τῷ Πηλίῳ, κάκεϊ θεοὶ τὸν γάμον εὐωχούμενοι καθύμνησαν.

Afterwards he [scil. Peleus] married Tethys, daughter of Nereus, for whose hand Zeus and Poseidon had been rivals; but when Themis prophesied that the son born of Tethys would be mightier than his father, they withdrew. But some say that when Zeus was bent on gratifying his passion for her, Prometheus declared that the son borne to him by her would be lord of heaven; and others affirm that Tethys would not consort with Zeus because she had been brought up by Hera, and that Zeus in anger would marry her to a mortal. Chiron, therefore, having advised Peleus to seize

⁴⁵ Purcell (1986) argues how Livia set an example for elite women in her religious activities, restoring the shrine of *Pudicitia* and dedicating a portico to *Concordia* in honor of marital harmony.

⁴⁶ The *aedes Concordiae* dates back to 7 BC, a bit later with respect to Catullus' period of activity.

⁴⁷ Apollod. Bibl. 3.13.5 (168-170), translation by Frazer (1921).

her and hold her fast in spite of her shape-shifting, he watched his chance and carried her off, and though she turned, now into fire, now into water, and now into a beast, he did not let her go till he saw that she had resumed her former shape. And he married her on Pelion, and there the gods celebrated the marriage with feast and song.

As reported by Apollodorus, this marriage revolves around two traditions: Peleus forcing Tethys into the union or the union itself being fundamentally a decision by the gods. Catullus prefers—in the economy of the whole story—the latter, less violent version (Catull. 64.19-21):⁴⁸

Tum Thetidis Peleus incensus fertur amore,
tum Tethys humanos non despexit hymenaeos,
tum Thetidi pater ipse iugandum Pelea sensit.

Then for Tethys Peleus became fired up out of love,
then Tethys has not looked down upon a mortal union,
then with Tethys her very father [scil. Zeus] conceived Peleus in union.

Judging by the emphatic use of rhetorical devices here, namely anaphora and polyptoton, in an exposed position at the beginning of the verse and for three lines in a row, it is impossible not to consider this choice as a resolute preference.⁴⁹ There seems to be a symmetry—something that is never random in Catullus—with regards to the lines quoted above (334-336): both triplets have a polyptoton (*nulla/nullus* vs. *Thetidis/Tethys /Thetidi*) and present an anaphora (*tum* vs. *qualis*). And the correspondence is not limited to rhetorical devices. To indicate the union, the verbs employed are *iugo* and *coniungo*: both refer to the cognitive metaphor connecting marriage to the image of the yoke, a device historically employed in agriculture to harness two oxen together for the purpose of

⁴⁸ I translate following Nuzzo's interpretation of line 19 (2003, 64) as he explains about *fertur*: "attribuendo al verbo il senso di «si narra», come di solito fanno i commentatori, e facendone dipendere *Peleus incensus (esse)*, verrebbe a crearsi un'evidente asimmetria coi successivi predicati in forma indipendente *non despexit* e *sensit*. Si potrebbe quindi interpretare *incensus fertur amore* come «è trascinato dal fuoco dell'amore», anche sulla base di precise attestazioni del nesso (Verg. *Aen.* 4, 376: *heu furiis incensa feror!*; Val. Fl. 4, 255: *incensa mente feruntur*); difficoltà senz'altro minore costituisce il passaggio dal presente *fertur* ai perfetti *despexit* e *sensit*: il repentino innamoramento di Peleo (un vero e proprio "colpo di fulmine") si colloca infatti, al di là dell'apparente sincronia suggerita dall'iterazione del *tum*, su un asse aspettuale e psicologico diverso, sia rispetto al più meditato assenso di Teti (non a caso espresso nella forma della litote) sia a quello 'fatale' di Giove, segnato dall'enigmatico *sensit* e da una serie di stilemi che gli conferiscono particolare solennità."

⁴⁹ Cf. Nuzzo (2003, 64) about *tum*: "si noti la forte sottolineatura data dalla triplice anafora di *tum* e dal relativo poliptoto del nome, che marca la 'novità' della versione mitica offerta da Catullo: come osserva Zetzel 1983, 261, «the point of that emphasis should be obvious: the poet intended to surprise the reader.»"

shared labor. And then there is the most meaningful correlation for our argument, which is considering *concordia* as human harmony as well as an allusion to its corresponding personification: that is, the use of *hymenaeos* as a metonymy for marriage on line 20 versus *concordia* on line 336.⁵⁰

Hymenaeus (or *Hymen*) is the Greek personification for the wedding hymn sung by the bride's procession as she is escorted to the groom's house or when a wedding is announced. In Latin, this term is employed to imitate the Greek's metonymical use for nuptial songs, which then, by synecdoche in which a part is made to represent the whole, indicates the marriage.⁵¹ There is consensus on this since most scholars capitalize him consistently in *Carmina* 61 and 62, for instance. This process is so typical in ancient literature that most commentaries do not even feel the need to justify it. By extension, it should be pretty straightforward to recognize that the same line of reasoning applies to both *hymenaeus* and *concordia* (and, once again, incidentally, how misleading capitalization can be as an editorial tool). No critical edition capitalizes *concordia*, nor do commentaries recognize her as a personification in 64.336.⁵²

The second passage from Catullus, again in the context of marriage, is the one suggested by Forsyth (66.87-88):⁵³

Sed magis, o nuptae, semper concordia vestras
semper amor sedes incola assiduus.

But rather, brides, may *concordia* and *amor* always be perpetual residents in your home.

⁵⁰ As further confirmation, Nuzzo (2003, 64) underlines that the lengthening in arsis of *despexit* is normal in Catullus and Vergil, and specifies that *Hymenaeus* is "usato sempre in fine di verso col senso metonimico di *nuptiae*." Cf. Catull. 64.4; 66.11; 115.1; Verg. Aen. 7.398; 10.720; V. Fl. 8.259.

⁵¹ Cf. Robbins (2006).

⁵² The only partial exception to this is Forsyth (1986, 412): in his commentary to the line, he writes "*concordia*: refers to the perfect harmony between husband and wife; cf. 66.87"; that adjective "perfect" could be a synonym for divine, but—in any event—he does not make this explicit.

⁵³ What makes this passage even more complicated in its interpretation is that Catullus 66 notably translates Callimachus. Most unfortunately the papyri have not preserved what is supposed to be the corresponding text and there is uncertainty about whether lines 79-88 are indeed a translation or an addition by Catullus. See the thorough reconstruction of the text in Marinone (1997, 59-69).

Once again, *semper* used anaphorically, together with the connection of *concordia* and *amor* in the context of marriage, suggest that Catullus had a specific goal in mind in portraying the marriage in this way. In this instance, Forsyth merely notes that “*concordia* is best translated as ‘harmony.’” To my knowledge, no commentary mentions *concordia*, or *amor* for that matter, as a personification other than Lenchantin de Gubernatis (1962, 201).⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Della Corte (1977, 166) edits and translates the text as follows:

Sed magis, o nuptae, semper concordia vestras
semper Amor sedes incola assiduus.

Ma piuttosto, o spose, abiti sempre le vostre dimore
Concordia, sempre un perenne Amore.

In his translation, Della Corte acknowledges both *concordia* and *amor* as personifications;⁵⁵ in the critical apparatus, he does not mention why he capitalizes *amor* and not *concordia* and does not comment on his choices in the notes. I imagine the reason for this textual solution resides in that, as Graf (2006) points out, *Amor* is one of the Latin equivalents, together with *Cupido*, for Eros “having purely literary functions; both names are used synonymously.” There is no question about the narrative identity of Eros, which makes it far easier to recognize him as a personification, even though most scholars leave it minuscule in this particular text. On the contrary, in Catullus 3.1, the famous *epicedium* of the sparrow, *Veneres Cupidinesque* is invariably capitalized. Thus, *concordia* was not recognized as a personification here, which may be attributed to the problematic state of the *utilitates*’ identity in general. I find it most untenable, in Catullus 66.87-88 (but then also as a widespread practice), to capitalize only one out of two (or more) personifications: however useful the choice of capitalizing, while it is logical to write them both in the majuscule or minuscule letter,

⁵⁴ Lenchantin de Gubernatis (1962) then reads the line *Sed magis, o nuptae, semper Concordia vestras*. The commentary states the following: “*Concordia* è personificata non altrimenti di Ἀφροδίτα” with reference to the Rylands Papyri 27.

⁵⁵ *Concordia* is not capitalized just because it is at the beginning of the line; the other lines, in fact, unless marking the start of new sentences with appropriate punctuation continue in regular minuscule letter, from which I infer the decision to capitalize *concordia* is intentional.

to be coherent, inconsistency can only lead to incomprehensibility. In this case, I would, therefore, argue for a correction.

Finally, in these three texts (64.19-21; 334-336 and 66.87-88), Catullus is trying to convey a consistent message when he refers to the theme of marriage. Catullus gives a peculiar Roman context and value to his verses in his effort to renew Greek Hellenistic poetry and address specifically his educated contemporary fellow citizens, especially with his *carmina docta*. Even though in *carmen* 64 Catullus is discussing a Greek couple and has shown knowledge of the Greek equivalents of the words he uses, he has chosen to use the Latin *concordia*. Acknowledging *concordia* as both the human value and the corresponding personification takes nothing away from the text; it rather enriches it with one more layer of meaning.

Of sacred vows and unbroken promises: honoring commitments and worshipping *Fides*

Aulus Gellius states that the Roman people owe their greatness to cultivating all manners of virtues, especially *fides*.⁵⁶ Thanks to this grammarian, there are quite a few anecdotes on how indispensable this quality was for people to coexist civilly and regulate social as well as commercial power relations. There were also stories on the more particular implications of such a virtue, e.g., the fact that a client was supposed to have absolute protection or that the soldiers should turn over the consuls rather than citizens of a lower level to the enemies if need be.⁵⁷ Indeed, the concept of *fides* was a serious affair in the complex social fabric of ancient Rome, especially from the archaic period to the Republican age.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Cf. Gell. 20.1.39-40.

⁵⁷ I find this information in Milani (2017, 31ff.) Cf. Gell. 20.1.40-41.

⁵⁸ I acknowledge that the scholarship on *fides* is extensive and continues to evolve within many fields, not only Classics. In light of this dissertation's specific focus and scope, the bibliography presented in this paragraph represents a limited and curated selection of the works most pertinent to the research questions. For a more exhaustive review of the extensive literature *fides*, see the still reliable Ramelli (2002, 13ff.).

Such a principle of trustworthiness and reliability was personified as a divine figure, a manifestation that embodied an ideal that permeated various dimensions of Roman life.⁵⁹ The personification of *Fides* played a significant role in fostering social cohesion, upholding morality, and facilitating the smooth functioning of civic, commercial, and political life in a society characterized by intricate relationships and alliances. This is all the more important in a culture that made no extensive use of the written word and, thus, where a divinity supplied some security.⁶⁰ For this reason, out of all the *utilitates*, *fides* is the one that best lends itself to fully understanding their nature. In this context, *fides* is to be understood as the loyalty, honesty, and fidelity realized in all aspects of the relationships between men (in both public and private spheres) while being, to some extent, guaranteed by the gods.⁶¹ In this sense, *fides* immediately shows the pragmatic value where there is an agreement between men: behind this agreement—whose success pertains to the contracting human parties only—there seems to be a well-structured behavioral code represented by a deified personification. In other words, the citizens of Rome seem to have deeply revered the deified representation of *fides*, elevating her to the status of a guardian of promises and an enforcer of pacts. In turn, temples and monuments dedicated to *Fides* and the festivals in her honor must have served as a reminder of the significance of adhering to agreements and oaths and upholding trust. I believe *Fides* had been provided with a sense of agency, i.e., she produced a particular effect when it came to keeping one's word; to some extent, she enabled the dissemination of an essential

⁵⁹ Milani (2017, 35) proposes a sensible definition for *fides* as a social dynamic requiring no need to persuade someone to abide to its principles by using force or threats: he calls it “diversified cogency” (lit. the Italian, “cogenza diversificata”).

⁶⁰ In his book about orality in ancient Rome, Bettini (2022) points out on many occasions the importance of the function of the goddess *fides* in a culture of orality, even in comparison with the Greek culture, and the relationship with the Roman notion of *fas*.

⁶¹ Cf. Hellegouarc’h (1972, 23ff).

value system in the context of Rome's nascent political structure and developing social order during the time of the Republic.⁶²

Unfortunately, we do not have much information regarding the temples and worship of *Fides*; the essentials are laid out in LIMC s.v. *Fides*:

A temple to F. was erected near that of Jupiter on the Capitol in 254 BC. Her cult was of considerable antiquity, traditionally ascribed to Numa. At her annual ceremony, the three *flamines maiores* drove in a covered wagon drawn by two horses to the site where they performed her rites with their hands covered to the fingers; in symbolic terms, F. was regarded as residing in the right hand.

Some remains of the temple of *Fides* have been discovered near the archeological site of the church of Saint Omobono: the podium, some column fragments, and a relatively great feminine head in marble, likely belonging to the cult statue, are still easily recognizable.⁶³

As for the birth of the cult, Livy and Plutarch agree that it was the work of Numa.⁶⁴ Plutarch merely declares that Numa was the first to build a temple to *Fides* and that she, as a deity, presides over a fundamental oath for the Romans.⁶⁵ Livy, on the other hand, makes a broader point and introduces the topic in the following way (1.21.1):

Ad haec consultanda procurandaque multitudine omni a vi et armis conversa, et animi aliquid agendo occupati erant, et deorum assidua insidens cura, cum interesse rebus humanis caeleste numen videretur, ea pietate omnium pectora imbuerat, ut fides ac ius iurandum pro obnoxio legum ac poenarum metu civitatem regerent.

Since the whole people's thoughts were diverted from violence and arms to the consultation and expiation, the souls were always occupied and the tending to the gods was constant, with the belief that a celestial will intervened in human affairs

⁶² The best evidence in this regard is in Dion. Hal. 2.75.1: the text is about Numa and the institution of the cult of *Fides*. He faced problems as the citizens fell too often into the habit of not honoring their commitments. If the liability for disrespecting an agreement were only in the hands of the contractors, it would be pretty easy to be in default. Numa solved the issue and held citizens accountable by making fairness an object of veneration, a fact that had beneficial consequences even in law courts. Cf. Milani (2017, 44ff. and especially n.70) and again his concept of "divine cogency" (see note 59).

⁶³ In the past, scholars have been confused about these archeological residuals, specifically about whether they belonged, in fact, to the temple of *Fides* or that of *Ops*. This is no longer an object of controversy thanks to the concurrent finding of bilingual inscriptions (in ancient Greek and Latin) with dedications from peoples of Asia Minor dating around the end of the II and beginning of the I century BC. These inscriptions doubtlessly belonged to the temple of *Fides*, with this god being the guarantor of diplomatic treaties and general relationships.

⁶⁴ Cf. Liv. 1.21.1-5; Plut. Num. 16.1.

⁶⁵ Cf. Plut. Num. 16.1: πρῶτον δέ φασι καὶ Πίστεως καὶ Τέρμονος ἱερὸν ἰδρύσασθαι. καὶ τὴν μὲν Πίστιν ὄρκον ἀποδείξαι Ῥωμαίοις μέγιστον, ᾧ χρώμενοι μέχρι νῦν διατελοῦσιν.

had pervaded everyone's hearts with *pietas* to the point that *fides* and oaths held the society together rather than the terrible fear for laws and punishments.

This premise is extremely valuable for understanding the Roman perspective in which *fides* is framed: it is a quality perceived as if there were a divinity acting among men (precisely, among their *res*) whenever an oath is taken, which is worth more than a law and implies more than just a penalty if it is not fulfilled. *Fides* seems precisely to be the figuration, in divine form, of a set of relations based on reciprocity, as if, when one gives one's word, a sacred, unbreakable covenant is established: this is the aspect that shows how *fides* was held to be a virtue inherent in men—to have the capacity to make and keep a promise.⁶⁶ The presence of *pietas* in this context is ever more pertinent. However, the translation is challenging as one would need a word capable of encompassing at once a sense of feeling of duty, together with the devotion due to the gods, as well as the respect proper to the various degrees of relatives and even to the state authority. Indeed, failing to consider *fides* and *pietas* as part of a homogeneous “network” could lead to confusion. Instead, bearing in mind their shared integration within the *utilitates* helps to clarify at what level of depth all of these qualities are interconnected.⁶⁷ *Pietas* and *fides* both function as a balancing force between human parties: whether the issue revolves around the type of relationship or a commitment/oath and, in turn, their respective obligations, these qualities stand in the middle between human affairs and the aura of importance represented by the personified divinities.

A few lines below the previous passage, Livy describes the cult of *Fides* and clarifies this delicate equilibrium (1.21.4):

Et soli Fidei sollemne instituit. ad id sacrarium flamines bigis curru arcuato vehi iussit manumque ad digitos usque involuta rem divinam facere, significantes fidem tutandam sedemque eius etiam in dexteris sacratam esse.

⁶⁶ In addition to the cult of *Fides* initiated by Numa, the fact that both Ennius and Cato the Elder mention the vicinity of *Fides* to Jupiter reinforces the connection with the oaths. Cicero quotes both of them in Off. 3.104. Cf. also Clark (2007, 23 and n.43). The proximity of the small temple of *Fides* to that of Jupiter, from an archeological viewpoint, is another element that contributed to the Christian idea that *fides* was a sort of smaller “prolongation” of Jupiter or a gift bestowed by him.

⁶⁷ I refer, once again, to the productive “networks” (cf. the French *reseaux*) methodology proposed in Berthelet and Van Haepelen (2021), particularly in the first chapter.

And [scil. Numa] instituted a cult to *fides* alone. He ordered the *flamines* to be led to her shrine on an arched chariot and to perform the ritual with their hand covered up to their fingers, to indicate that *fides* should be protected and also that the right hand is consecrated as her place.

It is not possible to find a more straightforward example than this to explain the meaning of the *utilitates* as *res humanae*: *fides* even has a place in the men's right hand.⁶⁸ This hand must be covered to indicate that *fides*, represented by the gesture of *dextrarum iunctio* (shaking right hands), thus signifying a binding agreement, was to be protected and preserved.⁶⁹ To leave no room for doubt, Cicero clarifies the following (Off. 3.29.104):⁷⁰

Est enim ius iurandum adfirmatio religiosa; quod autem adfirmate et quasi deo teste promiseris, id tenendum est. Iam enim non ad iram deorum, quae nulla est, sed ad iustitiam et ad fidem pertinet. Nam preclare Ennius: “*O Fides alma apta pinnis et ius iurandum Iovis.*” Qui ius iurandum violat, is fidem violat; quam in Capitolio vicinam Iovis Optimi Maximi, ut in Catonis oratione est, maiores nostri esse voluerunt.

An oath is a religious statement; and what you promise solemnly and almost with a god as your witness must be kept. For an oath does not pertain to the anger of the gods, which does not exist, but to the justice and *fides*. Ennius famously said: “Oh winged *alma Fides*, oh oath (sacred to) Jupiter.” If you break an oath, you profane *fides*; that which our ancestors wanted to be near Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol, as per Cato's speech.

This passage in *De officiis* refers to Atilius Regulus' deeds—which we will discuss below⁷¹—and illustrates how the binding force of an oath (*ius iurandum*) is not bonded to the fear of an eventual punishment derived from the anger of the gods (i.e., in this specific case of Regulus, Jupiter's stroke of lightning), but rather to own up to one's word, or, in other words, to the qualities of *iustitia* and *fides*. This passage is not within the bounds of the literary analysis of poetry, which is this chapter's object. Nevertheless, it is once again one of those instances where there is reasonable

⁶⁸ The right hand is the *sedes sacrata* of the goddess *Fides*. Cf. Milani (2017, 54ff.).

⁶⁹ About the relationship between the right hand and the oath, and in particular about the handshake as a gesture in Rome, see Sittl (1970, 135ff.) and Milani (2017).

⁷⁰ Cf. Milani (2017, 34, n. 39). About the conception of *fides* in Ennius, cf. Bettini (2022b, Chapter 12, n.19): “Nel primo libro degli Annales, 32 Skutsch, il poeta Ennio esprimeva la natura «mutua» della *fides* in forma addirittura iconica, evocandola attraverso la simmetria che informa la struttura sintattica e lessicale del suo verso: *accipe daque fidem pactumque feri bene firum*, «ricevi e dammi la tua *fides* e sigla un patto ben certo» (il verso si riferiva probabilmente al patto fra Enea e il re Latino, SKUTSCH 1986, 191). La *fides* agisce nella reciprocità orizzontale, nel rispecchiamento prodotto dall'*accipe daque fidem* del poeta.”

⁷¹ See Chapter III, pp. 169ff.

ambiguity: most scholars edit Cicero's text writing both of these qualities in minuscule, thus implying that he refers here to the corresponding human ones.⁷² I find it counterintuitive because Cicero himself quotes Ennius' poetry right after, and no scholar seems to hesitate to put the same *fides* in the majuscule letter.

The problem presents itself once again in the very following sentence. The third occurrence of *fides* here clearly refers to the temple of *Fides* on the Capitol, Nevertheless, most editions do not capitalize it, even while declaring that "anyone breaking an oath is treating *fides* with disrespect," and the verb *violare* is commonly used to mean "to profane" religious places in Classical Latin.⁷³ Capitalization, in these instances, leads to extreme confusion and shows the levels of meaning that can be lost through this editorial choice and how ineffective this practice is.

Going back to the point under discussion, it sounds like the correspondence between what is promised (or at any rate said) and what is to happen is taken very seriously in Rome, as per the words of Cicero, once again: *fides enim nomen ipsum mihi videtur habere, cum fit, quod dicitur* (it seems to me that *fides* draws its very name when one does what one says; Id. Rep. 4.7.)⁷⁴ In this instance, Cicero seems to propose a para-etymology: *fides* from *cum fit quod dicitur*; his suggestion

⁷² None of the main editions capitalize either *iustitia* or *fides*. Miller (2014, 382-83) translated this passage as "An oath is an assurance backed by religious sanctity; and a solemn promise given, as before God as one's witness, is to be sacredly kept. For the question no longer concerns the wrath of the gods (for there is no such thing) but the obligations of justice and good faith. For, as Ennius says so admirably: 'Gracious Good Faith, on wings upborne; thou oath in Jupiter's great name!'" He thus left *iustitia* and *fides* in the minuscule letters; nevertheless, throughout the translation of *De officiis* he provides summary glosses all over the text, and this passage is glossed "An oath is a covenant with Justice and Good Faith"; he recognizes both as personifications even if this is not reflected in his translation, as he sensibly seems to choose a term from theology to describe the agreement with brings about a relationship of commitment between a divinity and the people—and writes the personifications in the majuscule letter. Contradictions of this type are very frequent.

⁷³ Degen and Bollen (1848, *ad loc.*) do not capitalize *iustitiam* and *fidem*, but do capitalize the two successive occurrences. The editions by Testard (2002) and Winterbottom (1994) only capitalize *fides* in Ennius' citation. I agree with Dyck (1996, 628); he does not comment on the first occurrence of *fides* but reports on the third one that Atzert (1949) and Fedeli (1965) "rightly capitalize" it.

⁷⁴ Cf. Id. Off. 1.7.23: *fundamentum autem est iustitiae fides, id est dictorum conventorumque constantia et veritas. Ex quo, quamquam hoc videbitur fortasse cuipiam durius, tamen audeamus imitari Stoicos, qui studiose exquirunt, unde verba sint ducta, credamusque, quia fiat, quod dictum est, appellatam fidem.* The same wording is employed by many other authors: see TLL s.v. *fides*. Another piece of evidence may be the frequent presence of the nexus *bonā fide*, which helps to understand better the kind of covenant that is represented by the goddess *Fides*: this expression is widely used and mainly indicates the sincerity and honesty with which one makes a statement, and, in many cases, it also provides a guarantee that one will fulfill the commitment one has made. See OLD s.v. *fides*. Cf. Maltby (1991) s.v. *fides*.

appears to emphasize the conceptual relationship between *fides* and the idea of fulfilling one's promise, connecting the two based on phonetic resemblance.⁷⁵ It does not matter that such an explanation is not tenable from the point of view of historical linguistics: the "i" in *fides* is short, while in *fit* it is long. Instead, it is essential to acknowledge that while phonetics may not align with the principles of modern linguistics, this does not inherently diminish the argument's value of the ancient etymology as it offers valuable insight into the cultural and moral implications surrounding the concept of *fides* in ancient Rome.

Selecting the occurrences of *Fides* in poetry to elucidate our argument has proven particularly challenging since her presence is common, and scholars have shown themselves to be less biased towards her in her role as a personification, given her significant value in Roman culture. Nevertheless, even when scholars recognize her worth, they sometimes misunderstand her role in poetry, leading to the overlooking of her religious significance. We have focused on some of the most evident examples in Virgil, specifically addressing the biases against the many aspects of *Fides* that can be found even in the *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*. Among the most comprehensive scholarship available on Virgil, this encyclopedia stands as a cornerstone in Virgilian studies. For decades, it has served as the critical and hermeneutical foundation supporting the study and interpretation of Virgil's works. Under the entry "*fides*," with regards to its value as a personification, Carlo Venturini, a scholar of both Roman history and law, states:

Fides. Ha in Virgilio 27 occorrenze: nessuna nelle Bucoliche, una nelle Georgiche, 26 nell'Eneide. Una sola volta, in E 1,292, appare la poetica personificazione del corrispondente concetto astratto, non rara nella letteratura latina.

Indeed, the passage mentioned here is one in which the value of *fides* is crystal-clear, and scholars capitalize it unfailingly: *cana Fides et Vesta, Remo cum fratre Quirinus / iura dabunt*. Other than being qualified by an adjective, suggesting the solid antiquity of the goddess, *Fides* is in

⁷⁵ Dyck (1996, 115) writes that "Cicero pretends to offer this etymology of *fides* reluctantly and merely in imitation of Stoic practice": while I do see the Stoic methodology, I disagree with the assumed reluctance, given that this understanding of *fides* fits the context concerning the virtue of justice, which Cicero claims as founded on the concept of keeping one's word (cf. Off. 1.7.23).

the company of Vesta and thus unmistakably a divinity. Moreover, the fact that she is associated with Romulus (*Quirinus*) and Remus is a further confirmation of her role as an “oath-giver,” overseeing the relations among the collectivity, whereby she is in charge of the religious side of the matters with Vesta, as opposed to Romulus and Remus, in charge of the actual laws.

Contrary to Venturini’s claim that *fides* is only personified once in the whole poem, I argue that she can carry both human and divine value in some of the other 25 occurrences. One specific episode strikes me as requiring little to no explanation, such as *Aen.* 2.141-144:

Quod te per superos et conscia numina ueri,
per si qua est quae restet adhuc mortalibus usquam
intemerata fides, oro, miserere laborum
tantorum, miserere animi non digna ferentis.

Thus, by the gods above and the deities that know the truth, by *fides*, if there is still any form of it that remains unviolated anywhere among the mortals, I beg you, take compassion on such ordeals, take compassion on a soul that suffers unworthily.

In this text, Sinon, the young Greek boy who traitorously opened up Troy for his allies, is talking to king Priam. The structure of this text is an oath: the *quod* at the beginning of the sentence is used adverbially, and this use is standard, especially in poetry, to connect the rest of the speech to an invocation or an oath; the same goes for the formula *si qua est* and the verb *oro*.⁷⁶ What can be more unmistakable within an oath than the literal goddess of oaths? Nevertheless, no critical edition capitalizes *fides* here, nor is there any trace of her role in the commentaries, which is even more unsettling. In addition to the linguistic features of the oath, the adjective *intemerata* derives from the verb *temero*, a technical word of the religious lexicon meaning “to violate, profane, desecrate,

⁷⁶ See the detailed analysis by Casali (2019, 150), who seems to agree with Paratore (1978, 276). Austin (1964, 77) explains the *quod* as “a loose connective (as in *quod si*) originally a nominative or accusative of the relative pronoun, which lost its case aspect quite early and became a mere transition-word.” Virgil uses this type of phrasing—*si* + (*ali*)*quis*, *quid*—often when the gods are involved: cf. for example *Aen.* 1.603-604: “*Di tibi, si qua pios respectant numina, si quid / usquam iustitia est*” etc. Cf. Austin (1971, 188) and see later *Aen.* 5. 687-690, p. 107, *si quid pietas antiqua labores / respicit humanos*: Horsfall (2008, 408) notes that *si qua* is “a traditional and wide-spread type of formula in statements about life, death and the gods, conventional in character (cf. the many prayer-formulae beginning *si...*; NH on *Hor.C.1.32.1*), and quite clearly not explicitly sceptical.”

pollute.”⁷⁷ Finally, a grammatical peculiarity is played out with *fides* in the nominative case, as attracted within the relative clause, as opposed to being in the accusative as required by the preposition *per*.⁷⁸

The model of compromise proposed in this dissertation applies perfectly to this occurrence of *fides* and illustrates what may get lost following the practice of only recognizing a personification as such by the use of capitalization. What happened, in this case, is, on a smaller scale, what happened in general to personifications when they are not recognized as such. At what cost did this phenomenon come? Some details of the texts, and not unimportant ones, get lost. On this occasion, it is perhaps of great consequence that the perfidiousness—linking this word directly to its etymology, *fides*—of this young man is famously known. And it is ever more wicked in the words of Virgil, considering this perjury against the very goddess who presides over oaths. Therefore, following my interpretation, I propose an additional reading to this passage by rendering “*per si quae est quae restet adhuc mortalibus usquam intemerata fides*” with the following delineation: if the relationship with *fides*, intended both as the expected human behavior and the goddess, has not been corrupted among the mortals.

The willful falsehood of the young man does not stop with that hypocritical oath, as he continues with what I interpret as perjury a few lines later in his direct speech (lines 160-161):

Tu modo promissis maneat seruataque serues
Troia fidem, si uera feram, si magna rependam.

Troy, if I shall speak the truth, if I repay you richly, only keep your promises and, once safe, ensure the conservation of *fides*.

⁷⁷ See OLD s.v. temero and DELL p. 679: “Appartient au vocabulaire religieux. Le sens premier a dû être «traiter (parler, s’approcher) inconsidérément des choses sacrées».”

⁷⁸ Cf. again Casali (2019) *ad loc.* In view of the stylistic analysis for the passage, I disagree with Austin (1964, 77) who interprets *si quae fides* stating that “in itself it may have been a turn of ordinary language (‘please believe me’).” I add that Virgil coherently uses the formula *si quis* with another personification, *pietas*, in Aen. 9.493 (*figite me, si quae est pietas, in me omnia tela / conicite, o Rutuli, me primam absumite ferro*), which could further confirm a stylistic choice.

Sinon, defined a few lines earlier as *dolis instructus et arte Pelasgica* (line 152), thus expert in deceptions and Pelasgic art, once more implicates *fides* in his double-dealing declaration.⁷⁹ And once again, a rhetorical device, this time a polyptoton (*servataque serves*), strengthens the message. As Casali (2019, 154) noted, the polyptoton contributes to attributing a sacred and solemn halo to his words. I intend *fides* here to comprise both the human value of the reliability to keep a promise and the divine evocation to the goddess who is supposed to watch over such commitments. Further confirmation of this argument is the regular and primary use of the verb *servare* with the gods, which means to “preserve” and “conserve,” not to mention that Jupiter himself has been attributed with the epithet *conservator*, derived from it, and *salvator*.⁸⁰

I acknowledge *fides* used in both instances (2.143; 161) as an elegant ambivalence by Virgil, a beautifully crafted portrait of a quality for someone who ended up becoming the prototype of a traitor, forswearing himself. This is the Roman version of one of the most famous myths in Greek culture, the Trojan horse: to effectively show how faithless Sinon is to a Roman audience, Virgil chooses to picture him as the worst of perjurers, swearing repeatedly over the very goddess representing the act of taking oaths and honoring them. Sinon’s speech can be seen as a ring composition revolving around *Fides* and his *fides*, or better, lack thereof.⁸¹

⁷⁹ The nature of Pelasgic art in the discussed passage is elusive and it reflects historical uncertainties surrounding the Pelasgians. Various ancient sources present conflicting perspectives on the identity and origin of the Pelasgians. Oddly, their precise location varies among different authors. Despite their renown as skilled navigators and builders of formidable defensive walls, I could not find any meaningful connection with deception or trickery. Cf. also Thilo (1986, ad loc.): Servius explains *usquam* on line 142 as “*quia apud Graecos dicit fidem esse corruptam*” echoing the sentiment conveyed in what is arguably the most renowned verse from the Aeneid: “*timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*” (Aen. 2.49).

⁸⁰ Cf. DELL pp. 619-620: the primary meanings of the verb are “préservier, garder, sauver, assurer le salut ou la conservation de (joint à *saluus*, dans une vieille prière, sans doute grâce à l’allitération ; cf. Caton, Agr. 141. 3, *Mars pater, te precor pastores pecuaque salva servassis*.”

⁸¹ Paratore (1978, 276-277) notes other characteristics of style of this speech: “Predomina la simmetria colometrica, che assume anche la forma della rispondenza anaforica (*si vera feram, si magna rependam*); l’allitterazione s’intreccia in molteplici serie (*Tu... Troia; servataque serves; maneat... magna; fidem... feram*); le espressioni caratteristiche assumono una tournure più elaborata e sottile, per cui l’abituale *stare promissis* diviene *manere promissis*, *servare fidem* assume colore e base dal condizionante e ribattente *servata, vera dicam* si trasforma in *vera feram* che riecheggia *ferre sub auras* del v. 158, *rependam* fa le veci di *resolvam* già adoperato, ma in altro senso al v. 157; su tutto grandeggia l’anfibologia *servataque serves*.”

Honos et Virtus: guiding principles for the Roman soldiers

In the landscape of Roman society and religion, the personifications of *Honos* and *Virtus* are often coupled, both in their monumental and cultic representations.⁸² Respectively, they corresponded to civic and military honor and warlike and manly virtue. These two personifications held considerable value as guiding principles that shaped the moral, social, and political dimensions of Roman society, particularly the individual achievements of soldiers, for a soldier's worth is measured not only by strength in battle but also by his integrity, selflessness, and commitment to the State. *Honos* and *Virtus* were revered as deified ideals that informed the expectations and aspirations of the Roman soldier before the whole citizenry. The synthesis of the human and divine facets of *honos* and *virtus* was instrumental in cultivating a sense of civic pride, personal dignity, and respect for public office, while also promoting military discipline and the pursuit of victory in the name of Rome. By integrating the concepts of civic responsibility and martial excellence, these personifications served as a means to foster a cohesive and holistic understanding of a citizen's honor that was integral to the Roman ethos. The personifications not only elevated the importance of these virtues but also instilled a sense of moral responsibility among citizens to strive for honor, courage, and moral excellence.

The personification of *honos* encapsulated a multifaceted concept that carried both human and divine significance.⁸³ Varro provides an illuminating etymology of *honos*:⁸⁴

Honos ab onere: itaque honestum dicitur quod oneratum, et dictum: onus est honos qui sustinet rem publicam.

⁸² While it is important to acknowledge the individual value of these personifications, in the history of scholarship they are generally analyzed together: cf. Turchi (1939), Bieber (1945), and Richardson (1978). Clark in Bispham and Miano (2019) analyzes the question of their association in detail, focusing more on *Honos*.

⁸³ Jacotot (2013) has dedicated a monumental work to *honos*, with multiple approaches to anything that relates to this Roman notion. Particularly illuminating is the semantic analysis and the relationship between *honos* and *honestas*: “On remarque (...) l'évolution poussée du terme vers la sphère de l'éthique. À chaque étape, l'aspect social de la notion s'efface un peu plus au profit de la dimension morale.”

⁸⁴ Cit. Var. Ling. 5.73. Cf. Maltby (1991, 282).

Honos (honor) takes its name from *onus* (burden, responsibility): and so ‘worthy of honor’ is said of that which is ‘burdened’ (charged with responsibility), and it has been said: the burden is an honor (or public office) that supports the state.

Varro etymologizes *honos* by playing with *hōnos* (or *hōnor*) and *ōnus* on the phonetic level, which might be hermetic in its semantic meaning; nevertheless, many passages can support this play on words.⁸⁵ For instance, Cicero says (Cic. Phil. 7.5):

Et quidem dicuntur vel potius se ipsi dicunt consularis: quo nomine dignus est nemo, nisi qui tanti honoris onus potest sustinere.

They are defined—or rather, they define themselves—as being of consular rank: no one is worthy of that name except someone who can bear the burden (responsibility) of such a great honor (public office).

Clearly, *honos* is closely related to the public and political sphere of reality *stricto sensu*. It seems to be intrinsically associated with the responsibilities and expectations of public offices, emphasizing the ethical obligations inherent in positions of authority. The *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* by Daremberg et Saglio (DAGR s.v. *honos*) sums up the following:

« l’expression de *honos* est synonyme de *magistratus*: on désigne indifféremment le consulat, le tribunal légionnaire, la questure, par le terme de *magistratus* ou par celui de *honos*. La prêtrise n’est pas plus un *honos* qu’elle n’est une magistrature. Toutefois, il y a cette différence entre l’une et l’autre expression, qu’en parlant de *magistratus* on songe surtout à l’exercice du pouvoir, et le mot de *honos* rappelle surtout le rang, la dignité, les privilèges attachés à ce pouvoir ».

In its divine aspect, *honos* was revered for its connection to war and military prowess, given its association with *Virtus* and the protection of the Roman state.⁸⁶ Rather than being in conflict, these dual aspects of *honos* were complementary and mutually reinforcing, as they emphasized the importance of upholding honor in both the civic and military spheres. Unfortunately, as for the cultic worship, there is not much information on *Honos*. As per Wissowa’s intuition, the sacrifices were performed according to the Greek rite: since *Honos* was considered a male deity, female

⁸⁵ Such expressions are frequent in Latin: cf. Cic. Phil. 7.14.5 (next passage); Liv. 22.30.4; Ov. Her. 9.31; Met. 2.634; Tr. 5.14.16; Quint. Inst. 4. praef.2; *Declamationes minores* 315.16; Tac. Ann. 15.19.

⁸⁶ Cf. Axtell (1907, 21-23); RE s.v. *Honos*. Axtell (1907, 22), specifically regarding the military character of *Honos*, provides details on the association with the legions. This aspect can also be discerned in the figurative representation of *Honos*, who is often portrayed with a spear and cornucopia (see LIMC s.v. *Honos*).

animals were also offered on his behalf.⁸⁷ Incidentally, Wissowa's theory finds additional confirmation in Fears's account (1981a, 859): indeed, at first sight, the fact that two aristocratic virtues such as *honos* and *virtus* are associated so closely may seem quite typical of Roman values, and yet—as stated by Liv. 27.25—associating two gods was illicit according to the Roman rite but recurrent in the Greek one.⁸⁸

Jacotot (2013, 518-519) underlines—as does Clark in Bispham and Miano (2019)—that *Honos* was mainly honored in Rome. The earliest site of the cult for *Honos* was the temple located outside Porta Collina, built in the first decades of the 3rd century B.C.⁸⁹ We also know about another temple, erected in 234 B.C., on the slopes of the Caelian hill (near Porta Capena), dedicated by Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus. Since the Cunctator triumphed in Liguria the previous year, he decided to dedicate a temple to *Honos*; later on, Marcus Claudius Marcellus restored it and had another temple built nearby and dedicated to *Virtus*, which his son later consecrated in 205 B.C.⁹⁰

Conversely, *Virtus* is a noun formed from *vir* + *-tūs*, the feminine suffix that allows the creation of abstract or collective nouns in Latin.⁹¹ *Virtus* thus denotes the collection of military, moral, or social qualities that make a *vir* a true *vir*. As Varro again eloquently explains, *virtus ut viritus a virilitate*; in an equally transparent manner, Cicero says: *appellata est enim ex viro virtus*.⁹² *Virtus*, too, as a deity, has a trait essentially bound up with the military sphere; this is even more evident in the portrayals associated with her cult: on the coins of the Republican and Imperial ages,

⁸⁷ Cf. Wissowa (1971).

⁸⁸ This phenomenon often leads scholar to compare Greek and Roman personifications. In this case, the comparison is more appropriate than elsewhere, since Greek cult provides for couples of similar personifications, such as *εὐνομία* and *εὐκλεία* to be worshipped jointly (cf. at least the literary sources, Paus. 1,14,5; Bacchyl. 13,183-185). Cf. Fears (1981, 859 n. 124).

⁸⁹ Cf. Cic. Leg. 2.11.28; 2.23.58.

⁹⁰ Cf. Cic. Verr. 2.4.121; Nat. D. 2.23.61. From what can be inferred by the sources, the proposal by Marcellus to consecrate a temple to *Honos* and *Virtus* after the battle of Clastidium (222 B.C.) met some resistance from the pontiffs, yet his son succeeded in an alternative way, bypassing them: cf. Val. Max. 1.1.8; Liv. 27.25.7; see also LGRM s.v. *Personifikationen (römische)*; RE s.v. *Honos*.

⁹¹ Cf. OLD s.v. *-tūs*, *tūtis* and Ov. Ars am. 3.21: *Ipsa quoque et cultu est et nomine femina Virtus*.

⁹² Cit. respectively Var. Ling. 5.73; Cic. Tusc. 2. 43.

although she is depicted as a woman (a fact which is consistent with having a feminine noun), she always wears a helmet, possesses a spear, and often lays a foot on the spoils of war.⁹³

As for the temples dedicated to *Virtus*, there is the one mentioned just above, consecrated by the son of Marcus Claudius Marcellus in 205 B.C., which was probably nothing more than a simple cell with some cultic representation of *Virtus*, added to the preexisting temple of *Honos*. Besides this, the most important is the one Gaius Marius wanted, which was dedicated to both deities; he built it thanks to the spoils of war obtained in his victories against the Cimbrians.⁹⁴ In addition, there was a statue of *Virtus* placed in the vicinity of the temple of *Honos* near Porta Collina, which we have news of solely because it was destroyed.⁹⁵

Honos and *Virtus* represent the *utilitates* as a general phenomenon of figures of tradition, and even “tradition-builders” in Republican Rome, as shown by their presence within the temple of *Venus victrix*. Venus herself, mother to Aeneas, was in some way the foundation of the city of Rome, and her cult had ancient roots. The fact that other personifications, specifically *honos*, *virtus*, *felicitas* and perhaps *victoria* (as we infer from the epithet *victrix*) were present and presumably worshipped in the same temple as *Venus* projects a definite idea of the military expectations in Rome:⁹⁶ *Venus* is not a mere symbol of beauty, love, and fertility. *Venus victrix* is elevated as a “bearer of victory,” thus bestowing success in love and war affairs. By co-locating these personifications in the same temples, their interconnectedness is emphasized, and their coexistence turns to represent different aspects of the Roman ideals and virtues, contributing to a comprehensive framework of values that the Romans held dear. In other words, placing these specific personifications in a shared sacred space was supposed to reinforce the view that the ideal and virtuous life of a (male) Roman citizen, particularly someone involved in the military sphere in this

⁹³ Cf. LIMC s.v. *Virtus*.

⁹⁴ Cf. Cic. Div. 1.59; Vitruv. De arch. 7. praef.17.

⁹⁵ Cf. CIL VI 3735.

⁹⁶ Cf. Cic. Arch. 10.24 and Estienne in Berthelet and Van Haepelen (2021).

case, encompassed various dimensions, from military courage and public service to moral character and strength, adding a touch of prosperity for the state. These attributes were crucial to the Roman self-identity, as they reflected the qualities that contributed to the success and stability of their society. In this sense, figures such as *Honos* and *Virtus* served almost as a means of “figures of memory,” except that they are gods, and thus represent a step up to characters that hold a special place in the collective memory of society since these personifications were still connected to historical events and were celebrated through monuments (statues, temples, etc.).⁹⁷

The first ambiguous passage requiring analysis is suggested by Jacotot (2013, 507), as he comments precisely on the issue of capitalization:

Nous utiliserons quant à nous les termes d'honos et d'Honos car les textes d'époque républicaine où il est totalement impossible de trancher entre l'objet humain et le dieu sont rares. Un seul texte laisse véritablement planer le doute : il s'agit d'un passage de Plaute (Trin. 663).

This argument—as mentioned above, at the beginning of this chapter—is in response to Clark (2007, 18), who claims that any time the names of these personifications occur there is an unremitting allusion to the correspondent divinity. The passage in question is the following (Pl. Trin. 662-664):

et postremo, nisi mi auscultas atque hoc ut dico facis,
tute pone te latebis facile, ne inveniatur te Honor,
in occulto iacebis cum te maxime clarum voles.

And finally, if you won't listen to me and do what I say, you will conceal your identity behind yourself so well that Honor will not be able to find you, you will lie into the shadow the more you want to shine.

Most scholars recognize *honor* as a god, and thus capitalize him, both in the edited text and in the translation, plausibly on the grounds that he is the subject of a transitive verb, which implies agency. In this regard, the passage is entirely uncontroversial, and Jacotot is the only one to find it

⁹⁷ I refer to the extensive work by the Egyptologist Jan Assmann on the concepts of cultural memory and figures of memory. He explored how societies remembered their past, how memories were supposed to be constructed and transmitted, and how specific figures or narratives could become central to the collective memory of a determined culture. See at least Assmann (1997, 1-22.)

perplexing.⁹⁸ First of all, the whole *Trinummus* is a comedy that charms the reader/spectator because of its content revolving around philosophical discussions, ethical debates, and manifest Stoic discourse:⁹⁹ the heart of the matter is the pleasures of life as opposed to living honestly (i.e., according to *honos*). The presence of the god is to be expected, and this proves to be a perfect example in favor of the model of compromise I propose when reading similar passages. Second, as it is well known, Plautus is no stranger to the masterly use of personifications in his works.¹⁰⁰

There are three possible interpretations of this passage: (1) Plautus is making a plain joke, referring to honor as mere literary personification of the quality of knowing and doing what is morally right; or (2) he may be referring to the god exclusively; or (3) as I argue, to both. This must have resulted in some amusement.¹⁰¹ This passage perfectly exemplifies the type of metonymy the Roman authors employed so skillfully in their works: this is a glaring, or rather subtle, case of literary and religious metonymy.

Let us read an illustrative instance of *honos* and *virtus* associated in the text as found in Virgil's *Aeneid* at the beginning of book 4 (ll. 3-4):¹⁰²

multa viri virtus animo multusque recursat
gentis honos...

The great *virtus* of the man [scil. Aeneas] hastens back to the mind as well as the great *honos* of his race.

This passage opens the fourth book of the *Aeneid*, and it can only be read considering what happens immediately before, that is, the stories about the Trojan War and the Mediterranean wanderings, including many of the hardships and trials Aeneas and his followers went through.

⁹⁸ Lindsay (2016), Dupont (2019) and Riemer (1996) all capitalize it; Ernout (2003) does not.

⁹⁹ For an insightful discussion on moral messages within Roman comedy, see Dinter in Harrison et al. (2018, 127-141).

¹⁰⁰ See Slater in Perysinakis and Karakasis (2014, 55-65).

¹⁰¹ On the topic of laughing about and with the gods, see the thought-provoking book by Bettini and Raveri (2020), in particular the sections five and six of the first chapter.

¹⁰² No scholar capitalizes either *honos* or *virtus*. Cf. Mynors (1969), Perret (2002).

At the beginning of the fourth book, as Virgil frames it, the focus quickly shifts to Queen Dido and her response to what she has just heard. From the viewpoint of the storytelling, in transitioning to the next book, Aeneas, the character that, up to that point, has been leading the scene, is now seen through the eyes of his primary interlocutor, Dido. With full cognizance of the facts, Dido appreciates the man before her eyes and contemplates his *virtus* and the *honos* of his race. Virgil may mean just that in many respects: according to Dido's perspective, Aeneas shows the sum of a man's bodily and mental excellences and the dignity of his race.

On the other hand, since the *honos* and *virtus* are so specific to Aeneas, the fact that Virgil may be referring to the corresponding gods uniquely is out of the question.¹⁰³ Once again, it is possible to see a case of *utilitates* in place, where Virgil attaches some important Roman values onto Aeneas while pointing to the corresponding divinities. He is not only altering the spotlight to switch the focus onto Dido, which is in the interest of the linear narrative, but also adding substance to Aeneas and infusing richness and depth to the line to create an additional layer of "Romanity" to his portrayal. By stating—even through the eyes of Dido, queen of Carthage—that Aeneas, at this point exhausted by the retelling of his deeds, has two features, it cannot be casual that they are the two associated divinities that ordinarily are honored by citizens who show honorable and virtuous conduct in situations of war, and exhibit true "manliness."

Through the perspective of a non-Roman, Virgil is setting the foundations for the future values of Rome (other than showing intellectual sensitivity in finely using cultural relativism). Indeed, it is not the usual portrayal of *pious Aeneas*, but it is one of the many facets of this complicated personality. Each value has its place in the *Aeneid*, and it does not seem random that *honos* and *virtus* correlate in this manner. This is further emphasized by the anaphoric use of the

¹⁰³ Pasoli (1933, 3) is the only one to interpret them as such, or better, as "abstractions", as he comments: "Valore, nobiltà d'origine, bellezza, eloquenza dolorosa di Enea hanno colpito la regina: nella notte, le due prime doti, astratte, le «ritornano al pensiero» (*animo... recursat*), ma le altre due, or ora immediatamente sperimentate, le «stanno fitte in seno» (*haerent infixi pectore*).” Nevertheless, in his texts they are not capitalized, which again creates doubts.

adjective *multus*. It cannot be but a deliberate choice, and once again it is up to literary interpretation to discern this. Therefore, I see this repeated and unembellished adjective as an intentional nuance. This calculated echo is far from a redundancy; quite the opposite, it is a conscious decision to eschew many potentially more intricate adjectives in favor of clarity.

In conclusion, embracing the notion that a compromise is attainable in cases like this and consequently acknowledging that, in this particular passage, *honos* and *virtus* may indeed suggest their respective deities enriches our interpretation of this text.¹⁰⁴

Presence of mind: the personification of *Mens*

The personification of *Mens* held a unique position in Rome's cultural and moral landscape. As a deified embodiment of intellect, wisdom, and prudence, *Mens* represented the core intellectual virtues revered by Roman society. The divine figure of *Mens* offered a tangible symbol of the desired state of moral discernment that the Roman élite aspired to cultivate in both individual and collective spheres. I agree with Mello (1968, 41) in his observation that *Mens*, like *Concordia* and many other Roman personifications, is autonomous and independent, a divinity responding to a need that had not been seen previously in any other personification, which explains her peculiarity.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Adelmo Barigazzi in EO (v.2, 516-17) s.v. *Virtus* had already laid out some queries regarding the evaluation of the use of *virtus* in Horace as a personification or simply an abstract concept: "Egli [scil. Orazio] parla spesso della virtù, ma non è facilmente riconoscibile quando ne dia una personificazione o divinizzazione. A questo proposito è istruttivo consultare gli *indices nominum* delle edizioni oraziane recenti per constatare come V. figuri in Klingner 1959 e in Borzsák 1984 non più di due volte (C 2, 2, 19; Cs 58) e ben otto in Shackleton Bailey 1985 (oltre alle due già citate, anche in C 3, 2, 17 e 21; Ia 9, 26; S 1, 3, 43; 2, 1, 70; E 1, 16, 67), a testimonianza di un'oscillazione che fa ben vedere quanto sia sottile il confine fra il concetto astratto e la personificazione della virtù. L'imbarazzo palesato dai moderni induce a credere che forse per gli antichi la distinzione non si presentava così netta come per noi moderni." I am fond of this rather figurative definition of "oscillation" or "fluctuation" because it truly captures what I believe happens to Roman personifications when they are employed in literature, and, methodologically, I also appreciate the critical perspective of being wary of reading ancient texts with too modern of an eye.

¹⁰⁵ Cit. Mello (1968, 41): "È meglio senz'altro considerarla come una creazione autonoma; e come *Concordia*, molte altre astrazioni divinizzate sono indipendenti: così, credo, *Mens*, essendo un'esigenza, una forza non vista prima in collegamento con una divinità alcuna". This observation is particularly pregnant in the context of the chapter in which Mello makes it, since he is discussing all of the theories—some of which are completely unacceptable—in support of the Greek origin of the cult of *Mens*. Orlin (1997, 62 and 102) agrees with Mello. Cf. also Clark (2007, 30).

The cult of *Mens* dates back to 217 B.C. when the praetor Titus Otacilius Crassus vowed to build her first temple. This quality was deified after the Roman defeat at the hands of Hannibal on Lake Trasimeno during the Second Punic War. The temple was built on the Capitol in 215 B.C. and later renovated by Marcus Aemilius Scaurus.¹⁰⁶

To better understand the personification of *Mens*, let us turn to her description by Ovid (Fast. 6.241-246):¹⁰⁷

Mens quoque numen habet: Mentis delubra videmus
vota metu belli, perfide Poene, tui.
Poene, rebellaras, et leto consulis omnes
attoniti Mauras pertimere manus.
Spem metus expulerat, cum Menti vota senatus
suscipit, et melior protinus illa venit.

Even *Mens* has her *numen*: we see the temple of *Mens* promised for the fear of your war, treacherous Carthaginian. Oh Carthaginian, you had waged war again, and by the consul's death all the frightened ones feared the Maurian troops. Fear had removed all hope, when the Senate vowed to *Mens*, and she was immediately more favorable.

From what can be read in this text and from Livy's accounts in general, it can be inferred that one would turn to this deity in extreme situations, such as an emergency due to the fear of war or when one needs to regain calm and common sense.¹⁰⁸ I agree with Fears (1981a, 835-836) that out of the introduction of the cults of all the *utilitates*, on balance, *Mens* shows to the most significant degree how these personifications were "objects of profound and sincere piety, *numina* invoked by men in critical moments in sincere expectation of divine salvation."

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Liv. 22.9.8; 22.10.10; 23.31.9; Cic. Nat. D. 2.24.61; Ov. Fast. 6. 241ff. (from which we know that the *dies natalis* is June 8); see also RE s.v. *Mens*; LGRM s.v. *Personifikationen (römische)*. The best piece of scholarship devoted to the cult of *Mens* is still Mello (1968), to whom I refer for all the details of the matter, including the various hypotheses about the origin of the cult itself. See also Axtell (1907, 24-25).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Clark (2007, 164): "Although the very presence of an entry in the Fasti might imply that the rites to *mens* were still carried out in Ovid's day, it is initially tempting to conclude that his choice of explanation suggests that this divine quality was only found relevant in similar situations of external conflict, such as that in which the temple in Rome was founded again in the late second century."

¹⁰⁸ *Mens* also seems to be that state of equilibrium following a strong passion, e.g., Seneca uses the expression *redire ad bonam mentem* to mean "to become reasonable again" (cf. Ben. 2.14.3). He also produced a very significant verse: *mens regnum bona possidet* (Sen. Thy. 380). Moreover, he makes an interesting remark in this regard: *bona mens omnibus patet, omnes ad hoc sumus nobiles* (Ep. 44. 2); in a sense, *mens* is a virtue before which all people are equally noble, and normal social and military hierarchies are deleted to make way for moral ones.

In the more general meaning of “virtue,” *mens* features wisdom, sensibility, common sense, balance, and, in some cases, goodness. In what seems to be a systematic use, *mens* is frequently used in an expression in the ablative case, *bonā mente*, which means “with an honest purpose,” “with good intention,” and “out of goodwill.” Quintilian provides a particularly illustrative example of this use: while he explains some argumentation techniques, he ends up talking about how one may commit a crime: *bonā mente* or *malā mente*, i.e., honestly and thus openly, or dishonestly and thus with malice.¹⁰⁹

The examination of the previous *utilitates* presented them without comparison to their Greek counterparts to underscore their unequivocal Roman essence. On the other hand, the deliberative choice to engage in a comparative analysis in this singular instance is motivated by a desire for clarity, while keeping in mind, as thoroughly demonstrated by Mello (1968), that there is little to no Greek influence regarding the Roman cult of *Mens*.¹¹⁰ Perhaps the cultural mediation operated by Plutarch, when he has to explain that there is a temple dedicated to *Mens* in Rome, is the most fascinating aspect to understand what this quality represented, for he says: Ἔστι δὲ καὶ Γνώμη, ἥ νη Δία Εὐβουλίας νεώς, ἣν Μέντεμ καλοῦσιν (De fort. Rom. 10.322c).¹¹¹ Plutarch translates *mens* as reason, intelligence, judgment (γνώμη) and then, more precisely, interprets it as good advice, sage, wisdom (εὐβουλία), in a sense also integrating the adjective of the frequent nexus *bona mens*. Indeed, this challenges the common assumptions that associate *mens*, semantically, only with the Greek νόος: it is reductive to consider the intellectual aspect only.

Plutarch’s clarification is precisely a translation of the deity, or rather, an interpretation: this is useful to us in explaining how *Mens* was perceived to an outsider’s eye. The εὐβουλία is a

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Quint. 5.10.52: *his adiicitur modus, quem τρόπον dicunt, quo quaeritur, quemadmodum quid sit factum. idque tum ad qualitatem scriptumque pertinet, ut si negemus adulterum veneno licuisse occidere, tum ad coniecturas quoque, ut si dicam bona mente factum, ideo palam; mala, ideo ex insidiis, nocte, in solitudine.*

¹¹⁰ The wrong assumption is primarily due to the association with Venus Erycina. On the matter, see Mello (1968). Supporters of the Greek influence are primarily Wissowa (1902, 313-315) and Lind (1973, 100ff.)

¹¹¹ Cf. also Plut. De fort. Rom. 318e. This consideration actually encouraged the belief that the cult of *Mens* might have had a Greek origin: for the issue, see Mello (1968, 33ff.).

particular concept in Greek. Isocrates gives us a particularly distinct idea of it, even for the value of *mens* as an innate quality in humans.¹¹²

Βουλευόμενος παραδείγματα ποιοῦ τὰ παρεληλυθότα τῶν μελλόντων· τὸ γὰρ ἄφανές ἐκ τοῦ φανεροῦ ταχίστην ἔχει τὴν διάγνωσιν. Βουλευέου μὲν βραδέως, ἐπιτέλει δὲ ταχέως τὰ δόξαντα. Ἦγοῦ κράτιστον εἶναι παρὰ μὲν τῶν θεῶν εὐτυχίαν, παρὰ δ' ἡμῶν αὐτῶν εὐβουλίαν.

When you make a decision, make the things of the past examples for the things of the future: for what is obscure soon receives meaning from what is clear. Decide slowly, but soon bring to fruition the things you have decided. Think it best to have good fortune from the gods and good counsel from ourselves.

Based on these considerations, εὐβουλία is a quality that everyone may potentially possess, and it is the basis for making forward-looking decisions. This passage is then followed by some examples of the application of εὐβουλία, such as “when you are going to consult with someone for business,” or “it is good first to see how he has taken care of his interests.”¹¹³

In many cases, εὐβουλία recurs in contexts in which a decision needs to be made either for reasons of war or for issues related to authority. This quality is typical of those in leadership. In this regard, we can see a further similarity to the Roman *Mens*, a deity invoked in emergencies, as we have seen, so that a balance can be restored.¹¹⁴ While this comparison between the Latin *mens* and the Greek εὐβουλία stands on a conceptual level, it does not at the level of cult. I agree with Fears (1981a, 856) as he argues that cult borrowing is not the point of the translatability of Greek and Roman virtues. What is happening is “the transmission of the basic language of Greek politics and its absorption into the social and political structure of the Roman state.”¹¹⁵

¹¹² Cit. Isoc. *Ad Demonicum* 34; Plu. uses almost the same words in *De liberis educandis* 9f. Cf. also A. Pv. 1030-1039, in whose scolia εὐβουλία is given as a synonymous of φρόνιμος, an adjective that in the *scholia recentiora Thomae Magistri et Demetrii Triclinii* is glossed as follows: φρόνησις γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ καλῶς βουλευέσθαι; see also Thuc. 1.78.4; Eur. Ph. 708ff.; again Plu. *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum* 776e; *An seni respublica gerenda sit* 792d.

¹¹³ Cf. Isoc. *Ad Demonicum* 34-43

¹¹⁴ See, for instance, Isoc. *Evagoras* 46.

¹¹⁵ I cannot but agree with Fears's conclusion of the argument (1981a, 856): “Hence, it is futile and irrelevant to search for a Greek godhead which is the equivalent of the Roman *Mens*. *Mens* is a statement, in Roman form, of that essential attribute of good government in Greek political thought: wisdom.”

Regarding the cult of *Mens*, one ought to keep in mind the way it went through a renovation at a time of crisis and became a symbol of the Fabian strategy, i.e., that of delaying as far as possible a direct fight with the (more potent) enemy's army by Quintus Fabius Maximus, famously known as the *cunctator*. Since his strategy allowed Rome to gain a victory against the Carthaginians, he became an icon of military cautiousness. This aspect is highlighted by Fears (1981a, 854-855):¹¹⁶

The religious prescriptions of 217-215 were a central element in his [scil. of Q. Fabius Maximus] political policy, preserving the morale of the Roman People and channeling into productive forms the religious fervor awakened by the early stages of the Hannibalic War. In 216 Fabius, already an augur, assumed the pontificate. No other example of such a coupling of the two major priesthoods by a single individual is attested again before the late republic. Fabius' co-optation into the pontifical college at the height of the political and military crisis is hardly coincidental. (...) The introduction of the worship of *Mens* is illustrative of the employment of cultic innovation to justify Fabian policy. For the Fabian propagandists intelligent, prudent leadership, personalized by *Mens*, is the only salvation for the Roman state in this, its moment of crisis. Fabius' policy towards Hannibal is the embodiment of this essential quality of prudence and common sense. The disasters of Trasimene and Cannae have been the result of the temerarious and improvident conduct of the People and their popular champions.

Through the personification of *Mens*, the Romans underscored the role of rational thought and sound judgment in promoting virtuous behavior and wise decision-making. As noted again by Fears (1981a, 856):

It is not coincidental that the worship of Bona *Mens* is attested in the public cult of such a resolute ally against Hannibal as Paestum. Venus and *Mens* were elements in the mythology of Rome's Trojan origins, which had already served Rome so well in Sicily in the First Punic War. Through Aeneas the Venus of Eryx was the divine ancestress of the Romans; and already during the first Punic conflict, the Trojans of Segesta and the Trojans of Rome embraced each other as fellow Aeneades. Late heroic verse knew to celebrate Aeneas as the *nous*, the *mens*, of the Trojans. And for the broader Hellenized audience of South Italy and Sicily, the coupling of *Mens* and Venus Erycina may have symbolized the divine sanction under which Rome stood and that heaven-sent blessing of prudent and intelligent leadership which would bring victory to her and her allies.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Fears (1981a, 855ff.) for the thorough analysis of Livy's lexicon in relation to Fabian propaganda.

Clark (2007, 201), while discussing the sources about the cult of *Mens*, states that “with the exception of Cicero (*Nat. D.* 2, 61) [there is] no clear literary attestation before Ovid.” This is inaccurate, particularly regarding the argument we are developing in this dissertation. This can be seen through one example, which involves a phrase that conveys an immediate sense of auspiciousness or its absence. Indeed, when scholars consider it earnestly and do not dismiss it as a mere incidental clause: *si mens non laeva fuisset*. Virgil employs these words in two instances: *Ecl.* 1.16 and *Aen.* 2.54.

Francesco Adorno, in the *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, gives a rather bland interpretation of the use of *mens* within this expression, referring only to the first of these occurrences: he singles out these words, together with a few other lines, in categorizing the multiple nuances of the term *mens* in Virgil, and treats this one as “memory, thinking about, sign, attention.”¹¹⁷ Even without considering the context surrounding this expression, the adjective *laevus*, “left,” leaves very little to interpretation: in the language of augurs, it can either mean lucky or unlucky, but it refers, regardless, to prophetic significance.¹¹⁸ Indeed, the carrier of any meaning are the signs; however, according to ancient divination, it is widely known the signs are active manifestations of the agency of the gods and not of any man: men can only interpret the signs as favorable or unfavorable, and can be more or less sure about such interpretation. Therefore, I would intend *Mens* as a personification in this case even merely following this line of reasoning.

The contexts surrounding these words are, nevertheless, essential to consider. The passage of the *Bucolics* is quite self-explanatory, although the meaning of *mens* may be less evident; Meliboeus says (*Ecl.* 1.16-17):

Saepe malum hoc nobis, si mens non laeva fuisset,
de caelo tactas memini praedicere quercus.

¹¹⁷ Cit. EV s.v. *mens*: “*M.* come «ricordo», «pensare a», «segno», «attenzione» (opposto: oblio, *vacua m.*)”

¹¹⁸ I appreciate both the complexity and the problematic nature of this adjective in Latin. As explained very clearly by Austin (1968, 257-258): “In Roman augury the left was the favourable side, in Greek the right; cf. Cic. *de div.* ii. 82 ‘ita nobis sinistra videntur, Graiis et barbaris dextra meliora’, and Vahlen on Ennius, *Ann.* 613. Roman poets use both practices inconsistently”.

I remember that the oaks struck by heaven often predicted this misfortune, if *mens* had been not ominous.

Most translations of this passage, along with the commentaries, treat *mens* as belonging to Meliboeus.¹¹⁹ Such a meaning is easy to trace back, as Servius comments “*stulta, contraria. et sensus hic est: perdituros nos quandoque agros, res manifesta praedicebat, sed nosse mentis imprudentia nequivimus.*”¹²⁰ Given that the strokes of lightening had an established and solid prophetic value for the Romans,¹²¹ I understand why one may be led to think that Meliboeus did not understand the troubles he was about to go through solely because of the *imprudentia* of his mind: he did not pay enough attention. While this interpretation is certainly reasonable, there can be much more to this sentence.

Virgil’s alleged life experience may inform the representation of Meliboeus’ situation as one of the peasants forced to let the veterans have their pieces of land: this fact has been studied at length.¹²² Initially, Mantua was not one of the cities involved in this process. Still, after the battle of Philippi in 42 BC, it ended up indeed being picked because of its vicinity to Cremona. Perhaps Virgil intentionally compares the circumstances of this battle, specifically the grave economic crisis, with those of the aftermath of the Second Punic War and uses *mens* as a direct hint. After all, he saw the repercussions of the conflicts personally. He may be referring to *mens* as the personification since in no other Latin text (other than the repetition of these very same words) *mens* is ever defined as *laeva*. This adjective, belonging to the technical lexicon of divination, is used here in the context of prophetic signs, that is, the bolts of lightning: I would argue it can hardly refer to Meliboeus’ intellectual faculties only.¹²³ After all, in a literary genre that allows it, Virgil

¹¹⁹ Carena (2016) translates “*ma noi si era ciechi*”, agreeing with Saint-Denis (2003) using the same metaphor of blindness common in both Italian and French: “*ah ! si mon esprit n’avait pas été aveugle !*”; and a similar meaning is proposed by Rushton Fairclough (1916) who translates “had not my wits been dull”.

¹²⁰ Cf. Thilo (1986, ad loc.).

¹²¹ Cicero explains this divinatory practice quite clearly in Div. 1.10.16.

¹²² This specific piece of land had up and downs as it was given back to Virgil thanks to the intercession of Asinius Pollio with August, but then it was once again taken away. About this, see at least Büchner (1963, 43-47).

¹²³ For that matter, even *de caelo tactas* is a technical idiom typical of augural language.

employs a litotes here (*non-laeva*) in what can, in all respects, be a not too slightly ironic understatement in which the negative of its contrary expresses an affirmative. The litotes is ever more emphatic with *si non* in place of *nisi*. The message conveyed by these lines could even be in the context of a dig: if *Mens* had intervened in the war affairs and better decisions had been made, the piece of land would have been safe.¹²⁴ Moreover, the situation described in the eclogue is paradigmatic for the sociopolitical disruption at the time; hence, the collective value of *nobis* indicates the entire community of the victims of forced expropriation. The two nuances do not contrast: if considered together, they yield a more profound reading of the line and even of the eclogue as a whole.

In Aen. 2.54 there is room for less doubt, and comparing the two occurrences is one more reason I believe that *mens* fits the case study in both cases and represents a superb example of the doubleness of the *utilitates* conveying both individual and divine senses. While the line famously caused trouble to scholars, the episode is quite famous: Laocoön has just said “I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts,” and pierced the horse. Then, outside of his direct speech, there is the following consideration (Aen. 2.54-56):¹²⁵

Et si fata deum, si mens non laeva fuisset,
impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare latebras
Troiaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres.

And if the fates of the gods, if *mens* had been not ominous, one could have urged on wounding the Greeks’ hiding places with the sword, and Troy could now be standing, and you, the citadel of Priam, would keep high.

The common interpretation of *mens*, in this case, is generally intended as opposed to *fata*, as if *fata* represented the divine decree, i.e., what was ordained by the gods.¹²⁶ *Mens*, on the other

¹²⁴ The sentence *si mens non laeva fuisset* is often intended as the protasis of a missing apodosis. In this case, given the double nature of *mens*, I concur with Della Corte (1939, 27) who argues that rather than an if-clause, this is an incidental period. Indeed, from the viewpoint of the sense, one could do without it, and this adds up to my interpretation, i.e., the sentence being a barb by Virgil.

¹²⁵ Horsfall (2008, 91) notes that Aeneas “interrupts his own narrative to offer generalizing tragic-choral comment”. Indeed, this tone makes the words heavier.

¹²⁶ Servius is very clear about the meaning of *fata*: *fata deum* ‘fata’ modo participium est, hoc est ‘quae dii loquuntur’. Cf. Thilo (1986, ad loc.) and Austin (1968, 60).

hand, corresponds to the foolish human spirit, which did not realize what was inside of the Trojan horse. This is a conceivable reading, even though I find it challenging to put *fata* and *mens* in contrast with each other, given (1) the structure of the sentence, with the repeated *si*; (2) the fact that *fuisse* must act as the verb for both clauses (quite the typical example of zeugma); and, as I argue, (3) *laeva* referring at once to both of the nominatives, even though *fata* is plural neuter and *mens* singular feminine.¹²⁷ The arguments for *mens* to evoke simultaneously the personification and the human wits are sustainable even on the mere grounds of grammar and style.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, suppose this deliberation is read with a tone of calculated sarcasm. In that case, the argument mounts up: one ought to keep in mind that these lines, in the economy of the narration within the *Aeneid*, foretell in some way the events that are about to be recounted and are responsible for setting the tone, a very bitter one in this case.

In these two passages, no scholar hinted at the possibility of *mens* being more than just the human mind, and I would argue that is the *lectio facillior*.¹²⁹ Plausibly, the leading objection lies in the adjective *laevus* associated with a divinity, out of fear (or, rather, caution) of implying that the god can be unfavorable. This is indeed a possibility, though the gods in antiquity can either be

¹²⁷ Alessandro Fo (2012, 51) considers—as per his translation—*laeva* as referring to both *fata* and *mens* as he translates “a non avere sinistri i fati divini e la mente.” Servius puts the argument under a different light, which is equally interesting; cf. Thilo (1986, ad loc.): “et sciendum laevum, cum de humanis rebus est, esse contrarium, cum de caelestibus, prosperum, ut ‘intonuit laevum’, quia sinistra numinum intuentibus dextra sunt.” Again, the meaning of the adjective *laevus*, *a*, *um* is problematic *per se*. See note 118.

¹²⁸ So much is also valid due to the fact that *Mens* is only personified once she receives cult. The seemingly anachronistic mention of *mens*, here, preceding her actual cult’s establishment, underscores the *Aeneid*’s intricate temporal layering and does not make the interpretation inapplicable.

¹²⁹ Horsfall (ad Aen. 2, 91) expresses doubts, but still in terms of exclusion rather than coexistence: “either the *mens* of the gods or that of men (Hofmann *TLL* 8.719.29) can be intended”, although “*mens* of the gods” is not quite the same as the personification of *Mens*. It is possible that Horsfall intends *mens* as either the better judgement of the gods or even—following a Christian and wrong conception of Roman religion—*mens* as a sort of extension of “greater” (for lack of a better word) gods. In the same fashion, Perret (2002, ad loc.) translates “Et si le destins des dieux, si notre sottise ne nous eussent égarés” and wonders the following: “Est-ce l’esprit des Troyens qui est égaré (cf. Buc., 1, 16) ? Ou le vouloir des dieux (cf. Aen., 5, 56) qui leur est contraire (cf. Georg., 4, 7) ? Faut-il même comprendre : « si ç’avait été le destin des dieux (que Troie demeurât) » ? Ces incertitudes dans l’expression rendent sensible l’émotion d’Énée : ce n’est jamais sans un peu de vertige qu’on rêve sur les possibles irréalisés.” In any event, both of these annotations, which are the only ones who do discuss the ambiguity of *mens*, take in no account the possibility of *mens* alluding to the corresponding personification.

favorable or unfavorable and Virgil's use of this specific adjective elsewhere, at the beginning of the fourth book of the *Georgics*, should dispel any doubts (G. 4.5-7):

in tenui labor; at tenuis non gloria, siquem
numina laeua sinunt auditque uocatus Apollo.

Great toil is involved in a small task, but not a tiny glory, if the ominous divine
powers allow it and Apollo, invoked, listens.

In this text, Virgil talks about honey, great leaders, peoples' communities, struggles, and customs, which would be the tasks requiring work. A work not without glory, and—that is—if Apollo listens to the invocation and the *numina laeva* allow it. Most translators render the adjective *laevus* here as hostile, likely connecting it with the verb *sinere* (whence *sinister* as synonym of *laevus*).¹³⁰ The conditional nature of the sentence makes such an interpretation more complicated. I translate *laeva* as “ominous” to mitigate the negative sense and instead suggest a worrying impression, i.e., that given by an omen, an event regarded as a warning of good or evil. I believe preserving the vagueness is of the essence: perhaps one ought to accept that what can, in our contemporary perspective, look like an inconsistency in the use of this term is instead a peculiarity of the native culture. I would instead argue that this adjective is intentionally ambiguous because one is never quite sure when one is attributing it to the gods or to their signs.

When one is in two minds about the divinity being on or against one's side, one may use that adjective in the same vein as the more common *sive deus sive dea*. This prudential formula tries to include an eventually pertinent divinity, even one a person may be unaware of. Furthermore, one ought not to forget, not only about this specific instance of *mens*, that our perspective is that of *readers*, but these texts were targeted at *listeners* in a culture where orality was much more pre-

¹³⁰ This interpretation—contrary to that given by Servius—dates back to Aulus Gellius, at least: cf. Gell. NA 12.13-14: he explains that Virgil is a *connoisseur* of antiquities, even though he does not show it off, and quotes as an example the *numina laeva* in the *Georgics*, giving a rationale for the existence of divine powers that can be harmful other than beneficial.

eminent than writing: the native listener could easily sense the semantic depth behind the intentional ambiguity.

For the purposes of our argument, it is essential to underline that in this occurrence, there is an unambiguous association of *laeva* with *numina*, divine powers, demonstrating both that nothing prevents such an attribute from being predicated to the gods and that Virgil makes a coherent use of it overall.¹³¹ The final piece of confirmation of the fact that in the occurrences we analyzed (Ecl. 1.16 and Aen. 2.54) *mens* can allude to her divine nature in addition to the human one is in Servius' commentary on G. 4.7:¹³²

numina laeva prospera, ut "intonuit laevum". et aliter: 'laeva' hic in bono posuit, ut "intonuit laevum"; alibi autem in malo ponit cum dicit "saepe malum hoc nobis, si mens non laeva fuisset, de caelo tactas memini praedicere quercus".

ominous divine powers favorable, like "intonuit laevum." And in another sense: 'ominous' here has shown positively, like "intonuit laevum"; however, elsewhere, it shows negatively, when one says "saepe malum hoc nobis, si mens non laeva fuisset, de caelo tactas memini praedicere quercus."

Servius interprets *laeva* here as carrying a positive sense, referring to *intonuit laevum*, an expression occurring twice in the *Aeneid* (2.693; 9.631) and meaning "a thunder cried out from the left," i.e., from the favorable direction.¹³³ But then he says it can also be intended negatively, quoting as an example precisely *si mens non laeva fuissent*. After all, Servius repeats the same when paraphrasing the adjective *laevus* with *noxius* (harmful) at Aen 10.275: **laevo** noxio hic, ut "si mens non laeva fuisset": *alibi pro bono, ut "siquem numina laeva sinunt."*¹³⁴ The adjective *laevus* is polysemous, which adds to the difficulty of its interpretation in any instance, primarily when it

¹³¹ Thus, I agree with Austin (1964, 50) on Aen 2.54: "Conington and Mackail agree in taking *non laeva* with *mens* only; Conington explains 'si fata deum (fuissent)' as 'had fate so willed', quoting 433 f. 'si fata fuissent / ut caderem' (surely quite different). Mackail denies that *laeva fata* is a possible expression: but what of the *numina laeva* in G. iv. 7, and of *fatisque deum defensu iniquis* in 257 below? I cannot think that their interpretation is right or possible. There is no reason why 'non laeva (fuissent)' may not be supplied with *fata deum*."

¹³² See Thilo (1986) *ad loc.*

¹³³ Cf. Servius the crisscrossing commentary ad Aen. 2.693: **intonvit laevvm** sinistrum, prosperum, quia caeleste est; quae enim nobis laeva sunt <caelestibus> dextra sunt, ut diximus supra. 'sinistrum' autem a sinendo dictum, quantum ad auguria pertinet, quod nos agere aliquid sinat, unde alibi "siquem numina laeva sinunt".

¹³⁴ See Thilo (1986) *ad loc.*

refers to the fates, the gods' will, and divinity itself; the term cannot but imply the coexistence of many possible meanings. The fates and the gods' will are not up for discussion; only signs are. In a state of uncertainty, one cannot exclude any of the opposite senses.

In conclusion, when Virgil does iterate exact word choices, it is never accidental or unplanned. As sagaciously noted by Austin (1964, 50), Ecl. 1.16 and Aen. 2.54 both imply

a situation in which a mortal has failed to see the meaning of what heaven intends; the blasted oaks there [scil. in Ecl. 1.16] correspond to the *laeva fata* here [scil. in Aen. 2.54], and *si mens non laeva fuisset* looks like a formula for human self-deception. I therefore take Virgil to mean 'if destiny and our own wits had not gone against us': Laocoon was doomed, the Trojans misinterpret the cause of his doom, and are doomed themselves.

I agree with this interpretation and wish to add to it. In both instances, in the expression *si mens non laeva fuisset*, *mens* can be interpreted both as evoking the absent goddess, who did not assist at that particular moment, and, at once, the actual wits of the person, which failed to handle the situation. The personification of *mens* is supposed to evoke a presence of judgment at a time of crisis, the judgment itself being simultaneously provided by the goddess and acted upon by the human performer: this qualifies *mens* as *utilitas*.

A similar situation, to stay within the *Aeneid*, occurs again in 5.56. In book five, Aeneas is sailing away but sees the fire at Carthage and feels the cause for it is pure love's fury. Fear pours down over him and the rest of the Trojans, particularly with the opposing winds blowing stronger and the sky growing dimmer. Palinurus advises Aeneas to give up the current course and rather head for Sicily, a prudent and safer solution, because of the distance and assurance of a friendly harbor. Aeneas approves of such sound advice and is all the more motivated to go as Anchises' ashes and bones rest there. In his direct speech, Aeneas says (Aen. 5.55-57):

Nunc ultro ad cineres ipsius et ossa parentis,
haut equidem sine mente, reor, sine numine divom,
adsumus et portus delatis intramus amicos.

Moreover, now towards his ashes and my father's bones, indeed, not without *mens*, I believe, not without the gods' will, we find ourselves, and having been driven, we enter friendly harbors.

Once again, *mens* is expressed in the vicinity of *numine divom*. The parallelism is quite striking. Once more, I do not believe one should consider *mens* as referring merely to a (human) plan of action and as opposed to the gods' will. On the contrary, I would not separate the two expressions coordinated by the anaphoric *sine*, with that touch of cautiousness articulated through *reor*, as one may expect when a human is, in fact, interpreting signs—in this case, the storm in which the crew is caught and also the realization that they were being pushed towards that very place on the anniversary of Anchises' death. The suspension of disbelief imposed by the events warrants the reader to see this as a rather evident divine sign instead of sheer coincidence.¹³⁵ Arguing for *mens* to indicate the reference to the divinity would not push the text too far. Still, the passage would lose an appended piece of meaning: Aeneas seems to be trying to say that even if the changed route results from human sound judgment, the gods' hands have somehow prompted the decision, and *Mens* may well be one of such gods.

An additional passage that has mysteriously given no rise to suspicion regarding divinity is in the seventh book of the *Aeneid*, one truly full of oracles and signs. In short, Aeneas and the crew finally made it to the Tiber River and the lands of Latium, where the peaceful king Latinus was reigning. Lavinia, the king's daughter (the only heiress as there were no brothers), was supposed to marry Turnus. This, however, did not seem to be the gods' will, which can be inferred by the following signs.

First, Latinus had kept a bay tree since the construction of his royal palace, as it was dedicated to Phoebus. One day, on the tip of such a tree came a swarm of bees, which formed something similar to a bunch of grapes: a diviner interpreted this as the foretelling of a group of foreigners

¹³⁵ Coleridge's ideas on suspending disbelief were primarily developed and articulated in his *Biographia Literaria*, published in 1817. In this work, he discussed the concept as a response to the challenge of making supernatural or fantastical elements plausible in poetry. Coleridge argued that for a reader to fully engage with and appreciate imaginative works, there needed to be a willing suspension of disbelief—readers should momentarily suppress their natural skepticism to understand the spirit of the work profoundly.

coming and reigning over there. Then, when Lavinia was performing a sacrifice, she was surrounded by a flame that seemed to burn her hair, crown, vest, and even the palace: the diviners predicted great fortune for the woman but terrible disaster for her home and homeland. Quite expectedly, Latinus was preoccupied and consulted the oracle of his father, who prophesized that his daughter should not unite in marriage with a fellow Latin and that a foreign son-in-law would come and be very successful.

Meanwhile, Aeneas gets his share of signs following his father's prophesy as the crew finally ends their wanderings. Aeneas sends some selected ambassadors to Latinus, who asks them to let him come in person. At the end of his speech, he says (Aen. 7.273-274):

Hunc illum poscere fata
Et reor et, si quid veri mens augurat, opto.

And indeed I believe this [scil. Aeneas] is the one demanded by the oracles, and, if *mens* foretells something true, I wish so.

The fact that *mens* is the subject of another technical verb of prophecy leads me to read this passage as one more fitting my case study of *utilitates*.¹³⁶ While it is plausible that the poor mind of the king, justifiably troubled by the signs he received, conjectures that Aeneas may be the one, I find the potential coexistence of the personification well grounded. This may well be the resolution after a crisis for Latinus, and interpreting *mens* as both that of the king and the goddess herself, which *augurat*, i.e., performs the services or fills the office of an augur, to take auguries, observing and interpreting omens, and ultimately “to predict,” creates no contradiction in the interpretation of this text. If anything, it amplifies its meaning, which is the primary purpose of the methodology I have adopted in this dissertation. The cult of *Mens* may not have been active during the events described here, but this is a later epic text. Virgil may well wish to make the point—in a nutshell and with hindsight—that the crisis might finally be over. Any Roman upper-class citizen might

¹³⁶ *Auguror* (it is active even though it is supposed to be deponent, one more reason to boost up the divine value of *Mens* and her active agency. It would not be the first case in which the gods do not follow conventional grammar rules. Cf. the case of *Victoria* below, p.132ff.

have easily caught the evocation since they were likely familiar with what this specific personification stood for, as well as with her cult. Once more, deciding whether to recognize *mens* as a deified personification or not in these passages can only express a bias that is inconsiderate of the culture of reference.

***Pietas* in Rome: upholding ethical values for gods, family, and homeland**

Considering the foundational principle of *pietas* in Roman culture, it is unfortunate that the origin of the cult of the goddess *Pietas* is unknown, as no sources mention it. Nevertheless, we do know that two temples were dedicated to her in Rome: the most important is in the Forum Holitorium, pledged as a vow in 191 B.C. during the Battle of Thermopylae, by the consul Manius Acilius Glabrio, and erected by his son in 181 B.C. (later, it will become the theatre of Marcellus); the other one was located in the Circus Flaminius.¹³⁷

Even with this lack of information, *pietas* is so well documented in Republican literary sources that it is possible to at least frame its values within the Roman culture. *Pietas* is, first and foremost, a form of dutiful behavior, reflected in one's actions and attitudes towards the gods, relatives, and fellow citizens to the point of including one's entire homeland.¹³⁸ Therefore, *pietas* refers to a sense of duty, which encompasses what one should do when dealing with the gods, as well as one's closest relationships and the entire society to which one belongs.¹³⁹

The selection of the case studies to demonstrate our argument cannot but be drawn from the *Aeneid*, where *pietas* is an ideological benchmark; on this occasion, the focus is not around Aeneas,

¹³⁷ Cfr. LGRM s.v. *Personifikationen (römische)*; RE s.v. *Pietas*. Cfr. Liv. 40.34.4-5; Cic. Leg. 2.8.19; 2.11.28. For a rapid bibliographical overview see Milani (2017, 26-27).

¹³⁸ Cf. respectively Cic. N.D. 1.116 (*pietas* with respect to the gods); Cic. Inv. 2.66, Ter. An. 869 (*pietas* with regards to other people and specifically one's parents); Cic. Rep. 6.16 and Liv. 39.9.10 (*pietas* towards one's mother country).

¹³⁹ Alfonso Traina, in EV s.v. *pietas*, points out that *pietas* is the most native *Wertbegriff* (term of value) belonging to the Roman culture, and pinpoints four aspects: the sense of duty which makes it similar to *officium* but distances it from *caritas* and *miser cordia* (seeing as they imply gratuity as opposed to reciprocity); the sphere of affection, because other than being a virtue, *pietas* is also a feeling of fondness towards family or other types of social relations; the bipolarity, because the addressees of *pietas* are both humans and gods; finally, the reciprocity: *pietas* only makes sense when it is a shared value and all members of a community (are supposed to) play according to the same rules.

described at the very beginning of the poem as *insignem pietate virum* (Aen. 1.10),¹⁴⁰ but rather around the cultural value *per se*. In the *Aeneid*, *pietas* occurs 22 times (and, perhaps unsurprisingly, nowhere else in Virgil). In at least a few occurrences, I believe a few cases can be made about *pietas* evoking both the human and divine notion at once.

The following occurrence displays that even the translations of Virgil's texts have been defiled by Christian prejudices. However, its belonging to the case study of the *utilitates* is not necessarily so convincing at face value. The matter is, nevertheless, noteworthy. Anchises is making the following appeal (Aen. 2.689-691):

Iuppiter omnipotens, precibus si flecteris ullis,
aspice nos! hoc tantum; et, si pietate meremur,
da deinde augurium, pater, atque haec omina firma.

Jupiter almighty, if any prayer appeases you,
Look at us! Just look at us; and, if we deserve it as far as *pietas* allows,
give us a sign, father, and confirm these omens.

Translations of this passage render *si pietate meremur* in different ways, from “if we deserve your mercy” to “if our devotion deserves it.”¹⁴¹ All translations implying that Jupiter should “grant” any *pietas* (intended as mercy or pity) should be crossed out here: differently from the Christian religion, *pietas* belongs to human beings in a relation of reciprocity with the gods.¹⁴² Thus, I am inclined to accept the range of translations that signify *pietas* as a human feature rather than as granted by Jupiter. Furthermore, many Latin words indicate “mercy,” such as *miser cordia*.

When the verb *mereor* means “to deserve,” it usually employs an accusative, or, eventually, it is constructed with *de* + ablative: *pietate* is clearly an ablative here, and one may see it as one of limitation, rendering it as “if we deserve it as far our devotion allow / within the limits of our devotion”; nevertheless, this sense here is not entirely satisfactory, even though acceptable: the

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Austin (1971, 33).

¹⁴¹ To quote a few notable examples, Canali in Paratore (1978) translates “*se meritiamo la tua pietà*”; Perret (2002) “*si notre piété le merite*.”

¹⁴² Other scholars agree with this reading: cf. Scarcia in La Penna (2002) “*se lo meritiamo per la nostra devozione*”; Fairclough (1916) “if our goodness earn it.”

meaning can also be “if we deserve it as far as the goddess *Pietas* allows,” essentially because a sense of duty has been respected. The verb *mereor* can also mean “behave”: if one understands *pietas* as an ethical value, as much as the other *utilitates*, and intends it here as both the human attitude towards the gods and the corresponding personification, evidently embodying such customs, the enhanced sense could be “if we behave according to *pietas-Pietas* / by respecting *pietas-Pietas*.” This last piece of the argument is also supported by the fact that Anchises speaks in the first person plural rather than singular, as one may expect out of personal prayer: possibly, he is speaking on behalf of his family, referring collectively to a particular way of expected behavior regulated by the notion of *pietas*, to confirm the sudden omen of Iulus’ hair in flames.¹⁴³ No commentary places any attention on the use of the verb *mereor* here, nor does any critical edition consider the possibility that *pietas* may be personified. In any event, whether or not one may be persuaded by the fact that *pietas* is also a personification—given that, in all fairness, Anchises seems to be addressing Jupiter only, directly and by the vocative *pater*—the sense I propose, if anything, frees the line from Christian prejudices that do not belong to the Roman culture and, at once, respect the syntax.

Be that as it may, there is another invocation to Jupiter where *pietas* seems to fit the requirements of the case study that encompasses both human and divine nuance in one of the most classical cases of Virgilian ambiguity (Aen. 5.687-690):

Iuppiter omnipotens, si nondum exosus ad unum
Troianos, si quid pietas antiqua labores
respicit humanos, da flammam euadere classi
nunc, pater, et tenuis Teucrum res eripe leto.

Jupiter almighty, if you do not yet hate the Trojans exceedingly, until the last one of them, if the ancient *pietas* is at all mindful of human sufferings, grant to the fleet to escape the flame now, father, and pull the trifling matters of the Trojans out of death.

This time, the direct speech belongs to Aeneas, defined *pius* just two lines above the quoted passage (Aen. 685). Various commentaries imply that *pietas*, here, belongs to Jupiter as if it were

¹⁴³ I concur with Austin (1964, 256): “The plural is probably a true one, not ‘plural for singular’”.

his “pity.”¹⁴⁴ I argue that, instead, it should be regarded as a personification *per se* and not as Jupiter’s extension of power. At the same time, *pietas* also designates the human attentiveness one ought to have regarding fellow humans and gods: the preverbal particle *re-* expresses precisely such a due reciprocity.¹⁴⁵ The adjective here is tremendously telling: *pietas antiqua* can be intended as “the *pietas* which has always been there,” as opposed to other interpretations, which see it as merely old or attested beforehand.¹⁴⁶ I read the passage more comprehensively as if Aeneas were saying “If the rules of human fellowship and reverence towards the gods that have always been respected with regards to human sufferings apply, and the goddess *Pietas* does pay any attention to them, please, Jupiter, save us.” After all, Jupiter will in fact be moved to *pietas* (or by *Pietas*?) and will indeed spare them all.

Servius can also better guide us through the interpretation of this passage as he states:¹⁴⁷

si quid pietas antiqva l. r. h. aut si tibi cara pietas praestat aliquid humanis laboribus: aut si quid meremur propter pietatis cultum, ut “parce pio generi”, hoc ipsum remunerare: aut certe, quod est melius, si vel respicit res humanas pietas, quae de terris olim recessit.

Either “if *pietas* precious to you aids in some way the human suffering,” or “if we deserve anything because of the cult of *Pietas*,” like “spare (the life of) a pious race” (scil. Aen. 1. 526), repay this very *pietas*, or rather, indeed, which is better, “if *Pietas*, which in time past has left the earth, turns the attention to the human affairs.”

Servius presents a threefold interpretation, and in none of the scenarios he considers is there any reference to Jupiter. That is because considering any personification according to the Christian categories does not apply to the Roman religious system.¹⁴⁸ On the contrary, the second of the prospects considered by Servius refers directly to the cult of *Pietas*. And so he seems to do in the

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Williams (1960, 172): “your loving-kindness of old”; and Rostagni (1944, 106): “nel senso di «bontà divina»”. See also Fratantuono and Smith (2015).

¹⁴⁵ The verb *respicere*, in the meaning of “to have regard” or “to take care” is attested elsewhere with a divinity as the subject: cf. Cic. Att. 1.16.6: *nisi quis nos deus respexerit*. Cf. also, once again, Traina in EV s.v. *pietas*.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. respectively Williams (1960, 172) and Rostagni (1944, 106): “*antiqua*, perché fino allora attestata”.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Thilo (1986, 641-42).

¹⁴⁸ See discussion in Chapter I, p. 9ff.

third one, which he judges as preferable, in which the implication appears to be that, in some unspecified past, the goddess had not attended to human affairs.

Although the sense is clear, the first proposal of interpretation may give rise to some doubts because of the adjective *carus*. This term encompasses the notion of being highly valued and appreciated, even loved, as well as “fortunate”: both Horace and Cicero use it in connection with the gods, with the latter meaning, i.e., if someone is *carus* to the gods, they are fortunate.¹⁴⁹ Both senses take the dative, and that *tibi* clarifies that the sense is “*pietas* dear to you, highly regarded by you.” Therefore, all three suggestions by Servius appear to refer to the personification except the cross-reference he provides. It is quite suitable and significant that he should make a connection to the words of Ilioneus in Book 1. The Trojan crew has miraculously landed on the coasts of Carthage, where Dido is the Queen. Ilioneus speaks on behalf of his fellows, who come as suppliants and wish to be welcomed, fearful of having their ships burned down. Once they enter the temple and are given permission to speak to Dido, he tries to make a case with her that his companions are not criminals but, precisely, a *pium genus*.¹⁵⁰ The line presents a fundamental similarity with Aeneas’ plea, as Ilioneus phrases it as follows: *parce pio generi et propius res aspice nostras* (Aen. 1.526). The comparability resides in the use of the verb *aspicio*, “to turn one’s eyes towards, to examine, to consider”: he is asking Dido to please regard them more closely (*propius*) as much as Aeneas is calling on *Pietas* to be mindful of human sufferings, with an accent

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Cic. Flac. 69.9: *nunc vero hoc magis, quod illa gens quid de nostro imperio sentiret ostendit armis; quam cara dis immortalibus esset docuit, quod est victa, quod elocata, quod serva facta*; cf. Hor. Carm. 1.31.13: *dis carus ipsis*.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Aen. 1.523ff.

on the gaze.¹⁵¹ Indeed, Dido is not quite Jupiter, and yet, in that circumstance of great distress and uncertainty, to the eyes of the Trojans, she has—very much like Jupiter—the power of life and death over them. Furthermore, the correspondence between these two episodes is ever more glaring when considering the following line of reasoning by Ilioneus (Aen. 1.539-543):

quod genus hoc hominum? quaeue hunc tam barbara morem
permittit patria? hospitio prohibemur harenae;
bella cient primaque uetant consistere terra.
si genus humanum et mortalia temnitis arma,
at sperate deos memores fandi atque nefandi.

What kind of people is this? What sort of nation allows such barbaric customs? We are denied welcome on the shore; they come to attack us, and forbid us from standing to the very edge of the beach. If you scorn humanity and mortal weapons, at least keep in mind that the gods are aware of what is allowable and what is not.

The words of Ilioneus stand as a testimony to the connection between *hospitium* and *pietas*.

The Trojans are asking the Carthaginians to be welcomed as guests, with hospitality famously being a practice with a profound cultural value. Since *pietas* regulates, on a human level, the relationships between men and gods and those among fellow men, the relevance of such a virtue stands out.

Pietas can be seen here as analogous to *Fides*: while the latter constitutes a guarantor for promises and commitments, *Pietas* oversees various types of relationships.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Bettini (2019b, 14) proposes a fascinating interpretation of the passage (italics by the author): “Non siamo banditi, esclama il naufrago, siamo gente pia, un popolo di vinti, non di violenti. Guardaci più da vicino, considera chi siamo: *propius res aspice nostras*. Sono parole cruciali, se a pronunziarle è un naufrago sconosciuto che si rivolge a coloro che spera possano accoglierlo al termine del suo disgraziato viaggio. Esprimono la preghiera a osservare “più da vicino” lo straniero, a conoscerlo meglio per superare la barriera delle apparenze o dei pregiudizi, la barriera dell’ignoranza. Quella che porta a scambiare i fuggiaschi per invasori, per delinquenti, stava accadendo ai Troiani: gli stranieri, è questo che sta dicendo Ilioneo, non devono essere trattati come nemici.” Jumping to the conclusion of the passage, he comments (ibid., 15): “Ma se gli abitanti di Cartagine, continua Ilioneo, non tengono conto né dell’umanità, l’*humanum genus*, né della punizione che può venire dagli uomini, essi dovranno però temere l’ira degli dèi, che serbano memoria di ciò che è giusto e di ciò che è iniquo. Perché negare hospitium ai naufraghi è un atto empio, che offende la divinità.” Once again, there is a connection with the sad news stories about the current European situation with the refugees (ibid., 14): “Ancora cronaca contemporanea. Nel lamento di Ilioneo una parola in particolare risuona: hospitium “accoglienza”, quella che viene negata ai naufraghi.”

¹⁵² On *Fides*, see above, pp. 80ff. For the connection between *pietas* and *fides*, even in Virgil, as strictly connected Roman virtues, cf. Aen. 6.878 in the context of the afterworld, where Anchises reveals to Aeneas the future of Rome and his descendants: *heu pietas, heu prisca fides invictaque bello / dextera*. I see the *prisca* here as homologous to the *pietas antiqua* at 5.688, “of many years go”, thus which has always been present. Virgil is clearly making a point when using these adjectives.

The relations between guest and host were overseen by *Pietas*, and breaking such pacts might have offended the goddess (as well as any other divinity in charge of hospitality, like Zeus in Greece or Jupiter in Rome: a polytheistic system regularly allows for more gods to administer the same areas, with no apparent contradiction). This is why not respecting hospitality with *Pietas*, as much as breaking a promise with *Fides*, is twice as bad: such actions displease, at once, the human partner and the corresponding divinity.

Therefore, behaving according to the specific cultural expectations of hospitality is, in a sense, honoring *pietas-Pietas*, and that makes sense in connection to what Ilioneus is saying: a people that denies the basic reception of guests—in this case, shipwrecked ones, making the problem yet more serious— must be barbarous, i.e., primitive and uncivilized; moreover, if they are not inclined to behave in a way that shows compassion and benevolence to fellow humans and despise the mortal weapons which are supposed to be in charge of managing human violations, they should at least expect, or even trust with a certain apprehension, the gods to be fully aware of *fandi atque nefandi*. The fact that notions as delicate as *fas* and *nefas* are used in hendiadys and in the form of a gerundive, emphasizing ever more the idea of obligation, cannot leave the interlocutor, as well as the reader, indifferent. Translating this expression in English presents challenges given the significance of *fas* and *nefas*: when used together like this, they tend to designate “the entire spectrum of human actions and behaviors, what is allowable and what is unallowable, or better objectionable.”¹⁵³ The difficult task is finding a comprehensive expression, like “within accepted bounds” or “permissible,” and avoiding terms that qualify *fas* or its negation as plainly human, such as lawful, legitimate, or even divine, because the many uses of *fas* do not necessarily imply

¹⁵³ Cit. Bettini in McClintock (2016, 18): “l’endiadi *fas nefasque* è molto frequentemente usata per designare l’intero spettro delle azioni e dei comportamenti umani, ciò che è lecito e ciò che è illecito, anzi riprovevole.” Bettini also notes that the ancients already perceived this expression as proverbial (ibid., 18, n.5): “cfr. Donat. In Andr. 214 p. 96 Wessner (a proposito dell’espressione *quo iure quaque iniuria*): proverbiale *hoc est qualia sunt fas nefas*.”

endeavors that are godlike or devoted to the gods. Instead, the gods are the ones to enforce the sort of behavioral standard (the *utilitates*, in particular, represent codified behaviors).¹⁵⁴

The final case I propose is yet another invocation. This time Arruns, a young Etruscan warrior and hunter; right after taking the final shot at Camilla, he makes the following invocation (Aen. 11. 785-793):

Summe deum, sancti custos Soractis Apollo,
quem primi colimus, cui pineus ardor aceruo
pascitur, et medium freti pietate per ignem
cultores multa premimus uestigia pruna,
da, pater, hoc nostris aboleri dedecus armis,
omnipotens. non exuias pulsaeue tropaeum
uirginis aut spolia ulla peto, mihi cetera laudem
facta ferent; haec dira meo dum uulnere pestis
pulsa cadat, patrias remeabo inglorius urbes.

Greatest of the gods, you who guard sacred Soracte, Apollo, whom we worship as first, for whom a pine-sap flame is fed in a pyre, and in the middle, relying on *pietas*, we worshippers tread in the many burning footsteps, let, father almighty, this source of shame be abolished by our weapons. I don't ask for booty nor a trophy of the beaten girl nor any spoils, my other deeds will bring me praise; provided that this terrible plague cease beaten by a wound inflicted by me, I will return to the native cities unhonored.

An important detail to highlight before proceeding in the analysis of this passage is that Virgil specifically says (at 11.784) that Arruns is praying to the gods above (*superos precatur*) in the plural. This is relevant to our analysis because this is a situation similar to the first text regarding the personification of *pietas*—Aen. 2. 689-691—where Anchises was invoking Jupiter directly, just as this supplication seems to be addressing Apollo. By framing the prayer within a context of openness to other gods, it is tenable that these invocations are not exclusive in their addresses. That is to say that while a prayer may be directed at a particular god according to the circumstances, it is still conceivable to incorporate additional celestial beings into the message. In this case, the other divinity called into question could be *Pietas*, as per the expression *freti pietate*. The participle *fretus*

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Bettini in McClintock (2016, 51) wisely noting that the culture in which the notion of *fas* has formed is oral: “E in una cultura orale la formula *fas est* «è parola che» corrisponde puntualmente a ciò che, nelle culture fondate sulla religione del libro, verrà un giorno espresso con la formula «è scritto che».”

is only attested in this grammatical form and derives from an outdated verb **freo*. It is regularly constructed with the ablative, which Virgil seems to respect in all the seven occurrences in the *Aeneid*.¹⁵⁵ On this occasion, Virgil uses a *iunctura* already in existence by Naevius' fragment 12 (Morel) which bears *freti pietati*.¹⁵⁶

Senex fretus pietati	deum adlocutus
summi deum regis	fratreem Neptunum
regnatorem marum	

The old man, relying on *pietas*, addressed a god, Neptunus, the ruler of the sea, brother of the highest king of the gods.

In this piece of relatively sober poetry from the fragmentary *Bellum Poenicum*, the *senex* is believed to be Anchises, who is addressing Neptune: the general context of this prayer is in a storm, which can be gathered by the surrounding fragments, and the request is that of subsiding the waves. From the tone of the other lines, it sounds like Neptune intervened.¹⁵⁷ Barchiesi (1962, 418) notes that this is the first occurrence of *pietas* in Latin literature. He then interprets the expression in Aen. 11.787 as indicating the strength of a religious sentiment that compels the *cultores* to challenge the kindling fire.¹⁵⁸

The fact of the matter is that this passage, as it is, does not present much context to which one may turn for more information or educated guesses. The metrical situation is also rather tortuous. Be that as it may, there is a textual problem to which we may add our considerations. The first editors of the *Bellum Poenicum* (Hermann and Spangenberg) understood *deum* on the first line not

¹⁵⁵ Cicero constructs it with the ablative as well. There are, however, some cases in which it is constructed with the dative (cf. Livy 4.37.6; 6.13.1; 8.22.7 and Naevius fr. 12 Morel). In EV Rocca explains it as “per analogia con *fidens*. F., rispetto a *fido*, *fides*, *fiducia*, indica l'eccessiva sicurezza, l'audacia, fino alla presunzione; la conseguenza sarà il fallimento dell'impresa”.

¹⁵⁶ So much has been noted by Barchiesi (1962) and Rocca in EV *Pietati* is still to be considered an ablative (with ending in -ī belonging to the nouns presenting the consonant's stem), and Barchiesi discusses the matter thoroughly.

¹⁵⁷ There is general agreement on the identification of Anchises as the *senex*; Mariotti (1955, 116) is the only one to disagree and see the *senex* as a possible character belonging to a different episode, the war in the sea. For a summary and discussion of the problem see Barchiesi (1962, 417).

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Barchiesi (1962, 418): “nella preghiera ad Apollo dell'italico Arrunte essa indica la forza di un sentimento religioso che induce i *cultores* a sfidare l'ardore del fuoco.”

as a singular accusative but, rather, as a genitive plural, on the ground of a similar expression used in yet another fragmentary text by Ennius (*trag.* 292 Klotz) reading *deum me sentit facere pietas*. Barchiesi sensibly adds to the discussion of this point that *pietas deum* (as an objective genitive plural) can be a legitimate synonymic expression to *pietas adversus deos* (as used by Cic. Fin. 3.73). In the exploration of the passage, Barchiesi ends up proposing to read *deum* as an accusative singular, agreeing with more recent interpretations, for reasons that are entirely reasonable and commonsensical: as reported by Barchiesi (1962, 418), for Reichardt the metrical structure indicates a break between *pietati* and *deum*; moreover, *deum* in the following line is irrefutably a genitive plural, which is at once a fantastic variation and would be a somewhat disagreeable repetition.

While this is all true, and—ultimately—it is impossible to know for sure, none of these scholars considered that *pietas* might evoke the corresponding goddess other than the sentiment. I agree with Barchiesi (1962, 416) when he says that the topic of these verses is a man in front of a divinity and, mediating between them, *pietas*.¹⁵⁹ Later on, Barchiesi (1962, 417-418) also argues that *fretus pietati* can be considered a condensed expression in which one ought to see the Homeric prayer formulas.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, if this is the case, it is easier to imagine a possible recalling of the goddess *Pietas*, thus rendering the passage “the old man, relying on *pietas-Pietas* among the gods, addressed Neptunus, etc.” Furthermore, this interpretation, other than ruling in favor of *deum* as a genitive plural, perhaps a deliberate repetition (which is anything but unusual in archaic poetry), would make Virgil’s use of this precise *iunctura* richer in meaning because it seems to fit the same religious system where the invocation of the gods is not exclusive, but rather inclusive. *Pietas*, in particular, seems to assume the role of letting the invoker and the invoked meet halfway, a figure of mediation, as suggested by Barchiesi. After all, a similar function could be applied to Aen. 5.687-

¹⁵⁹ Barchiesi describes this as the architectural structure of these lines: “ecco intanto posto il tema, l’uomo di fronte alla divinità e fra di loro, mediatrice, la *pietas*.”

¹⁶⁰ This argument is advanced in the context of explaining how men address gods in epic poetry: “In certo modo, anche il *fretus pietati* si può considerare una condensazione e una trasposizione delle formule con cui l’orante omerico convalida la propria preghiera e giustifica la propria certezza di accoglimento con l’appellarsi alle prove di ὁσιότης fornite in passato.”

690, as analyzed above, with Aeneas pleading to Zeus for his crew to make it, or Aen. 11. 785-793, where the text says *medium freti pietate*. At least, Virgil seems to provide this evidence more than once; a parallel instance can be the following (Aen. 2.535-543):

“at tibi pro scelere,” exclamat, “pro talibus ausis
di, si qua est caelo pietas quae talia curet,
persoluant grates dignas et praemia reddant debita,
qui nati coram me cernere letum
fecisti et patrios foedasti funere uultus.
at non ille, satum quo te mentiris, Achilles
talis in hoste fuit Priamo; sed iura fidemque
supplicis erubuit corpusque exsangu sepulcro
reddidit Hectoreum meque in mea regna remisit.”

“For such a crime,” he cries aloud, “for such boldness, may the gods, if there is any *pietas* in heaven to see to such things, grant you due reward and may they pay you the price due and render you a proper reward, you, who made me see before my very eyes my son’s death, and polluted a father’s face with his murder. But that Achilles, by whom you falsely say you were begotten, was not like this against his enemy Priam; but he blushed with shame at the oaths and *fides* of a suppliant and returned Hector’s bloodless corpse for burial and restored me to my rule.”

King Priam bellows these sarcastic words, understandably racked by his son’s death. The solemnity of these words, addressed to no specific god but definitely to the gods, emerges in several features of the text: as noted by Horsfall (2008, 407ff.), *at* introduces an imprecation, *tibi* and the verb and direct object coming as far forward as possible, the “marked spitting alliteration of dentals,” the traditional formula *si qua* “quite clearly not skeptical,” the general tone of a curse. Even though *pietas* is next to *caelo* and is the subject of an active verb such as *curare*, no edition or commentary hints at the conceivability of *pietas* evoking more than mere human piety, except for Jordan (2008, 61-62), who argues that “Priam thinks that the gods ought to show *pietas* to him and his family since they have always honoured the gods.”¹⁶¹ Even without considering the surrounding context, the fact that *Pietas* is placed in the sky and is supposed to oversee anything makes me see it as a rather conspicuous personification here, but even considering it just that—I believe—does not

¹⁶¹ Cf. Austin (1964, 206) as he does not imply the presence of the personification but comments: “here it almost means ‘pity’, but pity based upon an attitude of responsibility and care.”

entirely do justice to the text.¹⁶² I think the role of mediation suggested by Barchiesi is the key to understanding the value of *pietas* as Cicero's *utilitas*, that is, evoking at once *pietas* regulating the relations among men and gods and fellow humans among themselves, and *Pietas* as a standing presence, much like *Fides*.

The role of these qualities-personifications is relevant to the context: specifically, the placement of *si qua est caelo pietas quae talia curet* as a sort of interruption, separating the subject *di* from its verbs in the following line seems intentional, in light of the capacity of *pietas-Pietas* under consideration. Priam, as much as the other analyzed cases, is making a general invocation to the gods: he wants his son's murderer, Pyrrhus, to pay the penalty for his wicked deed. To have *pietas* stand out in this context is not surprising: there is hardly anything more contrary to nature than a parent having to witness a child's death, and *pietas* is also notably the sense of respect, dutifulness, but also affection that one has towards the gods, one's parents, one's family, one's community and so forth. At least in the *Aeneid*, this occurs virtually unchanged in book 9.473ff., with the tragic death of Euryalus; his mother makes the following double invocation to the Rutulians and then to Jupiter (Aen. 9.492-496):

Figite me, si qua est pietas, in me omnia tela
conicite, o Rutuli, me primam absumite ferro;
aut tu, magne pater divom, miserere tuoque
invisum hoc detrude caput sub Tartata telo,
quando aliter nequeo crudelem abrumpere vitam.

Pierce me, if there is any form of *pietas*, let all your arrows fly at me, o Rutulians, let the sword end me first; you, great father of the gods, take compassion on me, and with your dart, cast this detested head of mine into the depths of Tartarus, since I cannot otherwise end my cruel life.

This episode seems to follow a similar pattern concerning Virgil's view of *pietas*, which is positioned in the middle and in addition to the other invocations. The world goes upside down when

¹⁶² I concur with Jordan (2008, 62) about *caelo* as he comments: "abl. supply *in*, 'in heaven', i.e., among the gods."

a parent survives their child, and this desperate mother is asking the Rutulians to kill her and Jupiter to do the same, “if there is any form of *pietas*.”

I cannot but disagree with Hardie (1994, 165), who refers back to Priam’s episode, too, when commenting on *si qua est pietas*. We diverge on the value of *pietas*, as he notes “here she [scil. Euryalus’ mother] appeals to a human pity.” Suffice it to open any Latin dictionary to find that *pietas* has numerous meanings in Latin. Still, it is only Christians who use it in the sense of pity, i.e., the feeling of sorrow and compassion caused by the suffering and misfortunes of others (or, then, as a general cause for regret). The only reason I can see the human value in *pietas*—but would not translate it as pity, perhaps with piety—is that the condition interrupts a sentence asking the Rutulians, i.e., fellow human beings, to be killed. Therefore, if I were to understand *pietas* here as only human, I would render the sentence as follows: “Rutulians, if there is any form of respect...”.

Nevertheless, I think there is much more to this conditional sentence. Despite the conditional nature of that *si*, I read it as a rather convinced utterance, as if Euryalus’s mother is saying “if *pietas-Pietas* counts for something.” After receiving the news of her son’s death (from no other than the personification of *Fama*, consistently recognized by all scholars), this desperate mother tries to reach her son’s body and in complete disregard of danger she threw herself amid the enemies’ arrows. She has lost interest in living or dying, expressing this by requesting the Rutulians and even Jupiter to take her life. Her son was her only reason to live. Once again, it comes as no shock for *pietas* to be prominent in such a context: what other form of divinity is a mother who has lost everything supposed to invoke other than the one who presides over all human relations? The personification of *pietas*, here, mediates the pledge of a desperate mother and the gods to whom she asks for compassion.

In conclusion, I argue for the critical importance of considering the religious backdrop of the *utilitates*, especially when delving into poetic analysis, and I advocate for a holistic approach to literary analysis. Neglecting the rich religious context surrounding these personifications and

abstract concepts, and in that particular type of text that is poetry, may result in unfortunate oversights, limiting our comprehension of the nuanced layers within the text. Through examining passages about *pietas*, it becomes evident that past interpretations, while reasonable, are enhanced when contextualized within the broader religious framework. While occasionally contrasting with those made by my predecessors, my arguments predominantly enhance existing interpretations, fostering a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the texts that includes the fact that these abstract concepts should not only be recognized as literary personifications but also as gods.

A path to collective safety: the personification of *Salus*

The personification of *Salus* is a peculiar example among Cicero's *utilitates*: unlike the others, she is surprisingly absent from the extant "religious" collected works. However, her personification is still present in literature, inscriptions, and popular salutations.¹⁶³ She is primarily associated with the security and welfare of the Roman state, thus entirely independent from her Greek counterpart, Hygieia (ὕγεια), a divinity of healing closely associated with Asclepius.¹⁶⁴ The Roman *Salus* is, therefore, more analogous to the personification of σωτηρία in Hellenistic Greece, with an official public and political cult related to the religious safety of the city-states, with particular reference to the external attacks of the barbarians.¹⁶⁵

In Rome, a temple dedicated to *Salus* was built on the Quirinal, vowed by C. Iunius Bubulcus in 311 BC, at the time of the second Samnite War.¹⁶⁶ Varro (Ling. 5.52) mentions a *collis Salutaris* and a shrine dedicated to *Salus* on the Quirinal. Still, the lack of additional information leaves

¹⁶³ Cf. Le Glay in Bianchi and Vermaseren (1982); Winkler (1995); Brenk (1999); Pighi (2007). For a detailed summary on the state of modern scholarship, see Miano (2019, 139-141) and relative bibliography.

¹⁶⁴ About the role of Hygieia within Greek religion and medicine, see now Beumer (2022), as he closely analyzes her divine identity, asking questions in the same fashion as this research, considering why scholars attributed to her several labels like goddess, abstraction, and personification. Beumer's argument is that Hygieia's role in performing incubation rituals gradually became as important as that of her mythological father Asclepius.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Linderski (2005); Fears (1981a, 827ff.). The most interesting piece of scholarship on the matter, and specifically on the many Greek translations of the Latin *salus*, is Miano (2019). He argues that this goddess is associated with many distinct meanings, especially in ancient Italy. He considers *Salus* to be connected with other gods, who are referred to as "saviors."

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Piccaluga (1981, 405): "l'ingresso di *Salus* nel panteon deve essere avvenuto piuttosto tardi, se la qualifica divina e la fruizione di un'*aedes* non le sono attestati prima del 302 a. C."

scholars uncertain whether an earlier cult existed. The goddess *Salus* undergoes quite the transformation: in the Republican age (much like *victoria*), she is regarded as the collective safety of the state, but then progressively identifies with that of individuals until, during the empire, she effectively becomes *Salus augusta* or *Augusti*, i.e., of the emperor himself.¹⁶⁷ This arching transformation shows the general path of the *utilitates*, which are born as a shared idealistic value and end up representing the godly virtue of one person (the *princeps*).

Brenk (1999, 122-126) regards *salus* in Vergil's *Aeneid* as progressively more teleological, i.e., involving the explanation of the Trojans' safety for Rome's destiny in terms of the purpose it serves rather than of the cause by which it arises. Moreover, the concept seems to evolve from the individual safety of people or animals into a less specialized notion of the safety of the Roman state, connected with its fates.

The present study argues that *Salus* within Cicero's *utilitates* should be considered with due reference to its religious value, as much as all the other personifications in this category. Remarkably, this contention has been previously posited by Brenk without any explicit reference to Cicero or the capitalization matter I pursue in this research. Nonetheless, my own independent analysis has led me to concur with Brenk's propositions, although through a different lens. Therefore, I will rely on Brenk's line of reasoning but also develop my own argument around it.

Brenk (1999, 123) reflects on the value of *salus* in Vergil, in general, and about the *Aeneid* specifically he says:

In the *Aeneid*, the term [scil. *salus*] is so closely associated with the destiny of Rome that only once does it take on more personal connotations. *Salus* now becomes associated with the preservation of the Trojan band that survived their city's destruction, and through them leads to the corresponding destiny of Rome (*Aeneid*). [...] In other cases the term occurs in five contexts: the plight of the Trojans at

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Fears (1981a, 910ff.) and DAGR s.v. *salus*: "au sens le plus ancien du mot, elle n'a aucun rapport direct avec la santé des individus. *Salus Publica*, qui paraît avoir été invoquée dans les chants des Saliens, à côté de *Pax* et de *Concordia*, et à qui on offrait un sacrifice public dans le sanctuaire qu'elle possédait au Quirinal, a une signification politique, on pourrait même dire sociale: elle procure le bien-être de l'État en paix et en guerre [...]. Si elle veille sur celui des individus, c'est que l'État ne peut être heureux que pour le bonheur des citoyens; et dans la langue populaire les appels à la *Salus* personnelle gardent toujours leur signification collective." See Wallace-Hadrill (1981, 298-323) for the bidirectionality of such genitives.

Carthage, the flight from Troy, the future of Aeneas in Italy, the battle against Turnus, and, finally, Turnus' false hopes. Above all, Vergil develops the growing relationship between *salus* and *fortuna*, which is increasingly understood as a divine guide.

The first two occurrences of *salus* in the Aeneid belong to the same famous scene and already offer us some ground to show the dual value, human and divine, that this personification may have. The next scene, following one of the ἐκφράσεις in the poem, preludes to Dido's first appearance.¹⁶⁸ Aeneas and his crew find a grove in the city of Carthage's most internal recesses. This grove hosted a temple in the making, apparently dedicated to Juno: on its walls, they see depictions of the Trojan War. These few lines frame Aeneas' fear. In this very grove, he finds hope for safety for the first time (Aen. 1.450-452):

hoc primum in luco noua res oblata timorem
leniit, hic primum Aeneas sperare salutem
ausus et adflictis melius confidere rebus.

In this grove, first, a strange sight appeared in front of him and alleviated his fear, here for the first time Aeneas dared to hope for *salus* and put better trust in his shattered fortunes.

It is noteworthy that Aeneas' first sign of safety was found in a "*lucus*," which in ancient Rome was often regarded as sacred places where rituals and cults were performed; people approached these places with caution, as they were believed to be the dwelling places of gods, and one might have sought to communicate with them there. A few lines later (Aen. 1.543, see above) Virgil will use the expression *sperare deos*, attesting to consistent use of this verb to indicate, if not hope, at least a neutral consideration and expectation towards the gods' presence.¹⁶⁹ Ilioneus utters these words to the Carthaginians in a pledge to be welcomed: "If you scorn humanity and mortal weapons, at least consider the gods (*at sperare deos*) who are aware of what is allowable and what

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Austin (1971, 151).

¹⁶⁹ The same use of the verb is attested in Pl. Cas. 346: *deos sperabimus*; Cist. 496 and Mil. 1209: *deos teque spero*. This meaning seems to be explicitly supported by Cic. Ver. 2.4.101, *quid speras, quid exspectas, quem tibi aut deum aut hominem auxilio futurum putas?*, since he uses it in hendyadis with *exspectare*. Cf. also Cic. Catil.4.3; Phil. 11.13; Liv. 44.22.3; Serv. Aen. 1.543; 10.45.

is not.” No commentary seems to take into consideration that the object of Aeneas’ consideration here may be something more than a mere human sense of safety.¹⁷⁰

Once again, the birth of the cult of *Salus* is later than the aftermath of the Trojan War, but such cultural elements do not interfere with the narrative and form the many temporal layers characteristic of this poem. Much like *Mens* seems to be evoked in emergency situations, *Salus* may be sought after at a time of desperation. Virgil refers to what Aeneas sees as a *nova res*, a strange, unexpected fact.¹⁷¹ It is unclear whether the strange fact refers to what comes right after, i.e., Aeneas considering and admiring every detail of Juno’s temple, recognizing Priam, Achilles, and his own story on the decoration, or something else, maybe a feeling, or even a suspicion that a divinity may be present in the grove. The place, the unexpectedness, and the verb all point to the possibility that *salus*, here, may indeed refer to a sense of safety, but one that is more than just human.

A certain insistence on the matter could confirm this. Talking to himself, and weeping, Aeneas says (Aen. 1.459-63):

constitit et lacrimans ‘quis iam locus,’ inquit, ‘Achate,
quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?
en Priamus. sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi,
sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.
solue metus; feret haec aliquam tibi fama salutem.’

He stopped and, weeping, said: “Is there any place, Achate, any land on earth not full of our sorrow? There, Priam. Here, glory finds its prize; here are tears for human affairs, and the mortal matters touch the heart. Dispel your fears; such fame will bring you some *salus*.”

As Aeneas confronts his own troubles and observes similar events depicted in a temple, he realizes that his people’s suffering has become renowned worldwide. He believes that the knowledge of these facts alone will move anyone to tears, and, as a result, he no longer feels afraid.

¹⁷⁰ For clear references to the personification, cf. Pl. As. 713; 727; Bac. 879; Capt. 518ff.; for human-only use cf., for example, Aen. 1.555.

¹⁷¹ Virgil seems to like this idea that *salus-Salus* comes unexpectedly: cf. Aen. 6.96-97; 8.475-477.

Aeneas is confident that the widespread recognition of his people's plight will lead to their salvation. This would make sense when integrated within Roman religion's context: at least two instances exist to consider. The most mundane is that consuls entering office would traditionally make a vow for the welfare of the state (*vota pro salute rei publicae*); and then there is the augural practice of inquiring annually as to whether the gods would accept the magistrates' prayers for the *salus* of the people.¹⁷² This particular query, as well as the consular one, seems to have only existed as a collective endeavor rather than an individual one. If *salus* has any divine value besides the human one, here, perhaps that is what Aeneas has in mind, with the fame of the collective fate of the Trojans and his fellows with him at that time. Given the scarcity of available information, scholars cannot demonstrate that the personification of *Salus* was involved in the *augurium salutis*. Based on the fact that *salus* is one of the *utilitates*, and they are a homogeneous group of personifications that show the same logic, I am inclined to argue that, before the empire, *Salus* may work similarly to *Pietas* as a figure of mediation between the magistrates and the gods, precisely for her primary association with the general welfare of the Roman state.

Again, in Book 2, Aeneas evokes *salus* in a situation of highest desperation in Troy, when he relates his story. His direct speech addresses his young fellows readying for battle (Aen. 2.351-354):

excessere omnes adytis arisque relictis
 di quibus imperium hoc steterat; succurritis urbi
 incensae. moriamur et in media arma ruamus.
 una salus uictis nullam sperare salutem.

All the gods on whom this rule was based have gone forth, leaving shrine and altar;
 the city you aid is in flames. Let us die and rush into the battle's midst. The only
salus for the defeated ones is to expect no *salus*.

¹⁷² This inquiry was appointed to convene on a day of peace, with Augustus being credited for its rehabilitation after its discontinuation during the tumultuous final years of the Republic.

Quite surprisingly, most scholars commenting on the last line almost dispose of it and settle on its inscrutability, as if this were a riddle.¹⁷³ Indeed, with the oxymoron *una/nullam*, the alliteration of -s, and the polyptoton *salus/salutem*, one may see a riddle in the sense Aristotle interpreted it: as a rhetorical figure in which a concept is expressed purposely in an obscure way through a literary technique that employs ambiguity or complexity, prompting the reader to reflect and seek a solution to the proposed mystery.¹⁷⁴ Alternatively, scholars interpret this last sentence as if Aeneas said “we are left with nothing but death.” I have a different interpretation of the situation and believe there may be another way to approach this.

After Sinon’s deceit, the city of Troy is on fire. In his account of the story, Aeneas points to the details of the state of despair they are all in, but at the same time Virgil uses the same set of words, which I think—I reiterate this—he never does randomly. I look at this situation as a “it’s do or die,” or “it’s make or break.” Aeneas encourages his fellows and is realistic about it (hence the *victis*): everyone can see the unfortunate lot of the city, even the gods seem to have left their dwellings: let us fight because with the gods gone our one collective *salus* may only be to not expect *salus*. In the economy of the narration, this is like a flashback: Virgil is showing the moment of highest hopelessness. Paradoxically, in this endeavor to show this, he makes Aeneas lose confidence even in the one goddess who could help, and instead believe that the only *salus* can be not expecting that she would show up. And then, when Aeneas gets to Juno’s grove, “for the first time” he dares to expect *salus* again. But that is not quite the very first time; it is rather the second.¹⁷⁵ Aeneas and his party find the courage to dive into the fray, and manage to succeed against some enemies, with this promptly represented with *adspirat primo Fortuna labori* (Fortune

¹⁷³ Austin (1964) comments on line 354 being a *sententia* that Lucan would envy as a paradox.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Beta (2016).

¹⁷⁵ I agree with Brenk’s reading (1999, 123): The second group of occurrences (the fall of Troy, which in the narrative scheme is chronologically previous to the events in Book One) displays a high degree of subtlety. At first, Aeneas despairs any hope of *salus* (*Una salus victis nullam sperare salute*, 2.354). Then he abandons himself to a *salus* which seemingly is nothing else than an Epicurean τύχη, *adspirat primo Fortuna labori* / ... “*O socii, quae prima*” inquit “*Fortuna salutis / monstrat iter quaque ostendit se dextra, sequamur...*” (2.385-388).

supports the first effort, Aen. 2.385). I am quite sure this is the goddess *Fortuna*, as opposed to the abstract concept; if anything, because of the active verb *adspirat*: nothing that is not understood in full personal meaning can do that.¹⁷⁶ And here begins what Brenk aptly summarized (1999, 123):¹⁷⁷

Above all, Vergil develops the growing relationship between *salus* and *fortuna*, which is increasingly understood as a divine guide. [...] At the opening of the Sixth Book, the Sybil promises an unexpected source of rescue (*salus*) from the Greeks, something she associates with *fortuna*. Since Aeneas (6.62 and 6.67) seems to identify *fortuna* and *fata*, the response of the Sibyl—which reflects a Stoic maxim—apparently includes the *fata*.

Brenk makes an interesting suggestion that I would like to develop with further consideration. I agree with the keen interdependence of *salus*, *fortuna*, and *fata*, and on the grounds of such a connection, as much as I—as most scholars—have no problem identifying *Fortuna* as a goddess, I also think it feasible to consider *Salus* in the same way. If, as Virgil seems to suggest, this first task was successful thanks to Fortune’s favor, I read the following lines concerning *salus* applying the same scheme. The Trojan hero Coroebus, encouraged by this success, before plotting to dress up in disguise to mislead the enemies, says (Aen. 2.387-388):¹⁷⁸

‘O socii, quae prima’ inquit ‘Fortuna salutis
Monstrat iter quaque ostendit se dextra, sequamur.’

“Comrades,” he says, “wherever Fortune first shows us the path to *salus*-*Salus*, and where she offers herself kindly, let us follow her.”

In rhetoric, this device becomes most conspicuous when the personified abstract concept assumes the grammatical role typically reserved for human agents, manifesting as the subject of verbs that inherently presuppose sentient action. Through this linguistic strategy, abstract ideas are endowed with agency, enabling them to participate actively in the discourse as though possessed of

¹⁷⁶ I capitalize *Fortuna*, as do Horsfall (2016,) Conte (2019,) and Mynors (1969) in their critical editions, and Perret (2002) and Fo (2012) in both text and translation. Canali in Paratore (1978) does not capitalize it. Horsfall does not capitalize it only in his translation. Servius does not comment on the matter, and no modern commentary provides a discussion.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Edwards (1960) on the Stoic influence in the Aeneid.

¹⁷⁸ Conte (2019) and Mynors (1969) capitalize *Fortuna* in their critical editions, and Perret (2002) and Fo (2012) and in both text and translation. Canali in Paratore (1978) and Horsfall (2008) do not. Perret (2002) proposes a misleading translation (2002, 53): “*Compagnons, nous dit-il, sur ce chemin où pour la première fois la Fortune nous montre un salut, nous declare sa faveur, suivons-la.*”

human consciousness. Thus, I identify *Fortuna* as the personification because, again, she performs active actions. In this case, the relevant one is that she indicates a path to the Trojans: a path towards *salus*, a clear objective genitive. This metaphor of *salus* being a way out of a difficult situation, and thus the path to safety, seems recurring, again with *Fortune* and, as inferred by Brenk (1999, 123), *fata*.¹⁷⁹ In Book 6, the Trojans meet the Sybil, and she tells them it is time to ask for their *fata*:¹⁸⁰ then and there, she is possessed by Apollo, to whom Aeneas offers a prayer. Through the prophetess, the relevant and final part of the reply is (Aen. 6.95-97):

tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito,
qua tua te Fortuna sinet. uia prima salutis
(quod minime reris) Graia pandetur ab urbe.

You, do not yield to misfortunes, but face them instead more boldly, as your Fortune grants you. And the first path to *Salus-salus* will come to you from a Greek city — something you do not expect.

In this reply, there is everything regarding the possible double value of *Salus-salus*. While the *tu* unequivocally refers to Aeneas, as well as the adjective *tua*, he is not alone, and is addressed in his quality of both leader and suppliant: indeed, he made the prayer (specifying the *Troiana Fortuna* at Aen. 6.62), but did so on behalf of the whole group of Trojans. There is again this association with the goddess Fortuna, as she will allow Aeneas to face his future with the necessary boldness. And then, there is the detailing of such prospect (i.e., the *fata*): the path to safety may well be shown by the corresponding personification, with the reappearance of the unexpected or unhoped for element. And indeed, the first to provide help for the Trojans will be the city of the Palatine hill, founded by Evander, the king of the Greek region of Arcadia.¹⁸¹

Brenk (1999, 123-124) adds more pieces to this puzzle:

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Horsfall (2008, 314) as he highlights other recurrences of this metaphor, e.g., Aen. 6.96 *uia prima salutis*; Cic. Fam.10.8.2 *expeditius iter communis salutis quam meae laudis esse uolui*; Petr.102.13 *aliquod iter salutis quaerendum est*; Sen. Clem.1.3.3 *si per stragem illi humanam iter ad salutem struendum sit*. Incidentally, this metaphor seems to occur with another *utilitas* at least once, *victoria*: see Aen. 12. 625-626: *Hac, Turne, sequamur Troiugenas, qua prima viam victoria pandit*.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Aen. 6.42 ff.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Aen. 8.51ff.; 97ff.; 470ff.

The final group of occurrences includes the illusory *salus* of Turnus, which neither fortune, the fates, nor the divine will allows. At first Turnus is *ingratus*. ... *salutis* (10.666) when Iuno miraculously transports him out to sea and for the moment out of the reach of Aeneas. He then rebukes Drances (11.399) with the cautionary advice, *nulla salus bello* (11.362). In the meantime, the Latins, urged on by Iuturna, abandon a *salus* that might have offered peace (12.241). At the end of the poem, Turnus realistically understands that Iuturna does not have the authorisation of the gods and that *fortuna* and the divine will oppose him (*aut quae iam spondet Fortuna salutem?*, 12.637). Shortly after, the fleeing Saces turns to him as the last hope (Turne, in te *suprema salus*, *miserere tuorum*, 12.653). The hero clearly identifying the roles of *fortuna*, *fata*, and Iupiter, surrenders himself to death like a good Stoic (*Iam iam fata, soror, superant, absiste morari; / quo deus et quo dura vocat Fortuna sequamur*, 12.676-677). His vain struggle serves to underscore the inviolability of the Roman *salus*, a *salus* originating with Aeneas and Latinus and guaranteed for the future by fate, fortune, and the divine will. Vergil's use of the term, then, draws from the Hellenistic political ideology associated with the semi-divine ruler. But it also incorporates conceptions of *fortuna* especially proper to Roman Stoicism.

With these considerations, Brenk closes a circle that encompasses *Salus* as one of Cicero's *utilitates*, personifications well-situated within Roman religion and whose features—as analyzed in the previous chapter—are permeated with Stoicism.¹⁸² Once again, one should be cautious with these personifications and acknowledge their value in determined contexts. No critical edition or commentary takes into consideration the fact that *salus* may indeed be more than just safety: it is a goddess that shows the way to collective safety, even if in evident collaboration with *fortuna*, an equally important notion, and goddess for the Roman people.

An example *e contrario*: the personification of *Victoria*

The embodiment of victory in contemporary consciousness stands as an iconic representation, seamlessly weaving together the threads of Greek and Roman personifications. For well over a century, dating back to 1883, the winged Victory of Samothrace has graced the grand staircase of the Louvre Museum—a breathtaking testament to the prowess of Hellenistic art.

There is no doubt about the transparent etymology of *victoria* from *vincere*, to win:¹⁸³ thus the canonical image of the personification as the goddess who crowns the winner of a battle. The first

¹⁸² I briefly wrote about this in Bevilacqua (2018, 18).

¹⁸³ Isid. Etym. 18.2.1 proposes an etymological connection between *virtus* and *victoria*: *victoria dicta quod vi, id est virtute, adipiscatur*. While from a linguistic viewpoint this has no scientific value, as a paraetymology it can inform us on the moral connection between the two virtues.

temple dedicated to this goddess in Rome was on the Palatine hill: while ancient sources suggest the temple had been there ever since Evander, it probably dates back to the dedication by L. Postumius Megellus during the third of the Samnite wars (298-290 BC).¹⁸⁴ The cult of *Victoria* in Rome—thus recognized ever since the Samnite wars—and in many cities in ancient Italy is independent of her Greek counterpart's *Nike*.¹⁸⁵ The personification embodies primarily military successes, so *Victoria* is closely associated with *Mars*.¹⁸⁶ Differently from the other personifications in the group of Cicero's *utilitates*, but similarly to *Salus*, the transformation of *Victoria* from a status of civic goddess to a more individual condition of divine association began relatively early, already with leaders such as Scipio Africanus, Sulla, and even Pompey.¹⁸⁷ Roman emperors then made a point of showing off a close relationship and affiliation with this goddess.

Given the argument brought forward in this dissertation, the role of the personification of *Victoria* is peculiar within Virgil's *Aeneid*.¹⁸⁸ Up to this point, it has been necessary to illustrate that the *utilitates*, in the analyzed selected occurrences, presented an evocation of divinity in addition to the human quality that had been widely acknowledged. With *victoria*, we will proceed with an argument *e contrario*, for there is already some scholarly consensus on recognizing her as the personification in the *Aeneid*, excluding, on the other hand, its human value. Therefore, in this paragraph, I will examine two passages in which *Victoria* is recognized as a goddess and explore

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Liv. 10.33.9. Additionally, Livy informs us that Cato dedicated a small shrine to *Victoria virgo*, known as *clivus Victoriae*, vowed to her on occasion of his Spanish victory, nearby the *aedes Victoriae* (cf. id. 35.9.6).

¹⁸⁵ About *Nike* see at least Hölscher (1967, 68-74) and the discussion on its independence from the Greeks' *Νίκη* in Weinstock (1971, 91ff.)

¹⁸⁶ Cf. RE s.v. *Victoria* for the epigraphic sources. As for the literary ones, cf. Cic. Att. 13.44.1 ff. and Ov. Am. 3.2.45. See also RE s.v. *Victoria*. Regarding *Mars*, it is important to highlight that “the limitation of his function to the aspect of war corresponded to the interest of the Roman aristocracy to control the social significance and use of warfare” (BNP s.v. *Mars*).

¹⁸⁷ In 82 BC, Sulla is supposed to have introduced the *ludi Victoriae* in Rome, once he won over Marius. The cult of Victory was then largely exploited as a means of political propaganda even by Caesar: cf. Hölscher (1957, 221-237) and Fears (1981b, 775ff.) Nevertheless, the supreme promotion of the empire using the cult of Victory to good advantage started after the war of Actium. Other than the material sources indicating this fact, Ovid (cf. Tr. 2.169-172) portrays *Victoria* as an assiduous partner to Augustus.

¹⁸⁸ Remarkably, *victoria* remains conspicuously absent from the EV.

why scholars may have been so easily persuaded by her divinity and unconcerned with her human value.

The first pertinent occurrence is Aen. 11. 434-437, with an enraged Turnus replying to Drances, one of the councilors of King Latinus:

Quod si me solum Teucri in certamina poscunt
idque placet tantumque bonis communibus obsto,
non adeo has exosa manus Victoria fugit,
ut tanta quicquam pro spe temptare recusem.

If the Teucrians require me alone in the duels, and that pleases you, and I am such an obstacle to the common good, hateful victory has not rejected these hands (of mine) to the point that I refuse to attempt anything for such a great expectation.

There is some scholarly consensus on the fact that *Victoria*, in this passage, evokes personification so much that it is generally edited and translated into a majuscule letter.¹⁸⁹ Horsfall (2017, 268) comments that *Victoria* is “here clearly enough personified.” That “enough” opens the way for our discussion. Naturally, the assumptions made here refer to the ordinary convention generally accepted in the field of only capitalizing a noun when there is a patent presence of the divine. The consequence is that *victoria*, when edited or translated with the majuscule letter, only indicates the personification, or, on the contrary, if presented or rendered in the minuscule letter, only refers to the human quality. I argue that this occurrence is one of Virgil’s purposely ambiguous ones, and thus capitalization may cause confusion.

In this passage, Turnus is called up for the final one-on-one duel with Aeneas, realizing he is an obstacle to the common good because by killing Pallas he generated the conflict. Then, if we consider *victoria* as just the personification, it sounds like Turnus implies that Victory abandoned his hands, so she will not help him, but he will still try and achieve his great hope. In so reading, Williams (2018, 410) adds that it is, instead, “a fine understatement of his past bravery.” The two possibilities do not exclude but rather complement one another: of course, in light of his past

¹⁸⁹ Most critical editions capitalize *victoria* here: cf. Mynors (1969); Horsfall (2017) and Conte (2019). Oddly, even so, the translation does not reflect the edited text: for example, while Paratore (1983) edits it with the majuscule letter, Canali, in the facing translation, does not. Perret (2002) does not capitalize *victoria*.

success, Turnus would still try whatever it took to win, and the responsibility for his actions lies with himself, but he can simultaneously be aware of the agency of the goddess over the matter. He seems to imply that the goddess still holds influence over him to the extent that he would not even attempt the duel. This illustrates a key distinction between Roman religion and Christianity. It is not simply about having faith in Victory; rather, it is essential to acknowledge that *Victoria*'s involvement—whether beneficial or detrimental—affects the outcome of human efforts in achieving victory or suffering defeat. The timeline of the narrative and the cult do not align once more; however, this discrepancy is insignificant within the context of the story, which is the essential element in literature.

The same notion of the acknowledgment of *Victoria*'s agency over victory or defeat can be seen later in Book 12, in the context of Aeneas' prayer to Mars (Aen. 12.179-191), repeating the scheme we already observed above, namely that more than one divinity may be addressed in the same invocation:

tuque inclute Mauors,
cuncta tuo qui bella, pater, sub numine torques;
fontisque fluuiosque uoco quaeque aetheris alti
religio et quae caeruleo sunt numina ponto:
cesserit Ausonio si fors uictoria Turno,
conuenit Euandri uictos discedere ad urbem,
cedet Iulus agris, nec post arma ulla rebelles
Aeneadae referent ferroue haec regna lacessent.
sin nostrum adnuerit nobis uictoria Martem
(ut potius reor et potius di numine firment),
non ego nec Teucris Italos parere iubebo
nec mihi regna peto: paribus se legibus ambae
inuictae gentes aeterna in foedera mittant.

And you, illustrious Mars, who govern every war, you, Father, under your will; I invoke the springs and rivers, and from the high ether, all the sacred rites, and your marine forces of the cerulean element: if *victoria* grants to the Ausonian, to Turnus, it is agreed that the defeated shall retreat to the city of Evander, and Iulus will abandon the fields, never again taking up arms. But if *victoria* consents that Mars be ours (as I rather believe, and may the gods confirm as much), I will not impose obedience on the Italians toward the Trojans, nor do I demand this kingdom for myself: under equal laws may both undefeated these peoples form an eternal alliance.

This text is increasingly confusing regarding how scholars capitalize and acknowledge divine agency. There is no consistent consensus on the double occurrence of *victoria*: most scholars do not

capitalize them, and some capitalize the second.¹⁹⁰ I understand why it is easier to recognize the second one as a metonymy since there is another one in the same line, *Martem* for battle, and the incidental clause suggests and calls upon divine presence.¹⁹¹ I think in its quality of *utilitas*, the personification of *Victoria* here is again the victim of the problem analyzed in the previous chapter: her narrative identity is not as strong as that of Mars, even though both of them possess the same divine status. Perhaps in the entire corpus of passages we analyzed so far there is no better illustration of why the human and divine element coexist as expressed by the rhetorical device of a metonymy.

What puzzles me more, however, is why the first occurrence of *victoria*, here, is generally unrecognized as a personification beyond its straightforward human meaning. *Cesserit* is a verb of motion, and, on those grounds, I would argue that this should show it is not a mere abstract concept. But the facts that *victoria* is the nominative, and Turnus the dative, are essential: a basic idea of victory cannot yield or grant anything. Thus, it must be the goddess, in this case. In fact, I would contend that a correction is needed here, and I would personally capitalize this occurrence and consider Victory as the goddess alone, in this case (i.e., not one of the *utilitates*, with a coexisting worldly and divine value).

Out of all the *utilitates*, *Victoria* is the only one who seems to have at least sparked some confusion among scholars. As much as all the other personifications of the same category, the context (and some attention to the subtle art of poetry) should guide a more thorough understanding of her divine value as well as the human one.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Conte (2019), Mynors (1969), and Perret (2002): none of them capitalize any of the two occurrences; Paratore (1983) and Geymonat (2008) capitalize the second one.

¹⁹¹ With regard to the meaning, Tarrant (2012, 138) reports that Bell “calls this a ‘perfect hypallage’, equivalent to *si Mars nobis dabit uictoriam*.” I do not see a reason to consider an inversion, but even in the event that this may be the correct line of interpretation, I would still consider *victoria*’s human and divine value, here. The personifications of the likes of *Victoria* stand on their own in Roman religion and should not be considered extensions of powers of another god. See discussion in Chapter I.

Concluding remarks: a “capital” dilemma in literary interpretation

In this chapter, we examined Cicero’s *utilitates* mainly through a lens of literary criticism, while also acknowledging their religious context, which has been somewhat overlooked in earlier interpretations of the passages discussed here, most of which are from Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

A threefold metonymy sets the *utilitates* apart from other ordinary literary personifications: their name simultaneously represents the abstract concept, the literary personification, and the officially worshiped god in Rome. Nonetheless, from an emic perspective, it remains suitable to refer to them as “personification,” since this is the grammatical category in which they appear to have been envisioned. Personifying an abstract concept, such as a civic virtue, exemplifies traditional Roman polytheism, which divided reality and engaged with specific aspects of life.

A cultural paradigm shift profoundly influences all areas, including literary allusions, as personifications evolve from deified virtues of a collective Republican ideal to those associated with the emperor. This shift is exemplified by Cicero’s *utilitates*, as showed by Pliny’s later reflection—about a century afterward—on similar abstract concepts, interpreting them as a bygone religious phenomenon, nearly resembling a popular superstition, while he navigates the contemporary landscape of imperial cults during his time.

This analysis primarily concentrates on textual interpretations of civic virtues, even in the presence of visual representations. This choice is intentional, not only due to the philological significance of our arguments but also because texts and images operate under distinct metaphorical codes and standards, making it inappropriate to analyze them at the same level.

The problem at the center of this research is whether the modern editorial practice of capitalizing personifications—specifically regarding the *utilitates*—serves as an effective strategy to convey both the worldly value and religious background of these unique deified abstract concepts. This issue touches upon broader and more deeply rooted concerns, which it both exemplifies and conceals: writing a personification in lowercase does not acknowledge her divine

value, whereas using uppercase letters solely recognizes the divinity. This also leads to confusion in translation, ultimately highlighting the blind spot in interpreting selected texts where worldly and divine elements coexist.

A subtle yet effective approach I recommend is the compromise model that permits optional capitalization choices. This can be accomplished by neutrally highlighting selected words with small caps, a technique used in editorial practices for some time and availed by Clark (2007).¹⁹² Ultimately, this model, along with the suggested graphic solution, underscores the intentional and elegant ambiguities noted in our case studies as expressed by the ancient authors. Adopting this compromise model does not detract from prior interpretations, which may still hold validity; instead, it presents an opportunity to enrich them with an additional meaning that may not have been considered previously. Upper-class Romans would recognize references to deities and related cults within abstract ideas; overlooking these connections by the interpreter would ignore the cultural context, something we have tried to bring attention back to. While Clark insists on the indeterminacy, with this compromise model I advocate for a more comprehensive method in analyzing Cicero's *utilitates*. It is essential to take their religious context into account; overlooking this aspect would lead to significant oversights and hinder our comprehension of the texts' many dimensions.

¹⁹² See her discussions on pp. 21 and 88.

Chapter III: Cicero's *utilitates* as a means to establishing priorities

The overarching concept I intend to explore in this chapter revolves around the notion of *utilitas* and its fundamental role in Cicero's philosophical and political discourse. The frequent recurrence of this concept in Cicero's discussion of deified civic virtues in Rome suggests that he accorded particular importance to *utile*, and thus *utilitas*, as an idea in its own right. The most sophisticated formulation of this concept is expressed in the third book of *De Officiis*, where Cicero engages deeply with the multifaceted dimensions of *utile* after exploring its relationship with *honestum*.¹ I aim to examine how Cicero redefines this pivotal term, which already held significant weight in his political and philosophical lexicon, by infusing it with a moral and religious value that resonates throughout his thoughts regarding the personifications under analysis.

In the first chapter, I situated the personifications in Cicero which I collectively refer to as *utilitates* in the Roman civic and religious context, giving an account of the primary sources and the philosophical discourse around them, as well as the secondary sources that contributed to their understanding or, in some cases, misunderstanding.

In the second chapter, I demonstrated the consequences of such misunderstandings and how to address them, challenging the conventional editorial practice of capitalization as inapplicable. I emphasized the significance of acknowledging the religious value of these specific eight personifications, even from a purely literary criticism standpoint, to fully comprehend and appreciate their value.

¹ The most relevant part of the discussion is in Off. 3.1-99, where Cicero engages with Stoic tradition and reflects on whether *utile* can ever conflict with *honestum* (that is to say, if expediency can ever conflict with moral rectitude). Cf. also Rep. 3.27-37 and Leg. 1.45-50. The scholarly debate on the matter has been long and extensive; for a key discussion and review of the literature see now Schofield (2021, 125-142).

In this chapter, I focus on the meaning of the word itself and the agency of the *utilitates*, i.e., the effect they supposedly produced in practice;² in particular, I intend to analyze what actions these deified personifications prompted through the human role models associated with them.

The natural, moral, social, and religious connotations of *utilitas* in Cicero

Utilitas, in Latin, has multiple levels of meaning, including usefulness and advantage in various areas such as action, speech, medicine, and architecture, both in private and public spheres.

Most dictionaries define *utilitas* as usefulness, practicality, benefit, or advantage, and these terms belong to the same semantic family as *usus*, primarily indicating practical usability but also carrying additional connotations such as exercise, experience, or practice. This very last sense should be taken more seriously regarding the least pragmatic and “temporal” aspect of *utilitas*: for *usus* can be a custom, a habit, a tradition, even a practice.³ Thus, *utilitas* could indeed be linked to this realm of words and encompass the idea of conventional and commonly accepted behaviors or practices, especially when such behaviors are particular to a specific society or, in the case of the Romans, to the context of *civitas*. Such denotations of *utilitas* seem consistent with a pattern of attitudes, as I believe a connection between abstract concepts and worldly values, along with the corresponding gods, should be established, hence the collective definition of *utilitates* for *concordia*, *fides*, *honos*, *mens*, *pietas*, *salus*, *victoria*, and *virtus*. The customs, rules, and traditions surrounding these eight keywords were incredibly vital to life in Republican Rome—some even before that specific period—so significant in fact that they were deified. This fact alone is remarkable.

² About the term “agency,” I refer specifically to its study by Duranti (1994, particularly his Chapter 5) and Gell (1998, 16-19; 116ff.). While the former is a linguistic anthropologist and regards agency as something that emerges through social interaction and is shaped by the structures, language, and cultural norms of a given society, the latter, an anthropologist of art, argues that objects can have agency because they provoke responses and actions from people. Cicero’s *utilitates*, in their essence as abstract concepts, personifications, and divine beings, prompt specific behaviors that I consider their corresponding agency in these respect.

³ For instance, Cicero employs *usus* in this sense in Inv. 2.22.66: *Consuetudine enim et usu diuturno permulta nobis sunt iucunda et cara*, where it is associated with *consuetudo* (custom) to indicate the enduring practices that shape human behavior. Cf. also Off. 1.39.138, where the term is nuanced as “habitual practice” in ethical deliberations.

The following passage may highlight the purpose of *utilitas* in the relationship between men and gods, again following the Stoic doctrine, which aligns with Cicero's take on it:⁴

Mundum autem censent regi numine deorum, eumque esse quasi communem urbem et civitatem hominum et deorum, et unum quemque nostrum eius mundi esse partem; ex quo illud natura consequi, ut communem utilitatem nostrae anteponamus. Ut enim leges omnium salutem singulorum saluti anteponunt, sic vir bonus et sapiens et legibus parens et civilis officii non ignarus utilitati omnium plus quam unius alicuius aut suae consulit. Nec magis est vituperandus proditor patriae quam communis utilitatis aut salutis desertor propter suam utilitatem aut salutem. ex quo fit, ut laudandus is sit, qui mortem oppetat pro re publica, quod deceat cariorem nobis esse patriam quam nosmet ipsos. [...] Inpellimur autem natura, ut prodesse velimus quam plurimis in primisque docendo rationibusque prudentiae tradendis.

As for the world, they [scil. the Stoics] believe it was ruled by the divine will, as though it were the city and the community of both humans and gods, and each one of us were a part of such a world; from this it follows, by natural consequence, that we put public *utilitas* before our own. For as much as laws put the safety of all before the individual one's, a good and wise man, law-abiding and aware of his civil duty, takes care of the *utilitas* of all rather than of one sole other individual or his own. Nor is a betrayer of the country worthier of blame than one who forsakes the public *utilitas* for the sake of his own *utilitas* and safety. Therefore, he who faces death on behalf of the State should be praised, because it is proper for our country to be dearer to us (as a community) than us ourselves (as individuals). [...] We are pushed by nature to want to be beneficial to the greatest possible number of people, first by teaching and giving norms of wisdom.

Cicero appears to view *utilitas* from multiple angles, adding to the moral and philosophical dimensions of Stoic thought, which suggests that pursuing what is merely useful at the expense of what is right betrays the natural order and the bonds of human society.

Cicero, other than famously resolving the contrast between what is useful and what is right, integrates into this equation a political, or more specifically civic, aspect, in which “usefulness” takes on a broader meaning, focused on the wellbeing of citizens. The law seems to be there to safeguard all citizens, but in a city where gods are part of the community. Reading the passage more closely, it is impressive that prioritizing public “utility” over personal interests is viewed as a civic duty, a sign of wisdom and awareness toward the state, as important as obeying the law. So much so

⁴ Cic. Fin. 3.19.64-65.

that those who do not act accordingly may be regarded as traitors to the country (*proditor patriae*).⁵

The importance of citizenship, in this case, is undoubtedly a desideratum for everyone.

According to the Stoic view, as noted in this passage, gods and men are part of one world, city, and community. What follows (literally, “by nature”) because of this exceptional condition is that the *communis utilitas* comes before anything else. Remarkably, gods and humans are expected to conduct themselves according to the same prescriptions, which are virtuous from all appearances. This alone makes it possible to infer that *utilitas* does have both a public and religious connotation. By the same token, in his *De legibus*, Cicero provides some valuable information regarding virtue, which men and gods *de facto* share. After arguing that only humans, among all species, are aware of the existence of gods, and that while they may ignore which one to worship, they at least recognize that gods should be acknowledged, he states that, ultimately, virtue is the fundamental similarity, by nature, between humans and gods (Leg. 1.8.25):⁶

Iam uero uirtus eadem in homine ac deo est, neque alio ullo in genere praeterea; est autem uirtus nihil aliud nisi perfecta et ad summum perducta <natura>: naturalis est igitur homini cum deo similitudo.

To speak the truth, inside of both a man and a god there is the same virtue, but not in any other category besides; quite the opposite, virtue is nothing but the perfect and uplifting nature raised to the greatest extent: the similarity between men and gods is, therefore, natural.

⁵ Cf. Cic. Off. 1.43.153, describing where exactly this kind of duty comes from: *Princepsque omnium virtutum illa sapientia, quam σοφίαν Graeci vocant – prudentiam enim, quam Graeci φρόνησιν dicunt, aliam quandam intellegimus, quae est rerum expetendarum fugiendarumque scientia. Illa autem sapientia quam principem dixi, rerum est divinarum et humanarum scientia, in qua continetur deorum et hominum communitas et societas inter ipsos; ea si maxima est, ut est certe, necesse est, quod a communitate ducatur officium, id esse maximum. [...] Ea autem actio in hominum commodis tuendis maxime cernitur; pertinet igitur ad societatem generis humani; ergo haec cognitioni anteponenda est.* “The most eminent of all the virtues is that wisdom that the Greeks call σοφία, for we mean something different by prudentia, which the Greeks called φρόνησις, i.e., the knowledge of the things to pursue or avoid. That wisdom, that I said to be the most eminent [of all the virtues], is, on the other hand, the knowledge of the human and godly res, which encompass the community of both gods and men and their relationship; if that is the highest [virtue], as it is indeed, the duty that comes from it must be highest as well. That activity is most of all recognized in the protection of the human advantages; therefore, it pertains the society of human genre; therefore, it is to put before knowledge.”

⁶ Cic. Leg. 1.8.25; the context of this passage lies in Cicero’s allusion to the recurring cycles in the existence of the world, in accordance with the Stoic doctrine of palingenesis. See a similar discussion in Resp. 6.21.

In other words, men and gods bear a resemblance based on virtue (either inborn or striven for, as per our earlier discussion⁷): such integrity is indeed present inside the gods and at the highest degree; nevertheless, its existence inside of men conveys the impression that they possess some of that virtue, or that is what they should aim for. In both texts, the reference to nature stands out, and it is even more transparent if we go back to Cicero's argument in his *De Finibus*. A few lines after the passage quoted above, he says (Fin. 3.19.66):

Atque ut tauris natura datum est ut pro vitulis contra leones summa vi impetuque contendant, sic ii, qui valent opibus atque id facere possunt, ut de Hercule et de Libero accepimus, ad servandum genus hominum natura incitantur. Atque etiam Iovem cum Optimum et Maximum dicimus cumque eundem Salutarem, Hospitalem, Statorem, hoc intellegi volumus, salutem hominum in eius esse tutela. Minime autem convenit, cum ipsi inter nos viles neglectique simus, postulare ut diis immortalibus cari simus et ab iis diligamur. Quem ad modum igitur membris utimur prius, quam didicimus, cuius ea causa utilitatis habeamus, sic inter nos natura ad civilem communitatem coniuncti et consociati sumus. Quod ni ita se haberet, nec iustitiae ullus esset nec bonitati locus.

As much as for the bulls it is granted by nature to fight with the greatest violence and passion against the lions on behalf of the calves, so much those who have the means and are able to do it, as we know from Hercules and Liber, are excited by nature to save the human race. Moreover, when we call Jupiter "Optimus" and "Maximus" and also "Saviour", "Hospitable", "Stator", we wish to mean this, that men's well-being is due to his protection. Furthermore, it is not appropriate that we are scornful and neglected among ourselves, and demand to be dear to the immortal gods and be loved by them. Therefore, in the way we use our limbs before we learn for which *utilitas* we have them, in the same way we are joined and united among us by nature in a civil community. If it were not like that, there would be no place for justice nor goodness.

This passage is illuminating, as it ties the gods up with the notion of *utilitas*. It seems to be established that, by nature, men are to come to one another's aid as they belong to the same community: the sense of belonging to the civil society is incredibly powerful. The gods, again, have a rightful place in this institution, and, as such, they contribute to safeguarding and keeping men alive. It could not be more apparent how this is regarded as the natural course of events within the community. A further demonstration of this comes out of the argument that it would be a contradiction to be dismissive and fail to take care of one another and yet seek the "love" and

⁷ Cf. Cic. N.D. 3.61, see p. 21.

protection of the gods. It becomes evident what *utilitas* is at this point: a combination of responsibility, awareness, and observance of determined rules and attitudes towards fellow citizens and the gods.⁸ Of course, when the word *utilitas* is mentioned in the passage, it refers to the usefulness of the limbs. Still, that very same meaning is transferred to the *utilitas* which is present— again, by nature—amongst a civic community. Thus, the sense of *utilitas* would be closer to something that suits the circumstances, even advantageous and favorable, but primarily appropriate: the two nuances are not incompatible. As a preliminary conclusion, it seems like some natural, moral, social, and religious connotations lie behind the concept of *utilitas* almost forming a circle.

Actions speak louder than words: Cicero's *utilitates* as a moral compass in *De officiis*

In the preceding chapters, my analysis concentrated on the religious and more strictly philosophical dimensions underpinning the personifications under scrutiny, hoping to illuminate the broader framework influencing these figures and using Cicero's *De natura deorum* and *De legibus* as primary sources. Transitioning from this foundation, the focus of the present section shifts to a more pragmatic examination of their worldly and ethical values, intending to understand not only Cicero's specific viewpoint as a philosopher but also as a Roman citizen and politician, thus considering a broader cultural frame of reference. This approach is mainly informed by Cicero's reflections in *De Officiis*, which provides a nuanced perspective on ethical conduct and its implications for understanding the behaviors in question.⁹

⁸ The gods are in fact regarded as fellow citizens. Cf. Scheid (1983, 61ff.).

⁹ As pointedly argued by Giammusso (2017, 34) about *De officiis*, “Cicerone prova meno interesse per gli aspetti speculativi della teoria stoica e cerca piuttosto una [typo: “uno”] schema generale entro cui svolgere una casistica delle azioni appropriate. Il suo trattato non riguarda o riguarda solo indirettamente il sommo bene e i principii della vita morale; è piuttosto un saggio di etica pratica, che in quella situazione politica fa appello agli aristocratici romani e alle élites municipali affinché mettano in atto comportamenti conformi al rango sociale e alle virtù repubblicane.” Moreover, in this work Cicero speaks as a father (not only to his actual son, but, ideally, to the young aristocrats: see Giammusso (2017, 36 n.20) for a critical evaluation of the relevant bibliographical references about this sociological interpretation of *De officiis*.

The issue under analysis is what Cicero meant by *utilis* and *utilitas*, and what these notions entail, considering the religious backdrop of the virtues selected and shown in Chapter I. By applying his principles, we can better appreciate the moral and practical considerations that shape these personifications within their specific contexts: in this work, the *utilitates* seem to be ancillary to the four cardinal virtues (*sapientia*, *iustitia*, *fortitudo*, and *temperantia*). It is not unexpected to encounter general reflections on the value of *utilitates* within a work that fundamentally elucidates not only ‘the right course of action’ but also the rationale behind its importance.

While the philosophical scaffolding around duties (*officia*) is again of a Stoic matrix, the right thing to do (that is, an action that is both honest and useful) is researched in more general moral precepts. The reflection is not confined to mere speculations but rather to morally correct choices and, finally, to the resulting actions.¹⁰ As summed up by Dyck (1996, 37), “in this essay Cicero speaks, not in a *persona* of philosophical detachment, but as a moralist with a program.” Indeed, the leading point of criticism in this regard pertains to Panaetius of Rhodes: according to Cicero, his principles are solid but incomplete, as he failed to ponder the degrees of duty, that is, what one ought to do when confronted with hard choices, as Panaetius provided no criterion to establish priorities. The best formulation of this assessment is provided in Off. 3.7.34 (trad. Miller 2014):

Itaque, non ut aliquando anteponeremus utilia honestis, sed ut ea sine errore diiudicarem, si quando incidissent, induxit eam, quae videretur esse, non quae esset, repugnantiam. Hanc igitur partem relictam explebimus nullis adminiculis, sed, ut dicitur, Marte nostro.

And so he [scil. Panaetius] introduced an apparent, not a real, conflict between them, not to the end that we should under certain circumstances give the expedient preference over the moral, but that, in case they ever should get in each other’s way, we might decide between them without uncertainty. This part, therefore, which was passed over by Panaetius, I will carry to completion without any auxiliaries, but fighting my own battle, as the saying is.

¹⁰ Cicero openly declares this at the beginning of his exposition in Off. 1.2.6: *sequimur igitur hoc quidem tempore et hac in quaestione potissimum Stoicos, non ut interpretes, sed, ut solemus, e fontibus eorum iudicio arbitrioque nostro quantum quoque modo videbitur, hauriemus*. Nevertheless, this is reiterated consistently at various times, particularly in book 1 and 3.

Since the relationship between “*utile*” and “*honestum*” has been extensively discussed and is recognized as one of the key conceptual frameworks of *De Officiis*, I will focus instead on those aspects that are particularly relevant to my analysis. While the rendering of *utile* as “what is morally good” is satisfactory, the translations of “interest” and “useful” cannot be applied to all occurrences.

I aim to contribute my insights to the existing scholarly discourse on these concepts, integrating them with the analysis made so far. As a father, Cicero prioritizes imparting practical wisdom to his son, drawing from Greek influences and especially from the Stoic experience, while also endeavoring to contextualize these teachings within Roman culture beyond his own viewpoint.¹¹ In this precise effort, he defines not only duties but also a sense of proper conduct and *savoir-faire*.

The cardinal virtues and the *utilitates*

In the paragraph introducing the four cardinal virtues, Cicero explains that the *honestum* comes out of wisdom, justice, fortitude, and moderation, arguing that what is morally good stems from the preservation of human society, achieved by giving each person their due, faithfully observing agreements, and upholding qualities such as magnanimity, order, and balance. From these virtues arise a series of duties, or rather “expected services,” as I may translate them, which is the discussion’s subject.¹²

I focus particularly on the relationship between *sapientia* and *iustitia* with the *utilitates*, as these two particular virtues are more relevant. After touching on the meaningfulness of wisdom as the research of truth, which is always morally sound, Cicero moves on to describe how the other cardinal virtues serve as a means to deal with life’s practical matters (Off. 1.5.17):

Reliquis autem tribus virtutibus necessitates propositae sunt ad eas res parandas tuendasque, quibus actio vitae continetur, ut et societas hominum coniunctioque

¹¹ Cf. Giammusso (2017, 35): “Cicerone sollecita il figlio a compiere gli studi in maniera più diligente e a comprendere le responsabilità connesse alla propria situazione; e lo fa riacciando a quel filone dell’etica pratica che dava precetti e norme pratiche di comportamento, di cui trovava vasta casistica nelle trattazioni degli stoici.”

¹² Cic. Off. 1.5.15.

servetur et animi excellentia magnitudoque cum in augendis opibus utilitatibusque et sibi et suis comparandis, tum multo magis in his ipsis despiciendis eluceat. Ordo autem et constantia et moderatio et ea, quae sunt his similia, versantur in eo genere, ad quod est adhibenda actio quaedam, non solum mentis agitatio. Iis enim rebus, quae tractantur in vita, modum quendam et ordinem adhibentes honestatem et decus conservabimus.

As for the three remaining virtues, on the other hand, they are set the task of providing and maintaining those things on which the practical business of life depends, in order for society and human association to remain robust on one hand and for excellence and magnanimity to shine in their full light on the other, not only by enhancing power and benefits for oneself and one's loved ones, but also, and even more so, by despising such things. Similarly, virtues like order, consistency, moderation, and others of that nature require not only mental activity but also practical application. Indeed, by applying a measure and order to the operations of daily life, we simultaneously uphold both integrity and decorum.

Knowledge of what is proper and mere possession of selected virtues do not lead to integrity; one must put knowledge and virtues into practice. In other words, understanding virtues and how to act in accordance with them leads to *actio vitae*, which is of the greatest consequence for the collective wellbeing. Cicero presents this idea both in general and private terms here, but he emphasizes it in public terms elsewhere. At some point in the initial paragraphs of his *De Republica* (as the beginning is unfortunately lost), he discusses patriotism and the role of the statesman, clearly opposing Epicurean views and endorsing Stoic ideas.¹³ Cicero argues that philosophy plays a crucial role in shaping an ideal orator and statesman. Still, he acknowledges that it remains a theoretical pursuit. When it comes to taking action, what truly matters is the application of philosophical principles for the benefit of all. His discourse moves on to describe exactly what type of virtue is required to defend the common safety (*communis salus*) of the state (Cic. Rep. 1.2):

Nec vero habere virtutem satis est quasi artem aliquam, nisi utare; etsi ars quidem, cum ea non utare, scientia tamen ipsa teneri potest, virtus in usu sui tota posita est; usus autem eius est maximus civitatis gubernatio et earum ipsarum rerum, quas isti in angulis personant, reapse, non oratione perfectio. Nihil enim dicitur a philosophis,

¹³ After 46 BC, Cicero was disappointed with the political situation, which led him to seek comfort in the seven paradoxical statements used by the Stoic philosophers to describe the happiness of a wise person. Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* demonstrates the truthfulness of these statements with examples from Roman history. Cf. Giammusso (2017, 34): "Cicerone prova meno interesse per gli aspetti speculativi della teoria stoica e cerca piuttosto una schema generale entro cui svolgere una casistica delle azioni appropriate. Il suo trattato non riguarda o riguarda solo indirettamente il sommo bene e i principii della vita morale; è piuttosto un saggio di etica pratica, che in quella situazione politica fa appello agli aristocratici romani e alle élites municipali affinché mettano in atto comportamenti conformi al rango sociale e alle virtù repubblicane."

quod quidem recte honesteque dicatur, quod <non> ab iis partum confirmatumque sit, a quibus civitatibus iura discripta sunt.

Possessing a virtue, as if it were an art of some sort, is not enough, unless you make use of it; even if an art, though you never use it, can still remain in your possession by your very knowledge of it, virtue depends entirely upon its use; its noblest use is the government of the state, and the realization of those very things that they (scil. the philosophers) let resonate in corners is in fact and not words. For nothing is said by the philosophers – at least that is said rightly and honestly – that has not been produced and confirmed by those who have written up the laws for the states.

The idea that virtue depends entirely upon its use is directly connected even just to the etymology of the personifications under analysis, the *utilitates*. Actively using this quality of being *utilis*, considered morally desirable in a person, resonates with the belief that actions speak louder than words when it comes to prescribed virtuous actions. The reference to philosophers and the laws of the states strengthens the notion that virtue, particularly when concerning common safety against the individual one, should be manifested in practical ways, not just in words or philosophical speculations. Again, in *De officiis*, Cicero clarifies that *cuius* [scil. of truth, which leads to the *honestum*] *studio a rebus gerendis abducti contra officium est; virtutis enim laus omnis in actione consistit*, which is to say that if people limit themselves to the theoretical research and are diverted from public affairs, they do not abide by their duty: the true asset of virtue is taking up the corresponding action.¹⁴ In conclusion, the cardinal virtue of *sapientia* is knowing what is true, which is morally uplifting. Acting upon this knowledge and practicing the corresponding virtues defines integrity and that is where duties spring from.

Moving on to the following cardinal virtue, *iustitia*, there is more common ground with the *utilitates* as per the list in *De legibus* and *De natura deorum*, with a particular emphasis on *concordia* and *fides*. The two foundational tasks of justice, as described by Cicero, are to avoid causing harm unless provoked (*iustitiae primum munus est, ut ne cui noceat, nisi lacessitus iniuria*) and to use common things as common, and private ones as private (*ut communibus pro*

¹⁴ Id. Off. 1.6.19.

communibus utatur, privatis ut suis).¹⁵ While causing no harm is a quasi-universal ethical norm, given its obvious social benefits, and since it is foundational in many religious and philosophical traditions of all times, the second task is ever more relevant in defining Cicero's philosophical and religious notion of the *utilitates* in connection with the civic obligations of Rome specifically. The reason for this is expressed in these terms (Off. 1.7.22-23):¹⁶

Sed quoniam, ut praeclare scriptum est a Platone, non nobis solum nati sumus ortusque nostri partem patria vindicat, partem amici, atque, ut placet Stoicis, quae in terris gignantur, ad usum hominum omnia creari, homines autem hominum causa esse generatos, ut ipsi inter se aliis alii prodesse possent, in hoc naturam debemus ducem sequi, communes utilitates in medium adferre, mutatione officiorum, dando accipiendo, tum artibus, tum opera, tum facultatibus devincire hominum inter homines societatem. Fundamentum autem est iustitiae fides, id est dictorum conventorumque constantia et veritas. Ex quo, quamquam hoc videbitur fortasse cuiuspiam durius, tamen audeamus imitari Stoicos, qui studiose exquirunt, unde verba sint ducta, credamusque, quia fiat, quod dictum est appellatam fidem.

Since, as Plato splendidly wrote, we are not born solely for ourselves, rather a part of our existence is claimed by our country, and another part by our friends; and, as the Stoics maintain, everything the earth produces is for the benefit of humanity, and humans were created for the good of one another, so that they might benefit each other mutually; for these reasons, we should follow nature as our guide, sharing common services and strengthening the bonds of human society through the exchange of obligations—through giving and receiving, through arts, labor, and possessions. The foundation of justice is loyalty, which is the truthfulness and compliance of the things said and agreed upon. Therefore—though this may seem somewhat rigorous to some—I would dare to imitate the Stoics, who so diligently seek the etymology of words, and would like to believe that “*fides*” was named thus because it signifies the fulfillment of what has been promised.

Once again, Cicero grounds his arguments on Stoic claims: nature and human beings exist to benefit each other. In moral terms, he takes this to mean that, within a society, one ought to share resources (whether they be goods or services) that can benefit everyone. In practice, the concerned *officia* involve making what one can contribute to collective well-being available to others rather

¹⁵ Id. Off. 1.7.20. Cf. also *ibid.* 1.10.31: *referri enim decet ad ea, quae posui principio fundamenta iustitiae, primum ut ne cui noceatur, deinde ut communi utilitati serviatur.*

¹⁶ I concur with Dyck (1996, 113) in observing that in the sentence *non nobis solum nati sumus ortusque nostri partem patria vindicat, partem amici* “it is odd that Cicero omits parents (unless one assume that *partem parentes* has fallen out through *saut du même au même* before *partem amici*).” While we cannot gather any missing point from the manuscripts, I would argue for considering it an omission as well, adding to Dyck’s claims that even a few lines later, in the following symmetrical argument, we read *parentes aut amicos aut patriam* and this precise order is at the center of the notion of *pietas*.

than keeping such resources exclusive and for private purposes. While the term *officium* in this work is primarily rendered by scholars and the wider arrays of translators as “obligation,” as it is a treaty on courses of action to which a Roman citizen was supposed to be morally bound, it can also mean “service,” or “commitment.”¹⁷ These considerate acts show in one’s attitude a positive behavior towards others, generating harmony between people, that is, *concordia* in its more general sense as opposed to the “defensive one” analyzed above in Sallust (see p. 67). Therefore, the *communis utilitas* is made of several attitudes and behaviors corresponding to ethical and juridical obligations.

Although *concordia*, in this passage, is a suggestion rather than an explicit reference, *fides* is unambiguously spelled out, and, in true Varronian fashion, Cicero even proposes an etymology for it: *quia fiat, quod dictum est appellatam fidem*.¹⁸ Indeed, the general implications of the whole *De officiis* revolves around *honestas*, which is not only the individual moral quality of honesty but a complex of respectability behaviors that Cicero programmatically sees in accordance with *utilitas*. In a society where social control is the primary means of general governance, the moral qualities of reliability, respectability, and credibility, together with their associated *officia* (obligations, moral duties) become essential for maintaining social cohesion and stability. These virtues, the *utilitates*, seem then to serve as the foundation for trust and mutual respect among individuals, allowing for harmonious interactions and collaboration, but also as a set of “shared rules” without which society would not function.

Furthermore, Cicero explains how the *officia* work in the context of the broadest form of human society, which is based on reason and language (*ratio et oratio*, cf. Off. 1.16.50). For such a

¹⁷ Cf. Giammusso (2017, 33, n.14).

¹⁸ Cf. Maltby (1991) s.v. *fides*. See above, p. 79. McClintock (2016, 73ff.) has demonstrated how the Romans did not see *iustitia* as a goddess, and such an absence is quite a cultural feature when considered contrastively against the other ancient cultures of the Mediterranean, in which gods of justice have a place in the pantheon. Instead, *Fides*—as seen above—is recognized, at least at the time of the late Republic, as overseeing pacts and promises and essentially guaranteeing bonds, whether they be moral or, in some cases, even legal. Cf. Fiori (2011, 240ff.).

society to be preserved, it is necessary—according to Stoic teachings—that all the goods produced by nature for the common benefit of humanity must be held and enjoyed by individuals as the shared heritage of all.

Bettini (2019b, 53-54) discusses this and warns the reader not to be fooled by the target language derivative of the noun *communitas* and the adjective *communis*:

Per un Romano espressioni come *communis* e *communitas* non implicano solo avere qualcosa “in comune”, ma anche reciproco impegno. La *communitas* presuppone infatti l’aver *munia* – “obblighi”, “impegni” – l’uno verso l’altro: ciò che è *communis* implica la presenza di un sistema di reciprocità, in cui il dare presuppone il ricevere, e viceversa. La *societas* umana, dunque, sta insieme quando ci si comporta in modo tale da rispettare il principio secondo cui l’usufruire di beni condivisi da tutti – beni che la natura ha generato perché fossero a disposizione degli uomini in quanto tali – implica sia l’atto di profittarne sia quello di concederne l’uso ad altri uomini: tanto il ricevere quanto il dare. Da qui, continua Cicerone, derivano quelle prestazioni che vengono indicate appunto come *communia*.

To enhance the lesson’s impact, Cicero uses a charming metaphor from Ennius, suggesting that guiding a lost traveler is akin to illuminating someone else’s lamp with your own; your torch remains as bright even after igniting theirs another.¹⁹ And Cicero singled out this piece of poetry because with an example alone the poet summarizes that we should extend even to a stranger everything that does not harm us.²⁰ From this principle derive the *communia*, common obligations—as I may call them—which are *utilia* for those who receive them and not at all harmful for those who provide them:

- a) do not prevent the use of water,
- b) allow those who wish to light a fire to do so from one’s own, and
- c) offer sound advice to those in doubt.

It is striking that numerous translations of this passage simplistically and insufficiently interpret the neutral plural *communia* as “maxims” or “common sayings.” In reality, these

¹⁹ The iambic trimeters in question originate from an unidentified tragedy, cf. trag. 145. See also Off. 1.16.51: *Homo qui erranti comiter monstrat viam, / quasi lumen de suo lumine accendat facit. / Nihilo minus ipsi lucet, cum illi accenderit.*

²⁰ Cf. Dyck (1996, 169-170).

expressions are not simply statements; rather, they function as quasi-imperatives that correspond to actions rather than mere words.²¹ Instead, the most reasonable (and recent) rendering seems to be that by Marchese and Picone (2012), who translate *communia* as “prestazioni dovute” (due services). Such a reading considers the exquisitely practical meaning attached to them by Cicero and provides an additional nuance to them being part of a cultural system that implies that those specific needs—intended by Cicero as fundamental for any community of humans—are to be supplied.²² Bettini (2019b) endorses the rendering “prestazioni” (services), and, in his argument, examines in what cases the provision of essential services, such as water and fire, would be withdrawn. This scenario arises within a legal context, as exiled Roman citizens were subjected to a formal interdiction from water and fire. He references a passage from Paul-Festus, which notes that the condemned are to be excluded from access to water and fire, much like, on the contrary, newlyweds receive these elements, evidently because human life depends on them more than anything else. By employing an *e contrario* reasoning, the argument demonstrates that, rather than communal sharing, there is a heightened exclusion. This exclusion is particularly severe given that water and fire were typically granted to all humans by virtue of their very humanity. Thus, the exiled individual not only forfeits citizenship but is also deprived of these necessities, or “due services,” effectively becoming an outsider not only to their community but to humanity as a whole.²³

²¹ Miller (2014) translates *communia* as “maxims”; so does Ferrero-Zorzetti (1974) with “massime”; Testard (2002), on the other hand, renders “biens communs”.

²² While it would be outside of the boundaries of this research to think about this in terms of the doctrine of natural law, it is interesting to mention the arguments developed by Bettini (2019b, 50ff.), who chooses to treat the problem by selecting specific cultural forms that the ancient had and comparing them with issues similar to our own nowadays. In this respect, he compares the ancient categories of natural law to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. Cf. also *ibid.* pp. 26-27, arguing that there are three possible ways of going about the analysis of what we define “human rights” in the ancient world: a) to use ancient culture as a background to establish interdependences between ancient and contemporary conceptions; b) consider the differences and contrasts between ancient and contemporary culture, to see the very distance between them; c) to make an emic comparison on similar issues from both the ancient and contemporary viewpoint. Bettini chooses the latter, which he deems the most productive.

²³ Cf. Bettini (2019b, 56-57).

Turning to what connects *iustitia* and *temperantia* as cardinal virtues with the religious backdrop behind the *utilitates* is another keyword Cicero introduces in Off. 1.28.97: *decus*.²⁴ Cicero explains this notion through a delightful literary metaphor about poetry, specifically drama: *servare illud [cfr. decus] poetas, quod deceat, dicimus, cum id quod quaque persona dignum est, et fit et dicitur* (we say that poets respect what is appropriate when what each person does and says befits them). Drawing on the metaphor, just as poets allocate roles to individuals based on their distinct personalities, nature itself—congruent with Stoic philosophy—bestows upon each human a mask akin to that worn by actors, which they are to employ in the theatrical arena of life. Such a metaphor supports the notion that, in fact, nature prescribes how we must behave within society, and gives us both the general extent of what is proper concerning morality in its entirety, and particularly when it comes to virtues.²⁵ To further clarify the role of *iustitia* in this regard, Cicero says (Off. 1.28.99):

Est autem quod differat in hominum ratione habenda inter iustitiam et verecundiam. iustitiae partes sunt non violare homines, verecundiae non offendere, in quo maxime vis perspicitur decori.

There is a difference between justice and considerateness in one's relations to one's fellow-men. It is the function of justice not to do wrong to one's fellow-men; of considerateness, not to wound their feelings; and in this the essence of propriety is best seen.

Cicero reflects on a fundamental difference between *iustitia* (the virtue of justice) and *verecundia* (a general feeling of shame due to unbecoming conduct) regarding one's conduct. While the latter simply means to commit a fault against other people, to disturb them, with *offendo* being, in Latin, a verb with a lesser degree of strength than English (where “to offend” can even designate committing an illegal act), the former implies a gross injustice. *Violare* does not have a determined moral flavor. Still, it involves violating generally sacred things and subjecting persons to outrage, especially those under divine protection.²⁶ Therefore, the virtue of *iustitia* implies the

²⁴ Cf. Nicgorski (1984, 562).

²⁵ Cf. Off. 1.28.98: *illud, quod ad omnem honestatem pertinent, decorum quam late fusum sit appareat et hoc, quod spectatur in uno quoque genere virtutis*.

²⁶ Cf. OLD s.v. violo. Surprisingly, Dyck (1996) overlooks the opposition *offendere* vs. *violare*.

task of treating others not only with due respect (*decus*) but also not going beyond the limits of what is morally, socially, and perhaps even legally and sacredly acceptable, following the model seen in the previous chapters with the *utilitates*, for which the divinity stands as guarantor against the eventual transgression.

As for the third cardinal virtue, fortitude, Cicero expresses his views clearly and succinctly in direct connection with *utilitas* (Off. 1.20.66-67):

Omnino fortis animus et magnus duabus rebus maxime cernitur, quarum una in rerum externarum despicientia ponitur, cum persuasum sit nihil hominem nisi quod honestum decorumque sit aut admirari aut optare aut expetere oportere, nullique neque homini neque perturbationi animi nec fortunae succumbere. Altera est res, ut cum ita sis affectus animo, ut supra dixi, res geras magnas illas quidem et maxime utiles, sed ut vehementer arduas plenasque laborum et periculorum cum vitae, tum multarum rerum, quae ad vitam pertinent. Harum rerum duarum splendor omnis, amplitudo, addo etiam utilitatem, in posteriore est, causa autem et ratio efficiens magnos viros in priore.

A truly courageous and great soul is distinguished primarily by two qualities: among them one is indifference to outward circumstances, for such a person cherishes the conviction that nothing but moral goodness and propriety deserves to be either admired or wished for or striven for, and that he ought not to be subject to any man or any passion or any accident of fortune. The second one is that, when the soul is disciplined, as I mentioned above, one should do deeds not only great and in the highest degree useful, but extremely arduous and laborious and fraught with danger both to life and to many things that make life worth living. All the glory and greatness and, I may add, all the usefulness of these two qualities of courage are centered in the latter; the rational cause that makes men great, in the former.

Cicero expresses views that are common to those of Panaetius. Fortitude shows itself in two ways: to aim at what is *honestum* and pertaining to the *decus*, in direct consequence to the two previous virtues, and in effectively performing ‘great and useful’ tasks. Since fortitude is a virtue whose value stands out in adverse circumstances, Cicero clarifies that such tasks can be challenging to endure, even dangerous. As noted by Dyck (1996, 195), there is a distinction between the “glamor and usefulness (sc. to society) of *magnitudo animi* and its psychological substrate, which is the real concern.” Both the ability to recognize as good what is *honestum* and the *utilitas* nourish the moral force required to know what it is right to do.

How does the system work? *Officia* and *utilitates* as social mechanisms

Cicero's *De Officiis* presents a society in which civic virtues, religious obligations, and social relationships are intertwined. Within this partnership, society is not merely a network of individual interactions but a cohesive structure maintained by the interplay of ethical principles, mutual obligations, and shared religious practices. After a careful examination of Cicero's *De officiis* in light of these claims and the discussion of the sources from *De natura deorum* and *De legibus* in Chapter I, I argue that *officia* and *utilitates* converge for the sake of the community, intended as a group of people living together according to the same sentiments and practicing according to a shared sense of ownership (in this case, specifically, the citizenship of Rome).²⁷

Through the “embodiment” of civic virtues—intending them as tangible forms and expressions of prescribed deportments, that is the corresponding personified gods—the Roman élite seems to have formed both the moral and social anchor of the *civitas*. At the same time, the gods, envisioned as *concives*, reinforce these bonds by solidifying the moral and social order.²⁸ This integration of ethics, religion, and societal structure highlights Cicero's belief that personally practiced virtue and, thus, collective stability are mutually reinforcing. The fulfillment of *officia*, whether toward one's fellow citizens or the divine, becomes the essential mechanism by which individuals contribute to the well-being of the whole, ensuring the safety of the Roman community.

When such obligations correspond to the expected civic virtues—the constitutional values of the *res publica* that an upper-class citizen is supposed to abide by—Cicero seems to imply that they

²⁷ Cf. Off. 1.17.53 where Cicero essentially conceptualizes human society as a series of concentric circles. The outermost circle encompasses all of humanity, but a more narrowly defined society consists of those sharing the same ancestry, population, and language. Moving further inward, there are those who belong to the same community, united by shared spaces such as the forum, temples, porticoes, streets, and bound by common laws, legal rights, courts, votes, customs, and reciprocal relationships. At the innermost level, familial connections represent the closest bond, making the family the core unit of society. This layered structure reflects Cicero's vision of social organization, with each circle narrowing as relationships become more intimate and obligations more pressing.

²⁸ On the concept of gods as *concives* (fellow citizens) in Roman religion, see John Scheid's seminal work, *La religion des Romains* (1998), particularly chapter 5, “Les dieux citoyens.” Scheid elaborates on the integration of the divine into the civic framework of Roman society, emphasizing how public rituals (*sacra publica*) reinforced the shared responsibilities between humans and gods. Scheid's analysis demonstrates that Roman religion was less about personal piety and more about sustaining communal bonds, with the gods serving as guarantors of social and political order.

have traditionally been given a sacred context, reinforced by something as steadfast as public cult.²⁹ According to Cicero's moral and political philosophy, then, civic virtues such as *concordia*, *fides*, *honor*, *mens*, *pietas*, *salus*, *victoria*, and *virtus* are presented not only as ethical ideals but also as defining traits of Rome's ruling class. Far from being mere abstract concepts, they functioned as practical "tools" for legitimizing and consolidating social power.

The argument I put forward here is that this function was reinforced precisely because these civic virtues were objects of cult. By "embodying" these virtues at a human level with prescribed behaviors, other than performing the appropriate ritual practices, the ruling class positioned itself as the moral and civic exemplar of the *civitas*, ensuring their status as leaders while reinforcing the hierarchical structure of society. Cicero's portrayal of these expected virtues reflects their dual role: as ethical standards that guide individual behavior and as mechanisms through which the *societas* maintained cohesion and order under the leadership of those perceived as the guardians of *boni mores* and the common good. And then there is the divine level: the concept of the gods as *conciues* (fellow citizens), as articulated in the work of John Scheid, reflects a fundamental aspect of Roman religious and social thought.³⁰ As Cicero frames it, this idea is highlighted in the practical role of shared religious practices, including the citizens (the family, the clan, the city) and the gods.

Therefore, I argue that the public worship of the gods (*sacra publica*), conducted through communal rituals and ceremonies, was not merely an expression of collective reverence but a

²⁹ The close relationship between the Roman elite and the maintenance of state religion at this is well attested even beyond Cicero's implications. To elucidate the point, suffice it to reflect upon the fact that membership in key priestly colleges (*pontifices*, *augures*, *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*) was overwhelmingly aristocratic, ensuring that religious authority remained within the senatorial class. Cf. Beard et. al. (1998, vol. I, 35-49).

³⁰ John Scheid has famously argued that the Romans perceived the gods as integral members of their civic communities, operating within the framework of the city to uphold the common good. Far from tyrannical or absolute rulers, the gods were envisioned as benevolent patrons and fellow citizens, sharing in the collective responsibilities of the civic order. Their presence was part of the social fabric, with rituals and daily practices reinforcing their role as divine participants in Roman society. Scheid emphasizes that this theological construct mirrors Roman society's hierarchical yet interdependent structure, wherein magistrates, senators, and other elites likewise functioned as anchors of communal stability, demanding and receiving honors as a reflection of their status. Through the performance of public rituals, the Romans not only acknowledged the gods but actively "constructed" their identity as civic deities. This reciprocal relationship between gods and men underscores a broader Roman social and political organization system, in which the divine and human spheres operated according to the same principles of duty, hierarchy, and mutual obligation. See Scheid (1998, 126-135) and Scali (2017).

“mechanism” for sustaining harmony within the *civitas*. By participating in these rituals, the Roman people affirmed their commitment to shared values, which again included specific virtuous behaviors, and their reliance on divine favor for the community’s prosperity. While the ruling class undoubtedly played a key role as intermediaries between the divine and human forms of the civic virtues, the gods as *concives* served to unify the social and moral order, binding the divine, the individual, and the collective into a cohesive whole.

Cicero envisions the *civitas* as a system where reciprocity functions among individuals and between humanity and the divine. The exchange of services and obligations, which characterizes social relationships within the *societas*, extends to the relationship with the gods. Just as citizens rely on mutual assistance to foster harmony and ensure collective well-being, so too does the community depend on the favor of the gods, maintained through the fulfillment of religious duties as well as the corresponding ethical ones. Through public rituals and sacrifices, humans reaffirm their gratitude and respect for the gods, who, in return, safeguard the community’s welfare and success. Similarly, by practicing expected behaviors such as harmony, faithfulness to pacts, political and official duties, common sense, respect for one’s family, fellow citizens, and the gods, and regard for both general and specific safety and success (especially during wartime), citizens look up to the corresponding gods as protectors of these values. These gods, in turn, watch over these specific behaviors, which are essential to Roman society, particularly during the late Republic, and ensure their preservation, thereby safeguarding the society itself. This interdependence between the divine and the human realms mirrors the broader network of obligations within the *societas*, reinforcing the idea that reciprocity is the foundation of both civic and sacred order.

As explained in the first chapter, Cicero’s philosophical discussion of the religious facts surrounding the *utilitates* reveals that each of these gods embodies a *vis* representing their name and power. Following the analysis of the relevant points in *De officiis*, my argument is that since they correspond to behaviors, worshipping them also signifies practicing the corresponding virtues. The

utilitas of these civic virtues is evident in the rules they establish, as these determine the divine representation of what is permissible and what is not: they distinguish between “good” and “bad” citizens, functioning almost like a handbook. Violating these codes of conduct disregards a model and offends a divinity, which is doubly severe. Thus, behind the ideal deities lies a cultural pattern of attitudes and behaviors that fosters bonds among people, provided that they worship (and practice) such virtues and act as *boni cives*.

Justice, duties, commitments, and laws in relation to *utilitas*: the case of *fides*

Cicero’s *De Officiis* portrays society idealistically as interdependent, with individuals within a community supposedly striving for the common good (*communis utilitas*); this concept is reiterated throughout the work.³¹ Although the description may be a mere abstract ideal, such a vision reflects the practical framework of relationships founded on mutual responsibilities and services (*officia*) as analyzed above. Central to this system is the virtue of justice (*iustitia*), which is considered a civic virtue as analyzed in the previous section. Cicero identifies it as the fundamental principle that ensures fairness in human interactions and safeguards the equitable distribution of resources for collective well-being.³²

Justice functions as a moral guide by prioritizing the community’s needs over individual ones. Naturally, there must be a system in place to make sure that it is put into practice, and that is where the law becomes relevant, particularly in Cicero’s reflections on *utile* and its alignment with moral principles.

³¹ Cicero’s discussions around *communis utilitas* are particularly emphasized in relation to *iustitia* (id. 1.7.20-22), *fides* (cf. Off. 1.7.23-24), and, more specifically, in the argument that public service is the highest form of moral duty (id. 1.14.43-44). On Cicero’s idealization of such a civic and political model and the influence of Stoic philosophy, See Nicgorski (2012, 86-92) and Steel (2005, 117-119). Cf. also Dyck (1996, 15-20).

³² I say “principle” because, unlike *Fides*, which was personified and worshipped as a goddess in Roman religion, no similar process is attested for *iustitia*. Scholarly debate on the matter was extensive. Scheid (1998, 152-155) highlighted that Roman religion tended to deify virtues that directly reinforced collective bonds (such as the *utilitates*), while *iustitia* remained more closely associated with the practical application of law through magistrates and civic processes. See also Wallace-Hadrill (2008, 193-194).

Cicero's exploration of this tension between laws established within a community and more general laws, about which he reflects philosophically, offers profound insights into how legal and ethical norms converge (or diverge) in guiding human behavior, both within the *civitas* and in relations between states. In this paragraph, I focus on three critical areas where this interplay is most evident: primarily the concept of *fides*, and, to a lesser extent, the ethical constraints on warfare and the role of *ius gentium*—themes which illuminate Cicero's attempt to embed a less rigid version of Stoic philosophy in Roman legal practices.

The context of this discussion on justice in the first book of *De officiis* concerns specifically the duties connected to *iustitia* and compliance with one's commitments and promises: *fides* is an informative and instructive case study, given its overtone in juridical matters. Cicero decides to start his argument with a *caveat* in Off. 1.10.31, explaining – again, as per his criticism towards Panaetius – that there are (or should be) degrees of duty or, in other words, obligations may change according to changing circumstances. The passage in question reads as follows (Off. 1.10.31):³³

Sed incidunt saepe tempora, cum ea, quae maxime videntur digna esse iusto homine, eoque quem virum bonum dicimus, commutantur fiuntque contraria, ut reddere depositum, [etiamne furioso?] facere promissum quaeque pertinent ad veritatem et ad fidem; ea migrare interdum et non servare fit iustum. Referri enim decet ad ea, quae posui principio fundamenta iustitiae, primum ut ne cui noceatur, deinde ut communi utilitati serviatur. Ea cum tempore commutantur, commutator officium et non semper est idem.

Situations often happen when actions that seem particularly fitting for a *vir bonus*, and which therefore define him as “respectable,” change in meaning and become contrary to their original intent—such as returning a deposit, even to a madman?, or fulfilling promises, and those things that involve truth and keeping one's word, at times, it becomes justifiable to break them or disregard commitments. This is because such actions must be judged in relation to the principles I have established as the foundation of justice: first, to harm no one, and second, to serve the common good (*communis utilitas*). Since these principles can shift over time/circumstance, what ought to be done also changes and is not always the same.

The two principles that should be considered as conditions here are not to cause harm and to serve the common good. These factors should influence how people choose to behave, and the

³³ Regarding the bracketing of the rhetorical question “etiamne furioso?” see Dyck (1996, 127-128); I interpret it as simply emphasizing the moral dilemma.

underlying message from prior discussions is that societies can only thrive if—generally speaking—individuals do not harm one another, respect each other’s rights, and value their commitments. The line of reasoning is subtle but coherent: as long as these two conditions are met, decisions about what to do or what is right can change. In this way, a promise made earlier and judged as the right thing to do may no longer satisfy one of these conditions, for instance. Cicero is developing a system that implies conventionally accepted rules founded on justice and mutual obligations. However, that is not to be viewed as a cage and can instead adapt to changing demands and circumstances. In such a system, not causing harm and serving the common good are static elements, while the functioning of *iustitia* and the connected *officia*, as well as the expected civic virtues, are dynamic features—and this is where Stoicism influences Cicero, but he also bends it to adapt to Roman citizenship. Indeed, this could be read as somewhat opportunistic, as the political implication is that one could shift alliances, make compromises, and still behave ethically. In modern ethics, this fluidity can be referred to as “situational variability”—the idea that the moral value of an action depends on the context in which it occurs.³⁴

The specific context under discussion here is that, while valuing commitments is foundational for a society to function, not all promises are necessarily meant to be kept. One should not keep them if the agreement is unjust or harms the common good or an individual, because the moral value (*honestas*) is no longer present. This reflection, when viewed in the broader context of Cicero’s discussion of the *utile* and *honestum*—and his strong belief that whatever is genuinely *honestum* is also genuinely *utile*—suggests that even something as significant as keeping a promise (*fides*) is subject to change because it is subordinate to justice and the common good; that is to say, to whatever is truly useful for all (*utilitas*).

³⁴ Langlands (2018) addresses the concept of situational variability in Roman ethics through the analysis of moral examples. Particularly in Chapter 5 she explores the pedagogical value of such *exempla*, something she had already touched on in a previous article (2011).

In Off. 1.10.32, Cicero selects two examples to make this point. First, he references the myth of Theseus and Hippolytus.³⁵ Theseus invoked one of Neptune's three granted wishes. In a fit of anger, Theseus rashly cursed his son Hippolytus, believing him guilty of Phaedra's death, and called upon Poseidon to punish him. This resulted in Hippolytus's tragic death, an outcome that, as Cicero emphasizes, illustrates the moral failure in keeping a promise that should never have been made in the first place. The wording is significant (Off. 1.10.32):

Potest enim accidere promissum aliquod et conventum, ut id effici sit inutile vel ei, cui promissum sit, vel ei, qui promiserit. Nam si, ut in fabulis est, Neptunus, quod Theseo promiserat, non fecisset, Theseus Hippolyto filio non esset orbatus. Ex tribus enim optatis, ut scribitur, hoc erat tertium, quod de Hippolyti interitu iratus optavit; quo impetrato in maximos luctus incidit. Nec promissa igitur servanda sunt ea, quae sint is, quibus promiseris inutilia, nec si plus tibi ea noceant, quam illi prosint [cui promiseris] contra officium est, maius anteponi minori.

It can indeed happen that fulfilling a promise, even one formally made and agreed upon, proves to be *inutile*—neither to the recipient of the promise nor to the one who made it. For instance, as recounted in myth, if Neptune had refrained from fulfilling his promise to Theseus, Theseus would not have lost his son, Hippolytus. Of the three wishes granted to him—they write—this was the third: the curse for his son's death, uttered in a fit of anger. When it was granted, it plunged Theseus into profound grief. Likewise, promises that are *inutilia* to their recipients should not be kept, nor should those that harm the promisor more than they help the recipient. Prioritizing the lesser over the greater is contrary to duty.

Cicero appears to have a clear hierarchy in mind, which he makes explicit in the end by using terms of measurement. This episode belongs to the recurring category of myths about “dangerous gifts.”³⁶ This mytheme (i.e., each of the narrative units of mythic storytelling, such that the structure of the myth results from the combination—subject to variation—of multiple mythemes) is closely tied to the anthropological and literary analysis of reciprocity, obligation, and the dual nature of gifts the gods give as a blessing and curse.³⁷ The adjective *inutilis*, in this context, can hardly

³⁵ Cf. Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where the story unfolds through the destructive power of Aphrodite, whose vengeance results in Phaedra's uncontrollable passion for Hippolytus, her stepson. Theseus, deceived by Phaedra's false accusations, curses his son using a promise granted by Poseidon, leading to Hippolytus' death when a sea monster terrifies his chariot horses (lines 887–1101). Seneca, in *Phaed.* 882–1035, provides a darker and still Stoic version of the myth, emphasizing Theseus' anger and Phaedra's moral corruption. Ovid, in *Met.* 15.497–529, recounts Hippolytus' destruction but also introduces his eventual rebirth as Virbius (“born twice”). Cf. Dyck (1996, 129–130) and Scolari (2018, 122–130).

³⁶ On this type of stories in Latin literature see now Scolari (2018) and relative bibliography.

³⁷ The scholarly theories on the dangerous gifts largely draw on Mauss (1925). Cf. also Godelier (1999).

indicate mere pointlessness. Perhaps a more fruitful reading, here, is “appropriate, fitting.” Scolari (2018) renders it through the Italian “conveniente,” i.e., “appropriate to the circumstances,” and she comments the passage as follows (pp. 121-122):

Quando il mantenimento della promessa rischia di causare un danno a chi lo esige, oppure è preteso da chi si dimostra incapace di intendere e di volere, è compito di colui che ha promesso tirarsi indietro e venir meno alla parola data. Non rispettare il vincolo di *fides*, in questo caso, è lodevole perché significa porre un freno al nocumento. [...] Secondo Cicerone, infatti, se il dio non avesse osservato la *fides* così rigidamente, Teseo non avrebbe perduto suo figlio. La responsabilità è dunque la sua. Questo è forse vero all’interno di una riflessione etica sugli *officia* e sull’opportunità di mantenere o meno la parola data, in cui Cicerone si serve degli esempi mitici per fornire prescrizioni utili al buon funzionamento delle prassi relazionali umane.

Scolari contends—and I concur entirely—that when honoring a promise could harm the individual pressing for it, or if it is requested by someone lacking sound judgment, the person who made the promise should have the obligation to retract and break their commitment. In these situations, not adhering to the bond of *fides* is not a fault but something to be commended, as it prevents harm. Scolari points out that according to Cicero, if Neptune had not been so inflexible with *fides*, Theseus would not have lost his son, making the god ultimately accountable. This argument, the author indicates, aligns with an ethical consideration of *officia* and whether keeping one’s promise is always the best course of action. In this regard, Cicero uses mythical instances to provide normative advice on the appropriate conduct of human social dealings.³⁸ Thus, this aligns with *officia* being somewhat subordinate to the *utilitates*, exemplified here by *fides*. To clarify how this system operates, Cicero builds on the previous passage, continuing with a second example that is distinctly Roman in nature (Off. 1.10.32):

Ut si constitueris, cuipiam te advocatum in rem praesentem esse venturum atque interim graviter aegrotare filius coeperit, non sit contra officium non facere, quod dixeris, magisque ille, cui promissum sit, ab officio discedat, si se destitutum queratur. Iam illis promissis standum non esse quis non videt, quae coactus quis

³⁸ Scolari (2018, 121 n. 142) rightly observes that Cicero employs this myth twice to underscore his argument in Off. 3.25.94. While she attributes this repetition to Cicero’s inability to revise the text due to his untimely death, I contend that the recurrence is not accidental but rather serves to reinforce his point.

metu, quae deceptus dolo promiserit? quae quidem pleraque iure praetorio liberantur, nonnulla legibus.

For instance, if you had decided to represent someone in court but, in the meantime, your son fell ill, it would not be contrary to duty to forgo what you had promised. More importantly, the recipient of your promise would be neglecting their own duty if they complained about being abandoned. Who does not realize that promises made under the constraint of fear or as a result of deception ought not to be kept? Such promises are most often nullified by praetorian edicts, while others are annulled by the laws.

In this scenario posed by Cicero, which emphasizes the significance of commitments and relates to *fides*, there is also an allusion to *pietas*. While the obligation to represent someone in court is significant, assisting an ill child takes priority in terms of hierarchy, and the language used clearly reflects this priority. Even the promise recipient must understand this; failing to do so would contradict their duty (*officium*). Finally, Cicero—an insightful legal theorist with a profound grasp of Roman law—reflects on the essence of justice, the function of laws, and their moral underpinnings. He concludes his reasoning by emphasizing that promises—commitments bonded to *fides-Fides*—should not arise from fear or deception, and that laws exist to prevent such situations. In Off. 3.25.94, Cicero brings these concepts up again, touching even the point of having to do with insane subjects, and concludes:

Ergo et promissa non facienda non numquam, neque semper deposita reddenda. Si gladium quis apud te sana mente deposuerit, repetat insaniens, reddere peccatum sit, officium non reddere. Quid? si is, qui apud te pecuniam deposuerit, bellum inferat patriae, reddasne depositum? Non credo; facias enim contra rem publicam, quae debet esse carissima. Sic multa, quae honesta natura videntur esse, temporibus fiunt non honesta; facere promissa, stare conventis, reddere deposita commutata utilitate fiunt non honesta.

Thus, there are times when promises should not be kept, nor should deposits always be returned. If someone entrusted you with a sword while in sound mind but later, having lost their sanity, demanded it back, it would be a mistake to return it; rather, it would be a duty not to do so. Likewise, if the person who had deposited money with you were to wage war against the fatherland, would you return the deposit? I think not—for doing so would be acting against the state, which ought to be dearer to you than anything else. In the same way, many actions that appear morally right by nature become wrong in certain circumstances: keeping promises, honoring agreements, and returning deposits all become improper when their *utilitas* is reversed into its opposite.

Once again, *utilitas* cannot solely denote “usefulness”; it must gain the technical-philosophical nuance that Cicero associates with the terms *utile* and *honestum*. *Utilitas* thus signifies what is useful, advantageous, or expedient in a more pragmatic sense. Still, it also pertains to the truly honorable actions that arise from the virtues he terms *utilitates*, once again with an emphasis on the public *utilitas* taking precedence and returning to the conclusive thesis of his *De officiis* that what is genuinely *honestum* is also genuinely *utile*.

Still regarding the relationship between duties, justice, and *utilitas*, let us consider one final contribution Cicero makes to this matter. In the third book of *De officiis*, he reaches a point where he notes that there may be a conflict between apparent or false expediency and, so to speak, principled justice. The specific example he analyzes focuses on the role of friendship in applying justice. When friendship is involved, one may feel uncertain about the duties and rules to follow, as well as what the right course of action may be (Off. 3.10.43-44):

Maxime autem perturbantur officia in amicitiiis, quibus et non tribuere, quod recte possis, et tribuere, quod non sit aequum, contra officium est. Sed huius generis totius breve et non difficile praeceptum est. Quae enim videntur utilia, honores, divitiae, voluptates, cetera generis eiusdem, haec amicitiae numquam anteponenda sunt. At neque contra rem publicam neque contra ius iurandum ac fidem amici causa vir bonus faciet, ne si iudex quidem erit de ipso amico; ponit enim personam amici, cum induit iudicis. Tantum dabit amicitiae, ut veram amici causam esse malit, ut orandae litis tempus, quoad per leges liceat, accommodet. Cum vero iurato sententia dicenda erit, meminerit deum se adhibere testem, id est, ut ego arbitror, mentem suam, qua nihil homini dedit deus ipse divinius. Itaque praeclarum a maioribus accepimus morem rogandi iudicis, si eum teneremus, *quae salva fide facere possit*.

The principles governing what must be done are especially confused in friendships, because it is contrary to duty both not to grant them what you justly can and to grant them what is not just. The precept to follow in this case is brief and straightforward: things that seem advantageous—such as offices, wealth, pleasures, and other things of that sort—must never be placed above friendship. And a decent man will never act against the state, against his oath, or against his given word on account of a friend; not even when he is judging a case involving that friend. For when he wears the mask of a judge, he must set aside the mask of a friend. His contribution to friendship will consist in believing in the sincerity of his friend’s cause; he will ensure that proper time is granted for building the case, within the limits set by the law. When, after having sworn an oath, he must pronounce judgment, he will remember that he has the god as his witness—that is, as I believe, his own presence of mind, for the gods have given nothing more divine to man than that. And thus, we have inherited from our ancestors the well-known formula of a request to a judge—if only we still remembered it—: “May he do what he can, preserving *fides*.”

This passage focuses on the delicate balance that the *utilitates* demonstrate as virtuous qualities and personifications of gods. A judge, even if friendly with someone, must prioritize certain behaviors: at the center of this illustrative case, there is not only *fides-Fides* but also *mens-Mens* as guiding principles. When faced with the task of judging a friend, a judge makes an oath and is expected to make sound decisions not only for the sake of the individual being judged, but also for the entire city and the common good; thus, the judge requires presence of mind. Cicero could not be more explicit: the judge must remember that he has the god as his witness and that his presence of mind—the highest “honor” the gods have bestowed upon him—is crucial.³⁹ Additionally, the formula quoted here, whether it be strictly juridical or a traditional norm, seems to support this interpretation—which I have not encountered elsewhere—as a hope that the judge may do his utmost, provided he respects *fides-Fides*. In other words, considering the sensitive role of a judge, the formula implies a desire for him to do the best he can as a human, provided he honors his own obligations and, at the same time, respects the goddess who serves as his witness.⁴⁰ Not doing so would be detrimental not only to the defendant in question, but to the community as whole.

To further validate this interpretation, Cicero wraps up this line of reasoning as follows (Off. 3.10.46):

Cum igitur id, quod utile videtur in amicitia, cum eo, quod honestum est, comparatur, iaceat utilitatis species, valeat honestas; cum autem in amicitia, quae honesta non sunt, postulabuntur, religio et fides anteponatur amicitiae. Sic habebitur is, quem exquirimus, dilectus officii.

When, therefore, what seems expedient in friendship is compared with what is moral, the aspect of (apparent) expediency must take second place, and morality must prevail. When immoral things are demanded in a friendship, one must place *religio* and *fides* above friendship; in this way, the choice of duty, which we are discussing, will be made.

³⁹ As noted by Testard (2002, vol. II, 93, n.2) “Cicéron revient souvent, dans de fort beaux textes, à cette idée que l’âme ou la raison ou la vertu sont en l’homme, présence de la Divinité. Voir notamment *De Leg.* I, 22 ; 24 ; 59 ; *De fin.*, V, 38 ; *Tusc.*, I, 56 ; 64-66 ; 70 ; V, 38 ; *Laelius*, 13”.

⁴⁰ There are no parallels of this formula used in a similar context.

Cicero combines *religio* (religious scruple), *fides* (loyalty with the goddess as witness), and *officium* (sense of duty). He could not have been clearer in emphasizing the religious context of the civic virtues expected from dutiful Roman citizens.

Cicero's reply to Panaetius: degrees of duty and establishing priorities

Cicero devotes Off. 1.43.152 to his reflection on how due services (*officia*) derive from the *honestum* and moves on to explain how they serve the *utile*. After a brief connecting sentence, he addresses the following problem:

Eorum autem ipsorum, quae honesta sunt, potest incidere saepe contentio et comparatio, de duobus honestis utrum honestius, qui locus a Panaetio est praetermissus.

Among morally honorable actions, conflicts and comparisons may often arise to determine which of the two is more honorable, which is a topic that Panaetius left unaddressed.

In other words, the issue is that even virtuous actions may often conflict with one another. Therefore, the question arises: which is the most righteous among two or more virtuous actions?

In addressing the delicate relationship between *utile* (convenience) and *honestum* (moral rectitude), Cicero adopts a distinctly more pragmatic approach than Panaetius, likely due to his acute awareness of the complexities inherent in Roman political and public life. This section explores how Cicero resolves the apparent conflict that arises when multiple morally correct actions are questioned, focusing specifically on his criteria to establish a “hierarchy” among virtues depending on the changing circumstances, just like with the case of *fides* analyzed in the previous section. I propose that Cicero's reasoning represents an attempt to address Panaetius' much-criticized omission on this issue while also acknowledging that it may reflect Cicero's very interpretation of the *utilitates* as civic virtues intended as criteria to establish such missing priorities. The line of reasoning proceeds as follows (Off. 1.43.153):

Placet igitur aptiora esse naturae ea officia, quae ex communitate, quam ea, quae ex cognitione ducantur, idque hoc argumento confirmari potest, quod, si contigerit ea

vita sapienti, ut omnium rerum affluentibus copiis [quamvis] omnia, quae cognitione digna sint, summo otio secum ipse consideret et contempletur, tamen si solitudo tanta sit, ut hominem videre non possit, excedat e vita. Princepsque omnium virtutum illa sapientia, quam σοφίαν Graeci vocant, prudentiam enim, quam Graeci φρόνησιν dicunt, aliam quandam intellegimus, quae est rerum expetendarum fugiendarumque scientia; illa autem sapientia, quam principem dixi, rerum est divinarum et humanarum scientia, in qua continetur deorum et hominum communitas et societas inter ipsos; ; ea si maxima est, ut est, certe necesse est, quod a communitate ducatur officium, id esse maximum.

It is fitting that due services arising from social inclination are more aligned with nature than those stemming from the pursuit of knowledge. This can be demonstrated by the following consideration: if a wise person were to lead a life blessed with every abundance, allowing them to study and contemplate all that is worthy of understanding in complete leisure, yet were so utterly isolated as to be unable to see another human being, they would still choose to abandon life. The most important of all virtues is that wisdom which the Greeks call σοφία (for we know that prudence, which the Greeks call φρόνησις, is something different, being the knowledge of what is right to seek and what is right to avoid). This wisdom, which I have identified as the most important, is the understanding of human and divine matters, encompassing the social inclination of men and gods as well as their shared community. Since this wisdom is truly the greatest, it follows that the duty arising from it must also be of the utmost importance.

Cicero's assertion that duties based on social connections align more closely with nature underscores the Stoic belief in the social nature of human beings. He reinforces this idea by presenting the example of a wise person opting for death rather than enduring complete isolation, highlighting that true fulfillment stems from social ties. This ultimately reinforces the significance of community for individuals. The surprising statement here is that community appears to hold more value than knowledge. In prior sections, we demonstrated that wisdom (*sapientia*) includes not just knowledge of what is suitable but also its essential practical application. This form of wisdom was not limited to the statesman; every citizen was expected to possess it to safeguard the *communis salus*, the common welfare. For Cicero, as he reiterates in this passage, wisdom is the understanding of both human and divine matters, encompassing the reciprocal relationships between gods and humans as well as the interactions among individuals within the community. He even clarifies his definition of knowledge by contrasting his lexicon with the Greek one, emphasizing that simply knowing what to pursue and what to avoid is inadequate; the wisdom he refers to includes both human and divine matters. The gods are very much part of the equation.

Given that Cicero regards wisdom as the highest virtue, the duties that arise from it—morally elevated and somewhat expected within the community, the *civitas* of Rome—are essential for maintaining human life in common. These duties reflect Cicero’s vision of a well-ordered state where personal virtue is inseparably linked to the public good, and resonate with his conception of the *utilitates* as civic virtues exemplifying as models/deterrents and as gods, “guarantors” of human relationships.

This perspective serves Cicero not only as a philosophical rationale for the Roman religious-political system but also offers a practical ethical viewpoint. It is in this sense that these exceptional qualities like *concordia*, *fides*, *honor*, *mens*, *pietas*, *salus*, *victoria*, and *virtus* should be understood: they sustain the bonds among individuals insofar as people themselves, by honoring and practicing these virtues, act in a civil, just, and proper manner. This interpretation appears distinctly Roman, particularly when one considers the specific virtues in question and observes how they pertain strictly to human relationships and obligations. These are all elements deeply rooted in Roman tradition and moral practice. As Cicero aptly emphasizes in concluding his argument, these virtues also give rise to *officia*—duties of equal importance—that are essential for upholding the laws and customs that govern interpersonal relationships within the community. The conclusion of Cicero’s paragraph reads as follows (Off. 1.43.153; 155):

Etenim cognitio contemplatioque naturae manca quodam modo atque inchoata sit, si nulla actio rerum consequatur. Ea autem actio in hominum commodis tuendis maxime cernitur; pertinet igitur ad societatem generis humani; ergo haec cognitioni anteponenda est. [...] Quibus rebus intellegitur studiis officiisque scientiae praeponenda esse officia iustitiae, quae pertinent ad hominum utilitatem, qua nihil homini esse debet antiquius.

The knowledge and contemplation of nature would be, in some way, deficient and incomplete if they did not lead to practical action. Such action is found above all in the safeguarding of human interests; therefore, it concerns the entire human race and must be placed above knowledge itself. [...] Based on these things, it becomes clear that the duties of justice, which pertain to human well-being, must take precedence over the pursuit of knowledge—since nothing should be more important to a person than the *utilitas* of humankind.

Once more, Cicero clarifies that acting according to the duties of justice is far more important than knowledge or—as per the title of this chapter—actions speak louder than words. Above all, what truly matters is the *utilitas* of humankind: after all of this reasoning, no translation of “expediency” or “usefulness” can be applied here. *Utilitas* must refer to the welfare of humankind, to a strong sense of human fellowship and community.⁴¹ This is why this word keeps popping up every time one or more of the personifications under scrutiny are involved: it is the key—or at least an attempt of theorization on the part of Cicero—to systematize how they are supposed to work logically, both in their worldly value and with their religious backdrop.

From theory to practice: the exemplary figure of Marcus Atilius Regulus

Now that I have established Cicero’s intended meaning of *utilitates* in theory, let us examine their practical application through an example. In his *De officiis*, Cicero presents various figures from both myth and history. Among the numerous ethical dilemmas he addresses, Marcus Atilius Regulus’s engagement with *fides* stands out as particularly relevant for our analysis. Through his actions, Regulus exemplifies how the understanding of *fides-Fides* guides him in determining what to do and prioritizing his choices in behavior.

Let us delve into Cicero’s narrative, which in this work—although Cicero did mention it elsewhere—is treated in-depth:⁴² he recounts the story, analyzes it, offers philosophical critiques, presents the counterarguments he encountered, and responds to them. This further demonstrates why this case study is an appropriate choice for this final chapter. To ensure clarity and focus, I fully quote the passages from Off. 3.26.99–115 that are most relevant to my analysis, citing the section numbers. Shorter excerpts are included in brackets without individual numbering.

⁴¹ Arfelli (1991, 123) translates *utilitas* as “fratellanza” (literally “fraternity, brotherhood”), which aligns with my interpretation. The sentence in full reads “Da tutto ciò si comprende che agli studi e ai doveri della scienza si devono anteporre i doveri della giustizia, i quali hanno per fine la fratellanza umana, che dev’essere il supremo ideale dell’uomo.”

⁴² Cf. Dyck (1996, 619-620).

During his second consulship, Regulus was ambushed and taken prisoner in Africa.⁴³ He was sent back to the Roman Senate under oath (*iuratus*) that he would be obliged to return to the Carthaginians unless certain noble prisoners were returned to the Carthaginians. Once having laid out these facts, Cicero expresses himself as follows (Off. 3.26.99):

Is [scil. Regulus] cum Romam venisset, utilitatis speciem videbat, sed eam, ut res declarat, falsam iudicavit.

Once Regulus had arrived in Rome, he recognized the appearance of *utilitas*, but, as the outcome demonstrates, he judged it to be deceptive.

Cicero uses his philosophical lexicon here, as the *species utilitatis* is the “apparent *utile*.” He then contends that Regulus’s coming to Rome is a merely “apparent” *utile* since it would have primarily served Regulus’s personal interests. No one could deny that for his own sake, it would have been far more advantageous for him to return home to his family, maintain his consular dignity, and regard the defeat as just one consequence of the war.⁴⁴ Here is why Regulus is exemplary: he refused to act out of self-interest, understanding that what was truly beneficial for him was also what benefited the citizenship. Cicero specifies that when he returned to the Senate, he refused to express his thoughts, stating that as long as he was under oath (*iure iurando*) with the enemies, he was no longer a senator. Then, Cicero explains Regulus’s actions:

Atque illud etiam (“O stultum hominem,” dixerit quispiam, “et repugnantem utilitati suae!”), reddi captivos negavit esse utile; illos enim adulescentes esse et bonos duces, se iam confectum senectute. Cuius cum valuisset auctoritas, captivi retenti sunt, ipse Carthaginem rediit, neque eum caritas patriae retinuit nec suorum. Neque vero tum ignorabat se ad crudelissimum hostem et ad exquisita supplicia proficisci, sed ius iurandum conservandum putabat. Itaque tum, cum vigilando necabatur, erat in meliore causa, quam si domi senex captivus, periurus consularis remansisset. At stulte, qui non modo non censuerit captivos remittendos, verum etiam dissuaserit. Quo modo stulte? etiamne, si rei publicae conducebat? potest autem, quod inutile rei publicae sit, id cuiquam civi utile esse?

⁴³ Cicero’s chronology appears imprecise and requires careful reconstruction. Regulus served as consul in 267 and 256 BCE and was defeated and captured during his second proconsulship at the Battle of Tunis in 255 BCE. Additionally, the Hamilcar mentioned in 255 BCE cannot be Hannibal’s father, as the latter’s military career begins only in 247 BCE, when he was still a young man, and he remained active until his death in Spain in 229 BCE. Cf. Miller (1913)

⁴⁴ Cf. Ibid.: *manere in patria, esse domui suae cum uxore, cum liberis, quam calamitatem acceperisset in bello, communem fortunae bellicae iudicantem tenere consularis dignitatis gradum. Quis haec negat esse utilia?*

And even this—(“Foolish man,” someone said, “who rejects his own advantage!”)—returning the prisoners, he denied, was beneficial; they were young and capable commanders, whereas he was already bent with old age. Thus, his authoritative opinion prevailed, the prisoners were kept, and he departed, returning to Carthage, restrained neither by love for his country nor his family. He was certainly not unaware that he was returning to the hands of a most cruel enemy to face refined torments, but he believed he had to keep the oath he had sworn. And so, when he was put to death with a torment that forced his eyes open, he was in a better condition than if he had remained in his homeland, an aged prisoner, a former consul stained by perjury. But was he foolish in his conduct, since not only did he refrain from urging the release of the prisoners, but he even discouraged his fellow citizens from doing so? How was he foolish? Even if this was to the advantage of the state? Can something be beneficial to a citizen if it is detrimental to the state?

This is precisely where we observe the agency, effectiveness, and *utilitas* of Regulus’s relationship with *fides*: in his decision-making process (and how Cicero lays it out). The point about the oath is reiterated; Regulus believed he should respect it—more on this in a moment. It does not matter that some might consider him foolish; he knows better, and his *auctoritas* (a term signifying solemn judgment, not just any opinion) prevailed. He deemed it more *utile* to return, sacrificing himself as an older man and keeping the young prisoners. His sense of duty compelled him to act in a way that was genuinely *utile*, not for his own sake, but for the state.

Cicero answers the rhetorical questions at the end of the quoted passage, explaining once more how and why *utile* is inseparable from *honestum* (Off. 3.28.101), then lists four general objections Regulus’s conduct provoked (Off. 3.28.102-103):

- (a) regarding his oath, he had no reason to fear the gods’ wrath;
- (b) it is not immoral to break an oath with evil people;
- (c) oaths extorted by constraint are not binding;
- (d) whatever is highly expedient becomes morally right, even if it did not seem so at the

outset.

The first issue (a), regarding the fear of the gods’ wrath in relation to the oath, concluded with a meaningful sentence: *nulla igitur vis fuit religionis, quae tantam utilitatem perverteret* (no force of religious scruple could destroy that *utilitas*). This prompts Cicero to clarify what an oath is

and its connection to *fides*, allowing us to reaffirm our earlier interpretation of the following passage (Off. 3.29.104):

Haec quidem ratio non magis contra Reguli quam contra omne ius iurandum valet. Sed in iure iurando non qui metus, sed quae vis sit, debet intellegi; est enim ius iurandum adfirmatio religiosa; quod autem adfirmate et quasi deo teste promiseris, id tenendum est. Iam enim non ad iram deorum, quae nulla est, sed ad iustitiam et ad fidem pertinet. Nam preclare Ennius: “*O Fides alma apta pinnis et ius iurandum Iovis.*” Qui ius iurandum violat, is fidem violat; quam in Capitolio vicinam Iovis Optimi Maximi, ut in Catonis oratione est, maiores nostri esse voluerunt.

This argument is valid not only against Regulus’s oath but also against any oath. But in taking an oath it is a duty to understand not what one may have to fear but wherein its obligation lies; an oath is a religious statement; and what you promise solemnly and almost with a god as your witness must be kept. For an oath does not pertain to the anger of the gods, which does not exist, but to the justice and *fides*. Ennius famously said: “Oh winged *alma Fides*, oh oath (sacred to) Jupiter.” If you break an oath, you profane *fides-Fides*; that which our ancestors wanted to be near Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol, as per Cato’s speech.

Cicero argues that the gods’ wrath does not exist, but *fides*, the commitment tied to the oath, is very much a “religious statement” (*adfirmatio religiosa*), whether sworn by Regulus or any other Roman citizen, thus it is guaranteed by the goddess, so keeping it is a duty (*ad iustitiam pertinent*) and breaking it means violating the goddess herself.

The second (b) and third (c) objections regarding Regulus’s conduct pertain to the question of whether any individual possesses sufficient merit to warrant entering into an oath. Cicero addresses both objections by referencing the Regulus case, even though they were stated in general terms regarding immoral individuals or oaths taken under duress. The argument concerns the law of war, which clearly establishes that a pledge given to the enemy must always be upheld, although the “nature” of the enemy remains a subject of debate (Off. 3.29.107-108).⁴⁵ In this regard, Cicero provides a distinguishing criterion, explaining that an oath made to pirates need not be honored, as they are not legitimate wartime enemies but rather enemies of all, which renders both promises and

⁴⁵ Cf. Leg. 2.14.34: *sequitur enim de iure belli; in quo et suscipiendo et gerendo et deponendo ius ut plurimum valeret et fides, eorumque ut publici interpretes essent, lege sanximus.*

oaths invalid in dealings with them.⁴⁶ As for Regulus, Cicero concludes the discussion with the following words (Off. 3.29.108):

Regulus vero non debuit condiciones pactionesque bellicas et hostiles perturbare periurio. Cum iusto enim et legitimo hoste res gerebatur, adversus quem et totum ius fetiale et multa sunt iura communia.

Regulus indeed should not have undermined through perjury the terms and promises agreed upon with the enemy in war; he was fighting against a legitimate adversary, bound by the rules of law, with whom the *ius fetiale* and many other legal principles applied, as they were shared by both sides.

Regarding the claim that Regulus's oath might have been taken under duress (c)—an objection posed to question its legitimacy—Cicero contends that a man with Regulus' strong character would not succumb easily to coercion (Off. 3.30.110). More subtly, he elaborates that Regulus' greatest virtue stems from his efforts to prevent the exchange of young prisoners and his self-sacrifice in old age. By choosing to persuade the Senate, he acted in what he considered the state's best interest (this might have been articulated as being executed on behalf of the *communis utilitas*), viewed his stance as morally justified, and wholly accepted the resulting consequences.

Regarding the last objection (d), which claims that whatever is highly expedient is morally right, even if it initially appeared otherwise, this allows Cicero to reformulate it to better align with his philosophical stance on *utile* and *honestum* (Off. 3.30.110):

Nam quod aiunt, quod valde utile sit, id fieri honestum, immo vero esse, non fieri. Est enim nihil utile, quod idem non honestum, nec, quia utile, honestum, sed, quia honestum, utile.

Indeed, what many claim—that something highly beneficial can become morally right—is not actually the case. Rather, it must already be so: nothing is truly beneficial unless it is morally right. It is not that something is moral because it is useful, but rather that it is useful because it is moral.

In conclusion, Cicero wraps up the episode by emphasizing that the most significant merit of Regulus is that he kept his oath, or, in other words, held his relationship with *fides-Fides* in the

⁴⁶ Cf. Bettini in Lentano (2023, 17-33).

highest regard. And he did this with the specific and explicit intention of doing something morally right for both himself and the state. This is why his exemplary figure represents the agency of the *utilitates* as deified civic virtues in Rome: they assisted citizens in navigating tough choices, helping to prioritize or at least delicately balance moral correctness with pragmatic considerations. These virtues are appropriate and well-judged actions, they meet the social expectations of Rome and are ancillary to the *officia*.

Concluding remarks: how to translate *utilitas*

This chapter has sought to illuminate the *utilitates* in Cicero not merely as abstract ideals, but as tools with ethical and practical implications within Roman society. In contrast to the previous chapters, which emphasized the philosophical and religious frameworks—as well as the literary strategies—that shaped the personifications of civic virtues, the present analysis has turned to their behavioral dimension. Without neglecting their religious or philosophical backdrop—because this has been a scholarly blind spot of the past—or even their cultural resonance, I argued, following Cicero’s line of reasoning in response to the criticism to Panaetius, that these deified virtues functioned above all as guides to action, markers of ethical judgment, and instruments of decision-making in the Roman civic world.

By signaling what matters in moments of uncertainty, these personifications acted as moral compasses: they helped individuals navigate competing claims and reminded them of their obligations. At the heart of their message lies a fundamental tenet of Roman political ethics—the primacy of communal well-being over private interest. This logic is intelligible within a civic-religious framework in which the gods themselves are conceptualized as fellow citizens. Nevertheless, this idealized vision of virtue was never politically neutral. As embodiments of elite values, the personified *utilitates* also reinforced the social authority of those who claimed to

exemplify them.⁴⁷ They offered both a mirror and a mandate: a mirror in which to reflect dominant ideals, and a mandate to legitimize the exercise of power.

The argument advanced here thus returns, in a circular motion, to the reflections opened in Chapter I on the divine status of civic virtues in *De natura deorum*. In terms of “distributed identity” (see, again, Bettini 2015b), the *utilitates* evidently also possess a behavioral one. To worship these figures is also to internalize the practices they enjoin. Their divinity does not simply consecrate political values; it enforces them. As such, these personifications not only propose a vision of the world, but also delimit its moral boundaries. They function as models to emulate and, just as crucially, as deterrents—embodying what is permitted and what must be avoided in the moral life of the citizen.

A central challenge throughout this chapter has been the translation of the term *utilitas*. Rendered simply as “utility” or “usefulness,” the word risks sounding reductive, too narrow to convey the full semantic range it carries in Cicero, especially in the context of his reflections on the relation between the *honestum* and the *utile*. A more suitable rendering on selected passages, I would suggest, is “what is fitting” or “what is appropriate”—that is, what one ought to do, what is right to do, and what proves most beneficial because it aligns with what is most virtuous, according to the expectations of Roman society.

These expectations were codified in the idealized values of the deified civic virtues—*utilitates* that were not merely ideals, but norms shaped and enforced by cultural memory and official cults. Such divine personifications belong to the collective memory of the Roman world precisely because they encapsulate the ethical expectations of a social group. Their force lies not only in their exemplary status, but in their capacity to remind: figures such as Regulus, in relation to *fides*, as we have seen, perform a commemorative function. Their agency consists in this power of

⁴⁷ Our sources primarily reflect the perspectives of the ruling classes. The extent to which these values were internalized or resisted by non-élite groups—who rarely left direct testimony—remains difficult to assess.

remembrance. That is their true *utilitas*—their fittingness, their cultural appropriateness, their role in expressing “what is expected,” and thus what is both *honestum* and *utile* for the community as a whole.

Epilogue: *Pudicitia* as a potential addendum to the list

In this research, I focused on the civic virtues I labeled as *utilitates* following Cicero's list based on the personifications found in particular sections of *De natura Deorum* and *De legibus*.¹ Cicero perceived these as a unified set of virtues linked to both human behaviors and divine beings. These virtuous-qualities/gods—as observed in Chapter I—share the name in a relationship of metonymy, and they correspond to the gods as subjects and to the benefits (the *utilitates*, the corresponding virtues they bestow upon men) as objects. These virtues are distinctive—as observed in Chapter II—as they exist concurrently as abstract ideas, literary figures, and deities with formal cults that were established in Rome long before the empire's rise. After reviewing Pliny's N.H. 2.5.14-15 alongside these selected excerpts, *Pudicitia* emerged as another virtue that meets these three specified conditions, particularly with regard to the cult, as noted by Livy when he recorded the establishment of her cult circa 296 BC.²

Much like Cicero's *utilitates*, the renderings of *pudicitia* into the target language have not been respectful of the emic categories of Roman thought. As Langlands (2006, 31) put it, the

attempts to to render the significance of the term give some initial sense of the scope of *pudicitia*, but just as there is no satisfactory English translation equally there is no way of encapsulating its unfamiliar significances in just a few words. To summarise, it is a moral virtue (in the peculiarly Roman sense of moral virtue – see below) that pertains to the regulation of behavior (either of oneself or of other people) specifically associated with sex.

Furthermore, addressing the philological matter of capitalization encountered in Chapter II, where the use of majuscule and minuscule letters for the *utilitates* often caused confusion, this issue also extends to *pudicitia*. As Langlands (2006, 39) again put it:

Latin does not distinguish between lower- and upper-case letters, and thus *Pudicitia* and *pudicitia* are one and the same, allowing a slippage between the active divine being, controlling the lives of mortals from without, and the virtue within.

¹ The primary passages in question are Cic. N.D. 2.60-61;78-79;3.61; Leg. 2.19;28. See Chapter I. In Bevilacqua (2016) I had suggested that *pudicitia* could be added to the group of *utilitates* merely on the grounds that it could be considered as the female counterpart of *virtus*. Since then, my arguments have developed. I no longer have such a strict gender-specific view of this quality, and in this section I make different and complementary claims.

² Cf. Liv.10.23.1-10; RE s.v. *pudicitia*.

Langlands's cautious solution to this is expressed in a footnote, where she declares:

I shall usually use the lower case to refer to all manifestations of *pudicitia* throughout, so as to maintain this flexibility, but where it is the personification that is specifically indicated I shall use the upper case.

In our continued analysis of primary sources—whether through insights into Roman religion, philosophy, or literary criticism—one fact became clear: virtuous qualities such as *concordia*, *fides*, *honor*, *mens*, *pietas*, *salus*, *victoria*, and *virtus* were more than mere words. They transcended abstract concepts, being personified and deified, representing ethically codified categories embedded in the civic life of Rome; *pudicitia* was similarly significant, and from early on in time.³ The behavior behind it, which aims to prevent impropriety or indecency, is guided by ethical norms and social expectations that can differ between men and women, even though it concerns both.⁴

***Pudicitia* as a civic virtue and goddess**

Pudicitia, often translated from Latin as “sexual purity” or “chastity,” can also refer more broadly to “virtue” much like *virtus*, the sum of all the corporeal or mental excellences of men, often rendered as “manliness”, then expands its meaning to “virtue.”⁵ Similar to the other civic virtues under analysis, *pudicitia* has faced its own set of Christian biases. As noted by Langlands (2006, 30), the rendition as chastity “bears little relation to this quality—which has specifically Christian roots in our own culture—of sexual abstinence and repression of desire.”

The term *pudicitia* encompasses not only a personal moral quality, but also a complex social and civic value and expectations that are crucial for regulating the sexual behavior and ethics of

³ Cursorily, Langlands (2006, 25-28) mentions that *Pudicitia* may belong to the same group of gods she defines as “moral qualities”, although without arguing why, thus I am not alone in associating this virtue to the others.

⁴ As a preliminary demonstration, suffice it to quote Valerius Maximus's invocation in 6.1: *unde te, virorum partier ac feminarum praecipuum firmamentum, Pudicitia, invocem?* Mueller (1998, 221-263) has set the basis for any discussion on this matter, arguing that while observance of *pudicitia* must be shared by men and women alike, this does not happen in equal terms, since—quite an important distinction that must be kept in mind—only free men can violate the *pudicitia* of others, and only *ingenuae* and *ingenui* possess a *pudicitia* that can be violated.

⁵ Cf. OLD, s.vv. *pudicitia* and *virtus*.

both men and women in Rome.⁶ While its connotation leans heavily towards femininity, as married women must display it within the community through specific aspects of their demeanor and appearance,⁷ it is a quality that males can also embody, as we shall show.

Pudicitia opposes the term *stuprum*, which denotes the corresponding “dishonor” or “disgrace” resulting from any form of unchastity affecting both genders, male and female.⁸

When it comes to women, *pudicitia* primarily concerns their refraining from extramarital—or even from all—sexual intercourse, marital fidelity,⁹ and a general attitude of exhibited modesty. In contrast, for men, the focus appears to be on managing sexual passions and safeguarding personal honor, including one’s sexual dignity, rather than the public or strictly military aspect—which would be, respectively, *honos* and *virtus*.¹⁰ Furthermore, aside from their own *pudicitia*, it appears that men are responsible for ensuring that women uphold theirs. Essentially, preserving one’s *pudicitia* was how both men and women upheld their expected and appropriate respective masculinity and femininity based on societal and cultural norms.¹¹

⁶ While *pudicitia* and *pudor* are closely related concepts in Roman thought, my analysis focuses exclusively on *pudicitia* due to its distinctive institutional and religious dimensions. Unlike *pudor*, which primarily denotes an internalized sense of shame, *pudicitia* functions as an externally recognized virtue, evaluated and upheld through public scrutiny and social enforcement. *Pudor* is a psychological disposition, a reactive emotion that governs behavior by instilling a sense of self-restraint and decorum, often in response to judgment of others. In contrast, *pudicitia*—though also a form of restraint—is a condition of moral integrity that must be actively demonstrated and socially validated. It is an attribute rather than an emotion, a status rather than a momentary feeling, and, most importantly, it carries legal, political, and religious implications. Crucially, *pudicitia*—unlike *pudor*—was objectified in religious practice, with dedicated cults (*Pudicitia Patricia* and *Pudicitia Plebeia*) and ritual spaces that reinforced its civic role. The presence of these cults indicates a sacralization of chastity and moral integrity in ways that *pudor* never achieved. Given this distinction, *pudicitia* offers a more tangible and institutionalized framework for examining the interplay between gender norms, civic virtue, and religious practice in the late Republic and Augustan age. On the conceptual differences between *pudicitia* and *pudor*, see Langlands (2006, 45–58); and Thomas (2006).

⁷ Cf. Langlands (2006, 37ff.).

⁸ Cf. DELL s.v. *pudet*. Langlands (2006, 30) rightfully notes that *pudicitia* has often been associated with women only, and although the cult is specifically relevant just to married women, *pudicitia* is “by no means exclusively a moral quality that pertains to females”.

⁹ As for the marital fidelity and the general role of women within the Roman family system, *pudicitia* is complementary to *fides* and *concordia*: cf. Treggiari (1991). Regarding the different aspects of women’s sexuality, see Cantarella (1996).

¹⁰ See above, p. 90ff.

¹¹ In a thought-provoking essay, Malisse (2023) analyzes the occurrences of polysemic terms such as *pudor*, *verecundia*, *mollitia*, and related words when men transgress in their attitudes, whether in terms of dress, pace, excessive pleasures, sexual or virtuous behavior, and then she argues about how this is all telling about the expected societal values of masculinity as they appear through Latin literature. While the words may have been different, men, as much as women, had very specific values of reference and transgressions were, if not equally, still very problematic.

These differences were apparent in Rome through gender-specific traditional and even legal norms, along with religious customs, which determined social consequences. For instance, let us consider the following case with regard to *pudicitia* in connection to men in Liv. 8.28.1-9:

EO anno plebei Romanae velut aliud initium libertatis factum est, quod nequi desierunt; mutatum autem ius ob unius feneratoris simul libidinem simul crudelitatem insignem. L. Papirius is fuit, cui cum se C. Publilius ob aes alienum paternum nexum dedisset, quae aetas formaque misericordiam elicere poterant, ad libidinem et contumeliam animum accenderunt. Florem aetatis eius fructum adventitium crediti ratus, primo perlicere adulescentem sermone incesto est conatus; dein, postquam aspernabantur flagitium aures, minis territare atque identidem admonere fortunae; postremo, cum ingenuitatis magis quam praesentis condicionis memorem videret, nudari iubet verberaque adferri. Quibus laceratus iuvenis cum se in publicum proripuisset, libidinem crudelitatemque conquerens feneratoris, ingens vis hominum cum aetatis miseratione atque indignitate iniuriae accensa, tum suae condicionis liberumque suorum respectu, in forum atque inde agmine facto ad curiam concurrit; et cum consules tumultu repentino coacti senatum vocarent, introeuntibus in curiam patribus laceratum iuvenis tergum, procumbentes ad singulorum pedes, ostentabant. Victum eo die ob impotentem iniuriam unius ingens vinculum fidei; iussique consules ferre ad populum ne quis, nisi qui noxam meruisset, donec poenam lueret, in compedibus aut in nervo teneretur; pecuniae creditae bona debitoris, non corpus obnoxium esset. Ita nexi soluti, cautumque in posterum ne nequerentur.

During that year, for the Roman plebs, it was as if another freedom had begun, for debt bondage came to an end; the law on the matter changed due to both the lust and the extreme cruelty of a single usurer. That man was Lucius Papirius, to whom Gaius Publilius had been bound in servitude because of his father's debts. Though his youth and beauty might have aroused pity, instead they provoked the man's lust and outrage. Seeing in the boy's flourishing youth an additional profit to be gained from his credit, he first tried to seduce him with obscene words. Then, as the young man refused to listen to such shameful proposals, he began to threaten him and abruptly reminded him of his situation. Finally, realizing that Publilius was more conscious of his birth as a free citizen than of his current state, he ordered him to be stripped and the rods to be brought forth. Flogged and tortured, the young man rushed into the street, crying out against the usurer's lust and cruelty. A great crowd, stirred both by compassion for his youth and by the outrage of the assault, as well as by thoughts of their own condition and that of their sons, poured into the forum, and from there, en masse, into the Senate house. The consuls, compelled by this sudden uproar, convened the Senate, and as the senators entered the curia, the people threw themselves at their feet, showing them the young man's lacerated back. That day, through the unjust tyranny of a single man, a bond that had served as a powerful guarantee of credit was broken. The consuls were instructed to propose to the people that no one, unless guilty of a crime, should be held in shackles or chains until the penalty had been expiated, and that it should be the debtor's property, not his body, that answered for his debt. Thus, those who had been enslaved for debt were freed, and measures were put in place to prevent debt bondage in the future.

This passage highlights the abolition of the cruel system of *nexum*, an ancient Roman legal institution mentioned in the Laws of the Twelve Tables, which allowed for enslavement due to

debts.¹² Nevertheless, our specific interest lies in the behavior of Caius Publilius, a young, free-born boy who refused to have his body violated because that would have meant having his honor, his manly honor, disgraced.¹³

To shed more light on his line of reasoning, we can turn to Valerius Maximus, who tells the same episode, much more succinctly, in his section *De pudicitia*, with slightly different names, Publius Plotius instead of Lucius Papirius. However, the story remains unchanged. Contrary to Livy, Valerius Maximus does not go into the legal importance of this story, and instead emphasizes that the young boy is punished for not wanting to suffer the *stuprum* (*quia stuprum pati noluerat*), something which would indelibly affect his *pudicitia*.¹⁴

Valerius Maximus makes this clear in the concluding remark: *senatus Plotium in carcerem duci iussit: in qualicumque enim statu positam Romano sanguini pudicitiam tutam esse voluit* (the Senate had Plotius imprisoned: it insisted that, under any circumstances, the *pudicitia* of Roman blood be safeguarded).¹⁵

A modern reader might find the relevance of this statement unclear in this context. In Roman law and moral discourse, the concept of *stuprum* encompassed illicit sexual acts, particularly those violating the social and sexual integrity of freeborn individuals, regardless of consent, which is, in fact, highly relevant for us.¹⁶ Unlike contemporary legal and ethical frameworks, where the dishonor of sexual violence falls—at least, supposedly—squarely upon the perpetrator, Roman society placed the burden of disgrace on the violated individual, male or female.¹⁷ This perspective

¹² The abolition of *nexum* marked a turning point in Roman law. The measure discussed in Liv. 8.28.1-9 is known as the *Lex Poetelia Papiria de nexis* (326 BCE), which formally abolished *nexum* and made debt slavery illegal. With this law, debt became a financial obligation as opposed to a personal one: the creditor could claim repayment only from the debtor's assets, not from their person.

¹³ Another interesting story in comparison to this is that of the *miles Marianus*, cf. Brescia (2004, 8ff.) and Langlands (2006, 265ff.). I briefly analyzed it in Bevilacqua (2016).

¹⁴ For the legal implication and penalties of *stuprum* in Republican Rome, see Fantham (1991) and Langlands (2006, p. 20ff.).

¹⁵ Val. Max. 6.1.9.

¹⁶ The Roman notion of *stuprum* is quite different than our concept of rape, by which we indicate the crime of forcing or compelling someone to have sex without their consent. Cf. Botta et. al. (2003) with relative bibliography.

¹⁷ Cf. Brescia (2012, 31-58); (2015).

was deeply rooted in the Roman conception of bodily integrity (*pudicitia*) as a crucial marker of status and moral standing: again, it did not matter whether you were a freeborn man or woman.

The episode concerning young Caius Publilius, then, is highly significant. Even though he is subjected to brutal coercion and physical violence, he refuses to yield to the advances of the usurer Lucius Papirius. Ultimately, he exposes the attempted abuse to public scrutiny in order to protect his own *pudicitia*, which is a quality that must be seen to be positively recognized. Furthermore, his refusal of *stuprum* and consequent reaction is all the more significant given that, in Rome, submission to it—even under duress—could result in loss of honor and social standing. By acting in the way he did, Caius Publilius made the shame shift from him to Lucius Papirius and, at the same time, showed the powerful agency that the protection of his *pudicitia* caused, a legal reform, a benefit for the whole citizenship.

Another example of the agency that *pudicitia*, along with other civic virtues, had in the context of fighting is the following. This is a passage from Cicero's *Second Catilinarian* in which the author contrasts Catiline's troops with the Roman people (2.11.24):

Sed si, omissis his rebus quibus nos suppeditamur, eget ille, senatu, equitibus Romanis, urbe, aerario, vectigalibus, cuncta Italia, provinciis omnibus, exteris nationibus, si his rebus omissis causas ipsas quae inter se confligunt contendere velimus, ex eo ipso quam valde illi iaceant intellegere possumus. Ex hac enim parte pudor pugnat, illinc petulantia; hinc pudicitia, illinc stuprum; hinc fides, illinc fraudatio; hinc pietas, illinc scelus; hinc constantia, illinc furor; hinc honestas, illinc turpitudine; hinc continentia, illinc libido; hinc denique aequitas, temperantia, fortitudo, prudentia, virtutes omnes certant cum iniquitate, luxuria, ignavia, temeritate, cum vitiis omnibus; postremo copia cum egestate, bona ratio cum perdita, mens sana cum amentia, bona denique spes cum omnium rerum desperatione confligit. In eius modi certamine ac proelio nonne, si hominum studia deficient, di ipsi immortales cogant ab his praeclarissimis virtutibus tot et tanta vitia superari?

But even if we were not to take into account all that we have at our disposal while he is deprived of it—namely, the Senate, the Roman knights, the people, the city, the state treasury, public revenues, the entirety of Italy, all the provinces, and foreign nations—even if, therefore, we were to disregard all this, if we were to compare only the moral values that stand in opposition, even this alone would allow us to understand how utterly our enemies are brought low. For on our side fight restraint, on theirs audacity; here modesty (*pudicitia*), there lust (*stuprum*); here loyalty, there deceit; here a sense of duty, there villainy; here prudence, there madness; here honor, there infamy; here moderation, there excess; here, finally, justice, temperance, fortitude, prudence, and all other virtues wage war against iniquity, debauchery,

sloth, recklessness, and all other vices; in the end, wealth stands against poverty, the defenders of order against those of subversion, sanity against folly, well-founded hopes—and with this I conclude—against utter despair. Now, in the face of such a struggle, such a conflict, if the goodwill of men were to fail, would not even the immortal gods intervene to make so many and such grievous vices succumb to these most radiant virtues?

In this section of the oration, Cicero aims to convince his audience using three main arguments, which he presents through the skillful use of numerous rhetorical devices, such as anaphora, parallelism, antithesis, crescendo, and climax, with a final touch of a rhetorical question.

The first one—the least relevant to our discussion—highlights the impressive resources at Rome’s disposal, far exceeding those of its enemies. This significant advantage fuels his confidence in victory, almost rendering the subsequent argument unnecessary to articulate.

However, the second one is central to the discussion and arguably the most compelling point, highlighting a moral contrast that illustrates the war’s dimensions beyond just politics, extending into ethics as well. Through an anaphorical series of parallelisms, Cicero draws a sharp moral contrast between the two sides, listing pairs of opposing qualities, grouping *pudicitia* with some of the *utilitates*, such as *fides* and *pietas*, and opposing it to *stuprum*, as observed earlier. The sheer volume of words can feel staggering. This technique highlights the ethical superiority of Cicero’s position and likely raises the conflict beyond mere politics to a battle between virtue and vice. By framing the conflict in ethical terms, Cicero can advocate for his political cause as morally essential and divinely endorsed. And then, the final touch: he crowns his argument with a rhetorical question, a device that simultaneously expresses certainty and appeals to shared values.

By asking whether even the gods could fail to intervene in favor of such radiant virtues against such grievous vices, he invokes divine justice to guarantee the rightness of his cause. This move—with a philosophical flavor to it—shifts the responsibility for action from mere human judgment to cosmic order, suggesting that the outcome of the conflict is not only a matter of strategy but of fate. In doing so, Cicero leaves his audience with the impression that to support his side is not only politically wise, but ethically and religiously imperative. I believe that beneath this

rhetorical strategy lies a genuine acknowledgement of these ethical and civic institutions. I am not referring to “belief” in the Christian sense of “faith,” but rather as a recognition or trust that these divinized civic values were integral to life and part of Rome’s collective identity.

Finally, moving on to considering *Pudicitia* in connection to women, her worship is solely focused on married ones.¹⁸ Perhaps more than any of the other virtues analyzed above, *pudicitia*, especially as a personification-goddess, has the most potent social connotation, for her worship eventually took on two distinct forms: the *Pudicitia Patricia*, reserved for women of patrician rank, and the *Pudicitia Plebeia*, which—according to the tradition recounted by Livy—became accessible to married women of plebeian status in 296 BCE, following the episode of the cult foundation, full of intense moral and social conflict, which is worth reading in full (Liv. 10.23.1-10):¹⁹

eo anno prodigia multa fuerunt, quorum auerruncandorum causa supplicationes in biduum senatus decreuit; publice uinum ac tus praebitum; supplicatum iere frequentes uiri feminaeque. insignem supplicationem fecit certamen in sacello Pudicitiae Patriciae, quae in foro bouario est ad aedem rotundam Herculis, inter matronas ortum. Uerginiam Auli filiam, patriciam plebeio nuptam, L. Uolumnio consuli, matronae quod e patribus enupsisset sacris arcuerant. breuis altercatio inde ex iracundia muliebri in contentionem animorum exarsit, cum se Uerginia et patriciam et pudicam in Patriciae Pudicitiae templum ingressam, ut uni nuptam ad quem uirgo deducta sit, nec se uiri honorumue eius ac rerum gestarum paenitere <ex> uero gloriaretur. facto deinde egregio magnifica uerba adauxit. in uico Longo ubi habitabat, ex parte aedium quod satis esset loci modico sacello exclusit aramque ibi posuit et conuocatis plebeiis matronis conquesta iniuriam patriciarum, 'hanc ego aram' inquit 'Pudicitiae Plebeiae dedico; uosque hortor ut, quod certamen uirtutis uiros in hac ciuitate tenet, hoc pudicitiae inter matronas sit detisque operam ut haec ara quam illa, si quid potest, sanctius et a castioribus coli dicatur.' eodem ferme ritu et haec ara quo illa antiquior culta est, ut nulla nisi spectatae pudicitiae matrona et quae uni uiro nupta fuisset ius sacrificandi haberet; uolgata dein religio a pollutis, nec matronis solum sed omnis ordinis feminis, postremo in obliuionem uenit.

In that year, many prodigies occurred, and to avert them, the Senate decreed supplications for two days; wine and incense were offered at the expense of the treasury; men and women flocked to implore the gods. That supplication remained memorable for a dispute that broke out among the matrons in the sanctuary of *Pudicitia Patricia*, located in the Forum Boarium near the round temple of Hercules. The matrons had excluded from the sacred rites Virginia, daughter of Aulus, a patrician married to a plebeian, the consul Lucius Volumnius, on the grounds that by

¹⁸ Women who married more than once—thus, not *univirae*—were banned from touching the statue of *Pudicitia*, as well as that of *Fortuna muliebris*. About this, see the discussion in Boëls-Janssen (1996, 47-66).

¹⁹ Cf. RE s.v. *Pudicitia*. For a panoramic overview on the role of women in the civic cult of Rome, see now DiLuzio (2019). See also the still relevant and thought-provoking discussions in Boëls-Janssen (2010b).

marrying, she had left the patriciate. A brief argument arose, which, due to female irascibility, soon flared into a fierce dispute. Virginia rightly boasted that she had entered the temple of *Pudicitia Patricia* as a patrician and a chaste woman, married to the only man into whose house she had been led as a virgin, and that she had no reason to be ashamed of her husband, his honors, or his deeds. To these proud words, she added a remarkable gesture: from her house on the Via Longa, where she lived, she set aside a space just large enough for a modest shrine. There, she placed an altar and, summoning the plebeian matrons, lamenting the offense she had suffered from the patrician women, she declared: “I dedicate this altar to *Pudicitia Plebeia*, and I urge you that, just as the men of this city compete in *virtus*, so too should the women compete in *pudicitia*. I invite you to strive with all your might so that it may be said that this altar is revered with greater devotion and by women of even greater *pudicitia*, if possible, than the patrician one.” This altar was then venerated with almost the same rites as the older one, and no matron was allowed to offer sacrifices there unless she was of unblemished *pudicitia* and had been married only to one man. Later, however, the cult was extended even to women who had lost their chastity, and not only to matrons but to women of all social classes, until eventually, it fell into disuse.

It is evident that we are faced with a moralistic, exemplary, even if somewhat unrealistic narrative.²⁰ Virginia’s sole initiative, despite being a patrician *matrona*, lacked the official religious or legal requirements to establish a cult or create a private space for public worship.²¹ Nevertheless, similar to previous cases, this research emphasizes grasping the cultural meaning expressed by the narrative instead of fact-checking.

Like the situation of Caius Publilius, Verginia’s reaction, having been excluded by her fellow patrician matrons due to her marriage to a plebeian, had a distinctly forward-looking impact on a larger segment of the community, making the cult of *Pudicitia* a little more inclusive than it had previously been.²² Most importantly, in this case, Livy presents the arguments that led her to make this decision to extend the cult to the plebeian *matronae*, which provides us with a somewhat emic account (not of Verginia, but certainly of a Roman perspective).

²⁰ For a commentary on the connection between moralistic and political matters in this episode, see Geoffrey Stephen (2003). Cf. also Baudou (2001).

²¹ Cf. RE s.v. *Pudicitia*. On the matter, cf. Boëls-Janssen (2010a), who argues that the conflict between plebeians and patricians may have its roots in archaic religious conceptions, according to which the consulship was reserved for those of “pure” lineage. Within this framework, the patricians’ insistence on the *pudicitia* of their wives functioned not only as a moral ideal but also as a means of asserting social distinction. As plebeians pressed for access to the consulship, they too emphasized the inviolability of their wives’ *pudicitia*, thereby asserting their own eligibility for sacred office. Livy’s inclusion of episodes such as that of Verginia may reflect this concern. Boëls-Janssen’s central claim is that, once plebeians attained the consulship, the political salience of female *pudicitia* waned, coinciding with the resolution of the longstanding conflict between the two orders.

²² In Rome, differing birth statuses between a husband and wife posed challenges. On this problem of exogamy, see Treggiari (1991, 89ff., and n.27).

Being a freeborn patrician, Verginia, like Caius Publilius, recognizes her status and speaks out: she enters the sanctuary declaring herself *pudica*, proudly stating that she is a *virgo*, and insisting there is no need to be embarrassed by her husband's honors and accomplishments.²³

What stands out in comparing *pudicitia* to other civic virtues as *utilitates*, given the situation, is Virginia's call to her now fellow plebeians. After establishing a shrine and altar for the worship of *Pudicitia Plebeia*, she asserted that just like the men of Rome compete in *virtus*, women should strive for excellence in *pudicitia*, even aiming to surpass the patricians in this endeavor.

Measuring *pudicitia* up to *virtus* cannot be undirected, these two virtues are obviously two flip sides of the same coin, one feminine, the other masculine, for *Virtus* is the divine guarantor for men as much as *Pudicitia* is for women, as far as virtues qualities are concerned. And, from a religious perspective, the principle of "distributed identity" is equally relevant to *Pudicitia* as it is to other divinized civic virtues, making her an exemplary case study.²⁴ Her identity becomes duplicated from a cultual, onomastic, topographic and even narrative standpoint.

The cult of *Pudicitia* exemplifies the Roman practice of venerating abstract qualities or personified virtues—such as the *utilitates*—to which ethical ideals were ascribed divine status and given dedicated temples or altars. These cults functioned to embed in the collective imagination the notion that such values were safeguarded by divine authority, and that transgressing them constituted not merely a moral lapse but a sacrilegious offense. *Pudicitia*, in particular, occupied a unique position as both a domestic and a civic deity: as the protector of monogamous marriage, she was believed to guarantee legitimate fertility—something the Romans were quite obsessed about²⁵—and familial harmony, elements understood to mirror, and ultimately support, the stability of the social order.

²³ Cf. Langlands (2006, 44ff.).

²⁴ On the notion of "distributed identity" of the gods (in Italian "identità distribuita") see Bettini (2015b) and our discussion above, p.16ff.

²⁵ On the matter, see Lentano (2007).

Since *pudicitia* shares the same features—it is an abstract concept, a literary personification, a goddess with a cult—and difficulties—hard to translate in target language, issues with capitalization—as the other *utilitates*, and, like them, it seems to possess an agency that benefits the collectivity and a distributed identity, I argue that it can be an addition to this group of personifications, even if Cicero does not list it together with the others.

Future directions of inquiry: *Pudicitia* and beyond

The inclusion of *Pudicitia* as a potential addendum to the list of *utilitates* examined in this dissertation naturally invites further questions, both specific to this figure and more broadly applicable to the study of Roman personifications. In a broader sense, the approach adopted here—focused on a collection of personifications characterized by their metonymic structure and civic-religious role—can also be applied to various other sets of deified abstractions within Roman religion.

Having demonstrated that *pudicitia-Pudicitia* shares with the *utilitates* the key features of being, at once, an abstract moral concept and literary personification, and possessing a civic cult, it becomes almost pressing to explore the reasons for her exclusion from Cicero's discussions of divine civic virtues. Given her undeniable cultic status and her ethical resonance within Roman ideology, her absence from the *utilitates* is striking. Several hypotheses may be formulated to address this gap.

One avenue for exploration could be the gendered nature of *Pudicitia* as a virtue generally more associated with women, particularly in their roles as wives and daughters within the Roman *familia*, even if we saw how men too were supposed to guard their own *pudicitia*. Cicero's corpus of *utilitates* largely reflects virtues expected of male citizens, especially those belonging to the senatorial and equestrian orders—as far as we can gather—whose participation in public life was central to the functioning of the *res publica*. *Pudicitia*, while possessing civic significance—most notably through its connection to the moral integrity of the *gens*—might have been considered more

of a “domestic” virtue, rooted in the private sphere, and therefore not immediately relevant to Cicero’s Stoic-inflected discussion of civic religion. Moreover, the regulation of female sexual behavior by male citizens was more tied to familial structures than to civic responsibilities, therefore belonging more to the private realm than to the public one.

Furthermore, while *pudicitia* certainly functioned as a civic virtue—one that had implications for the moral integrity of families—its primary focus on sexual conduct, and more specifically the control of female sexuality, might have rendered it less suitable for inclusion. Even in his *De Officiis*, Cicero is concerned with moral duties (*officia*) as they relate to public life and the common good, often drawing on Stoic and Academic frameworks that prioritize rationality and communal welfare, hence the focus on virtues such as *virtus*, *fides*, and *honor*.²⁶ Additionally, Cicero, like many of his contemporaries, often treats sexual topics with a degree of rhetorical distance or, at times, discomfort. While he does not shy away from sexual invective in forensic or political contexts, in his philosophical works he generally avoids discussions of sexual matters.

Finally, and perhaps more likely, Cicero might have regarded *pudicitia* as already encompassed under broader virtues like *pietas* and *fides*, which also touch upon appropriate behavior in familial and social contexts, although in a less explicitly sexualized way. If *pudicitia* were viewed as a subset or consequence of these broader, more inclusive virtues, Cicero might not have found it necessary to emphasize it specifically.

Moving on beyond *Pudicitia* and her absence in Cicero’s list of *utilitates*, the methodological approach developed in this dissertation could be fruitfully applied to other groups of Roman personifications, organized around different but equally culturally significant criteria.

²⁶ Perhaps, we can even add from a Stoic perspective, which Cicero often engages with (even while maintaining an Academic skepticism), virtues connected to bodily passions, including sexual ones, are typically treated with caution. The Stoic wise man is not led by passions and even appropriate physical behavior must be governed by reason. *Pudicitia*, with its roots in the control of sexual activity, may have been perceived as more a social convention or specific moral restraint than a virtue of universal civic application. Cicero may have preferred virtues that embodied rational control in the service of public utility, rather than those tied to specific social roles or physical domains.

One promising direction would be to explore personifications of private virtues, as distinct from the civic virtues analyzed here. While the *utilitates* are rooted in public life and contribute directly to the cohesion and function of the state, many Roman values pertain to the private domain, particularly in relation to family, household management, and interpersonal relationships.

In conclusion, this dissertation has laid the groundwork for an emic understanding of Cicero's *utilitates* as divine civic virtues, challenging long-standing Christianized and etic interpretations of Roman personifications. Yet the field remains open in expanding the scope of inquiry to other clusters of personified divinities. By considering alternative criteria—e.g., domestic versus public, life-cycle stages, imperial versus republican values, or gendered dimensions—scholars can further illuminate the richness and complexity of Roman religious thought and its articulation through personifications. The study of the *utilitates*, therefore, has been a window into the moral and religious imagination of Rome, one that hopefully continues to invite re-examination and dialogue.

Conclusion

This dissertation examined Cicero's *utilitates* through three complementary lenses—religious-philosophical and historical, literary and editorial, ethical and behavioral—in order to recover their full significance as deified civic virtues in Roman culture. An examination of seemingly minor figures in Roman polytheism, found in Cicero's works, has emerged as a compelling lens onto Roman religious thought, literary expression, and civic ethics.

Chapter I laid the foundation by restoring the religious, philosophical and political seriousness of these personifications, contesting both Christianizing tendencies and external interpretive frameworks that have long distorted scholarly understandings. I argued for an emic approach, grounded in Roman categories and sensitivities, which reveals the *utilitates* not as mere abstract moralizations, but as divine agents rooted in cult, language, and social practice. Their threefold identity—as abstract nouns, as personifications, and as gods—called for a more comprehensive approach.

The analysis of key excerpts from *De natura deorum* revealed the nature of these deified civic virtues, while those from *De legibus* informed about their roles in Roman polytheism and civic life.

These virtues are human traits that are also considered divine, as people honor them by building temples for their personifications and engaging in rituals. Several interpretative errors compromised the analysis of the selected passages from *De natura deorum* due to a misunderstanding of the philosophical contexts in which the arguments were presented. The discussion consisted of a dialogue between Balbus the Stoic and Cotta the Skeptic. The insights gained from these philosophical discussions focus on the relationship between the names of the gods—specifically, the deified personifications of *concordia*, *fides*, *honos*, *mens*, *salus*, *victoria*, and *virtus*—and their produced outcomes. These outcomes are not logically subordinate to the deity; instead, they are interdependent. Thus, the relationship between name and outcome is metonymic, reflecting a quality-reality connection, which is what distinguishes them from all other

personifications. The confusion surrounding the connection between the names and outcomes of these deified abstract concepts, coupled with the absence of a robust mythology around them, resulted in varied and divergent scholarly interpretations. I sought to reduce the confusion by grouping these personifications under a single term, the *utilitates*, as the concept of *utilitas* frequently arose in their discussions, particularly through Balbus's and Cotta's words during the philosophical discourse about them. In short, the *utilitates* are gods whose names correspond to themselves as subjects and to the matters they confer as objects.

The environment in which the *utilitates* function, both on a human and divine level, is civic. The gods are regarded as fellow citizens, and are believed to share the same social virtues that people attribute to them. In an idealized collective existence, both men and gods adhere to the same moral guidelines, positioning the *utilitates* as both models and deterrents with regard to moral practices. The *utilitates* function as religious actions within a civic framework, much like legal prescriptions. A key characteristic of these actions is their behavioral aspect: they essentially guide you on how to act.

Moving on to Chapter II, I explored the literary dimension of these figures, focusing in particular on the problem of their representation and interpretation in written texts, mainly drawn from Virgil's *Aeneid*. As we observed from Chapter I, the *utilitates* distinguish themselves from conventional literary personifications through a threefold metonymic structure: each name encapsulates at once the abstract idea, its literary embodiment, and the divinity officially venerated in Roman cult. Nevertheless, from a native viewpoint, the term "personification" remains appropriate, as these figures are conceived within the grammatical and rhetorical framework traditionally reserved for personified abstractions. Shifting the focus from literary to historical, a significant cultural transformation reshaped even this practice. The ideological shift from Republic to Empire reoriented the religious meaning of personifications. Once tied to communal Republican ideals, these figures became increasingly associated with imperial authority: they became the direct

virtues of the emperors, not of their people. Cicero's *utilitates* mark an important moment in this trajectory—a moment already seen as somewhat archaic by the time of Pliny the Elder, writing nearly a century later. Pliny reflects on similar personifications with a sense of distance, treating them as relics of an earlier religious sensibility, if not outright superstition.

The heart of this chapter addresses specifically the editorial dilemma of how to signify divinity, abstraction, and personification in both translation and typography. From the viewpoint of literary criticism, capitalization is not an issue inherent to Roman (or ancient) culture but rather a contemporary scholarly convention. Forcing the choice between abstract concept and god, i.e., majuscule and minuscule, means not acknowledging—in the case of Cicero's *utilitates*—their peculiar threefold identity—as abstract nouns, as personifications, and as gods.

This investigation centers on an essential editorial question: does the contemporary practice of capitalizing personified abstractions effectively express both their civic role and their sacred aspect? This is no minor typographic concern. It reveals, and simultaneously obscures, deeper interpretive tensions. Writing a personified deity in lowercase can strip her of religious stature; capitalizing the name, on the other hand, may reduce her to divinity alone, eclipsing her civic relevance. Such ambiguity also creates challenges in translation, often leaving unacknowledged the texts' dual engagement with the human and the divine.

To navigate this difficulty, I propose a middle path, a “model of compromise:” a solution that hopefully neither imposes uniform capitalization nor erases the divine aspect. The use of small caps—a convention with precedent in editorial practice and supported by scholars such as Clark (2007)—allows for nuanced emphasis without overt interpretation. This strategy preserves the layered intentionality found in our sources and respects the stylistic ambiguity cultivated by Roman authors. Adopting such a compromise does not displace earlier readings, many of which remain compelling. Rather, it expands the interpretive field, introducing a hermeneutic subtlety that better reflects Roman cultural codes. While Clark emphasizes the indeterminate quality of these figures, I

contend that this very indeterminacy is best met not with definitive editorial choices, but with practices that accommodate multiplicity. Thus, in approaching Cicero's *utilitates*, we must recover their religious dimension as part of their full semantic richness. To neglect this aspect is to misread not only the texts, but the worldview from which they emerged.

Chapter III examined the ethical and behavioral dimension of the *utilitates*, analyzing how these personified virtues functioned as tools for moral reasoning and civic guidance.

Rather than framing *utilitas* as a mere synonym for “utility” or “usefulness,” this chapter has explored the term's deeper moral and civic significance in Cicero's works—especially its function as a measure of what is ethically appropriate in a given situation. When Cicero reflects on the tension between the *honestum* and the *utile*, *utilitas* emerges not simply as what is advantageous, but as what is fitting—that is, what is ethically and culturally expected within the Roman community. It is this richer sense of the term that aligns with the normative power of the personified *utilitates*. These deified civic virtues do not remain confined to abstract philosophical ideals or poetic personifications. Rather, they act as behavioral models—tools of ethical orientation designed to shape Roman conduct in practical, public life. They signal appropriate action in moments of doubt, reinforce communal values, and make visible the moral expectations encoded in Roman civic ideology. As such, they serve as moral compasses—indicating not just what is permissible, but what is most aligned with virtue, and thus most beneficial for the community. Their very divinity does not merely endorse values; it gives them prescriptive force.

This behavioral dimension is central to understanding how Roman religion and ethics intersect in civic life. Responding to his criticism of Panaetius, Cicero develops a framework in which deified virtues are not just conceptual tools, but instruments of action. They shape judgment, guide decision-making, and mark the boundaries of what is morally expected from citizens. This chapter has aimed to bring that practical, normative force into focus. Viewed from this angle, *utilitates* are moral agents. To honor such virtues in cult is also to embody them in action. Worship

becomes internalization. The divine personifications of these figures do not merely reflect civic ideals—they command them. Roman civic religion constructs a world in which gods are fellow citizens, and virtues themselves become “participants” in the life of the state. But these personifications were never ideologically neutral. Rooted in elite discourse, the *utilitates* also helped legitimize the moral authority of those who claimed to exemplify them. They reflected the values of the ruling class while reinforcing their dominance.

This chapter’s argument thus returns—though now through a different lens—to the questions raised at the outset of this study, particularly in Chapter I’s analysis of *De natura deorum*. If the divine status of civic virtues defines their place in Roman polytheism, then their practical role as behavioral norms defines their place in Roman ethics. Moreover, their commemorative function reinforces their cultural power. Figures like Regulus, associated with *fides*, do not just exemplify virtue; they become “vessels” of collective memory. They function as reminders—agents not of divine intervention, but of moral expectation. Their lasting *utilitas*, then, lies not in practical usefulness but in their capacity to express what is proper, what is demanded, and what aligns with both *honestum* and *utile*. They represent an ethic that is both divinely allowed and socially constructed—shaped by cultural memory, sustained by ritual, and enacted through civic life.

This dissertation ends with an epilogue. I extended the analysis beyond Cicero’s list of *utilitates* by proposing the inclusion of *Pudicitia*, a personified virtue that meets the same criteria—abstract moral category, literary figure, and cultic deity—and exhibits a comparable civic and ethical agency.

Through close readings of Livy, Valerius Maximus, and Cicero, I showed how *Pudicitia* functions within the same religious and rhetorical framework, despite its absence from Cicero’s discourse, like the other *utilitates*. I argued that her dual-gendered expression and capacity to generate change relevant to the community, as illustrated in the narratives of Caius Publilius and Verginia, make her an especially powerful case study of *utilitas*. In this sense, *Pudicitia* exemplifies

the Roman articulation of moral norms through personified divinities, and her study supports and further refines the theoretical framework developed across the chapters.

Throughout this research, a constant methodological challenge has been the effort to “scrape away” the layers of sedimented interpretation that have accumulated over decades of otherwise authoritative scholarship. Engaging with such a complex tradition required both intellectual caution and critical resolve. Though the number of primary passages examined in Chapter I may appear modest, their interpretive density—when approached with anthropological sensitivity and an emic perspective—reveals the extent to which these texts demand to be handled with care. The work of the scholar, here, is akin to restoration: clearing accretions without erasing traces, dislodging prejudice without damaging what lies beneath. Translating a culture so distant in time, space, and worldview is a delicate undertaking—one that calls for humility, attentiveness, and respect for the logic of the source culture.

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