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# A Classicising Friar in Dante's Florence: Servasanto da Faenza, Dante and the Ethics of Friendship\*

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The aim of this essay is rather limited, and perhaps the title may look ambitious when compared to its actual content. I shall not offer here a comprehensive discussion of the role of classical antiquity in shaping religious culture in Dante's Italy, nor shall I presume definitively to solve any of the many problems related to the topic. On this occasion I shall not even try to sketch a well-rounded profile of the classicising friar mentioned in the title. Hence the subtitle: I propose to limit myself to posing a few still unaddressed questions on the reception of classical culture in Dante's intellectual context. I shall do so by discussing a sermon preached on an unknown occasion (presumably in Florence during the last decades of the thirteenth century) by the Franciscan Servasanto da Faenza and later collected in the so-called *De proprio sanctorum* collection of his sermons, with a specific focus on the use made by the preacher of classical sources.<sup>1</sup> Only towards the end of this brief discussion shall I touch on the importance to our understanding of Dante's poetry of such a religious reading of classical culture.

The definition 'classicizing friar' comes from Beryl Smalley's pioneering study on *English Friars and Antiquity*. The term 'points to fondness for classical literature, history and myth' displayed in sermons, preaching aids and biblical commentaries written by a group of early fourteenth-century English friars centred mostly in Oxford and Cambridge 'without suggesting that the group played any special part in

the rise of humanism',<sup>2</sup> insofar as they do not aim to produce a scholarly type of classicism but rather to use classical sources 'for the furtherance of the Gospel through the art of preaching'.<sup>3</sup> To the best of my knowledge, to date only a few attempts have been undertaken to investigate the presence of a similar attitude in late medieval Italy. This, even though Billanovich's seminal studies on Italian pre-humanism have long since established that an English friar was active as commentator of classical texts (including Seneca, Boethius and Livy) in central Italy, most notably between Pisa and Florence at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries: the Dominican Nicholas Trevet.<sup>4</sup> In what follows I shall argue that Servasanto can also be listed among these Italian classicising friars, in light of the high number of quotations and references to classical literature and culture in his surviving sermons. My discussion will focus on his role as mediator of classical texts to Dante's intellectual context.

Among Servasanto's many sermons rich in quotations from classical authorities, one worthy of special consideration is the first of two on St Bartholomew. It is based on a verse from the Gospel of Luke, 'Amice, ascende superius' [Friend, go up higher],<sup>5</sup> and it develops an articulated discourse on friendship that aims to comment on this biblical authority by means of constant references to Cicero's *De amicitia*. Although no such use of the *De amicitia* can be found in standard exegesis on the Gospel of Luke,<sup>6</sup> the use of references to Cicero's treatise to comment on that verse is not peculiar to Servasanto's sermon. It can also be found in other sermons from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>7</sup> However, references to the same verse in late medieval preaching often occur in support of discourses on knowledge. Sermons based on Luke 14. 10 are thus peculiar to university preaching. Here the focus is less on the first word (*amice*) than on the last two (*ascende superius*), so as to support a line of reasoning intended to celebrate study as true friendship to knowledge, i.e., the only activity that can elevate men on earth.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, Servasanto's sermon does offer a slightly different interpretation of the second half of the biblical verse, by reading (as we shall see towards the end of this essay) the adverb *superius* in a moral sense. This consists in a demonstration that Bartholomew was a good friend of Christ ('verus ergo amicus Bartholomeus fuit, quando Christo non diviti, sed summe pauperi se conjunxit' [Bartholomew was in fact a good friend, when he joined Christ not for riches but for great poverty]).<sup>9</sup> Such a reading is based on an articulated set of references to the notion of friendship as developed by classical, rather than biblical,<sup>10</sup> authorities and including, in addition

to the aforementioned *De amicitia*, Valerius Maximus, Seneca, Boethius and Macrobius.<sup>11</sup>

Surprisingly enough, no extant manuscript of any of the classical authorities quoted by Servasanto can be found in the ancient catalogue of the library of Santa Croce.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, excerpts from the majority of them (Valerius Maximus, Macrobius and Seneca) are present in a manuscript now held in Florence's Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Plut. 6 sin. 10, which had been housed in the Franciscan convent since the late thirteenth century.<sup>13</sup> A closer look into this collection of *notabilia* is essential to a better understanding of Servasanto's reading of classical culture in this sermon. Let us, for instance, consider an *exemplum* concerning Alexander the Great that Servasanto intended using to demonstrate that good friends are as united as if they were one, as well as to exhort his listeners to be good friends to each other, given that even pagans could be champions of friendship:<sup>14</sup>

Nam, postquam Alexander, rex Macedonum, regem Darius devicisset et regnum Persarum suo dominio subjugasset, et ad quemdam locum, ubi erat mater Darii, devenisset, illa quemdam militem videns, quem propter elegantiam formae, et magnitudinem personae Alexandrum esse credidit, ipsum tanquam regem salutavit. Cumque audiret, quo ille quem salutaverat, rex non esset, timens, verba querebat, quibus se excusaret. Cui rex: Nihil est, quod in hac re debeas formidare: quia et hic Alexander est, et ego sum id quod ipse est.<sup>15</sup>

Quod ita esse rex Alexander sensit. Darei castris, in quibus omnes necessarii eius erant, potitus Hephaestione gratisimo sibi latus suum tegente ad eos adloquendos uenit. Cuius aduentu mater Darei recreata humi prostratum caput erexit Hephaestionemque, quia et statura et forma praestabat, more Persarum adulata tanquam Alexandrum salutavit. Admonita deinde erroris per summam trepidationem excusationis uerba quaerebat. Cui Alexander 'nihil est' inquit 'quod hoc nomine confundaris: nam et hic Alexander est'.<sup>16</sup>

[In fact, after Alexander, king of the Macedonians, defeated King Darius and conquered the Persian kingdom, and came to a certain place where Darius's mother was, she, seeing a certain soldier and believing he was Alexander because of his graceful and magnificent appearance, welcomed him as the king. When she realised that he whom she welcomed was not the king, full of fear she asked to be excused. The king said to her: There is nothing to be afraid of, because he is Alexander too and I myself am what he himself is.]

[King Alexander realised that this was the case. He captured the camp of Darius, and with his favourite friend Hephaestion by his side, he came to speak to the relatives of Darius, who were all in the camp. The mother of Darius was cheered by his arrival and lifted up her head from the ground where she had lain prostrated. Since Hephaestion was more impressive in height and appearance, she bowed down before him in the Persian way, greeting him as if he were Alexander. When her mistake was pointed out, she was absolutely terrified and tried to find words with which to excuse herself. But Alexander said to her, 'There is no need to get upset just because of a name: he is Alexander too'.]

Here is Servasanto's *exemplum* (on the left) alongside its most probable source (on the right): an anecdote narrated in Valerius Maximus's *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. Although the *exemplum* is quite clearly a rewording of this text, Servasanto does not mention the name of the soldier mistaken for Alexander, who in the ancient versions of the anecdote is always named as Hephaestion; instead he narrates the story as if it occurred simply to 'quemdam militem' [a certain soldier]. Apart from this difference, which is indeed a major one, the *exemplum* shows strong links with the *Facta et dicta*: the most notable similarity is not the wording of the sentence attributed to Alexander ('hic Alexander est' [Alexander is here as well]), which may well come from any of the other ancient versions of the story,<sup>17</sup> but the simple fact that both Servasanto and Valerius Maximus link the anecdote to the theme of friendship: the first by narrating it in a sermon on friendship and the second by including it in his collection's section on friendship. Whereas the other accounts put their stress on the

magnanimity of Alexander himself, these both focus on the fact that such magnanimity is a clear sign of his close friendship with Hephaestion.

Servasanto's use of Valerius Maximus as a source for *exempla* from ancient history is not surprising, considering that such use is constant in his sermons.<sup>18</sup> What is surprising is that this specific *exemplum* is not at all common in late medieval preaching: to the best of my knowledge the story is not included in any existing medieval sermon or collection of *exempla*. Yet the substitution of a character as essential as Hephaestion seems to point out that Servasanto is not copying the story directly from Valerius's text. To date, I have not found any medieval version of the anecdote that fails to mention Hephaestion.

However, some observations on Servasanto as reader of the *Facta et dicta* become possible by considering the list of *notabilia* from Valerius Maximus's texts present in the aforementioned manuscript from the library of Santa Croce. This list is alphabetical, and tends to group the *exempla* according to their relevance to the development of different moral themes. Under the letter 'a', the anonymous compiler also lists some passages from the *Facta et dicta* on friendship, introduced by the title 'De amicitia l. iiii c. vii', written in red characters.<sup>19</sup> The title echoes precisely the chapter on friendship of the *Facta et dicta* (Book IV, chapter 7), and is followed by a list of *exempla*. Here is the list, transcribed in bullet points and contrasted with the actual table of contents of Valerius's text (in square brackets):

1. Comendatio amicitiae
2. Gracco et Blossio [4.7.1]
3. Pomponio et Lectorio amicis G(aii) Gracci [4.7.2]
4. Lucio Regio et Scipione [4.7.3]
5. Volupnio et Lucullo [4.7.4]
6. Lucio Petronio et Celio [4.7.5]
7. Terentio Servo et Decimo Bruto [4.7.6]
8. Decimo Lelio cum Agrippa [4.7.7]
9. Damone et Phytia [4.7.ext. 1]
10. Amicitie effectibus magnis et plenis
11. Alexander et Ephestione [4.7.ext. 2]
12. Pompeio et Valerio
13. Felicitate quo invidiam patiam

[1. Commendation of friendship; 2. On Gracchus and Blossius; 3. On Pomponius and Lectorius, friends of Gaius Gracchus; 4. On Lucius Regius and Scipio; 5. On Volupnius and Lucullus; 6. On Lucius

Petronius and Celius; 7. On Terentius Servus and Decimus Brutus; 8. On Decimus Laelius with Agrippa; 9. On Damon and Pythias; 10. On the great and copious effects of friendship; 11. On Alexander and Hephaestion; 12. On Pompey and Valerius; 13. On felicity from enduring envy]

The list of *notabilia* follows the sequence of *exempla* in Valerius's text quite closely, as they are listed in the same order. Moreover, the first of the *notabilia* (*comendatio amicitiae*) probably refers to the introduction of this section of *exempla* in the *Facta et dicta* (4. 7. Intr.), so that the first item on the list also reflects a passage in the classical source. The text which the list refers to, however, must have been slightly different from the modern standard edition, as it seems to contain three extra chapters: two on friendship itself (numbers 10 and 13 on the list), plus one extra *exemplum* (*Pompeio et Valerio*). Besides this difference, significant as it is, what matters most is that the list of *notabilia* testifies to the circulation in late thirteenth-century Florence of the anecdote on Alexander and Hephaestion as a good example relating to friendship.

The manuscript does not offer any suggestion that would explain why Servasanto fails to mention Hephaestion. However, its importance must not be underestimated, as it appears to be one of the most rich and complete collections of classical *excerpta* and authorities available at the library of Santa Croce during Servasanto's stay in that convent.<sup>20</sup> In this regard it is important to consider that the manuscript contains numerous quotes and *exempla* on friendship derived from ancient philosophers and writers. For instance, on the very first page there is a discussion of friendship drawn from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which focuses on the distinction between true and false friendship (ff.1r–2v).<sup>21</sup> The presence of such a discussion testifies to the circulation of this theme in the Florentine environment, and of a distinction between different types of friendship that offers Servasanto the argument with which to begin his sermon by distinguishing between selfish and unselfish friendship (as we shall see later on).

This latter discussion is far less articulated than the Aristotelian one, but it is still significant that it reflects the same interests shown by the anonymous compiler of these *notabilia*. However, Servasanto does not follow the Aristotelian theory of friendship, and tends rather to ground his argument on the authority of Seneca's *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, which are quoted twice in the sermon.<sup>22</sup> This is a rather unusual choice. However, it makes complete sense once we take into account that the Florentine manuscript also contains an anthology of passages from Seneca's works, mostly from the *Epistulae* themselves. These are transcribed according

to their relevance to different themes, among which there is also a comprehensive series of passages on friendship. It is thus quite clear that in the intellectual environment of Santa Croce, Seneca was also perceived as an authority *de amicitia*: this makes Servasanto's choice more understandable.

His first quotation from Seneca's letters appears in support of the discussion of the long-standing *tòpos* of unselfish friendship, and reads as follows:

Seneca: Ergo amicum quaero cui serviam, pro quo mori valeam, non a quo munera ulla recipiam. Nam qui in amicitia non amici, sed sua commoda pensat, non bene cogitat, quia sicut coepit, sic desinet, et cum amicum viderit afflictum, discedet.<sup>23</sup>

[Seneca: therefore, I seek a friend to serve, for whom it is worth dying, not from whom to receive any reward. In fact, anyone who, being a friend, cares not about his friend but about his own convenience, does not reflect properly, because as it began so it will end, and when he sees his friend suffering he will leave.]

What is to be stressed about this quote is, first and foremost, its originality. During the thirteenth century Seneca was used as an authority on friendship, albeit a minor one, also in other texts related to preaching (most notably in Peraldus's *Summa*), but with reference to different passages from the Senecan *corpus*, from both the *De beneficiis* and the *Epistulae ad Lucilium*.<sup>24</sup> However, while Peraldus follows his sources quite closely, Servasanto's quote does not appear in any work by Seneca, even though its content seems to echo a paragraph of a letter entirely devoted to the theme of friendship ('In quid amicum paras? Ut habeam pro quo mori possim, ut habeam quem in exilium sequar, cuius me morti et opponam et impendam' [For what purpose, then, do I make a man my friend? In order to have someone for whom I may die, whom I may follow into exile, against whose death I may stake my own life, and the pledge, too]).<sup>25</sup> This letter is transcribed among other Senecan passages *de amicitia* in the Florentine manuscript: 'Amici paro ut habeam pro quo mori possim, ut habeam quem in exilium sequar, cui me morti opponam et impendam' [I make friends so as to have someone for whom I may die, to have someone to follow into exile, for whose death I may stake my own life, and the pledge, too].<sup>26</sup>

What I am suggesting is not necessarily that Servasanto is here putting into his own words a sentence that he found in this collection

of *notabilia*. Besides the fact that there is no positive evidence that Servasanto knew and used this manuscript, it might well be the case that the sentence worded as in his sermon also circulated in another, still unknown, *florilegium*.<sup>27</sup> Still, it is worth observing that the rewording of Seneca's passage (most notably its beginning: 'In quid amicum paras?') is similar both in Servasanto's sermon ('Ergo amicum quaero') and in the Florentine collection ('Amici paro'): the latter uses the same verb as Seneca (*paro*), but in a sentence syntactically closer rather to Servasanto than to Seneca (i.e., not phrased as a rhetorical question, but as a simple affirmation, 'verb + direct object'). However, what I want to stress is that the manuscript Plut. 6 sin. 10 must have conveyed into the Florentine cultural context themes, authorities and *exempla* that at a first sight seem peculiar to Servasanto's preaching style.

Whether or not this manuscript was a point of reference for Servasanto in terms of classical authors and motifs, the sermon on St Bartholomew, as mentioned, is an articulated discourse on friendship based on classical authorities. It is worth now moving on to consider the nature of such a discourse itself – or, to put it more precisely, to consider the ethics of friendship displayed in this sermon. Servasanto takes his starting point from a double reference to Cicero and Valerius Maximus, to make a point that echoes quite precisely the first observation made by Peraldus in his *summa*'s chapter on friendship: 'Unde concludit Tullius, quod omnibus rebus humanis est amicitia praeponenda' [Therefore Cicero concludes that friendship is to be preferred above all human things].<sup>28</sup>

Such a statement leads into a very traditional distinction between true and false friendship, and to the following, equally conventional, statement: 'Non est enim credendus amicus, qui beneficiis cessantibus, amicitia divideretur, eo quod tales omnes amici fortunae sunt, non personae' [In fact, he should not be considered a friend who, once the advantages cease, breaks friendship, for these are friends to fortune not to the person].<sup>29</sup> The notion of *amici fortunae* is a long-standing *tòpos*, present in many ancient and medieval texts including Ovid's *Tristia* ('Vix duo tresve homini [...] superestis amici, | cetera fortunae, non mea, turba fuit' [Barely you two or three of so many friends are left me: the rest were Fortune's crew, not mine]) and Brunetto Latini's *Favolello* ('ch'amico di ventura | come rota si gira' [because a friend of fortune turns like a wheel]).<sup>30</sup> One might also add to the list Boncompagno da Signa's chapter *De amico fortune*, in his treatise on friendship<sup>31</sup> – as well as words from Dante himself, who at the beginning of the *Commedia* makes Beatrice define his relationship with her as follows: "'I'amico mio, e non de la ventura'" ['My friend, not the friend of fortune'] (*Inf.*, II. 61).<sup>32</sup>

This line of the poem has been read most often with reference to the just-mentioned passages from Ovid and Brunetto, as well as to a few lines from Abelard's commentary to St Paul's Letter to the Romans: 'tale profecto homines, fortunae potius dicendi sunt amici quam hominis' [certainly men of this sort are to be defined friends of fortune rather than of men].<sup>33</sup> However, although these texts (especially the *Tristia*) clearly use the same wording as Dante, none of them offers a solid reference to the real sense of Dante's verse. Beatrice is celebrating a true friendship. By contrast Ovid laments the lack of true friends and Brunetto describes a false friend, while Abelard uses the *iunctura* to distinguish between those who love God unselfishly and those who do so because of their desire to be saved in the afterlife.<sup>34</sup> This latter use of the *amici fortunae* motif is particularly close to that of Servasanto: he celebrates St Bartholomew as a good friend of Christ, so as to exhort his audience to cultivate good friendship with God in order to be saved in the afterlife. Both texts present the same idea, but Servasanto's sermon also helps to locate this form of discourse in Dante's Florence. This latter circumstance is essential, especially when we try to read Dante's verse in light of the theology of friendship displayed in a text not so widely circulated and well known as Aberlard's commentary.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, a closer look at other Florentine developments of this idea might help to shed some further light on the verse on friendship in *Inferno* II. Scholarship tends to offer two different interpretations of Beatrice's definition. The first dates back to Jacopo della Lana, and reads the line as meaning 'friend of mine, and not of fortune', and thus, 'my unfortunate friend'. The second, already present in Benvenuto da Imola's commentary on Dante's poem, reads 'friend of mine, despite bad fortune' and thus 'my true friend'. The latter reading seems preferable. However, both readings interpret the verse as if Dante meant that he was a good friend to Beatrice, with reference to the relationship between the two as described in the *Vita nova* rather than in the *Commedia* itself. This is most probably because Dante himself stated that his reading of Cicero's *De amicitia* after Beatrice's death helped him conceive their relationship, and thus shape it poetically, in a completely different way towards the end of the *Vita nova*.<sup>36</sup> I do not by any means want to suggest that this interpretation is groundless or, worse, wrong.<sup>37</sup> In what follows I simply want to add a new shade to Beatrice's definition that might well coexist with the traditional reading in the polysemy of Dante's verse, by arguing that the development of the theme of friendship in Servasanto's sermon leads to a better understanding of the traditional interpretation.

Beforehand, however, it is worth observing that Beatrice's definition is, to say the least, ambiguous. Conceived as a periphrasis to indicate Dante-the-character, in the expression 'l'amico mio' [my friend], it is not clear whether the stress is on Dante being a friend to Beatrice (as in nearly all the commentaries) or on Beatrice being a friend to Dante. The distinction might look deceptive, and most probably the verse contains both the senses, according to the mutuality intrinsic to friendship itself. However, while the first reading makes complete sense when compared to the link that ties Dante to Beatrice from the *Vita nova* to the *Commedia*, the latter might help to shape an interpretation of the verse that also takes into account the context of the poem's opening. In fact, the theme of friendship – or, to put it more precisely, the necessity for any good Christian to have good friends in order to walk the path that leads to Paradise – is developed by Bono Giamboni in a passage of his *Libro de' vizi e delle virtudi*. He describes a situation particularly close to that in which Dante-the-character finds himself in the first two cantos of the *Commedia*:

E poi disse [*scil.* Philosophy]: Il regno di cielo è molto forte a conquistare, perché è posto molto ad alti, e vavisi per una stretta via, e per una piccola porta vi s'entra, secondo che t'ho detto di sopra. E ha ne la detta via molti nimici, i quali die e notte assaliscono altrui e non dormono niente, e se truovano alcuno in questa via che ben guernito e armato non sia e acompagnato, s'ì il fanno sozzamente a dietro tornare. E però fa bisogno a coloro che vi vanno che sian forniti di fedeli amici; e in altra guisa sarebber malamente traditi e ingannati.<sup>38</sup>

[And then she said: the kingdom of heaven is very hard to conquer, because it is built in a high place, and one reaches it by a narrow path, and one enters here through a small door, as I told you before. And in this path there are many enemies, who attack day and night, and who do not sleep at all, and if they find someone on this path who is not well supplied and armed and who is not accompanied they make him turn back so badly. And thus it is necessary to those who walk this path to be supplied with trustworthy friends; and otherwise they would be badly betrayed and deceived.]

In this brief passage we find a path that leads to Salvation that cannot be easily walked because of the presence of enemies that push back whoever aims to reach the summit. Hence the need for good friends

(‘fedeli amici’), in order to conquer those enemies and be saved. I do not want to downplay the differences between Bono’s text and the magnificent opening of the *Commedia*. It is significant, however, that Giamboni’s *Libro* introduces the theme of good friendship within a scene common to that late medieval Florentine didactic literature that has already been studied as a precedent for *Inferno* I and II (for instance, one cannot fail to see the similarities with the content of the *Detto del gatto lopesco*).<sup>39</sup> In light of this passage from the *Libro de’ vizi e delle virtudi*, one might argue that Beatrice’s periphrasis is conceived to stress that Dante will be saved (i.e., will not be stopped by the enemies encountered on his path to Salvation) *also* because he has a good friend to help him. In this regard it is worth observing not only that by specifying that Dante is a friend “non de la ventura” [‘not of fortune’] Beatrice means that Dante and herself are good friends (i.e. not simply friends), but also that the verse “l’amico mio, e non de la ventura” is the first of a tercet (*Inf.*, II. 61–63) in which Beatrice establishes an explicit connection between this friendship and her intervention to save him because he has found himself stuck (“ne la diserta spiaggia è impedito”) after having been pushed back in trying to walk a path beset by fearful enemies (“sì nel cammin, che volt’è per paura”).

This said, we shall now turn back to Servasanto’s sermon. The preacher discusses St Bartholomew’s friendship as an example of a more general form of friendship that every Prophet and Apostle must have with Christ. In other words, the point that Servasanto makes is that the capacity to be a good friend of Christ is an essential feature of every Prophet – or to put it more precisely, that it is not possible for anyone to be a Prophet (or Apostle, which in medieval terms is the same thing)<sup>40</sup> except by being a good friend to Christ. Servasanto clarifies this point by reporting the lack of true friends of Christ, and thus of Prophets, in his contemporary world:

Sed quis hodie Christi amicus? Ubi sunt hodie, quibus pandantur divina secreta? Ubi sunt hodie divina miracula? Ubi propheta, cui hodie pandantur divina secreta? Unde potest hodie dicere cum Propheta religio Christiana: Signa nostra non vidimus, iam non est propheta, et nos non cognoscet amplius [Psalms 73. 9]. Et illud: Prophetæ nostri non invenerunt visionem a Domino [Jeremiah 2. 9]. Quis hodie, juxta Apostolum, cognovit sensum Domini? Aut quis consiliarius eius fuit? Sed quare, o fratres, haec omnia? Quare sic exclusi sumus a Domini nostri praesentia?

Numquid non sunt in Ecclesia Dei, qui digni essent hac gratia? Sunt quidem plurimi, sed ad hac gratia exclusi sunt propter peccata populi. Non sumus, fratres mei, hac gratia digni, quia non sumus Dei amici, sed potius inimici.<sup>41</sup>

[But who nowadays is a friend of Christ? Where nowadays are those to whom divine secrets are opened? Where nowadays are divine miracles? Where a Prophet, to whom divine secrets are opened? Hence nowadays one can say with the Prophet of Christian religion 'we see not our signs, there is no more any Prophet, neither is there any among us that knoweth how long'. And that 'our Prophets did not receive a vision from God'. Who nowadays as the Apostles knows the thoughts of God? Or who has been his counsellor? But why, brothers, all this? Why are we excluded from the presence of our God? Are there not in the Church of God men worthy of this grace? There are many, but they are excluded from this grace because of the sins of the community. We are not, brothers, worthy of this grace, because we are not friends of God but rather his enemies.]

Interpreted as such, the theme of good friendship (at this stage it is vital to remember that, as mentioned, Servasanto defines this feeling as not being a friend of fortune) reaches a more complex conclusion that that developed in Abelard's commentary: returning to his tag from Luke, being a good friend of Christ (*Amice*) helps one to ascend (*ascende superius*) not only to otherworldly salvation ('Ad subtilitatem excellentissimi premii' [to the refinement of an excellent reward]), but also 'ad dignitatem apostolici officii' [to the dignity of the Apostolic office].<sup>42</sup> While the first interpretation of Beatrice's words in *Inferno* corroborates what we have said in relation to Bono's conception of friendship, by supporting the idea that the ability to be a good friend is essential to gain Salvation, the latter adds a new shade to Beatrice's periphrasis. The definition of Dante as a good friend of a lady who, by virtue of her otherworldly condition, is part of a trio including St Lucy and the Virgin Mary herself,<sup>43</sup> implies that being her friend means, to a certain extent, also being a friend of the Divine.<sup>44</sup> If we then consider this point bearing in mind that, as is well known, in the first two cantos of the poem explicit references to David and to St Paul set the ground, albeit implicitly, for the recognition of the prophetic and apostolic nature of Dante's own poetry,<sup>45</sup> it appears quite clearly that being defined as a good friend by Beatrice adds another reference to the qualities that make Dante suitable to undertake the task of becoming a Prophet of God.

## Notes

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1. The classic study on this preacher is Livarius Oligier, 'Servasanto da Faenza O.F.M. e il suo *Liber de virtutibus et vitiis*', in *Miscellanea Francesco Ehrle*, 5 vols (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1924), I (*Per la storia della filosofia e della teologia*), 148–89. On Servasanto and Dante, see Nick R. Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans. Poverty and the Papacy in the 'Commedia'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 33–4, and Nicolò Maldina, *In pro del mondo. Dante, la predicazione e i generi della letteratura religiosa medievale* (Rome: Salerno, 2017), *ad indicem*.
  2. See Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1961), 1.
  3. John T. Slotemaker and Jeffrey C. Witt, *Robert Holcot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 134. Further evidence of the non-scholarly attitude towards classical literature lies in the fact that these friars generally drew their quotations from secondary sources. See Smalley, 151–2.
  4. See Giuseppe Billanovich, *La tradizione del testo di Livio e le origini dell'Umanesimo*, 2 vols (Padua: Antenore, 1981), I (*Tradizione e fortuna di Livio tra Medioevo e Umanesimo*), 34–40. See also Giuseppina Brunetti, 'Nicolas Trevet, Niccolò da Prato: per le tragedie di Seneca e i libri dei classici', *Memorie domenicane* 44 (2013): 345–71.
  5. Luke 14. 10. Here and elsewhere quotes from the Bible follow the *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, ed. Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983<sup>3</sup>), and English translations are taken from the King James version. Quotes from Servasanto's sermons are from *Bonaventurae opera omnia*, ed. Adolphe C. Peltier, 15 vols (Paris: Ludovicus Vives, 1864–71), XIII (1868), 493–636 (= Servasanto da Faenza, *Sermones de proprio sanctorum*, hereafter referred to as *PS*), and translations from the texts are mine. For the attribution to Servasanto of the sermons here published under the name of Saint Bonaventura see Johannes B. Schneyer, *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit 1150–1350*, 11 vols (Münster: Aschendorff, 1969–90), V, 376–99. See also *Repertorium edierter Texte des Mittelalters aus dem Bereich der Philosophie und angrenzender Gebiete*, ed. Rolf Schönberger, Andrés Quero Sánchez, Brigitte Berges and Lu Jiang (Berlin–Boston: Akademie Verlag, 2011), 3571.
  6. See for instance Hugh of Saint Cher's comment, largely drawing on the so-called *Glossa ordinaria: Postilla Hugonis de Sancto Charo*, 7 vols (Venice: apud Nicolaum Pezzana, 1703), VI, 218v.
  7. See for instance Schneyer, *Repertorium*, IV, 102 and Meister Eckhart, *Sermones*, ed. Ernst Benz, Bruno Decker and Joseph Koch (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1987), 325. In addition, it is worth noting that Peraldus's *Summa* refers constantly to Cicero's treatise in its chapter on friendship. See *Summa virtutum ac vitiorum*, 2 vols (Paris: apud Ludovicum Boulenger, 1648), I, 180a–182a. On the importance of this *summa* as a source for Servasanto, see Antonio Del Castello, *La tradizione del 'Liber de virtutibus et vitiis' di Servasanto da Faenza. Edizione critica delle 'distinctiones' I–IV* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Naples Federico II–École nationale des Chartes, 2011–13), xv–xxiii.
  8. On the use of this verse in Franciscan preaching in this regard, see Joshua C. Benson, 'Matthew of Aquasparta's Sermons on Theology', in *Franciscans and Preaching. Every Miracle from the Beginning of the World Came about through Words*, ed. Timothy J. Johnson (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2012), 145–74 (156–60).
  9. *PS*, 591a.
  10. It goes without saying that this does not exclude the presence of constant references to the Bible itself, and/or to patristic texts. See, for instance, *PS*, 590b: 'Unde dicitur: Si possides amicum, in tentatione posside illum, et non facile credas ei' [For it is said: If thou wouldst get a friend, try him before thou takest him, and do not credit him easily]; *PS*, 592a: 'Unde erat de dicentibus illud: Ecce nos reliquimus omnia' [Whence it is said: Behold, we have forsaken all]; *PS*, 591a: 'Amicitia enim, ut dicit Ambrosius, virtus est, et non quaestus' [For as Ambrose says: Friendship is a virtue, and not an acquisition]. It is nonetheless significant that the sermon mentions only briefly (*PS*, 592b) the biblical verse that clearly offers the key idea developed by Servasanto, i.e., that saints are good friends of Christ: 'Vos amici mei estis si feceritis quae ego praecipio vobis' [Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you] (John 15. 14).

11. All quotes from classical texts follow the Teubneriana editions, unless otherwise stated, and were consulted via the database 'Bibliotheca Teubneriana Latina (BTL) and Thesaurus linguae Latinae (TLL) Online', accessed via: <https://www.degruyter.com/view/db/btll>.
12. This can be easily checked thanks to the list published in Anna Pegoretti, "Nelle scuole delli religiosi": materiali per Santa Croce nell'età di Dante, *L'Alighieri* 50 (2017): 5–55 (44–55).
13. The codex is item 96 in Pegoretti's catalogue (52), described as a *Florilegium* of moral and historical texts, with *notabilia* from *Nic. Eth.*, Seneca (*Epist.* and other), Orosius, Valerius Maximus, Pompeius Trogus, Solinus, Macrobius, *Institutiones of Corpus Iuris Civilis*. The presence of this manuscript in the ancient library of Santa Croce has been pointed out and investigated in the study by Giuseppina Brunetti and Sonia Gentili, 'Una biblioteca nella Firenze di Dante: i manoscritti di Santa Croce', in *Testimoni del vero: su alcuni libri in biblioteche d'autore*, ed. Emilio Russo (Rome: Bulzoni, 2000), 21–55 (36–8), with a focus on the importance of this manuscript for the Aristotelian features of the *Convivio*.
14. This is a use of classical *exempla* peculiar to Servasanto's preaching style. See Maldina, *In pro del mondo*, 222–5.
15. *PS*, 592b.
16. Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta*, IV. vii. ext. 2.
17. See for instance Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*, III. xii. 17: 'Quam manu allevans rex: "Non errasti", inquit, "mater: nam et hic Alexander est"' [The king, taking her hand and raising her to her feet, said: 'You were not mistaken, mother; for this man too is Alexander']. The English translation is taken from the Loeb edition: Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander*, trans. John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).
18. Moreover, in the sermon on St Bartholomew, Valerius Maximus is quoted as one of the most reliable authorities on friendship. See *PS*, 590b, which is the beginning of the sermon: 'Docet Tullius, et Valerius Maximus, quod amicitia propinquitati praefertur. [...] Unde concludit Tullius, quod omnibus rebus humanis est amicitia praeponeunda. [...] Dicit quoque Valerius, quod amicitiae bonum non est a quocumque facile assumendum, sed semel assumptum nunquam est deponendum, quia, qui semel fit amicus, est omni tempore diligendus' [Cicero and Valerius Maximus teach that friendship is to be preferred to proximity. [...] Therefore Cicero concludes that friendship is to be preferred above all human things. [...] Valerius says also that friendship is a good not easy to obtain, but once obtained never to be deposed, because he who has once been a friend is to be loved forever].
19. Florence, BML, MS Plut. 6 sin. 10, f. 62v.
20. As regards the classical authorities quoted by Servasanto and present in the manuscript, it should be observed that Macrobius is quoted in the sermon as the author of the *Saturnalia* (see *PS*, 593b: 'Narrat et Macrobius, quod multi fuerunt servi, et pagani, qui pro dominis suis temporalibus se tradiderunt morti' [Also Macrobius narrates that there were many servants, even pagan ones, who gave themselves up to death for their earthly lords], with reference to *Saturnalia*, I. xi), but the list of *notabilia* in the Florentine manuscript refers to the commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis* only.
21. See, on this section of the manuscript Brunetti and Gentili, 'Una biblioteca', 37, note 41.
22. Seneca must have been perceived as an authority on friendship within the Florentine environment beyond Servasanto's preaching as well: Bono Giamboni also refers to his work to set up a moral discourse on that theme in his *Libro de' vizi e delle virtudi*: 'onde dice Seneca: Aiuta e consiglia l'amico tuo in su' bisogni, acciò che àl possi ritenere e vogliati bene, perché senza amici non s'ha mai vita gioconda' [therefore Seneca says: Help and advise your friend in his needs, so that you can keep him and so that he may love you, because without friends you will never have a happy life], quoted from the edition by Cesare Segre (Turin: Einaudi, 1968), 64; translation mine. In jointly discussing passages from Servasanto's sermons and Giamboni's treatises, it must be observed that no documentable links tie the two Florentine authors besides the fact that they shared and helped shape the same intellectual environment. There is no evidence that Bono's *Della miseria dell'umana generazione* is a re-elaboration of Servasanto's works, as has been stated on several different occasions: see for instance St Alfonso Maria De Liguori, *Opere ascetiche*, ed. Oreste Gregorio, Giuseppe Cacciatore and Domenico Capone (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1960), 261; or as clearly appears also in the discussion offered in *Della miseria dell'uomo, Giardino di consolazione, Introduzione alle virtù di Bono Giamboni*, ed. Francesco Tassi (Florence: Guglielmo Piatti, 1836), xlv–xlv.
23. *PS*, 591a.
24. See for instance Peraldus, *Summa*, I, 181b: 'Senec. in libro de beneficiis: Dic illis non quod volunt audire; sed quod velint semper audisse. Idem in epistolis: Amici vitia frangenda sunt:

- non amo illum, nisi offendero' [Seneca in his book on benefits: Tell them not what they want to hear, but what they would like to hear always. The same author in his letters: One should break the sins of one's friends: I do not love him if I don't displease him] (translation mine). References are to Seneca, *De beneficiis*, VI. 32 and *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, III. 25. 1. On Peraldus's use of Seneca as authority on friendship, see *Das büch der tugenden. Ein Compendium des 14. Jahrhunderts über Moral und Recht nach der 'Summa theologiae' II-II des Thomas Aquin und anderen Werken der Scholastik und Kanonistik*, ed. Klaus Berg and Monika Kasper (Tübingen: Max Miemeyer Verlag, 1984), 233. The study, however, fails to recognise that the quote from Seneca's *Epistulae* is worded differently from its original, according to a version that must have circulated within the Dominican environment as part of a *florilegium*: the sentence is worded as in Peraldus also in Humberti de Romanis, *Opera de vita regulari*, ed. Joachim J. Berthier, 2 vols (Rome: Typis A. Befani, 1888–9), II, 522.
25. Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, I. 9. 10. English translation from the Loeb edition: Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, trans. Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917–25).
  26. Florence, BML, MS Plut. 6 sin. 10, f. 21v. English translation mine.
  27. In this regard, it is worth noting the other reference to Seneca (see *PS*, 591a: 'Non enim debemus amicitiam contrahere cum divite, quia dives est, sicut Seneca docet: quia, sicut mel muscae sequuntur cadavera lupi, frumenta formicae, sic et falsi amici praedam sequuntur, non hominem, et fortunam potius, quam personam' [In fact, we should not become friends with a rich man because he is rich, as Seneca teaches: as flies seek honey, wolves dead bodies and ants wheat, so false friends follow plunder, not men, and fortune rather than persons]). This reference also does not come directly from the Senecan corpus, but must have circulated among preachers, given that one can find it also in Antoninus of Florence's *Confessionale*: see *Confessionale di Santo Antonino [...]* (Venice: Girolamo Scotto, 1566), 116: 'Onde non è amicitia quella ch'è fondata in amor carnale, o in parentado, o in guadagno; ma come dice Seneca, Sicut formicae grana, mel muscae, cadavera lupi, sic turba ista amicorum praedam sequitur' [Therefore it is not friendship if it is based on carnal love, or on kinship, or on profit; but as Seneca says: as ants seek wheat, flies honey, wolves dead bodies, so this crowd of friends follows plunder]. Translations mine.
  28. *PS*, 590b. See Peraldus, *Summa*, I, 180a: 'Tullius in lib. De Amicitia: Omnibus rebus humanis anteponenda est amicitia' [Cicero in his book 'On Friendship': friendship is to be preferred above all human things]. See also *PS*, 590b: 'Docet Tullius, et Valerius Maximus, quod amicitia propinquitati praefertur, eo quod ex propinquitate removeri amor potest, sed ex amicitia nunquam' [Cicero and Valerius Maximus teach that friendship is to be preferred to proximity, insofar as one can remove love from proximity, but never from friendship]; and Peraldus, *Summa*, I, 180a: 'Idem [scil. Cicero] in eod [scil. *De amicitia*] In hoc praestat amicitia propinquitati, quod ex propinquitate benevolentia tolli potest: ex amicitia non potest' [The same author in the same book: in this friendship is better than proximity, because benevolence can be removed from proximity; [but] not from friendship].
  29. *PS*, 591a.
  30. On Brunetto's discussion of friendship see in particular Patrizia Gasparini, 'L'amitié comme fondement de la "concordia civium". Le Favolello de Brunet Latin (et une nouvelle source du *Tresor*)', *Arzana* 13 (2010): 55–108.
  31. See *Amicitia di maestro Boncompagno da Signa*, ed. by Sarina Nathan (Rome: La Società, 1909), XXVII (64–6), which is the source for Brunetto's *Favolello*: 'Amicus fortunae tamquam rota volvitur et iudicat secundum casum' [A friend of fortune turns like a wheel and judges according to circumstance] (64); and for further references to other texts on the same theme (19).
  32. The problem of how to translate this line is further discussed below.
  33. References to Ovid, Brunetto and Abelard are taken from existing scholarship on *Inferno*, II. 61. See, in particular, Mario Casella, 'L'amico mio e non de la ventura', *Studi danteschi* 27 (1943): 117–34 and Francesco Mazzoni, *Saggio di un nuovo commento alla 'Divina Commedia': Inferno canti I–III* (Florence: Sansoni, 1967), 256–68. The translations of Brunetto and Abelard are mine; Ovid is quoted from Anthony S. Kline's translation, available at: <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/OvidTristiaBkTwo.php>.
  34. On Dante's notion of friendship as influenced by a Christian reading of classical sources on the subject see Filippa Modesto, *Dante's Idea of Friendship: the Transformation of a Classical Concept* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 58–77.

35. Only a few manuscripts of Abelard's comment to St Paul's Letter to the Romans survive: see Friedrich Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevii* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1949–61), nr. 6378, 741.
36. See *Convivio*, II. xii. 2–4, quoted following Franca Brambilla Ageno's text (Florence: Le Lettere, 1995): 'Tuttavia, dopo alquanto tempo, la mia mente, che si argomentava di sanare, provide, poi che né 'l mio né l'altrui consolare valea, ritornare al modo che alcuno sconsolato avea tenuto a consolarsi; e misimi a leggere quello non conosciuto da molti libro di Boezio, nel quale, cattivo e discacciato, consolato s'avea. E udendo ancora che Tulio scritto avea un altro libro, nel quale, trattando dell'Amistade, avea toccate parole della consolazione di Lelio, uomo eccellentissimo, nella morte di Scipione amico suo, misimi a leggere quello. E avegna che duro mi fosse nella prima entrare nella loro sentenza, finalmente v'entrai tanto entro, quanto l'arte di gramatica ch'io avea e un poco di mio ingegno potea fare; per lo quale ingegno molte cose, quasi come sognando, già vedea, sì come nella Vita Nova si può vedere' [Nevertheless, after some time my mind, which was endeavouring to heal itself, resolved (since neither my own consolation nor that of others availed) to resort to a method which a certain disconsolate individual has adopted to console himself; and I began to read that book of Boethius, not known to many, in which, while a prisoner and an exile, he had found consolation. And hearing further that Tully had written another book in which, while discussing Friendship, he had addressed words of consolation to Laelius, a man of the highest merit, upon the death of his friend Scipio, I set about reading it. Although it was difficult at first for me to penetrate their meaning, I finally penetrated it as deeply as my command of Latin and the small measure of my intellect enabled me to do, by which intellect I had perceived many things before, as in a dream, as may be seen in the *New Life*]. English translation from: *Dante's 'Il Convivio'*, trans. Richard H. Lansing (New York: Garland, 1990). For further discussion of this passage, see also Anna Pegoretti's essay in this volume.
37. For an interpretation of the presence of the theme of friendship in the first two cantos of the *Commedia*, in relation to Dante's moral salvation, see Modesto, 93–114.
38. Bono Giamboni, *Libro de' vizi e delle virtudi*, XI, p.83.
39. See Antonio Lanza, *Primi secoli. Saggi di letteratura italiana antica* (Rome: Archivio Guido Izzi, 1991), 41–59 and Franco Suitner, 'Le tre fiere di Dante, la *Queste* e il *Gatto lupesco*', in *Dante e il mondo animale*, ed. Giuseppe Crimi and Luca Marcozzi (Rome: Carocci, 2013), 34–48.
40. See Maldina, *In pro del mondo*, 60–80.
41. *PS*, 593a. I have added in square brackets the biblical passages quoted by Servasanto. It is worth observing that Servasanto builds the entire sermon around the contrast between the true friendship of which the Apostles were capable and the false friendship to Christ that characterises his contemporary world. See *PS*, 593b: 'O stultitia christiana, et amicitia falsa, sub christiano nomine palliata, quae sub pelle ovi lupium animum gerit' [O Christian foolishness, and false friendship, covered under the name of Christian, that bears the soul of a wolf under the skin of a sheep].
42. *PS*, 593b–594a: 'Quia ergo sic Christi fuit amicus, ideo audire meruit: Amice, ascende superius. Nam ascendit primo ad dignitatem apostolici officii; secundo, ad excellentiam singularis martyrii, tertio vero, ad subtilitatem excellentissimi premii' [Because he who has been this sort of friend to Christ thus deserves to be addressed as follows: Friend, go up higher. In fact, he ascended first to the dignity of the Apostolic office; secondly, to the excellence of martyrdom; thirdly to the refinement of an excellent reward].
43. See *Inferno*, II. 94–108 and 124–6.
44. This has to be considered since, in the very same canto, Dante is qualified as 'fedele' [faithful one] of St Lucy: *Inferno*, II. 98.
45. See also for other bibliographical references Maldina, *In pro del mondo*, 34–48.