

Angela Dressen

## The Marble Philosophers and the search for *pia sapientia*



Fig. 1: Pintoricchio, *Mountain of Wisdom*, Siena Cathedral, pavement panel (Pietro Scarpellini and Maria Rita Silvestrelli, *Pintoricchio*, Milan 2003, p. 259).

The panel situated in the fourth nave bay of the Sienese cathedral pavement has been given various titles: *The Mount of Wisdom*, *The Mount of Virtue*, or *The Story of Fortune* (fig. 1). Although the allegorical scene obviously has some connection with all three of these topics, I want to reinforce the aspect of wisdom, and to emphasize the importance for the panel's essential iconology of early Christian texts viewed through a humanist lens. During the 1480s the cycle of Sibyls and Hermes Trismegistus had been finished by several artists. In 1504 Pintoricchio was commissioned to make a presentation drawing, the *cartone di disegno* for the *Mount of Wisdom*. Two years later the panel was finished in the *marmo sgraffitto* technique. [1]

The crowded composition shows a spiral-shaped mountain with two plateaux. One group of people has just disembarked from a boat steered by Fortune, and now climb the path up the hill. At the summit a female personification is flanked by the ancient philosophers Socrates and Crates,[2] who are identified by *tabulae* above their heads. The woman, who has been identified as either *Sapientia* or *Virtus*, hands a palm frond to Socrates and a book to Crates. Simultaneously, Crates is hurling from a basket his jewellery downhill at Fortune's head, symbolizing the vanity of earthly possessions. She tries to protect herself with the ship's sail, whilst balancing between the boat and a sphere. The *cornucopia*, the ship's rudder and the sphere are all attributes of Roman *Fortuna*[3], who is

now represented, freed from medieval (mis-)interpretations, as the benevolent Goddess, distributing her gifts according to the moral order. In the pavement iconography she safely transported her passengers to the mountain, despite her boat's dilapidated state.[4] The group of people can now ascend the hill to gain what the *tabula* above *Sapientia* promises: If you can conquer the difficult ascent of this hostile and stony hill, you will receive the palm-branch as a token of peace of soul:

HVC PROPERATE VIRI SALEBROSVM SCANDI-  
TE MONTEM PVLCHRA LABORIS ERVNT PRE-  
MIA PALMA QVIES.[5]



Fig. 2: Raphael, *School of Athens* (part.), Vatican City, Stanza della Segnatura (Stefano Zuffi, Konrad Oberhuber, *Raffaello*, Milan 2006, p. 155, part.).

Before considering the literary sources, it is however helpful to clarify the diversities of social and intellectual status of those climbing the hill. By examining the male garments more carefully, it becomes clear that they represent different classes, identified by *all'antica* robes and hats in various classicising and contemporary styles. In fact the hats seem to provide the most accurate way of distinguishing the eminent mountaineers.[6] Comparing Raphael's approximately contemporary frescoes, the *School of Athens* (fig. 2) and the *Disputa*, it becomes evident that Raphael did not distinguish his sages in this way. While the *tunicas* are broadly similar to those of the Sienese sages, hats are rare, used only to identify popes and bishops. The same is true for many Renaissance paintings. Botticelli in his drawings for the *Divine Comedy* makes a distinction, however which gets closer to the representation in Siena. He gives Virgil the characteristic cylindrical hat, divided by eight *fasciae* coming out of a corporal roll. Dante instead



Fig. 3: Botticelli, *Divine Comedy*, Inf. X (part.) (Hein-Th. Schulze-Altappenberg, *Sandro Botticelli. Pittore della Divina Commedia*, vol. 2, p. 61, part.).

wears the typical hat of humanists and clerics (fig. 3). That Pintoricchio was quite familiar with the means of distinguishing personalities by depicting different kinds of hats is visible in his frescoes in the Libreria Piccolomini just some meters away from our pavement panel (fig. 4+5). Here we see examples of clerical hierarchies with their appropriate hats, as well as examples of sages from the West and the East, humanists and ordinary people.



Fig. 4: Pintoricchio, *Enea Silvio receives the cardinal's hat* (part.), Siena, Libreria Piccolomini (photo by author).





Fig. 5: Pintoricchio, *Enea Silvio elected Pio II* (part.), Siena, Libreria Piccolomini (photo by author).



Fig. 6: Pintoricchio, *Mountain of Wisdom* (part.), Siena Cathedral, pavement panel (Pietro Scarpellini and Maria Rita Silvestrelli, *Pintoricchio*, Milan 2003, p. 259, part.).

In the Sienese *Mountain of Wisdom* Socrates, Crates and the two men on the lower level, one sitting in thought, his companion marching forward while looking backwards, are clearly identified by their hats as Antique sages. In front of them two men appear in the typical barrettes of clerics and humanists. A prominent group of six persons in the lower foreground

stand behind the four sages and clerics, as if waiting their turn to begin the march (fig. 6). This sextet, which includes a woman with plainly arranged hair, is made up of contemporary youths wearing aristocratic or student hats. *Sapientia*, the goal to which they all strive, wears a crown studded with precious gems. *Fortuna*, the complete antithesis of *Sapientia*, is unclothed, hatless and barefoot, her ethereal beauty the embodiment of a transcendent and abstract fate. It is thus evident that the pavement master intended this double search for one's destiny as a problem comprehending all intellectual classes, from philosophers to ordinary people, so clearly characterized in this representation.

Several literary sources for the panel's iconography have already been suggested: *Fortuna* was addressed in the *Hypnerotomachia Polifili* (1499) and earlier in the *Somnium de fortuna* by Enea Silvio Piccolomini, published in 1475-76. Both texts discuss the vicissitudes of riches that *Fortuna* bestows on important people. The *Somnium* furthermore indicates Socrates and Crates as important moral exemplars. Socrates is placed first among those who never gain *Fortuna*'s favour. The *Somnium* also portrays Crates as an example of the man who set aside the gloomy riches given him by *Fortuna*, who then could proceed easily towards philosophical enlightenment.[7] However the *Somnium* remains conventional in characterization and beyond this initial similarity provides no suggestion of narrative structure.

As a compositional source for the weary and upward winding climb towards the goal of moral virtue, the iconic narrative of the *tabula cebetis*, a first century text which became increasingly popular from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, can plausibly be suggested. Here, at the end of the complex ascent of a hill inhabited by several virtues, *Fortuna* is confronted by *Vera Disciplina*, which, however, implies a negative connotation for *Fortuna*. [8] The *tabula cebetis* certainly provides a model for a narrative structure with a virtuous aim, approaching human life from a moral, religious-philosophical standpoint. However, it does not provide the specific source for the Sienese pavement iconography, any more than do any other texts which have so far been adduced.

Thus far it would seem that the pavement iconography is dominated less by humanist and neoplatonic sources themselves, than by a humanist interpretation of biblical or patristic texts, familiar to anyone with a humanist education. I wish therefore to reinforce this hypothesis by considering both the Bible itself and also Lactantius. Surprisingly, neither of these texts has previously been taken in consideration for the interpretation of the *Mountain of Wisdom*, although each contains a chapter closely related to the pavement panel.

The *Mountain of Wisdom's* most obvious source should certainly be the Old Testament *Book of Wisdom*. This provides both a narrative and also a background iconology. In synthesis, wisdom is primarily explained through human aspects, as being close to ordinary people. Thus the *Book of Wisdom* is important in strengthening the search for wisdom in relation to faith as the only way for heavenly acceptance and final illumination, while acknowledging God's guidance of man's destiny through an uncertain, though positive, boat allegory.

In the introductory passage wisdom is termed a philanthropic spirit (1,6), ruled by the Holy Spirit which teaches mankind everything (1,5). It is explained how Wisdom is directed by God (7,15) and is to be interpreted both as a mirror of God's strength and an image of his perfection (7,26). This explains why God will only accept those who seek wisdom (7,28). Eternal life will only be for those who know how to live wisely (8,17). The narrative thrust of the chapter becomes increasingly relevant thereafter for the pavement iconology. Wisdom is termed the teacher of all virtues and therefore its highest embodiment. Wisdom is responsible for the perception of God and necessary for heavenly acceptance (8,2-8,8). What is remarkable here is a detailed imagery of a boat journey towards wisdom under divine guidance (5,10; 14,1-14,7). God's providence directs the ship with its faithful crew despite the waves and the dilapidated state of the ship. Thanks to God's guidance the ship is usable by all, be they experienced sailors or not. The narrative then shifts to a description of vices which hinder mankind's path toward virtue. It depicts "irrational serpents and worthless animals" (cfr. the serpents and frogs in the pavement panel), God's pun-

ishments for excessive folly (11,15). Gold and silver stand for ephemeral and worthless symbols incomparable to the inner riches of true wisdom. Wisdom will be granted however to those who seek it (7,9-7,11; 13,10). Finally the *Book of Wisdom* describes Solomon as the supreme model for wisdom and exemplary behaviour (8,19-9,19).[9]

There had in fact been projected in the Sienese pavement a panel designed by Luca Signorelli with Solomon close to the *Mountain of Wisdom*, which ultimately was never realized.[10] Thus the *Book of Wisdom*, a primary source for every educated humanist and priest is indubitably a fundamental text for a proper understanding of the *Mountain of Wisdom*, by developing a narrative around the search for wisdom for the faithful and ordinary folk, who are truly looking for God and heavenly acceptance. It becomes very clear that wisdom is obtained but by one only means: "Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me".[11] The biblical text thus provides a framework for the theological meaning of the development and the plot, but also establishes several details in the figurative scene. The same can be said about the next text we are going to look at.

Already in 1899 Émile Mâle hinted at the significance of the writings of Lactantius (ca. 250-325), the early Christian apologist, for the cycle of sibyls' iconography in the pavement. Several authorities have agreed.[12] In his seven books of the *Divine Institutiones* Lactantius developed a complex synthesis of Christian doctrine. Especially during the 15<sup>th</sup> century his work on sibylline wisdom became increasingly important. The first printed edition of the *Divine Institutiones* was already available by 1465 and many other editions followed.[13] In fact, Lactantius is not only of fundamental importance for the cycle of the sibyls but equally for the *Mountain of Wisdom*.

Lactantius' third book of the *Divine Institutiones*, called "On the false wisdom of philosophers" is the most authoritative source for the *Mountain of Wisdom*. Parallel to the *Book of Wisdom* Lactantius clearly relies on wisdom's religious background, accessible to people with different status, while, as an apologist, he also looks at the past and the different directions philosophers and their wisdom come from,

all of which are unified by their search for truth and wisdom. Perhaps surprisingly, in Lactantius philosophy is not assigned the incontestable authority which at first glance the panel might suggest. As he explains, philosophers do not necessarily possess wisdom. Rather, philosophers simply aspire towards wisdom and search for it. Lactantius refers to Pythagoras, as the first “philosopher“, in order to explain why human study might never lead to wisdom, and that wisdom and philosophy are not truly equivalent. [14] This in Lactantius’ time not uncommon definition is preceded by Plato’s description of Socrates’ statement, who said that a man himself could not be called wise, as only a God could be wise. Otherwise a man could be called a philosopher or a friend of wisdom. [15]

For Lactantius the two most important, though contrary, philosophical approaches are those of Socrates and Zeno, and he inclines to the latter. Socrates’ thesis implies that nothing can be known, whereas Zeno teaches that everything may be supposed. [16] Following Arkesilaos of Pitane Lactantius repeats the example of ordinary people having possession of genuine wisdom, as they know what they need to know, and admit without hesitation to being ignorant of other things. [17]

Arkesilaos visited the Peripatos in Athens. He was a great admirer of Crates’ teaching and became the leader of the Academy after his teacher’s death. [18] The opponents of Arkesilaos were the Stoics whose founder was Zeno of Citium. Diogenes Laertios in his *Lives of the Philosophers* writes of Zeno, who in Athens following a shipwreck, enters a bookshop and becomes interested in Socrates’ writings. After asking the bookseller where he could possibly meet this person, Crates of Thebes was pointed out to him as a contemporary model. Another variant of this story by Laertios records that Crates was already staying in Athens when he was informed that his ship was damaged, where after he thanked *Fortuna* exclaiming: “It is well done of thee, Fortune, thus to impel me to philosophy“. [19]

Following this interpretation of Zeno and Arkesilaos by Lactantius these two suggest themselves as possible actors at the bottom of the hill in the Sienese panel. The stoic, Zeno deep in thought,

sits at the start of the path leading to wisdom. [20] According to Lactantius the teaching of Zeno’s school was based on a lifestyle which strengthened virtue and peace of mind. In the panel these are fundamental issues in the path to wisdom and are mentioned in the *tabula* above *Sapientia*. In Laertios’ description Zeno earned a golden crown for his virtue (Diogenes Laertius, vii. 6, 11), and he is likewise represented as crowned in the panel’s iconography. Lactantius underlines Zeno’s compassion, which makes him an extraordinarily humane philosopher. Zeno saw pity as fundamental for a functioning human society. [21] The philosopher is directly connected to the group behind him who represent the *popolo*. Representative of the stoics, Zeno’s philosophy influenced the composition of this group, for as Lactantius writes, his philosophy is addressed to everyone, including women and slaves. It is only virtue, however, which leads to a fulfilled and happy life. [22]

In front of Zeno, striding energetically forward while glancing backwards to dispute, is Arkesilaos. [23] He is placed also in front of the *popolo*, the young nobles and students, whom he appears to invite to follow the path to wisdom. Indeed this group on the lower level stands closest to *Sapientia*. However Arkesilaos, like Zeno, remains at the beginning of the path to wisdom. As Lactantius stated, Arkesilaos initiated an unstable and inconsistent philosophy through referring to Socrates and the negation of wisdom. [24] This is the reason for Lactantius’ enquiry: “Where, then, is wisdom? It consists in thinking neither that you know all things, which is the property of God; nor that you are ignorant of all things, which is the role of a beast. For it is something of a middle character which belongs to man, that is, knowledge united and combined with ignorance.“ [25] If one is to follow Lactantius and Arkesilaos, wisdom therefore would be most easily found in each interested and educated man. This explains, on the one hand, why the group of people in the lower foreground stand nearest to *Sapientia*; it also helps identify the pair further along the path to wisdom. These are two humanists, who in the literature have been suggested to be Pandolfo Petrucci and Alberto Aringhieri, the *reggitore della Repubblica* and the *Operaio del Duomo* respectively. [26]

At the summit of the hill only Socrates bows towards *Sapientia*, who reaches out her hand to offer him a palm branch. According to Lactantius, among the philosophers Socrates possessed most “human” wisdom.[27] While history regards Socrates as the wisest of philosophers, in recognizing his own ignorance, Lactantius emphasizes the point that Socratic teaching incorporated the thesis that nothing could really be known. The complex iconography of the pavement stresses this sceptical aspect, developed in Lactantius’ chapter “On the false wisdom of philosophers“.[28] Here we learn that philosophers, concentrating on discussing good and bad ways of conducting life fail to practice it themselves. True wisdom in contrast lies in the conjunction of virtue and knowledge.[29]

In the same chapter Lactantius writes of the shipwreck and liberation from riches. His harsh judgement of the leading philosophers climaxes in an acknowledgement of their inner emptiness, whereas more obscure philosophers appear wise only at the very moment, they divest themselves of possessions. Therefore, Lactantius writes somewhat angrily, he would wait to see their own lifestyle. They would do better to suffer from shipwreck in a storm, as they were not sustained by virtue, but driven only by perverse fear. These dishonourable and insignificant men would cast their belongings away so as to receive more liberality. There follows the example of throwing precious objects into the sea, which however Lactantius narrates through the main character Democritus. He is praised for selling all his possessions and later throwing the money into the sea. Lactantius says however that Democritus would have done better in investing this money humanely and helping the poor. It would be virtuous to get rid of one’s money, but only if one subsequently assisted those who needed it.[30]

Again, according to Lactantius, another false approach by the philosophers lay in their understanding of *Fortuna*. She was not the thoughtless goddess, settling people’s destiny by random choice, and thus philosophers were mistaken in seeing *Fortuna* as their opponent. On other occasions they saw *Fortuna* as God in a natural guise. They would in fact search for the truth in Nature rather than God, a crucial error, since they then claim God to be Nature, a perversion

of the truth. Good and bad do not originate with *Fortuna*. On this occasion Lactantius rounds out his story once again with the example of Democritus, who supposed truth to lie in a bottomless well. But this is erroneous, for it is unnecessary to descend toward truth: rather, it is an ascension to the top of an isolated, windy hill or even to heaven itself. Truth could only be found on the highest summit and this would explain Socrates’ desperate admission that he knew only that in reality he knew nothing. But, Lactantius continues, *Fortuna* would ultimately be nothing more than a chain of unexpected events. Unwittingly, people would think that she distributed both good and bad. This explains why she would be often represented with a cornucopia and a rudder or wheel, as if she were able to confer riches to people and direct their lives, whereas *Fortuna* would never be harsh to anyone.[31]

Lactantius closes his chapter about the false wisdom of philosophers with the suggestion that only the combination of wisdom and virtue would help them for a better life. And true wisdom would result only through the acknowledgement and the worship of God.[32]

It becomes clear that Lactantius as the first Christian author who combined systematically religion and wisdom, is not only the most relevant narrative source for the Sieneese iconography; it also puts the topic of the search for wisdom in a precise place. Searching for wisdom does not mean to follow the teaching of philosophers, though some of them might help as an example. Therefore Lactantius says: “Thus philosophy, inasmuch as it does not possess true religion, that is, the highest piety, is not true wisdom.“[33] The search for wisdom in Lactantius is primarily connected to the Christian *pia sapientia*. It is only the combination of religion and wisdom that leads to illumination and therefore to a higher knowledge. Thus in concordance with the Old Testament’s *Book of Wisdom*, only those searching for wisdom as well as for God and worshipping him may count among the wise people and be accepted in heaven, whereas the *Book of Wisdom* brings it to the point: only those inhabited by wisdom are admitted by God and his providence will keep them on the right way. The positive interpretation of men’s final destiny,

coming out of a seemingly troublesome fate, but guided by God's providence or Fortuna's help are equivalents in the Bible and Lactantius.

As throughout his book, here again Lactantius uses ancient philosophy and its pagan sages to undermine his apologetic approach to justify Christian religion. Pagan authorities often showed useful virtues and moral behaviours comparable to the Christian doctrine. However it is clear that in Lactantius the truly illuminated and wise people are the *docti*, the learned pagans of his days, an interested and skilled society, and as it seems often even "prominent in culture", who are truly looking for religion and the final truth.<sup>[34]</sup> Therefore looking at the Sienese background the importance of Lactantius' *docti* seems to be of clear relevance for the humanists, who may be mirrored in this group, as well as for the laic public. These two categories, following Lactantius, possess the highest possibility of finding true religious wisdom. Represented in the panel on the hill's lower plain we might be assured of their ascendance to the top of the hill, where they will find the enthroned *pia sapientia* distributing heavenly rewards.

What we are dealing with here in Siena is a religious allegory, which gets close to being an *ekphrasis* to specific chapters in early Christian texts. Though we do have contemporary sources dealing with some of its elements, they may not be seen as the primary sources, whereas however they might go back to the same roots. The *Mountain of Wisdom* is a very clear example for a genuine humanistic interpretation of Patristic texts and reveals their importance for humanistic studies. By the means of an apologetic author – who could also be interpreted ironically – humanists are allowed to give relevance to ancient sages, while claiming for priority for their own wisdom.

## Endnotes

1. Maestro Paolo Mannucci executed the panel following the cartoon by Pinturicchio. See: Robert H. Hobart Cust, *The pavement masters of Siena (1369 - 1562)*, London 1901, pp. 28-29; Enzo Carli, *Il Duomo di Siena*, Genova 1979, p. 151; Gail Schwarz Aronow, *A documentary history of the pavement decoration in Siena cathedral, 1362 through 1506*, New York, Columbia Univ., Ph.D. 1985, pp. 348-352 and docc. 192-203. Schübler publishes a drawing by Johann Anton Ramboux, which dates before the restoration in 1859, now in Städelsches Museum Frankfurt (Gosbert Schübler, *Die Tugend auf dem Felsenberg: eine Komposition Pinturicchios für das Paviment des Domes von Siena*, in:

*Zeichen – Rituale - Werte*, ed. by Gerd Althoff, Münster 2004, pp. 435-497, fig. 4).

2. We are dealing with Crates of Thebes, known as a cynic, who lived between the end of the 5th century to the second half of the 4th century before Christ. He was a pupil of Diogenes from Sinope and wrote satirical and parodical lyrics. Together with his sister Ipparchia he stood for a cynical indifference in confrontation to social habits, raising scandal in the society. Caciorgna points to the description made by Ambrogio Traversari in his *Vitae et sententiae philosophorum* (Marilena Caciorgna and Roberto Guerrini, *La virtù figurata: eroi ed eroine dell'antichità nell'arte senese tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, Siena 2003, p. 151; Marilena Caciorgna, *Il naufragio felice: studi di filologia e storia della tradizione classica nella cultura letteraria e figurativa senese*, Sarzana 2004, pp. 215-217). For Crates see also: Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, with an English translation by Robert Drew Hicks, London 1925, vol. 2, pp. 88-97; see also: Mario Bussagli, *Arte e magia a Siena*, Bologna 1991, p. 85 and Schübler 2004, *Die Tugend auf dem Felsenberg*, p. 464. For Socrates see: Diogenes Laertius 1925, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, vol. 1, pp. 148-177.

3. Selected literature on Fortuna: Aby Warburg, *Francesco Sassetis letztwillige Verfügung*, in: *Kunstwissenschaftliche Beiträge, August Schmarsow gewidmet*, Leipzig 1907, pp. 129-152; Frederick Kiefer, *The Conflation of Fortuna and Occasio in Renaissance thought and iconography*, in: *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 1979, pp. 1-27; Stefano Colonna, *Variazioni sul tema della Fortuna da Enea Silvio Piccolomini a Francesco Colonna*, in: *Storia dell'arte*, 66, 1989, pp. 127-142; Philine Helas, *Fortuna-Occasio. Eine Bildprägung des Quattrocento zwischen ephemerer und ewiger Kunst*, in: *Stadel-Jahrbuch*, 17, 1999, pp. 101-124.

4. Fortuna's well intentioned move may therefore contradict the opinions of Stefano Colonna and Gosbert Schübler, whereas Fortuna may only distribute unstable goods, underlined by her unstable position on the sphere (Colonna 1989, *Variazioni sul tema della Fortuna*, p. 136). Schübler also points to a negative identification of Fortuna as a symbol of misfortune and evil. Schübler, after elaborating a pointed summary of the main points in the allegory of Fortune and her attributions, must however conclude with the observation that her unstable position between the boat and the sphere could never give security and stability. Also her nude representation would rather point to a reading as a prostitute. Schübler sees in the connection with the sea another hint to a negative interpretation and her image as bringing misfortune. The mast of the ship, the only possibility of navigation, is broken. Therefore Fortuna could never have brought the crowd of people to the secure land (Schübler 2004, *Die Tugend auf dem Felsenberg*, pp. 448-456). Certainly Schübler's image of Fortuna is not the one of Fortuna-Occasio, which means, the goddess bringing fortune and profit (on Fortuna-Occasio see: Helas 1999, *Fortuna-Occasio*, pp. 101-124). While Schübler is looking for a humanistic interpretation of the panel, his idea of Fortuna is still the medieval image, cited by Petrarca and others, which he mentions. Cassirer and others instead have pointed out, how people in the Renaissance tend to see Fortuna as being steered by one's virtues, thus making man interfere with his own destiny (Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, Leipzig 1927, pp. 81, 126). Though Schübler mentions this changed attitude in the Renaissance, he makes no use of it for the pavement panel (Schübler 2004, *Die Tugend auf dem Felsenberg*, p. 487).

5. Caciorgna mentions two possible sources for this phrase. The first part HVC PROPARETE VIRI might be taken from the 7th century text by Eugenius Toletanus *In basilica sanctis Felicis quae est in Tatanesio* (Carmina XII): "Ecce domus Domini, quae ducit ad atria caeli: / cordibus afflictis huc proparete viri" (Marilena Caciorgna and Roberto Guerrini, *Il pavimento del Duomo di Siena: l'arte della tarsia marmorea dal XIV al XIX secolo; fonti e simbologia*, Milano 2004, p. 81). The second part should be from Geronimus's *Epistulae*: "Scandebat montem Thabor, in quo transfiguratus et Dominus". The same work would also mention Crates, throwing his riches into the sea (Caciorgna 2003, *La virtù figurata*, p. 151).

6. There is little literature about hats in the Renaissance. On costume a useful approach is suggested by: Sara Piccolo Paci, *Turbanti e copricapi ,esotici': Una ricerca esplorativa di tipologie e significati nella miniatura fra Duecento e primo Cinquecento*, in: *Antichità Viva*, 37, 1998, pp. 6-14. She explains the significance of hats for social group as a means to exhibit power, or in case of clerics, as distinction of religious status or rites (My thanks to Anne Dunlop for pointing to the article). Hats in Italy were influenced from an early time on from the Near East.
7. Colonna 1989, *Variazioni sul tema della Fortuna*, pp. 130, 136; Bussagli 1991, *Arte e magia a Siena*, p. 85; Caciorgna 2004, *Il naufragio felice*, p. 200; Caciorgna, Guerrini 2004, *Il pavimento del Duomo di Siena*, p. 76.
8. Reinhart Schleier, *Tabula cebetis*, Berlin 1973. Aronow also mentions this possible iconological source (Aronow 1985, *A documentary history*, p. 350). See also Guerrini 2003, *La virtù figurata*, pp. 311-312 under 'Socrate' and Caciorgna 2004, *Il naufragio felice*, pp. 202-214; Caciorgna, Guerrini 2004, *Il pavimento del Duomo di Siena*, pp. 72-77.
9. *The Oxford annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, ed. by Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, New York 1965, pp. 102-119 (1,5-14,7).
10. Aronow 1985, *A documentary history*, pp. 345-352.
11. *The Oxford annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* 1965, p. 109 (7.7).
12. Emile Mâle, *Quomodo sibyllas recentiores artefactes representaverint*, Paris 1899, pp. 10-12, 45-47; Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic tradition*, London 1964, p. 42; Enzo Carli, *Il Duomo di Siena*, Genova 1979, p. 150; Aronow 1985, *A documentary history*, pp. 237-238, 330-331; Roberto Guerrini, *Le "Divinae institutiones" di Lattanzio nelle epigrafi del Rinascimento: il Collegio del Cambio di Perugia ed il Pavimento del Duomo di Siena (Ermete Trismegisto e Sibille)*, in: *Annuario dell'Istituto Storico Diocesano di Siena*, 1992-1993, vol. 1, pp. 6-38; Anna Maria Romaldo, *Corpus titulorum senensium: le Divinae Institutiones di Lattanzio e il pavimento del duomo di Siena*, in: *Annuario dell'Istituto Storico Diocesano di Siena*, 1992/93(1993), pp. 51-58; Roberto Guerrini, *Le Divinae Institutiones di Lattanzio e il pavimento del Duomo di Siena: Ermete e le Sibille*, in: *Il Duomo come libro aperto: leggere l'arte della Chiesa*, ed. by Senio Bruscellini, Siena 1997, pp. 51-66; Carlo de Clercq, *Quelques séries italiennes de Sibylles*, in: *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, 48/49, 1978-1979, pp. 105-127; Caciorgna 2004, *Il naufragio felice*, pp. 222-223; Caciorgna, Guerrini 2004, *Il pavimento del Duomo di Siena*, pp. 13-51.
13. Editions were printed 1468 in Rome, 1470 in Rome, 1471 in Venice, 1472 in Venice, 1474 in Rome, 1478 in Venice (cfr. Mâle 1899, *Quomodo sibyllas recentiores*, p. 23).
14. *Ante-Nicene fathers: the writings of the fathers down to A.D. 325*, Peabody 1995, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7, book III, chapt. IV, p. 70 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
15. Plato, *Phaidros*, Stuttgart 2008, p. 92 (*Phaidros* 64).
16. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. IV, p. 71 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
17. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. V, p. 72 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
18. For Arkesilaos see Laertius 1925, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, vol. 1, pp. 404-423.
19. For Zenon see: Laertius 1925, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, vol. 2, pp. 110-263 (vii. 2-3). Diogenes' *Vite* were translated into Latin between 1427-1433 by Ambrogio Traversari and printed 1472 for the first time (see also Marilena Caciorgna, "*Salebrosum scandite montem*": contributo all'esegesi iconografica del Monte della Sapienza nel Pavimento del Duomo di Siena; fonti letterarie classiche ed umanistiche, in: *Studi interdisciplinari sul pavimento del Duomo di Siena: iconografia, stile, indagini scientifiche*, ed. by Marilena Caciorgna, Roberto Guerrini, Mario Lorenzoni, Siena 2005, pp. 101-126, see p. 114).
20. Caciorgna had already identified the figure of Zeno in the pavement, however locating him in the standing figure, ready to step off. In the sitting figure she sees the librarian, who handed the book over to Zeno. The figure of Zeno would be connected with the pavement's iconography for the coinciding theme of the "Naufragium felix", a citation in Diogenes. In this context this theme would regard the happy disembarkation of the sages, who had been led by helpful winds. Following Caciorgna, the antique literary source for a shipwreck in combination with the figure of Crates is in Zeno of Citium, mentioned in Diogenes Laertios' *Vite dei filosofi* and in the Sienese Francesco Patrizi's *De institutione reipublicae*. Following the description by Patrizi, Zeno, under the good influence of Fortuna, is able to change from being a merchant to a philosopher. After a shipwreck with an happy end, he met his teacher Crates. In conclusion Caciorgna recognizes in the figure on top of the panel's hill either Philosophia or Sapientia. (Caciorgna 2004, *Il naufragio felice*, pp. 219-221, 230; Caciorgna, Guerrini 2004, *Il pavimento del Duomo di Siena*, pp. 77-80; Caciorgna 2005, *Salebrosum scandite montem*, pp. 114-117). Bussagli sees a general influence in the panel by the Greek alchemist Zosimus from Panopolis (3rd or 4th century). He stood for the conviction that the skills of the philosophers would be more influential than man's destiny, in which he was following Hermes and Zoroaster. This is why man's destiny was less influenced by Fortuna, which he sees in a positive light of the Fortuna-Occasio. Fortuna should be seen in the light of a Venus, her nudity thus as a demonstration of the harmony between Sapientia and nature. Bussagli's interpretation of the ship and the figure of Socrates are however slightly problematic. He sees Pius III in the figure of Socrates, both concerned with political misfortune, but facing their consequences. This interpretation goes as far as seeing a sarcophagus in the throne of Sapientia, while the little boat would hint to Egyptian navigation, itself a motif for the journey to death (Bussagli 1991, *Arte e magia a Siena*, pp. 87-91).
21. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. XXIII, p. 94 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
22. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. XXV, p. 95; chapt. XVII, p. 96 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
23. Laertios comments about Arcesilaus' appearance, he had always been dressed very fashionable (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, with an English translation by Robert Drew Hicks, London 1925, vol. 1, p. 411).
24. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. VI, p. 73 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
25. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. VI, p. 73 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
26. Alessandro Angelini, *Pinturicchio e i pittori senesi: dalla Roma dei Borgia alla Siena di Pandolfo Petrucci*, in: *Studi interdisciplinari sul pavimento del Duomo di Siena: iconografia, stile, indagini scientifiche*, ed. by Marilena Caciorgna, Roberto Guerrini, Mario Lorenzoni, Siena 2005, pp. 83-99, see pp. 86-87; see also: Caciorgna 2005, *Salebrosum scandite montem*, p. 117.
27. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. XX, p. 91 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
28. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. IV, p. 71 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
29. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. VIII, p. 76 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
30. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. XXIII, p. 93 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*). In Diogenes these figures are however Diogenes and Crates. Here it is Diogenes who tries to convince Crates to change his belongings into money and then throw it into the sea (Laertius 1925, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, vol. 2, p. 91).
31. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. XXVIII-XXX, pp. 97-100 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
32. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book III, chapt. XXVIII-XXX, pp. 97-100 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*). With this we have indicated at length why the figure on the mountain cannot be identified as Virtus, cfr. Schüßler 2004, *Die Tugend auf dem Felsenberg*, p. 470.
33. *Ante-Nicene fathers* 1995, vol. 7, book IV, chapt. III, p.102 (Lactantius, *The divine institutes*).
34. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, translation with an introduction and notes by Anthony Bowen and Peter Garnsey, Liverpool 2003, see introduction pp. 15-21, 51-52.



## Figures

Fig. 1: Pintoricchio, *Mountain of Wisdom*, Siena Cathedral, pavement panel (Pietro Scarpellini and Maria Rita Silvestrelli, *Pintoricchio*, Milan 2003, p. 259).

Fig. 2: Raphael, *School of Athen* (part.), Vatican City, Stanza della Segnatura (Stefano Zuffi, Konrad Oberhuber, *Raffaello*, Milan 2006, p. 155, part.).

Fig. 3: Botticelli, *Divine Comedy*, Inf. X (part.), (Hein-Th. Schulze-Alt cappenberg, *Sandro Botticelli. Pittore della Divina Commedia*, vol. 2, p. 61, part.).

Fig. 4: Pintoricchio, *Enea Silvio receives the cardinal's hat* (part.), Siena, Libreria Piccolomini (photo by author).

Fig. 5: Pintoricchio, *Enea Silvio elected Pio II* (part.), Siena, Libreria Piccolomini (photo by author).

Fig. 6: Pintoricchio, *Mountain of Wisdom* (part.), Siena Cathedral, pavement panel (Pietro Scarpellini and Maria Rita Silvestrelli, *Pintoricchio*, Milan 2003, p. 259, part.).

## Title

Angela Dressen, *The Marble Philosophers and the search for pia sapientia*, in: *Representations of Philosophers*, ed. by Helen Langdon, papers presented at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, Venice 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> April 2010, in: [kunsttexte.de](http://kunsttexte.de), Nr. 2, 2011 (9 pages), [www.kunsttexte.de](http://www.kunsttexte.de).

## Summary

Central to the design of the Siena cathedral pavement is the *Mountain of Wisdom*. It is located among Sages like Hermes Trismegistus and the Sibyls. Originating in a larger study of the roles of Neoplatonic, Gnostic and Hermetic concepts of salvation in the cathedral pavement design, this paper concentrates on the panel designed by Pintoricchio in 1504 which shows Socrates, Crates, Fortuna and Sapientia together with a "peripatetic" group of Sages who ascend the mountain. Many sources have been claimed for this scene, among them the Bible, Augustine, and the *tabula cebetis*. Crucial for understanding the panel's iconography are however the Old Testament's *Book of Wisdom* and Lactantius' *Divine Institutes*, with its chapter on the *False Wisdom of the Philosophers*. Lactantius uses ancient philosophy and their pagan sages to undermine his apologetic approach to justify Christian religion. Within this context Socrates and Crates constitute important moral exemplars. The *Book of Wisdom* indicates Sapientia as the teacher of all the virtues, and through an interpretation of Divine Wisdom links humanity to the maritime allegory. Only those who recognize the superiority of Divine Wisdom finally achieve enlightenment.

## Author

Angela Dressen is Andrew W. Mellon Librarian at Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies (Florence, Italy).