Leonardus Colucio S.P.D.

[Written ca. 1405 from Leonardo Bruni to Coluccio Salutati -- the numbered sections are mine.]

[1] **Quo consilio Homerus nomina rebus personisque tribuerit.**

Non satis conspicuum tibi factum ais, quod superioribus ad te litteris de Hectore scripsi, petisque et unde id nomen ductum sit, et quomodo, apertius explicari, et simul admirari videris, si id primaevum non sit, sed postea ab eventu quodam illi viro tributum, ut apud nos Torquati, et Cincinnati, et Africani. [2] Ego autem exiliter porro jejuneque rescripsisse non inficias eo. Sed accidit hoc pudore quodam, quod ad te hominem ea aetate auctoritateque hisce de rebus scribens, quas tibi notiores esse puto quam michi, veritus sum, ne obtunderem auris, ineptusque fierem, si prolixius in iis ostendendis fuerim commoratus. [3] Itaque velut admonuisse et tanquam digito monstrasse contentus, non ultra explicui. Sed quoniam illud tibi placere intelligo, parebo equidem voluntati tuae, et quod tunc properatio abstulit, nunc mora resarciet. Primum igitur de Hectore non dubito, quin id sit non proprium nomen, sed a poeta fictum, ut etiam neque de Astyanacte, neque de Hyppolito dubitari potest. [4] Nam, et Astyanactis aliud nomen ab ipso poeta didicimus Scamandrium, et Hyppoliti, quem fabula tradit turbatis distractum equis, nomen hoc ipsum ita designat, ut plusquam manifestum sit ab eventu fabulae fuisse impositum. Nec ulla sane admiratio vel tibi, vel aliis esse debet, si a poetis fingantur nomina, cum res ipsas fingere illis permittamus, quas constat minus esse in potestate nostra secundum naturam, quam nominum ipsorum impositiones, praesertim cum justa sit ratio nuncupandi, ut est in his ipsis, quae supra memoravimus. [5] Hectoris enim filius, quia spe successionis quasi designatus quidam rex opinione hominum habebatur, Astyanax a poeta dictus est, adeoque fictum nomen praevaluit vero, ut Scamandrium quis fuerit, nemo sciat, Astyanacta vero omnes cognoscant. Hyppoliti quoque non dubito si modo quisquam is fuit qui Thesei filius ab equis distractus fertur, aliud nomen fuisse, quod postea ab hoc ficto et adventitio obscuratum deperiit, ut iam nisi Hyppolitum nemo intelligat. Eadem ratio de Hectore est, quod et ipsum a poeta fictum apparet. [6] Dictum aiunt ab eo, quod Urbem tenuerit, quod quia non satis clarum, tibi videri scribis, conandum est lucidius aperire. Tale enim aliquid intelligi volo, quale est Virgilianum illud:

In summa custos Tarpeia Mallius arce

Stabat pro templo et Capitolia celsa tenebat

‘Tenere’ enim hoc in loco tueri est, et defendere. [7] Ab hac itaque significatione tractus est ‘Hector’. Nam εχω greace ‘teneo’ est, inde Hector verbale nomen ex eo illi tributum, quod is solus patriam tenuerit contra Graecorum impetum. Patescere iam arbitror quod ipse intelligam; nil tamen vetat enodatius explicari. A poeta enim ipso si quis in hunc modum quaerat**:** Dic michi, Homere, tu apparatus Graecorum tantos facis, ut mare quidem classibus, terraautem incredibili armatorum multitudine compleatur. [8] Conveniunt Reges cuncti, et proceres ad Troiam oppugnandum: obsident illam, atque circumstant. Quis ergo adversus tantam vim tenere Urbem poterat? In hunc modum si quis roget respondebit Poeta: filius erat quidam Priami Regis maximus natu. [9**]** Is Dux, et Imperator incredibili virtute contra tantam Graecorum manum Troiam tenebat, atque eam ob rem, cum haec in poemate describerem, hunc ipsum admirabilem praestantemque virum a tenendo Hectorem nuncupavi, nomenque a re fingendo pertraxi. Quotiens ergo de Hectore scribo, totiens de eo, qui Urbem tenebat sentio. [10] Nec multum admodum interest, ‘Hector’ dicatur, an ‘is qui Urbem tenebat’. Haec igitur, si poeta dicat, liquidissimum erit, quod requiris. At enim, inquies, non solum Hector tenebat Troiam contra tantos hostium conatus, quo pacto enim id posset? sed et alii cum eo perplurimi Troes, et Licii, et Dardani cominus pugnaces. [11] Immo solus, si Homero credis. Quodam enim loco sui carminis cum Hectoris mentionem fecisset, quasi rationem huius afferret, ita subiunxit; ‘solus enim hic servabat urbem, et moenia longi ambitus’, et alio loco inquit: ‘solo stabat Hectore Troia’[[1]](#footnote-1). Nec tamen in hoc ipso mentitum putes Homerum, quia solum dixerit. Nam Imperator in exercitu, ut Aristoteli placet mentis atque animi instar habet; milites vero quasi membra quaedam ipsius, et instrumenta sunt. [12] Ut igitur neque pes, neque manus, neque dolabra facere opus dicuntur, sed artifex, cuius iussu illa moventur; ita in bello non militum, neque exercitus, sed Ducis Imperatorisque opera sunt. Imperator vero erat Hector. Non ergo superlatione neque iactantia Homerus de Hectore locutus est, quod solum hunc dixerit Troiam servasse, sed philosophia plenus Divina quadam intelligentiae vi ex arcano veritatis ista deprompsit, laudes in re militari ac res bello gestas Imperatori et Duci, hoc est rationi, et providentiae totas ascribens. Vale.

Brief identifications

**Leonardo Bruni**, 1370 - 1444. Bruni was importantly involved in Italian political affairs, and wrote a history of the Florentine people in twelve books; a biography of Cicero, *New Cicero*; made many translations of Greek texts into Latin, including Aristotle and Procopius, and, pertinent to this letter, the *Orationes Homeri*, translations of three speeches from the *Iliad*.

**Coluccio Salutati**, 1331 - 1406. Tuscan, key to Florentine Renaissance. (Re)discovered Cicero’s letters *Ad familiares*, among other manuscripts.

**Astyanax/Scamandrius**: son of Hector; treated in the *Iliad*.

**Hyppolitus**: son of Theseus; treated, e.g., in Euripides’ eponymous tragedy and Seneca’s *Phaedra*; this letter references the end of his life and how it affected his name.

**Hector**: son of Priam; bulwark of Troy; treated in the *Iliad*.

**Homer**: creator of the *Iliad.*

**Priam**: king of Troy, father of Hector.

Bibliography [the text for this letter taken from Mehus’ edition.]

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Commentary

**1.** **Quo consilio**: abl. of means | **tribuerit**: perfect subj. in indirect question. | **factum**: sc. ‘esse’. | **ais**: introduces indirect question, whose subject is the unstated antecedent of **quod** which is in apposition to it. **scripsi**: though often a verb in a subordinate clause in indirect statement is expressed in the subjunctive, this relative clause is a parenthetical remark by Bruno, not something that Colucio actually said, and thus takes the indicative. | **petisque**: the object of this verb is ‘et unde…explicari’., hence the ‘et’ immediately following ‘putisque’ means ‘both’. | **ductum sit**: perf. sub. ind. question. | **si…non sit**: pres. subj. future less vivid protasis of a conditional clause | **tributum**: sc. ‘sit’, i.e. perf. subj. parallel to the previous ‘sit’ | **Torquati, Cincinnati, Africani**: Titus Manlius received the agnomen ‘Torquatus’ meaning ‘adorned with a necklace’ in 361 BC, after defeating a Gaul in single combat and placing the latter’s torc onto his own neck. The name passed on to his descendants. ‘Cincinnatus’, meaning ‘curled’ with reference to hair, was the cognomen of L. Quinctius who in 458 BC went from the plough to serve as dictator to defeat rival tribes. ‘Africanus’ was the agnomen given to Scipio after defeating Hannibal in the Second Punic War in 202.

**2. exiliter porro jejuneque rescripsisse**: this is the object of ‘non inficias eo’. | **non****inficias eo**: ‘eo’ is the verb, ‘inficias’ an accusative plural noun. cf. vocabulary for meaning. | **puto**: introduces indirect statement. | **michi**: vatiant of ‘mihi’. | **pudore quodam**: abl. of cause | **quod**: because. | **ea aetate auctoritateque**: ablatives of description. | **obtunderem/fierem**: imp. subjs. in fear clause in secondary sequence. | **si…fuerim commoratus**: perf. subj. in the protasis of a conditional in a fear clause in secondary sequence representing an original pres. subj.; i.e. this is virtual oratio obliqua, as Bruni originally thought ‘si sim commoratus…’

**3. admonuisse…monstrasse**: epexegetical infinitives explaining ‘contentus’. | **intelligo**: introduces ind. statement. | **voluntati tuae**: ‘pareo’ in the current meaning governs the dative. | **quin**: ‘but that’ | **sit**: pres. subj. in doubting clause…sc. ‘sit’ with ‘fictum’ as well. | **Astyanax…Hyppolitus**: the first name means ‘king of the city’, the second, ‘unleasher of horses’.

**4.** **Hyppoliti**: gen. with nomen, separated by the relative clause**. tradit**: introduces ind. statement. | **turbatis equis**: this could be an ablative abs. construction or dative of agent with the passive verb. | **ita…ut**: introduces result clause: ‘in such a manner…that’. | **sit**: pres. subj in result clause. This verb also introduces ind. statement, whose subject is understood to be the ‘nomen’ which was ‘impositum’. | **si…fingantur**: can be understood as pres. subj. in protasis of future less vivid cond. though there is no apodosis. | **cum**: ‘since’, introducing pres. subj. ‘permittamus’ in a causal ‘cum’ clause. | **constat**: introduces ind. statement. | **minus**: goes with the following ‘quam’. | **cum iusta sit**: descriptive or characterizing ‘cum’, ‘when’. cf. Woodcock § 234. | **quae supra memoravimus**: he is referring to Hyppolitus and Astyanax.

**5. adeoque…ut**: introducing result clause. | **sciat…cognoscant**: pres. subjs. in result clause | **fuerit**: perf. subj. in indirect question. | **Hyppoliti**: gen. with subsequent ‘aliquid nomen’, separated by 15 words. | **non dubito**: introduces ind. question whose acc. subject and infinitive are ‘aliud nomen fuisse’. | **ut…intellegat**: result clause. | **quod**: ‘because’ | **apparet**: introduces ind. statement, whose infinitive is ‘fictum (sc. esse)’.

**6. aiunt**: introduces ind. statement, whose inf. is ‘**dictum** (sc. esse)’ and whose acc. subj. is not there, but understood to be Hector. | **quod Urbem tenuerit**: ‘quod’ clause of alleged cause, i.e. virtual oratio obliqua. Bruni is reporting what others have said. | sribis: introduces ind. statement. | **conandum est**: impersonal future passive. | **In summa…tenebat**: The verses are Virgil’s *Aeneid* VIII 652-653. | **Tenere enim…est**: ‘est’ here means ‘is equivalent to’.

**7.** **εχω**: equivalent to ‘teneo’ in Latin. | **Hector verbale nomen**: these three words are understood together, i.e. ‘verbale nomen’ is in apposition to ‘Hector’ which is the subject of ‘tributum’ (sc. est). ‘Hect-’ sounds like the Greek verb for teneo, εχω (which had a rough breathing before the dissimilation of aspirates - the future form maintained a rough breathing); ‘Hector’ then means ‘possessor, holder, keeper, guardian.’ | **ex eo…quod**: ‘ex eo’ anticipates the explanation begun by ‘quod’. | **tenuerit**: perf. subj. in virtual oratio obliqua, that is, Bruni is again reporting the account told by Homer and others. | **quod ipse intelligam**: ‘intelligam’ is pres. subj. in a subordinate clause in indirect statement, which is introduced by ‘**arbitror**’. | **si…quaerat**: pres. subj., protasis of future less viv. cond. sent. | **ut…compleatur**: result clause. | **ad Troiam oppugnandum**: gerundive of purpose. | **si quis roget**: pres. subj. in fut. less vivid protasis of mixed cond. sent. | **natu**: abl. of description.

**9.** **incredibili virtute**: abl. of description. | **cum…describerem**: imperfect subj. with generalizing ‘cum’, ‘whenever’| **a tenendo**: the reason for the designation ‘Hector’. | **a re fingendo**: | **quotiens…totiens**: correlative adverbs. |

**10.** **‘Hector’ dicatur**: pres. subj. in indirect question. | si poeta dicat: pres. subj. in future less vivid protasis of mixed conditional sentence. | **enim**: ‘truly’ the first time it is used in the sentence, ‘for’ the second. | **quo pacto**: this ossified phrase means ‘how’. Literally, ‘with what having been established?’ | **posset**: past potential imp. subj. |

**11.** **cum…fescisset**: plup. subj., narrative ‘cum’, i.e. circumstantial: ‘when’. | **afferret**: imp. subj., pres. cont. to fact: ‘as if he *were*’, etc… | **solus…ambitus**: *Il*. 22, 507. | **solo…Troia**: *Il*. 6, 402. | **longi ambitus**: gen. of description | **putes**: introduces ind. statement. | **dixerit**: though ‘quia’ is not subordinating (subordinate clauses in indirect statement take the subjunctive), this perf. subj. may be taken as a clause of alleged cause (virtual oratio obliqua), or as indicating rejected cause or reason. | **Aristoteli**: a reference to a work of Aristotle’s. | **ipsius**: the Imperator.

**12. ut…ita**: ‘as…so’ | **iussu**: ablative of means or cause. | **non..quod..dixerit**: again, perf. subjunctive indicating rejected cause or reason. ‘dixerit’ also introduces indirect statement. | **plenus**: this adjective takes the ablative ‘philosophia Divina quadam’. | **Duci..rationi…providentiae**: these three datives are the indirect objects of the participle ‘ascribens’. | **totas**: with ‘laudes ac res gestas’.

Vocabulary

**accedo**: happen

**adeo**: to this extent

**admirabilis**: outstanding, marvelous

**admiratio**: wonder, admiration

**admiror, admirari, admiratus sum**: wonder, be amazed

**admodum**: very, greatly

**admoneo, admonere, admonui, admonitum**: admonish, advise

**adventitius, adj.**: unusual, extraordinary

**adversus**: against, in the face of

**aetas**: age

**affero, afferre, attuli, allatum**: assert, report, inform

**aio**: say

**ambitus, us**: circuit

**aperio, aperire, aperui, apertum**: open, reveal

**apertius**: more openly, more clearly

**apparatus, us**: preparation

**appareo, apparere, apparui, apparitum**: appear, to be evident

**arbitror**: intend to, decide to

**arcanus**: hidden, secret

**armator**: armed soldier

**artifex**: artist, maker, craftsman

**arx, arcis**: citadel, stronghold

**ascribo**: ascribe

**auctoritas**: authority

**aufero, auferre, abstulit, ablatum**: carry away, remove

**autem**: but

**auris, auris**: ear

**bellum**: war

**carmen**: song, poem

**celsus**: lofty, high, elevated

**circumsto**: surround

**clarus**: clear, famous, noble

**classis**: fleet

**cognosco, cognoscere, cognovi, cognitum**: recognize

**com(m)inus**: in close combat, hand to hand

**commoror, commorari, commoratus sum**: delay, tarry

**compleo**: fill

**conatus, us**: attempt

**conor, conari, conatus sum**: attempt, try

**consilium, i, n**.: counsil, plan, advice

**conspicuus**: visible, striking, conspicuous

**consto**: it is agreed or clear

**contentus**: content

**contra**: against

**convenio**: come together, gather

**credo**: believe, give credit to

**cuncti**: together

**custos**: guardian

**debeo**: should, ought

**defendo**: defend

**depereo**: perish, be ruined

**depromo, depromere, deprompsi, depromptum**: bring, produce

**describo**: describe

**designo**: designate

**dico**: say

**disco, discere, didici, discitum**: learn

**digitus**: digit, finger

**distraho, distrahere, distraxi, distractum**: drag apart, draw asunder

**dolabra**: axe

**dubito (1)**: doubt, hesitate

**duco, ducere, duxi, ductum**: draw

**dux,ducis**: leader, general, duke

**enodatius**: more clearly, more plainly

**eo, ire, ii, itum**: go

**equus**: horse

**eventus, us**: event

**exercitus, us**: army

**exiliter**: meagerly, feebly

**explico (1)**: unravel, explain

**fabula**: play, story

**faco, facere, feci, factum**: do, make

**fero, ferre, tuli, latus**: bear

**fingo, fingere, finxi, fictum**: shape, adorn, make up

**fio, fieri, factus sum**: become

**filius**: son

**graece**: in Greek

**habeo**: passive: to be considered, held to be

**homo, hominis**: man

**hostis**: enemy

**iactantia, ae, f.**: boasting, ostentation

**igitur**: thus

**immo**: nay, indeed

**imperator**: general, leader

**impetus**: attack

**impono**: establish, set, fix

**impositio**: application

**incredibilis**: incredible

**ineptus**: unsuitable, tasteless, improper

**inficiae**: denial. only in the acc. in connection with ‘ire’

**inficias ire**: to deny.

**inquam**: say [defective verb: inquies = 2nd person future]

**instar**: image, likeness, resemblance

**instrumentum**: instrument, tool

**intelligo**: understand

**interest**: it makes a difference

**iussum**: command [abl. iussu]

**jejune**: blandly, emptily

**justus**: just

**laus, laudis**: praise

**locum**: place

**loquor, loqui, locutus est**: speak

**liquidissimus**: most clear

**littera**: letter

**lucidius**: more lucidly

**manifestus**: apparent, obvious, open

**manus**: band (of soldiers), hand [used in both contexts in letter]

**mare, maris**: sea

**maximus**: greatest

**membrum**: body part

**memoro (1)**: tell, recount

**mentio**: mention

**mentior, mentiri, mentitus sum**: lie, deceive

**militis**: soldier

**minus**: less

**modo**: only

**modus**: way, manner

**moenia**: city walls

**monstro**: show, demonstrate

**mora**: delay

**moveo**: move

**multitudo**: multitude

**natura**: nature

**natus, us**: birth

**nomen**: name

**nuncupo (1)**: name

**notior**: more known, more familiar

**obscuro (1)**: darken, suppress

**obsideo**: besiege

**obtundo**: beat, deafen

**opinio**: expectation

**opus**: work, task

**oppugno (1)**: sack, besiege

**ostendo, ostendere, ostendi, ostentum**: show

**pango, pangere, pepigi, pactum**: fix, fasten

**pareo, parere, parui, paritum**: to be obedient to

**patesco, patescere, patui**: reveal, disclose

**patria**: fatherland

**permitto**: allow, grant, concede

**perplurimi**: very many

**persona**: character

**pertraho**: carry through, draw out

**pes, pedis**: foot

**peto**: seek, ask

**placeo**: be pleasing

**plenus**: full of

**plusquam**: more than

**poema**: poem

**poeta**: poet

**porro**: further

**possum**: be able

**postea**: afterwards

**potestas**: power

**praesertim**: especially

**praestans**: outstanding, preeminent

**praevaleo, praevalere, praevalui, praevalitum**: prevail, be foremost in strength

**primaevus**: in the first period of life, young

**procer, proceris**: noble, chief

**prolixius**: more verbosely

**properatio**: hurrying, haste

**proprius**: special, particular, not in common with others

**providentia**: providence, fore-seeing

**pudor**: shame, humility

**pugnax, pugnacis**: fighter

**puto (1)**: consider, think

**quaero, quaerere**: ask

**quin**: but that

**quomodo**: how

**quoniam**: since

**quotiens**: however many times

**ratio**: reason, ground, explanation

**requiro**: ask, demand, need

**res**: thing, affair

**resarcio**: patch, repair, restore

**rescribo**: write back

**respondeo**: respond

**rex, regis**: king

**rogo (1)**: ask

**sane**: indeed, surely

**satis**: enough

**scio, scire, scivi, scitum**: know

**scribo**: write

**sentio**: feel, perceive

**servo (1)**: save, protect

**significatio**: signification, meaning

**simul**: at the same time

**solus**: alone

**spes**: hope

**sto, stare, steti, statum**: stand

**subiungo**: subjoin

**succesio**: succession

**summus**: highest, topmost

**superior**: previous

**superlatio**: exaggeration

**supra**: above

**tanquam**: as it were

**templum**: temple

**teneo**: have, hold

**terra**: land

**totiens**: so many times (that many times)

**trado**: relate, hand down

**traho, trahere, traxi, tractum**: draw

**tribuo**: bestow

**tueor, tueri, tuitus sum**: guard, defend, protect

**tunc**: then

**turbatus**: stirred up, riled up

**ultra**: further, beyond

**unde**: whence

**urbs**: city

**velut**: just as, as if

**verbalis, verbale**: verbal (coming from a verb)

**vereor, vereri, veritus sum**: fear

**veritas**: truth

**veto (1)**: prevent, prohibit

**video, videre, vidi, visum**: see

**vir, viri**: man

**virtus, virtutis**: strength, virtue

**vis, vis**: power, force

**volo, velle, volui**: want

**voluntas**: will

1. I subjoin a note from Thiermann, p. 141-142: ‘Brunis Übersetzung ‘solus enim hic servabat *urbem* et moenia longi ambitus’ weicht von dem Homervers Il. 22, 507 ‘οἶος γάρ σφιν ἔρυσο πύλας καὶ τείχεα μακρά’an einer Stelle ab: Bruni schreibt ‘urbem’, Homer hingegen ‘πυλας᾿. Es handelt sich in diesem Fall nicht um einen Fehler Brunis, sondern um die korrekte Widergabe des Wortes ‘πολιν’, das Plato statt ‘πυλας’ in den genannten Homervers setzt, den er im Kratylos zitiert. Neben der unpräzisen Quellenangabe ‘quodam enim loco sui carminis᾿ beweist das gleiche Thema in Brunis Brief und in Platons Kratylos -- Hektors Stärke sowie die Namen seines Sohnes --, daß Bruni den ursprünglichen Homervers nicht gekannt hat, sondern lediglich die platonische Fassung. Das zweite Zitat ‘solo stabat Hectore Troia’, welches ebenfalls von Trojas Verteidigung durch die alleinige Kampfkraft Hektors handelt, gibt den Vers Il. 6,403 wieder:

   Il. 6,402sq.:

   τόν ῥ᾽ Ἕκτωρ καλέεσκε Σκαμάνδριον, αὐτὰρ οἱ ἄλλοι

   Ἀστυάνακτ᾽: οἶος γὰρ ἐρύετο Ἴλιον Ἕκτωρ.

   Auch hier ist der Zusammenhang zu beachten, denn Homer spricht im vorangehenden Vers 402 von der Namensgebung des Sohnes Hektors, die auch im Kratylos behandelt wird. Bruni hat also wahrscheinlich versucht, den Zusammenhang des Platonizitates in seinem Homercodex zu ergründen und stieß dabei auf Vers 403, den er in seinem Brief dem platonischen Homerzitat hinzufügte.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)