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Knowledge, Freedom, and Brotherly Love: Homosociality and the Accademia dei Lincei

[Mario Biagioli](#)

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The Accademia dei Lincei, often considered the earliest of scientific organizations, was established in 1603 by Federico Cesi, a young Roman aristocrat who was soon to become prince of San Polo and Sant'Angelo, duke of Aquasparta, and marquis of Monticelli.¹ After a period of very limited activity, which lasted until 1609, the academy quickly revived its membership and visibility, and by 1611 it included prestigious figures like Galileo and Giovanbattista della Porta. Its ranks continued to increase until 1625, when it listed thirty-two members, most of them located in Rome, Naples, and Florence.² The Lincei became an important reference point in the fledgling Italian philosophical community and played a relevant role in Galileo's later career, but it collapsed shortly after the prince's death in 1630. Cesi left behind a vast, elaborate, and well-documented academic project that usually bore little more than a family resemblance to the **[End Page 139]** actual academy. This essay analyzes the gender dimensions of Cesi's project and traces them into some aspects of the academy's historical record.

Unlike all other seventeenth-century scientific academies that excluded women from their membership without making that ban explicit or providing reasons for their policies, the Lincei's oath stated that the academy was a "philosophical army" whose recruits were exclusively male.³ Such a stance reflected Cesi's belief in a direct link between the practice of natural philosophy and the moral economy of a community of chaste brothers who worked and lived together in the same locale (the *liceo*) and did not marry.⁴ Cesi's unpublished "Lynceographum" (a manuscript completed around 1614, which contained the academy's proposed statutes and bylaws) stated that even if an academician owned a house in the same city where his *liceo* was located, he could not live in it or go there to sleep at night.⁵ The Lincei were not supposed to have much of a private life; even their vacations were to be managed by the academy--usually in the countryside

locales that the institution was to establish. ⁶

The "Lynceographum" also stressed the dangers that contacts with women posed to the philosophers' intellectual life. ⁷ According **[End Page 140]** to Cesi, the Lincei were required to avoid "the attractions of Venus," "bad women and profane love," "Venereal lust," "prostitutes," "tempting lust," "low passions of the body," "carnal drives," "libidinous excitements," and "the body's inane desires." ⁸ Additionally, the "Lynceographum" ordered the academicians to stay clear of "scandals with boys," and legislated how violations of the Lincei's code of honor were to be reprimanded and punished. ⁹ Finally, not a maid but a male servant was supposed to be hired in each *liceo* to keep the place clean and to care for the academicians. A female servant could be hired only if she were elderly and unattractive. ¹⁰

Cesi's prescriptions seem to reflect a Platonic privileging of male chaste love over heterosexual desire, something we find also in the earlier Florentine Platonic Academy and other humanistic academies in Renaissance Italy. ¹¹ As has been discussed by Evelyn Fox Keller, Plato saw knowledge as driven by desire not for material objects but for ideal forms, and he thought that the male mind would be endangered by sexual contact with women, whom he saw as the epitome of materiality. ¹² In order for the male philosopher's pure love for ideal forms to survive and beget knowledge, his desires should be redirected from corrupting material objects (i.e., women) toward a purer form of love: one with another man. Plato conceived of such a relation as an idealized form of pederasty between the older man (*erastes*) and a younger male lover (*eromenos*) in which the two did not actually engage in sex but, acting as mirrors to each other's desire, reflected and elevated their mutual love into a cognitive **[End Page 141]** desire for immutable immaterial forms. ¹³ Unlike heterosexual relations, which had material outcomes such as children, their chaste homosocial love would beget an immaterial entity: wisdom.

As we will see, Cesi's emphasis on chaste brotherly love as the basic condition of possibility of knowledge did have a distinct Platonic ring to it. However, unlike Plato, Cesi did not propose a theory of knowledge rooted in an affinity between the innate, immutable, and immaterial (though faded) contents of the mind and the structure of the world. Consequently, he did not see knowledge as an erotic union of knowers' minds and formal objects achieved by shedding both the material constraints of the mind and the material dimensions of objects. Quite to the contrary: he was an empiricist who believed that knowledge was of material objects, not of immutable forms, and that, therefore, the mind was inextricably dependent on bodies for its sensory inputs. But while Cesi saw the mind-body connection as a fundamental one, he also agreed with Plato about the inherently problematic nature of that link.

Cesi's response to this difficulty was not to embrace a sort of philosophical ascetism that would enable the mind's distancing from the body. Rather, he envisioned a scientific society that, by taking care of the male academicians' bodies, would unburden their minds from material constraints, corruptions, and distractions, such as those triggered by sexual desires for women. While Plato saw knowledge as something produced by an *individual* who engaged in an idealized and sex-free pederastic relationship with *one* boy, Cesi linked the conditions of possibility of individual knowledge to a specific form of *collectivity*: a chaste brotherhood of *many* academicians *collectively* shielded from material constraints by a very material *institution*.

To summarize: Cesi's position was Platonic insofar as he stressed the role of love among the male knowers as the key condition for sustaining their desire for knowledge. However, while Plato tried to avoid the obstacles posed by the materiality of both objects and bodies **[End Page 142]** by presenting a nonempiricist theory of knowledge featuring an increasingly dematerialized mind striving to perceive immaterial immutable forms, Cesi, because of his empiricist stance, preserved the body's role as producer of material sensations about material objects. At the same time, he wanted to control other less desirable body-based material constraints by establishing an institution that would neutralize them.

Because Cesi shared neither Plato's radical antimaterialism nor his ontology, which gendered matter as "feminine," he did not picture the threat posed by women to the male mind in metaphysical terms. More simply, he saw heterosexual contact as a major threat to his academicians because it disrupted the male brotherhood that he saw as providing the condition of possibility of knowledge. For related reasons, as we will see, Cesi did not view knowledge as a male conquest of female nature--a topos that Fox Keller and other historians have traced into much of early modern science.¹⁴ While he conceived of knowers as male, their object of cognitive desire was not cast as feminine because the chaste male homosocial love that bound them together and made them desire knowledge left women and the feminine out of the cognitive picture altogether.

The Lincei began as a very small, youthful group of eager but undistinguished lovers of natural philosophy who presented themselves as an "order" dedicated to the "Paracelsian disciplines," the "Spagyrian arts," and the study of nature's "arcana."¹⁵ They also stressed the deeply personal kinship underlying their common intellectual interests and referred to each other as "brother"--including Cesi, who often signed himself as "Your most loving brother."¹⁶ Like other closed communities, the Lincei had initiation rituals, **[End Page 143]** used secret ciphers, and prized their emblem, the lynx, as a symbol of their brotherhood.¹⁷ They were also committed Catholics, and their concern with the restoration of natural

philosophy seemed to resonate with the ethos of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. ¹⁸

Marquis Cesi was not amused by his eldest son's uncanonical activities (for Federico was expected to take over the father's title and responsibilities), and some have suggested that he may have worried about a possible homosexual liaison between his son and the fellow-Lincean Johannes Eckius. ¹⁹ Although the marquis did his best to have the group disbanded, the strategy backfired. The father's displeasure with Federico's friends, his chamberlain's spy-like behavior, and Eckius's eventual brush with the law were all integrated by Federico into a sort of conspiracy theory that allowed him and his fellow Lincei to represent themselves as persecuted because of their intellectual outlook. ²⁰ Perhaps their dedication to the so-called occult sciences helped them perceive these "persecutions" as something quite natural, something they should have expected from vulgar philistines. In any case, far from weakening Cesi's commitment to the Lincei, these local difficulties (once placed into a more general and menacing framework) seemed to confirm the importance of his academy and made him even more eager to turn it into a bastion **[End Page 144]** against the enemies of true knowledge. ²¹ History may again have fulfilled Cesi's expectations about the dangers necessarily faced by the lovers of truth when in 1616, a few years after Galileo had joined the academy, his controversial cosmological claims were subjected to their first official condemnation by the Church.

Such a siege mentality seemed to frame Cesi's conception of the academy's defining feature: *lincealità*. For instance, in April 1605 he asked his fellow Lincei to consider "what needs to be done to establish our *lincealità* so that never again will it have to suffer similar or other difficulties, but will remain stable and firm without fearing any enemy." ²² However, while Cesi presented *lincealità* as something that was already well established and was now being endangered precisely because of its visibility, in effect it was not a stable category, but was being constituted precisely as that which had to be defended from external threats. Similarly, the special brotherly bond the Lincei sought to defend may have been constituted by the same attacks it was supposed to be defended from, for it was the Lincei's self-perception as being under siege that sustained that "esprit des corps" which they then experienced as brotherly bond.

Cesi's concern with discipline and academic laws was also predicated on a perception of the academy as ever-threatened. As he put it,

The order we have just established, being in its infancy, needs strength, stability, and support. Because of its many persecutors (who are enemies of virtue) it necessitates cohesion, continuity, defenses, and caution. The pursuit of its activities requires the comfort, the consensus, and the care for all those things that are necessary for both the soul and the body. And all

this can be accomplished only through the strict observation of our laws. ²³

This early letter introduces several of the leitmotifs that Cesi maintained throughout his life and that he articulated in the later "Lynceographum" and "On the natural desire to know"--his most mature statement on the academy's goals, completed around 1616. **[End Page 145]** By that time, he had developed a rudimentary theory of knowledge that fit well into his view of the academy as an ever-threatened (but ever-free) brotherhood.

Cesi's "epistemology" assumed that everyone was born with an innate desire to know, but that, like a fragile seed, such a desire could yield actual knowledge only if planted in a nurturing environment. ²⁴ Laziness, external threats, the pursuit of economically rewarding professions, the bonds of patronage, the crippling effect of traditional philosophy, and the desire for sexual pleasures all conspired to kill that precious seed or limit its growth. ²⁵ As the receptacle of all these various external constraints, the body was the focus of Cesi's concerns:

Instead of obeying [the mind] as it ought to, the body usurps its authority and with a protracted siege it slowly takes possession of the thoughts of the unaware mind. As a result, any type of labor is avoided and good dispositions are replaced by the pleasure of idleness. Then come the arts of luxury and the company of these vain pleasures which are enough not only to repress our natural disposition to seek knowledge, but even to deviate and distract the most fervent of us when they are already in the middle of their path. ²⁶

To preserve the innate desire to know, "someone should provide for the body so that the good student would almost forget about it, and would be aware of his body only insofar as [it provides for] the sensations that are needed by the mind." ²⁷ Cesi envisioned his institution as precisely such a caretaker: **[End Page 146]**

Because we lack a well-organized institution or philosophical army for a feat that is so worthy, so great, and so befitting man as the acquisition of knowledge . . . there has been erected to this purpose the Academy or gathering of the Lincei. Through an appropriate community of subjects well apt and prepared for that feat, this well-regulated academy will overcome all the obstacles and impediments listed above, thus enabling the fulfillment of such a worthy desire. ²⁸

To Cesi, the academy was

well united by and rooted in the mutual love among colleagues and in the love all and each of them feel toward knowledge. It is completely dedicated to and pursues knowledge with a sincere mind, generous mutual help, and communal support, and it provides for the personal and professional needs

of its members. Freed from any other duty, devoid of ambition and self-interest, and able to overcome any obstacle to knowledge with the ardor of mutual affection, the reward of glory, and material safety (but also with much toil and commitment, and without any distraction or dispute), the academy will always provide for the improvement of these noble but abandoned sciences. ²⁹

The reign of the mind thus coincided with the reign of brotherly love. In an environment in which material needs were met, competition and envy would disappear, to be replaced by "virtuous friendship and the sweetness of its practices." ³⁰ Under these circumstances **[End Page 147]** the Lincei could fulfill their "obligation to always sustain true love," as well as the "bond of friendship and mutual good will." ³¹ As Cesi wrote Galileo in 1614, "the strength and vigor of our enterprise [consists] of the union and strict bond of the souls, which is maintained through love." ³² This bond would have each Linceo "enjoy his companions' joys and desire them as much as his own," and with "help from his companions," "perfect company," and "continuous, friendly, and trustworthy communality" he would be perfectly equipped to pursue knowledge. ³³ To Cesi, such an institutional structure was much more than a means to the efficient allocation of research resources or the productive management of professional interactions: it was a way to give his philosophical brotherhood a chance to thrive as such.

Brotherly love was, for Cesi, predicated on freedom. His letters to Galileo, the "Lynceographum," and "On the natural desire to know" indicate that he thought of *lincealità* as something quite incompatible with rigid methodological, philosophical, or cosmological commitments. ³⁴ Cesi's "methodology" was nothing more than a broadly construed empiricism, and although he saw mathematics as central to the academy's pursuits, he did not present it as a formalism that could claim a privileged relationship to nature. ³⁵ He allowed the Lincei to pursue a remarkably wide range of disciplines and approaches, and his rare and vague references to *esperimenti* ("experiments") did not signal a specific methodological prescription. ³⁶ No laboratory **[End Page 148]** was contemplated in the "Lynceographum"'s detailed description of the typical *liceo*. In short, all the Lincei had to follow was an undogmatic approach to knowledge--that is, to a knowledge that could be produced within (and in turn sustain) the Lincei's noncontentious, noncompetitive, disinterested, and brotherly sociability. ³⁷ They should commit themselves to nothing but freedom.

Cesi seemed to extend the notion of freedom to include nature itself, not just the philosopher's mind. He represented nature as a book open to those who had open minds, but, unlike Galileo, he did not venture any hypothesis about the type of characters it contained. ³⁸ Nature remained a free (and gender-neutral) book. ³⁹ A similar outlook may be found in his 1618 letter to Cardinal Bellarmine "On the unitary constitution of the

heavens" where Cesi treated planetary motions, not as determined by rigid devices such as spheres or epicycles, but rather as trajectories followed by celestial bodies moving through unconstraining fluid heavens.⁴⁰ To him, the sky was "not *constrained* by the rigid shape of a solid body, but *fluid* and therefore *open* to the various motions of the stars [and the planets]." ⁴¹ The view of the cosmos as structured in rigid spheres was constraining of nature and of the mind at the same time. That one was not "violently and sharply repelled by these very limiting assumptions" could only mean that one's will, "dominated by impulses other than the natural desire to know, forced and obliged one [to hold it] against his own wishes." ⁴² Unlike such a servile (i.e., Aristotelian and Ptolemaic) intellect, a free mind would conceive of the planets as free bodies moving, as Bellarmine put it, "like birds in the air and fish in the sea." ⁴³ **[End Page 149]**

The academy's projected structure reflected Cesi's emphasis on freedom as the essential feature of the brotherhood. The "Lynceographum" indicates that although the academy was to be a tightly organized institution, the level of active cooperation among its members would be quite limited. Cesi stated that the trainees were expected to study and interact with their colleagues in daily discussions to be held in the library of each *liceo*, but he did not discuss how senior Lincei were to conduct research; quite probably, that was left up to their "natural desire to know." ⁴⁴ The Lincei could not be *interdependent* in the manner of, say, the members of the Royal Society, who relied on *collective* witnessing and certification of matters of fact. While the support the Lincei were to provide for each other sustained their freedom, cooperation and mutual *dependence* in the process of knowledge making was perhaps constraining of the "natural desire to know"--the ultimate but most fragile form of freedom.

The "Lynceographum" described various forms of academic meetings, but these were not gatherings in which knowledge was to be collectively produced or certified. Rather, they were more like business meetings during which the officials of a given *liceo* were to discuss administrative and strategic matters. ⁴⁵ The meetings were to be held in order to discuss and remove practical problems and constraints: they were to maintain the best conditions under which knowledge could be made, but not to produce knowledge itself. Furthermore, unlike Bacon's House of Solomon, Cesi's plan did not involve a fixed division of labor: different Lincei pursued different disciplines, and one's level of training defined what one could do. The Lincei's hierarchy reflected a familial structure rather than a factory: one generation would follow another as young students would become experienced philosophers and train the next generation. ⁴⁶ Unlike the workers in the House of Solomon, the Lincei's tasks changed in accordance with their growing skills, thus giving them the best chance to actualize their innate desire to know. **[End Page 150]**

Even Cesi's near-fixation on academic statutes and bylaws is directly (if paradoxically) related to his belief that the Lincei's *minds* should not be *directed* by anything, but set *free* by a strong and well-organized institution that took care of the material needs of their *bodies*. The brotherly love envisioned by Cesi had to be free because only such a love would enable the Lincei to produce knowledge.⁴⁷ However, perceiving the innate and free desire to know as extremely fragile, Cesi plunged himself into trying to predict and control all kinds of obstacles that might either come from the outside or emerge within the daily activities of the Lincean brotherhood. That the "Lynceographum" grew to several hundred pages and was continuously revised and discussed but never printed nor adopted reflects, I think, not only the practical difficulties that thwarted the prince's plans, but also the hopelessness of the task he had set for himself: the total institutionalization of absolute freedom.⁴⁸ Having rejected all philosophical systems, Cesi ended up becoming a systematic and totalizing institution-builder.

Cesi's worries about the fragility of the Lincean "form of life," and of the freedom that sustained brotherly love, cast women and the pleasures associated with them as one of the most important threats the academy needed to control. The "Lynceographum"'s prescriptions against women can be traced back to early discussions among the Lincei. At the very beginning of the academy Saint John the Baptist was chosen as its patron saint--a choice that reflected Cesi's hope that that saint (who had died a virgin) would protect the chastity of its members.⁴⁹ Each member had to wear an emerald ring **[End Page 151]** as a corporate emblem--emerald being a stone associated with chastity.⁵⁰ If a Linceo violated his commitment to chastity (which all had to swear), he was "punished by being forced to stay away from the other academicians for three days. Then, after showing unequivocal signs of contrition, he had to plead to his brothers to be admitted again."⁵¹

These were not just words. For example, Eckius, having traveled through Europe for several months in order to avoid the unloving papal police, establish links with other savants on behalf of the Lincei, and gather books and other "secrets" for his brothers, seems to have become tired, disillusioned, and alienated from his brothers' love.⁵² Furthermore, while on the road he was robbed of most of his belongings, books, and notes. The only item he was able to preserve, by swallowing it, was the emblem of his *lincealità*: the golden lynx he had received from Cesi. However, *lincealità* had its costs because, as he put it, "[the lynx] has remained in my bowels and gives me more than a little trouble."⁵³ In a 1605 letter to Cesi he confessed that all the difficulties he had encountered were plunging him into a state of despair, and he was considering going back home, settling down, and getting married.⁵⁴ A shocked Cesi replied that he should not forsake the love of his brothers and seek "marriage and effeminate relaxation"; instead, he should desire only the peace one experiences with

brothers. ⁵⁵ At the same time, Cesi called on the other Lincei to express their opinion on his plans for providing the academy with more stable structures and resources so that no one else would have to experience Eckius's dangerous disheartening. Eckius's nuptial plans, listed under "dangers," were an item on which Cesi asked for the brothers' opinion. ⁵⁶ As for himself, he stated that "This should not be allowed to happen in any way, and we do not want **[End Page 152]** him *to get married, for all the reasons you know. Enough!*" ⁵⁷ The other Lincei confirmed the prince's wishes and listed "profane love of women" (evidently including marriage) among the "enemies of our sciences." ⁵⁸ An upset Cesi continued to preach chastity to a resistant Eckius and to remind him of the dangers of "profane love," "lust," "effeminate bonds," and "vile dependency on women" to the academy's mission and Lincean brotherly love. ⁵⁹ Eckius did not marry.

As mentioned, Cesi's view of the dangers that women posed to philosophy resonated but did not coincide with a Platonic stance. He did not believe that contact with women (or, more generally, the indulgence of pleasures) clouded a man's mind by lowering it into the realm of formless matter. Rather, heterosexual contact or attraction was dangerous in that it disrupted the brotherly bond that created the only environment in which the innate but fragile love for knowledge could thrive. ⁶⁰ More precisely, lust endangered knowledge by destroying freedom. The innate but fragile love for knowledge would survive only if the brothers loved each other, and that could happen only in an environment devoid of material constraints and competition. **[End Page 153]**

Cesi wanted the Lincei to practice so-called Platonic love: an intense but sex-free masculine bond. ⁶¹ Brotherly love could not have physical referents. An object of desire outside of the brotherhood (or a *particular* object of desire within it) would have generated tensions, thus turning love from an expression of freedom into one of constraint. ⁶² Love would become a desire for something one did not have, which was precisely what the academy was designed to prevent. Therefore, desire for a woman--that is, for someone outside of the shielded, content, and self-sufficient brotherhood--was much more than a distraction in the philosophical workplace: it subverted the entire community by "opening it up," thus disrupting the self-sustaining chain of love that kept it together and directed the philosophers' minds toward knowledge.

Although highly gendered, Cesi's view of knowledge does not seem reducible to categories of "mastery," "control," or "penetration" as these categories have been used, sometimes successfully, in analyses of the discourse of early modern science. ⁶³ To him, nature was a book to be read, not an object to be penetrated. He associated natural philosophy with a community of male knowers whose love of knowledge was predicated on their love for each other, not with the distance between the individual

subject (connoted as male) and its natural object (connoted as female), or with the desire (of either bonding or domination) predicated on that distance. The image that best encapsulates Cesi's view of knowledge is not the male conquest of feminine nature, but a peculiar "love triangle" in which the chaste Lincei shared the same object of desire: pure knowledge.

In her study of male homosocial desire, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick discusses René Girard's claim that, in heterosexual erotic triangles, the two men's desire for the same woman is rooted in a male homosocial bond between the two pursuers:

the choice of the beloved is determined in the first place, not by the qualities of the beloved, but by the beloved's already being the choice of the person who has been chosen as a rival. In fact, Girard seems to see the bond between rivals in an erotic triangle as being even stronger, more heavily determinant of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between **[End Page 154]** either of the lovers and the beloved. ⁶⁴

Girard's insight that male bonding is the predominant factor in erotic triangles sets the stage for Sedgwick's discussion of how male heterosexuality and homosociality are not mutually exclusive but intricately related. By looking at a broader range of "geometries of desire" than Girard, she shows that triangles come in different varieties and that rivalry is not necessarily the only link between two men who share the same female object of desire: homosocial attraction may be just as powerful a bond. For instance, her reading of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* indicates that one man can preach the value of heterosexuality to another while professing love for him at the same time:

within the world sketched in these sonnets, there is not an equal opposition or a choice posited between two such institutions as homosexuality (under whatever name) and heterosexuality. The *Sonnets* present a male-male love that, like the love of the Greeks, is set firmly within a structure of institutionalized social relations that are carried out via women: marriage, name, family, loyalty to progenitors, and to posterity, all depends on the [male] youth's making a particular use of women that is not, in the abstract, seen as opposing, denying, or detracting from his bond to the [male] speaker. ⁶⁵

In short, a man's endorsement of heterosexuality may reflect a commitment to a form of socialization that sustains and reproduces the male homosocial bond (and the social structures predicated on that bond) through women's bodies. ⁶⁶ In this broader context, Girard's erotic triangles between a woman and two male rivals may be seen as just one example of the articulation of male homosocial bonding and the reproduction of a patriarchal social structure via women.

Cesi's view of his academy as "well united by and rooted in the mutual love among colleagues and in the love all and each of them feel toward knowledge" fits quite well Girard's and Sedgwick's claim that a male homosocial bond was the most important factor in directing desire toward a specific object.⁶⁷ However, the Lincei did not **[End Page 155]** have to worry about the reproduction of patriarchy and the continuity of male social structures, for their institution already ensured that. The academy was a virtual family, which (had it gained the stability Cesi wished to give it) would have provided for the continuity of the Lincei's name and for their intellectual progeny.⁶⁸ As a result, they did not need to express their bond as rivalry, nor, for that matter, did they need to direct their homosocial bond toward heterosexual objects such as women or feminine nature.

The purity of the Lincei's brotherly homosocial bond was expressed as a desire directed toward something abstract and sexually unmarked: knowledge itself. More precisely, what the Lincei seemed to desire was not a knowledge of *objects*, but rather the *process* by which they produced knowledge out of brotherly love. What Cesi saw as the innate (which to him meant completely free) human drive was the "desire *to know*," not the "desire *for knowledge*." As a process rather than a result, the act of knowing represented a pure expression of the natural desire to know: it was completely free and unconstrained by anything external to it, including its own object.

Given the essential link posited by Cesi between the free innate desire to know and the role of the academicians' mutual love in creating a free environment in which the free desire to know could express itself, the act of knowing was *lincealit * itself. Therefore, the Lincei may be modeled as a broad-based "Platonic love triangle" in which a pure and free male homosocial bond and the pure and free desire to know become one through the process of knowing. The triangle's shared object of desire was not nature itself but the male bond the Lincei established and maintained as they pursued knowledge. In fact, as suggested by Cesi's topos of nature as a book, free male philosophers did not even need to touch feminine nature, but just to read it, with their lynx eyes, from a distance.

When we compare it to other seventeenth-century academic experiments, Cesi's project stands out as somewhat peculiar. While all early scientific academies were male institutions that developed their structures out of received forms of male sociability, the Lincei were alone in stressing the necessary role of brotherly love in natural philosophy. In this they shared some of the features of Rosicrucian **[End Page 156]** brotherhoods and Hermetic circles--which, however, tended to remain private (if not secret) gatherings.

Historians have tried to solve this puzzle by tracing the possible sources of Cesi's institutional model. The first candidate has been the religious order--

especially the Society of Jesus, whose members often shared the Lincei's interests in natural philosophy and mixed mathematics.⁶⁹ This analogy is supported by Cesi's description of the Lincei as an "order" or a "seminary" and by his remarks on the affinities between the Lincei and the Jesuits.⁷⁰ Moreover, Cesi was a Roman aristocrat born to a family whose social standing and financial fortune had always been inextricably tied to the Church.⁷¹ Curial life was not just a distant referent to Federico, who in fact joined a conclave as an assistant to his uncle, Cardinal Bartolomeo.⁷² Consequently, it is quite likely that Cesi developed some affinity for Catholic clerical culture--which was de facto male, prized chastity, and did (and still does) resist women's participation. However, religious orders did not share his insistence on freedom of thought and the need to free oneself from any system of thought (such as Scholasticism).⁷³ Furthermore, while the Lincei shared much of the **[End Page 157]** religious orders' emphasis on discipline, Cesi did not see discipline as a path to ascetism, the meditative life, or the mortification of the body. To him, discipline was more of a "drill," an ongoing training for a very active philosophical life.

Freedom and brotherly love did not represent a problem for another institution Cesi may have drawn from: the humanistic neo-Platonic academies. Cesi praised the fifteenth-century Medici-sponsored Platonic Academy and other poetic brotherhoods as an example of the type of chaste brotherhood he sought to establish.⁷⁴ However, these academies were not the discipline-oriented institutions he envisioned, they did not display sustained interests in natural philosophy, and, while they emphasized the *vita activa*, they were far from professing the quasi-missionary ethos that characterized Cesi's project.

The knightly order may provide the missing link to Cesi's institutional bricolage. On several occasions he presented the Lincei as a "philosophical army" (*militia filosofica*), and one of these references occurs in a crucial document, the Lincei's academic oath, where Cesi refers not only to his philosophical army but even to its encampment.⁷⁵ Therefore, when he called his academy an "order," he may have meant something like the Order of the Knights of Malta rather than a religious order. Moreover, while Cesi did sometimes compare the Lincei to the Jesuits, he did not liken them to the Franciscans or the Benedictines--that is, he compared his academy to an order (established by a former noble warrior forced into early retirement by war wounds) that was famous not for its meditative ethos, but for its pursuit of strongly "interventionist" missionary agendas. While Cesi's academic plan shared some features of religious orders (such as the emphasis on discipline) and much of the homosocial character of Platonic academies, the Lincei's form of male bonding was, I believe, a philosophical version of "platoon mentality."

The aristocratic and military connotation of the Lincei emerges in the description of the rituals that marked its institution on Christmas Day, 1603.

From the beginning, despite Cesi's protestations to the contrary, the Lincei were not exactly a democratic brotherhood, but an order whose "philosophical soldiers" first pledged allegiance to Cesi as their prince. As Eckius put it: "to you lord, to you who **[End Page 158]** shine with such heroic virtues and are adorned with such truly princely qualities, is suited not the title and rank of brother, but rather that of prince of us other brothers. We are only brothers, but you are, oh lord, our prince." ⁷⁶ What followed was a ritual resembling that of knighting:

[Cesi,] after having dressed in long robes decorated with purple, ascended to the cathedra, and made each of the Lincei come to him and, having read to them some new constitutions, he asked each of them if they were willing and able to obey them. First among all of them, Eckius said he would and could observe them, and, putting his open right hand over his chest, he took his oath. The prince then, opening his robe, showed a gold chain that hung around his neck on his chest, with a lynx suspended from the middle of the chain. He gave Eckius a similar one, saying, receive this symbol of brotherhood common to you and me: this is not only a sign of virtue and of brotherliness, but also a prize for future and present labors. All the others approached him and he hung on the neck of each one a similar chain. By so doing, he established solemnly the academy of the Lincei and the order of the studious *lincei* in the most august day of the birth of Christ. ⁷⁷

Knightly and military culture was not alien to someone of Cesi's background. More importantly, because Roman aristocrats had been largely domesticated, the "knightly ethos" was becoming a nostalgia item for them, as it was for court aristocrats throughout Europe. ⁷⁸ In most cases, the daily reality of the so-called Roman Barons was not one of battles and duels, but of financial and political decline caused by the burdens of courtly life. ⁷⁹ The economic difficulties that worried Federico throughout his life and prevented the Lincei from getting more firmly established fit this pattern very well. ⁸⁰ **[End Page 159]**

Since he was a teenager, Cesi had expressed a sharp disdain for court etiquette, self-display, noisy disputations, and other features of Roman courtly and academic life. Perhaps this was the defensive response of a young aristocrat who saw his family's political role eroded by the aggressive nouveaux riches (like some of the popes themselves) who populated an increasingly competitive court. The adoption of a more solitary, meditative, and precourtly lifestyle may have been an attempt to turn his increasingly marginal political role into a philosophical virtue. While fashioning himself as a philosopher who shunned mundane life to pursue botanical research in his country estate, Cesi was perhaps reclaiming the "good old days" when aristocrats were real lords of their lands, not emasculated courtiers. Seen in this light, the establishment of the Lincei was an attempt to fashion a new identity for himself in a social context that was threatening his traditional social role, and to reclaim the freedom that

court life was taking away from him.⁸¹ However, Cesi was not a Don Quixote. He did not regress into an imaginary world, but, while holding on to his aristocratic ethos, he applied it to a new kind of battle, with new kinds of weapons, and a new kind of knightly order: a philosophical one.

This hypothesis about the genealogy of the Lincei as an aristocratic gesture (which was both philosophically innovative and socially reactionary) may explain the emphasis Cesi put on freedom (and especially freedom of thought) as the essential feature of his academy. As an aristocrat, he was inclined to prize freedom and to look down on material constraints as something that characterized lowly people, not someone like himself. Freedom of thought was perhaps the only philosophical option he had: it was a matter of noblesse oblige. When Cesi wrote that the Lincei should have a "noble and free mind," I do not think he used the term "noble" metaphorically.⁸² **[End Page 160]**

For instance, in a July 1611 letter to Galileo, Cesi criticized the Roman Aristotelian philosopher Giulio Cesare Lagalla (who was working on a response to Galileo's discoveries of 1610) for being unable to escape his Scholastic modes of thinking. Interestingly, he represented Lagalla as trapped in a "philosophical prison"--a situation that was as cognitively damaging as socially distasteful because, as he put it, "dignified intellects are bound to freedom."⁸³ Someone like Lagalla who let himself be enslaved by a philosophical system displayed a low-class intellectual attitude. Not surprisingly, Lagalla was never admitted to the Lincei despite his repeated attempts to gain membership.

Cesi saw any type of philosophical commitment, not just one to the Aristotelian system, as crippling one's freedom. For instance, while he fully endorsed Galileo's attempt to prove the Copernican hypothesis, he did not want Copernicanism to become a dogma. This is perhaps best exemplified by his response to Paolo Antonio Foscarini's 1615 *Lettera sopra l'opinione de' Pittagorici e del Copernico*--a book in which the Carmelite friar argued the compatibility between Copernican astronomy and the Scriptures.⁸⁴ Writing to Galileo in March 1615, Cesi protested: "The author assumes that all our companions [Lincei] are Copernicans, despite the fact that this is not true. All we are committed to as a group is freedom in natural philosophy."⁸⁵ Cesi did not say that Galileo should not uphold Copernicus: free-thinking did not mean that one could not have strong beliefs, and that all opinions were equally plausible and sound. What Cesi meant was that the Lincei as a *group* should not be perceived as the institutional embodiment of a new dogma. Perhaps he supported Galileo's work so sternly because he saw it (as well as Galileo's "fearless" style) as the epitome of the noble free thinking, the kind of philosophical *attitude* he wanted to see embodied in his academy.

To summarize, Cesi conceived the Lincei as an academy of free **[End**

Page 161] thinkers: people whose intellectual attitudes resonated with his aristocratic ethos. While the Lincei's emphasis on elaborate institutional structures and disciplines did resemble that of religious orders, the Lincei could not be monks simply because they should not think like monks. If the Lincei's discipline seemed monastic it is because they had to be disciplined to be free, and they had to be free to fight the good fight. And, of course, a good fight was that which was fought by free fighters.

Cesi's anachronistic knightly ethos caused him to put great emphasis on personal honor and the respect of the Lincean mission. In a 1605 letter to Eckius (who, as mentioned, was experiencing a case of cold feet), Cesi reprimanded him: "neither you nor I nor all of us can compromise the continuity of our Order in any way. We must observe what we swore and promised. Nor can we do anything less than that without losing our honor and certain fame and receive [instead] shame and perpetual infamy." ⁸⁶

While Cesi did not use the same words in 1616, he did nevertheless convince his brothers to expel the distinguished mathematician Luca Valerio because of his "treason" of the Lincei's mission. That year, the Inquisition placed Copernicus on the Index after having considered accusations of the possibly heretical nature of pro-Copernican claims made by Galileo in his "Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina." While the condemnation mentioned neither Galileo nor the Lincei, the academy found itself in a very delicate position because most of its members were connected, in one way or another, to the papal court. While the details are unclear, it seems that Valerio, a Roman Linceo and a longtime friend of Galileo, suddenly decided to disassociate himself from Galileo's opinions and resign from the academy without previously consulting the other brothers. ⁸⁷

The Lincei seem to have read Valerio's action not as an expression of disagreement on cosmological issues, but as a straightforward desertion and betrayal. Valerio had left precisely when a member of the philosophical platoon had been ambushed, and had done so "despite the fact that he had never shown anything but friendship toward Signor Galileo." ⁸⁸ His flight not only deprived his brothers of **[End Page 162]** support, it also actively endangered them--because, as the minutes of the meeting put it, Valerio's decision "not to be Linceo anymore casts the academy as guilty, as if it had committed a crime." ⁸⁹ By resigning in fear that the Lincei had collectively endorsed Galileo's Copernican beliefs, Valerio exposed his perception of his brothers as bound to a specific school of thought, when, instead, Galileo had not presented his claims in a dogmatic form, nor had the Lincei endorsed them as a "sect." Valerio's perception of the scenario proved that he had not understood *lincealità*. In one fearful gesture he had displayed both his cowardice and his inability to recognize and practice free thinking. ⁹⁰ In Cesi's mind the two things went together.

Perhaps Valerio's well-known private life helped the Lincei to represent him as less "masculine" than required by the circumstances. Valerio had been living with Margherita Sarrocchi for several years both before and after the death of her husband. She was a well-known poetess, a good friend of Galileo, and a prominent member of Rome's most prestigious literary academy, the Umoristi.⁹¹ (She was famous enough to have her death reported in the *Avvisi di Roma*--a privilege that escaped Prince Cesi himself.⁹²) Sarrocchi's uncommon gender role attracted a good amount of gossip and unkind vignettes in satirical literature.⁹³ She was often presented as a bad poetess, a formerly great beauty who had been promiscuous throughout her life, "a woman with men and a man with women," and finally, a controlling virago who had manipulated poor old Valerio (a former teacher of hers) into servitude.⁹⁴ The great mathematician whom Galileo had called "the Archimedes of our age" was frequently spotted running around Rome loaded with Margherita's groceries; when a friend of Cesi and Galileo stopped him in the street, an embarrassed Valerio apparently mumbled that "as a former **[End Page 163]** teacher, he owed it to her."⁹⁵ Literally represented as forced back to a prehuman state (*imbestialito*) and a slave (*in servitù*) to a domineering woman, Valerio could but confirm Cesi's diagnosis: unfree men could not be free thinkers.⁹⁶ No wonder he deserted.

Eventually, Cesi's financial difficulties prevented him from fulfilling his institutional project. In any case, it is unlikely that many Lincei would have followed their prince's plans had he seriously tried to actualize them. The academy meant very different things to different people, and some (though not all) of the Lincei probably saw it as little more than a prestigious gathering which could provide them with an entry to powerful patronage networks. However, beside the contingent problems that led to the eventual demise of the academy in 1630, Cesi's ideal plan carried unresolvable tensions within its own internal logic.

The fundamental emphasis on freedom that informed the entire project and propelled it from the inside was, I believe, an expression of Cesi's self-perception as a "threatened" aristocrat who wished to fashion an ideal community of free brothers who would be collectively able to keep all external threats and material constraints at bay. Freedom, therefore, could not be taken out of the equation without disrupting the entire system. At the same time, freedom (especially of Cesi's totalizing kind) had serious, perhaps lethal, costs.

For instance, all the features of the academy concerning the actual production of knowledge (methods, research programs, organization of labor, certification of results) had to be left *necessarily* inarticulated--otherwise they would have constrained the academicians' freedom, thus short-circuiting the entire system. The Lincei **[End Page 164]** could not hold binding protocols regarding the production and legitimation of

knowledge, as knowing was seen as a necessarily free and private act, something that sprang and gained legitimacy only from one's innate, natural desire to know; the institution existed to guarantee that it remained so by ensuring that each academician would not have to *depend* on others for material needs. Brotherly love was supposed to be a mutual *free* gift, not something that made the academicians interdependent. In short, there was no room within the Lincei's structure for anything resembling a *negotiation*: either knowledge was free, or it could not be at all.

Consequently, their institutional structure was supposed to achieve the impossible: to institutionalize absolute freedom and free brotherly love. New constraints, problems, or conflicts could not be negotiated (for that would have ruined freedom), but were to be shielded away through ever-finer and never-ending institutional articulations. This seems to imply that, together with an innate desire to know freely, there must have been, somewhere within the Lincei, an innate desire to build freedom-preserving institutions. But where was this desire located? Who was to articulate the institution? How were the free brothers to develop the structures that were supposed to keep them free? How could that be achieved freely without any constraining negotiation?

In his typical fashion, Cesi dedicated several pages of the "Lynceographum" to these problems and outlined the intricate configuration of committees in charge of the clarification of the Lincean laws. However, he presented those laws not as a renegotiable contract, but as a sort of sacred text that could be expounded by the Prince or by wise senior Lincei, but whose essential intention could never be modified.⁹⁷ In a sense, the laws of the "Lynceographum" were presented as "natural"--like the natural innate desire to know.

This, I believe, exposes the fundamental aporia of Cesi's entire project: the Lincei could be represented as a free-thinking and free-loving brotherhood only by assuming the presence of a freedom-keeping institution while, at the same time, presenting such an intricately artificial institution as "natural." Cesi's role reflected this same aporia: he could not openly act as a prince because the Lincei were supposed to be an absolutely free brotherhood, but he could not act as a brother because the kind of academy he wished to establish could not exist without a prince. **[End Page 165]**

In fact, his academy was no brotherhood. By representing his "brothers" as in need of defense against women, political enemies, dogmatic philosophies, and much more, Cesi cast himself as a peculiar paterfamilias who, with the help of a state-of-the-art institution, could almost efface the patriarchal nature of his role and become a free brother among free brothers. In any case, Cesi's pursuit of a pure homosocial bond would have ended up dissolving it. The institutional fortress he wanted to build against

all those pervasive material threats to the absolutely free brotherly bond and desire to know would have created an enclave of freedom so pure, so abstract, so undifferentiated, that there would have been nothing left for the brothers to bond about.

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University of California at Los Angeles

[Mario Biagioli](#) is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of California at Los Angeles, where he teaches history of early modern science. His *Galileo, Courtier* was published in 1993. He has also written on Nazi science, science museums, and methodological issues in history of science. He is currently working on a book on science and civility in seventeenth-century Europe and, with Albert van Helden, on a volume concerning the dispute on the discovery of sunspots (1611-1613).

Notes

1. The most extensive treatment of the Lincei is Giuseppe Gabrieli, *Contributi alla storia dell'Accademia dei Lincei*, 2 vols. (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1989). An extensive bibliography on the Lincei is in Enrica Schettini Piazza, *Bibliografia storica dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* (Florence: Olschki, 1980), pp. 27-72. An excellent treatment of Cesi's intellectual and academic program (which has provided me with important insights) is Giuseppe Olmi, "In esercizio universale di contemplazione e prattica: Federico Cesi e i Lincei," in *Università, Accademie e Società Scientifiche in Italia e in Germania dal Cinquecento al Settecento*, ed. Laetitia Boehm and Ezio Raimondi (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1981), pp. 169-236. For a critique of the somewhat Whiggish representation of the Lincei as the first scientific academy, see Eugenio Garin, "Fra '500 e '600: Scienze nuove, metodi nuovi, accademie nuove," *Nuncius* 1 (1986): 3-23.

2. Olmi, "In esercizio universale," p. 177.

3. Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 10-36. The academic oath describes the Lincei as *viri* (Giuseppe Gabrieli, "Ricerche e carte di Augusto Statuti sulla storia della prima Accademia Lincea," *Memorie della Pontificia Accademia delle Scienze Nuovi Lincei* 8 [1925]: 446-447), as does the diploma of membership (Giuseppe Gabrieli, "Verballi delle adunanze e cronaca della prima Accademia Lincea [1603-1630]," *Memorie della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, ser. 6, 2 [1927]: 468). The Lincei are referred to as men throughout Cesi's "Lynceographum quo norma studiosae vitae Lynceorum Philosophorum exponitur," Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome, *Archivio Linceo* 4.

4. Baldassarre Odescalchi, *Memorie storico critiche dell'Accademia de' Lincei e del Principe Federico Cesi* (Rome: Salvioni, 1806), p. 213. In the "Lynceographum," Cesi presented marriage as a sacred bond (perhaps as a gesture of respect to its status as a

Catholic sacrament) but went on to say that, like any other type of obligation, it prevented full engagement with academic life, and was therefore incompatible with membership in the Lincei; "Lynceographum," *Archivio Linceo 4 bis*, ff. 132-133 (this is Odescalchi's eighteenth-century integral copy of the original manuscript).

5. Odescalchi, *Memorie storico*, p. 222.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 216, 221, 224.

7. David Noble has dedicated a few pages to the gender dimensions of the Lincei, which he has largely reduced to an expression of misogynous monastic culture: David F. Noble, *A World without Women: The Christian Clerical Culture of Western Science* (New York: Knopf, 1992), pp. 213-215. For an interesting critique of Noble's outlook see William Clark, "The Misogyny of Scholars," *Perspectives on Science* 1 (1993): 342-356.

8. "Lynceographum," *Archivio Linceo 4 bis*, ff. 5, 21, 118, 119, 126, 131, 134, 138, 154. Similar injunctions are at ff. 135 and 153.

9. *Ibid.*, ff. 239, 402-403. See also Odescalchi, *Memorie storico* (above, n.4), p. 241.

10. Odescalchi, *Memorie storico*, pp. 232-233.

11. Ficino's discussion of brotherly love as one of the defining characters of the Florentine Platonic Academy is mentioned in Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Lay Religious Traditions and Florentine Platonism," in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1956), pp. 113-114, 120. Cesi's connection to the tradition of Florentine Platonism is discussed in Garin, "Fra '500 e '600" (above, n. 1), pp. 19-20.

Platonic philosophy had an important place in the discussions among the early Lincei. Johannes Eckius, one of the cofounders, was put in charge of teaching that topic to the other brothers: "*Illuminatus* [Eckius]: *Platonica et Transnaturalis Philosophia, Astrolabii fabrica, syderalis scientia, primus magister pro officio declaratus*" ("*Gesta Lynceorum*," Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome, *Archivio Linceo* 3, f. 4r).

12. Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 21-25.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-30. The "Lynceographum"'s injunction, mentioned earlier, against sex with boys does not refute the Platonist character of Cesi's position. Such an injunction seems not to have been directed against pure Platonic pederastic relationships, but rather against the most common homosexual practice in early modern Europe: sex between older men and boys. These relationships were not Platonic, for the boys were usually paid and assumed a "passive" position. See Theo van der Meer, "Sodomy and the Pursuit of a Third Sex in the Early Modern Period," in *Third Sex Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in History and Culture*, ed. Gilbert Herdt (New York: Zone Books, 1994), pp. 137-212, esp. p. 148.

14. Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (above, n. 12), pp. 33-65; Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?* (above, n. 3), pp. 119-159. This argument is central to Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980).

15. "Eckius to Mermann," February 17, 1604, p. 30; "Lincei to Campello," March 20, 1604, p. 31; "Eckius to Clusius," March 20, 1604, p. 32, in Giuseppe Gabrieli, "Il carteggio linceo," Part I, *Memorie della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Classe di Scienze

morali, storiche e filologiche, ser. 6, 7 (1938). On the Hermetic interests of the early Lincei, see Anna Maria Partini, "I primi Lincei e l'ermetismo," *Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, ser. 8, 41 (1986): 59-83.

[16](#). For example, see "Cesi to Eckius," August 12, 1604, p. 44; and "Cesi to Eckius," April 1, 1605, pp. 57, 59, in Gabrieli, "Il carteggio linceo," Part I.

[17](#). On secret ciphers and the Hermetic connotations of the lynx see Partini, "I primi Lincei e l'ermetismo" (above, n. 15), pp. 60-62. On the initiation rituals see Odescalchi, *Memorie storico* (above, n. 4), pp. 28-29.

[18](#). Olmi, "In essercitio universale" (above, n. 1), pp. 204-208; Pietro Redondi, *Galileo: Heretic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 86-106; Giuseppe Gabrieli, "La spiritualità filippina, o dell'Oratorio della Chiesa Nuova, nel piano e negli inizi della prima Accademia Lincea," *Atti del V Congresso Nazionale di Studi Romani*, vol. 5, (Rome: Istituto di Studi Romani, 1946), pp. 353-360; Armando Rigobello, "Motivi di spiritualità nel progetto di Cesi e dei primi Lincei," in *Federico Cesi* (Atti del convegno celebrativo del IV centenario della nascita di Federico Cesi, Acquasparta, 7-9 ottobre 1985) (Rome: Accademia dei Lincei, 1986), pp. 61-76; Raffaello Morghen, "Riforma cattolica e cultura nella Roma del primo '600," *Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, ser. 8, 30 (1975): 131-144.

[19](#). Richard Westfall ("Galileo and the Accademia dei Lincei," in *Novità celesti e crisi del sapere*, ed. Paolo Galluzzi [Florence: Giunti Barbera, 1984], pp. 194-195) has argued that "there was more than a modest hint of a homosexual relation between young Cesi and [Eckius]," and that Cesi's father's reaction was triggered by that suspicion. I believe, however, that Westfall has misinterpreted a strong homosocial bond as a homosexual one. In fact, Cesi's father's reaction seems quite understandable in the context of the life patterns expected of firstborns of Roman aristocratic families, as discussed in Renata Ago, "Farsi uomini: Giovani nobili nella Roma barocca," *Memoria* 27:3 (1989): 7-21, esp. p. 15.

[20](#). Odescalchi, *Memorie storico* (above, n. 4), pp. 19-21, 35-37.

[21](#). On Cesi's quite paranoid call for a state of alert among his brothers, see *ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

[22](#). "Cesi to Stelluti and De Filiis," April 10, 1605, in Gabrieli, "Il carteggio linceo," Part I (above, n. 15), p. 63.

[23](#). *Ibid.*, p. 60. Later in the same letter, Cesi also stated: "I cannot think of anything more necessary and effective than the publication of the Lynceographum and the strict obedience to it, as it contains all the Laws, constitutions, and statutes we have already established as well as new, extremely important ones. It lays out the lifestyle of the Lincei, all their activities, policies, cautionary measures, and all that which is necessary to strengthen and preserve *lincealita'* . . . once it is published, observed, and accepted, we shall not fear anything anymore" (*ibid.*, p. 65).

[24](#). Cesi never says whether or not women are endowed with the innate desire to know. He refers to knowers as *huomini* ("men"), but while sometimes he means biological men, on other occasions he seems to use *huomini* as the generic term for humans.

[25](#). Federico Cesi, "Del natural desiderio di sapere et Institutione de' Lincei per adempimento di esso," in *Scienziati del Seicento*, ed. Maria Luisa Altieri Biagi and Bruno

Basile (Milan/Naples: Ricciardi, 1980), pp. 39-51. On the date and circumstances of this discourse, see Gilberto Govi, "Intorno alla data di un discorso inedito pronunciato da Federico Cesi fondatore dell'Accademia de' Lincei e da esso intitolato: Del natural desiderio di sapere et Institutione de' Lincei per adempimento di esso," *Memorie della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, ser. 3, 5 (1879-1880): 244-261.

[26.](#) "Il corpo che dovrebbe obbedire, oh quanto s'usurpa di dominio, mentre con assedio continuato vien pian piano impossessandosi delle ragioni della sopita mente! Quindi ogni fatica si fugge, e viene posposta la buona inclinazione al piacere della pigrizia; aggiungonsi l'arti del lusso e le compagnie di questi vani godimenti, bastanti non solo ad impedire l'indirizzo datoci dalla natura alle discipline, ma anco a disviarne e distoglierne i più ferventi nel mezzo del corso" (Cesi, "Del natural desiderio di sapere," p. 40).

[27.](#) Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[28.](#) "Di modo che mancando un'ordinata istituzione, una militia filosofica per impresa si degna, si grande e si propria dell'uomo qual'è l'acquisto della sapienza, e particolarmente con i mezzi delle principali discipline, è stata a questo fine e intento eretta l'Accademia o vero consesso de' Lincei, quale con proportionata unione dei soggetti atti e preparati a tal opra, procuri, ben regolata, supplire a tutti li sopradetti difetti e mancamenti, rimuovere tutti li ostacoli et impedimenti et adempire questo buon desiderio" (ibid., p. 53).

Cesi's view of the Lincei as an institution that would bring about the "reign of the mind" emerges in other passages of the same text: "Ove regna la mente et è in possesso d'operare la sua divina superiorità, bisogna suo malgrado il corpo con i suoi affetti soggiaccia, nè il pericolo che il piacer di questo possano distoglierne dalle dolcezze di quella con le quali non sostengono alcuna comparazione" (ibid., p. 56). He reiterates this point at p. 59.

[29.](#) "[B]en unita e fondata sull'amore dei colleghi fra di loro e di tutti e di ciascuno verso la sapienza, a quella totalmente dedicata et indirizzata con sincerità di mente e buon ordine di scambievoli aiuti e corrispondenza, provvista di quanto e per il vitto e per la professione l'è necessario, scarica et esente d'ogni altra cura, ambitione o interesse, superando con l'ardore del proprio affetto, con lo stimolo della gloria, con l'aiuto de' modi e commodi, qualsivoglia interposta difficoltà, non solo con ogni sforzo e assiduità e senza alcuna distrazione o contesa procurarà sempre l'acquisto di queste nobili e abbandonate scienze" (ibid., p. 70).

[30.](#) Ibid., p. 65.

[31.](#) Ibid., p. 64.

[32.](#) "Cesi to Galileo," August 16, 1614, in Giuseppe Gabrieli, "Il carteggio linceo," Part II, sect. 1, *Memorie della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, ser. 6, 7 (1939): 456.

[33.](#) Cesi then cites passages from Horace and Ovid on the joys of pure male friendship among Roman poets: Cesi, "Del natural desiderio di sapere" (above, n. 25), pp. 64-65.

[34.](#) "Cesi to Galileo," March 7, 1615, p. 489; "Cesi to Galileo," July 23, 1611, p. 166, in Gabrieli, "Il carteggio linceo," Part II, sect. 1. See also Garin, "Fra '500 e '600" (above, n. 1), p. 17.

[35.](#) Rather, Cesi seems to have supported the pursuit of mathematics because it had

been given a marginal role in university teaching and because, unlike the study of law and medicine, it did not usually lead to wealthy careers. It almost seems that, being poor, it must have been pure. See Cesi, "Del natural desiderio di sapere," pp. 41, 49-50, 53, 59, 70.

[36](#). On experiments, see *ibid.*, pp. 44, 56, 70. On the range of disciplines open to the Lincei, see Odescalchi, *Memorie storico* (above, n. 4), p. 219. Occasionally, Cesi did mention *methodo* ("method"), but he used that term to refer to memory and taxonomical schemes, which he saw not as reflections of the structure of nature, but just as convenient tools for the organization of knowledge; Cesi, "Del natural desiderio di sapere," pp. 48-49. Furthermore, he saw memory, not as part of the mind, but as part of the body. Therefore, considering it a possibly faulty handmaiden to knowledge, he depicted memory as another "material constraint" to be managed with appropriate tools; *ibid.*, pp. 43, 48-49.

[37](#). *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48, 50, 56, 69.

[38](#). *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 47.

[39](#). *Natura* (Italian for "nature") is a feminine noun, but Cesi did not represent the reading of the book of nature in sexual terms.

[40](#). Federico Cesi, "De caeli unitate, tenuitate fusaque et pervia stellarum motibus natura ex sacris litteris epistola," in Biagi and Basile, *Scienziati del Seicento*, (above n. 25), pp. 9-35.

[41](#). *Ibid.*, p. 22, (translation and emphasis mine).

[42](#). *Ibid.*, p. 31. Interestingly, Cesi criticized the Aristotelians for relegating angels to the duty of rotating the heavenly spheres--that is, for reducing heavenly (and thus free) entities to the mechanical, almost animal task of "turning a mill" (*ibid.*, p. 32).

[43](#). Quoted in Edward Grant, *Planets, Stars, and Orbs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 348. Cesi has a similar expression in "De caeli unitate," p. 23.

[44](#). "Lyceum convenire, in Bibliotheca ipsius studere, Lectiones audire, cum Linceis se experire, et disputationibus ibi, orationibus, dissertationibus interesse, in ipsamque descendere palestram" ("Lynceographum," *Archivio Linceo* 4, f. 40r). The very comprehensive but quite unstructured curriculum for trainees is in *ibid.*, at f. 16r. See also Odescalchi, *Memorie storico* (above, n. 4), pp. 218-220.

[45](#). It seems that the vast majority of the actual meetings held by the Roman Lincei reflected the "Lynceographum"'s guidelines. See Gabrieli, "Verballi delle adunanze" (above, n. 3), pp. 463-512; and see Odescalchi's summary of the "Lynceographum"'s section on this topic in *Memorie storico*, pp. 234-236.

[46](#). The various academic ranks and a Linceo's path through them are discussed in Odescalchi, *Memorie storico*, pp. 206-213.

[47](#). Cesi's grand utopian plan, involving the establishment of *licei* (as he called any Lincean institution) in several Italian and European cities and other parts of the world, is closely connected to his belief in the fragility of the Lincean "form of life." *Lincealità* was not a method that could be taught in a handbook and then followed step by step: it was an elusive form of intellectual freedom that could not travel without the nurturing academic structure that made it possible to begin with. *Lincealità* could spread only through the physical multiplication of its institutional homes. On Cesi's plans for the academy's

geographical expansion see Antonio Favaro, "Di una proposta per fondare in Pisa un Collegio di Lincei," *Archivio Storico Italiano*, ser. 5, 42 (1908): 137-142; Giuseppe Gabrieli, "Il 'Liceo' di Napoli: Lincei e lincebili napoletani," *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, ser. 6, 14 (1938): 499-564; Giuseppe Gabrieli, "La 'Germania lincea' ovvero Lincei e lincebili tedeschi della prima Accademia," *ibid.*, ser. 6, 15 (1939): 42-66.

[48](#). The only set of academic laws printed by the Lincei were the *Praescriptiones Lynceae Academiae curante Joanne Fabro Lynceo Bambergensi* (Terni: Guerrero, 1624). However, this was a ten-page pamphlet, not a significant summary of the "Lynceographum."

[49](#). "Gesta Lynceorum" (above, n. 11), f. 11r. See also Odescalchi, *Memorie storico*, p. 30.

[50](#). The "Lynceographum" describes the emerald as "Smaragdum castitatis ac virentis spei," *Archivio Linceo* 4, fol. 242r.

[51](#). Odescalchi, *Memorie storico*, p. 20.

[52](#). The most comprehensive analysis of Eckius's life is Elisja M. R. van Kessel, "Joannes van Heeck (1579-?)," *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 38 (1976): 109-134.

[53](#). "Eckius to Lincei," December 19, 1604, in Gabrieli, "Il carteggio linceo," Part I (above, n. 15), p. 46.

[54](#). Eckius's letter is lost, but the information is reproduced in "Cesi to Stelluti and De Filiis," April 10, 1605, *ibid.*, p. 62.

[55](#). "Cesi to Eckius," March 19, 1605, *ibid.*, p. 56.

[56](#). "Occorrenze dannose: Se si ha in modo alcuno a comportare che l'illuminato pigli moglie et voglia trattenersi alla patria" ("Cesi to Stelluti and De Filiis," April 10, 1605, *ibid.*, p. 64).

[57](#). "Non si deve in modo alcuno, et non vogliamo in maniera nissuna comportare questa occorrenza, che piglierà o pigli moglie, per tutte le cause che ognuno po' da se considerare. Absit. Absit. Absit" (*ibid.*, p. 68).

[58](#). "Tepidas, profanus mulierum amor, negligentia in scientiarum studiis . . . hi nostrarum scientiarum inimici" (*ibid.*, p. 70).

[59](#). "Cum primo nullus fere hominum in periculoso aerumnosoque huius infelicis vitae cursu reperitur inculpabilis, et tuos in Lyncaea praecepta errores defectusque amore fraterno sinceroque iuvandi desiderio examinavisset in fervore Lyncaeae, studiorumque assiduitate, animique castitate lyncaeaeque stabili firmaque intrepidate, non sine proprio ordinisque detrimento, hominumque exteriorum scandalo te defecisse invenimus et labe frigidae tepiditatis, negligentiae prophani amoris et concupiscentiae, timidaeque diffidentiae nimis addictum vidimus, praesertim dum lyncaelitatis exitium et unius errore vereris, cum tamen Deus Opt. Max. e tot nos tantisque misericorditer liberavit adversitatibus, distractiones denique et aliqua instabilitatis in sapientia macula dum militaria lyncaeae volutas in animo, in his omnibus culpabilem, et dulci paternitate multandum reperimus" ("Cesi to Stelluti and Eckius," April 29, 1605, *ibid.*, p. 71).

Cesi returns to these issues, with undiminished pathos, in the same letter (*ibid.*, p. 72), and a few months later: "Quanto all'andare prima alla patria, non glielo negarei, quando non conoscessi questa essere una trappola di parenti interessati, quali per poterlo più legare e tenerlo in casa a covar la cenere con effeminato legame di dargli moglie, cercano tanto più invischiarlo, et già patteggiano di concederli un sol anno di libertà, quasi che schiavo comprato l'havessero. Ove è quel zelo di libertà, ove l'integrità et l'innata intrepidezza dell'Illuminato [Eckius]? Ove la lynceal fide et ferventissimo amore a' fratelli? Non crederò giamai che siano estinti, dalla carnal mollicie che li a ha quasi soffocati" ("Cesi to Eckius," July 2, 1605, *ibid.*, p. 85).

[60](#). *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[61](#). Although Cesi's emphasis on chaste love seems to have been sincere, Platonic love was an ambiguous topos in this period for it could also be used to disguise homosexual relations; see Giovanni dall'Orto, "'Socratic Love' as a Disguise for Same-Sex Love in the Italian Renaissance," *Journal of Homosexuality* 16 (1989): 33-65.

[62](#). A homosexual community of free love (bodily rather than Platonic) would have met Cesi's philosophical requirements, but I do not have any evidence that he thought of the Lincei in those terms.

[63](#). See above, n. 14.

[64](#). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 21.

[65](#). *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[66](#). This aspect of Sedgwick's argument overlaps with Gayle Rubin's critique of Levi-Straussian analysis of kinship: Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes Toward a Political Economy of Sex", in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157-210.

[67](#). Cesi, "Del natural desiderio di sapere" (above, n. 25), p. 70.

[68](#). Cesi's view of the Lincei as a virtual family informs much of "Del natural desiderio di sapere" (esp. pp. 43-46), and it emerges quite clearly in his discussion of the care the Lincei will take of a deceased academician's work. Not only they will make sure that his intellectual property (i.e., fatherhood) will be respected, but they will see his manuscripts through the press: "[his works] verranno da' cari compagni stampate con quell'istessa diligenza che se essi vivessero" (p. 58).

[69](#). See Morghen, "Riforma cattolica"; Gabrieli, "La spiritualità filippina"; and Rigobello, "Motivi di spiritualità" (all above, n. 18). The *Praescriptiones Lynceae Academiae* compared the lifestyle of the Lincei to that of a religious order (*Praescriptiones Lynceae Academiae curante Joanne Fabro Lynceo Bambergensi*, as reprinted in Odescalchi, *Memorie storico* [above, n. 4], p. 312). In the "Lynceographum," Cesi presented members of religious orders (especially the Jesuits, the Minims, the Capuchins, and the Camaldolenses) as good discussion companions for the Lincei ("Lynceographum," *Archivio Linceo 4 bis*, f. 127).

[70](#). Olmi, "In essercitio universale" (above, n. 1), pp. 190-191; Redondi, *Galileo: Heretic* (above, n. 18), pp. 86-106. By 1624, St. Ignatius Loyola was added to the academy's patron saints: *Praescriptiones Lynceae Academiae*, in Odescalchi, *Memorie storico*, p.

316.

[71.](#) Edoardo Martinori, *Genealogia e cronistoria di una grande famiglia umbro-romana i Cesi* . . . (Rome: Compagnia Nazionale Pubblicità, 1931), pp. 87-98.

[72.](#) Cesi's insightful account of the conclave (which produced Gregory XV) is in Giuseppe Gabrieli, "Relazione del Conclave di Gregorio XV," *Archivio della Reale Società Romana di Storia Patria* 50 (1927): 5-32.

[73.](#) Cesi precluded religious people from gaining membership in the Lincei not only because that might have brought up "conflicts of interest," but also because people with strong intellectual preconceptions could not fit the Lincei's moral economy: they could not be free. A comparative analysis of the Lincei's and the Jesuits' responses to the debate around Copernicanism brings their crucial differences between these two orders to the surface. On this topic, see Rivka Feldhay, *Galileo and the Church: Political Inquisition and Critical Dialogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); James Lattis, *Between Copernicus and Galileo* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); and Ugo Baldini, *Legem impone subactis: Studi su filosofia e scienza dei gesuiti in Italia (1540- 1632)* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1992).

[74.](#) Cesi, "Del naturale desiderio di sapere" (above, n. 25), pp. 62-63.

[75.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 53; "Cesi to Galileo," May 11, 1613, in Gabrieli, "Carteggio Linceo," Part II, sect. 1 (above, n. 32), p. 353. The oath is in Gabrieli, "Ricerche e carte" (above, n. 3), p. 446. Cesi refers to the Lincei as a "militia philosophica" in another official document, the diploma of membership he gave each Linceo after he signed to oath; the document is reproduced in Gabrieli, "Verballi delle adunanze" (above, n. 3), p. 468.

[76.](#) "Gesta Lynceorum," as quoted in Odescalchi, *Memorie istorico* (above, n. 4), p. 28. Stelluti, another Linceo, confirmed the need for this hierarchical distinction among them: "no one thing could be more justly agreed upon than that our role is to be true brothers among us while your role is that of the prince. Love belongs to us, to you the empire to which you were born, and to which you were destined from heaven. To you we give the sceptre, and you will govern us other brothers" (*ibid.*, p. 28).

[77.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[78.](#) On the domesticized character of the Roman aristocracy, see Ago, "Farsi uomini" (above, n. 19).

[79.](#) On the development of papal political absolutism, see Paolo Prodi, *The Papal Prince* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[80.](#) On the financial decline of the Roman baronage see Carlo Mistruzzi, "La nobiltà nello Stato Pontificio," *Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato* 23 (1963): 206-244; and (with reference to the Cesi family) Jean Delumeau, *Vie économique et sociale de Rome dans la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle* (Paris: De Boccard, 1959), vol. 1, pp. 153-155, 434-438, 467, 471-472. Enrico Stumpo has argued that the incomes from the estates of the Roman Barons "were not sufficient to allow for and maintain the very high standards of living necessary in the Rome of that age, standards that could have been assured only by the benevolence of the various popes" (*Il capitale finanziario a Roma fra cinque e seicento* [Milan: Giuffrè, 1985], p. 268).

[81.](#) I have discussed some aspects of the relation between social identity and scientific orientation in Mario Biagioli, *Galileo Courtier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

1993), pp. 290-297; and, in a different context, in "Filippo Salviati: A Baroque Virtuoso," *Nuncius* 6 (1991): 157-169.

[82](#). "Quelli che s'avessero ad ammettere non saranno schiavi nè d'Aristotele nè d'altro filosofo, ma d'intelletto nobil e libero nelle cose fisiche" (Cesi as quoted in Garin, "Fra '500 e '600" [above, n. 1], p. 17).

[83](#). "Sollecito il Signor Lagalla a mostrarmi il suo Discorso, et spesso lo persuado a non starsi così imprigionato ne' chiostrì del Peripato, ma contentarsi d'uscirne tal volta fuori, poichè a' degni intelletti devesi la libertà" ("Cesi to Galileo," July 23, 1611, in Gabrieli, "Il carteggio linceo," Part II, sect. 1 [above, n. 32], p. 166).

[84](#). *Lettera del R.P.M. Paolo Antonio Foscarini Carmelitano sopra l'opinione de' Pittagorici e del Copernico della mobilità della terra e stabilità del sole e del nuovo Pittagorico sistema del mondo, ecc.* (Naples: Scoriggio, 1615). On this episode (and for an English translation of Foscarini's text), see Richard Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

[85](#). "Cesi to Galileo," March 7, 1615, in Gabrieli, "Il carteggio linceo," Part II, sect. 1, p. 489.

[86](#). "Cesi to Eckius," April 30, 1605, in Gabrieli, "Il carteggio linceo," Part I [above, n. 15], p. 75.

[87](#). Giuseppe Gabrieli, "Luca Valerio Linceo e un episodio memorabile della vecchia Accademia," *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, ser. 6, 9 (1933): 709.

[88](#). *Ibid.* The complete report of the meeting is in Gabrieli, "Verbali delle adunanze" (above, n. 3), p. 498.

[89](#). Gabrieli, "Luca Valerio Linceo" (above, n. 87), p. 709.

[90](#). Cesi and his brothers rejected Valerio's resignation on the grounds that someone who had behaved in that way should not be granted the privilege of terminating his membership by his own volition. Instead, while his name was kept on the membership book, he was banned from all the activities of the academy; *ibid.*, p. 709.

[91](#). On Sarrocchi, see Antonio Favaro, "Margherita Sarrocchi" in *Amici e corrispondenti di Galileo*, ed. Paolo Galluzzi (Florence: Salimbeni, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 6-31; and Gabrieli, "Luca Valerio Linceo," pp. 701-704, 726-728.

[92](#). J. A. F. Orbaan, *Documenti sul barocco in Roma* (Rome: Società Romana di Storia Patria, 1920), vol. 2, pp. 279, 291.

[93](#). Ianus Nicius Erythraeus, *Pinacotheca Imaginum Illustrum . . .* (Leipzig: Gleditschl, 1692), pp. 259-261.

[94](#). "[F]uit inter mulieres vir, & inter viros mulier" (*ibid.*, p. 260).

[95](#). "Non ho visto il Padre Gambergier nè il Signor Luca se non così alla sfuggita, perchè sta molto lontano, et sempre impedito per vettureggiare carico in servitù della Signora Margherita, tralasciando, per quanto dice, gli studi; et così beffeggiato da molti, si sotterra per tale umore; nè io mi sono ardito a persuaderlo più che di tanto, perchè lo veggio troppo in preda a tale umore; anzi mi sfugge, perchè sempre la sotto, che io lo trovo, o

carne o cose siffatte, che le porta la a questa cogliona, et si scusa mecho con dire che gli da a molto obbligo, perchè gli ha insegnato. O pensate se lei avesse insegnato a lui quanto è li parrebbe d'essere in obbligo di servirla" ("Cigoli to Galileo," August 31, 1612, in Galileo Galilei, *Opere*, ed. Antonio Favaro [Florence: Barbera, 1890-1909], vol. 11, p. 387.

[96](#). "Fussimo insieme con il Signor Luca: del quale pure se ne può far poco capitale, perchè è più immerso che mai in quell'umore solito della Signora Margherita Sarrocchi, la quale è in molta necessità, et lui vuole sovenirla e mancare alle sue proprie; et talmente v'è immerso, che si può dire imbestialito" ("Cigoli to Galileo," July 28, 1612, in *ibid.*, p. 369).

[97](#). "Lynceographum," *Archivio Linceo 4 bis* (above, n. 3), ff. 385-396; Odescalchi, *Memorie istorico* (above, n. 4), pp. 240-241. Odescalchi commented that "il corpo intero delle leggi Lincee rimaner dovea sempre intatto, e come sacro rispettarsi" (p. 240).

