Lorenzo Bartolini's Demidoff Table

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LORENZO BARTOLINI'S Demidoff Table of 1845, *Allegory of Love, Vice, and Wisdom* (Figures 1–3), is described as "lost" in Mario Tinti's catalogue raisonné of 1936, and as "whereabouts unknown" in the catalogue of the Bartolini exhibition held at Prato in 1978.[1] The sculpture is in fact located in The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where it has languished in storage for many years. It was given to the Museum in 1903 by the duc de Loubat, who had purchased it at the sale of Count Anatole Nikolai Demidoff's property held in Paris on March 4, 1870.[2] In a letter dated September 1, 1903, to the then-director of the Museum, General Cesnola, the duke describes the sculpture as depicting "three children personifying the loves of wisdom, of study, and of drink."[3]

Also entitled *The Dream of Unhappy Virtue and Wanton Opulence*, the Table is an allegorical group whose meaning has been misinterpreted, and whose significance is not fully revealed even by the artist's explanation of the work or by a study of his literary source.

Lorenzo Bartolini (1777–1850) emerged from humble beginnings to become the most highly esteemed Italian sculptor of the generation after Canova. Born to a family of blacksmiths, Bartolini was trained as an artisan of decorative metal ornaments. In adolescence he traveled to Florence, and in 1797 he made his way across war-torn territory to Paris, where he managed to enter the most famous atelier of the day—the studio of Jacques-Louis David. There he immersed himself in the Neoclassical training of the time, perhaps introducing John Flaxman's Homeric illustrations (which he had discovered a few

1. Mario Tinti, *Lorenzo Bartolini* (Rome, 1936) II, p. 13; and *Lorenzo Bartolini*, exh. cat. (Prato: Palazzo Pretorio, 1978) p. 58, no. 18. The Prato exhibition, which did so much to restore Bartolini's reputation, included the plaster model of the Table.

The Demidoff Table is referred to by a number of titles. Tinti describes it as "L'amor il vizio et la saggezza" or "Il Sonno della virtù sventurata e della opulenza Lussuriosa," as well as "La Tavola degli amori" and "la Tavola dei Genj" (Tinti, *Bartolini*, II, p. 75). In a list of his works compiled at the request of Enrico Montazio in 1846 Bartolini mentions it as "Una Tavola con tre Amori significante La Vita e la ricompensa che ha nel mondo L'uomo da bene" (ibid., p. 13, no. 24). Two other lists compiled by Bartolini's studio assistant, Eliso Schianta, describe the work as "Tre figure di bambini che posano sopra una tavola—rotonda che indica il Mondo—In altro foglio sara descritto il soggetto" (ibid., p. 23, no. 43). The Table is mentioned again in a list of works commissioned by Prince Demidoff; Schianta notes, "La Tavola detta degli Amori, ossia il Mondo. Questo è tutto lavoro di Bartolini" (ibid., p. 23). We thus learn from Schianta the important fact that no other hand than Bartolini's carved the Demidoff Table.

2. *Collection de San Donato: Tableaux, marbres, dessins, acquarelles et miniatures* (Paris, 1870) p. 155, no. 228. The group was sold for 3,400 francs.

3. Written on stationery embossed with the address 53, rue Dumont d'Urville, the letter reads: "My dear General, I have yours of the [?] and the memorial to the Countess di Cesnola, for which please accept my best thanks. I bought, years ago, at the Demidoff sale, a very handsome marble table of Bartholoni [*sic*] who made the Demidoff monument erected at Florence. On the upper part are three children personifying the loves of wisdom, of study, and of drink. I shall be happy to present this to the Museum, provided it is willing to pay the boxing, transport and freight from Paris to New York. Please answer by return of mail. Yours Sincerely, J. F. Loubat" (MMA Archives). Joseph Florimond Loubat was born in New York, Jan. 21, 1831. His titles were papal; he was created count by Pope Leo XVIII in 1888, and duke by the same in 1893. Ruvigny (1914) calls him the 1st Duke Loubat, and he was evidently still alive at the time. He was a member of the Institut de France and the academies of Madrid, Lisbon, Stockholm, Berlin, etc. The *Libro d'oro* lists the family under "de Loubat," noting that they were French in origin.

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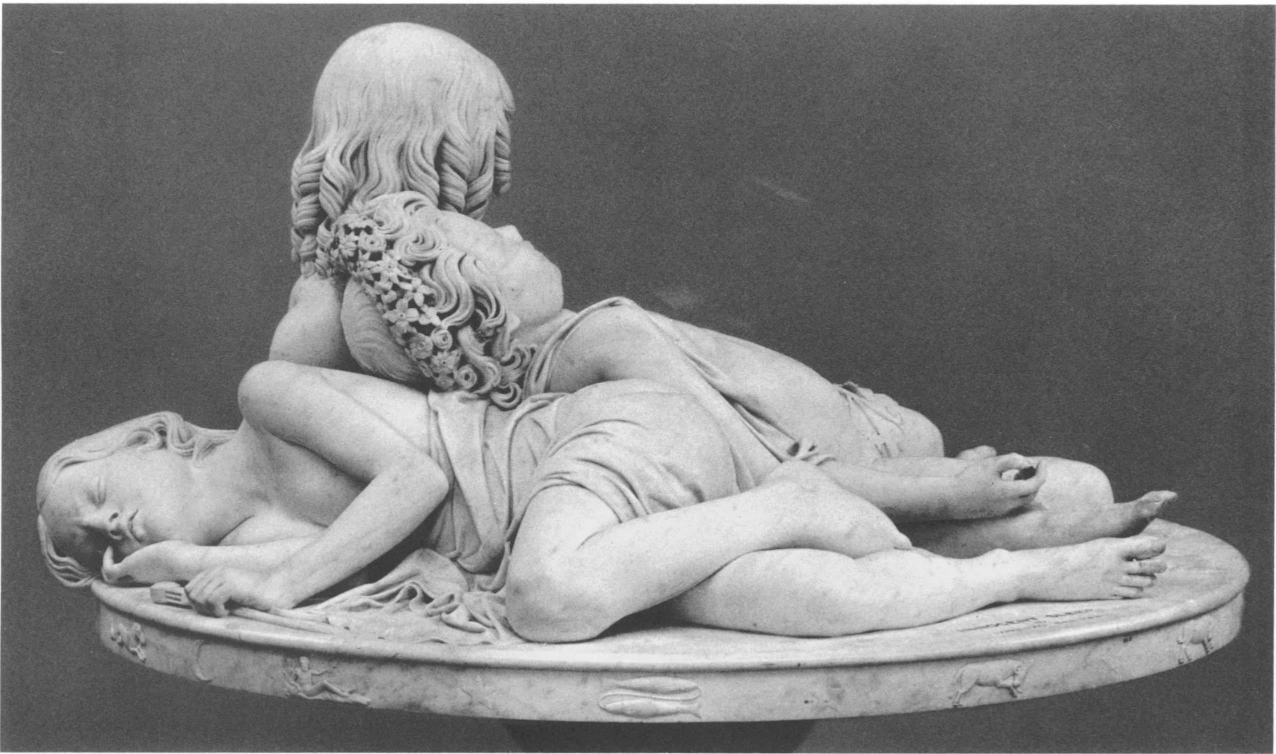


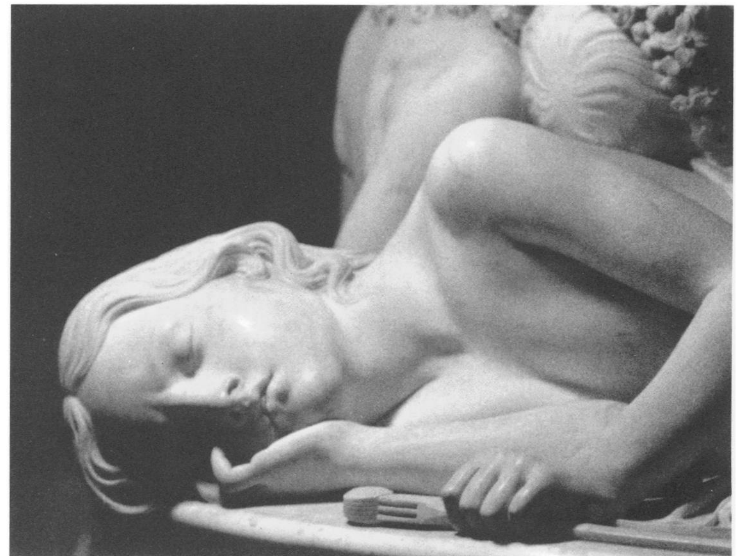
1, 2. Lorenzo Bartolini (1777–1850), The Demidoff Table: *Allegory of Love, Vice, and Wisdom*, inscribed: *di commissione del Principe / Anatolio Demidoff / Bartolini fece 1845 Firenze*. Marble, H. 64 in. (162.6 cm.), Diam. approx. 54 in. (137 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Le Duc de Loubat, 03.11a–d

years earlier in Italy) to his friend and classmate, J.-A.-D. Ingres.[4]

In 1801, the year Ingres won the Grand Prix de Rome in painting, Bartolini was awarded second prize for his relief of *Kleobis and Biton*.[5] With this his career was launched and soon he was charged by Napoleon's powerful cultural minister, Vivant-Denon, with the execution of a bust of the emperor for the Vendôme Column as well as with a relief of the battle of Austerlitz. In 1808 Napoleon sent Bartolini to Carrara to establish a school of sculpture, which he administered until Bonaparte's abdication in 1814. Bartolini then settled in Florence where he enjoyed the wide patronage of a foreign, largely British, clientele and where in 1839 he was named professor of sculpture at the academy. Once his position was secure, he became a vocal opponent of academic Neoclassical training, renouncing the style of his youth in favor of direct study from nature.

The Demidoff Table is a product of Bartolini's maturity. It depicts three children reclining upon a round

3. Sleeping boy with calipers, detail of the Demidoff Table (photo: Menaker)



4. Agnes Mongan speculates on this in "Ingres and the Antique," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 10 (1947) p. 5. As a youth Bartolini had a passion for Flaxman's etchings and went to great lengths to study them (ibid., pp. 3–4).

5. See Tinti, *Bartolini*, I, p. 6, for the surviving fragment of the bas-relief.

4. Bartolini, Bust of Count Anatole Demidoff, ca. 1840. Marble, H. 24¼ in. (61.6 cm.). Prato, Cassa di Risparmi e Depositi (photo: Cassa di Risparmi . . . di Prato)

tabletop, which is dotted along the rim with reliefs of the twelve signs of the zodiac and the sun and moon. Designated as a "piano del mondo," or "plan of the world," the Table revolves on a pivot, a particularly clever device considering the work's global theme, and one that undoubtedly delighted nineteenth-century viewers.[6]

Two of the figures lie sleeping. One child reclines supine, his wreathed head tilted back and a half-smile upon his lips. With an arm extended at either side and his body exposed save for a vine leaf, he is the image of secure and relaxed sleep. The clue to his sound rest is an overturned cup which has fallen from his right hand. This, as well as the scattered grape bunches and the floral wreath that crowns his tousled hair, clearly identifies him as a young Bacchus.

Awake and supporting this "child of nature" is another young boy who, in a pose reminiscent of Leonardo's pointing angels and saints, raises a finger heavenward as if indicating the sleeping child's blessed state.[7] There is a Renaissance air about this beatific boy, particularly in his shoulder-length hair, serene bearing, and androgynous beauty, and one is reminded that as a Florentine Bartolini was particularly susceptible to the renewed interest in the quattrocento that was spreading throughout Europe in the mid-nineteenth century.[8] Set behind this figure are the attributes of Eros (a bow and a quiver filled with arrows and embellished with a moth carved in low relief) and Wisdom (a torch)—perhaps to be read literally as "love of wisdom."[9]

6. Comparable are Canova's colossi of Ajax and Hector in the Palazzo Treves in Venice, which can be made to roll about the marble floor with minimal effort.

7. See, e.g., the pointing angel in the *Madonna of the Rocks* (1486–90, Louvre), St. Anne in *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne* (1499–1501, National Gallery, London), *St. John the Baptist* (1513–16, Louvre), and *Bacchus* (formerly *St. John in the Desert*, 1511–15, Louvre). The figure who points—a preacher or "commentator"—was developed from images of John the Baptist, who "announces one greater than himself," in the late Middle Ages. It was given verbal definition by Leon Battista Alberti in his *Treatise on Painting* of 1435: "In an epic painting I like to see someone who admonishes and points out to us what is happening there" (quoted by Jack Wasserman, *Leonardo* [New York, 1975] p. 116). That Bartolini looked not only to other sculpture but also to painting for inspiration is evident from his statue of Venus, a marble translation of Titian's famous *Venus of Urbino*. Ingres made a copy of Titian's Venus as a favor to Bartolini so that he would have an image to sculpt from (see Richard H. Randall, "Ingres and Titian," *Apollo* 82 [1965] pp. 366–369).

8. For more on the Neo-Florentine movement see entries under Paul Dubois and Antonin Mercié in H. W. Janson and Peter Fusco, eds., *The Romantics to Rodin: French Nineteenth Century Sculpture from North American Collections*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles, 1980) pp. 242–245, 303–304.

9. Described by the duc de Loubat as "love of wisdom" (see note 3 above), and by Bartolini as "Cupid, God of generation" (see below, note 18), the child's spiritual bearing and his gesture pointing heavenward have also led him to be called "Divine Love" (see below, and notes 16, 17). In fact, the figure seems suggestive of a conflation of pagan Eros and the Christ Child that developed in late 16th- and early 17th-century emblem books. See, e.g., Herman Hugo, *Pia Desideria*, introductory note by Hester M. Black (Antwerp, 1624; Menston, Yorks.: Scolar Press, 1971). Rudolf Berliner in "God is Love," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 42 (1953) p. 19, notes that there are embodiments of Divine Love as classical Cupid as early as the 14th century. (Thoughts on the unification of images of Eros with the Christ Child were provoked by the late H. W. Janson's lecture, "The Image of the Human Soul," Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass., Oct. 29, 1981.)

The third boy (Figures 2, 3), sleeping in a fetal position on his side, turns away from the two other children. His draped body is tense and angular. In one hand he holds a calibrating instrument, with the other he cradles his cheek. His head extends outside the "plan of the world," a metaphor, as we shall see, to emphasize his existence outside of nature.

The Table was commissioned by the Russian-born Count Anatoly Nicolayevich Demidoff (1812–70, prince of San Donato from 1840), Bartolini's greatest patron (Figure 4).[10] Possessing enormous wealth, yet not accepted in all social circles because his titles and riches were newly acquired (his forebears, like Bartolini's, were blacksmiths), the count strove throughout his life to improve his education and better his social status. He surrounded himself with literary friends and in 1843 was elected to the Institut de France for his book on travels through Southern Russia.[11] In 1838 the novelist and drama critic Jules Janin introduced Demidoff to Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, Napoleon's niece and the daughter of Jérôme, former king of Westphalia, and Catherine of Württemberg. Mathilde's pedigree, not to mention her beauty and wit, made her an attractive prize, and the two were married in November 1840. Unfortunately, Demidoff behaved scandalously from the moment they were wed. He paraded his infidelities before his wife, overindulged in drink, provoked violent arguments, and even slapped her in public. This last incident, which took place at a fancy-dress ball at the prince's San Donato estate, was the final outrage. Mathilde petitioned Czar Nicolas for a divorce, which was promptly granted in 1846.[12]

Variously described as "fiercely handsome like the hero of a romantic novel" and as "ugly, with brusque unattractive manners," Demidoff was by all accounts a quintessentially romantic figure, who alternated like a maniac between acts of great generosity and expressions of touching tenderness, and extreme cruelty and violence.[13] One cannot help but speculate on the degree to which he defined the subject of the Table, commissioned at the time of his turbulent marriage. It is indeed tempting to see the sleeping boys as reflections of two salient aspects of the count's tormented personality, his intellectual aspirations and his profoundly dissolute nature. On the other hand, it is doubtful that Demidoff would have wanted to immortalize the latter, especially since by 1844 his debauchery had caused him considerable regret.[14]

Repeatedly misread, the group is described in Bartolini's own manuscript list of his works as "A Table with three Loves signifying Life and the rewards that the good man has in the world. Sent to S. Donato."[15] The 1870 sale catalogue of the Demidoff estate describes the group as follows: "L'Amour divin est couché sur un plateau figurant le monde et soutient l'Amour profane dormant sur lui, d'un sommeil agité, au milieu des raisins et des roses. L'Amour du travail, abandonné à lui-même, repose dans le calme."[16] Paraphrasing this, the Metropolitan Museum's catalogue card reads: "Divine Love supports Profane Love who sleeps a restless sleep amidst grapes and roses, while Love of Work left to herself [*sic*] sleeps calmly."[17]

10. Demidoff commissioned Bartolini to execute the famous monument to Niccolò [Nicolay Nikitich] Demidoff, his father, which stands in the Lungarno Serristori, Florence. On the bust of Demidoff (Figure 4) see Giuseppe Marchini, *La Galleria di Palazzo degli Alberti: Opere d'arte della Cassa di Risparmi e Depositi di Prato* (Milan, 1981) pp. 106–109, no. 44; Marchini suggests that it was executed to commemorate the count's marriage in 1840. The plaster cast is in the Gipsoteca Bartoliniana, Florence. Bartolini had made a bust earlier, in 1831, but the count was dissatisfied with the likeness; see Prato cat., *Bartolini*, p. 84, no. 15, ill.

11. *Voyage dans la Russie méridionale et la Crimée par la Hongrie, la Valachie et la Moldavie* (Paris, 1839–42). The work comprised eight volumes and an atlas. Doubt has been cast on Count Demidoff's authorship by Mrs. Bearne, *Four Fascinating French Women* (London, 1910) p. 390: "Demidoff succeeded in being elected member of the French Institute on the strength of being the author of a learned book he had paid someone else to write in his name."

12. Mathilde's petition to the Czar is quoted in Joanna Richardson, *Princess Mathilde* (New York, 1969) pp. 51–52. Demidoff's slap is recounted there (p. 50) as well as by Bearne, *French Women*, p. 393.

13. See Richardson, *Princess Mathilde*, p. 28, and Bearne, *French Women*, p. 390; both remark on the dual nature of the count's personality. The sculptor Giovanni Dupré notes that though Demidoff was said to be extravagant and brutal he remembers witnessing the count's tenderness to the princess, the tears he shed over Bartolini's death, and the charity he displayed in founding and maintaining the asylum of S. Nicolò (Giovanni Dupré, *Thoughts on Art and Autobiographical Memoirs* [Boston, 1886] p. 318).

14. Demidoff was apparently a victim of venereal disease (Richardson, *Princess Mathilde*, pp. 47–48).

15. Cited by Tinti (*Bartolini*, II, p. 13, no. 24) and in Prato cat., *Bartolini*, p. 58: "Una Tavola con tre Amori significante La Vita e la ricompensa che ha nel mondo L'uomo da bene. Posta a S' Donato."

16. *Collection de San Donato*, p. 155.

17. The work has been catalogued under the general title "Table aux Amours."

Neither of the two last descriptions takes into account the appearance of the sculpture or Bartolini's explanation of it. The bacchic figure of "Profane Love" is not agitated, but is sleeping deeply and contentedly under the protection of "Divine Love." By the same token, it is actually "Love of Work" who, with furrowed brow and clenched hands, sleeps uneasily.

In a manuscript dedicated to his main studio assistant, Eliso Schianta, Bartolini poetically, if obscurely, explains his group:

> Stretched out upon the plan of the world is Cupid, God of generation, sustaining and watching over the symbolic genius of dissolute wealth without virtue, who snores in his sleep, released from feasting and love, his head rumpled, the cup with the excess from his belly overturned, and covered for the rest by remains of the bacchanale, dreaming of past diversions in pleasure. Left to himself, the Genius of ambitious rectitude in work sleeps the agitated sleep of misfortune and glory, and serves as a cushion to the Destiny which oppresses him, covered by the respectability conferred by knowledge, his head extending beyond the periphery of the world: indicating thereby that he had no other happiness than in the other life. In the circle that indicates the celestial vault is the opulent sun that heats it; the Moon is warmth for the unfortunate.[18]

Bartolini indicated that the subject of the Table was taken from the *Satires* of Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636–1711). In a letter dated February 3, 1845, to his friend Giovanni Benericetti-Talenti, inspector of the Academy of Fine Arts, Bartolini writes: "Send me the Boileau because I have to make a description of the theme of the table. I need to decipher the subject which I have extracted from the *Satires*."[19]

The rather scatterbrained impression this letter creates, that Bartolini carved the group with only a dim recollection of Boileau, is confirmed by a careful reading of the *Satires*. Boileau's twelve satires do not contain either a literal reference to a "table of Amours" with its respective personifications, or a general description of Wisdom, Divine Love, Unfortunate Virtue, or the vices of Lust and Ambition. Rather, Boileau's barbs are usually aimed at specific people and are written in a cynical, lighthearted vein which does not accord with the serious tone of Bartolini's writing or his sculpture.

Nonetheless, many of Boileau's satires do deal with moral subjects. A constant theme is the folly not only of profligate vice, such as carnal lust and drunkenness, but also intellectual vice such as ambition and narrow-mindedness.[20] In fact, Boileau has a definite preference for the hedonist over the civilized man, whom he regards as having strayed from nature and primitive simplicity.[21] This is a preference Bartolini shared, and it is entirely likely that he had only a general notion of Boileau's anti-intellectual philosophy, rather than a specific satire in mind, when he began the Table in 1843.

Combining various elements, the group is clearly readable as representing a nude Bacchus who, overcome by drink, has let a cup fall from his hand as he sleeps soundly in the arms of Divine Love. In the meantime, the draped genius, symbolizing the qualities of ambition, correct behavior, and love of work, grasps the tool of reason—a pair of compasses—as he furrows his brow in isolated, troubled sleep. Bartolini's message is clear: it is not eroticism and dissoluteness, but rather ambition, exactness, and misguided adherence to rules that are the more tormenting sins. In the end, the sensual, natural man is blessed, while the civilized, educated, and ambitious one is condemned to think, plan, and measure.

This reading, however, does not tell all, for the key to unraveling another level of meaning within the

18. Tinti, *Bartolini*, II, p. 76: "Sopra al piano del mondo ovunque posa sta sdraiato [*sic*] l'Amore Dio della generazione, sostenendo e vegliando al simbolico genio della ricchezza scostumata senza virtù, russando il sonno rilasciato dei conviti e degli amori, arruffata la testa, rovesciata la coppa del rigurgito del suo stomaco, e coperto dal resto del baccanale, sogna i passati divertimenti dei piaceri.

"Abbandonato a sè stesso dorme il sonno agitato della sfortuna e della gloria il Genio dell'ambiziosa giustezza di operare, e serve di guanciale al Destino che l'opprime, coperto dalla decenza che dà il sapere, sortendo la testa dalla periferia del mondo: indicando con ciò che non aveva altra felicità che nell'altra vita. Nel cerchio che indica la volta celeste, l'opulento sole che lo riscalda; la Luna è il calore per gli sfortunati."

19. Ibid: "Mandami il Boileau, perchè dovendo fare la descrizione del tema della tavola, ho bisogno di decifrare il soggetto quale ho estratto dalle *Satire* del suddetto."

20. See Satires IV, V, and VIII as well as chap. 35 of "Traité du sublime" in Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1835). Boileau was supposedly despised by the Romantics. Mme de Staël did in fact denounce him. Chateaubriand and Stendhal, however, respected Boileau, and Stendhal recommended him repeatedly to his sister Pauline while overseeing her education. See John Richardson Miller, *Boileau en France au dix-huitième siècle* (Baltimore, 1942) chap. 5.

21. Boileau-Despréaux, *Oeuvres*, p. 195. As in Satire V: "Que maudit soit le jour où cette vanité/Vint ici de nos moeurs souiller la purité."

5. Joseph Nollekens (1737–1823), *Boy on a Dolphin*, 1764. Marble. Burghley House, Northamptonshire (photo: Courtauld Institute of Art)

group comes not from Boileau but from Bartolini's personal philosophy of art.

Although to modern eyes Bartolini's figures may appear blandly Neoclassical in their smooth, pearly finish and antique coiffure and garb, a closer look reveals an individuality of facial type and expression, an instinctive naturalism in hand and leg positions, and a detailed specificity in the rendering of objects that are at variance with our received notions of Neoclassical tenets. Indeed, we know Bartolini spearheaded the group of artists who renounced the *Bello Ideale* of the Winckelmann school in favor of the *Bello Naturale*.[22] Bartolini rebelled against the dogmatic aspect of Neoclassicism, regarding its academic method as mired in theory and formulas. He felt that idealizing and systematizing the art of the ancients into measurable, teachable rules was contrary to the spirit of classical art, which itself was rooted in truth and experience.[23] The *Bello Naturale* thus championed a return to living reality, which meant the artist must select his forms from nature.

Bartolini was, of course, very much the offspring of his Neoclassical times. He may have renounced academic methods but he retained allusions to past classical art, and references to Greco-Roman sleeping Cupids are present in the Demidoff Table. Dormant putti identified as Eros or Hypnos were plentiful in antiquity from the Hellenistic age on.[24] Sculptures of sleeping children were also commonly used as grave monuments in the ancient world. This usage was revived in late eighteenth-century England and later on the Continent.[25] Bartolini's strong English connections may have afforded him contact with this type of British sculpture. Joseph Nollekens's once-famous *Boy on a Dolphin* of 1764 (Figure 5), with his upturned head, swept-back hair, and dangling arms, strikingly resembles the unconscious bacchic figure in Bartolini's group.[26] It is also significant that Nollekens's sculpture, like Bartolini's, is mounted on a dowel so that it can be rotated and seen from all points of view.[27]

In something of a four-way dialogue the Demidoff Table speaks not only to a far classical and a near Neoclassical past, but also addresses earlier Italian sculpture. References to Renaissance and Baroque sleeping putti by Michelangelo, Algardi, Duquesnoy,

22. See Tinti, *Bartolini*, I, pp. 257ff., and Prato cat., *Bartolini* 131–162. See also the review of the Prato exhibition in *Connoisseur* 198 (1978) p. 172.

23. On the rigors of academic training for sculptors see Ann Wagner, "Learning to Sculpt in the Nineteenth Century: An Introduction," in *Romantics to Rodin*, pp. 9–20.

24. Margarete Bieber, *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age* (New York, 1961) figs. 617–620. Note also the Barberini Faun (ibid., fig. 450), who sleeps in a drunken stupor, his body exposed. For more on sleeping Eros see *Die Skulpturen der Sammlung Wallmoden* (Göttingen, 1979) pp. 29–31.

25. See Margaret Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain 1530 to 1830* (Harmondsworth, 1964) figs. 141A, and 178B: Thomas Banks's monument to Penelope Boothby of 1793 (Ashborne, Derbyshire) and Sir Francis Chantrey's *Sleeping Children* of 1817 (Lichfield Cathedral). For a later, French example of the trend see James Pradier's tomb of Princess Françoise d'Orléans of 1847 (Royal Chapel, St. Louis, Dreux), on which Fred Licht writes: "There is an attempt . . . to avoid the suggestion of death and substitute an impression of sleep" ("Tomb Sculpture," in *Romantics to Rodin*, p. 99, fig. 102).

26. See Seymour Howard, "Boy on a Dolphin: Nollekens and Cavaceppi," *Art Bulletin* 46 (1964) pp. 177–189, figs. 1–5.

27. Ibid., p. 183.

and others, who in turn were consciously perpetuating antique traditions, superimpose themselves upon Bartolini's group.[28] Thus, the Table resonates with classical allusions reiterated over three centuries of antique revivals. And yet, though in form and subject the work is thoroughly classical, in details, contours, and shades of meaning it rejects its models in favor of close observation of nature.

In 1839 Bartolini was appointed professor of sculpture at the Florence Academy, replacing the strict academician Stefano Ricci, whose teaching was based solely on copying the antique. In a direct about-face Bartolini prohibited all study from statuary and restricted instruction to study from life. Promptly after his appointment Bartolini created a scandal by choosing a hunchback dwarf for a model.[29] This action provoked a lengthy debate on aesthetics in the Florentine press. Bartolini published three polemical tracts in the *Giornale del Commercio* from 1843 to 1846, arguing for acceptance of the *Bello Naturale*.[30] Thus the Demidoff Table, begun in 1843 and completed in 1845, was created precisely at the height of Bartolini's dispute with the Academy.

Given the primary meaning of the group as representing the isolated unrest of the rational, rule-bound being against the relaxed, carefree state of the uncivilized, "natural" one, it is logical to read a secondary, personal message—one that incorporates Bartolini's *Bello Naturale* philosophy—into the group as well.

Support for this notion is found in an eyewitness account of a statement Bartolini made between 1844 and 1846 at the salon of Signor Fenzi, reported by Giovanni Dupré in his autobiography.[31] Dupré writes that Bartolini expressed his belief that the arts were in a state of decadence: first, because of the lack of enthusiasm and faith among the public who were sleeping in a *dolce far niente*; second, because the artist had abandoned the right road of imitation of beautiful nature and was pursuing the chimera of the *Bello Ideale*; and last, "because the vices of both had usurped the place of the virtues of our ancestors, and luxury, apathy, and avarice had drawn out of our beautiful country activity, temperance, . . . and liberality."[32]

From Dupré's account a specific and personal reading of Bartolini's group emerges. The "God of generation" representing "the virtues of our ancestors" supports and points the way for Wanton Opulence, who represents the luxury and apathy of the contemporary public lulled into a sleep of "sweet nothingness." Bartolini's severest criticism is reserved for Unhappy Virtue or Correct Behavior, that is, the artist who shuns nature and instead slavishly copies and measures the art of the classical past, as attested by the calipers in his grasp (see Figure 3). Viewed in this way, the sculpture has greater meaning, functioning not only on the remote, abstract plane of timeless allegory, but also in terms of Bartolini's personal reaction to the contemporary art scene.

Bartolini's use of the calipers as chief attribute of the rule-bound genius finds iconographic parallels in the past. Calipers or compasses have traditionally stood for rational philosophy and mathematical order. In medieval manuscripts they appear in representations of the second day of creation, used by God to delineate the firmament, thus indicating the imposition of order upon chaos.[33] By the sixteenth century com-

28. For Charles de Tolnay's candidate for Michelangelo's lost Cupid see "Alcune recenti scoperte e risultati negli studi Michelangioleschi," in Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, *Problemi attuali di scienza e di cultura* 153 (1971) pp. 8–9. A more striking resemblance is to be found in the group of three sleeping putti in the Galleria Borghese, Rome, by an unknown sculptor, ca. 1600, attributed by Italo Faldi (*Galleria Borghese: Le sculture dal secolo XVI al XIX* [Rome, 1954] pp. 13–14, no. 6) to Stefano Maderno. See Irving Lavin, "Five New Youthful Sculptures by Gianlorenzo Bernini and a Revised Chronology of His Early Works," *Art Bulletin* 50 (1968) p. 229, n. 45, fig. 14; Lavin notes that the group is of "Hellenistic inspiration."

29. Dupré, *Thoughts on Art*, p. 117. See also Tinti, *Bartolini*, I, pp. 107–109, and John Kenworthy Browne, "Lorenzo Bartolini: Plaster Models and Drawings. Palazzo Pretorio, Prato," *Burlington Magazine* 120 (1978) pp. 340–341. Bartolini adopted the figure, known as the Gobbo (hunchback), as his emblem and made of it an allegory, showing the Gobbo holding the mirror of truth up to the head of the "serpent of deceit" whom he is strangling with the dictum: "Tutta la Natura è bella/Relativa al soggetto da trattarsi . . ." (Tinti, *Bartolini*, I, p. 109, n. 1). For images of the Gobbo see Prato cat., *Bartolini*, pp. 161–162, figs. 9–13. For classical precedents see Bieber, *Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age*, figs. 376, 377. Bartolini chose the hunchback dwarf for a projected sculpture of Aesop meditating on his fables (Tinti, *Bartolini*, I, p. 107).

30. Excerpts given in Prato cat., *Bartolini*, pp. 135–142. For more on the debate over aesthetics see essays by Sandra Pinto and Ettore Spalletti, ibid., pp. 99ff.

31. Dupré, *Thoughts on Art*, pp. 157–158.

32. Ibid.

33. See, e.g., *The Creation*, Bible Moralisée, Oxford Bodl. 270b, reproduced in Anthony Blunt, "Blake's 'Ancient of Days': The Symbolism of the Compasses," *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 2 (1938–39) fig. 9b; Blunt cites Prov. 8:27, "When He set a compass upon the face of the depth" (p. 53). See also *God the Father as Architect*," Bible Moralisée, Österreichische Nationalbiblio-

6. Giovanni Caccini (1556–1612), *Temperance*, 1583–84. Marble, H. 72 in. (182.9 cm.) The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 67.207

passes were symbolic of measure, science, and philosophy in general.[34]

Bartolini could easily have encountered such a personification in the late sixteenth-century statue of *Temperance* by Giovanni Caccini, which stood in the garden of the palace of Giovanni Battista del Milanese, bishop of Marsica, (later owned by the Covoni family) on the via Larga (now via Cavour) in Florence (Figure 6). The classicizing allegorical figure holds a bit and bridle symbolizing restraint in one hand, and a pair of dividers standing for "measured reason" in the other.[35] Caccini's sculpture represents the very tradition that Bartolini reacted against.

It was Albrecht Dürer who first associated melancholy with symbols of measurable creative endeavor, setting a precedent that eventually led to Bartolini's dejected genius. In *Melencolia I* the female personification of melancholy holds a compass as she sits surrounded by geometrical instruments (Figure 7). Afterwards, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the compass served as the standard attribute of melancholy.[36] Just as Bartolini contrasts

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thek, Vienna, reproduced in Helen Gardner, *Art Through the Ages*, rev. Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey (New York, 1970) pl. 65.

34. Blunt, "Blake's 'Ancient of Days,'" p. 53. See, e.g., the figure of Euclid in Raphael's *School of Athens*, Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican, Rome.

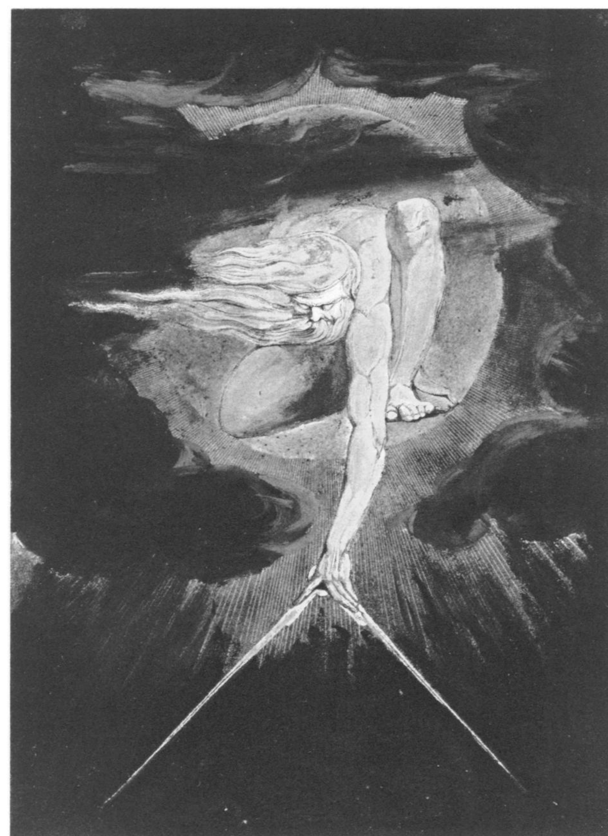
35. Like Bartolini's Table, Caccini's *Temperance* has made its way from Florence to New York. It, too, resides in the Metropolitan Museum. See Olga Raggio, "Our Finest Hour," in Thomas Hoving, *The Chase, The Capture: Collecting at the Metropolitan* (New York, 1975) pp. 160–164; and *The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Notable Acquisitions 1965–1975* (New York, 1975) p. 237. I am grateful to Mary Laing for calling this work to my attention.

36. "The influence of Dürer's *Melencolia I*—the first representation in which the concept of melancholy was transplanted from the plane of scientific and pseudo-scientific folklore to the level of art—extended all over the European continent and lasted for more than three centuries" (Erwin Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer* [Princeton, 1943] p. 170). For other examples of Melancholy associated with compasses see Jacob de Gheyn's engraving *Melancholy* reproduced in Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn* (New York, 1963) pl. 1; Georg Pencz's *Melancholy* of 1545 (Collection Count von Schönborn, Weissenstein, Pommersfelden Castle; Frick Art Reference Library, study photo no. 609a); G. B. Castiglione's 17th-century etching of Melancholy (Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia); and Mathias Gerung's unusual *Melancholy* of 1558, which shows a bare-breasted brooding Melancholy in the middle register of the painting and in the lower a white-robed, bearded man holding a compass and a mirror reflecting a landscape (Collection Mrs. W. O. Burton, New York; Frick Art Reference Library, study photo).

the "natural" man blessed by divinity against the tormented, "intellectual" one, so Dürer's *Melencolia I* can be viewed as a pendant to his *St. Jerome*. In an observation that might well be applied to the two sleeping youths on Bartolini's Table, Erwin Panofsky has written that in *St. Jerome* and *Melencolia I* Dürer "opposes a life in the service of God to what may be called a life in competition with God—the peaceful bliss of divine wisdom to the tragic unrest of human creation."[37]

It was perhaps not accidental that the English poet and artist William Blake had a copy of Dürer's *Melencolia I* on his wall for many years.[38] In poem after poem Blake the visionary and anti-intellectual railed against the destruction of creativity by the imposition of rules and conventions upon the imagination, and in his art he made repeated use of the compass as an attribute of evil reason.[39] The famous etching *The Ancient of Days*, from *Europe* of 1794, represents Blake's invented deity Urizen (a pun on "your reason"), holding a compass over the black emptiness beneath him (Figure 8). Unlike the medieval artist's rendering

7. Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), *Melencolia I*, 1514. Engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 43.106.1



8. William Blake (1757–1827), *The Ancient of Days*, frontispiece to *Europe*, 1794. Etching and watercolor. Upperville, Paul Mellon Collection (photo: Mellon Collection)

37. Panofsky, *Dürer*, p. 156.
38. Blunt, "Blake's 'Ancient of Days,'" p. 60, n. 1.
39. As early as 1782 Blake engraved Thomas Stothard's design for the title page to John Bonnycastle's *An Introduction to Mensuration and Practical Geometry*; "The design apparently provided the germ of one of Blake's most famous motifs, the scientist making a diagram upon the ground or on the surface of the water with a pair of dividers" (David Bindman, *The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake* [New York, 1978] p. 467, pl. 2). The scene depicts children pointing to geometric drawings and forms upright and flat on the ground. The figure seated nearest the ground with his hand to his head recalls not only Dürer's *Melencolia* (note the multisided form in the background) but also brings to mind the figures of Heraclitus, who rests his elbow on a square block, and Euclid, who measures a geometric figure on the floor with a compass, in Raphael's *School of Athens*. Raphael's fresco, which stood for the command of reason over man's baser side and represented the rational search for truth and understanding, undoubtedly constituted a significant point of reference for Blake's and Bartolini's Romantic reactions.

9. Blake, *Newton*, 1795. Color monotype. Philadelphia, Glen Foerd at Torresdale, Lutheran Church in America (photo: Lutheran Church)

of a compass-wielding Creator imposing order on chaos, Blake's Urizen condemns man to a bound and restrained existence as opposed to the free life of the imagination. Later Blake cast Sir Isaac Newton as the pernicious exponent of Urizen's "religion of reason on Earth" (Figure 9). Again the compass appears, this time as Newton's chief attribute as he sits narrowly focused on the attempt "to define man within the laws of physics."[40]

Bartolini may have been familiar with Blake's etchings through his early interest in Flaxman,[41] but he is unlikely to have had insight into Blake's highly personal, antirational cosmology. Rather, both Blake and Bartolini should be viewed as fellow products of the Romantic epoch—an epoch that rebelled against the rules and systematized methods that characterized the Enlightenment and early Neoclassicism.[42] Their similar use of the compass to stand for the debilitating effects of reason upon creativity stems from an attitude that ranged internationally from German *Sturm und Drang* to French Romanticism. From Charles Lamb and John Keats's famous toast cursing Newton, to Delacroix's avowal that there are "no rules whatsoever for the greatest minds," writers and artists in the

40. Peter Drucker, quoted in Jacques Barzun, *Romanticism and the Modern Ego* (Boston, 1943) p. 31. For a different view of Newton, typical of the Enlightenment, see Etienne-Louis Boullée's project for the *Cenotaph for Newton* dated 1784, whose accompanying text begins: "Sublime Mind! Prodigious and profound genius! Divine being! . . . With the range of your intelligence and the sublime nature of your Genius, you have defined the shape of the earth" (Helen Rosenau, *Boullée and Visionary Architecture* [London, 1976] p. 107, figs. pp. 70–73).

41. See above and note 4.

42. As Barzun (*Romanticism*, chap. 2) points out, the Enlightenment sowed the seeds for the Romantic rebellion. See also Marcel Brion, *The Art of the Romantic Era* (New York, 1966); Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* (Princeton, N.J., 1967); and Lorenz Eitner, *Neoclassicism and Romanticism 1750–1850: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970) 2 vols.

first half of the nineteenth century continually declared their freedom from institutions, rules, and even reason itself.[43]

The irony of the Demidoff Table is that Bartolini, to modern eyes at least, appears to use a form and vocabulary scarcely distinguishable from academic Neoclassicism in order to proclaim a distinctly Romantic belief. Bartolini's departures from academic practice—such as his belief in individual expression and form, his interest in detail, and his insistence on the use of live models—which were radical at the time, now appear as minor infractions of Neoclassical dogma. In historical perspective we can see that not all art made with revolutionary intent remains revolutionary with the passage of time. The fact that the sculpture is repeatedly misread, whereby the figure embodying the Dionysiac principle is described as agitated and disconsolate when it is really the ambitious, rational worker who deserves that label, shows the difficulty viewers have in reconciling the style of the piece with its meaning.

It is only when we allow for the paradoxes of the style of Bartolini's formative years—ironically, sometimes labeled "Romantic Classicism"—that the contradictions within the Table are resolved. For, in effect, Neoclassicism was one manifestation of a pervasive romanticizing of less civilized and less corrupt times and places than those of Western Europe around 1800. Early antiquity was commonly equated with contemporary primitive societies in the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East.[44] Viewed in this light Bartolini's hedonistic little Bacchus is the fitting hero of a sculpture that attempts to capture what was thought to be the true, primitive spirit of antiquity—a time when man lived in harmony with nature instead of struggling against it.

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43. The toast was made at the "immortal dinner" given by the ill-fated artist Benjamin Robert Haydon, on Dec. 28, 1817, when they drank to "Newton's health and the confusion of Mathematics," adding that Newton had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to its prismatic colors; see Willard Bissell Pope, ed., *The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960) II, p. 173, and Douglas Bush, *John Keats, His Life and Writings* (New York, 1966) p. 158, n. 2. For Delacroix's words see Paul Flat, ed., *Journal d'Eugène Delacroix* (Paris, 1893) I, p. 82, entry for Tuesday, Apr. 27, 1824.

44. For primitivizing currents within Neoclassicism see: Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *The Noble Savage: A Study of Romantic Naturalism* (New York, 1928); Arthur Lovejoy, *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore, 1948); N. Pevsner and S. Lang, "Apollo or Baboon," *Architectural Review* 104 (1948) pp. 279ff.; Rosenblum, *Transformations*, chap. 4.