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Calvin and Humanism

By Iso Peyer

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Trinity College, University of Dublin, Department of Modern History, under the supervision of Dr Patrick H. Kelly.

April 1, 2001

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SUMMARY

Calvin and humanism is an extensive and controversial topic the treatment of which depends to a considerable extent on the type of approach and method adopted. The introduction provides an overview of the special difficulties involved in exploring the question of Calvin's relation to humanism, specifying their implications for research, and it situates the topic in the wider context of intellectual and religious history, namely the development of the relationship between the Reformation and humanism since Luther. Among the special difficulties encountered three are prominent. First, the reformer shows a fundamentally reserved attitude towards humanism manifest in his conspicuous lack of explicitness concerning the principal issues associated with it. Calvin's reticence to address humanistic subjects directly can be described in terms of "implicitness", marginalisation or even tabooisation, and it makes the elaboration of a coherent theory based on documentary evidence a hard task. Second, humanism is the object of an ongoing controversy which is embedded in deep-rooted intellectual divisions, and therefore no agreed definition exists. This means that any conclusions about the relation of the Reformation to humanism depend substantially on the concept of humanism adopted. Third, Calvin's insistence on rational clarity contrasts sharply with the humanists' espousal of literary ambiguity. This contrast indicates a fundamental antagonism which makes the direct comparison of the two movements difficult.

Chapter one offers an overview of the literature, distinguishing four different types of interpretation. These types are advocated by major scholars, which demonstrates that no agreement on the question of Calvin and humanism has been reached. Augustijn and Crouzet defend an anti-humanistic interpretation (Calvin is averse or hostile to humanism), Neuser and Parker a non-humanistic one (Calvin is indifferent to or reserved about humanism), McGrath and Muller a scholastic one (Calvin shows distinct affinities with late medieval thought), and Millet, Bouwsma and Oberman a humanistic one (Calvin is a humanist or is friendly towards humanism). In chapter two the main problems of defining humanism are analysed and a concise integral description of the movement is provided. In defining humanism the conflict between philosophical (Garin) and anti-philosophical (Kristeller) interpretations is taken into account, since conclusions about Calvin and humanism depend essentially on the attitude adopted towards that issue. It appears impossible to bridge the gap between the philosophical and the anti-philosophical interpretations of humanism, which are rooted in distinct and long-established intellectual traditions in modern European thought (going back to Vico and Descartes). Since an adequate treatment can only be reached if a twin-track approach integrating both views is adopted, equal attention is given to the ideal of *humanitas* (emphasised by the philosophical interpretation of humanism) and to the cycle of the *studia humanitatis* (emphasised by the philosophical interpretation of humanism).

Chapters three and four provide an analysis of humanism according to the criteria of the *studia humanitatis*. Chapter three looks at the subjects of grammar, rhetoric, poetry and history, while chapter four deals with the philosophical components of humanism (among which moral philosophy features prominently). A close consideration of the philosophical interpretation suggests that the humanists embraced a fundamentally anthropocentric outlook in which the factor of self-knowledge played a key role as human existence was understood in terms of self-realisation. The ideal of *humanitas* implied the establishment of a harmonious balance between the individual faculties of the mind, which required the promotion of the undervalued non-rational faculties (imagination, will, memory) against the dominance of reason in scholasticism. This aspect of humanist intellectual reformism has been epitomised in terms of a shift from *ratio* to *oratio*, and it has been manifest most prominently in the humanists' anti-philosophical polemic and in their defence of freedom and the imagination in the framework of the disciplines of moral philosophy and poetry. If humanist reformism is considered in this way as a protest against the increasing tide of rationalism (encountered in Aristotelianism), *humanitas* can be interpreted as corresponding to an affirmation of what is today referred to as unconsciousness (according to Fromm's

suggestion), and therefore the humanists can be seen as early advocates of the unconscious and the humanist movement as fostering a process of expansion of consciousness. This contrasts with the prevailing intellectual currents of the Renaissance, which tended to amplify the conscious sphere of the human mind, thus encouraging the development or promotion of consciousness.

Chapter five deals with the young Calvin, whose relation to humanism is difficult to determine due to a lack of source material. Taking into account the latter fact, the chapter not only offers an overview of the literature but also provides a summary of the (often neglected) early biographies. However, no conclusive statements can be made concerning the attitude of the young Calvin towards humanism, so that his intellectual disposition cannot with any degree of certainty be determined as predominantly humanistic or scholastic before his religious conversion. It is possible that Calvin underwent an intellectual conversion in his youth, leading him from the espousal of a nominalistic epistemology to the adoption of a compromise between a humanistic and a realistic theory of knowledge, which was not uncommon in the later Renaissance. It remains uncertain whether there existed a period in the life of the young Calvin which was dedicated exclusively or predominantly to humanistic pursuits. Probably humanism became a hobby for Calvin when he turned from legal to religious studies, thus playing an auxiliary role in the shaping of his religious views.

In chapter six the relation of Calvin the reformer to humanism is analysed using the concept of humanism elaborated in chapters two, three and four. Calvin's attitude towards the *studia humanitatis* is examined with regard to the humanistic programme of studies as a whole as well as with regard to the individual disciplines of that cycle of studies, taking into account the reformer's view of the related notion of *humanitas*. Unlike most humanists, Calvin disassociates the concepts of *humanitas* and the *studia humanitatis*, treating the latter with a considerable degree of detachment while almost completely disregarding the former. Calvin hardly ever deals with humanism or humanistic issues in an explicit or direct way, sidelining humanistic questions in such a way that his attitude can be characterised in terms of "implicitness", marginalisation or even tabooisation (if unconscious factors are also considered). The reformer never formally condemns humanism or the humanistic studies but he never delivers a wholehearted or unreserved recommendation and his manner of talking about humanistic themes sometimes almost amounts to condemnation. On the whole Calvin maintained a distinctly critical attitude towards humanism and the humanities. This is most obvious in his reservations about the art of poetry, which was absolutely central to humanism and from which he detached himself almost completely. Calvin's "implicitness" concerning humanism and his marginalisation of it suggest the existence of a degree of tabooisation, that is, an unconscious desire to suppress humanism.

Calvin is not categorically and completely against humanism but he prefers to keep it on a low level because he is apprehensive about the possible philosophical liberating effects which the outlook associated with it might have. Thus, on the whole the *studia humanitatis* can be useful instruments for theology but they must be "helpers" performing an auxiliary function and never become "masters". The renaissance of letters is interpreted by Calvin according to Luther's theological framework: the humanistic studies were revived by God in order to further the cause of the Gospel and restitute the Bible in its original form. With his rational focus on theology and in particular the Bible Calvin can be characterised as a "pre-Cartesian philosopher" who is a typical representative of the Renaissance insofar as he advocates what we have called promotion of consciousness, that is, he defends the emphasis on the conscious side of the human mind (as found in most forms of Aristotelian philosophy). His preoccupation with imposing limits to human understanding and, in a wider sense, to the human urge for knowledge, reveals him as someone who resists what we have called expansion of consciousness, for which the humanists called. Thus Calvin is at odds with the impulses arising from the realm of *humanitas* or the human unconscious and does not encourage, as has been claimed, a quest for wholeness.

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Introduction

Ever since Jacob Burckhardt advanced his vision of the Renaissance in the second half of the nineteenth century,[1] there has been vivid debate about the relationship of the Reformation to the Renaissance and to humanism. This debate has not been limited to history and historians, but it has been extended to other scholarly disciplines too, for instance art history, philosophy, psychology or more recently, sociology. There is no doubt: Burckhardt's idea of the Italian Renaissance has proved seminal for our understanding of humanism in early modern Europe and, as often happens with seminal ideas, it has not only offered a smooth solution to a difficult problem, but it has also increased the awareness of the problem itself, thereby raising fresh questions and sparking off controversy. Thus by putting forward his new theory of the Renaissance Burckhardt conjured up that intriguing triangle which has made people ponder: Renaissance, humanism and Reformation.

Burckhardt was seen by the Protestant bourgeoisie of his day, and in particular of his city, as a "liberal, rather too much of a freethinker" and as a figure who "stood somewhat askew in the eternal order of things".[2] Although his famous "essay" on the Renaissance contained no detailed or clear-cut theory about the relation between humanism and the Reformation, the ideas advanced in that "essay" appeared to undermine certain traditionally maintained assumptions, for instance the view that Luther was the man destined to accomplish the task which the humanists had only begun. Burckhardt vaguely portrayed the Reformation as a reaction against the "secularization"[3] of the Renaissance on the one hand, and as an antipode to what he called "humanistic rationalism"[4] on the other hand. He remained reluctant to commit himself to a definite view, raising the crucial question "why did not Italy, intellectually so great, ... accomplish a reformation?" only in order to withdraw cautiously from interpreting the phenomenon in the context of the Renaissance and humanism. "Mighty events like the Reformation, he commented, "elude ..... the deductions of the philosophers" because "the movements of the human spirit ..... must for ever remain a mystery to our eyes, since we can but know this or that of the forces at work in it, never all of them together".[5]

One of the first to appreciate Burckhardt's study on the Renaissance was his Basel faculty colleague Nietzsche, who had a keen eye for the liberal and freethinking elements which the Swiss historian's ideas contained.[6] The "literary" philosopher and son of a

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1 J. Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch* (Basel 1860).
2 C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (London 1963), 92.
3 J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 3rd ed. (London 1995), 85.
4 Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, 364.
5 Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, 298-299.
6 Nietzsche confessed that *Die Kultur der Renaissance* was one of the few modern books he admired; cf. L. Goldschneider, "Preface" to Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, xiv.

Lutheran pastor portrayed Lutheranism as a betrayal of humanism:

> The German Reformation cut us off from the ancient world: was this necessary? It revealed anew the old contradiction of paganism vs. Christianity .....; it was a victory over the same culture that was defeated in Christianity's beginnings.[7]

Nietzsche's thought-provoking statement contributed to fuel a seemingly interminable controversy over the relationship between the Renaissance, humanism and the Reformation. Gradually, it became more difficult to maintain a tradition which emphasised the positive connections between humanism and the Reformation, epitomised, for instance, by Herder's characterisation of Reuchlin as the "morning star of the Reformation".[8] After Burckhardt and Nietzsche, many theories have been advanced, defending very different positions, but comprehensive attempts at interpreting the triangle of Renaissance, humanism and Reformation have been relatively sparse, although they have led to very divergent views, too. In general scholars have either construed the Reformation as essentially a reaction to the Renaissance and to humanism highlighting contrasts and antitheses, or they have explained it as mainly a consequence emphasising affinities and similarities.[9] There were others who have suggested doing away with the term *Renaissance*; Charles G. Nauert tells us that there was a time when it was tolerable or even fashionable to do research on the subject avoiding the word *Renaissance* altogether.[10]

The radical revisionist attempts at abolishing the concept of *Renaissance*, however, have not helped advance a better theory. Today we seem to be back to the beginning, once again accepting *Renaissance*, *humanism* and *Reformation* as "obligatory terms" designating "three major axes of research", and inclined to readmit these concepts as "great compelling ideas" that are "historically and geographically pertinent".[11] One of the foremost experts in the field has recently remarked that since the relationship between the Renaissance, humanism and the Reformation represents one of those fundamental questions in European history which are naturally subject to much speculation, "this discussion has necessarily been more suggestive than definitive".[12] Today, in the wake of the surge of economic and social history, the topic appears to be rather underexplored.[13]

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7 F. Nietzsche, "We Classicists" in *Unmodern Observations* (1873-76) (New Haven 1990), 351. Cf. also D. R. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism* (Boston 1991), 59.

8 *Johannes Reuchlin: Deutschlands erster Humanist*, ed. H.-R. Schwab (Munich 1998), 7.

9 Cf. L. W. Spitz, "Humanism and the Protestant Reformation" in A. Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia 1988), 380.

10 Cf. Ch. G. Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge 1995), ix.

11 J.-C. Margolin, *Humanism in Europe at the Time of the Renaissance* (Durham (North Carolina) 1989), 1, 79. Jean Delumeau defends the term *Renaissance* as "convenient", although admitting that it is not quite satisfactory; cf. Delumeau, "Une histoire totale de la Renaissance" in *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1992), 2.

12 L. W. Spitz, "Humanism and the Protestant Reformation" in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 3, 402.

13 The literature is not very extensive. Apart from Spitz' s article the following contributions may help convey a general impression of the state and development of the discussion. C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: Der Humanist als Theologe und Kirchenreformer* (Leiden 1996); G. Bedouelle, "De l'humanisme aux réformes" in P. Chaunu, *L'aventure de la réforme* (Brussels 1991), 95-138; P. Matheson, "Humanism and Reform Movements" in A. Goodman / A. MacKay (eds.), *The Impact of Humanism on Western Europe* (London 1990), 23-42; A. Buck (ed.), *Renaissance - Reformation: Gegensätze und Gemeinsamkeiten* (Wiesbaden 1984); J. D. Tracy, "Humanism and the Reformation"

The current state of research has been summarised by a contemporary specialist:

> At present, ... no agreed framework for the interaction of humanism and the various reform movements - Catholic, Protestant and Radical - exists, and some of the bolder attempts to get beyond a piecemeal treatment carry little conviction.[14]

The different views and assumptions on how the Reformation relates to the Renaissance and to humanism have inevitably been reflected in the assessment of the attitudes of individual reformers towards humanism. It can be observed that scholars tend to operate with pre-set theories about the intriguing triangle in the back of their minds when dealing with the subject. Thus the discussion of the relationship between the major Reformation figures and humanism has been enveloped in continuous and sometimes rather monotonous controversy. With Luther, Zwingli and Melanchthon many aspects remain disputed, although consensus has been reached concerning basic points. Recent research has not substantially altered the received perceptions of Luther as fundamentally a nominalist and of Zwingli and Melanchthon as showing distinct humanistic traits. Zwingli has been called "a conscious Erasmian",[15] while Melanchthon is seen as the most humanistically oriented of all reformers.[16]

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in S. E. Ozment (ed.), *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research* [I] (St. Louis 1982), 33-57; S. E. Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven 1980), esp. chapter 8, "Humanism and the Reformation", 290-317; J. Boisset (ed.), *Réforme et humanisme* (Montpellier 1977); W. J. Bouwsma, "Renaissance and Reformation: An Essay in Their Affinities and Connections" in H. A. Oberman (ed.), *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era* (Leiden 1974), 127-149; Q. Breen, "Humanism and the Reformation" in J. C. Brauer (ed.), *The Impact of the Church Upon Its Culture* (Chicago 1968), 145-171; A. Dufour, "Humanisme et Réformation: État de la question" in A. Dufour, *Histoire politique et psychologie historique* (Geneva 1966), 37-62; L. Bakelants, "Les rapports de l'humanisme et de la Réforme" in *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles* 18 (1965-1966), 264- 282.

14 Matheson, "Humanism and Reform Movements", 24.

15 W. Neuser, *Calvin* (Berlin 1971), 7.

16 Concerning Luther cf. L. W. Spitz, *Luther and German Humanism* (Aldershot 1996); A. G. Dickens, "Luther and the Humanists" in P. Mack / M. C. Jacob (eds.), *Politics and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 1987), 199-213; H. Junghans, *Der junge Luther und die Humanisten* (Göttingen 1985); A. E. McGrath, "Humanist Elements in the Early Reformed Doctrine of Justification" in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 73 (1982), 5-20; G. Yule, "Late Medieval Piety, Humanism and Luther's Theology" in K. Robbins (ed.), *Religion and Humanism* (Oxford 1981), 167-179; M. Grossmann, *Humanismus in Wittenberg 1485-1517* (Nieuwkoop 1975). For Heiko Oberman "there is no doubt" that "Martin Luther was a nominalist", but Oberman points out that the reformer was a nominalist whose "lack of bias" against humanism is "striking"; cf. H. A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (New Haven 1989), 122-123. However, Luther's attitude towards nominalism is also an issue which is under debate at present; cf. G. White, *Luther as Nominalist* (Helsinki 1994). Concerning Zwingli cf. H. Feld, "'Es gat ein Christenman über fâld': Die Begegnung von humanistisch geprägter Theologie und mittelalterlicher Volksfrömmigkeit in der Zwinglischen Reformation" in W. van't Spijker (ed.), *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag* (Kampen 1991), 181-202; I. Backus, "Randbemerkungen Zwinglis in den Werken von Giovanni Pico della Mirandola" in *Zwingliana* 18 (1990-1991), 291-309; R. Stauffer, "L'influence et la critique de l'humanisme dans le *De vera et falsa religione* de Zwingli" in R. Stauffer, *Interprètes de la Bible* (Paris 1980), 87-102. Concerning Melanchthon cf. F. Schalk, "Mélanchton et l'humanisme" in *Courants religieux et humanisme* (Paris 1959), 73-82; W. Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon: Zwischen Humanismus und Reformation,* 2 vols. (Göttingen 1967 / 69). As regards the minor reformers cf. J. M. Kittelson, *Wolfgang Capito: From Humanist to Reformer* (Leiden 1975) and B. Stierle, *Capito als Humanist* (Gütersloh 1974). If we want to extend our consideration to include Catholic reforming figures, we can state with John O'Malley for Loyola that "the more potent influences upon Ignatius ..... were medieval and late medieval"; cf. J. W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge (Mass.) 1993), 254. Cf. also I. Elizaldo, "Ignacio de Loyola: su formación universitaria y su relación con los humanistas" in *Letras de Deusto* 21 (número extraordinario 50) (1991), 7-28.

Calvin, however, the most influential synthesiser of the thought of Luther, Zwingli and Melanchthon, is without doubt the case which is disputed at greater length: he seems to be the problem with no solution, and has indeed proved a bone of contention to scholars.[17] A survey of critical opinion on Calvin and humanism reflects the general debate in the interpretation of the Reformation, the Renaissance and humanism. Indeed, a cursory glance at the literature reveals that no basic consensus on the question of Calvin's attitude towards humanism has yet emerged and that this question figures among the most controversial issues in Reformation research.[18] There is no agreement among Calvin scholars; some have portrayed Calvin as a man of the Renaissance emphasising the scope of his humanist learning and its positive implications,[19] while others have given him a medieval aura regarding him as fundamentally alien or hostile to humanism.[20] The lowest common denominator appears today to consist in the concession that the reformer rejected the notion of an absolute opposition between classical literature and the Bible, and that he never completely abandoned humanist culture, particularly in his emphasis on education. But why should the relationship of the Reformation, or Calvin respectively, to humanism be such a knotty problem? If we reflect on the reasons for this, we find that the topic presents a number of special difficulties. These have to be examined carefully and their implications must be taken into account for a successful exploration of the topic. While most of these difficulties are well-known and only need to be restated, some are more obscure and require further elucidation. We will consider them one by one, deriving from their implications the basic principles of approach and method.

Let us first look at the problems that humanism presents. The most prominent difficulty is certainly the continuous absence of an agreed general definition or just of an established descriptive concept of the phenomenon. The elusive nature of humanism has proved hard to grasp in its entirety, and among the various theories that have been put forward since Burckhardt, no single one has gained universal acceptance, so that today the whole issue of humanism must be regarded as unresolved or partly resolved. Progress has been made in different areas, notably in the field of the humanistic disciplines (*studia humanitatis*), but this must not obscure the fact that no overall consensus has been reached on humanism and on the Renaissance.[21] We do not have "a sharply-defined checklist of humanist traits" which could be used to measure humanism in Calvin or other sixteenth-century reformers.[22] Four decades ago François Wendel distinguished six

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17 Cf. R. D. Linder, "Calvinism and Humanism: The First Generation" in *Church History* 44 (1975), 167. For a systematic overview of the literature cf. chapter 1 (Calvin the reformer) and chapter 5, pp. 245-263 (the young Calvin).

18 Experts have repeatedly emphasised this point. Already half a century ago Wendel spoke of "une des questions les plus controversées parmi les spécialistes, celle de l'attitude du réformateur [Calvin] en face de l'humanisme" (*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 31 (1951), 456).

19 E.g. Bohatec, Wendel or Bouwsma.

20 E.g. McNeill, Parker or Neuser.

21 Cf. P. O. Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought" in *The Renaissance: Essays in Interpretation* (London 1982), 127 and 131. Cf. also chapter 2, p. 77.

22 Cf. Linder, "Calvinism and Humanism", 168.

current concepts of humanism.[23] At present the situation is much the same. Recent textbooks indicate four or more influential notions of humanism commonly employed in historical research.[24] In this situation of conceptual pluralism every researcher is forced to make a choice - which may help explain why preliminary assumptions (and the preconceptions attached to them) have played such a prominent role.

In addition to the confusion over definition or description there is some uncertainty, too, about the estimated "canonicity" of humanist writings, an issue from which the problem of definition partly arises. We must be aware that there is no such thing as a *Corpus humanistarum*, that is, a Library of Humanist Classics, but that on the contrary, much humanist material remains unedited, unprinted or even uncatalogued.[25] For example, there are no complete modern editions of Petrarca's, Vives' or even Erasmus' works in the original languages, which means that one is sometimes obliged to use sixteenth- or eighteenth-century editions.[26] Moreover, Kristeller has remarked that as far as the humanist contributions to moral philosophy are concerned, "critical editions have yet to be published for many of the important texts; likewise, there are still many little-known or neglected texts whose importance cannot be yet ascertained".[27] What Peter Godman has recently said about a minor Florentine humanist is true for many humanists: "his voice ..... has seldom been heard, because most of his works are unpublished".[28] As far as English translations are concerned, we must be aware that except for Erasmus and More, editing is very selective. There are very few anthologies, and while we have translations of some of the principal works of the major humanists, a considerable quantity

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23 Cf. F. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme* (Paris 1976), 7.

24 Cf. A. E. McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Oxford 1987), 32-36. McGrath summarises as follows: "At least four views of the nature and aims of the humanism of the Italian Renaissance have gained some support in the present century. First, there is the view based upon the writings of Jacob Burckhardt, which regards the Renaissance as marking the birth of the modern consciousness: humanists may be viewed as the advocates of individualism, secularism and moral autonomy. Second, there is the rival view based upon the writings of Giuseppe Toffanin, viewing Italian humanists as exponents of an authentically Christian culture, in the face of heterodoxy and paganism. Third, there is the view based upon the works of Hans Baron, according to which Florentine humanists were exponents of republicanism, who studied the classics in order to benefit from their political and moral insights. Fourth, there is the more restrained view of Paul Oskar Kristeller, which envisages humanism as a cultural and educational movement, primarily concerned with written and spoken eloquence, and only secondarily concerned with matters of philosophy and politics." McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, 32-33.

25 There is a new series coming from the Société d'Éditions Les Belles Lettres in Paris called *Les classiques de l'humanisme*, but this series is not conceived on a comprehensive scale. So far eight volumes have appeared (texts by Bruno, Budé, Dante, Ficino, Poliziano), and three more are in preparation (works by Alciatus, Ficino, Petrarch). For uncatalogued material cf. P. O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum: A Finding List of Uncatalogued or Incompletely Catalogued Humanistic MSS of the Renaissance in Italian and Other Libraries*, 6 vols. (Leiden 1977-1991).

26 There is a comprehensive critical modern edition of Vives' works forthcoming but its completion is not ascertained. Cf. *Ioannis Lodovici Vivis Valentini opera omnia* (Valencia 1992-). So far only one volume has appeared. There is also a smaller new critical edition in Latin and English, of which only one volume has appeared, too. Cf. *Selected Works of Juan Luis Vives* (Leiden 1996-). Cf. bibliography, section 4B.

27 Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 133.

28 P. Godman, "Florentine Humanism between Poliziano and Machiavelli" in *Rinascimento* 35 (1995), 69. The humanist in question is Marcello Virgilio.

of important material remains untranslated.[29] How then can the phenomenon of humanism be fathomed if, with the exception of a few standard texts, which are regularly edited, a series of important works linger in limbo? In view of this fact it is necessary to restate the obvious rule, namely that the availability of texts within given linguistic and cultural borders has a very real influence on interpretation insofar as it automatically determines the emergence of a canon. A striking example of this is the complete absence of any reference to Juan Luis Vives in the two most recent books on humanism in English.[30]

Another problem in dealing with humanism is the absence of a comprehensive and authoritative survey of the history of French humanism. This remarkable lack is to some extent a corollary of the general disagreement on humanism, particularly acute in a country where northern and southern views meet. Wendel began his essay on Calvin's humanist education by stating that "the history of French humanism remains to be written".[31] At the same time the editor of the papers of a conference dedicated to French humanism remarked that "it is surprising but true ..... that no over-all study has been attempted yet".[32] The older literature is comparatively small[33] and although a number of fresh contributions have been made recently,[34] the fact remains that there is still no broad synthesis. Renaudet's masterly work has been reissued,[35] and now we have an extensive study that continues the story where Renaudet left off.[36] However, there is no general consensus on the precise outline of French humanism.

In researching Calvin we can discern five main difficulties. The first and most notorious one concerns the reconstruction of the reformer's youth. There are several factors which make it difficult to establish an accurate picture of the role of the humanistic influences in the growth of Calvin's mind. As mentioned above, we do not have a general history of French humanism which could provide a summary orientation on essential

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29 Kelley's opinion is that "some of the major authors of Renaissance humanism are well served by translations, especially Petrarch, Bruni, Erasmus, More, Machiavelli, and Montaigne, and to some extent, Ficino, Pico, Vives, and Vico. This is less true of others, including Boccaccio (Latin works), Salutati, Budé, Melanchthon, the Scaligers, and in general the tradition of philology". Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 161-162.

30 Cf. J. Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge 1996), and Ch. G. Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge 1995).

31 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 7.

32 André Stegman in his introduction to *L'humanisme français au début de la Renaissance* (Paris 1973), 7.

33 Cf. F. Simone, *The French Renaissance: Medieval Tradition and Italian Influence in Shaping the Renaissance in France* (London 1969); W. L. Gundersheimer (ed.), *French Humanism 1470-1600* (London 1969); A. H. T. Levi (ed.), *Humanism in France at the End of the Middle Ages and in the Early Renaissance* (Manchester 1970).

34 Cf. M.-M. de la Garanderie, *Christianisme et lettres profanes: Essai sur l'humanisme français (1515-1535) et sur la pensée de Guillaume Budé* (Paris 1995); Ph. Desan (ed.), *Humanism in Crisis: The Decline of the French Renaissance* (Ann Arbor 1991); J.-C. Margolin, "Humanism in France" in Goodman / MacKay (eds.), *The Impact of Humanism*, 164-201; E. F. Rice, "Humanism in France" in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 2, 109-122.

35 A. Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d'Italie (1494-1517)*, 2nd ed. (Paris 1953) (1st ed. 1916).

36 Cf. G. Gadoffre, *La révolution culturelle dans la France des humanistes: Guillaume Budé et François Ier* (Geneva 1997).

points of the relevant intellectual background. Further, we face a formidable lack of reliable first-hand documentation on Calvin's years as a student, wandering scholar and underground refugee. Particularly acute is the scarcity of autobiographical material, which is not easily compensated by other early sources as these are contradictory on some issues. It seems that when Calvin, the young commentator of Seneca and student of the royal lecturers, left Paris in autumn 1533 to go underground and finally into exile, he not only left behind his papers and books, which were lost forever, but also his memories. Hesitant by nature to talk about himself, he makes hardly any effort later to remember for the record what happened in his life before he joined Farel to help implement the Reformation in Geneva in 1536. The reasons for this reticence lie, of course, as much in necessity as in nature: in times of tension too much talk may cause trouble, hence the attitude of "instinctive mistrust".[37] Considering the difficulties involved in determining the role humanism played in Calvin's intellectual development, it is not surprising that the question of the consequences of humanistic influences in Calvin's youth on Calvin the reformer has not reached a conclusive answer. It is evident that his early familiarity with humanism affected Calvin the reformer, but there has been considerable disagreement as to how and to which degree it affected him, and as to what the implications were for his mature conception of humanism. There has also been disagreement on how pervasively Calvin was influenced by other currents, such as the two dominant strands of late medieval nominalism, the *via moderna* and the *schola Augustiniana moderna*.[38] It is not clear either how humanism and nominalism, or scholasticism in a wider sense, related in the mind of the young Calvin.

Another problematic aspect of Calvin's early life is his conversion, about which we know so little that it remains difficult, if not impossible, to determine the implications for humanism. The relevant autobiographical testimonies and early sources which we have do not contribute much to clarify the matter since they do not contain any explicit references to humanistic studies. Calvin's most important statement on his conversion is obscure and ambiguous with regard to humanism[39] and is usually interpreted as depicting his career in terms of a direct transition from legal to theological studies, without any humanist interlude. Due to the absence of any clues the interpretation of Calvin's conversion with regard to its significance for humanism has been very controversial. Some have construed the conversion as a complete break with the past implying a departure from humanism, while others have understood it as a gradual process of transformation allowing for the continuity of humanism. Bouwsma has argued that orthodox perceptions of religious conversion have influenced research negatively. He has observed that most specialists tend to neglect the study of Calvin's youth because they adhere to the traditional concept of

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37 B. Cottret, *Calvin* (Paris 1995), 21.

38 A. E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: AStudy in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford 1990), 42-47.

39 Viz. the preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms* of 1557. Cf. chapter 5, p. 226.

Christian conversion shaped by the examples of St. Paul and St. Augustine. This concept implies that the life of individuals before their conversion is unimportant since conversion signifies the birth of a new human being entirely remade and effectively effacing the old. After conversion a new life begins which the reborn individual is capable of filling with inspired accomplishment, and it is this new life which matters and which deserves our attention.[40] Bouwsma's criticism of the religiously motivated neglect of the study of Calvin's youth represents both an invitation to reconsider the small body of documentation and a call for further research. The latter would involve the difficult task of large-scale archival work with uncertain expectation of making new findings.

The second problematic point about Calvin is his *forbidding façade*. This consists on the one hand in the *forbidding persona* - an established term in Calvin studies[41] - and on the other hand in what could be called the *forbidding work*. As regards the *persona*, the arguments are indeed well-known; they are gathered in the black legend which has formed around Calvin since his lifetime and which has had its advocates also in the twentieth century.[42] Foremost among these was Stefan Zweig, whose portrait of Calvin was influenced by the analogy he drew between Luther and Hitler.[43] Zweig thought that just as Luther had suppressed humanism in the person of Erasmus, Calvin suppressed it in Castellio.[44] Calvin is portrayed as a tyrant who anathematises the essential values of humanism: freedom and tolerance, individualism, humanity and dignity. His severity and the discipline he imposes are the consequence of a theological doctrine which is inhuman in its radical theocentricity and therefore also anti-humanistic. Calvin is the cold thinker who never laughs and who either denigrates or ignores the major living humanist wits; there is no room for them in his world-view.

The association of Luther with Hitler and more generally of Nazism with the Reformation, including Calvinism, was also made by writers of the psychoanalytical school. Fromm wrote during the Second World War: "Calvin's theory of predestination has one implication which should be explicitly mentioned here, since it has found its most vigorous revival in Nazi ideology: the principle of the basic inequality of men".[45] Indeed, the historians of the Third Reich had interpreted the Reformation "as a break-through (*Aufbruch*) of the German spirit, whose specific characteristics", according to Nazi ideology,

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40 W. J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York 1988), 10.

41 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 1.

42 Cf. B. Hall, "The Calvin Legend" in G. E. Duffield (ed.), *John Calvin* (Appleford, Abingdon 1966), 6-7.

43 Cf. Zweig's letter to Klaus Mann of 15 May 1933, quoted in J.-C. Margolin, *Erasme: Précepteur de l'Europe* (Paris 1995), 353.

44 The two influential novels in which Zweig exposes his views on humanism and the Reformation are *Triumph und Tragik des Erasmus von Rotterdam* (Vienna 1934) and *Castellio gegen Calvin: Ein Gewissen gegen die Gewalt* (Vienna 1936). The English translations are *Erasmus* (London 1934) and *The Right to Heresy: Castellio against Calvin* (London 1936).

45 E. Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (London 1942), 76.

"gained the upper hand in Northern humanism".[46] Jung (who had had a brief involvement with Nazism)[47] also linked Luther with Hitler, stating that "we should not omit to mention ..... how much capital the Nazis made out of the idea that Hitler was continuing and completing the work of reformation which Luther had left only half-finished".[48] Calvin and Calvinism, apart from being perceived as promoters of despotism and contributory factors to fascism, have also been associated with the aggressive assertion of white supremacy, for instance in the approbation of Negro slavery in the south of the United States or with the policy of *apartheid* in South Africa.[49]

Some existentialist philosophers of humanistic orientation have also expressed strong reservations about Luther and Calvin. Jaspers commented about Luther that "the combination ..... of brilliant penetration and coarse bluster makes it a duty, almost a torment to study him", while in Calvin the German philosopher saw a chief advocate of religious tyranny:

> Calvin's greatness lies in disciplined, methodic form, iron logic, unswerving and dauntless adherence to principles. But his loveless intolerance makes him, in his theoretical as in his practical activities, the repellent antithesis of philosophy. It is good to have looked him in the face in order to recognise this spirit wherever, in veiled or fragmentary form, it is manifested in the world. He is the supreme incarnation of that Christian intolerance against which there is no weapon but intolerance.[50]

Today hostility towards Calvin has waned perceptibly, but not enough to make his *forbidding persona* disappear. It has to be admitted that "John Calvin has never had the personal appeal of Martin Luther. If anything, Calvin continues to suffer from a bad press in both popular and more scholarly literature".[51]

As far as Calvin's *work* is concerned it must be underlined that it has several qualities which make it difficult to access. It is cerebral and arid; it is very extensive, complex and rather heavy; it is completely Bible-centred (a problem for those who are not familiar with the Scriptures) and it is not easy to understand. If Calvin has been called a *Réformateur malgré lui,*[52] he might, in like manner, also be called a *Philosophe malgré lui* since he displays the contradictory attitude of being a theological author who consciously eschews philosophy (in line with Reformation tradition) but whose way of thinking can, nevertheless, be regarded as philosophical in the sense that his approach is dominated by a

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46 Matheson, "Humanism and Reform Movements", 31 n. 36 (the reference is to a German history textbook for secondary schools published in 1940).

47 "On the general count of being a Nazi supporter ..... one could enter the Scottish verdict of 'not proven', and the most judicious conclusion would be that Jung was being extremely foolish and naïve in thinking that one could sup with such a devil; this would bracket him as Nazi dupe with the man he most detested, Martin Heidegger". F. McLynn, *Carl Gustav Jung* (London 1996), 358.

48 Jung, GW 9(2), 111.

49 Cf. J. T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York 1954), 424.

50 K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom* (London 1951), 183.

51 W. Klempa, "Introduction" to "Colloquium: The Image of John Calvin in Recent Research" in E. J. Furcha (ed.), *In Honour of John Calvin, 1509-64* (Montreal 1987), 343.

52 A phrase coined by A. Rilliet (cf. N. Weiss in *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du Protestantisme français* 37 (1888), 493) and publicised by A. Lefranc in *La jeunesse de Calvin* (Paris 1888), 123. Subsequent French authors have almost standardised this phrase as an epithet, of which e.g. J. Cadier's article on Calvin in *Encyclopædia Universalis* (Paris 1990), vol. 4, 785-789, gives evidence.

rigorous attempt at logical systematisation. Calvin's religious works do not so much represent moments of mystical illumination as rational discourse; although stylistically perfect, they do not emanate imaginative charm but are rather cool, controlled and analytical. All these features contribute to build a *forbidding façade* while at the same time also making a striking contrast with humanist writing, in which the aspect of poetic imagination plays a dominant role.[53]

Finally, we must consider some textual and editorial problems. Since with Calvin we often have a Latin and a French version of the same text, both should be consulted and compared since they sometimes supplement each other. The authenticity of each version, particularly the French, must be assessed, and all the changes Calvin made to his texts in his frequent revisions have to be considered carefully. It is evident that humanistic elements are generally more transparent in the Latin version, since the Latin text is addressed to the educated reader and therefore contains all the specialist terminology associated with humanistic studies. The French edition omits much of this erudite vocabulary, since it is aimed at the general reader, but it has the asset of offering clarification of obscure or ambiguous Latin notions.

The comparison of the successive editions of the *Institutes*,[54] and to some extent also of the commentaries, is indispensable for tracing the development of Calvin's attitude towards humanism, although the task of establishing a chronologically comparative and synoptic Latin-French parallel text of a given passage is often arduous - in fact, to study a page of Calvin's *Institutes* at times means entering a kind of linguistic labyrinth. There is no graphically synoptic and bilingual edition of the *Institutes* in its two original languages and the Latin and French editions are not complete in their comparative cross-references.[55] The 59 volumes of the *Opera Calvini* in the *Corpus Reformatorum* series represent an admirable editorial achievement, but they are incomplete, mostly monolingual (emphasising Latin at the expense of French) and they are not well laid out for consultation. The *Supplementa Calviniana*, which were intended to provide those sermons not included in the *Corpus Reformatorum*, have remained unfinished to date,[56] while the new complete modern edition entitled *Calvini Opera omnia denuo recognita* is coming forth at a slow if steady pace.[57] Meanwhile we do not have a complete critical modern edition of Calvin's works, and several unedited writings of the reformer "sit waiting" modern editions and translations.[58] Add to this that most of the above-mentioned

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53 Cf. chapter 3, pp. 161-165.

54 Henceforth referred to as *Inst*., with book, chapter and section number as in the 1559 edition.

55 Henceforth the Latin version of the *Institutes* (or any other work by Calvin of which more than one version exists) is referred to as VL (versio latina), and the French version as VG (versio gallica). A year number may be added in square brackets indicating the edition in which a given passage first appeared or in which it reappeared in revised form.

56 The series is continued. Cf. bibliography, section 1A.

57 So far seven volumes have appeared. Cf. bibliograhy, section 1A.

58 R. A. Muller in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 25 (1994), 477 (book review).

editions are rare and the picture often seems too bleak to be encouraging to anyone. It is certainly no exaggeration to say that the complicated editorial situation contributes to keeping the *forbidding façade* intact.

As regards translation, recent attempts at rendering Calvin in English have been quite disparate and not helpful for researching humanist aspects. Both the *Institutes* and the Bible commentaries have appeared in inept and old-fashioned translations which not only keep people from reading Calvin but sometimes misrepresent his ideas and his way of thinking, especially if we endeavour to understand them in relation to the various frames of reference of medieval and Renaissance thought, among which humanism features prominently.[59] An eminent expert has recently criticised the (only) English translation of the first edition of the *Institutes* as "unclear, imprecise, occasionally incomplete, and at times so misleading that a mere revision will not suffice", adding that "one of the reasons for these insufficiencies is a lack of familiarity with the medieval matrix of Calvin's thought".[60] We should add to this that the translation mentioned also shows a lack of familiarity with the *Renaissance* and the *humanist* matrix of the Reformer's thought. Evidently Calvin's eloquent prose with its involved syntactical structures does not easily translate into English. Moreover, any translation can be deceptive as far as humanism is concerned, since relevant references and allusions in the original may be couched in ambiguous or technical terms now archaic. A good subject index might help, but no moves have been made in this direction. The two most recent critical standard editions of Calvin's *Institutes* in English and French do not feature any entries reading "humanism" or "humanistic studies" in their indexes, which are designed in Calvinist tradition as tables of theological themes.[61] Thus extensive familiarity with the original text (especially the Latin version) is imperative for locating humanistic elements and for defining humanistic influences with some precision, distinguishing them, for instance, against medieval currents of thought.

Partisan historiography is another problem in Calvin studies which has negatively affected the discussion of Calvin and humanism.[62] Calvin was caught in the web of confessional controversy for three centuries (or more) living a double life in two distinct historiographical traditions: Protestant hagiography initiated by Beza and Colladon on the

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59 Cf. e.g. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia 1961); *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority*, ed. and trans. H. Höpfl (Cambridge 1991), reviewed by J. H. Leith in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24 (1993), 1004-1005; *New Testament Commentaries*, 12 vols., eds. D. W. Torrance / T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh 1959-1972).

60 H. A. Oberman, "*Initia Calvini*: The Matrix of Calvin's Reformation" in W. H. Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor* (Grand Rapids 1994), 121 n. 23.

61 Cf. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia 1961) and *Institution de la religion chrestienne*, ed. J.-D. Benoît (Paris 1957-1963). McNeill has one entry reading "humanists", which consists of a reference to one of his editorial footnotes concerning an obscure and indirect allusion by Calvin to contemporary humanists (vol. 1, p. 254, note 14). Benoît makes the telling remark that his purpose in compiling the indexes is "to do for the *Institutes* a bit what others have done for the text of the Bible with the *Concordances*" (vol. 5, p. 122).

62 Cf. Linder, "Calvinism and Humanism", 168, 181.

one hand, and Catholic demonography founded by Bolsec and perpetuated by Richelieu on the other hand.[63] This situation did not improve substantially until the second half of the nineteenth century, although several writers had explicitly criticised the prevalence of biased attitudes in the field of Calvin biography before.[64] It took a lot of effort and scholarly dedication until the historiography of Calvin and Calvinism could begin to free itself from the long-established confessionalised patterns. The improvement began with the gradual establishment of the scientific method in historical research, and it manifested itself in the publication of the *Opera Calvini* of the *Corpus Reformatorum* (1863-1900), the *Correspondance des réformateurs* (1866-1897),[65] and the Calvin biography of Kampschulte (1869/1899).[66]

As far as the situation today is concerned, we can say that although the antagonisms of partisan historiography are gradually being eroded with the further establishment of modern critical methods and increasing distance from the past, it would be an illusion to think that partisan attitudes have disappeared - or that they will ever disappear completely. In the twentieth century research made substantial progress,[67] although complaints about biased approaches could also be heard. In 1962 one historian complained about "a known tendency to hagiography" prevalent among many Calvin scholars.[68] Today we can state that the situation has improved in general, although it can be observed that some prejudice lingers. The work of publishing Calvin's writings, sermons and letters in a new and complete critical edition, which represents, in a sense, the basis for all fresh research attempts, has only just been begun.[69] Other appreciable efforts have been made in recent times at removing the veils of legend from Calvin: the two latest biographies that have appeared in Spanish and French are good examples of positive revisionism.[70] However, research is sometimes still influenced by biased attitudes. Oberman, for instance,

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63 The following studies analyse these traditions: F. Pfeilschifter, *Das Calvinbild bei Bolsec und sein Fortwirken im französischen Katholizismus bis ins 20. Jahrhundert* (Augsburg 1983); J.-R. Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles" in Ph. Joutard (ed.), *Historiographie de la Réforme* (Paris 1977), 45-59; H. Neuenschwander-Schindler, *Das Gespräch über Calvin: Frankreich 1685-1870* (Basel 1975); D. Bosch, *Calvin im Urteil der französischen Historiographie vor 1789* (Ph.D. dissertation, Köln 1971); A. Zahn, *Studien über Johannes Calvin* (Gütersloh 1894).

64 Varillas, for instance, wrote at the end of the seventeenth century that "il n'y a jamais eu de vie écrite avec plus de contrariété que celle de cet hérésiarque; et pourtant il n'y en a jamais eu qui fit moins connoistre celui dont on prétendoit conserver la mémoire à la postérité"; Varillas, *Histoire des Révolutions arrivées dans l'Europe en matière de religion*, 6 vols. (1686-1689); quoted in Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 52.

65 Cf. bibliography, section 1A.

66 Cf. F. W. Kampschulte, *Johann Calvin*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1869/1899). The second volume was unfinished and appeared posthumously. Even Doumergue attributed "a remarkable impartiality" to Kampschulte, although some contemporary scholars found Doumergue's criticism of Kampschulte still "too unfavourable". Cf. W. Walker, *John Calvin* (New York 1906), xiii n. 1.

67 Cf. e.g. F. Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse* (Paris 1950), concerning which cf. Oberman's judgement quoted below, p. 33. Cf. also the numerous editions listed in the bibliography, sections 1A and C.

68 P. Mesnard, "Jean Calvin, étudiant en droit, à Orléans" in *Actes du congrès sur l'ancienne université d'Orléans* (Orléans 1962), 83.

69 Cf. above, p. 10 n. 57.

70 Cf. J. Gomis, *Calvino: una vida por la Reforma* (Barcelona 1993), which is the first Calvin biography by a Spanish author. This is a popular but very detailed and well-documented account based chiefly on the research of Ganoczy and Wendel. Cf. also B. Cottret, *Calvin* (Paris 1995).

has remarked critically about the recent Calvin biography by McGrath[71] that "with Calvinism we touch on McGrath's underlying agenda".[72] Another example: a standard compilation of literature on Calvin covering the years 1959 to 1974 was arranged chiefly according to theological topics and therefore does not feature a section on humanism, which means that it can be difficult to trace relevant contributions for these years.[73]

Calvin was a controversial figure causing sharp and long-lasting divisions which have stayed with us, and we must therefore not be surprised to perceive that opinions diverge greatly. Partisanship can be rooted in a sense of religious, cultural or intellectual affiliation. It is usually stronger among theologians, but historians can also be seen as adhering to pre-set assumptions, although they normally do so in a less obvious manner. Partisan attitudes have polarised the study of Calvin and humanism in such a way that some scholars have rejected a priori and all too categorically any significant connection between the reformer and humanism, while others have almost overzealously dedicated themselves to demonstrating humanism in him. Biased approaches, however, do not only arise in connection with the figure of Calvin but also from considerations concerning humanism, especially with regard to historical assessments of the relation between Renaissance humanism and modern forms of humanism. Considering this, the call to go back to the Calvin of the sixteenth century, voiced by some contemporary historians,[74] is not entirely unproblematic, since it, too, may imply a kind of intellectual partisanship (no less real than the theological one) manifesting itself, for instance, in the isolation of the reformer from the larger context of the development of civilisation and religion - a fact which is strongly resented by theologians. Karl Barth, for one, held that it was not sufficient to place Calvin in the context of history, but that the reformer's thought could only be understood properly with respect to "eternity". According to Barth, Calvin must not be seen so much as an individual *made by* history, but rather as somebody *making* history, and therefore the "historical Calvin" encompasses neither the total nor the essential reality of the religious reformer.[75]

Finally, we must consider the most intriguing difficulty, namely the fact that the reformer does not discuss humanism or the phenomena associated with it explicitly

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71 A. E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford 1990).

72 H. A. Oberman in *Times Literary Supplement*, March 1, 1991, 24.

73 Cf. D. Kempff, *A Bibliography of Calviniana 1959-1974* (Leiden 1975). Historians have criticised the omission of humanism and have expressed their reservations against the predominance of theological criteria in the organisation of this bibliography. Cf. B. Hall, "From Biblical Humanism to Calvinist Orthodoxy" in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 (1980), 336. The older bibliography by Wilhelm Niesel did contain an entry for humanism (cf. W. Niesel, *Calvin-Bibliographie, 1901-1959* (Munich 1961), 59-60, cf. also chapter 1, p. 55 n. 87), and so does Peter de Klerk's annual bibliography appearing in the *Calvin Theological Journal*.

74 Cf. e.g. W. J. Bouwsma, "The Quest for the Historical Calvin" in *Archive for Reformation History* 77 (1986), 47-57, which represented a step towards the author's *Sixteenth-Century Portrait* of 1988.

75 K. Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids 1995) (1st ed. 1922). Cf. the review by Randall C. Zachman in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997), 563-565.

anywhere in his work, hardly ever mentioning the humanists by name. On the contrary, he has a tendency to avoid speaking of humanism directly which can be characterised in terms of marginalisation and which sometimes almost borders on tabooisation. This attitude could be called Calvin's *implicitness* about humanism and it is manifest in a lack of clarity on most issues related to humanism, producing an effect which could be described as "conceptual indeterminateness". This phenomenon of implicitness has occasionally been recognised in research; it was construed, for instance, as a so-called "argumentum e silentio" against humanism in Calvin by a scholar who, when underlining his negative conclusion concerning Calvin's supposed dependence on Lefèvre d'Étaples, asserted that "Calvin ..... never says anything about having been influenced by Lefèvre".[76]

It has to be noted here that implicitness is not, viewed on the whole, a salient feature in Calvin's writing; on the contrary, it is actually the exception rather than the rule. The reformer advocated the principles of clarity, simplicity and brevity and sought to apply them in his whole work.[77] He rejected implicitness in what he considered his principal pursuit: theological discourse. Apart from his defence of the principles of rhetoric just mentioned, this is also manifest in his condemnation of the scholastic concept of "implicit faith". Calvin stipulates that genuine faith show a maximum of explicitness, which concretely signifies that individual believers must attain such competence as to be able to formulate the contents of their belief in clear-cut definitions. Implicitness is detrimental to religion, for it leads to an "obscure definition" and creates "a fantasy of faith" which "not only buries but entirely destroys true faith".[78] Calvin expresses his aversion to implicitness in a pun; he complains that due to the disregard of the schoolmen for the common people's proficiency in religion "we are so enveloped [enveloppez] in ignorance that very many things are now implicit [implicita] for us".[79] And the reformer adds that

> they do not ask whether faith is enveloped [implicita / enveloppée] in many remnants of ignorance, but they determine that those believe duly who stand stupefied in their ignorance and even indulge in it.[80]

As regards the motives for Calvin's peculiar indirectness about humanism, it is difficult to make any definitive assertions. Is Calvin sparing humanism out of nostalgic reverence? Is he trying to put a veil over his own past, in an attempt at eliminating a contradiction in his own life? Does he want to avoid humanism because of its association with heterodox thinking, intending to silence it by ignoring it? Is he simply suppressing

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76 H. Dörries, "Calvin und Lefèvre" in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 44 (1925), 578.

77 Cf. chapter 6, pp. 324-334.

78 *Inst.* 3.2.2., VL [1539]; VG [1560] has "definition pleine des tenebres" and "une fantasie de foy, qu'ils appellent Implicite, ou Enveloppée".

79 *Inst.* 3.2.3. VL [1539] and VG [1541] are conflated in order to reproduce both the Latin and French word-play in one sentence. Calvin also warns of the dangers inherent in the schoolmen's disregard, exclaiming: "What an abyss have they opened with this implication [implicatione / implication] of theirs!"; *Inst.* 3.2.3. (VL and VG conflated). Note that VL "labyrinth" is rendered in VG as "abyss"; cf. chapter 1, p. 73 n. 220.

80 *Inst.* 3.2.3., VL [1559] / VG [1560].

those parts that are not compatible with the Reformation, or is he evading the issue because he believes that it is itself too evasive? Whatever may be the case, his reticence to be clear and explicit about humanism is remarkable and manifests itself most prominently in his reluctance to address the question in a straightforward way, or more specifically in his avoidance of referring to humanist authors and works by their names, of identifying their ideas clearly, or of referring to them at all. Calvin's indirectness concerning humanism contrasts sharply with his own explicitness about Lutheranism,[81] Anabaptism, nominalism, to a lesser degree high scholasticism,[82] the fathers and the classics. It also contrasts with the more straightforward statements by other reformers about humanism, and with the unambiguous declarations of various humanists about the Reformation. In 1524 Erasmus wrote: "I have separated the cause of good learning from the cause of Luther", and on the aphorism attributed to him, "I laid the egg; Luther hatched it", he commented: "what I laid was a hen's egg; the bird Luther hatched was altogether different".[83] Having pointed out (in 1519) that Luther's mind had been shaped by scholastic rather than humanistic influences, Erasmus came to suggest later (in 1526) that there was a tendency for heresy to arise among the doctors trained in scholastic theology.[84]

As far as the reformers are concerned, it is a puzzling fact that Luther, for instance, who was clearly less humanistically-oriented than Calvin, could make more explicit comments about humanism than Calvin. In a letter (written before his break with Erasmus) to a young humanist professor and poet who feared that Luther's theology would marginalise the new sciences and throw the German people back into a state of barbarity, the reformer assures the humanist and his associates that the reborn letters would not suffer under the regime of the Reformation. Luther even declares that good theology is impossible without good letters:

> *I am persuaded that true theology cannot stand at all without knowledge of literature*, just as up to this time it has miserably declined and fallen in the decay and ruin of letters. Indeed I see that the remarkable revelation of the Word of God would never

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81 Dörries pointed out that while Calvin was silent on the humanist Lefèvre (cf. above), he was very outspoken about Luther and Bucer, defending these German reformers against the Swiss even though such action was likely to disimprove relations with his Helvetic protectors (whose support was vital). Cf. H. Dörries, "Calvin und Lefèvre", 578.

82 Calvin distinguishes between "sophists" or "Sorbonnists" on the one hand and "schoolmen" on the other, and he is clearly less explicit about the latter, although this is not the case to such a degree that one would speak of implicitness concerning high scholasticism. It is wrong to state, as one author has recently done, that Calvin "chose not to mention by name" the representatives of high scholasticism (Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 156). There is no doubt a certain tendency in the reformer to avoid calling the "schoolmen" by name, but one has to recognise that Calvin always clearly delineates their ideas and concepts so that identification is no problem for the reasonably informed reader. In the case of Aquinas, for instance, one gets the distinct impression that Calvin does often not call him by his name because he does not want to be seen as his detractor. At any rate a strict implicitness about scholasticism is not conceivable in Calvin, since his theology rests in good part on the conscious repudiation or correction of the medieval doctors, be they nominalists or realists. Apart from that, we must be aware that Calvin refers to the name and ideas of Aquinas more often, more clearly and with more ease than to those of Erasmus or other humanists. This is clear from the start as Calvin mentions Aquinas by name in his first editions of the *Institutes*, but not Erasmus (cf. *Inst.* (VG [1541]), chapter 8; ed. J. Pannier, vol. 3, 70).

83 Erasmus, *Letter to Melanchthon*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 70. For another example, namely Reuchlin's disassociation from Luther cf. below, pp. 17-18.

84 Cf. R. H. Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom* (New York 1969), 194, 245.

> have come about had He not first prepared the way by the rise and flowering of languages and literature, as by Baptist forerunners.[85]

We see here a Luther who expresses recognition of the value of the humanist disciplines for theology, promising that young people will "study poetry and rhetoric diligently" in reformed schools so that they will be better able to "grasp the sacred truths".[86] This Luther can be understood in the context of his association with Melanchthon, who no doubt represents the most important influence on Luther as regards the latter's appreciative comments on the role of the humanistic studies.[87]

Melanchthon had stated the case of humanism in his inaugural lecture at Wittenberg in 1517, when he publicly advocated the new literary studies, declaring that "my entire address has the single purpose of raising your hope for elegant literature (I am speaking of Greek and Latin)". In his lecture he also pleaded that "Greek letters should be added to Latin" in order that, reading the classics, "you may gain the very substance, not the shadow of things". Melanchthon's defence of the humanistic studies culminated in his declaration of their universal indispensability:

> I am fully of the opinion that whoever desires to undertake anything distinguished, either in the sacred cults or in the affairs of state, will achieve but very little unless he has previously exercised his mind prudently and sufficiently with humane discipline.[88]

It is easy to recognise that Luther's vindication of the humanistic studies contains a distinct echo of Melanchthon's defence, namely with regard to the argument of indispensability. However, it is clear that Luther's attitude is different from Melanchthon's in a fundamental way. The latter's writings always (before and after the Reformation) had a distinctly pedagogical and literary character, while the former, as a man who "felt happiest when seriously concerned with the things of God,"[89] would insist on providing a well-defined theological frame for utterances on secular matters such as humanistic studies.

The basic aspects of how humanism fits into Luther's religious world-view are quite clear. The reformer firmly embeds the humanistic studies into the eternal scheme of God's providential plan of salvation, in which they are assigned a distinct role. Luther emphasises the eschatological dimension of the issue; he believes that the development of

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85 "*Ego persuasus sum, sine literarum peritia prorsus stare non posse sinceram theologiam*, sicut hactenus ruentibus et iacentibus literis miserrime et cecidit et iacuit. Quin video, nunquam fuisse insignem factam verbi Dei revelationem, nisi primo, velut praecursoribus Baptistis, viam pararit surgentibus et florentibus linguis et literis" (italics added). *Letter to Eoban Hess*, March 29, 1523. *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel*, vol. 3 (Weimar 1933), 50.

86 *Letter to Eoban Hess*, March 29, 1523. *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 50.

87 Melanchthon actually wrote his own answer to Hess in co-ordination with Luther. Both letters were sent on 29 March 1523, and they were published by Hess under the telling title *Dass die humanistischen Studien, die für zukünftige Theologen höchst notwendig sind, nicht vernachlässigt werden dürfen* (1523). Cf. H. Scheible, *Melanchthon* (Munich 1997), 35.

88 Melanchthon, *De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis* (1517); quoted in N. L. Brann, "Humanism in Germany" in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 2, 147.

89 E. F. Winter (ed.), "Introduction" to *Erasmus - Luther: Discourse on Free Will*, 2nd. ed. (New York 1989), vii-viii.

human civilisation has reached its peak in the Renaissance and that therefore the end of time is near. Everything has come to a culmination, both in a positive and negative sense: on the one hand science and commerce prosper prodigiously and "the arts are unequalled since the birth of Christ", but on the other hand "never have greater errors, greater sins and greater lies prevailed in the world".[90] Luther also interprets the restitution of ancient texts as a sign that the end of the world is imminent, commenting that "in this age everything begins to be restored, as if that day of the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21) were near".[91]

Having addressed the issue of humanism as a prophet, Luther provides a more "temporal" interpretation in his public appeal to the councillors of the German cities, which was written before his clash with Erasmus, and in which he amplifies his interpretation of the revived humanities as "Baptist forerunners" advanced some nine months before. Luther explains everything in the context of the apocalypse he predicts, asserting that the resuscitated humanities represent a last-minute aid sent by God for the defence of the Gospel in the ultimate struggle with the Antichrist. Accordingly, the humanistic studies must primarily be understood as an instrument given by God to defend His truth against the errors with which the Devil upsets the world. Just as in antiquity God had prepared the way for the efficient dissemination of the Gospel by allowing the Roman Empire, and within it the Latin and Greek languages, to extend widely over the earth, now He has caused these languages to be revived in order to resuscitate the gospel in its original form, and so to help combat the Antichrist more efficiently, as humanity is rapidly approaching its end. God has allowed the Turk to advance into Greece so that the Greek language would spread westward through the Byzantine refugees, who are destined to be the agents of the contemporary renaissance of Greek letters in the realm of Latin Christendom. The association of the loathed Roman Empire with the humanistic studies or the reference to the fall of Constantinople in terms of a necessary evil is not precisely flattering for the humanists, but this fits in with Luther's eschatological interpretation of humanism:

> Nobody knew why God let the languages appear, until now, when we can see for the first time that it was done for the sake of the Gospel, which He wanted to reveal afterwards and thereby expose and destroy the rule of Antichrist.[92]

Another aspect of Luther's relationship with the humanists, namely his attitude towards Johannes Reuchlin, helps clarify the question of the reformer and humanism. In a

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90 Luther, *Sermon on the Gospel of the Second Sunday of Advent*, 1522; quoted in J. Delumeau, "Une histoire totale de la Renaissance", 17.

91 Luther, *Lectures on Deuteronomy, Preface* [dedicated to George Polenz] (1525), trans. R. C. Caemmerer in *Luther's Works (American Edition)* vol. 9, ed. J. Pelikan, (St. Louis 1960), 6. Bornkamm pointed out that there are only few passages in Luther's works connecting the Reformation with the Renaissance (cf. *Luther's Works*, vol. 9, 6 n. 9).

92 "Niemant hat gewust warumb Gott die sprachen erfuer lies komen, bis das man nu allererst sihet, das es umb des Euangelio[n] willen geschehen ist, wilchs er hernach hat woellen offinbarn und da durch des Endchrists regiment auff decken und zu stoeren". *An die Ratherren aller Staedte deutsches Lands* (1524) in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol. 15 (Weimar 1910), 37.

letter to Reuchlin, Luther greeted the humanist as a "brave and fearless man", "highly learned and kind", who "has silenced the mouths of the liars [Ps. 63:12]". Together with the praise, however, the reformer presented his own theological interpretation of the humanist's achievement:

> You [Reuchlin] really were the *instrument* of a divine decree of which you were *unconscious*, but which was keenly awaited by all the supporters of the pure theology. Thus the things which happened through God are very different from what appeared to be done by you [the humanists].[93]

This judgment is typical of Luther; it reveals the same approach to the subject, the same strictly religious outlook as the other statements the reformer made about humanism. Luther subordinates the cause of humanism to that of the Reformation, characterising himself as the "successor"[94] of Reuchlin and his colleagues, while assigning to humanism the role of a trailblazer in the emergence of the Reformation. Thus to Luther the humanists obviously represent *unconscious instruments* of God's will to reform the Christian church. Luther's lines to Reuchlin demonstrate that the reformer's explicitness concerning humanism can be misleading. It is evident that Luther's notion of humanism is different from the humanist's own conception. The reformer's assertions concerning Reuchlin's role in the Renaissance and the Reformation must not be taken at face value, for it is well known that Reuchlin fundamentally disagreed with them. However, the humanist preferred to remain silent, never sending a reply to the reformer's letter. According to Hutten, who must have known the truth, the ageing humanist scholar found it "unbearable" that his name appeared in Luther's writings, for he "disliked" the reformer's cause, "condemned it" and wished to have it "extinguished".[95]

In Calvin we cannot find any comment on humanism which is as explicit, clear and direct as the statements by Luther, although Calvin's work is undoubtedly affected more profoundly by the humanistic disciplines than Luther's. But unlike the German reformer, Calvin tends to be implicit and elusive; moreover, he is often impersonal and quite distant. Nowhere does he make a straightforward statement on humanism which would be comparable to the wholehearted affirmations of Luther. This is not to say that Calvin is never positive at all about humanism, but it has to be underlined that in those rare moments when he breaks his silence on humanism and lays aside his usual indirectness, his judgements of the humanists are mostly negative and his remarks on humanism tend to have a hostile tint. It is an intriguing fact that what has appeared to some critics to be Calvin's most explicit statement about humanism sounds harshly dismissive. In his polemical *Apology to the Nicodemites*, which he wrote in 1543-44 while occupied with dismissing the humanist Castellio, Calvin criticises the contemporary humanist

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93 "Du bist wirklich ein Werkzeug des göttlichen Ratschlusses gewesen, Dir selbst unbewusst, doch [von] allen Anhängern der reinen Theologie heiss ersehnt; so ganz anderes geschah von Gott, als durch Euch getan zu werden schien". *Letter of Luther to Reuchlin*, 14 Dec 1518; quoted in *Johannes Reuchlin*, ed. H.-R. Schwab, 257 (italics added).

94 *Letter of Luther to Reuchlin*, 14 Dec 1518; quoted in *Johannes Reuchlin*, ed. H.-R. Schwab, 257.

95 *Letter of Ulrich von Hutten to Reuchlin*, 22 Feb 1521; quoted in *Johannes Reuchlin*, ed. H.-R. Schwab, 271-272.

evangelicals of France for being too half-hearted about church reform and, associating these "men of letters" with the so-called "human sciences" (*sciences humaines*), he launches a sharp attack on those *sciences*. Perhaps with Castellio in mind, he writes in rabid mood: "I would rather that all the *human sciences* were banished from the earth than that they would be the cause for cooling the zeal of Christians and for turning them away from God".[96]

The statement from the *Apology to the Nicodemites* seems indeed to be a perfect part of Calvin's *forbidding façade*, and it is certainly quite explicit, but does it represent a central declaration on humanism on the part of the reformer, and is it to be taken as fundamentally depreciative of humanistic studies? In order to decide this we must judge it in the context of the writings of Calvin as well as those of the humanists. This passage, which was first brought up for discussion by Ferdinand Brunetière in 1900,[97] has received widely divergent interpretations, and it has also been ignored by many scholars of repute.[98] Some have taken *sciences humaines* to refer to the humanistic studies, concluding that Calvin ultimately stood in outright opposition to humanism,[99] while others have given the term the wider meaning of "human knowledge" as opposed to "divine knowledge", taking the statement simply as an assertion of the absolute primacy of religious faith over the potential of human cognition.[100] Others again have narrowed its meaning to "paganising Ciceronian purism",[101] thus minimising the contrast between Calvin and humanism. As far as translation is concerned, it appears appropriate to render the term *sciences humaines* simply as "human sciences" in order to preserve the ambiguity of the original while not overinterpreting.[102]

If we want to explain this radical statement in the context of the works of Calvin and the humanists, we must ask ourselves two questions. First, how typical is it of Calvin to be explicit about the preponderance of theology over the "human sciences" in a general sense

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96 VG [1544]: "... j'aimerois mieux que toutes les *sciences humaines* fussent exterminées de la terre, que si elles estoyent cause de refroidir ainsi le zele des Chrestiens, et les destourner de Dieu"; *Excuse aux Nicodémites* in *Three French Treatises*, ed. F. Higman, 139 or CO 6.600 (italics added).

97 Cf. F. Brunetière, "L'œuvre littéraire de Calvin" in *Revue des Deux Mondes* 161 (1900), 899-900.

98 So e.g. Walker, McNeill, Wendel, Neuser, Parker, Bouwsma, McGrath and Cottret, who do not mention it at all.

99 Cf. Brunetière, "L'œuvre littéraire de Calvin" and Hauser, who follows the former's interpretation closely. Cf. chapter 1, p. 48.

100 Cf. J. Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin* (Graz 1950), 256. Bohatec quotes Calvin's full statement in a footnote, but he does not provide any explanatory comment. Cf. Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 256 n. 12. Potter and Greengrass in their recent selection of extracts from Calvin's work translate "sciences humaines" as "human knowledge" in this passage. Cf. G. R. Potter / M. Greengrass (eds.), *John Calvin* (London 1983), 116. It has to be noted, however, that the same editors render "sciences humaines" as "humanities" in the context of Calvin's general description of the ideal curriculum of the desired College of Geneva, the establishment of which he proposed in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541 (cf. Potter / Greengrass (eds.), *John Calvin*, 73). The relevant passage from the latter is quoted in chapter 6, pp. 285-286 (n. 64).

101 Cf. O. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole* (Paris 1992), 16.

102 In fact, the most recent translation of the treatise does so. Cf. "Apology of John Calvin, to Messrs. the Nicodemites Upon the Complaint that They Make of His too Great Rigour (1544)", trans. E. Kayayan in *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994), 352.

(including the humanities)? Second, how typical is it of him to be explicit about the other side of the coin, namely the inferiority of these "human sciences" (always including the humanities)? The first question poses no difficult problem, for the theme of the overriding importance of theology as the science of revealed knowledge is abundantly declared in Calvin's work. It is epitomised in assertions such as "outside Christ there is nothing worth knowing"[103] and similar statements. As far as the second question is concerned, it can be observed that Calvin sometimes makes fundamentally negative comments about the "human sciences". This is, to a certain extent, a feature of the age in which the reformer lived; it is a remnant of the Middle Ages which lives on in the Renaissance.

If we read the works of the humanists, especially the early ones, not infrequently we come across statements asserting the priority of the spiritual over the purely intellectual in a broad, but fundamental sense. Petrarch, for instance, made declarations of a surprisingly radical character such as: "I should wish to know nothing of letters or just so much as would be expedient for the daily praise of God".[104] He occasionally expressed a fundamental depreciation of human knowledge, saying that "learning ..... inflates, it tears down; it does not build up", and describing learning as "a glittering shackle" and "a resounding burden for the soul."[105] "Therefore", Petrarch concludes, "it may be sufficient to know as much as is necessary for salvation".[106] As mentioned above, this attitude represents a valid aspect of the mentality of the times, seen here through the mind of a humanist. Nevertheless, declarations of this kind by humanists are usually not to be taken at face value but must be understood as rhetorical exaggerations, for they do not rest on fundamentalist convictions about religion, nor do they prevent fervent dedication to human letters. The question we have to ask ourselves with Calvin is whether the depreciation of the human sciences is an accidental or a central feature in him: is it mere rhetoric and can it be considered a mere reflection of contemporary traditionalist tendencies, or does it have deeper roots in him?

To answer this question, we must proceed by means of interpolation, searching for more specific comments about these enigmatic "human sciences", especially for comments that are positive and have reference to these "sciences" in the sense of "humanities". Precisely here, however, lies the problem with Calvin, for if we look for positive statements on the human sciences or the humanities in his work, we find that they tend not to be very

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103 *Inst.* 2.15.2.; VL [1559]: "extra ipsum nihil esse utile cognitu"; VG [1560]: "il n'y a rien utile à cognoistre que lui".

104 Petrarch, *De ignorantia*: "Literarum vero vel nichil, vel nonnisi quantum quotitianis Dei laudibus oportunum est novissem". *Opere latine*, ed. A. Bufano (Turin 1975), 1034. Trans. H. Nachod in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago 1948), 54.

105 Petrarch, *De ignorantia*, trans. Nachod in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 62.

106 Petrarch, *De ignorantia*: "sit satis scire quantum sufficit ad salutem". *Opere latine*, ed. Bufano, 1142. Trans. Nachod in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 126.

explicit or meaningful. In what has sometimes been reckoned the most positive statement by Calvin about humanism, namely the short declaration that "we do not at all need to boast much how anxious we can be to care about the letters and sciences",[107] we encounter this peculiar reticence which we have termed implicitness. This often-quoted statement is very short and general, and one cannot evade the impression that Calvin could have been purposefully inexplicit when he wrote it. If we take into account the immediate context of the statement, its implication appears even less positive, for the reformer adds a highly restrictive condition: "but since Jesus Christ, without excepting anything in the world, has commanded to preach the Gospel whatever may happen, we must obey this command".[108]

Having considered Calvin's supposedly most positive remark about humanism, we seem to be back to the first basic point: theology or Bible first, and everything else, including the humanities, second. Judged in context, Calvin's statement from *De scandalis* does not sound convincing as a vindication of humanism and it would appear that it is not sufficiently explicit to be regarded as the cornerstone of a theory of Calvin's appreciation of humanism.[109] Moreover, if we take into account the statement's immediate context, we find that the interpretation could even be more negative. Calvin is referring to an argument presented to him by a bishop at the Colloquy of Worms who "intended to break my heart" by suggesting that if the Protestant faction persisted in its views without compromise, a war could start in which all learning, and with it the humanistic studies, might perish.[110] Taking this into account, the second part of Calvin's statement can be regarded as a simple confirmation of the assertion he had made six years earlier in his *Apology to the Nicodemites*.[111] However, the first part of Calvin's statement in *De scandalis* shows that in declarations that are positive and relatively explicit, the reformer of Geneva can be seen as adopting an attitude which is basically similar to that of Luther, although Calvin is clearly vaguer and less assertive than the German reformer. Like Luther, Calvin wants to persuade the world that the humanistic studies will not be disregarded by the Reformation movement, but unlike Luther, he never says anything as explicit and positive as "true theology cannot stand at all without knowledge of literature".[112] Calvin does not speak in the open-hearted and straightforward manner of Luther either, and the German reformer's historical-eschatological frame remains rather implicit. Generally Calvin is remarkably reticent and unenthusiastic in his affirmations concerning humanism; in fact, we cannot find in his work any declaration that is similarly

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107 VL [1550]: "Literarum quanta nos cura sollicitet, verbis praedicare nihil opus est"; *De scandalis*; CO 8.81. VG [1550]: "Il ne nous fault jà vanter en quelle recommandation nous sont les lettres et bonnes sciences"; *Des scandales*, ed. O. Fatio, 224.

108 *Des scandales*, VL CO 8.81 / VG ed. Fatio, 224.

109 As suggested by Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 121.

110 Viz. Bernardo Sanzio, bishop of Aquila, in November 1540. VG [1550]: "il me remonstroit que *les bonnes lettres et toutes sciences* s'en iroyent abolir et qu'on ne verroit plus que barbarie et confusion brutale au monde"; *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 223-224 and 223 n. 455.

111 Quoted above, p. 19.

112 Quoted above, p. 15.

explicit and positive as Luther's. It appears that the optimistic attitude towards humanism of the early days of the Reformation has withered - and has been withering ever since the break of Luther with Erasmus, or more specifically for Calvin since the affair of the Placards in 1534. This latter event marked the division of humanism and the Reformation in France and undoubtedly confirmed Calvin in his implicit mode of expression.

In summary we can state the following about Calvin's implicitness. It appears that in general the reformer tends to be quite indirect and vague in his comments concerning humanistic issues. However, when he abandons this tendency and becomes more explicit, as he very occasionally does, he is prone to be rather negative about humanism - sometimes in a harsh way - and his assertions are terse and dry. On the other hand, when Calvin shows himself appreciative of humanism, he follows the habitual mode of implicitness. Considering this peculiar penchant, the question arises whether to put the emphasis on a more frequent implicitness or on a rarer explicitness in the evaluation of the evidence from Calvin's works. In order to answer this question it is important to recognise which mode of expression, implicitness or explicitness, may under given circumstances be considered as representing mere rhetoric and which substantial speech. Some scholars have tried to reduce the relevance of Calvin's more explicit and reserved statements by qualifying them as mere rhetoric or by tacitly ignoring them, advancing the claim that the reformer in actual fact nowhere condemns humanism.[113] However, one could as well invert the argument and assert that Calvin in actual fact nowhere vindicates humanism in the sense of being wholeheartedly positive and unambiguously explicit about it.

Having examined the phenomenon of Calvin's implicitness it remains for us to look at those difficulties related to the comparative analysis of Calvin and humanism. On the practical level we must acknowledge the cross-disciplinary dimensions of the inquiry. Calvin is a theologian, and those who are not prepared to study religious doctrine will not be able to understand him. Renaissance humanism, on the other hand, cannot be grasped without a flair for the original humanistic disciplines, which is to say, for languages, literature (including, especially, poetry), history and philosophy. Bernard Roussel's recent statement that in Calvin studies "philology and semantics are good counsellors"[114] reminds us of the relevance of the linguistic part of the humanities for situating Calvin in the context of humanism. It is also important to emphasise that one needs to be at home in the world of antiquity in order to discern how Calvin evokes this past world and how he relates to it. The problem is that most experts on Calvin are not experts on humanism and the classics - and vice versa. Thus evaluating the humanist elements in the reformer is clearly a cross-disciplinary enterprise, for researching the relation between Calvin and

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113 Cf. Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 13. Bouwsma's full statement on the latter point is quoted in chapter 1, p. 73.

114 B. Roussel in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26 (1995), 753 (book review).

humanism means moving in the borderlands of theology, history, literature and philosophy - borderlands that are in general little explored by one-man expeditions.

The comparative analysis of Calvin and humanism involves fundamental methodological difficulties (which we cannot hope to resolve entirely here). First we must spell out the implications of the lack of agreement on humanism. Since due to the variety of theories on humanism, "any discussion of the relation of humanism and the Reformation will be totally dependent upon the definition of humanism employed",[115] the choice of view-point on humanism is crucial: it has a decisive influence on the conclusions that follow. But apart from the absence of agreement on humanism, there is the fundamental difficulty of providing a precise definition of humanism. We must be aware that Calvin and humanism are very different with regard to historiographical definability: one has a clear, the other a blurred outline. Comparing Calvin and humanism means juxtaposing a clear-cut world-view based on a coherent set of theological doctrines with a literary and quasi-mystical outlook defying philosophical systematisation. The question then is how to compare something well-defined in rational terms (Calvin's Reformation) with something ill-defined in this respect (humanism) or, to put it in other words, how to relate a doctrinal system which manifests itself in the clarity and concision of a catechism to the ambiguities of literary creation encountered in the realm of human letters.

Both Calvin and the humanists were reformers; the former of religion, the latter of letters and education. Calvin produced a consistent and unified complex of ideas and founded a disciplined movement destined to play a prominent role in history. He created a revised version of Christianity in a systematic way using elaborate rhetoric while remaining fairly unambiguous in the essentials. Calvin could be vague in matters that do not directly concern religious doctrine, but in his theology he advocated the ideals of rational clarity, of simplicity and brevity,[116] and he insisted on common sense intelligibility. Disliking ambiguity in theological discourse, he showed himself an advocate of clear definitions, which is manifest in numerous declarations, such as: "I prefer to aim at the correct form of expression, by means of which the thing that is meant can be better expressed, rather than to affect forms of speaking which induce obscurity without reason".[117] In his attempts at minimising ambiguity Calvin follows Luther, who had declared against Erasmus that "it is justly said among lawyers, 'the words of one speaking obscurely, when he can speak more plainly, should be interpreted against him'".[118]

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115 A. E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1993), 45.

116 Cf. above, p. 14.

117 *Inst.* 4.1.2; conflated reading from VL [1539]: "malim tamen loquendi proprietatem sequi, quae aptior sit rei exprimendae: quam formulas affectare quibus res sine causa obscuretur" and VG [1541]: "toutesfois i'ayme mieux suyvre la propriété, par laquelle la chose soit bien déclairée, que d'affecter formes de parler qui induisent obscureté sans propos".

118 Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* in Erasmus-Luther, *Discourse on Free Will*, ed. and trans. Winter, 120.

The humanists were reformers of a different kind. They did not share Luther's and Calvin's liking of the law (which was partly a result of professional conditioning in the latter) but they were mostly literary people who expressed their reforming ideas in witty satires, poetic images, allegories, fables, tales and utopias,[119] often avoiding plainness and deliberately embracing ambiguity out of artistic conviction, or simply for fear of persecution. They believed in the importance of what is sometimes called "the intermediary world of mythic imagination",[120] especially with regard to its function as a bridge between the external world and the inner reality of the soul, and thus they dedicated themselves to reviving ancient mythology and to forming new myths suitable to express the concerns of their own age. Their attitude is illustrated by the perennial insight that "myth is or can be equivocal, like the oracle of Delphi or like a dream",[121] an insight which characterises the humanists' appreciation of the ancient traditions of mythology as sources of profound wisdom, as well as their defence of a mythological mode of thinking as an antidote against the dominance of reason.[122]

Typical of literary people, the humanists were professed individualists. They did not form an organised movement with an agreed programme, nor did they act at the forefront of events but rather behind the scenes as teachers, tutors, counsellors, speech-writers, advisors, secretaries or diplomats. Their influence was often indirect, and their professional activities encouraged adherence to the principle of ambiguity. However, the humanists' attachment to that principle had deeper roots. Erasmus, for instance, was an independent scholar and thus enjoyed a certain freedom of action and speech; nevertheless, he voluntarily adopted the role of mediator and was "a man of moderation partly because he perceived the *ambiguities* of all things human".[123] In summary we can state that the individualism, the professional situation and the literary orientation of the humanists all contributed to shape their intellectual attitude, which was essentially characterised by a tendency to assess critically the power of rational thinking and by a devotion to the world of the mythopoeic imagination. In the philosophical writings of the humanists this attitude is reflected in the fact - well-known to experts - that "the conclusions are often ambiguous".[124]

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119 Calvin has also occasionally been called "a Christian Utopianist" by authors who think that the main purpose, or one of the main purposes, of humanist utopias was to depict the new individualism of the Renaissance as a threat to civilisation. Cf. J. Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London 1993), 413 and 418. It should be noted that this judgement rests on the assumption that the humanists espoused the same notion of individualism in creating their utopias as Calvin did when drawing up his reform programme. The idea of linking Thomas More with Calvin goes back to J. H. Hexter, who suggested an indirect connection between More's *Utopia* and Calvin's Geneva, consisting in a common constitutive reference to a notion corresponding to that of Max Weber's *innerweltliche Askese*. Cf. J. H. Hexter, *More's "Utopia"* (Princeton 1952), 91-94.

120 Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 348. Also quoted in chapter 3, p. 180.

121 Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 373.

122 Cf. chapter 3, pp. 176-180.

123 Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, 18 (italics added).

124 Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 133.

However, we are not obliged to describe humanist ambiguity as an implicit or indirect insight derived from secondary literature. A closer look at the sources reveals that many humanists delivered an open vindication of the principle of ambiguity. They cultivated ambiguity not only as professional writers who use this principle as a literary technique, but they also advocated it in a philosophical sense as a means to convey the uniqueness of personal experience and as a symbol of the impossibility of capturing with rational precision the essential phenomena of human existence. Thus ambiguity was not regarded as an obstacle to good philosophising by the humanists, who were ready to accommodate a certain amount of contradiction as something that inevitably belonged to human beings. Montaigne, for instance, reassured his readers that in intellectual discourse "it is not dangerous, as with a medical drug in an ancient tale, when something may be this way or the other".[125] It appears that many humanists regarded ambiguity (together with the concomitant paradoxicality) as the natural expression of what they perceived to be the dualistic structure of the psyche, a fact which was established scientifically only in modern depth psychology.[126]

One of the most paradigmatic examples of humanist ambiguity was without doubt Erasmus. His incorrigible dedication to the principle of "double value" irritated many of his contemporaries, one of whom once cried out in despair that: "he says one thing sitting down, and another standing up".[127] The reformers in particular disliked the humanists' inclination to ambiguity immensely. Luther characterised Erasmus disparagingly as a "verbose Vertumnus" (a wordy god of change) when criticising the *Praise of Folly*.[128] The reformer also compared the humanist to an eel "intending to ridicule his much vaunted versatility and subtlety which permitted him to adopt, by means of clever rhetoric, alternately (if not simultaneously!) the *pro* and the *contra*, the *yes* and the *no*".[129] In the controversy over free will the contrast between Erasmus and Luther regarding the issue of ambiguity emerged very prominently. The Dutch humanist's sensitivity for the ambiguities inherent in the Bible is opposed to Luther's notion of "claritas scripturae",[130] which constitutes the basis of the reformer's doctrinal assertions. Erasmus confessed that "so great is my dislike of assertions that I prefer the views of the sceptics wherever the inviolable authority of Scripture and the decision of the Church permit." He declared that human beings should always maintain an open mind when confronted with seemingly impenetrable questions, and be tolerant of alternative views, adding that "as a matter of

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125 "Il n'est pas dangereux, comme une drogue médicinale en un conte ancien, qu'il soit ainsi ou ainsi". Montaigne, *Essays*, 1.21.

126 Cf. e.g. the assertion that "all statements which seek to overstep the limits of the psyche's polarity - statements about a metaphysical reality, for example - *must* be paradoxical if they are to lay claim to any sort of validity". Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 386 (italics added).

127 E. Rummel, *Erasmus on Women* (Toronto 1996); quoted by N. Terpstra in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997), 696.

128 Luther, *Table Talk*; quoted in A. J. Gail, *Erasmus von Rotterdam* (Reinbeck 1974), 56.

129 J.-C. Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 48.

130 H. A. Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*: The Conversion of John Calvin" in Oberman / Saxer / Schindler / Stucki (eds.), *Reformiertes Erbe*, vol. 2 (Zurich 1993), 285 n. 27.

fact, I prefer this *natural* inclination to one I can observe in certain people who are so blindly addicted to one opinion that they cannot tolerate whatever differs from it".[131]

Luther disliked Erasmus' cautious attitude, and he retorted to the humanist, who had accused him of "obstinacy of assertion", that

> Not to delight in assertions is not the mark of a Christian heart. Indeed, one must delight in assertions to be a Christian at all! ..... What Christian can bear that assertions should be deprecated? That would be to deny at once all piety and religion.[132]

Luther pointed at what seemed to him a contradiction in Erasmus, asking him "why do *you assert* your 'dislike of assertions' and your preferring an open mind?", and "what is more miserable than uncertainty?"[133] Erasmus was not only a wavering and contradictory character in Luther's opinion; but he was evasive, superficial and light-minded: certainly a prince of letters but more even a *king of ambiguity* who was undermining the certainty of Christian doctrine and thus deserved the reproach of not being a pious man.[134] In his criticism of Erasmus, Luther reveals his fundamental reservations about humanism:

> It is difficult to grasp this articulate Proteus Erasmus, who wholly relies on the smoothness of his eloquence and knows how to dodge each blow like a skilful hornet ..... *As a true king he sits on his throne of ambiguity* [*Doppeldeutigkeit*] and makes life difficult for us, the simple Christians. He just finds it delightful that we are offended by his words and that we clumsy people feel fooled by him. ..... He does not teach us to think or talk seriously and deeply about anything, but only makes his readers laugh, as those adepts of humanist learning do, who can only talk nonsense. With such frivolity and fiddling he gradually drives out any sense of religion, which must finally disappear and yield to complete worldliness.[135]

Two more examples from Petrarch may conclude our consideration of humanist ambiguity. On the one hand, ambiguity has the status of an objective concept in the Italian poet's work, and as such it is explicitly declared as a "double value" embracing two distinct meanings such as the laurel tree when it is supposed to represent the hero's or the poet's crown respectively.[136] On the other hand, the principle of ambiguity is evoked by Petrarch rhetorically to stress the subjective dimension of literary expression and, in a wider sense, the relativity of all human utterance. The poet always insists on a certain vagueness in creative writing, and does not hesitate to assert this in a forceful manner, concluding, in one instance, a poem in this way: "If someone should call you obscure, my song, tell him: "I do not care'".[137]

There is another contrast between Calvin and humanism which is closely related to

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131 Erasmus, *The Free Will* in Erasmus-Luther, *Discourse on Free Will*, ed. and trans. Winter, 6 (italics added).

132 Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* in Erasmus-Luther, *Discourse on Free Will*, ed. and trans. Winter, 100-101.

133 Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* in Erasmus-Luther, *Discourse on Free Will*, ed. and trans. Winter, 101-102.

134 "Du bisst nicht fromm!"; quoted in Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 48.

135 Quoted in Gail, *Erasmus*, 147 (italics added).

136 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 161. The verse reads: "O fronde, honor de le famose fronti, / o sola insegna al *gemino valore*!" (italics added).

137 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 119.

the dichotomy between logical clarity and literary ambiguity, namely the contrast between a rational and an emotional approach to understanding the world. In general, humanistic world-views are characterised by the fact that certainty of insight is seen as based on emotion, intuition and subjective inner experience as much as on reason or logic. This attitude could perhaps be best described by the term *emotional intelligence* from modern psychology, by which we understand a form of cognition that integrates elements of emotive response in the process of comprehension.[138] In humanist discourse, the appreciation of emotional intelligence is manifest in many ways; it is epitomised, for instance, by literary depictions of an emotionally coloured inner certitude or by references to the visionary quality of poetic sensitivity. Petrarch captured these attitudes in lyric utterances such as "I know it because I feel it"[139] or "I can see it with my inner eye".[140] Calvin, on the other hand, emphasises quite distinctly the role of rational cognition, so that in him an attitude of mind characterised by the stipulation that knowledge be based on understanding, not on feeling in the first place, prevails. This is a feature which was already pointed out by his contemporaries, some of whom saw him as "addicted to human reason".[141] Later critics have also highlighted Calvin's cerebral approach to religion.[142]

Calvin shows a strong tendency to conceive of faith in terms of knowledge and he often associates the former with the latter. In one of his central statements about faith the reformer asserts that "we have a full definition of faith if we say that it is *a firm and certain knowledge* of the divine benevolence towards us".[143] If Calvin defines faith as "a firm and certain knowledge", we must be aware that he does so only with due respect for the tradition of orthodox piety. As a religious thinker and reformist, he likes to call faith knowledge, while as a defender of true godliness and tradition he is inclined to admit that faith is not knowledge primarily or essentially. Being a man of learning and of books, and intending to combat the doctrinal confusion of the Late Middle Ages, Calvin aims at grasping faith cognitively to the greatest extent possible. However, he sometimes feels obliged to oppose the rising rationalist tendencies of the Renaissance, and so acknowledges that intellectual comprehension does not represent the essence of religion. Thus he states that the proper Christian doctrine derives from the "*knowledge*" and "right *understanding*

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138 The key notions of emotional intelligence are currently defined as: emotional self-awareness and self-control, empathy, and the capacity of handling feelings (in oneself as well as in others). Cf. D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (London 1996), 43-44.

139 "i' 'l so che 'l sento"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 135 (l. 75).

140 "con l'occhio interno ..... veggio"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 345.

141 Viz. Joachim Westphal; cf. *Inst.* 4.17.24, VL [1559]: "rationi humanae addictos"; VG [1560]: "addonnez à la raison humaine".

142 This aspect can be traced in both old and modern historiography. We cannot offer an exhaustive discussion of the subject here, but we may quote a representative example, namely the Calvinist church historian Williston Walker, whose research - together with that of other contemporaries like Lefranc - stands at the beginning of modern critical Calvin scholarship. Walker stated that for the reformer of Geneva "a true faith must be intelligent", adding that "*intelligence ..... was to Calvin the mother of piety*". He also hinted at the antithesis of reason and feeling, maintaining concerning "Calvin's system" that "its appeal was primarily to the intellect" and that "it has been the foe of ..... emotional ..... views of Christian truth". Cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 360, 428 (italics added).

143 *Inst.* 3.2.7. (italics added),VL [1539]; VG [1541]: "une ferme et certaine cognoissance".

of Christ", though conceding that this doctrine "must not be grasped by the understanding and the memory alone, ... but it must possess the whole soul and find a seat and resting place at the very bottom of the heart".[144] However, this concession is to be understood more rhetorically than literally, for if we consider Calvin's idea of the Reformation in its historical context we recognise that the new church envisaged by Calvin distinguishes itself from the old one by requiring a higher degree of rational knowledgeability from the believer. Regarding the medieval notions of believing the reformer argues that "faith rests not on ignorance but on *knowledge*" and that "it is not enough to believe ..... without understanding, or even inquiring".[145] As stated above in the discussion of Calvin's implicitness, the reformer demands a maximum of explicit knowing and conscious awareness in the sphere of religious belief.[146] Indeed, an "obscure definition" of faith diminishes its "whole force" and almost annihilates it.[147] With regard to the scholastic concept of a non-rational (so-called implicit) faith, he concludes that "to state truly and frankly the real fact of the matter, this fiction not only buries but utterly destroys true faith".[148]

As far as the humanists are concerned, their appeal to emotional intelligence signifies a validation of intuitive comprehension or "sentient cognition", as Campanella called it.[149] The humanists' endorsement of the intuitive and emotive faculties of the mind is often associated with a tendency to mysticism or Platonism and manifests itself in an emphasis on factors like will, love, grace or poetic inspiration as opposed to reason, knowledge or logic. Ficino, for instance, reformulated the Petrarchan catch-phrase "I know it because I feel it" in terms of the Neoplatonic notions of love and grace, stating that higher wisdom cannot be attained by the effort of reason but only by a kind of mystic meditation which opens the mind for divine illumination:

> The light of God, since it goes far beyond the limits of human reason[,] cannot be understood in any way by man's natural intelligence. But it is loved; and loved, it is fused into us by grace. ..... For this reason Plato used to say that one ought not to point at the light of God with the finger of reason .....[150]

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144 *Inst.* 3.6.4, conflated from VL [1539] and VG [1541] (italics added).

145 *Inst.* 3.2.2 (italics added); VL [1539]: "non in ignoratione, sed in cognitione sita est fides"; VG [1541]: "certes la foy ne gist point en ignorance, mais en cognoissance". The second part is from Beveridge's translation, and the word omitted is "implicitly". Calvin's conception of faith has received different interpretations, and while some critics have tried to highlight the part of the intellect, others have emphasised the heart, and others again have pointed to a balance between the two. Cf. Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 131-133 and 157-158; R. A. Muller, "'Fides' and 'Cognitio' in Relation to the Problem of Intellect and Will in the Theology of John Calvin" in *Calvin Theological Journal* 25 (1990), 207-224. To quote a recent judgement, we can refer to Oberman, who has argued that for Calvin "the 'cognitio Dei' is *not merely* the intellectual attainment (notitia fidei) of revealed truth about God, but the awakening of longings (affectus) which enable the thoughts and meditations to soar high to get a 'taste' (gustus) of the mysteries of God, even though they will never succeed 'ultra tenuem gustum conscendere' [=*Comm. Ps.*, 40:6]"; Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 281.

146 Cf. above, p. 14.

147 *Inst.* 3.2.2., VL [1539] / [1559]. Note that the argument is reinforced in the last edition of the *Institutes* with the addition of the notion of annihilation.

148 *Inst.* 3.2.2., VL [1539], trans. F. L. Battles.

149 E. Garin, *Italian Humanism* (Oxford 1965), 220.

150 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 99.

Pico maintained the Ficinian emphasis on the non-rational and advocated "the superiority of will and love over all abstract knowledge",[151] asking: "why should we, in vain, seek with our reason the things we can reach joyfully in a single moment by love?"[152] Nesi vindicated the principle of emotional intelligence in religion by claiming that "God is more pleased with the man who loves Him than with the man who knows him".[153] He also popularised the humanist notion of the superiority of the will, recommending philosophers to search for wisdom not by means of the intellect but the will.[154] Following this approach, the humanists attempted to forge a new type of logic that would satisfy the needs of emotional intelligence or sentient cognition. Such a logic should not be mathematical in character like that encountered in Aristotelianism, but it should "correspond to the actual movements of human inwardness and ..... represent them consciously".[155]

The Petrarchan attitude of "I know it because I feel it" was adopted by many humanists. Evidence of this can be found in literary descriptions from early on, while philosophical elaboration only occurred towards the end of the Renaissance. It was Campanella who caught the essence of the humanistic attitude when he formulated the concept of sentient cognition. Campanella criticised the Aristotelian notion of abstract cognitive knowledge and advanced his theory of sentient cognition with reference to the concept of Platonic intuition and to the mystical tradition of the Arabs. According to this theory, human wisdom derived from the capability of "tasting" or "feeling" the things, not so much from the capacity of understanding them rationally. Campanella argued in typical humanist fashion with an etymological comparison; he stated that "'knowing' (*sapientia*) is said to derive from 'tasting' (*sapor*)" and concluded that man only knows (*sapit*) if he can sense the taste (*sapor*) of the things.[156] This notion of mental "tasting" or "feeling" was meant to be different from corresponding conceptions in Aristotelian epistemology, for it implied "submergence in the object" and led to "participation in its deepest essence".[157] Thus for Campanella "to know something is to feel it",[158] and accordingly, he emphasised that "the more sensitive and soft one is, the greater the capacity *to feel and become wise*".[159] Campanalla's theory is anticipated in literary form in Rabelais' *Fifth Book*, in which the guardian of the oracle of the divine flask tells Pantagruel and his companions that

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151 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 106.

152 Pico, *Letter to Manuzio*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 106 (Garin's words; syntax changed).

153 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 106. Nesi was a follower of Pico.

154 Cf. G. Nesi, *Oratio de charitate*; cf. J. Kraye, "Moral Philosophy" in Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge 1988), 352.

155 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 158. Nizolio can be mentioned as a case in point.

156 "Sapientia dicitur a sapore, qui sensui gustus intrinsecatur"; Campanella, *Metaphysica*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 217.

157 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 217.

158 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 218.

159 Campanella, *Del senso delle cose e della magia*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 218 (italics added).

> the philosophers, preachers and doctors of your world feed you with fine words through your ears; here we impart our doctrines materially through the mouth. Therefore I do not say to you: read this chapter, listen to this interpretation, but I say: taste this chapter, swallow this nice interpretation.[160]

The humanistic conception of emotional intelligence or sentient cognition has left an enduring and thought-provoking heritage as it formed part of an outlook which has often been associated with modern ideas of alternative philosophy. We cannot examine this heritage in detail here, but we can draw attention in the following chapters to what appears its most interesting aspect, namely the affinities with the new perspectives opened up in modern psychology.[161]

Although most of the difficulties involved in researching Calvin and humanism are well-known, their implications have not always been spelled out clearly. It is imperative to delineate these implications in order to determine approach and method adequately. We will mainly look at the theoretical aspects now and deal with the concrete questions later. Since the absence of a common consensus on the precise meaning of the term *humanism* makes it impossible for us to start off with a ready-made and authoritative definition, we will have to adopt our own working definition suitable for this inquiry - a task which we will carry out in chapters two to four. Considering the continuing controversy about humanism, it becomes clear that the problem of definition demands some preliminary reflection on method.[162] However, stipulating sound methodology and acknowledging the notional relativity of the term *humanism* does not mean tolerating any degree of vagueness, simplification or arbitrariness. The absence of an agreed overall view on humanism has encouraged the fashioning of manageable small-size definitions, that is, partial definitions which focus mainly on concrete and uncontroversial issues and which are therefore easily applicable. These definitions basically represent a positive development, since they have highlighted zones of concord and consolidated the progress attained in some areas. However, this development can be deceptive because it has fostered a belief that the essence of humanism can be captured in a compact list of micro-criteria. The task of defining humanism has been made more manageable in this way, but this has been achieved by means of shifts of emphasis involving generalisations on the one hand and simplifications on the other, with the result that the corresponding notions have relatively little substance left and have become too protean to be convincing as a whole.

This situation appears unsatisfactory considering that such small-size definitions do

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160 Rabelais, *Le Quint Livre*, chapter 46.

161 One example may illustrate this point. Jung judged the principle of love in Ficinian manner as the cornerstone of the acquisition of all deeper knowledge: "I sometimes feel that Paul's words - 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love' - might well be *the first condition of all cognition* and the quintessence of divinity itself. Whatever the learned interpretation may be of the sentence 'God is love', the words affirm the *complexio oppositorum* of the Godhead". Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 387 (italics added).

162 Scholars have repeatedly deplored the general lack of methodological deliberation in studies on humanism, and an explicit plea for "an epistemology of historical scholarship" has been made in this context by Kristeller. Cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York 1979), 12.

not fit the profile of some major humanists.[163] It also appears unsatisfactory from the standpoint of common sense, that is to say, if one recalls the basic rule of logic (stressed by Aristotle) which says that the wider the extension of a notion, the smaller its content and hence its meaning. But what does this rule signify for the analysis of Calvin and humanism? If we choose a very technical or simplified definition of humanism Calvin may appear more humanistic, but the corresponding conclusions will perhaps not be extremely meaningful. If on the other hand we choose a substantial definition the reformer may appear less humanistic, but we may expect to attain more profound insights about his attitude towards humanism. Consequently, given the present inconclusive state of research, it is advisable to avoid further unnecessary generalisation or simplification and to adopt a notion of humanism which is as comprehensive and at the same time as substantial and accurate as possible. Leading experts have pointed out that we must avoid two tendencies in defining humanism: on the one hand we should not be unnecessarily vague and imprecise, while on the other hand we should not try to frame a notion that is more narrowly determined than the variations of the phenomenon permit.[164] It may also be convenient to take a twin-track approach to humanism splitting its definition into a controversial and a non-controversial part in order to treat the disputed issues apart. This can reduce the intrusion of prejudice and enhance analytical accuracy. Finally, we can compensate for the lack of clarity on humanism by focusing on the majority voice of what are commonly considered its principal representatives rather than on the marginal figures. Of course this confronts us with the awkward question of the humanist canon,[165] but given the unresolved state of this issue, it is not advisable to rely too much on minor sources.[166] The problem of possible contradictions between major sources is best handled by following their majority voice.

The absence of an authoritative definition and overview of French humanism calls for similar methodological measures as outlined above for humanism in general. The adoption of an inductive line of approach is clearly indicated, since the significance of French humanism for Calvin lies mainly in its formative influences in his youth. This means we will concentrate on selected aspects which are concretely relevant for the intellectual development of Calvin, trying to work out which humanist ideas he may have

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163 It has been pointed out that Petrarca, Boccaccio, Salutati and Valla do not completely match the criteria established by Kristeller. Cf. R. G. Witt, "The Humanist Movement" in Brady / Oberman / Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History 1400-1600*, vol. 2, (Leiden 1995), 93-94.

164 Cf. Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 79.

165 Cf. above, p. 5.

166 Kristeller's theory is a case in point. It can easily be confirmed from minor sources, whereas it remains inadequate for several major humanists, as we have just pointed out (cf. previous page, n. 170). For a paradigmatic example of how Kristeller's theory is proved from the work of a minor humanist, cf. Ch. Trinkaus, "A Humanist's Image of Humanism: The Inaugural Orations of Bartolommeo della Fonte" in *Studies in the Renaissance* 7 (1960), 90-125 (reprinted in the author's *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism*). There are numerous other examples, such as when Antonio Loschi is presented as "illustrating the fact that the humanists were the successors of the medieval Italian *dictatores*"; cf. J. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric" in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 3, 188.

assimilated in the years before and around his conversion. The danger of generalisation is obviously very real here. We can avoid it by keeping the focus narrowly on the proven facts. Given the scarcity of documentary evidence, it is clear that much in Calvin's youth remains shrouded in a cloud of uncertainty and that the role humanism played in it is probably not demonstrable in detail, especially with regard to his conversion.

The problems of Calvin's *forbidding façade* is best tackled by reversion to the sources and their proper contextualisation. As regards the forbidding *persona*, the appropriate measure is to let Calvin the *person* speak for himself. This means that sufficient space must be allowed for direct quotation - something which has not always been done in writing about Calvin.[167] As regards the forbidding features of the *work*, some fresh translating needs to be done so that the *Philosophe malgré lui* is not hidden by the customary cutting and restructuring of his sentences, and so that the dust of centuries which has settled on his serious work is blown off. In the case of controversial passages which have been given divergent renderings, it will be helpful to include references to the original version of a translated text in footnotes for comparison. In general the emphasis will be on the Latin version (VL), but this does not mean that the French version (VG) should be put aside, for the latter offers clarification on many abstract Latin passages and adds colour when Calvin is polemical. If the French text lacks some of the specialist humanist vocabulary, it is nevertheless relevant because it supplements basic terms of reference which help define the meaning of the Latin text more sharply, eliminating some of the ambiguities of Latin rhetoric. With regard to the *Institutes* it is important to indicate the date of composition of a given passage and to establish a synopsis of variant readings in the successive editions in order to find out how Calvin's attitude developed during the approximately twenty-five years he spent on writing the book. It may occasionally be convenient to conflate Latin and French versions, to merge readings from different editions or to restitute rejected pieces. Alternative formulations by Calvin (translations or alterations) are always of value in that they offer additional shades of meaning. Calvin sometimes inserted in one edition what he had forgotten in another and in a translation what he had forgotten in the original, and he occasionally suppressed a passage in a new edition - not because he thought it was bad but because it did not suit the altered context any more.

Our considerations concerning partisan historiography have made it clear that it is imperative to minimise religious or intellectual bias in researching Calvin. The expectations expressed in the often advanced belief that "by historical scholarship Calvinism is being rescued from its defamers and from its too zealous partisans"[168] have,

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167 Cf. e.g. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, which relies heavily on secondary literature and in which one finds only five longer direct quotations from Calvin (pp. 95-96, 157, 164, 239-240, 254-255).
168 McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 433.

however, only been partially fulfilled. In fact, an overview of the literature reveals that the historical method has not always proved a sure means of gaining objectivity. If it is true that in general historical criticism has made our approach to Calvin more neutral and our knowledge of the reformer more objective, the same cannot be said of the question of Calvin and humanism. The historian Wendel has written a biography of the reformer which after "four decades is still the best one-volume introduction to Calvin's theological thought".[169] Nevertheless, the same author's study on Calvin and humanism cannot be said to have stood the test of time.[170] Wendel, and after him Bouwsma, have tried to improve theological interpretations of Calvin's attitude towards humanism from the historian's view-point, but their attempts have not won the approval of the majority of Calvin experts.[171]

There are a few basic rules which can be helpful in tackling the problem of partisan historiography. First, the approach adopted should be ideologically unobtrusive and conducive to highlighting the factual evidence established by the sources. Second, we can distinguish the controversial aspects of the subject from the uncontroversial ones where this is possible. Third, adherence to the rhetorical precept of brevity (to which both Calvin and the humanists subscribed) is recommended. Calvin's dictum "truth has adequate support in simplicity"[172] can serve as a guideline in this respect, and so can Rabelais' observation: "all learned men agree that words and discussions are superfluous if the facts are evident. Discussions are only necessary if the facts considered are not clearly apparent".[173] Fourthly, an attempt should be made at drawing an impartial outline of the development of the major arguments in the critical discussion of the problem of Calvin and humanism, a task which we will tackle in chapter one. By discussing the secondary literature separately, we are freer to concentrate on the extensive source material in the main part of the analysis, and to accommodate a comprehensive spectrum of evidence. Finally, humanism in Calvin has to be evaluated according to the definition worked out in chapters two to four.

If what we have called Calvin's implicitness has proved difficult to capture, its methodological implications are quite easy to discern. Since the major corollary of Calvin's implicitness is the absence of direct and comprehensive statements on humanism, we have to construe Calvin's attitude towards humanism by means of inferences from fragmentary

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169 Oberman, "*Initia Calvini*", 117. The biography is Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse* (Paris 1950) (2nd ed., Geneva 1985).

170 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*; discussed in chapter 1, pp. 69-72.

171 For criticism of Bouwsma's interpretation cf. D. Crouzet, *Jean Calvin* (Paris 2000), 67, 127, 408.

172 VL [1539]: "satis habet in simplicitate praesidii veritas", *Inst.* 4.16.28. (also quoted in chapter 6, pp. 325, 335). Calvin's defence of brevity is discussed in chapter 6, pp. 331-334.

173 "ce homos philologi pantes homologusi tote logus te ce rhemata peritta hyrparchin, opote pragma asto pasi delon esti. Entha gar anancei monon logi isin, hina pragmata (hon peri amphisbetumen) me phosphoros epiphenete" (classical Greek, one among various languages Panurge speaks in this passage). Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 9, ed. Jourda, vol. 1, 268.

items of evidence inductively gathered from his work. This is awkward - but not entirely disadvantageous, because explicit summary statements can be misleading, as the case of Luther shows. There are three ways of tackling the problem of implicitness. First, we must localise implicit forms of reference to humanism, determining the significance of the corresponding allusions. This is not always an easy task since it involves interpreting concepts which are disputed.[174] Second, a comparative analysis of those statements in Calvin's work which bear on the issue of the humanistic studies has to be made. This requires a linguistic study of the semantic field of the notion of *studia humanitatis* circumscribed by terms such as *bonae literae / artes liberales / sciences humaines / arts et bonnes sciences* etc. To make such a study is an arduous task as there are hardly any indexes and no concordances which could be of assistance, but its results will be rewarding.[175] Third, due weight must be given to Calvin's rare explicit utterances and an attempt has to be made at harmonising them with his more frequent implicit statements, assuming, as we can, a high degree of logical consistency in Calvin, and assuming, also, that there was no pressing need for Calvin to adopt an implicit mode of communication when talking about humanism. Calvin was free to say what he wanted about humanism in Geneva; nevertheless, he imposed a kind of self-censure making guarded statements for the most part. If, as it seems, humanism was marginalised by Calvin, representing a kind of taboo for him, then it will be imperative to uncover what lingers underneath the surface.

Calvin and humanism is a topic that touches on a variety of subjects such as theology, philosophy, literature, linguistics and history; accordingly, it requires a multidisciplinary approach combining the different perspectives of these subjects. As far as methods of comparison are concerned, the contrast in historiographical definition between Calvin and humanism suggests the separate treatment of controversial issues. The uncontroversial and well-defined parts of humanism can be compared directly with Calvin's thought, while the parts that are debated or ill-defined have to be handled in a different way, as the case requires. We should never force direct comparability by defining humanism according to its supposed links with the Reformation. Rather, we should look at humanism from an intrinsic view-point, that is, we should derive any definition of humanism fundamentally from the perspective of humanism, and not from that of the Reformation. Some researchers have violated this elementary rule of objective procedure, stipulating that "the meaning of the term *humanism* must be determined according to Calvin".[176] The fact that the reforming aspirations of humanism included religious objectives has given rise to endless debates, not just in the sixteenth century but also today, as one expert has pointed out when complaining that "the profoundly reforming spirit of humanism has been subject to many misinterpretations, not only in the age of the

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174 For instance *humanitas* (VG *humanité*); the concept is discussed in chapter 2, pp. 102-105.
175 This study will be carried out in the first half of chapter 6, pp. 277-315.
176 J. Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, v. Cf. chapter 1, p. 65.

great religious reformations but even more in our own times".[177]

Finally, a few remarks are required concerning the evaluation of similarities and contrasts between Calvin and humanism. In view of the ongoing controversy in research it seems advisable to build on existing consensus and proceed cautiously when trying to break new ground. Three simple rules can be helpful here. First, the positive links that are least controversial have to be identified. Second, in the case of negative parallels the positive implications have to be established. Third, positive connections and contrastive aspects which are based on debated assumptions have to be treated accordingly. Two examples may illustrate the usefulness of these rules. First, Calvin and the humanists are often compared with regard to their shared disparagement of nominalism. This negative parallel is often dwelled on at length but this is not of much use because it does not capture the essence of the people and movements in question, unless one believes that their profession consisted principally in protesting. Even an understanding of the Reformation as a mere *corrective* (and this would apply to humanism as well) implies a consideration of the wholeness of the corrective undertaking and thus includes a reconstruction of the positive programmes for renewal contained in that undertaking. But apart from that, any judicious study of negative parallels takes into account the concomitant affirmative implications. Second, establishing positive links between Calvin and humanism in areas which are controversial can be problematic. In the rare case when Calvin refers appreciatively to a humanist, we must not rush to a positive conclusion about the connection between the reformer and humanism, but check if Calvin's reference is objective determining in how far the humanist's point in question can be regarded as representative of humanism in general. Thus when Calvin adduces Lorenzo Valla in support of his doctrines of predestination and the unfree will, claiming that the humanist showed that "both life [i.e. election] and death [i.e. reprobation] are acts of the divine will rather than of foreknowledge",[178] we must remember that Valla's position on free will has been interpreted in different ways.

In his treatise *On Free Will* Valla actually remained ambiguous and left the main question open, breaking his dialogue off in the middle when only half of the issue is resolved. All that Valla's treatise warrants in terms of a firm thesis is the negative assertion that divine foreknowledge does not by itself cause volitional necessity for human beings. The possible positive implication of this negative assertion, namely that if God's foreknowledge does not determine the individual's will, then His will does, is nowhere affirmed explicitly. Thus when Calvin claims that Valla went beyond the fathers and the schoolmen in asserting that God's will predetermines the human will, he is presenting an overinterpretation of the facts. This overinterpretation can be traced back to Luther, who

177 J.-C. Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 42.
178 *Inst.* 3.23.6

had claimed the humanist as an ally in his treatise *On the Bondage of the Will*. Following Luther's suggestion, Calvin draws an affirmative conclusion in the name of Valla which Valla never drew, for the latter never committed himself to a definite view on the relation between divine and human will - a paradigmatic example of humanist ambiguity. The problems of establishing positive connections between Calvin and humanism in disputed issues are manifest in the research of Trinkaus, who has tried to demonstrate an affinity between Calvin and Valla in the question of free will. Trinkaus follows Calvin's reading of Valla, affirming that the humanist tended to a negative view of the freedom of the human will, and then suggests that Valla can be considered a forerunner of the Protestant doctrine of the bondage of the will. In order to maintain this theory, Trinkaus rejects Cassirer's widely acknowledged interpretation in favour of one obscure Barozzi's, and by doing so he attributes to Valla a view which must be considered as atypical of humanism.[179] Of course, Valla can be regarded as an (occasionally) atypical humanist - a fact which Trinkaus underlined[180] - but it makes little sense to adopt this perspective, unless one would aim at demonstrating that Calvin behaves like an atypical humanist, but the meaning of such a conclusion can be very small depending on the issue under consideration.

Since the success of any inquiry depends on how the questions are asked, it is worth stating the basic queries of this analysis in a clear and succinct way. The following may be regarded as the principal questions: "how does Calvin relate to Renaissance humanism in the variety of its aspects as we understand them today?", and (especially when dealing with controversial issues): "in how far do Calvin's aims correspond to the humanists' aims?", or in other words: "what are Calvin's priorities and aspirations and how do they compare with the chief ideas of the major humanists?" Thus the general aim is to analyse how and to what extent humanism in its various aspects is represented in Calvin's thought and ideals, and in his works and his life. However, any statement about Calvin's relation to humanism will be limited in its affirmative strength if it rests on preliminary assumptions (particularly about humanism) which are controversial. We cannot avoid acknowledging that research into the phenomenon of humanism appears to be subject to something like an "indeterminacy principle", to use a term from physics,[181] which means that it will be very difficult to define humanism with great analytical precision in the ongoing academic debate. It is evident that it will not be easy, either, to separate Calvin's attitude towards *humanism* from his attitude towards the *humanists*, especially the major ones, for Calvin himself never made any clear disassociation, which is not surprising given his tendency to implicitness.

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179 Trinkaus, "The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation" (1949) in his *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor 1983), 270.

180 Trinkaus, "Introduction" [to Lorenzo Valla's *On Free Will*] in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 147.

181 Formulated by Heisenberg with regard to describing the movements of subatomic particles.

In accordance with the stress on source work, a brief word is needed on the selection of primary material. As for humanism, the relatively small number of standard anthologies have provided essential orientation.[182] Further, the recent though often incomplete editions of the works of individual humanists (which have appeared in various languages) have been consulted.[183] Given the wide variety of humanist thought as compared with the focus on Calvin as a single person, the outstanding familiarity with the sources of experts like Garin, Kristeller, Margolin, Kelley and Maravall has also been appreciated.[184] Moreover, collections of recent specialist literature which provide an overview of the sources and facilitate access to them have been of assistance.[185] As for Calvin, it appears indispensable to study the various versions of that book on which he worked during his whole life, constantly revising it, and in which he gathered the fruit of all his labours: the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The argument that this work, being a doctrinal compendium, is not a suitable object for investigating humanism is basically true, but it is outweighed by the consideration that in order to form an adequate general idea of how Calvin the reformer relates to humanism it is necessary to determine the status of humanism in the one work which he regarded as his greatest achievement and as his most significant gift to posterity. Calvin was a theologian and one should acknowledge the fact that as such he decided not to allocate much space to humanism when forging Reformed doctrine. If humanism does not stand out in the *Institutes*, this is simply because Calvin did not want it to stand out; if Calvin makes no comment on humanism or humanist studies in the *Institutes*, it is because he did not give importance to making any. Calvin's tendency to implicitness concerning humanism pervades his whole work, but it is clearly most prevalent in his *Institutes*, so that this work represents something like a symbol of implicitness, marginalisation or even tabooisation in this respect.

Admittedly the method of focusing on the *Institutes* can be problematic, namely if it is applied to the exclusion of other texts, or if it is employed all too selectively (for instance, for extracting isolated reference points). Recently scholars have criticised the procedure of centring research on the *Institutes* while marginalising other sources, which has been the traditional way of interpreting Calvin's thought. They have advised Calvin students not to commit "that structural error [of] opting for the shortcut to Calvin's mind provided in that

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182 Cf. bibliography, section 4A.

183 Cf. bibliography, section 4B.

184 Cf. e.g. Garin, *Italian Humanism* (I occasionally provide my own translation from the Italian original) and *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 3rd ed. (Bari 1966), partly translated in *Science and Civic Life in the Italian Renaissance*, trans. P. Munz (New York 1969); Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* and "Humanism" in Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 113-137; Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*; Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*; J. A. Maravall, *Antiguos y Modernos*, 2nd. edition (Madrid 1986). For other important works by these authors cf. bibliography, section 5.

185 Cf. e.g. Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*; Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, 3 vols.; Goodman / MacKay (eds.), *The Impact of Humanism*; B. P. Copenhaver / Ch. B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford 1992); Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*.

conveniently indexed Summa called the *Institutes*".[186] However, if one takes the trouble to read the *whole* of that "Summa", comparing the different versions, one can hardly be talking about "opting for a shortcut" - on the contrary! Moreover, the elements of humanism have never been "conveniently indexed" in the *Institutes* - neither by Calvin's printers, nor by his modern editors.[187] The revisionist argument that "the concentration on Calvin's principal writing can even become an impediment for researching his *theology*"[188] also applies, although to a more limited degree, to investigating the reformer's attitude to humanism. But there is no insuperable obstacle here if we acknowledge as a fundamental fact that with respect to humanism the *Institutes* are dominated by the principle of implicitness. We are undoubtedly confronted here with a characteristic attitude on Calvin's part which can be interpreted in terms of marginalisation or tabooisation. However, the fact that Calvin deviates from the principle of implicitness in other writings, particularly when he is not concerned with doctrinal matters in the first place but dealing with practical issues or technical matters, does not mean that the text of the *Institutes* can be laid aside. On the contrary, we owe respect to the *Institutes* insofar as they represent the sum of Calvin's thought in the form he wanted. This work, in spite of its implicitness (or rather by virtue of it) reveals with remarkable force the ground note of Calvin's attitude towards humanism, which it is not unwise to take into account.[189]

The fundamental acknowledgement of the special status of the *Institutes*, however, does not prevent us from admitting that we cannot draw a full picture of Calvin's attitude towards humanism from this work, and that we must turn to other works in order to do so. In fact it is indispensable to consult works other than the *Institutes* to form a detailed theory about Calvin and humanism. If humanism appears subdued in the *Institutes*, it emerges more prominently in the polemical treatises and in the Biblical commentaries, in which Calvin reveals his familiarity with humanism more openly, showing what practical use he can make of it. Calvin's humanist skills are increasingly recognised today: the new Geneva edition of Calvin's works draws attention to the humanistic aspects of the reformer's exegesis,[190] enabling us to see better than before how "the humanistically oriented Calvin used his linguistic and exegetical skills to good advantage".[191] In the

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186 H. A. Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness: Calvin between Humanism and Reformation" in O'Malley / Izbicki / Christianson (eds.), *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation* (Leiden 1993), 263-264. Cf. also chapter 1, p. 75.

187 Cf. above, p. 11 n. 61.

188 Neuser, "Calvins Verständnis der Heiligen Schrift" in Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, 42 (italics added).

189 There is no similarity between Calvin's implicitness and humanist ambiguity, for the former, as we have seen, is the exception and not the rule in the reformer's attitude and does not apply to his main concern, that is, theological doctrine, whereas the latter represents a universal principle which is essential to the humanists and which pervades the whole range of their activity. Moreover, Calvin is implicit about humanism because he wants to avoid talking about it, while the humanists remain ambiguous about certain things because they feel that certain things cannot be stated clearly.

190 Cf. e.g. Feld's editorial work in the *Opera Exegetica* division of the *Ioannis Calvini Opera denuo recognita*, viz. 11/2, 15 and 16. Cf. bibliography, section 1A. Cf. also above, p. 10.

191 E. J. Furcha in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996), 528 (book review).

commentaries there are some important remarks on humanistic issues which Calvin did not incorporate into the revised editions of his *Institutes* - against his customary tendency to systematisation. Calvin's attitude towards Aristotle, for instance, remains quite vague in the *Institutes*; he only mentions the Greek philosopher eight times,[192] without making any substantial statement. Only if we turn to the commentaries we can find an explicit comprehensive declaration (the only one there is) in which Calvin summarises his negative opinion on the Stagirite. Despite this conspicuous reticence in expressing criticism of Aristotle, the declaration makes Calvin appear as absorbing the humanist aversion to the Greek philosopher:

> Aristotle was most eminent in genius as well as in learning. Nevertheless, as he was a profane man with a depraved mind, he always assumed that God's providence would involve many vague speculations. Indeed, whatever sharpness of mind God gave him, that impious idler [*sacrilegus ille nebulo*] applied it to extinguish all light.[193]

Lack of systematisation is a common feature in the sixteenth century, but it is remarkable here in Calvin because he usually shows an accentuated tendency to systematic integration. However, it has to be underlined that Calvin's tendency to systematic organisation - so obvious in his theology - does clearly not apply to humanism. On the contrary, the important remarks about humanistic issues are spread all over his work, without any recognisable principle of distribution which could facilitate access. As far as the works by Calvin other than the *Institutes* and the commentaries are concerned, there are some well-edited recent selections in English and especially in French, which I have perused with profit.[194] As far as the doctrinal controversies are concerned, the case of Servetus will be omitted from consideration because the subject is very extensive and controversial,[195] and because Servetus represents in many ways an atypical humanist. The humanistic aspects of the Servetus affair have traditionally constituted a classic topic in the literature, but recently this topic has been neglected[196] - no doubt because of the comprehensive reassessment of humanism.

Reconsidering the preliminary reflections on Calvin and humanism it appears appropriate to divide the analysis of the topic into three major parts. First, a summary of the critical discussion of the subject as reflected in the literature; second, the elaboration of the conceptual framework, which consists in the attempt at determining the meaning of the notion *humanism*; and third, the main inquiry: a detailed analysis of humanism in

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192 We mean mentioning Aristotle by name; *Inst.* 1.5.5., 1.8.1., 1.8.9., 1.15.7. (twice), 2.2.23., 2.5.2., 4.17.26. Cf. also Ch. Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Leiden 1977), 99. However, some of these references are insignificant, and one could perhaps more meaningfully argue that there are eleven substantial references, explicit or implicit, to Aristotle's philosophy in Calvin's *Institutes*, namely 1.5.3., 1.5.5., 1.15.6., 1.15.7. (twice), 1.15.8., 2.2.2., 2.2.3., 2.2.23., 2.5.2., 3.14.17.

193 *Comm. Ps.* 107: 43; CO 32.145.

194 Cf. bibliography, section 1B.

195 Servetus' thought often touches on those aspects of humanism which are disputed, particularly if humanism is understood as a "defence of man more than as an analysis of the classics" and thus as a "defence of human dignity and freedom". Cf. A. Alcalá (ed.), "Introducción" to Miguel Servet, *Treinta cartas a Calvino* (Madrid 1971), 21.

196 Cf. e.g. Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 27 and McGrath, *A Life Of John Calvin*, 114-120.

Calvin. In the first part (chapter one) we survey the secondary literature, tracing the development of research, identifying currents of interpretation and highlighting the results obtained (and, if of interest, the methods used). The literature considered in chapter one principally concerns Calvin the reformer; contributions dealing with the young Calvin will be looked at separately in chapter five.[197] In the second part (chapters two to four) we try to delineate the chief features of humanism establishing a detailed working definition, the criteria of which will represent the standard for assessing humanism in Calvin. Chapter two provides a general overview from the point of view of *humanitas*, while chapters three and four deal with the individual disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* (moral philosophy, the most debated among them, being consigned to the latter chapter).

In the third part (chapters five and six) we examine first the young Calvin (chapter five) and then the elements of humanism in Calvin the reformer (chapter six). With the young Calvin, the scarcity of documentation requires close consideration of the extant primary literature as well as of a wide range of secondary literature including especially the old biographies. A chronological analysis of Calvin's youth will highlight humanistic influences and describe the chief features of the reformer's early familiarity with humanism. Finally, we analyse humanism in Calvin the reformer diachronically according to our working definition of humanism (not according to the plan of Calvin's *Institutes* or the system of his theology, as is often done in Calvin studies). Since this is not an exposition of Calvin's theology but an examination of *humanism* in Calvin, the perspective of Calvin's ideas is not paramount but rather subject to critical juxtaposition with the humanistic view-point. This does not imply that humanism occupies the foreground; on the contrary, the definition of humanism is to be understood as a grid pattern which is laid over Calvin's work. It does not imply either that we disregard the significance of biographical facts (as one might be inclined to do in the case of Calvin) for "it would be contrary to historical truth to try to explain Calvin's thought without regard to certain important events that have marked his life".[198] The analysis of humanism in Calvin will be divided into two main sections, the first dealing with the reformer's attitude towards the *studia humanitatis* as a whole, the second with his relation to the five principal intellectual areas defined by these *studia*, namely grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history and moral philosophy. Chronological aspects of the problematic (for instance, the development of the *Institutes*) will be considered within the framework of the general topical arrangement.

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197 Cf. chapter 5, pp. 245-263.

198 Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse*, 2nd ed. (Geneva 1985), xi.

1 Calvin and Humanism in Historical Perspective

As we have said, a survey of the literature shows that Calvin and humanism is one of the most controversial topics in Reformation research.[1] If we consult the major authors who have written on the problem we find a wide and even bewildering variety of opinions and conclusions, and we are confronted with a number of intriguing contrasts and contradictions. Indeed, the divergences in interpretation are such that they constitute an imperative, so to speak, to reconsider the issue directly from the sources. Meanwhile an overview of secondary literature remains necessary, because individual assessments of research have often been marred by partisan attitudes.[2] One weighty author, for instance, wrote in the 1940s "that the most eloquent of French reformers was a humanist ..... is generally acknowledged",[3] while it is completely evident that such a claim cannot possibly have been true at the time. But apart from that, a survey of literature is also useful because it enables us to gain insights concerning method and approach, and because by reviewing a broad spectrum of opinion we can put the problem into historical perspective, thus tracing the development of the present controversy.

As regards scope, it is advisable to reach back more than a century, since progress in the field has been relatively slow, and many of the substantial arguments in the controversy have been advanced with reference to Burckhardtian concepts of the Renaissance and of humanism. Moreover, the modern critical approach and the scientific method, which began to be applied in historical research towards the end of the nineteenth century, only became tardily established in Calvin studies. Thus we survey here what are generally considered the most prominent interpretations of the problem of Calvin and humanism from the end of the nineteenth century to the present time, analysing them in their hermeneutic context, and trying in particular to bring out the underlying conceptions of humanism. This emphasis on large-scale retrospective, however, does not prevent us from paying full attention to recent developments and from examining current trends in research. The stress is on comprehensive interpretations advanced by specialists in either Calvin studies or humanism, but contributions of a more general character are also considered if they have influenced our present perceptions of the subject. Our survey mainly focuses on writings concerning Calvin the reformer, that is to say, Calvin after the publication of his *Institutes* in 1536.[4]

The literature on Calvin and humanism is not very extensive and does not occupy a prominent place in Calvin studies. A closer look at recent publications also reveals that the present state of research remains, despite some impressive advances, unsatisfactory. We

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1 Cf. introduction, p. 4 (n. 18).
2 Cf. introduction, pp. 11-13.
3 J. Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin* (Graz 1950), 121.
4 Studies on the young Calvin will be considered separately in chapter 5, pp. 245-263.

only have two full-scale studies, which were written more than half a century ago and which are clearly antiquated by now.[5] Besides these there are a number of more recent specialist contributions dealing with particular aspects of the subject, but the coverage they provide is far from complete and no attempt has been made at welding them together into a broad synthesis.[6]

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5 Cf. Q. Breen, *John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism* (Grand Rapids 1931) and Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin.*

6 I list here the most important specialist literature since 1945. Older contributions are acknowledged further on in the analysis of the various strands of interpretation. - R. Battenhouse, "The Doctrine of Man in Calvin and in Renaissance Platonism" in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 9 (1948), 447-471; Ch. Trinkaus, "The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation" in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10 (1949), 51-62 (normally quoted from the author's *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor 1983), 263-271); Ch. Trinkaus, "Renaissance Problems in Calvin's Theology" in *Studies in the Renaissance* 1 (1954), 59-80 (normally quoted from the author's *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism*, 317-339); Q. Breen, "John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition" in *Church History* 26 (1957), 3-21 (normally quoted from the author's *Christianity and Humanism: Studies in the History of Ideas* (Grand Rapids 1968), 107-129); J. Boisset, *Sagesse et sainteté dans la pensée de Jean Calvin: Essai sur l'humanisme du Réformateur français* (Paris 1959); A. Biéler, *L'humanisme social de Calvin* (Geneva 1961); B. Hall, "Calvin and Biblical Humanism" in *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London* 20 (no.2) (1961), 195-209; B. Hall, "John Calvin, the Jurisconsults and the *Ius Civile*" in G. J. Cuming (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, vol.3 (Leiden 1966), 202-216; J. Cadier, "Le prétendu stoicisme de Calvin" in *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 41 (1966), 217-226; B. Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 2nd ed. (London 1967); E. Grislis, "Calvin's Use of Cicero in the *Institutes* I: 1-5 - A Case Study in Theological Method" in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 62 (1971), 5-37; E. D. Willis, "Rhetoric and Responsibility in Calvin's Theology" in A. J. McKelway / E. D. Willis (eds.), *The Context of Contemporary Theology* (Atlanta 1974), 43-63; R. L. Bührer, *John Calvin's Humanistic Approach to Church History* (Ph.D. dissertation, Washington 1974); R. D. Linder, "Calvinism and Humanism: The First Generation" in *Church History* 44 (1975), 167-181; R. Peter, "Rhétorique et prédication selon Calvin" in *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses* 55 (1975), 249-272; F. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme* (Paris 1976); N. Malet, "Les références à Platon dans l'*Institution de la Religion Chrétienne* de Calvin" in *Platon et Aristote à la Renaissance* (Paris 1976), 391-402; D. T. Williams, "John Calvin: Humanist and Reformer: The Influence of Calvin's Early Humanism on his Work as a Christian Theologian" in *Trinity Journal* 5 (1976), 67-78; Ch. Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Leiden 1977); G. Babelotzky, *Platonische Bilder und Gedankengänge in Calvins Lehre vom Menschen* (Wiesbaden 1977); B. Girardin, *Rhétorique et théologique: Calvin et le commentaire de l'Epître aux Romains* (Paris 1979); A. Ganoczy / S. Scheld, *Herrschaft, Tugend, Vorsehung: Hermeneutische Deutung und Veröffentlichung handschriftlicher Annotationen Calvins zu sieben Senecatragödien* (Wiesbaden 1982); C. M. N. Eire, *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge 1986); J. R. Payton, "History as Rhetorical Weapon: Christian Humanism in Calvin's Reply to Sadoleto, 1539" in E. J. Furcha (ed.), *In Honour of John Calvin, 1509-64* (Montreal 1987), 96-132; J. C. McLelland, "Renaissance in Theology: Calvin's 1536 Institutio - Fresh Start or False?" in E. J. Furcha (ed.), *In Honour of John Calvin, 1509-64* (Montreal 1987), 154-174; W. J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York 1988); C. Augustijn, "Calvin und der Humanismus" in W. H. Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Servus Christi* (Budapest 1988), 127-142; M. Potter Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology* (Atlanta 1988); W. J. Bouwsma, "Calvinism as Renaissance Artefact" in T. George (ed.), *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform* (Louisville 1990), 28-41; A. Vos, "Calvin: The Theology of a Christian Humanist" in W. E. Helleman (ed.), *Christianity and the Classics: The Acceptance of a Heritage* (Lanham 1990), 109-118; P. J. Leithart, "That Eminent Pagan: Calvin's Use of Cicero in *Institutes* I.1-5" in *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990), 1-12; J. Carbonnier, "Le calvinisme entre la fascination et la nostalgie de la loi" in *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 64 (1990), 507-517; O. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole: Étude de rhétorique réformée* (Paris 1992); M. L. Monheit, "The Ambition for an Illustrious Name: Humanism, Patronage, and Calvin's Doctrine of the Calling" in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23 (1992), 267-287; A. Teneti, "Ignace, Calvin et l'humanisme" in J. Plazaola (ed.), *Ignazio de Loyola y su tiempo: Congreso Internacional de Historia (9-13 septiembre 1991)* (Bilbao 1992), 271-283; H. A. Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness: Calvin between Humanism and Reformation" in J. W. O'Malley / T. M. Izbicki / G. Christianson (eds.), *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation* (Leiden 1993), 251-283; O. Millet, "Exégèse évangelique et culture littéraire humaniste: entre Luther et Bèze, l'Abraham sacrifiant selon Calvin" in *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 69 (1994), 367-380; Ph. W. Butin, "John Calvin's Humanist Image of Popular Late Medieval Piety and Its Contribution to Reformed Worship" in *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994), 419-431; F. L. Battles, "Calvin's Humanistic Education" in F. L. Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin* (Grand Rapids 1996), 47-64; O. Millet, "*Docere / Movere*: Les catégories rhétoriques et leurs sources humanistes dans la doctrine calvinienne de la foi" in W. H. Neuser / B. G. Armstrong (eds.), *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex* (Kirksville (Missouri) 1997), 35-51; V. Mellinghoff-Bourgerie, "Calvin émule d'Erasme:

In the first half of the twentieth century the topic of Calvin and humanism was rather neglected, due to two factors. First, there was an intellectual dogmatism prevailing in theological studies which tended to disregard quite categorically any link between the reformer and humanism. Thus one critic stated that around 1930 "the Christian Reformed Church like other traditionally Calvinistic churches in America would not have thought there could be any connexion between Calvin and Humanism".[7] Second, there was a pervasive trend in the emerging discipline of analytical psychology challenging the orthodoxies of the Christian religion in the name of a modern humanism, thereby stressing the differences, rather than the similarities, between Calvin and humanism. Psychologists and philosophers working with the newly developed theories of the unconscious began to depict Luther and Calvin in anti-humanistic terms and even established a link between the Reformation and contemporary fascism. Luther and Calvin appeared as partly responsible for the general incapability of European society to handle the concept of freedom in the first half of the twentieth century.[8] It is also clear that psychoanalysis contributed to consolidate the notion of Calvin's *forbidding persona*.[9] Moreover, there were some reputable historians who chiefly operated with Burckhardtian concepts of humanism (which are difficult to harmonise with the ideals of Calvin's Reformation) leading them to focus on the contrasts between Calvin and humanism rather than possible affinities.

These tendencies led to an almost universal, if tacit, acceptance of an anti-humanistic view of Calvin. Nobody felt inclined to call this into question except an Austrian pastor, an American post-graduate student and, finally, a professor from the University of Vienna. The article "Calvin as a Humanist: His Education and His Work" of 1909 by Johannes Neuenhaus[10] marked the beginning of a pro-humanistic reading of Calvin, but it had practically no effect on research. Two decades later the doctoral dissertation by Quirinus Breen, entitled *John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism* and published in 1931,[11] stated the case in amplified form and experienced some degree of appreciation. It was, however, only after the Second World War, when the monumental study of the Czech theologian Josef Bohatec on Budé and Calvin came out after much

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L'irréductibilité d'une conscience humaniste" in O. Millet (ed.), *Calvin et ses contemporains: Actes du Colloque de Paris, 1995* (Geneva 1998), 225-245; M. Turchetti, "Calvin face aux tenants de la concorde (moyenneurs) et aux fauteurs de la tolérance (castellionistes)" in O. Millet (ed.), *Calvin et ses contemporains: Actes du Colloque de Paris, 1995* (Geneva 1998), 43-56; *Homère chez Calvin*, Mélanges en l'honneur d'Olivier Reverdin (Geneva 2000).

7 B. Hall in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22 (1971), 75 (book review).

8 Cf. e.g. E. Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (London 1942) and *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven 1950).

9 Cf. introduction, pp. 8-9.

10 Cf. J. Neuenhaus, "Calvin als Humanist: Dargestellt an seinem Bildungsgange und an seinem Wirken" in Bohatec (ed.), *Calvinstudien: Festschrift zum 400. Geburtstage Johann Calvins* (Leipzig 1909), 1-26.

11 Breen, *John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago 1931). This dissertation was published, without further revision, by Eerdmans in Grand Rapids in the same year.

delay,[12] that a positive interpretation of Calvin's relation to humanism became scientifically established as an alternative to prevailing views. This alternative was actively promoted by François Wendel, professor at the University of Strasbourg, who undertook to write a study of his own on the topic but died leaving an unfinished manuscript which was published posthumously under the title of *Calvin et l'humanisme*.[13]

With increasing specialisation in the second half of the twentieth century, which has been reflected in Calvin studies as a "marked preference for analysis rather than synthesis",[14] a fuller critical discussion of the subject has developed, although no comprehensive study has yet been attempted. Between 1950 and 1975 the focus in Calvin studies shifted from examining "particular aspects of doctrine peculiar to Calvin" to exploring "his intellectual capital in all its ramifications", which specifically includes research on humanist aspects.[15] In the 1970s scholars began to depict Calvin less in terms of dependence on Luther and focused increasingly on affinities with Erasmus, Lefèvre d'Étaples and Bucer, with special emphasis on Calvin's reception and exploitation of classical philosophy.[16] However, changing perspectives in the study of humanism[17] have made the situation more complicated.[18] Given this fact it is perhaps not surprising that no comprehensive study on Calvin and humanism has been produced since Bohatec, but research on the topic has gathered momentum, especially during the last three decades. In 1986 one scholar stated that "the image of Calvin in recent research is of a Calvin positively influenced by the humanist tradition".[19] In particular, as another scholar observed in the same year, "recent research has also made us aware that Calvin stood in the rhetorical tradition".[20] More recently, two scholarly publications have added weight to the positive interpretation of Calvin's attitude towards humanism, namely the much-discussed biography of the reformer by William Bouwsma[21] and the extensive study on Calvin and rhetoric by Olivier Millet.[22] At the beginning of the 1990's Heiko Oberman confirmed the tendency to an increased appreciation of the humanistic features in Calvin, stating that

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12 Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*. This book was finished by 1943 but could not be published until 1950. Large parts of it had appeared in advance in journals from 1936 onwards (cf. Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, vi).

13 Paris 1976. Wendel had died in 1972.

14 Cf. R. White, "Fifteen Years of Calvin Studies in French (1965-1980)" in *Journal of Religious History* 12 (1982), 161.

15 D. Nauta, "Stand der Calvinforschung" in W. H. Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Theologus* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1976), 83.

16 A. Ganoczy, "Zur gegenwärtigen Lage der Calvinforschung" in P. Manns (ed.), *Zur Lage der Lutherforschung heute* (Wiesbaden 1982), 70.

17 Cf. introduction, p. 30.

18 Cf. White, "Fifteen Years of Calvin Studies in French (1965-1980)", 148.

19 D. E. Demson, "The Image of Calvin in Recent Research" in E. J. Furcha (ed.), *In Honour of John Calvin, 1509-1564* (Montreal 1987), 367.

20 W. Klempa, "Introduction" to the colloquium "The Image of John Calvin in Recent Research" in Furcha (ed.), *In Honour of John Calvin, 1509-1564*, 346.

21 W. J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York 1988).

22 O. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole: Étude de rhétorique réformée* (Paris 1992).

> Renaissance research, particularly in the United States, reaching from Quirinus Breen (1896-1975) to William Bouwsma, has developed a consensus which affirms, articulates and delineates the humanistic dimension in Calvin's work.[23]

In the wake of the increasing interrelation of theological and historical scholarship, Calvin has emerged more clearly as a humanist reformer. Thus one author has commented that the traditional opposition between Calvin's theology and the humanist outlook has proved to be a "false notion", arguing that "we are now in a position to recognise unequivocally the fundamental importance of French humanism not only in the formation of Calvin's thought but as a key to the understanding of his entire career". The same author has asserted that "Calvin was a humanist rhetorician committed to the clear and persuasive presentation of the substance of Christian doctrine".[24] Nevertheless, no overall consensus has been reached to date on the question of Calvin and humanism, although agreement on certain aspects appears more likely today due to the results of specialist studies and due to the better critical apparatuses in the new editions of Calvin's works. It is probably too optimistic to assert that if humanism is defined carefully and not just from the point of view of "literary methodology", but also "by implementing current research and insights into Calvin's view of both history and humankind ..... it is likely that a consensus will be reached in the near future".[25] As we have shown, the problems involved in defining humanism are so difficult that we cannot expect them to be solved soon. Moreover, since cultural factors play a significant role in the evolution of scholarly judgements, we should perhaps think of progress in terms of a generation (or more) rather than "the near future".

If we review the whole spectrum of critical opinion on Calvin and humanism, we can distinguish four major strands of interpretation which may conveniently be labelled anti-humanistic, non-humanistic, scholastic and humanistic. In what follows we examine the most important views of each strand in more or less chronological order, tracing the origin and development of the principal arguments. It seems appropriate to structure this analysis of literature according to strands or types of interpretation, since these represent strong and distinct traditions of research between which there was often little interchange of ideas or mutual interest. However, we do not ignore the influences of one tradition on another where it is clearly manifest. Let us look first at the anti-humanistic interpretation of Calvin, which we already know from our considerations concerning the phenomenon of Calvin's *forbidding persona*. This interpretation is in many ways a direct consequence of Burckhardt's theory on the Renaissance and humanism, although in a wider sense it is rooted in the tradition of enlightened free-thinking. The anti-humanistic view of Calvin was established in France by around 1900 and has remained strongly influential during the whole century. Its founding fathers were the celebrated *seizièmistes* of the Napoleonic

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23 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 253-254.

24 J. Tonkin, "The Calvin Enigma Revisited" in *Journal of Religious History* 18 (1994), 226.

25 R. C. Gamble, "Current Trends in Calvin Research, 1982-90" in W. H. Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor* (Grand Rapids 1994), 101.

École Normale Supérieure, Ferdinand Brunetière and Henri Hauser, and those who followed in their footsteps were no less illustrious; they included, among others, Abel Lefranc and Jean Plattard.

The most explicit advocate of the anti-humanistic interpretation was Henri Hauser, who in an influential synthesising essay of 1897 advanced what was to become the standard view of the early history of humanism and the Reformation in France, and of the role Calvin played in it, for much of the twentieth century.[26] Hauser characterised the Genevan Reformation as "a striking and decisive break"[27] with the Renaissance and with humanism, arguing that Calvin, although intimately acquainted with the reborn classical letters, would never tolerate the emancipation of humanistic thought from the tutelage of the church. The root of Calvin's opposition to humanism lies in the fact that his notion of religion remains essentially medieval in that he maintains the traditional principles of Christian orthodoxy, namely dogma, authority and an ethics based on the doctrine of human depravity. Calvin's conservative instincts led him to perceive "the narrow but unfathomable gap that separated the Renaissance from Christianity, renewed antiquity from the rejuvenated Gospel",[28] from which he concluded - "a stroke of genius"[29] according to Hauser - that the viability of the Reformation as an organised opposition to Rome depended on a renewal of religious orthodoxy departing from the chief ideas of humanism. Thus what Calvin engineered was nothing but a solid change of orthodoxy palpable in the achievement "to oppose to the Catholic church a church that is more Catholic". He hindered the progress in religious life envisaged by the humanists, and by doing so checked the advance of the Reformation movement itself, so that it can be said that "the powerful hand of Calvin has delayed the development of Protestantism for almost a century".[30]

In order to comprehend the full significance of this classic interpretation we must have a closer look at the notions of *humanism* and *Renaissance* employed in it, which have proved very influential, especially in Francophone scholarship. Deriving his conceptions essentially from Burckhardt and Voigt, Hauser regards the terms *humanism* and *Renaissance* as largely synonymous in the sense that humanism represents the perfect embodiment of the spirit of the Renaissance if we understand *Renaissance* as the concerted emergence of that complex of principles which marks the beginning of modernity. The major hallmark of the Renaissance, then, is a momentous potential for progress manifest in the resolution to break with the past as well as in the actual capacity to conceive visions of

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26 Cf. H. Hauser, "De l'humanisme et de la Réforme en France, 1512-1552" in *Revue historique* 64 (1897), 258-297 (reprinted in *Études sur la Réforme française* (Paris 1909), 52ff). For a critical assessment of Hauser's theories cf. H. Weber, "Eléments de rupture entre la Renaissance et la Réforme en France (1535-1550)" in J. Boisset (ed.), *Réforme et humanisme* (Montpellier 1977), 219-240.

27 Hauser, "De l'humanisme et de la Réforme en France", 290.

28 Hauser, "De l'humanisme et de la Réforme en France", 295.

29 Hauser, "De l'humanisme et de la Réforme en France", 290.

30 Hauser, "De l'humanisme et de la Réforme en France", 296.

radical change. It is, however, precisely this revolutionary drive which the Reformation rejects and to which Calvin in particular reacts, suppressing all the humanistic tendencies towards thorough modernisation.

The key principle of humanism in this interpretation is free-thought (*libre pensée* or *libre examen*), signifying the assertion of spiritual individualism against institutionalised credos with reference to the model of the culture of classical antiquity. Hauser's understanding of humanism centres on this very notion of free-thought and is articulated as follows:

> Humanism is essentially the conception of the *litterae humaniores*, that is to say the bold affirmation that the study of classical letters would make humanity more civilised, more noble and happier, more similar to what it was in its brilliant cities where the human being developed in freedom.[31]

Four important ideas are inextricably associated with this notion: first, the idea that individual human beings are alone on their own and represent subjects which are worth studying; second, the idea of glory; third, the idea of the continuity of classical antiquity in the present; and fourth, the idea of beauty. In this view humanism is epitomised by the French term *cuyder*, that is, the confidence of human beings in themselves and their pride of thinking or acting independently, while the Reformation by contrast can be characterised by the term *foi*, which stands for the conviction that human beings are nothing without God, that is, they are unable to produce anything valuable by their own powers. Calvin is the relentless defender of *foi*, diametrically opposed to the chief ideas of humanism, most of all to the principle of free-thought. Indeed, at the heart of his opposition is his determination to suppress this form of destructuralising individualism which he saw embodied in Rabelais' maxim of *franc-vouloir* and which he regarded as nothing less than "the heresy *par excellence*".[32]

Hauser's anti-humanistic view of Calvin enjoyed wide international appeal for a long time. Particularly the clearly worked-out historical background in which Hauser had placed the reformer experienced wide appreciation among scholars. Bourrilly, for instance, who was a colleague of Léonard in Aix-en Provence, restated the outline of that historical background almost half a century later, reformulating Hauser's resolutely anti-humanistic interpretation in a more moderate, if no less definite, way. Bourrilly argued that "scholasticism had not destroyed the taste for humanism in him [Calvin]", who as a young graduate "could dedicate himself to classical letters", which constituted "the object of his predilection" at the time of publishing the *Seneca Commentary*.[33] However, after the Affair

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31 Hauser, "De l'humanisme et de la Réforme en France", 261.

32 Hauser, "De l'humanisme et de la Réforme en France", 291. The relevance of the humanist concept expressed by the sixteenth-century term *cuyder*, which basically refers to the activity of thinking with emphasis on the power of independent reasoning, will be evaluated further on. Cf. chapter 2, pp. 110-111 and chapter 4, pp. 198-207.

33 "above all a humanist work"; V.-L. Bourrilly, "Humanisme et Réforme: La formation de Calvin" in *Calvin et la Réforme en France* (Aix-en-Provence 1944), 19.

of the Placards "the humanist changed into a theologian of the Reformation",[34] who, when installed definitively in Geneva, would "exchange invectives with Rabelais" and thus signal the divorce of the Reformation with humanism.[35] Thus the two movements, "originating in the same principle, using the same methods, associated for almost half a century in the same struggle, separate definitively and follow their own destinies".[36]

The acceptance of Hauser's basic assertions, however, did not prevent the increasing appreciation of the merits of Calvin's humanist eloquence by literary historians, who had come to rate the *Institutes* as one of the first classics of modern French.[37] On the contrary, the acknowledgement of Calvin's literary achievement was integrated into the predominant anti-humanistic view. Abel Lefranc, for instance, was one of the foremost scholars in highlighting the rich rhetoric of Calvin's prose,[38] but at the same time never moved away from the basic assertion he had made in his penetrating study of Calvin's youth. The reformer's "powerful literary education was for him ..... an efficient instrument and means of action"[39] - no more than that - and when Calvin finished the first edition of his *Institutes* "the scholar and the humanist definitively gave way in him to the apostle".[40]

Ferdinand Brunetière, whose teaching had been an important source of inspiration for Hauser,[41] paid ample tribute to Calvin's talent as a writer while maintaining that "the Reformation was the condemnation of the spirit of the Renaissance"[42] and asserting that Calvin was opposed to humanism in that he rejected the liberties advocated by the humanists, diluted the individualism proclaimed by the Renaissance and "anathematised letters and arts".[43] It was Brunetière who first brought up for discussion the radical utterance which Calvin made in his *Apology to the Nicodemites*, making clear that what the reformer meant by *sciences humaines* was the new programme of the humanistic studies.[44] Jean Plattard, similarly, praised the virtues of Calvin's eloquence but insisted that when Calvin turned from his humanistic studies to the Reformation, he abandoned humanism in its essentials.[45] The publication of the *Institutes*, then, can be said to have "put the seal on

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34 Bourrilly, "Humanisme et Réforme", 20.
35 Bourrilly, "Humanisme et Réforme", 22.
36 Bourrilly, "Humanisme et Réforme", 22.
37 Cf. e.g. G. Lanson, "L'Institution chrétienne de Calvin" in *Revue historique* 54 (1894), 60-76. Cf. chapter 6, p. 323.
38 A. Lefranc, *Grands écrivains français de la Renaissance* (Paris 1914), 305-386, and *Calvin et l'éloquence française* (Paris 1934).
39 Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin* (Paris 1888), 81-82.
40 Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 125.
41 Hauser acknowledged his debt to Brunetière in his essay "De l'humanisme et de la Réforme en France", 261, n. 2.
42 F. Brunetière, "L'œuvre littéraire de Calvin" in *Revue des Deux Mondes* 161 (1900), 900.
43 Brunetière, "L'œuvre littéraire de Calvin", 923.
44 Cf. introduction, p. 19.
45 "without further consideration" ("sans ménagement"); J. Plattard, *La Renaissance des Lettres en France de Louis XII à Henri IV*, 6th ed. (Paris 1952), 71.

the break between the Reformation and the Renaissance".[46] There is no deeper concern with grammatical theory, the humanists' favourite pastime, in the *Institutes*, from which, according to Plattard, "all philological discussions are eliminated".[47] Second, Calvin declares Christian theology fundamentally incompatible with classical philosophy, thus destroying the humanist dream of blending pagan elements with Christianity. In particular he dismisses the optimistic anthropology of classical philosophy as resuscitated in Renaissance humanism, substituting for it the doctrine of the total depravity of the human race. Third, Calvin suppresses the humanist ideal of free-thought kept alive in French evangelicism;[48] "he governed Geneva as a dictator, pursuing everyone whose ideas threatened his spiritual authority".[49]

Ernst Troeltsch held that there was "an inherent and essential opposition"[50] between humanism and the leading reformers manifest in their continued attachment to the principal concepts of the medieval world-view, especially in their uncompromising adherence to the ideal of a Christian civilisation. According to Troeltsch Calvin "abhors Zwingli's weakness for the beloved pagans"[51] and rejects, like Luther, the humanist tendency to philosophical speculation. Calvin's attitude towards humanism is utilitarian and rests on a pragmatic compromise between acceptance of what is practical and disregard of what is doctrinally unsuitable. In his historical survey of Protestant theology Troeltsch observed that

> To him [Calvin], as well as to the Jesuits, humanism has become purely a technique and form which he appreciates as a scholar but which as far as substance is concerned contributes very little to his general world-view.[52]

Margaret Mann provided a comprehensive summary of the anti-humanistic interpretation[53] in which she coined the famous formula that Calvin "uses humanism to fight humanism", stressing that the "pupil of humanism" becomes its "most formidable enemy".[54] The *Institutes* mark Calvin's break with humanism, which is epitomised by the antagonism between his doctrine of predestination and the ideal of free will.[55]

Erich Fromm reinforced the predominant anti-humanistic interpretation in applying the methods of modern psychoanalysis and sociology to the study of history. Adopting a Burckhardtian view of the Renaissance he saw a sharp contrast between the Renaissance

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46 Plattard, "Calvin et l'éloquence française" in *Revue Bleue politique et littéraire* 73 (1935), 207.
47 Plattard, *La Renaissance des Lettres*, 76.
48 Plattard, *François Rabelais* (Paris 1932), 301-302.
49 Plattard, *La Renaissance des Lettres*, 71.
50 E. Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress* (Philadelphia 1986), 36.
51 Troeltsch, "Protestantisches Christentum und Kirche in der Neuzeit" in P. Hinneberg (ed.), *Die Kultur der Gegenwart: Ihre Entwicklung und ihre Ziele*, Teil I, Abteilung IV, Band I, *Geschichte der Christlichen Religion*, 2nd ed. (Berlin 1909), 520.
52 Troeltsch, "Protestantisches Christentum und Kirche in der Neuzeit", 520.
53 M. Mann, *Erasme et les débuts de la Réforme française (1517-1536)* (Paris 1933), chapter VI: "Erasme et Calvin; l'humanisme jugé par la Réforme (1530-1536)", 151-188.
54 Mann, *Erasme et les débuts de la Réforme française*, 171, 185.
55 Mann, *Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance* (London 1949), 84, 165.

and the Reformation characterised mainly by the opposition between the doctrines of human dignity and depravity on the one hand, and of free will and predestination on the other hand.[56] Thus according to Fromm the Reformation signified a break with the Renaissance, but not only that - it also signified a break with the spiritual heritage of the European past because, in his words, "Protestantism ..... relinquished elements that had been the foundations of Judaeo-Christian tradition".[57] It has to be noted here that Fromm's notion of humanism is not tied exclusively to the Renaissance but refers to a perennial anthropocentric world-view, that is to say, to a way of looking at the world which is determined by the human perspective and condition. The context of Fromm's interpretation is the distinction between two main types of religion: humanistic and authoritarian. Humanistic religion aims at self-realisation of human beings and at developing their innate potentialities, seeing God as a symbol of the higher self, while authoritarian religion makes obedience its principal virtue and inhibits self-realisation by stipulating self-depreciating surrender to an absolute superhuman power. Calvin created an authoritarian type of Christianity and his theology can be considered as fundamentally anti-humanistic with its strong stress on human powerlessness, worthlessness and dependence. The Christian religion, however, has not always been so authoritarian; on the contrary, it was originally humanistic in the teachings of Jesus. The humanistic religion understood more generally as a type of devotion has a long tradition which is related to Buddhism and Taoism and goes back to Isaiah and Socrates, living on in Jewish and Christian mysticism and re-emerging as the religion of reason in the French Revolution.[58]

The psychoanalytical school has generally tended to produce anti-humanistic interpretations of Calvin. Jung omitted the reformer altogether from consideration in his scientific work. In interviews he disassociated himself from Calvinist theological views, asserting that there was "no touch of Calvinism" in his Swiss religious background[59] and observing that, despite his greatness, "Calvin was often cruel".[60] In a comparative study of Calvin and Ignatius Loyola by the psychologist André Favre-Dorsaz,[61] the author concedes that Calvin can be seen as a humanist insofar as he was "an artist of discourse", but he adds that the reformer's eloquence is not humanistic insofar as it is dominated by "the cult of logical thinking".[62] As an artist of discourse Calvin "shaped to a large extent the language of eloquence and of popularisation", while as a theological thinker "he knows and

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56 E. Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (London 1942), 72-76, 85-86.

57 Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom*, 86.

58 Cf. Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven 1950) and D. M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion* (New York 1991), in particular "Erich Fromm: The Hope of a Humanistic Faith", 592-601.

59 *C. G. Jung Speaking*, eds. W. McGuire / R. F. C. Hull (Princeton 1977), 217.

60 *C. G. Jung Speaking*, 165. Cf. also *C. G. Jung Speaking*, 386-387 (predestination). "As is known, the [holy] spirit blows where *it* likes, and not where Calvin would like to have it with his [doctrine of] 'providentia specialis'", is Jung's only recorded written reference to the reformer of Geneva; letter to pastor Max Frischknecht of 17 July 1945; C. G. Jung, *Briefe*, vol. 1 (Olten 1972), 460.

61 This study is, according to Delumeau, "too partial" and therefore "to be redone"; J. Delumeau / Th. Wanegffelen, *Naissance et affirmation de la Réforme*, 8th ed. (Paris 1997), 375 n. 2.

62 A. Favre-Dorsaz, *Calvin et Loyola* (Paris, Brussels 1951), 424.

admits only one means of expression, namely that which can find an adequate translation in the words of logical language".[63] Thus Calvin's extraordinary rhetorical gifts lead him to pursue perfection of form at the expense of substance in content, and so, Favre comments,

> Facility of expression prevails with him over fullness and depth of content - a content which is indefinitely repeated with all the variations of a magisterial virtuosity. His speech is so sure, impeccable and definitive that the substance evoked is, as it were, sterilised by it.[64]

Calvin's discourse therefore has, seen from the psychological perspective, "no mysterious fringe, no background analogies".[65] Considering the discrepancy between the abundance in formal expression and the limitations imposed on the content, Favre argues that

> A more delicate sense of artistic figures and forms, a less eloquent style would have saved Calvin from falling into the traps of his own rhetoric, in which ideas that are apparently clear hide their poverty behind high-flown sentences.[66]

Friedrich Heer advanced a modified form of the anti-humanistic interpretation integrating some conclusions of the emerging humanistic interpretation as represented by Bohatec, his colleague in the University of Vienna. Heer paints the traditional gloomy picture of Calvin as a "lord of terror" and antagonist of fundamental humanistic values, but he concedes that the reformer is also a kind of humanist, although, as he puts it, "surprisingly so, and very much in his own way, but he is".[67] Heer's appraisal of Calvin as a humanist is based on a distinction between an open and a closed form of humanism. Open humanism is essentially derived from the tenets of the *philosophia perennis* encountered (as a concept) in Pico della Mirandola, that is to say, a universal synthesis of ideas from different schools of thought deriving from an imaginary symposium of all spirits of humanity, past and present. It embodies the ideals of freedom, tolerance and human dignity and is based on an optimistic attitude to life according to which the world and humanity are perceived as young and capable of development.[68] Rabelais, Cervantes, Castellio and Servetus are typical representatives of open humanism, which has found religious expression in mysticism, the only form of faith that is unconditionally open.[69] Heer calls open humanism the hidden Third Force in the age of confessionalisation, that is to say, a strand of thought which offered a mediating alternative but was submerged under the pressures generated by the religious polarisation.

Closed humanism is the opposite: it is pessimistic, eschatological, prescriptive, intolerant and it emphasises the depravity of human nature. Calvin is a typical representative of closed humanism;[70] he offers protection to religious humanism, but he

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63 Favre-Dorsaz, *Calvin et Loyola*, 423-424.
64 Favre-Dorsaz, *Calvin et Loyola*, 424.
65 Favre-Dorsaz, *Calvin et Loyola*, 424.
66 Favre-Dorsaz, *Calvin et Loyola*, 423-424.
67 F. Heer, *Die Dritte Kraft: Der europäische Humanismus zwischen den Fronten des konfessionellen Zeitalters* (Frankfurt a. M. 1959), 243-244.
68 Heer, *Offener Humanismus* (Bern 1962), 21-25, 35-36.
69 Heer, *Die Dritte Kraft*, 263-264, 275-281, 287-289.
70 Heer, *Die Dritte Kraft*, 257.

does so at the price of excluding the distinctive elements of its open form.[71] Thus his humanism is characterised by the closed form of its strictly controlled thought, which is manifest in the enforcement of doctrinal unity and in the limitation of intellectual inquiry. But Heer's principal contention is that "in Calvin the pessimism of antiquity re-emerges" and that "his humanism is essentially pessimism".[72] The important features of Calvin's humanism are his perfect grasp of rhetoric and his tendency to eclecticism. The reformer puts his humanist talent as a writer into the service of the church and incorporates more or less everything from the intellectual traditions of the West which can be fitted into the system of his theology. Calvin's attitude towards humanism is above all practical. He regards humanism as a helping hand for the Reformation and creates his own version of it adapted to the needs of the Reformation, contrasting sharply with the openness of traditional humanism.

There is no doubt that Calvin's teaching contains humanist elements, but these elements cannot easily develop because they are embedded in a tight doctrinal framework dominated by fear.[73] Thus Calvin's humanism is, paradoxically, inhumane. It contains, however, forces that are capable of breaking its original limits in the long term. By integrating humanist methods into his programme of education and by touching on humanist issues in his writings Calvin inadvertently becomes the founder of that liberal school of Calvinism which will turn to editing Castellio one century later. But in order to characterise Calvin's basic attitude towards humanism in the context of his own times, Heer proposes a modified version of Margaret Mann's formula, stating in the terms of his own theory that Calvin uses closed humanism to fight open humanism. The reformer hates the exponents of open humanism because they provoke him and because they refuse to collaborate in the enterprise of the Reformation. Heer concludes that it is the combination of humanist eloquence with inhumane doctrines which best illustrates the closeness of Calvin's humanism, exclaiming: "Purest Latin, wonderful French: ..... the formal mastery of humanism in the service of terror-making!"[74]

The Dutch theologian Cornelis Augustijn, one of the rare experts in both the Renaissance and the Reformation, is one of the most knowledgeable contemporary advocates of the anti-humanistic interpretation. He concedes that Calvin adopted humanist methods in his exegesis, but denies that this makes him a humanist. In Augustijn's view the main trait of humanism is the vision of the compatibility of Christianity and classical antiquity, that is to say, the unreserved recognition of pagan thought as given and controlled by God and as anticipating Christian wisdom. Calvin does not embrace humanism because he sees the world-view of the ancients as fundamentally irreconcilable

71 Heer, *Europäische Geistesgeschichte*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart 1957), 372-375.
72 Heer, *Die Dritte Kraft*, 250.
73 Heer, *Die Dritte Kraft*, 272.
74 Heer, *Die Dritte Kraft*, 286.

with the ideals of the Bible.[75] Furthermore, Calvin's negative anthropology, succintly expressed in the title of chapter three of book two of the *Institutes*, *Ex corrupta hominis natura nihil nisi damnabile prodire* (these words, as all other chapter headings, were added in 1559), endorses his fundamental opposition to humanism. Thus Augustijn speaks of "Calvin's negative attitude towards the basic convictions of the humanists", concluding that "to call him a humanist is to ignore the essence and core of humanism".[76]

Today the anti-humanistic interpretation receives strong support from sociologists. We may take as an example John Carroll, who has recently restated the view that the Reformation, and especially the Calvinistic Reformation, was fundamentally opposed to the Renaissance.[77] According to Carroll Luther and Calvin forged Protestant theology in an "anti-humanist crucible", in which "fate and faith are fused together", which is to say, Luther and Calvin integrated the doctrines of the bondage of the will and of predestination with the principle of *sola fide* into the system of their theology against the philosophical trends of humanism. From this "anti-humanist crucible" a new kind of human being arose, the Puritan, who made a sharp contrast with the humanist ideal of "the virtuous man, the gentleman", for, as Carroll puts it, "Renaissance culture had no affinity with the new type of self-disciplined, guilt-hounded individual".[78] This does not mean, however, that the Reformation annihilated the individualist impulse of the Renaissance; rather, it contained this impulse within a tight doctrinal framework, but it did so at a certain price. Thus Calvin fashioned an alternative form of individualism against the Renaissance with his stress on the inner dimensions of the human being and the examination of conscience: Puritan individualism.

Recently the historian Denis Crouzet has lent fresh support to the anti-humanistic interpretation continuing the French tradition with a more moderate argumentation. Crouzet acknowledges the difficulties involved in defining the notion of humanism, endorsing the ambiguities associated with the concept, and his theory centres on that very fact. "Humanism does not propose a coherent system in a logical way" and is "the contrary of a universe of homogeneous thought", but it is based on "the mechanisms of a perpetual destructuralisation, of a perpetual critical advancement" moving towards the goal of the perfection of the individual.[79] Erasmus embodies all those aspirations, being "the intellectual of the metamorphoses of the self" (symbolised by the figure of Proteus) for whom "disjunction" represents a fundamental feature of the condition of the human mind from which a dialectic process of self-realisation starts, accommodating the tensions and

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75 Cf. C. Augustijn, "Calvin und der Humanismus" in W. H. Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Servus Christi* (Budapest 1988), 127-142.

76 Augustijn, "Calvin und der Humanismus", 140.

77 Cf. J. Carroll, *Humanism* (London 1993), chapter 4: "The Great Counter-Renaissance of Luther and Calvin", 47-63.

78 Carroll, *Humanism*, 61

79 D. Crouzet, *Jean Calvin* (Paris 2000), 65.

contradictions inherent in human beings and moving towards an equilibrium of opposite forces.[80] Calvin discards the whole Erasmian philosophy of self-realisation, and in his Reformation the humanistic notions of "disjunction" and metamorphosis "are rejected as a condition and aim of human existence".[81] The hypothesis that Calvin oscillated between humanism and fideism is erroneous, for already in the *Seneca Commentary* there are traits foreshadowing the reformer's negation of the Protean conception of "perpetual destructuralisation".[82] Crouzet endorses Jeanneret's thesis that the Protean sense of self-identification was dismissed in Calvinism.[83] It is possible that Calvin was attracted by humanism for a certain time in his youth, but when he turned reformer he would only remember humanism as "the impiety of mixed thought" improperly fusing the sacred with the profane in a bold attempt at eclectic synthesis.[84] Thus Crouzet suggests that "the Calvinian dream is to put an end to the time of humanist hermeneutics",[85] concluding that by virtue of Calvin's opposition to the humanist attitude of "indetermination", "Calvinism was one of the first expressions of the *Counter-Renaissance*".[86] The humanists themselves have become, "in the eyes of Calvin, enemies who should be dealt with without hesitation".[87]

Apart from the anti-humanistic interpretation of Calvin there were also what may be called non-humanistic and scholastic interpretations. Those interpretations share most of the basic anti-humanistic conclusions but they are based on different preliminary assumptions and adduce different arguments. Let us first consider the non-humanistic interpretation. Its advocates have mainly been theologians who, while agreeing with the basic anti-humanistic proposition that Calvin is fundamentally not a humanist, would not see him primarily as hostile to humanism, but rather as reserved or indifferent. They have asserted that Calvin and humanism are essentially different things, maintaining that the reformer was not affected in a significant way by the humanist movement, from which he kept aloof. The problem with non-humanistic interpretations is that they often do not present a clear and systematic argument since the authors start from the basic assumption that Calvin was not a humanist.

At the end of the nineteenth century Émile Doumergue asserted in the first volume of his monumental Calvin biography that

> In reality the commentary on *De clementia* proves that our young and brilliant humanist is not only a man of modern times, nor even a man in the plain sense of the word: he is an Augustinian. Now Augustinianism is the contrary of humanism. Ask Erasmus, or rather Luther, whose successor is developing and will soon reveal

80 Crouzet, *Jean Calvin*, 68.
81 Crouzet, *Jean Calvin*, 69.
82 Crouzet, *Jean Calvin*, 81.
83 Crouzet, *Jean Calvin*, 69.
84 Crouzet, *Jean Calvin*, 70.
85 Crouzet, *Jean Calvin*, 70-71.
86 Crouzet, *Jean Calvin*, 73.
87 Crouzet, *Jean Calvin*, 71.

himself.[88]

In a short study on the relation of Calvin to Lefèvre d'Étaples' thought, Hermann Dörries argued that the affinities between the work of the Protestant reformer and that of the evangelical humanist "are not sufficient to infer a dependence of Calvin on Lefèvre".[89] For Wilhelm Niesel there was not much to be said about the topic; he had little doubt that Calvin rejected humanism as a whole and stated his view in a brief article[90] before he wrote his important book on Calvin's theology, in which one finds no word about the role of humanism.[91] Critics have pointed out that by rejecting categorically natural theology in Calvin Karl Barth and his followers created the impression that humanism played no substantial role in Calvin's work.[92] Doede Nauta conceded that humanism in its association with French evangelicism constituted an important influence on Calvin's intellectual development, but underlined that the mature Calvin came to oppose any close alliance of the Reformation with humanism because he anticipated that humanist tendencies would undermine faith and drive it apart from knowledge.[93] The positive links which remained between Calvin and humanism were the emphasis on good education and the fostering of a practical and active attitude to life.[94] Calvin integrated the humanistic disciplines into the curriculum of the Geneva Academy, but the classics were strictly subordinated to the study of Biblical theology.[95]

John T. McNeill, having supervised Quirinus Breen's doctoral thesis on Calvin and humanism,[96] acknowledged the relevance of the question. He concedes that it is not wrong to say that Calvin was "a humanist man of letters who after conversion made the Bible his literary study", but he points out that it is truer to say that humanism was eclipsed by the conversion and that it does not account for much in Calvin the reformer.[97] According to McNeill the natural thing for a religious renovator of the sixteenth century is to "graduate", as he puts it, from humanism to the Reformation, abandoning the vague humanist ideas of church reform and moving to something more concrete.[98] Thus what happened when Calvin underwent conversion was that "literary delight gave place to

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88 É. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, vol. 1 (Lausanne 1899), 222.

89 H. Dörries, "Calvin und Lefèvre" in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 44 (1925), 577. Cf. also introduction, p. 14, p. 15 n. 81.

90 W. Niesel, "Calvins Ablehnung des Humanismus" in *Reformierte Kirchenzeitung* 80 (1930), 282-284.

91 Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (London 1956) translated from *Die Theologie Calvins* (Munich 1938). Niesel's Calvin bibliography of 1961, however, does contain a section on humanism (cf. introduction, p. 13 n. 73).

92 Cf. B. Hall, "The Calvin Legend" in G. E. Duffield (ed.), *John Calvin* (Appleford, Abingdon 1966), 4-5.

93 D. Nauta, "Standpunt van Luther en Calvijn tegenover het humanisme" in J. Waterink et. al. (eds.), *Cultuurgeschiedenis van het Christendom*, vol. 3, *Het Christendom in de branding* (Amsterdam 1950), 286.

94 Nauta, "Standpunt van Luther en Calvijn tegenover het humanisme", 278-282.

95 Nauta, "Standpunt van Luther en Calvijn tegenover het humanisme", 275-276.

96 Cf. above, p. 43 (n. 11). Breen's study is discussed below, pp. 61-64.

97 J. T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York 1954), 203.

98 McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 53-54.

heartfelt conviction".[99] As far as stylistic mastery and rhetoric refinement are concerned, however, McNeill accepts the view of Calvin as a life-long humanist, although not without clear negative side-effects, such as an excessive tendency to invective.[100] As far as Calvin's humanistically shaped literary ability is concerned, McNeill suggests that Cordier played a decisive role, affirming that the latter's teaching was "brief ..... but ..... sufficient to impart to his pupil the spirit of humanism at its best", and concluding that "it was perhaps due largely to Cordier that Calvin ..... acquired that unfailing sense of style and diction that marks all his writings".[101]

The most prominent present-day exponents of the non-humanistic interpretation are Thomas Parker and Wilhelm Neuser, both of whom observe a kind of "learned silence" on the topic of Calvin and humanism similar to that of the first part of the twentieth century. In Parker's opinion Calvin was never a humanist and humanism did not play a significant positive role in the reformer's life and work. His chief argument is that the conversion preceded the *Seneca Commentary* and that therefore Calvin never practised humanism with full inner commitment, but merely used it as a means to start a career as an academic jurist, for which, as Parker puts it, "the aspirant must show his quality by learned works on his subject".[102] Thus the young Calvin was not a real humanist and his *Seneca Commentary* was mainly a demonstration of ability and a publication for personal advancement, conforming to the fashion of the times. Parker concedes that Calvin "shows himself a true child of the new learning" in that he uses the humanist methods of textual interpretation, but he emphasises that this is nothing unusual and does not make Calvin a humanist.[103] Calvin did not have any genuine attachment to humanism, as can also be inferred from biographical facts like his unenthusiastic attitude towards the Italian law professor Andrea Alciatus.[104]

Parker has not dedicated himself to the task of discussing critically the emerging humanistic interpretation. On the contrary, he has sharply attacked one of its principal advocates, Quirinus Breen.[105] Regarding the latter's claim that Alciatus exerted a strong influence over Calvin the law student, Parker exclaimed that "such a gush as 'Nectar to Calvin it must have been, who thus discovered a new world, a world that was beautiful' had better been left unuttered".[106] Parker has analysed in detail Calvin's exegetical method and textual criticism,[107] but he has not made any effort at identifying its

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99 Calvin, *Institutes*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia 1961), 82 n. 1.
100 Calvin, *Institutes*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles, lxix, lxxi, and McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 231.
101 McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 98.
102 T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin* (London 1975), 31.
103 Parker, *John Calvin*, 31-32.
104 Parker, *John Calvin*, 24.
105 Breen's contributions are discussed below, pp. 61-64 and 68-69.
106 Parker, *John Calvin*, 24. The reference is to Breen, *John Calvin*, 46.
107 Cf. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (London 1971) and *Calvin's Old Testament*

humanistic aspects.[108] This attitude has provoked harsh reactions from scholars - mainly historians - who have attempted to advance research on humanism in Calvin. Basil Hall's criticism of Parker's biography may illustrate the tensions surrounding the issue of humanism in Calvin studies:

> Humanism, Christian or biblical, is a word Parker is very sparing with and will not apply to Calvin. The most he will allow is that Calvin studied Greek because he wished to read the New Testament in the original - not only is this a truism but it suggests that Calvin's attitude to Greek learning was that of a modern student in a fundamentalist seminary - and that he wrote a commentary on one of Seneca's works because he was a lawyer planning a career by startling the world with a learned work on a classical theme, not forgetting that Seneca was regarded by sixteenth-century men as having Christian sympathies (awareness of these sympathies is, however, not apparent in Calvin's commentary). In view of the literature on Calvin as a humanist scholar and the use of humanist scholarship by Calvin, this attitude of Parker's is neither in itself historically true, nor should it be permissible in what claims to be an objective account of Calvin's life.[109]

Wilhelm Neuser has never concerned himself with examining in detail the reformer's connections with humanism. In his concise biography of Calvin Neuser concedes that the reformer was influenced in his youth by French religious humanism, above all by Budé, but he points out that Calvin later came to oppose the evangelical humanists on account of their hostility to the Reformation. If Calvin showed a certain receptiveness for religiously oriented humanism, it is clear that he always rejected the more secular forms of humanism, which propagated the new individualism emerging from Italy. This humanist individualism, which was based on "a consciousness of human autonomy",[110] was intolerable to Calvin as it appeared to him to contain a dangerous antinomianism which manifested itself in the public expression of doubts about fundamental points of Christian orthodoxy such as whether the divine law is binding or not. Neuser occasionally touches on issues that in the context of the sixteenth century must be considered humanist, but never elucidates them in terms of the individual disciplines of Renaissance humanism, thus seemingly ignoring the growing recognition of some aspects of the humanistic interpretation in recent times. In his article on Calvin's understanding of the Bible, Neuser makes several points which would evidently call for an explanation with reference to humanism, such as: "there are in Calvin's work points of departure for a historical-critical exegesis of the Bible", "the problem of authorship is taken seriously", "there are numerous critical remarks concerning the text", or "there are notes of a literary-critical character",[111] but these statements remain without comment on the more obvious connections with humanist scholarship in the Renaissance.

Commentaries (Edinburgh 1986).

108 Compare Parker's editions of Calvin's *Commentary on Romans* (Leiden 1981 and Geneva 1999).

109 B. Hall, "From Biblical Humanism to Calvinist Orthodoxy" in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 (1980), 337.

110 W. H. Neuser, *Calvin* (Berlin 1971), 9.

111 Neuser, "Calvins Verständnis der Heiligen Schrift" in Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, 66.

As far as the scholastic interpretations of Calvin are concerned, it is not our task to consider them in detail. We limit ourselves to sketching their chief affirmations and, more importantly, to establishing their implications for assessing Calvin's attitude towards humanism. The advocates of those interpretations essentially maintain that medieval scholasticism in its various types constitutes the most decisive intellectual influence on Calvin, overshadowing that of humanism while not necessarily excluding it completely. The most important representative of this view in the first half of this century was Pierre Imbart de la Tour. According to him Calvin is first and foremost "a disciple of scholasticism"[112] who uses dialectic as the main instrument in the construction of his doctrine and shows a preference for analytical proceeding as well as syllogistic reasoning. Imbart applied Margaret Mann's formula "Calvin uses humanism to fight humanism" to scholasticism, contending that Calvin uses scholasticism to fight scholasticism: "He [Calvin] is a perfect "schoolman", and it is to destroy the doctrinal edifice which the School has built up that he employs the arms which the School itself has laid into his hands".[113]

Calvin, however, is not only a schoolman, but also a legist insofar as he is a "man of rules" and a "theologian of the law".[114] His legal studies reinforced the scholastic education and did not imply any substantial change in method. Calvin acquired a wide knowledge of classical culture on which he constantly enlarged during his whole life, but on the whole he remains strongly reserved and does not share the general fondness of his contemporaries for this culture, accepting it only in a very limited way as a reservoir of human knowledge for the eclectic.[115] Thus Calvin is "lettered", but not "a man of letters",[116] although he is clearly not a detractor of antiquity. He never worships the beauty of the human word and rejects classical philosophy in its essentials on the grounds that it offers no moral certainties and has no power to form the individual for life. Already in his *Seneca Commentary* Calvin points to the incapacity of the Greek and Roman thinkers to comprehend the nature of evil in humanity. Classical culture rests on a profound error, namely the belief in the natural goodness of human beings and the concomitant ignorance of the true scope of human depravity. Imbart de la Tour emphasises that from the very start, that is to say, before his conversion, "Calvin sketches out this irreducible antithesis between Christianity and the Renaissance which will later stand out in sharp relief in his religious thought".[117] The only aspect of humanism which Calvin readily embraces is the political philosophy of classical antiquity, that is to say, a realistic theory of social organisation based on the recognition of the prime importance of the law. Apart from this,

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112 P. Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, *Calvin et l'Institution chrétienne* (Paris 1935), 10.

113 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 185.

114 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 13.

115 "il n'accepte pas que sous bénéfice d'inventaire cette culture dont son siècle est si profondément épris"; Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 15.

116 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 15.

117 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 18.

what is left of Calvin's humanistic studies is "a marked taste for moral problems".[118]

The principal advocate of the scholastic interpretation in the second half of this century has been Karl Reuter, who advanced a detailed theory of Calvin's nominalist dependence in 1963, revised in 1981.[119] Reuter's basic contention was that Calvin received a "new conception of anti-Pelagian and Scotist theology and a renewed Augustinianism" from John Major in Montaigu and that this conception essentially shaped his theology.[120] The thesis of a late medieval intellectual influence on Calvin was accepted as fundamentally correct, but Reuter was criticised for over-estimating the extent of this influence and for linking it specifically to the person of John Major and the institution of Montaigu. Alistair E. McGrath has proposed modifying Reuter's thesis by shifting the emphasis from the *via moderna* to the *via Augustiniana moderna* (a late medieval type of academic Augustinianism), but his suggestions remain very general and are supported more by what he calls "circumstantial evidence"[121] than hard documentary proofs. According to McGrath "all ..... [the] foundational features of the modern Augustinian school are faithfully echoed in the writings of Calvin"; they are:

> 1 A strict epistemological 'nominalism' or 'terminism'.
>
> 2 A voluntarist, as opposed to intellectualist, understanding of the grounds of human merit, and also of the merits of Jesus Christ.
>
> 3 The extensive use of the writings of Augustine, particularly his anti-Pelagian works, which concentrate upon the doctrine of grace.
>
> 4 A strongly pessimistic view of original sin, with the Fall being identified as a watershed in the history of human salvation.
>
> 5 A strong emphasis upon the priority of God in the salvation of humanity.
>
> 6 A radical doctrine of absolute double predestination.
>
> 7 A rejection of the role of created habits of grace in justification or merit (these were seen as necessary intermediates by earlier medieval writers).[122]

Even though McGrath's scholastic interpretation is somewhat vague, it cannot be dismissed off-hand. The subject of Calvin and scholasticism is badly researched; efforts at studying Calvin's relation to medieval thought have perhaps focused too much on the figure of St. Bernard.[123] The few studies we possess suggest that the gap between Calvin and nominalism on the one hand, and scholasticism on the other hand, is perhaps smaller than previously thought.[124] The author of the most recent analysis, Richard Muller, has

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118 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 20.

119 K. Reuter, *Das Grundverständnis der Theologie Calvins* (Neukirchen 1963) and *Vom Scholaren bis zum jungen Reformator* (Neukirchen 1981).

120 K. Reuter, *Das Grundverständnis der Theologie Calvins*, 21; quoted in A. E. McGrath, "John Calvin and Late Medieval Thought: A Study in Late Medieval Influences upon Calvin's Theological Development" in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 77 (1986), 66.

121 McGrath, "John Calvin and Late Medieval Thought", 78. The only concrete theological example is the *ratio meriti Christi*; cf. McGrath, "John Calvin and Late Medieval Thought", 73-77.

122 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford 1990), 45.

123 There are many publications on the topic of Calvin's relation to Bernard of Clairvaux, and we cannot list them all here. The most recent comprehensive analysis is A. N. S. Lane, *Calvin and Bernard of Clairvaux* (Princeton 1996).

124 Cf. Lane, "Calvin's Use of the Fathers and Medievals" in *Calvin Theological Journal* 16 (1981), 149-205; B. Cottret, "Pour une sémiotique de la Réforme: Le *Consensus Tigurinus* de Calvin" in *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 39 (1984), 265-285; A. Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin, and*

suggested restating the problem of Calvin and scholasticism in terms of "relation and disjunction".[125] Muller has argued that although Calvin fundamentally rejected the scholastic conception of the Christian religion, "his theology contained a measure of positive allusion to and indirect reliance on scholastic formulations".[126] The conclusion of Muller's study is that

> Calvin's overtly negative reaction to "scholastici" conveys only a small part of his relationship to medieval scholastic theology, its method, its themes, and its distinctions. Alongside the rejection, there is also appropriation, sometimes explicit, often unacknowledged.[127]

We may conclude our consideration of the scholastic interpretation with the observation that arguing for scholasticism in Calvin does not necessarily imply arguing against humanism in him. Humanism did not signify a total annihilation of the scholastic heritage, but aspects of scholasticism naturally lived on in the humanist tradition, as Kristeller has convincingly demonstrated.[128]

The humanistic interpretation of Calvin was established in the second half of the twentieth century, while its beginnings date back to the first half and can be attributed to the initiative of theologians. The year 1950 is a watershed in the history of the interpretation of Calvin and humanism: Bohatec's *Budé und Calvin* provided a solid foundation to the humanistic interpretation and Wendel's *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse* marks the point where historians procured a more widespread acceptance for the humanistic interpretation. Parallel to this change in Calvin studies there was a change in outlook concerning humanism. While the conceptions of humanism of the first half of the century had made it difficult to appreciate humanism in Calvin, the detailed researches which began to be published after World War II[129] have enabled us to discern more easily the connections between the Renaissance, humanism and the Reformation. These substantial advances in humanist studies have not directly affected Bohatec's and Wendel's research, but later Calvin scholars have readily made use of the new ideas and conceptions in their efforts to consolidate the humanistic interpretation.

Contemporary Protestant Thought: A Critique of Protestant Views on the Thought of Thomas Aquinas (Washington 1985); C. B. Kaiser, "Calvin's Understanding of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy" in R. V. Schnucker (ed.), *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin* (Kirksville 1988), 77-92; G. Zimmermann, "Die Allmacht des Schöpfers" in *Zwingliana* 17 (1988), 457-476; L. Brink, "Thomas en Calvijn tezamen ter communie" in *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 29 (1989), 232-249; H. Davis, *The Vigilant God: Providence in the Thought of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin and Barth* (New York 1992); J. Wawrykow, "John Calvin and Condign Merit" in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 83 (1992), 73-90.

125 R. A. Muller, "Scholasticism in Calvin: A Question of Relation and Disjunction" in Neuser / Armstrong (eds.), *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex*, 247-265.

126 Muller, "Scholasticism in Calvin", 263-264.

127 Muller, "Scholasticism in Calvin", 265.

128 Cf. e.g. P. O. Kristeller, *Medieval Aspects of Renaissance Learning*, 2nd ed. (New York 1992).

129 Cf. e.g. E. Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano: Filosofia e vita civile nel Rinascimento*, 1st Italian ed. (Bari 1952) (this book appeared first in German as *Der italienische Humanismus* (Bern 1947)) and *Medioevo e Rinascimento: Studi e ricerche*, 1st ed. (Bari 1954); Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance" (1944) and "The Humanist Movement" (1954-55) in the author's *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York 1979), and "Philosophy of Man in the Italian Renaissance" in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters [I]* (Rome 1956).

The Austrian pastor Johannes Neuenhaus was the first to dedicate a short study to the positive links between Calvin and humanism. This study appeared under the editorship of Josef Bohatec and was published in 1909 on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Calvin's birth.[130] This first exploratory attempt at highlighting humanistic elements in Calvin was based, however, mainly on secondary literature. Neuenhaus proposed a kind of revisionist thesis against the dominant anti- and non-humanistic interpretations, affirming that Calvin remained a humanist throughout his whole life. Neuenhaus wrote: "this is the general judgement[:] ..... that the humanist perished in the reformer. But it would be more correct to say: continued in the reformer. For the latter never ceased to be a humanist".[131]

Positive connections between Calvin and humanism are established mainly on the level of form. Calvin writes and preaches in the eloquent style of a humanist, he adopts the grammatical-historical method in exegesis and he uses the humanistic disciplines in education. The main doctrines of Calvin's theology, however, make a sharp contrast with the chief ideas of humanism. Nevertheless, beside this contrast there exists a hidden affinity with humanism, manifest in the fact that Calvin's theology becomes "scientific" in the modern sense of the word. Within the limits set by the doctrines of human depravity and Biblical authority, Calvin makes extensive use of the faculty of reason and the methods of the newly discovered sciences. He tends to explain every doctrine, once set out on Biblical ground, by means of logical thinking and empirical verification, adducing the truths of classical philosophy as common sense support. In this sense, the *Institutes* are the first "scientific" compilation of Christian dogmatics - Melanchthon's *Loci communes* and Zwingli's *De vera et falsa religione* are still dominated by the scholastic method - and Calvin can therefore be called "the academic representative of pious humanism".[132] The reborn sciences can be an instrument in exegesis and education, but the "Greek spirit"[133] of humanism must recede in favour of the principles of the Christian faith. Thus humanism conditioned Calvin by forming perceptions, not convictions; it was not the fountain-head of his Reformation.

In 1931 Quirinus Breen presented the first detailed study of the influence of humanism on Calvin's intellectual development.[134] At the origin of this study was an open rebellion against the prevailing academic dogmatism in American Calvinism. Breen was a minister of the Christian Reformed Church, but decided to leave his post in 1924 after a controversy over the deposition of one of his professors in Calvin Theological Seminary. He

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130 J. Neuenhaus, "Calvin als Humanist" in J. Bohatec (ed.), *Calvinstudien*, 1-26.

131 The German word-play "untergegangen im Reformator ..... übergegangen in den Reformator" cannot be rendered in English; Neuenhaus, "Calvin als Humanist", 12.

132 Neuenhaus, "Calvin als Humanist", 26.

133 Neuenhaus, "Calvin als Humanist", 12.

134 Cf. above, p. 43 (n. 11).

joined the Presbyterian church in 1926 and became a historian under the instruction of John T. McNeill, embarking on the project of a Ph.D. dissertation on the impact of humanism on Calvin.[135] Breen's research was based on the method prevalent at the Chicago Divinity School, which focused on the analysis of environmental factors in the development of the individual. Thus the major part of Breen's thesis is devoted to drawing a detailed historical background to Calvin's student years in which the decisive humanist influences shaping Calvin's mind are highlighted. Breen states in his preface that "the study of his [Calvin's] early life reveals a cross-section in miniature of French humanism as such".[136] The study did not make an immediate impact on Calvin scholarship. Henri Hauser, whose work on the subject had been omitted from consideration by Breen,[137] somewhat condescendingly called it a "travail estimable", but he welcomed the choice of topic and predicted the potential of this thesis to dismantle preconceived ideas about Calvin in the country where "Calvinism possesses the widest and even most profound influence, and where the true face of John Calvin is perhaps worst known".[138] When the book was reprinted in 1968 it was acknowledged as "a much admired study and still the only book in English on the subject".[139] Today the admiration may have waned, but it remains "still the only book in English on the subject". In retrospect we can say that the chief merit of Breen's study lies in the approach it proposes, namely to situate the figure of Calvin in the historical and intellectual context of Renaissance humanism - something which has increasingly fascinated scholars in recent times.

The main argument of Breen's thesis is that humanism was the most prominent and pervasive influence on Calvin's intellectual development and decisively shaped his mental attitude for life. The young Calvin "is wholly identified with ..... French humanism";[140] at the time of his *Seneca Commentary* he is a "thorough" and "seasoned humanist".[141] The conversion is interpreted as an abandonment of purely intellectual concerns in favour of a dedication to practical issues.[142] Breen holds that humanism played an active part in Calvin's conversion, arguing that "the inner logic of his humanism was leading him to criticising the foundations of the papal church".[143] The conversion did not signify a break with humanism; on the contrary, he "as a reformer developed a scriptural defense of humanism".[144] Since Calvin converted relatively late, his "mental 'set'",[145] as Breen calls

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135 Cf. N. P. Ross in Breen, *Christianity and Humanism* (Grand Rapids 1968), xiii.
136 Breen, *John Calvin*, vii-viii.
137 Breen lists Hauser's *Études sur la Réforme française* (Paris 1909), but he does not discuss Hauser's arguments in his thesis.
138 Hauser in *Revue historique* 170 (1932), 475 (book review).
139 Ross in Breen, *Christianity and Humanism*, xiii.
140 Breen, *John Calvin*, vii-viii.
141 Breen, *John Calvin*, 141, 146.
142 Cf. Breen, *John Calvin*, viii.
143 Breen, *John Calvin*, 91.
144 Breen, *John Calvin*, 108.
145 Breen, *John Calvin*, 146.

it, remained fundamentally that of a humanist who "never had got away from his humanistic inheritance".[146] "The opinion that Calvin was largely scholastic in his method finds no support from a fair study of his writings".[147]

Breen examines what he calls "the *precipitate* of humanism in Calvin the reformer."[148] First, he followed the humanist appeal to reason, common sense and good taste in the interpretation of the Bible, "thus arriving at independent judgements"[149] in humanist fashion. In general he prefers the natural to the allegorical sense, but his thorough familiarity with the principles of rhetoric enables him to advocate a figurative interpretation of the Bible against tradition in decisive cases, such as the eucharistic controversy. Second, Calvin explains the Bible in its historical context according to the method employed by Valla, Erasmus and Budé, enhancing the importance of "accommodation", according to which the scriptural messages must be understood as adapted to the specific conditions of the culture to which they are addressed.[150] Further, Calvin endorsed the basic principles of humanist education in his organisation of the Geneva Academy. His moderately appreciative attitude towards classical philosophy was essentially influenced by Budé's *De transitu* and becomes more positive as he develops his doctrine of common grace.

Finally, Breen argues that on a more abstract level Calvin can be considered an inadvertent advocate of humanistic rationalism in religion: "he has been one of the factors in promoting the rationalism that in two centuries would rise to power in the churches".[151] Calvin can be seen as allocating room to the humanist ideal of "libre examen" in the practice of church history, Bible study and political thought, although it has to be added "that Calvin made an important qualification of this principle ..... namely that this freedom was not to be exercised by all men regardless of their beliefs".[152] According to Breen humanism is chiefly characterised by a concern for this world, the revival of classical antiquity, the promotion of individualism and the advocacy of "libre examen". The main humanists Breen refers to are Valla, Erasmus and Budé. The Reformation is "both the child and the protector of humanism"[153] and "largely a defence of the new age that the Renaissance had ushered in",[154] but it is at the same time "more than a mere continuation of humanism"[155] in that it reacts to certain humanist principles, namely by narrowing

146 Breen, *John Calvin*, 150.
147 Breen, *John Calvin*, 147.
148 Breen, *John Calvin*, 146 (italics added).
149 Breen, *John Calvin*, 148.
150 Breen, *John Calvin*, 150-154.
151 Breen, *John Calvin*, 153.
152 Breen, *John Calvin*, 158. Breen does not consider Hauser's essay "De l'humanisme et de la Réforme en France" (discussed above, pp. 46-47) when dealing with the issue of "libre examen", an issue on which Hauser took a view opposed to Breen's. Cf. previous page (n. 137).
153 Breen, *John Calvin*, vii.
154 Breen, *John Calvin*, 108.
155 Breen, *John Calvin*, vii.

down the scope of humanist individualism and free-thinking.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s Josef Bohatec wrote the only in-depth study to date on the attitude of Calvin the reformer towards humanism.[156] In almost ten years of painstaking work Bohatec compiled a tome of encyclopaedic dimensions, which has been rated as a milestone in Calvin research.[157] In almost 500 densely packed pages Bohatec systematically unfolds a humanistic argument for Calvin drawing on a vast amount of hitherto neglected documentary evidence. The book soon came to be regarded as the definitive study and foundation of the humanistic interpretation of Calvin, which has been growing ever since. The major part of the primary material which today constitutes the standard repertoire of the humanistic interpretation of Calvin goes back to the tireless efforts of Professor Bohatec, whose study is a true gold mine of source quotations. If it has not elicited much explicit response, this is because it reads like a Kantian treatise - prompting critics to air their frustration "that a work so very learned should be so very dull".[158]

Bohatec's main thesis is that Calvin the reformer had a fundamentally positive attitude towards humanism and that he can be considered as an authentic representative of Christian humanism. On the basis of detailed analysis of Calvin's thought Bohatec has drawn a more differentiated picture of Calvin, which shows that the connections between the reformer and humanism are more extensive than previously assumed, not only with regard to aspects of form, but also of substance. Bohatec studies Calvin's attitude towards humanism mainly by comparison with Budé, which reveals both Budé and Calvin as convinced Christian humanists who principally aim at ridding humanism of pagan, or "hellenistic" elements. But while Budé simply delimits his Christian philosophy against the pagan parts of humanism, Calvin is more assertive: he takes the offensive and attacks those contemporary French humanists who in his opinion remain attached to "hellenistic" ideals - sometimes including Budé himself.[159] Calvin's criticism, however, should not obscure the fact that he borrows from humanism - mainly Budé - all those elements which seem genuinely Christian or to possess significant Christian relevance, incorporating them into his doctrinal system. The more Calvin turns against "hellenistic" humanism on the one hand, the more he turns towards the Christian humanism of Budé and Erasmus on the other hand.[160]

Bohatec's list of Calvin's humanistic features is so detailed that we can only highlight

156 Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin* (Graz 1950).
157 Wendel was of the opinion that with this study Bohatec "renouvelle entièrement le sujet"; F. Wendel in *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 31 (1951), 456 (book review).
158 E. G. Rupp in *English Historical Review* 66 (1951), 620 (book review).
159 Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, v.
160 Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 240.

the most important points. Calvin appreciates the humanistic disciplines as a preparation for higher education, especially in theology. Bohatec links Calvin to Budé in this respect, asserting that to the reformer "the human sciences have a high propedeutic value, since they convey the formal education to man and so refine him that he can stand as a true man".[161] Calvin attaches particular importance to grammar, rhetoric and to knowledge of languages: "we can see Calvin the humanist above all when he stipulates comprehensive knowledge of the old languages".[162] In theology the reformer's doctrine of God is shaped with reference to an example from Roman Law. Equally, Calvin uses terms and methods of Roman Law in his attempts at reconciling natural and divine law. In his political theory he is substantially indebted to classical thought. And contrary to what one would expect the connections with humanism are also numerous in ethics, although it has to be noted that contrasts remain significant. Calvin follows Luther against the humanists in his rejection of free will, tying the principle of "libre examen" to the authority of the Bible. He equally follows Luther in his firm assertion of the principle of monergism, defining the highest good not anthropocentrically as virtue but theocentrically as union with God and thus arriving at a notion of freedom as freedom in faith under the law of God. Calvin also shows strong opposition to humanism in his criticism of the passion for glory and the concomitant conception of immortality in earthly terms. But despite these divergences Calvin can be said to have been a humanist. Bohatec summarises this assertion as follows:

> Calvin was a humanist not only because he continued, corrected and supplemented the fundamental ideas of the Christian humanists in his appreciation of the liberal arts and sciences, but also because he turned back directly to antiquity and its sources attempting to assimilate, as far as possible, the ideas, methods and fundamental notions of the ancients to the contents of Christian thought, particularly in his ethics and in his political theory.[163]

Bohatec concludes that Calvin is a Christian humanist who maintains a critical debate with humanism around three principal issues: God, immortality and freedom. Bohatec concedes that these very issues had been highlighted as illustrating Calvin's break with humanism by Henri Hauser, but he remarks that the latter's interpretation "needs incisive correction".[164] He criticises Hauser for defining humanism too narrowly by focusing on the pagan elements as represented by "the radical libertinistic circles in Paris",[165] thus marginalising the ideals of the Christian humanists. His "incisive correction" of Hauser consists in separating pagan from Christian humanism and in defining the latter almost exclusively from the works of Calvin.[166] Bohatec conducts his inquiry from the point of view of Calvin's theology, taking its doctrines as the guidelines of his analysis. There is no serious antinomy between the humanist principle of "libre

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161 Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 257.
162 Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 304-305.
163 Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 472.
164 Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 477. Note that, unlike Breen, Bohatec engages in a critical dialogue with Hauser. Cf. above, p. 62 (n. 137), p. 63 n. 152.
165 Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 478.
166 Cf. Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, v; cf. also introduction, p. 34.

examen" and Calvin's outlook, provided one understands freedom according to Calvin as obedience to the law and subordination to the authority of the Bible, and not according to the free-thinking humanists as the unlimited autonomy of individuals to legislate for themselves. Having labelled Hauser as an ideological follower of Rabelais and Des Périers, Bohatec identifies himself with Calvin's judgement that the free-thinking French humanists of the sixteenth century were hidden atheists threatening true Christianity. Thus the reformer's attitude towards humanism has to be understood above all in terms of his existential fear for the survival of Protestantism.

Basil Hall has been the main advocate of the humanistic interpretation in England, where he promulgated and critically reviewed the theories of Breen and Bohatec. Drawing attention to the fact that humanism in Calvin was obscured by his successors, who had shifted the emphasis from humanism to Aristotelianism in founding Protestant scholasticism,[167] Hall defended the view of Calvin as a life-long humanist by calling for a return to reading him in the original. He maintained that the reformer pursued "with concentrated energy" the humanist ideals acquired in his youth, namely the refinement of Latin, the study of Greek and Hebrew, and the attainment of universal learning in order to become "an Abysse, a bottomless pit of knowledge" according to Rabelais' metaphor.[168] The young Calvin disliked "the egotism and display"[169] of Italian humanism as he encountered it in Alciatus and embraced, instead, a moralistic kind of humanism similar to that of Budé, which centres on the renewal of Biblical and legal studies. There is a "moral emphasis ..... at the core of Calvin's humanism, ... which overweighs his purely literary sensibility",[170] and stays with the reformer as a fundamental force conditioning his thought and action.

After the conversion "the humanist and moralist ..... recede - though they never disappear - before the preacher of the Word"[171] and the mature Calvin has become a "humanist tamed to a theologian,"[172] that is, someone who adopts the methods of Biblical humanism, retaining "something of its purposes"[173] but rejecting completely the pagan elements of humanism. While to the young Calvin humanism was a profession, to the reformer it has become an instrument in the renewal of church and doctrine, as well as in the criticism of humanist self-complacency.[174] Hall's judgement is that Calvin the reformer is a humanist essentially by virtue of his ardour for the cause of morals and that this

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167 Hall, "Calvin Against the Calvinists" in Duffield (ed.), *John Calvin*, 25-26.
168 Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 8-9.
169 Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 12.
170 Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 13.
171 Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 17.
172 Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 15.
173 Hall, "Calvin and Biblical Humanism", 196.
174 "Before his conversion, a moralistic humanism had been for Calvin an end; now it was to become a means to aid him in his life's work, and even at times a means to combat humanism in those who continued to follow it as an end in itself"; Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 15.

ardour is fused with the lawyer's sense of order into a reformatory zeal for moralistic legislating:

> Calvin was a humanist with a passion for morality, a lawyer with a passion for order, in whom both elements were ... transmuted by theological conviction into obedience to God whose moral order is declared in Scripture.[175]

Hall argues that Calvin's humanism is more difficult to define than his theology because it elicited less critical reaction. It has to be recognised that Calvin's affinities with humanism lie on the level of basic presuppositions rather than the consequences one may draw from them. "When Calvin turned from humanism to theology, what he set aside was the conclusions drawn by his fellow-humanists rather than their fundamental assumptions".[176]

Calvin's humanism is manifest chiefly in his linguistic skills, his approach to exegesis and his concern for education. Calvin possesses "an extraordinary mastery of language"[177] and refinement of style, the origins of which must be attributed to his humanistic studies. His way of interpreting the Bible is substantially inspired by the humanist method as developed by Erasmus. Calvin prefers the literal and grammatical sense and the historical interpretation to allegorisation, eliminating "obscure learning" in favour of arriving at "a plain and direct meaning"[178]; he insists on explaining Bible passages in their context; he avoids glosses and seeks the original Greek and Hebrew versions; and he draws on a wide range of classical, patristic and contemporary authors.[179] Further, Calvin's exegesis is influenced specifically by the approach of French legal humanism in that he follows the ideal of brevity and clarity and in that he adopts the principle of explaining the text from the perspective of the author's mind.[180] The humanist ideals of education are embodied visibly in the Geneva Academy, where "langues et sciences humaines" (Hall does not translate here)[181] are taught, in particular Greek and Hebrew. Moreover, Calvin's Geneva was a haven for humanists, and so "many humanist scholars sought a home in Geneva".[182] Finally, Calvin's orthodoxy concerning the Biblical canon does not signify a departure from humanism, since, as Hall explains, the kind of humanism with which Calvin was acquainted - Biblical humanism - only intended to establish historically more accurate texts, not to evaluate their authenticity. Biblical humanism, according to Hall, consists of three main features: trilingual scholarship, a fresh exegesis on the basis of this scholarship and the moral aspiration of renewing religious life.

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175 Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 28.
176 Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 33.
177 Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 33.
178 Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 34.
179 Hall, "Calvin and Biblical Humanism", 206.
180 Hall, "John Calvin, the Jurisconsults and the *Ius Civile*", 215.
181 Cf. introduction, p. 19 (n. 100) and chapter 6, p. 286 n. 64.
182 Hall, *John Calvin: Humanist and Theologian*, 34. Hall mentions Cordier, Bèze and Whittingham.

Simultaneously with Hall's studies, Breen came to re-examine the problem of Calvin and humanism. In two contributions he considered the issue anew in the light of the advances made in research since 1931, though his book was reprinted without changes in 1968.[183] Following Bohatec's interpretation of Calvin and adopting a Kristellerian view of humanism as rhetoric rather than philosophy, Breen characterised the reformer as a humanist by situating him in the tradition of Renaissance rhetoric, describing him "as a child of his humanistic age and training".[184] According to Breen, Calvin practised a "dynamic Ciceronianism", sharing the humanist ideal of the fusion of wisdom and eloquence.[185] "As a young scholar he can as it were be thought of as a rhetor in search of a subject matter", while as a reformer "he is an orator bent on persuading men to accept the Protestant way of faith and life as he sees it".[186] Breen stressed the function of the *Institutes* as "deliberative discourse" aiming at persuading the common man of the reformed doctrine. He further pointed to Calvin's use of rhetorical instead of syllogistic logic, to the clarity of the reformer's style and to the metaphors in his language, among which the figure of the *labyrinth* is identified as particularly prominent.[187]

Acknowledging subsequently the relevance of a philosophical interpretation of humanism alongside a rhetorical one, Breen suggested distinguishing between two types of humanism: first, "general humanism" embracing the philosophical aspects of the phenomenon and second, "particular humanism" embracing its philological, rhetorical and historical aspects.[188] In this double approach, which represents perhaps one of the most useful compromises in the debate on humanism and its relation to the Reformation, Calvin's attitude towards humanism is examined according to the two most prominent conceptions of humanism. As far as general humanism is concerned, Breen refers to the research of Battenhouse and Trinkaus[189] and concentrates on the influence of Renaissance Platonism, concluding that "it was the spirit of the philosophical autonomy manifested in Pico ..... that made possible his [Calvin's] conversion".[190] However, Calvin was not a Platonist, although he was "not untouched" by Neoplatonism.[191] As far as particular humanism is concerned, Breen argues in a general way that "Calvin defends the autonomy of secular learning",[192] concluding that the reformer "made a significant breakthrough for the good right of the Renaissance secularistic emphasis".[193]

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183 Breen, *John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism* (Hamden (Conn.) 1968).
184 Breen, "John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition", 128.
185 Breen, "John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition", 112-113.
186 Breen, "John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition", 113-114.
187 Breen, "John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition", 126-127. Compare this with Bouwsma's argument described below, p. 73.
188 Breen, "Humanism and the Reformation" in J. C. Brauer (ed.), *The Impact of the Church Upon Its Culture* (Chicago 1967), 147.
189 Cf. above, p. 42 n. 6 (beginning).
190 Breen, "Humanism and the Reformation", 157.
191 Breen, "Humanism and the Reformation", 158 n. 47.
192 Breen, "Humanism and the Reformation", 161.
193 Breen, "Humanism and the Reformation", 164. It has to be noted that this assertion depends on

The double approach to humanism devised by Breen was applied later to Calvin and early Calvinism by Robert D. Linder in a short essay on Calvin, Viret and Beza. Linder restated Breen's arguments and applied them to early Calvinism, intending, as he wrote, "to demonstrate more clearly the positive and direct link between humanism and Calvinism in the formative years of the Reformation".[194] As far as Calvin is concerned, Linder's conclusions did not go beyond earlier affirmations made in the humanistic interpretation. Two points are given special emphasis: first, there was a certain affinity between Calvin and Erasmus and second, Calvin did not reject the basic conceptions constitutive of humanism, although as a reformer he came to repudiate many of its conclusions.[195] As regards Calvin's followers in the sixteenth century, Linder formulated the claim that "there seems to be no way of denying or ignoring the heavy component of humanism in early Calvinism".[196]

When Bohatec's *Budé und Calvin* appeared, François Wendel (1905-1972) immediately suggested translating it into French. As this did not happen, Wendel decided to write his own study. However, he left his task unfinished and what was published posthumously as *Calvin et l'humanisme* (1976) were his drafts of the planned study. Wendel was a qualified lawyer like Bohatec (and like Calvin); he appreciated Bohatec's detailed approach and descriptive method and basically shared the same viewpoint. He intended to advance the humanistic interpretation of Calvin by developing further Bohatec's work, but he could only achieve a synthesis of the most important scholarship on Calvin and humanism up to 1969. This synthesis, however, covered for the first time both the reformer's youth[197] - representing the main part of the study - and the mature work,[198] and this has made Wendel's *Calvin et l'humanisme* a useful handbook summarising the research and the arguments of the humanistic interpretation. Wendel does not bring up anything new in his study, but he presents the subject matter with more lucidity and critical awareness than earlier Calvin scholars.[199]

Wendel had already outlined a humanistic interpretation of Calvin in his

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two preliminary assumptions, namely that "his [Calvin's] apprehension or fear of equating the terrestrial with the celestial is afterthought", and that "Calvin the commentator of Scripture ..... here would take precedence over Calvin the systematic theologian"; Breen, "Humanism and the Reformation", 163 n. 65, 164 n. 66.

194 Linder, "Calvinism and Humanism", 167.

195 Linder, "Calvinism and Humanism", 181. This argument is derived from Battenhouse (cf. above, p. 42 n. 6 (beginning)).

196 Linder, "Calvinism and Humanism", 181.

197 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 7-61.

198 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 63-98.

199 We may point out that the important chapter on Calvin the reformer is nothing but a concise restatement of the second part of Bohatec's *Budé und Calvin* with no new source material added (as far as I can make out) and with a conclusion that is essentially the same as Bohatec's, but we must at the same time appreciate the fact that it makes better reading and represents a clearer exposition of the question than Bohatec's account. Thus Wendel's book can be seen as a kind of concise companion volume in French to Bohatec's long and heavy German disquisition.

outstanding account of Calvin's life and thought,[200] which was published in the same year as Bohatec's *Budé und Calvin* and where he reached conclusions similar to those of Bohatec, though independently from him. Wendel highlights the humanistic orientation of the young Calvin, affirming that the reformer remained a humanist throughout his life. When the young humanist lawyer wrote his Commentary on Seneca's *De clementia*, he "is entirely absorbed in his philology and in his classical antiquities",[201] and we can see already that

> Calvin is convinced of the superiority of the Christian moral doctrine, but he is not displeased to be able to show its agreement with the moral doctrine of the ancients, or at least with certain currents of their ethics.[202]

For Calvin his conversion was essentially "a new awareness of sin",[203] and as such it was bound to signify for him a break with fundamental values of humanism. To the idea of human dignity he opposed the doctrine of depravity; to the idea of free will, the doctrine of predestination; to the notion of continuity between classical philosophy and Christian theology, the concept of their essential incompatibility. But although the reformer is eager to draw a line between his ideals and those of the humanists and consciously repudiates pagan and even Erasmian humanism, he still remains a humanist in many respects, principally "in his method and in the particular form of his intellectual mentality",[204] and more specifically with regard to his "concern for external form".[205] Moreover, "Calvin's ideal of culture has remained, during his whole life, that of the humanists".[206]

A thorough analysis of the reformer's work proves that his apparent break with humanism was not so complete as his own conscious attitude would suggest. The attacks Calvin launched against humanists must not be interpreted as an abnegation of humanism, for the reformer did not attack the humanists because of their humanism, but because of their critical stance towards the Christian religion in general and the Reformation in particular. It is important to note, therefore, that Calvin did not identify humanism exclusively with currents in which critical detachment from religious issues prevailed. Margaret Mann's formula of Calvin using humanism against humanism is true, but it is not incompatible with an interpretation which focuses on the positive side of Calvin's use of humanism. To the young Calvin humanism was a literary fulfilment and philosophical pastime, while to the reformer it became a helping hand in building and defending a new church and doctrine. As a tool, humanism belongs as much to Calvin as it belongs to the humanists:

> Before his conversion, humanism was for him an end in itself; after this event, it is no more than a means, and one can say, according to a happy and exact formula, that he

200 Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse* (Paris 1950).
201 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 44.
202 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 55.
203 Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse*, 2nd ed. (Geneva 1985), 25.
204 Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse*, 25.
205 Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse*, 18.
206 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 82.

used humanism to fight humanism.[207]

This general and well-known theory of instrumentality, which Wendel maintains, characterises only the basis, not the essence, of Calvin's attitude towards humanism. Instrumentality does not imply that the influence of humanism on Calvin was a purely formal one; on the contrary, "there is in fact in his thought more than a simple formal influence of humanism, an influence which affects the very substance of this thought".[208] The idea that Calvin was influenced by humanism only in non-theological fields is contradicted by his own writings; there are several clear connections with humanism in the reformer's doctrine of God and in his ethics. Similarly the idea that Calvin's positive relation to humanism consists in merely copying from it is inadequate. The reformer's attitude towards humanism has to be understood first in terms of selecting (that is, rejecting certain aspects and accepting others), and then in terms of transforming (that is, adapting individual elements to the needs of the Reformation). We must learn to appreciate that Calvin possesses his own conception of humanism which he holds to be more perfect than that of the humanists:

> the part of negation sometimes seems to lead him [Calvin] to the point where one may be tempted to think that he rejects humanism rather more than he adheres to it. But this would mean to overlook the fact that even when Calvin rejects theses advanced by humanists, he does so in the name of a humanism which he believes to be superior and of Christian inspiration, and with the help of a dialectics that is in the best of humanist traditions.[209]

Wendel argues that "Calvin sets himself the task of showing that the best elements of humanism can very well be combined with the true religion and contribute to make it stronger".[210] Calvin tried, like Melanchthon, to retain humanism in the Reformation, but while the latter's humanism looks like "added veneer", the former's humanism is rooted in an attempt at fusing "the best elements of humanism" with Reformation theology. In Calvin "we find, for the first time, a conscious effort to harmonise humanism with the thought of the Reformation";[211] he borrows everything from classical philosophy which could in his eyes be reconciled with Christianity and adopts everything from the tradition of Christian humanism which seems to him applicable to the Reformation. One recognises the echo of Bohatec's judgement in Wendel's conclusion:

> In spite of the sometimes violent attacks which he launched against certain humanists of his time, in spite of the strong criticism to which he subjected the philosophical and moral affirmations of the thinkers of antiquity, he remained a humanist. He was a humanist in that he continued and perfected the work of the Christian humanists of the type of Erasmus and Budé, and in that he transposed their work on the plane of the religious ideas of the Reformation. He was also a humanist by virtue of his conviction that the thought of antiquity was one of the peaks or even the peak which humanity can attain if it is left to its natural forces alone. Firm in this conviction, he did not cease confronting the ideas and methods of the ancients with Christianity and adopting to it

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207 Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse*, 25.
208 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 70.
209 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 83.
210 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 74-75.
211 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 98.

what seemed to him usable.[212]

The principal humanistic features of Calvin are the stylistic perfection of his expression, his historical and philological exegesis, his appreciation of the classics and of the humanistic disciplines, his defence of rhetoric, his concern for education, and, finally, his attempt to adapt the heritage of antiquity to Christian thought. Calvin maintains that we must not disdain the ability to speak or write well and in the Geneva Academy he realises the ideal of trilingual scholarship. Wendel thinks that Calvin in his *Institutes* wrote "one of the highest praises a Christian ever gave to antiquity".[213] Humanistic studies are a preparation for the study of the Bible and they also help in the elaboration of Reformed theology. Calvin's repeated assertions that they have no value for attaining divine truth must not be interpreted as a denigration, but as the expression of the limits of appreciation on the part of a Christian humanist.

Wendel, like Bohatec, operates from the perspective of French Christian humanism, emphasising the element of Christian faith and evangelical piety in figures like Lefèvre, Budé, Clichthove and Marguerite de Navarre. Thus Wendel rejects a purely secularist conception of humanism and advocates a notion which accounts for the religious aspects, accommodating the view that "the majority of French humanists - and one could even say, the majority of non-Italian humanists - share a common religious tendency".[214] However, if the religious dimension of humanism is properly acknowledged and humanism is not just seen as revolving around the idea of the glorification of humanity, "it will soon be recognised that the proposed incompatibility between humanism and Christianity is a view that is swiftly contradicted by the facts".[215] If humanism is seen as a predominantly Christian movement, it still shows a largely appreciative attitude towards the classical heritage, for it is not just a secular-minded attachment to the philosophical thought of classical antiquity, or an identification with a particular school of that thought, but "a mental attitude which strives to save from the contribution of classical civilisation everything which may seem usable". However, Wendel argues that "this amounts to making antiquity the basis of intellectual culture, and it is precisely this attitude which the humanists of all tendencies share.[216]

In William Bouwsma's recent interpretation of Calvin we can witness the impact which the new scholarship on humanism, specifically as represented by Kristeller, has made on Calvin studies. Criticising Parker's non-humanistic view, Bouwsma advances the bold claim that

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212 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 96.
213 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 65-66.
214 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 8.
215 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 9.
216 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 96.

> resistance to the notion of the mature Calvin as a humanist ..... seems to be possible only if P. O. Kristeller's basic *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic and Humanist Strains* (New York 1961) is ignored.[217]

According to Bouwsma Calvin is a Faustian figure in whom two distinct souls dwell, a scholastic and a humanistic one "coexisting uncomfortably within the same historical personage".[218] On the one hand Calvin is "a schoolman in the high scholastic tradition" who adheres to the rules of traditional logic attempting to maintain order and stability. On the other Calvin is "a rhetorician and humanist" whose pragmatic and utilitarian attitude makes him assert "the primacy of experience and practice over theory".[219] These two sides of Calvin's mind are epitomised by the metaphors of the "labyrinth" or the "abyss" respectively.[220] The reformer's humanistic side was more accentuated than the scholastic one, so that in the reformer the rhetorician ultimately won over the philosopher, who was "doomed to failure",[221] without, however, being annihilated completely. Basically, Calvin's ideals of religious renewal are the same as those of Erasmus and of Rabelais; there is no doubt that the reformer was a lifelong humanist and that he was not fundamentally hostile to humanism:

> Between 1527 and 1534, at any rate, and in a more general sense all his life, Calvin inhabited the Erasmian world of thought and breathed its spiritual atmosphere; he remained in major ways always a humanist of the late Renaissance. *He never condemned humanism in general*, and only occasionally individual humanists for particular shortcomings.[222]

Humanism was for Calvin also a remedy against his deep-seated intellectual anxiety, since it enabled him to escape from scholastic philosophy and to find relief in humanist rhetoric. Thus humanism was not merely "peripheral or auxiliary" for Calvin, but, as Bouwsma underlines, "crucial to his thought".[223]

The chief features of Calvin's humanism according to Bouwsma are the following. Calvin loves the classics and his abundant use of them proves that he remained emotionally, if not theologically, attached to paganism. He possesses humanist *eruditio*, that is, the new trilingual philological scholarship of the Renaissance, to such a degree that he must be considered "a distinguished textual scholar ..... for his time".[224] Further, he shows a perfect acquaintance with the principles of rhetoric, which makes him realise that language is "a cultural artifact"[225] and signifies power. Accordingly the accomplished eloquence of his speech derives from his aspiration to persuade rhetorically by appealing to the heart rather than to the intellect. In this sense the *Institutes* can be regarded as a

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217 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 240 n. 18.
218 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 230.
219 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 230-231.
220 This distinction is scarcely tenable in the full light of the primary evidence, for Calvin sometimes uses the two terms as synonyms, translating Latin "labyrinthus" into French as "abysme". Cf. *Inst*. 3.2.3.; cf. also introduction, p. 14 n. 79 and above, p. 68.
221 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 231.
222 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 13 (italics added).
223 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 113.
224 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 117.
225 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 115.

humanist document in which theological doctrine appears stripped of scholastic philosophy and wrapped, instead, in humanist rhetoric. Calvin's understanding of the Bible as well as his own writing are essentially influenced by his appreciation of the rhetorical principle of *decorum*, that is, the adaptation of the message to the conditions of the audience. His Biblical criticism is profoundly humanistic in that it combines philological scholarship with a rhetorical outlook:

> The deepest mark of his humanism was his recognition that the Bible is throughout a rhetorical document and a work of interpretation. ..... Calvin ..... recognised that full appreciation of the Bible depends on reading it as literature.[226]

On a more speculative level, Bouwsma proposes that there are other features in Calvin which may be considered as reflecting the tradition of Renaissance humanism. Calvin's utilitarianism corresponds to the humanist belief that utility is the fundamental principle of order in the world, not hierarchy, as in the Middle Ages. His stress on practicality and activity derives from the humanist preference for the *vita activa* over the *vita contemplativa*. His ability "to contain ..... the tensions and contradictions in his thought"[227] is rooted in the humanist skill of balancing opposites. Finally, Calvin's conception of personality, according to which the heart is superior to reason, stems from Biblical humanism.[228] Bouwsma's portrait of Calvin the humanist has been intensely debated, and critical response has been very mixed.[229] Nevertheless, with Bouwsma's portrait the humanistic interpretation of the reformer has for the first time been published in an encyclopaedia. Soon after the appearance of his book, Bouwsma had the opportunity of advancing his daring view in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

> Historians [not theologians!] are generally agreed that Calvin is to be understood primarily as a Renaissance humanist who aimed to apply the novelties of humanism to recover a biblical understanding of Christianity.[230]

After Bouwsma the humanistic interpretation has found two important advocates in Olivier Millet and Heiko Oberman. Oberman has recently moved into the field of Calvin studies and is preparing a biography of Calvin, periodically publishing the ongoing preliminary work in article form. He expresses the fundamental conviction that the reformer of Geneva appreciated the great significance of the renaissance of letters occurring in his day and thus "shared the humanist pride of living at a time of the rebirth of classical letters and biblical studies". However, Calvin had his reservations about

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226 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 121, 123.

227 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 113.

228 For the more general arguments concerning the connections between humanism and the Reformation cf. Bouwsma, "Renaissance and Reformation: An Essay in Their Affinities and Connections" in H. A. Oberman (ed.), *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era* (Leiden 1974), 127-149.

229 Cf. I. J. Hesselink, "Reactions to Bouwsma's Portrait of 'John Calvin'" in Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, 209-213. The minimal consensus that exists today among scholars is reflected in the statement, taken from a recent handbook for research, that "Bouwsma overestimates the significance of Erasmus"; W. van't Spijker, *Calvin: Biographie und Theologie* (Göttingen 2001), 108.

230 Bouwsma, "Calvin and Calvinism" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., vol. 15 (1990) (*Macropaedia*), 478 (words in square brackets added).

Renaissance optimism, for "he saw Europe in the grip of a spirit of greed and exploitation as never before".[231] Considering the question from a more technical angle, the American-Dutch scholar first makes a case for methodology, suggesting that researchers should avoid focusing on the *Institutes* and examine, instead, the reformer's other works such as the Bible commentaries.[232] This shift of emphasis allows us to understand Calvin "from within",[233] opening up an intrinsic perspective from which the reformer's humanistic features can be recognised more distinctly. Looking at the problem of Calvin and humanism in this way, Oberman argues that if humanism is defined as "dedication to the *studia humanitatis* ..... then Calvin fills the bill in every respect".[234] However, if humanism is defined as including the notion of human dignity, "then the assumption of Calvin's teaching of the 'total depravity of man' seems to provide the final answer by blocking this avenue of investigation altogether".[235] Nevertheless, it is possible to make a positive point here, too, if the commentaries are properly taken into account and given their due weight. Thus, for example, in his *Commentary on Genesis* (9:6) Calvin highlights the notion of human dignity in a measure "to be reckoned with", as Oberman puts it.[236] However, this aspect of Calvin's work came to be appreciated only generations later, namely in "the rewarding principle of the rational and moral pursuit of secular happiness".[237] This development in Protestant ethics can be explained if Calvin's theology is understood as suggesting a transition "from ontology to psychology". The transition or "transformation" corresponds to what is called a "paradigm shift",[238] reflected in Calvin's conviction that human beings are not born to strive for "ontological elevation"[239] but to engage in the pursuit of earthly happiness enjoyed "with a good conscience".[240]

One of the most prominent advocates of the humanistic interpretation today is the French literary historian Olivier Millet. A former pupil of Richard Stauffer, Millet has been active as an editor of Calvin's works,[241] has written an exhaustive study on the reformer's relation to Renaissance rhetoric[242] and has explored various aspects of the problem of the reformer's attitude towards humanism in separate contributions.[243] In his comprehensive

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231 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 282.
232 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 263. Cf. introduction, pp. 37-38.
233 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 264.
234 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 274. He is "a true humanist" in this sense; Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 275.
235 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 276.
236 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 270-271, n. 63.
237 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 283.
238 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 265.
239 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 271.
240 Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness", 273.
241 Cf. bibliography, section 1 B, C.
242 Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole: Etude de rhétorique réformée* (Paris 1992).
243 Cf. e.g. O. Millet, "Le thème de la conscience libre chez Calvin" in Guggisberg / Lestringant / Margolin (eds.), *La liberté de conscience, XVI^e-XVII^e siècles* (Geneva 1991), 21-37; "Exégèse évangelique et culture littéraire humaniste: entre Luther et Bèze, l'Abraham sacrifiant selon Calvin" in *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 69 (1994), 367-380; "*Docere / Movere*: Les catégories rhétoriques et leurs sources humanistes dans la doctrine calvinienne de la foi" in W. H. Neuser / B. G.

analysis of Calvin's rhetoric in the context of the French literary Renaissance (submitted as a *thèse d'Etat* in Paris in 1990) Millet investigated the humanistic influences on the reformer with scrupulous attention to detail. Millet's study can be compared with Bohatec's *Budé und Calvin*[244] in several respects: it is extremely detailed[245] and systematic, its approach is very methodical, and its research is carried out with meticulous care and is inspired by genuine enthusiasm for Calvin's theological point of view. One specialist has pointed out that Millet's thesis, although representing a "'literary' study which must be appreciated as such", "is *also* directed at historians".[246] However, historians have been hesitant to adopt Millet's conclusions concerning Calvin's attitude towards humanism, preferring the literary or theological parts of Millet's work instead.[247] Theologians have more readily acknowledged Millet's contribution to Calvin studies. In a recent overview of research on Calvin Willem van't Spijker has stated with reference to Millet that "the influence of humanism can be observed in Calvin's view of the significance and value of rhetoric".[248] Van't Spijker has pointed out that by virtue of Calvin's appreciation of humanistic rhetoric "his theology acquired a feature which can also be found in Bucer and which is closely connected with the technique of communication by the spoken and written word".[249] Some Calvin scholars, however, have criticised Millet for not paying sufficient attention to the influence of scholasticism on the reformer. As Richard Muller has pointed out, Millet's study

> does fall slightly short of its goal of dealing with the "whole Calvin" - and does so on its own terms: having shared with Bouwsma the dichotomous Calvin, Millet fastens on the humanistic rhetor as the creator of theological language without fully drawing back into focus the traditionalistic theologian and exegete whose work exhibits scholastic and Aristotelian overtones.[250]

Following a recently established trend in Calvin studies, Millet shifts the emphasis from the *Institutes* (which are not neglected) to the reformer's Bible commentaries and his polemical treatises - marginalising, however, his sermons.[251] The structure of Millet's inquiry is largely based on guidelines derived from formal philological criteria,[252] while his

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Armstrong (eds.), *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex* (Kirksville (Missouri) 1997), 35-51.

244 Discussed above, pp. 64-66.

245 Bohatec's work is 492 pages long, while Millet's treatise comprises 983 pages.

246 B. Roussel in *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire du protestantisme français* 137 (1991), 327 (thesis examination report). Roussel argues that Millet's specialist analysis "remains readable, in spite of its technical language"; Roussel in *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire du protestantisme français* 137 (1991), 326 (thesis examination report).

247 Cf. e.g. B. Cottret, *Calvin: Biographie* (Paris 1995), 81 (literary reference), 82 (reference to humanism), 317 (literary reference). Cf. also Crouzet, *Jean Calvin*, 83, 85, 118 (references to humanism) and 112, 153, 162, 164, 176, 206, 218 (theological references). Crouzet disagrees with Millet on the question of Calvin's relation to humanism; cf. above, pp. 53-54.

248 Van't Spijker, *Calvin: Biographie und Theologie*, 206-207. The reference is to Millet's article "*Docere / Movere*: Les catégories rhétoriques et leurs sources humanistes dans la doctrine calvinienne de la foi".

249 Van't Spijker, *Calvin: Biographie und Theologie*, 207.

250 R. A. Muller in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24 (1993), 749 (book review).

251 Higman has drawn attention to the latter fact; cf. Roussel in *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire du protestantisme français* 137 (1991), 326.

252 For instance, terms like "hyperbole", "oxymoron" or "expolitio" constitute section headings. Cf.

notion of humanism is mainly shaped from the perspective of Calvin's theology and of Reformation thought. Humanism is considered primarily in terms of scholarly dedication to Biblical studies[253] - which is reflected in Millet's selection of sources. Apart from Erasmus and Budé, whose relevance for French humanism is beyond controversy, humanistically-oriented advocates of the German Reformation such as Melanchthon, Bucer or Jean Sturm feature prominently.[254] The secular-minded Italian Alciatus is dealt with at length and he is even depicted as a representative of Biblical humanism.[255] Lefèvre d'Etaples, Marguerite de Navarre, Vives and most of the humanists of the Royal College in Paris are, however, marginalised.[256] The work of Rabelais, that "wonderful and accomplished product of ..... French humanism" who "occupies a quite exceptional place both in French literature and in the humanist movement",[257] is never quoted.[258] Millet's critical assessment of Calvin's relation to Rabelais and his "vast humanist enterprise"[259] is limited to one brief statement (embedded in a footnote):

> It is well known that Calvin was acquainted with Rabelais' novels (see CO, 10, 2 col. 28 {1533}, *Des scandales*, op. cit., p. 138; CO 8, 45) and condemned them; Rabelais gave him as good as he got".[260]

Millet shows a tendency to avoid citing from humanist works composed during the period of Calvin's establishment in Geneva (1541-1564) and written by authors who do not form part of the Reformation movement.[261] This tendency (which constitutes an implicit methodological stricture) inevitably limits the meaning of Millet's deliberations and

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Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 351-361, 665-673, 744-752.

253 The humanistic background against which Calvin is defined is described as "*Biblical* rhetoric according to the humanists"; Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 189-203 (italics added).

254 Cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 122-141 (Melanchthon), 117-121 (Sturm). Jean Sturm was a lecturer in dialectic and rhetoric at the College of Lisieux in Paris and is portrayed as a successful humanist teacher whose fame equalled that of the newly appointed royal lecturers.

255 By adducing what can be considered a rare quote: "Pour ma part, je ne juge pas qu'il convienne à un chrétien d'ignorer la loi dans laquelle il vit. Et ceux qui ont reçu le don d'une certaine intelligence, doivent apprendre les évangiles avec les interprétations des Anciens {Pères}, et laisser les vaines questions des modernes {scholastiques}, que ces saints Pères de l'ancienne Eglise ont partout condamnées"; Alciatus, *Commentary on the Codex of Justinian*; quoted in Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 55 n. 113.

256 There are no citations from Lefèvre's writings. There is one quotation from Marguerite de Navarre's works and one more reference to them. Cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 462 n. 26, 220 n. 48. There are four quotations from Vives' works; one appears in the main text and three in the footnotes. Cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 663, 190 n. 13, 201 n. 70, 707-708 n. 49. There are also two references to Vives' works. Cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 44 n. 70, 769 n. 15. The works of the royal lecturers are almost completely disregarded, except for Latomus, who taught at the Royal College from 1534 to 1540 and whose writings are quoted fifteen times (there are thirteen quotes from the *Summa totius rationis disserendi* of 1527 and two quotes from the *Epitome Commentariorum Dialecticae inventionis R. Agricolae* of 1534). Cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 145-149, 565 n. 32, 566 n. 35, 574 n. 55, 581 n. 82, 588, 634 n.16.

257 J.-C. Margolin, "Humanism in France" in Goodman / MacKay (eds.), *The Impact of Humanism on Western Europe* (London 1990), 192, 194.

258 Millet mentions the name of Rabelais nine times but never cites from the French humanist's works, to which he gives two specific references, namely to *Pantagruel* and *Le Quart Livre*. Cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 30 n. 11.

259 J.-C. Margolin, "Humanism in France", 192 (referring to *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*).

260 Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 782 n. 61.

261 Erasmus (d. 1536) and Budé (d.1540) are quoted frequently, while consideration of Alciatus (d. 1550), though detailed, is limited almost exclusively to the period of Calvin's youth. For Marguerite de Navarre (d. 1549) and the first generation of royal lecturers (all of whom were contemporaries of Calvin the reformer) cf. n. 256 above.

conclusions, for while Calvin may appear as an exponent of humanist rhetoric if placed mainly in the context of the humanistically-oriented branch of the early German Reformation, this is not necessarily the case if the full range of sources belonging to the context of contemporary French humanism is taken into account.

Millet's discussion of Calvin's relation to Renaissance rhetoric is centred on the argument of the reformer's progressive assimilation and endorsement of the humanist tradition in the discipline of rhetoric. Already Calvin's first work, the *Seneca Commentary*, "illustrates ..... [his] adherence to the rhetorical and moral culture of Renaissance humanism", particularly with regard to his "rejection of dialectical [i.e. scholastic] quibbles".[262] Millet recognises a certain reticence concerning humanism in the young Calvin, observing that "in this text by Calvin [the *Seneca Commentary*] we do not find such a [humanist] confession of faith as Budé, Erasmus or Rabelais would produce".[263] Moving around between Noyon, Orléans and Claix from 1531 to 1534, Calvin "always comes back to Paris",[264] where he is influenced decisively by the current of German humanism then prevailing in the French capital.[265] Melanchthon's "new rhetoric"[266] and "genus didascalion"[267] in particular provide the young Calvin with a whole range of humanistic techniques and ideas which the young reformer applies in his first theological writings, composed between 1535 and 1541.

Millet does not fail to acknowledge the ambiguity of Calvin's position on humanism as a cultural movement. If Calvin can be regarded as a humanist with respect to his classical erudition, his mastery of language and his positive attitude towards the promotion of linguistic proficiency, he must be considered an opponent of humanist individualism, which he thought had a subversive effect on religious life. Millet argues that

> the humanistic figure of the bookish individual, ... the fascination for the moral and religious personality of the great authors, ... the idea ..... that the individual biography of these authors facilitates the understanding of their work, all this is present ..... in the work of the reformer, but in schematic form only, recognisable but elusive at the surface level of discourse.[268]

Thus Calvin can be qualified on the one hand as a "humanist with regard to his culture and his [learned] references", while on the other hand he must be seen as an "anti-humanistic prophet with regard to his self-renunciation".[269]

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262 Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 91.

263 Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 91. Millet attributes Calvin's reticence principally to the restrictions imposed on the author by the specific requirements of the literary genre, that is, the classical commentary. He does not explain it in terms of *implicitness*, that is, as an anticipation of this distinctive feature of Calvin the reformer (cf. introduction, pp. 13-15, 18-20).

264 Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 114.

265 Cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 117.

266 Cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 125-135.

267 Cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 137-141.

268 Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 553.

269 Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 554.

In conclusion we can state that today all the major strands of interpretation of Calvin and humanism are still current in research. Each strand has advocates of international repute maintaining their views in scholarly publications. There has been a notable shift of emphasis from the anti-humanistic to the humanistic interpretation, while the non-humanistic and scholastic interpretations are maintained more or less unchanged. However, there is no doubt that despite recent advances in research the question of Calvin's attitude towards humanism continues to be a debated topic and cannot be considered as resolved. Some progress has been made but this survey has shown that further work on the subject is needed in order to clarify the remaining controversial issues. It has also shown that the view-points encountered in research on Calvin vary quite considerably and that it is difficult to overcome the divergent attitudes because they are often rooted in profound cultural differences which cannot easily be eradicated. Considering this, it appears that the most significant step in recent Calvin studies has been the publication of the first volumes of the new *Opera omnia* edition of Calvin's works, which provide an ideal means to advance research by facilitating the direct contact with the original sources.

The recent biography of Calvin by Bernard Cottret reflects the general inconclusiveness concerning the problem of Calvin's attitude towards humanism. The common consensus seems to be that Calvin represents a peculiar mixture of medieval and modern elements, like other important figures of the sixteenth century. Cottret points out that the links with the Middle Ages must not be forgotten; he remarks:

> That Calvin breaks with the Middle Ages appears established. But this does not imply that the Middle Ages break with him. ..... No, Calvin is the troubled heir to this unique medieval autumn which haunts him, and which he refutes all the more ardently as he belongs to a past too near to be totally over.[270]

Calvin is, at best, "a prodigal son of humanism" who remains a humanist in "his culture, his origins, his thought".[271] The reformer "has the humanist's liking for the well-worded page of writing";[272] he has an acute historical perception and a sound grasp of classical philology, but on the whole, he "has never been completely a Renaissance man in the Mediterranean sense of a happy paganism".[273] Cottret stresses the ambiguity of the term *humanism* and its consequences. If humanism is understood as concern for literature and restoration of original texts, Calvin was a humanist. However, if humanism is understood as belief in the virtues and rights of human beings or as confidence in their capacity for progress, Calvin was the pure opposite of a humanist.[274] In his recent handbook on Calvin van't Spijker confirms Cottret's basic assertions, although with a slightly different emphasis. Defining humanism mainly from an Erasmian perspective, van't Spijker draws

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270 Cottret, *Calvin*, 40.
271 Cottret, *Calvin*, 46.
272 Cottret, *Calvin*, 298.
273 Cottret, *Calvin*, 349.
274 Cottret, *Calvin*, 335.

attention to the fact that the great Rotterdamer "inspired him [Calvin] to study the classics" when he was a young wandering student and not yet committed to the cause of the Reformation.[275] Calvin "learnt from him [Erasmus] how to deal with texts and to treat them with respect", and "his exegetical method partly derives from this [instruction]".[276] The eloquence and literary skills the reformer acquires from his contact with humanism become a technical means subordinated to the theological end of making the sacred scriptures accessible and intelligible to all Christians.[277] However, the study of the church fathers encouraged by Erasmus led Calvin to an interpretation of the doctrine of grace which differed substantially from that of the Dutch humanist and so "a break with religious humanism occurred over the question of free will".[278]

275 Van't Spijker, *Calvin: Biographie und Theologie*, 206.
276 Van't Spijker, *Calvin: Biographie und Theologie*, 206.
277 Van't Spijker, *Calvin: Biographie und Theologie*, 207.
278 Van't Spijker, *Calvin: Biographie und Theologie*, 206.

2 Humanism, *Humanitas* and the *Studia Humanitatis*

Before we enter the world of Calvin's thought, we must clarify the conceptual framework and determine the notions of *humanism* and *Renaissance*. Humanism will be the main subject, while the Renaissance is considered by way of introduction in order to delimit the former within the context of the latter. Since the two concepts have traditionally been closely associated - particularly in comparative studies of humanism and the Reformation, in which there has often been no clear distinction at all[1] - there is a danger of confusion here if the emphasis in determining the notion of humanism is on assimilation with the Renaissance rather than distinction from it. Thus delimiting humanism within the context of the Renaissance means outlining it against the background of the Renaissance, without merging the two concepts indiscriminately. The most fundamental observation about the Renaissance is that it has been the object of a controversy similar in character to that of humanism while greater even in magnitude.[2] If we begin to search for the meaning of the term *Renaissance*, we encounter the same formidable confusion as with humanism, for today "the most varied opinions still have their proponents and ..... there is still no generally accepted over-all view.[3] Indeed, there is hardly any contemporary author who does not at some point acknowledge this situation of conceptual pluralism;[4] a recent specialist contribution begins with the remark that "Renaissance is an elastic term which has been used with a dozen different meanings".[5] We can repeat here for the Renaissance what we have said about humanism: there is no universally agreed definition at hand, and we therefore have to establish our own working definition.[6] Given the lack of consensus and the controversy in interpretation scholars have in recent times tended to discard comprehensive attempts at "definition", limiting themselves to efforts at "description". The situation is the same as with humanism: each author adopts such a notion as seems adequate to the purpose of his inquiry. Renaissance studies have been in a phase of revisionism for some time,[7] and no radically new perspectives have opened. But despite a certain stagnation, scholarly discussions on the subject are characterised by a confrontation of fundamental beliefs. As Garin has stated,

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1 A recent example is Bouwsma, who has not clarified the relation of the concepts of *humanism* and *Renaissance* in his work. Cf. W. J. Bouwsma, "Renaissance and Reformation: An Essay in Their Affinities and Connections" in H. A. Oberman (ed.), *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era* (Leiden 1974), 129-139, and *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York 1988), 150-161 (chapter 9). Humanism is closely associated with the Renaissance in either study, but the exact degree of association is nowhere determined.

2 Garin has observed that "the interpretation of the Renaissance as a historical period and a stage in the history of Western culture - its origins, its chronological limits, its contents, its nature, even its essence - has always prompted lively debate and continues to do so". E. Garin, "Introduction" to Garin (ed.), *Renaissance Characters*, trans. L. G. Cochrane (Chicago 1991), xviii (I occasionally provide my own translation, then referring to the original Italian edition).

3 P. O. Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought" in *The Renaissance: Essays in Interpretation* (London 1982), 127.

4 For the conceptual pluralism concerning humanism cf. introduction, pp. 4-5.

5 G. Holmes, *Renaissance* (London 1996), 7.

6 Cf. introduction, p. 30.

7 Cf. Ch. Trinkaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor 1983), xviii.

> the unresolved questions are many and differences of interpretation can be acrimonious. Preconceived notions of all sorts, some deriving from ideology and even from national pride, inevitably and perhaps unconsciously converge in them.[8]

The discussion of the Renaissance, as we know it now, was sparked off by Burckhardt's interpretation, although the origin of many arguments can be traced back to the age of the Renaissance itself.[9] After Burckhardt the discussion increasingly became the domain of specialists characterised by the opposition between various disciplines, for instance, modern versus medieval history, or history of art versus history of philosophy or science. Thus modernists and historians of art have tended to describe the Renaissance as the beginning of modernity, while medievalists and historians of philosophy and science have disputed its modern character. Moreover, growing research in social and economic history has led to the establishment of the alternative concept of *early modern*, a compromise according to which the period from 1400 to 1600 represents a preparation of modernity rather than modernity itself.[10] But in spite of this revisionist attempt, the discussion about the Renaissance has become less intense today.[11] However, we can observe that the Renaissance as a historical concept has survived: it may again be regarded as a valid notion, although still with a variety of meanings on which there is no full agreement but which are all significantly more restricted than that given by Burckhardt - and in many ways significantly different from it. Even Burckhardt's interpretation has in many aspects remained intact; it has "like a well-made ship, ... survived the winds of criticism".[12]

Currently the general meaning of *Renaissance* is determined in a pragmatic way as something like the lowest common denominator of the chief conclusions drawn from the century-long debate that began with Burckhardt's thesis. Thus *Renaissance* has become mainly a generic term denoting the period of time in European history from around 1300 or 1350 to around 1600, which is to say, it has come to stand for the entirety of European civilisation in the complexity of its diverse developments from Petrarch to Shakespeare or Cervantes, including everything that happened in politics, art, religion and science, in technology, economy and philosophy, etc.[13] However, conceptualising the Renaissance as

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8 E. Garin, "Introduction" to Garin (ed.), *Renaissance Characters*, xix.

9 For a comprehensive overview, cf. W. K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Cambridge (Mass.) 1948). Cf. also Kristeller, "Changing Views of the Intellectual History of the Renaissance since Jacob Burckhardt" in T. Helton (ed.), *The Renaissance: A Reconsideration of the Theories and Interpretations of the Age* (Madison 1961), 27-52; D. Hay, "Historians and the Renaissance during the last twenty-five years" in *The Renaissance: Essays in Interpretation*, 1-32.

10 The notion of *early modern* can be understood as "a conceptual bridge between the world of pre-modern Europe and the histories of most other parts of the world"; Brady / Oberman / Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History 1400-1600*, vol. 1 (Leiden 1994), xxi.

11 According to one scholar, one could speak already two decades ago of "an armistice imposed by exhaustion and boredom"; Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 127.

12 Hay, "Historians and the Renaissance during the last twenty-five years", 5.

13 Cf. J. Delumeau, "Une histoire totale de la Renaissance" in *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1992), 2; Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 128; Hay, "Historians and the Renaissance during the last twenty-five years", 8-9, 14;

an epochal category in the periodisation of Western history inevitably means that it represents a historical reality with a typical profile. This is indeed assumed, although often implicitly, for it is difficult to outline the distinctive features of this profile with analytical precision as the underlying historical reality is extremely complex and multi-faceted: hence the characterisation of the Renaissance as "a tissue of contradictions".[14] Contemporary historiography suggests that the most salient feature of the Renaissance as an epoch is the so-called "promotion of Europe", that is, the rapid development and extraordinary progress of Europe by which it advanced beyond the visible level of the other civilisations of the world.[15] "Here at last was the Strabonic continent", one author has recently written, "stuffed with those natural resources and man-made centres of activity, that was - however small it looked on world maps - subordinating the rest of the globe to its energies".[16] The Renaissance is thus "the decisive moment of European growth"[17] in which the world-wide supremacy of this continent was established.

Europe's leap forward is manifest in several outstanding phenomena which constitute the most typical features of the Renaissance from the point of view of general history. In the first place there is the amazing outburst of artistic creativity and ingenuity that stands almost unequalled in history and is therefore often seen as epitomising the essence of the age. The Renaissance brought a veritable revolution in the arts: the scope of innovation is wide, ranging from the invention of perspective to the creation of the novel, and from the introduction of oil painting to the new engineering that made possible architecture like St. Peter's in Rome or Brunelleschi's dome of Florence cathedral, of which Alberti wrote:

> Who could ever be hard or envious enough to fail to praise Pippo the architect on seeing here such a large structure, rising above the skies, ample to cover with its shadow all the Tuscan people ..... Since this work seems impossible of execution in our time, if I judge rightly, it was probably unknown or unthought of among the Ancients.[18]

Indeed, Brunelleschi's models were to determine the future of architecture for almost half a millennium,[19] and the same can be said of painting or of literature: the innovations of the Renaissance lasted until the twentieth century, and some of them still endure.

In addition to the explosion of artistic talent, there is the outburst of what psychologists have called the "materialistic earth-bound passion to conquer matter and

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Trinkaus, "Renaissance Ideas and the Idea of the Renaissance" in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51 (1990), 684; Garin, "Introduction" to Garin (ed.), *Renaissance Characters*, ix, xi.

14 Delumeau, "Une histoire totale de la Renaissance", 17.

15 Delumeau, "Une histoire totale de la Renaissance", 2.

16 J. Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London 1993), 19.

17 Delumeau, "Une histoire totale de la Renaissance", 2.

18 Alberti, *On Painting,* ed. and trans. J. R. Spencer, 2nd ed. (New Haven 1966), 40.

19 Gombrich stated that "for nearly five hundred years the architects of Europe and America followed in his footsteps. ..... If Brunelleschi wanted to create the architecture of a new era, he certainly succeeded"; E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th ed. (London 1995), 224.

master the world",[20] the concomitant of a change in the fundamental orientation of European consciousness from the unconscious to the conscious sphere of the mind, which manifested itself in a shift of emphasis from faith to reason, from the supernatural to the natural, from myth to science and, on a more palpable level, from the vertical to the horizontal dimension. This change in the orientation of consciousness is a gradual process of transformation which had begun in the Middle Ages but which reached the decisive turning-point in the Renaissance. The desire for horizontal expansion manifested itself in the discovery and colonialisation of America, and in a wider sense in the exploration of the whole globe. There was what we could call a new "mentality of movement", which found expression in the belief that there "there is no sea unnavigable, no land uninhabitable".[21] Discovery, exploration and colonialisation had far-reaching consequences and reflected the increasing "conviction ..... that man should extend his mastery of nature",[22] inspiring a "heady confidence" in Europeans which led to "a shared consciousness of separateness and superiority".[23] Cartography is an interesting side-aspect of the newly developing horizontal and rational orientation of Renaissance consciousness. Map-making "became, indeed, almost a craze":[24] there emerged a passion for cartographic surveys which sprang from a wish to understand more realistically than in the Middle Ages one's geographical position and situation. On a psychological level the newly produced maps reflect the tendency towards rationality and horizontality, for, representing a "source of self-orientation on a flat surface", they "had become for the first time the spur to a rationally grasped personal location within a clearly defined continental expanse."[25] The Renaissance passion for horizontal expansion as manifest in cartography is expressed by Marlowe's dying Tamburlaine: "Give me a Map: then let me see how much / Is left for me to conquer all the world!"[26]

Cartography became popular through the publication of atlases, that is, due to the invention of printing, that "unacknowledged revolution"[27] of the Renaissance which constitutes a landmark in the history of Western culture and a decisive step towards modernity. Printing was a new medium of verbal as well as visual communication which created an immense potential for acceleration and provided a catalyst for change; it made possible the remoulding of the mentality of Europe at an unprecedented speed and at the same time it represented a powerful means for spreading European culture across the whole world. Both the humanist and the Reformation movements made extensive use of

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20 C. G. Jung, CW 9(2), 43 / GW 9(2), 53.

21 Uttered by the merchant Robert Thorne; quoted in Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 589.

22 Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 514.

23 Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 38.

24 Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 16.

25 Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 27.

26 Part 2, 5.3; quoted in Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 19.

27 E. L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 1983), 3.

the printing press in order to spread their ideas. Like all the advances in technology, the invention of printing had positive as well as negative effects. The latter were soon recognised by the humanists, whose critical attitude is reflected in the description of Don Quixote's reaction to the news that the first part of his adventures has been published:

> He could not convince himself that such a history could exist, for the blood of the enemies he had slain was hardly dry on the blade of his sword, yet they were already saying that his high deeds of chivalry were in print.[28]

When the new editions and the translations are mentioned, Don Quixote observes:

> One of the things which shall give the greatest pleasure to a virtuous and eminent man is to see himself in his lifetime printed and in the press, and with a good name on people's tongues, a good name, I repeat, for were it the contrary, no death could be so bad.[29]

The Renaissance contained two more revolutionary impulses which transformed the face of Western civilisation profoundly: humanism and the Reformation. The Reformation was for religion what humanism was for culture: a comprehensive effort at renewal representing, in the understanding of recent historiography, a movement within an era rather than an era in itself. Thus we consider humanism and the Reformation as reform movements which belong to the Renaissance conceptualised as a historical period in a broad way.[30] It appears to make sense

> to include all that falls into the traditional periods of Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation under a single periodic designation that might as well be called "Renaissance" until a better one is devised ..... Letting a part stand for the whole, the period may then ..... be called the "Renaissance" not only because of the restricted element of antique revival but also ..... for the incredible energy invested in cultural renewal, refinement, and the transformation of the old throughout Europe .....[31]

Considering the most common current interpretations of the Renaissance, we can observe that these interpretations sometimes diverge considerably from the original meaning of the term *Renaissance* as conceived by Petrarch and Vasari (and to a large extent by Burckhardt), that is, the rebirth of classical literature and of the spirit of antiquity after a long period of "darkness" and "barbarism". The unifying principle of the interpretations prevailing at present, namely "the promotion of Europe", is not reflected in the term itself anymore, which creates an incongruity between word and meaning. Thus the classical revival, formerly the name-giver to the epoch, and its chief promoting agent, humanism, are no more seen as the essential features of the age from the point of view of general history. Only if we examine the Renaissance in the light of intellectual history does the connection with the original sense of the word (and with humanism) again become central. However, although contemporary historiography tends to marginalise humanism and the classical revival of the Renaissance, we do encounter occasional acknowledgements of their relevance, such as when one author states that "a new release of adrenalin flowed into the intellectual and creative life of Europe", and "it was through the reinvigoration of already

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28 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 3, trans. W. Starkie (London 1957), 544.

29 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 3, 546.

30 Kristeller considers the Reformation "as an important development within the broader historical period [of the Renaissance]"; cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York 1979), 66.

31 Trinkaus, "Renaissance Ideas and the Idea of the Renaissance", 684.

existing talent and sense of purpose that the revival of interest in the ancient past made its most creative mark".[32] But these acknowledgements must not obscure the fact that humanism is increasingly characterised with an emphasis on its limitations. This aspect looms large in contemporary literature: the same author has argued that the renaissance of classical learning "was a revival which depended ..... on the grinding persistence of narrower enthusiasms", that is, "the intellectual excitement" of the humanist movement.[33]

Having outlined the meaning of *Renaissance*, we can now move on to look at humanism, which is the central element of the conceptual framework, representing the hinge on which essential parts of our argumentation and conclusion depend.[34] In seeking a definition of *humanism* which is adequate for a comparative analysis with Calvin's thought, it is advisable to follow certain basic methodological principles. Such principles are not to be taken as something absolute, but they are provisional devices designed pragmatically to deal with the intricate difficulties inherent in the subject. They have a regulative function, that is to say, they are intended primarily to structure the argument, to facilitate drawing conclusions and to enhance intelligibility. Inevitably, any choice of method implies certain presuppositions; some of these have been declared in the introduction and others will be mentioned here in the context of defining humanism. What we have said earlier about the topic as a whole applies especially to humanism: there is widespread awareness of the problems involved in dealing with the issue, but the methodological implications of these problems for research have often not been spelled out and taken into account.[35] The principal points concerning method are the following: first, we should avoid unnecessary generalisation or simplification and shape a concept that is as comprehensive, substantial and precise as possible. Second, it is advisable to distinguish the chief controversial issues from the non-controversial ones and treat them separately. Third, we must put the emphasis on the *major* sources.[36] Finally, we should determine the meaning of humanism from an intrinsic view-point, that is, we should define humanism from the perspective of the humanists rather than from that of Calvin.[37]

All these methodological guidelines are fairly self-explanatory except for the second, the meaning of which has to be made more explicit. If we have insisted on a distinction between controversial and non-controversial issues in humanism, we have to make clear what the concrete meaning of controversial and non-controversial is. Generally speaking the controversial aspects of humanism concern philosophical questions (understood in a broad sense) so that the distinction between controversial and non-controversial chiefly

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32 Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 192.
33 Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 193.
34 Cf. introduction, p. 23.
35 Cf. introduction, p. 30.
36 Cf. introduction, p. 31.
37 Cf. introduction, p. 34.

amounts to a distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical. The philosophical significance of humanism is a highly complicated issue enveloped in a seemingly interminable controversy. Scholars regularly restate the question; one expert has observed that

> One of the crucial problems in the interpretation of Renaissance humanism is whether it possessed or acquired any philosophical or ideological significance itself ..... or whether it merely converged with the older disciplines in a formal way.[38]

Another author has described the problematic from a different angle, stating that

> In some respects, despite controversies, it might be accepted that European humanism ..... oscillated between an enthusiastic practice of the *studia humanitatis* and a philosophy of man based on acute awareness of his dignity.[39]

This controversy needs some further consideration, since the controversial philosophical questions of humanism have played an important role in the discussion of Calvin and humanism.

Today most authors agree that there is a philosophical side to humanism associated mainly with the fields of ethics and politics and with themes like humanity, dignity, freedom, activity, virtue, will or fortune,[40] but there is no unanimity as to what the importance and precise characteristics of that side are. Interpretations vary considerably, and there exist two fundamentally different approaches: one that rejects the association of humanism with philosophy on the grounds that the former belongs to a different professional tradition from the latter, and another that views humanism as a philosophy in its own right, understood as an outlook or world-view shaped in the context of the Renaissance. Advocates of the first view insist that humanism focused on the practice of the *studia humanitatis*, while defenders of the second emphasise that the outlook of humanism was based on the classical concept of *humanitas*. These two approaches are usually perceived as mutually exclusive, so that individual authors tend to adopt either one or the other. However, survey volumes written by several authors sometimes strike a balance and include both approaches. Nauert has recently defended a strictly non-philosophical view of humanism, arguing that "humanism was not a philosophy at all" and that "the humanistic culture did not produce a new philosophy".[41] Margolin has advocated the opposite view, pointing out that humanism "opened the way to a transformation of worldview ..... and a new vision of the human condition".[42] Kelley has taken a middle position, stating that "'Renaissance humanism' joins two debatable abstractions, one that suggests a cultural revival and the other a *secular philosophy*, perhaps divested of higher

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38 D. R. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism* (Boston 1991), 39.

39 J.-C. Margolin, "Humanism in France" in Goodman / MacKay (eds.), *The Impact of Humanism on Western Europe* (London 1990), 164.

40 Cf. Margolin, *Humanism in Europe at the Time of the Renaissance*, (Durham (North Carolina) 1989), 44; Kristeller, "Humanism" in Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge 1988), 134-135; Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 133.

41 Ch. G. Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge 1995), 4.

42 Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 3.

religious concerns".[43] As far as the latter is concerned, Kelley concedes that humanism can be seen as a kind of "human philosophy"[44] or "civic ideology".[45] The editors of the *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, though chiefly favouring a non-philosophical overall interpretation, admit both approaches and provide for an interpretation which disassociates humanism from philosophy as well as for one which emphasises the philosophical side of humanism - a fact that has been highlighted by sensitive critics.[46]

Both the non-philosophical and the philosophical interpretations of humanism are embedded in established research traditions. The latter goes back to Burckhardt, for whom humanism signified the new philosophy of the Renaissance, which represented the beginning of the modern way of thinking, while the former originates in reactions to that view from which contrasting theories evolved. Burckhardt's view received support from Ernst Cassirer, who believed that "basic proportions" of a humanistic philosophy emerged "whenever humanism sought to be more than just a scholarly movement, whenever it sought to give itself a philosophical form".[47] Both the philosophical and the non-philosophical interpretation have had formidable advocates: the two most outstanding living historians of humanism, Kristeller and Garin, each stand for one position or tradition respectively - a fact which illustrates the deep divisions in research. It is worthwhile surveying briefly the development of these interpretations to work out a viable compromise for this inquiry.

In 1944 Kristeller made the radical assertion that "most of the works of the humanists have nothing to do with philosophy even in the vaguest possible sense of the term",[48] claiming that the Italian humanists "were on the whole neither good nor bad philosophers, but no philosophers at all".[49] Humanism belonged to the professional tradition of rhetoric as opposed to philosophy, and therefore the humanists have to be seen as rhetoricians, not philosophers; they are the successors of the classical orators and of the medieval *dictatores*, continuing the tradition of *ars dictaminis* and *ars agregandi* and reforming it on classical principles.[50] Kristeller is a professor of (classical) philosophy, and his view of humanism is based on a clearly delimited notion of philosophy - a notion shaped by the tradition of academic philosophy. When the humanist "rhetoricians" treat

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43 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 1 (italics added).

44 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 2.

45 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 4.

46 Cf. Trinkaus, "Renaissance Ideas and the Idea of the Renaissance", 674. The former is represented by Kristeller, the latter by Vasoli. Cf. Kristeller, "Humanism" and C. Vasoli, "The Renaissance Concept of Philosophy" in Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 113-137 and 57-74.

47 E. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford 1964, 1st ed. (in German) 1927); quoted in Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford 1992), 165.

48 Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance" in *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 91.

49 Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance", 91.

50 Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance", 90-91.

philosophical questions, he argues, they are "rather superficial and inconclusive" by comparison with classical and medieval philosophers.[51] Humanist thought lacked substance and had nothing to offer which could replace the contents of traditional learning.[52] Moreover, the humanists did not share a common central concern, but their interest in human values was only "incidental".[53] Kristeller concluded:

> By humanism we mean merely the general tendency of the age to attach the greatest importance to classical studies, and to consider classical antiquity as the common standard and model by which to guide all cultural activities.[54]

Kristeller's position provoked a reaction on the part of Garin, who argued that "the real reason for this condemnation of the philosophical significance of humanism" lay in "a surviving love for an image of philosophy which fifteenth-century thought constantly opposed", that is to say, for "that metaphysico-theological synthesis of ..... scholasticism".[55] According to Garin humanist thought represents a philosophy in its own right - provided philosophy is taken in a wide sense and not limited to the confines of academic notions. Humanism constitutes a new outlook which is based on an approach focusing on the investigation of human nature and the human world and employing a newly developed historical-critical method derived from philological scholarship. This outlook constitutes a world-view presenting a new way of facing reality which establishes itself in the branches of ethics and politics, and which exhibits many of the essential characteristics of the Renaissance. The humanistic world-view is not inferior to traditional philosophy, but it signifies "proper and only effective philosophising"[56] in the changed context of beginning modernity. It represented an alternative to scholasticism, which had subordinated everything to the authority of a fixed theological doctrine and judged all things from the point of view of metaphysical speculation. Humanism initiated

> concrete, definite and precise researches in the two directions of the moral sciences (ethics, politics, economics, aesthetics, logic and rhetoric) and the natural sciences, which were cultivated *iuxta propria principia*, outside every bond and every *auctoritas*, and have at every level that freshness which "honest" but "obtuse" scholasticism ignored.[57]

The ideas characteristic of the humanistic outlook developed mainly outside the framework of institutionalised intellectual activity "on non-scholastic territory".[58] This is to say, humanism did not primarily grow in the universities, but rather among people whose occupation was not, or not exclusively, academic. The fact that most humanists were

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51 Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance", 91.

52 Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance", 92.

53 Kristeller, "Philosophy of Man in the Italian Renaissance" in the author's *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters [I]* (Rome 1956); quoted in Q. Breen, "Renaissance Humanism and the Roman Law" in Breen, *Christianity and Humanism* (Grand Rapids 1968), 184, n. 3.

54 Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance", 87-88.

55 Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, 3rd ed. (Rome, Bari 1964), 10 (written in 1952). In what follows we present a brief summary of Garin's arguments.

56 Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, 12.

57 Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, 11.

58 Garin, *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 3rd ed. (Rome, Bari 1966), 6 (written in 1954).

not professors of philosophy does not imply, however, that they did not produce any philosophical work. In fact, the contrary is the case, but the appreciation of humanism as a philosophy involves the consideration of fundamental questions about the nature of philosophy. Garin holds that humanism can be viewed as a philosophy "if philosophy is understood as an unceasing exploration and taken to be a critical consciousness of the mind's activities, of its human measure and its limitations as well as its potentialities".[59] For the humanists Socrates embodied the archetype of true philosophy, which "a deepened appreciation of the highly dramatic problems of experience".[60] Humanist philosophising also signified "a reflection on earthly activity, a quickening of the consciousness of community tasks, of the human condition and of human fate"; it signified "a reflection on the behaviour of man and the forms of his life".[61] Philosophy was for the humanists "a school of life, a serious and deep meditation upon the problems of life".[62] Garin's theory of humanism is based on a fundamental challenge to established concepts of philosophy, for

> It is not yet proved - as it seems to some - that he who has constructed impressive and systematic theories, well-reasoned according to the canons of classical metaphysics and logic, is a greater philosopher than Socrates, whose demon continues to torment us, or than Vico, the dead professor of rhetoric.[63]

Therefore, Garin concludes, "to repeat ..... that humanism was a non-'philosophical' phenomenon ..... means ..... to present as established a vision of the act of philosophising which is, on the contrary, in discussion".[64]

Garin's criticism proved influential and affected the development of Kristeller's theories. Ten years after his radical anti-philosophical statement Kristeller modified his view, conceding that humanism "had important philosophical implications and consequences".[65] However, he maintained that humanism "was not philosophical in its substance",[66] claiming that the humanists were "amateur thinkers" whose work lacked substance and did not represent a remarkable contribution to "speculative thought".[67] Kristeller claimed that "we cannot discover a common philosophy for all humanists"[68] insisting that "the humanists' contributions to philosophy, however interesting and influential, were essentially those of dilettanti and outsiders".[69] Humanist thought does not represent a philosophical school because it does not constitute a systematic body of doctrines in the classical (that is, Aristotelian) sense and because its themes are "neither profound nor rigorous".[70] Nevertheless, the German-born American scholar has

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59 Garin, *Italian Humanism* (Oxford 1965), 222.
60 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 28 (the case in point is Salutati).
61 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 28.
62 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 29.
63 Garin, *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 9-10.
64 Garin, *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 7.
65 Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement" [1954-55] in *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 31.
66 Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement", 31 (order of words inverted).
67 Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement", 28.
68 Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement", 32.
69 Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 137.
70 Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 133.

increasingly come to admit the relevance of those "important philosophical implications and consequences", stating that "the influence of humanism on philosophy was very great indeed". Kristeller has conceded that philosophy can and should also be taken in a broader, non-professional sense to understand Renaissance thought in its entirety, and he has added that if this is done, the influence of humanism on philosophy "is much greater". But even if philosophy is taken in the narrow sense "the humanist contribution is still significant, especially in ethics and politics and to a lesser extent in logic".[71] "Ethics and politics and ..... logic": this is clearly an echo (and partial acknowledgement) of Garin's propositions.[72] Moreover, from the late seventies on Kristeller has applied the labels "intellectual"[73] and "scholarly"[74] to the humanist movement, which he had characterised before only as "cultural", "literary" or "educational".[75]

In summary we can acknowledge today that in the question of the philosophical relevance of humanism there exists a minimal consensus which consists in the recognition that humanism has certain "important philosophical implications and consequences" by virtue of which it can be considered as having made a "significant contribution" to various branches of philosophy. Nauert, for instance, a follower of Kristeller, holds a non-philosophical overall view of humanism but concedes that "the humanists' programme ..... does have some philosophical implications".[76] This compromise can be seen as representing the lowest common denominator of current theories on humanism. However, this minimal consensus must not obscure the fact that fundamental aspects of the question of the philosophical significance of humanism remain debated. This is not surprising, since the discussion of humanism and philosophy is a perennial controversy embedded in long-established traditions in European intellectual history. We are dealing here with distinct intellectual schools of thought which have been engaged in mutual rivalry since the establishment of Western philosophy and which continue to affect the discussion about humanism and philosophy. Today some argue that it is the contrast between the Platonic and the Aristotelian outlook, while others hold that it is the opposition between the disciplines and the different schools of rhetoric and philosophy which is relevant for the evaluation of the philosophical significance of humanism. The former view is taken by Garin, who links humanism with the Socratic (or Platonic) approach,[77] while the latter position is advocated by Kristeller, who associates humanism with the tradition of rhetoric,[78] represented by Protagoras and the sophists on the one hand and by Isocrates

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71 Kristeller, "Humanism", 134.

72 Cf. above, p. 89.

73 Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 137. This essay first appeared in Italian in *Il Rinascimento: Interpretazioni e problemi* (Rome, Bari 1979).

74 Kristeller, "Humanism", 133.

75 Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 22, 31 and 69. The two essays we are referring to date from 1954-55.

76 Ch. Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*, 12.

77 Cf. above, p. 90.

78 Cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 23-24 and 213-214.

and the orators on the other hand.[79] The division between philosophy and rhetoric is traced back to Plato, who attacked the Sophists as shallow rhetoricians,[80] or to Cicero, who criticised those philosophers who lacked eloquence.[81] Today the interpretive positions defined by Garin's and Kristeller's theories continue to be maintained. Some have defended the distinction between rhetoric and philosophy, associating the humanists with the ancient sophists.[82] Others have questioned this distinction, arguing that rhetoric can embody an "ideology"[83] and a science based on rational argument and positive proof.[84]

Apart from the interpretive debate mentioned, there is an intrinsic historical factor which has complicated the discussion about the philosophical relevance of humanism. The humanists launched an aggressive anti-philosophical polemic against the representatives of Aristotelianism in the universities, who embodied what can be considered the official culture of philosophy of the day. They wanted to challenge the dominant position of the academic establishment in the domain of philosophising, and so their criticism was often construed as a radical attack against philosophy itself. The anti-philosophical polemic was manifest from the very beginning of the humanist movement. Already Petrarch expressed fundamental reservations about the capacity of speculative philosophy, arguing that its sophisticated ratiocinations could impede the quest for higher wisdom. The Italian humanist eloquently questioned the value of established philosophy:

> How copious and how ridiculous are the vanities of philosophers, how many contradicting opinions show up; how great is their obstinacy, how great their impudence! Innumerable are the sects, innumerable the differences. How many quarrels break out, how ambiguous are all matters, how great and entangled is the confusion of words! Deep and inaccessible are the caverns where truth is hidden, and sophists lay countless ambushes which completely obstruct the road to truth, as it were, with briars and thorns, so as to make it impossible to distinguish which way leads straight to truth.[85]

Petrarch incessantly pointed to the limitations of Aristotelian philosophy, particularly to its emphasis on the rationally knowable, commenting that "it is with this small portion of what can be known that, inflated by presumption, we practice philosophy".[86] Aristotelian thinkers invested their time and energy in the pursuit of trivial goals, failing to attain any real wisdom:

> Who does not laugh at the insignificant little conclusions in which these highly

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79 Cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 217-218. Cf. also Breen, "John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition" in Breen, *Christianity and Humanism*, 110; Trinkaus, "A Humanist's Image of Humanism: The Inaugural Orations of Bartolommeo della Fonte" in Trinkaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism*, 71; and Bouwsma, *John Calvin* (New York 1988), 113.

80 Cf. Plato, *Protagoras*, 312d.

81 Cf. Cicero, *De oratore*, 1.12.54.-13.63.; 3.35.142.-143.

82 Cf. N. Struever, *The Language of History in the Renaissance* (Princeton 1970).

83 Cf. C. Ginzburg, "Préface" to L. Valla, *La Donation de Constantin*, ed. and trans. J.-B. Girard (Paris 1993), xiv, 114 n. 8. (Cantimori wrote simply "ideologia" but Frances Yates translated "aesthetico-moral ideology").

84 Cf. Ginzburg, "Préface" to Valla, *La Donation de Constantin*, xx.

85 Petrarch, *De ignorantia*, trans. H. Nachod in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago 1948), 125. This is a famous passage which was echoed in many variations throughout the Renaissance.

86 Petrarch, *De ignorantia* in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 124.

> educated people fatigue themselves and others? They waste their whole lives in such conclusions, since they are not good for anything else .....[87]

The Italian humanist also declares the philosophers incapable of grasping essential phenomena of human existence such as love, remarking that "so many philosophers have commented / on this, [but] all their phrases are low".[88]

A substantial part of the motivation of the humanist protest against scholastic philosophy sprang from a deeply rooted belief in the validity of living inner experience against the force of rational argumentation, particularly in metaphysical questions. The humanists frequently invoked the Pauline motto "not by philosophy and vain deceit",[89] which constituted something like a catchphrase in their attack on nominalist conceptions of philosophising. Paul, "that vessel of election who, snatched up even to the third heaven, heard the secret words which man is not permitted to speak",[90] as Valla wrote - Paul provided people with a canonical reminder to be wary of unenlightened philosophies [φιλοσοφιαζ] which cannot comprehend the mysteries of the Christian religion. The apostle's exhortation to the Colossians was often quoted by the humanists: "Make sure that no one captivates you with the empty lure of a 'philosophy' of the kind that human beings hand on, based on the principles of this world and not on Christ".[91] It was with reference to this Pauline principle that Valla said about Boethius (in whom he saw the beginning of medieval "barbarism"): "I think that no such ardent admirer of philosophy can please God".[92] And it was with reference to Pauline theology, too, that Valla challenged the wisdom of traditional philosophy:

> Let us not wish to know the height, but let us fear lest we become like the philosophers who, calling themselves wise, are made foolish; who, lest they should appear ignorant of anything, disputed about everything.[93]

The motives of the anti-philosophical polemic were different in each humanist, but generally speaking, the polemic does not appear to have derived from deeply orthodox religious convictions in the more significant humanists, who were certainly moralists but never theological fundamentalists.[94] The humanists' attack on philosophy was often based

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87 Petrarch, *De ignorantia* in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 136.

88 "Venga quanti philosophi fur mai, / a dir di ciò: tutte lor vie fien basse"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 262.

89 Cf. e.g. Valla, *Encomium Sancti Thomae Aquinatis*, trans. M. E. Hanley in L. A. Kennedy (ed.), *Renaissance Philosophy* (The Hague 1973), 23.

90 Valla, *On Free Will*, trans. Ch. Trinkaus in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 176.

91 *Col.* 2: 8.

92 Valla, *On Free Will* in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 179.

93 Valla, *On Free Will* in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 181.

94 There were exceptions, though: the strong religious preoccupations of Gian Francesco Pico or Guillaume Budé, for instance, would lead them to reject classical philosophy as something inferior to and incompatible with Christianity. However, this categorical attitude is, considered on the whole, atypical of humanism. For Gian Francesco Pico cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism* (Oxford 1965), 134-135. For Guillaume Budé cf. M.-M. de La Garanderie / D. F. Penham (eds.), "Introduction" to Guillaume Budé, *Le passage de l'hellénisme au Christianisme / De transitu Hellenismi ad Christianismum* (Paris 1993), xxxv-xxxviii.

on a kind of heterodox anti-rationalism, and it focused on Aristotelianism in its various forms. This tendency prevailed until the end of the Renaissance: Campanella, for instance, incessantly criticised "all types of Aristotelian abstraction",[95] and Bruno repeatedly questioned the Aristotelian approach to philosophising.[96]

Apart from heterodox anti-rationalism, what fuelled the anti-philosophical campaign of the humanists was the revival of the humanities. Petrarch argued that since the secrets of God remained impenetrable to human beings, they should apply the power of his intellect to the exploration of human things relevant for this life, such as the forms of the state or the nature of the mind. In particular, Petrarch sparked an interest in investigating the human condition, criticising sharply the tendency of contemporary academics towards "not knowing or even neglecting man's nature".[97] His appeal to "know man's nature" amounted, in reality, to a call for the exploration of the inner dimensions of the human world, and thus it can be seen as a first tentative step towards a science of psychology which would - against the age-old Aristotelian conception - be independent from philosophy. In the letter known as *The Ascent of Mont Ventoux* Petrarch shows a unique fascination for the phenomenon of the human soul, declaring: "I should have learned a long time ago from the pagan philosophers themselves that *nothing is admirable but the soul* beside whose greatness nothing can be as great".[98] Petrarch's fascination for the soul is both classical and modern, and it is modern not only in the sense of being characteristic of the Renaissance, but also in the sense of anticipating the growing scientific concern with the human psyche.[99]

Salutati endorsed Petrarch's focus on the human mind, reproaching scholastic philosophy for its alienation from reality and suggesting "that only a clearer consciousness of one's self could give rise to a philosophy superior to scholastic disputations and abstract constructions".[100] The quattrocento humanists followed Petrarch's call to investigate the nature of human beings, declaring the newly reshaped humanistic studies the basis of all intellectual life.[101] Poliziano contemptuously rejected the name of philosopher for himself and wanted to be called a grammarian, although he regarded himself a true philosopher precisely by virtue of being a grammarian.[102] For Poliziano grammar was not a low and limited type of knowledge, but, properly understood, the common grammar of language

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95 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 219.

96 Bruno was censured sharply for this in Calvinist Geneva. Cf. chapter 6, p. 313 n. 208.

97 Petrarch, *De ignorantia* in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 58-59.

98 Petrarch, *Selections from the* Canzoniere *and Other Works*, ed. and trans. M. Musa (Oxford 1985), 17 (italics added). Petrarch is referring to Seneca, *Epistles* 8.5.

99 This concern experienced a scientific breakthrough only in the twentieth century, when the foundations of modern depth psychology were laid. Some parallels between humanism and modern psychology will be described later on in this chapter and in chapter 4.

100 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 29.

101 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 55.

102 "nec aliud mihi nomen postulo quam grammatici"; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 70.

represented a higher grammar of thought which provided the key to all genuine learning. Thus authentic philosophising presupposed first-hand acquaintance with the original language and thought of the works of the great philosophers.[103] Poliziano's notion of the "grammarian-philosopher" corresponded to the notion of the "rhetorician-philosopher" advanced by Valla, and the two ideas inspired Pico to extend the conception of philosophy, declaring that philology was true philosophy.[104]

What all humanists shared in their anti-Aristotelian polemic was a criticism of the alienation of medieval philosophy from the reality of life, a criticism which crystallised in the motto *vita magis quam disputatio*, that is, "life is more important than discussion".[105] This motto, however, is a rhetorical formulation, and as such it can be deceiving, for the humanists did not want to express a total depreciation of philosophical inquiry, but rather a condemnation of the attitude of "discussion for discussion's sake". In fact, Erasmus coined the formula in 1523 in the context of depicting the history of the Christian church as a gradual defeat of faith by the rising force of rationalism, manifest in the establishment of the great scholastic systems of thought in the Middle Ages.[106] One of the most fervent advocates of the maxim *vita magis quam disputatio* was Rabelais, whose work contains colourful illustrations of that maxim. The French humanist continually denounced the academic approach of the nominalist "sophists", reproaching them for cultivating an all too cerebral mental attitude that would foster an alienation of the intellect from life. In particular, he ridicules their dialectic method, claiming that it is inadequate as a means of capturing the essence of the human condition. The practical inadequacy of the nominalist method is exposed in *Pantagruel*, where an instance of comical indecision on Gargantua's part is described as the inevitable outcome of the application of that method:

> For either side he had very logical arguments, and these arguments almost choked him, for he formulated them very well *in modo et figura*, but he could not come to any conclusion and so remained entangled in them: he was like a mouse stuck in pitch or like a kite caught in a trap.[107]

The humanists' motto *vita magis quam disputatio* embodies a kind of "anti-intellectualism which only intellectuals can advocate",[108] and it also contains a vindication of humanist thought as a practical philosophy of life. This aspect is often overlooked, although it is clearly apparent in the humanists' attachment to the Socratic (or Platonic) approach. In general the humanists tended to favour Plato over Aristotle,[109] and they

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103 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 71.

104 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 107.

105 Quoted in G. Bedouelle, "De l'humanisme aux réformes" in P. Chaunu, *L'aventure de la réforme* (Brussels 1991), 124.

106 Cf. Bedouelle, "De l'humanisme aux réformes", 124.

107 "D'un costé et d'autre il avoit argumens sophisticques ..... "; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 3. The expression *in modo et figura* is a typical example of nominalist technical jargon, applied to the procedures of the syllogistic method performed within the framework of traditional Aristotelian logic.

108 Bedouelle, "De l'humanisme aux réformes", 124.

109 Cf. below, pp. 118-120.

revered Socrates (or Plato respectively) as a spiritual father-figure. Erasmus bestowed the honour of holiness on the Greek philosopher when he coined the alliteration of "Sancte Socrate", having one of his characters in his *Religious Symposium* confess: "I can hardly refrain from saying: Holy Socrates, pray for us".[110] Rabelais, too, conceded to the Greek philosopher the first place among all thinkers, declaring that he was "without controversy the prince of philosophers".[111]

Another problem of the humanist anti-philosophical polemic is that it often presented scholasticism in the form of caricature. The humanists enjoyed mocking the scholastic philosophers in literary fashion by drawing exaggerated and distorted pictures of them. They did not always care to be fair or accurate in their criticism, and they often avoided engaging in serious critical discussion, being inclined to laugh at scholasticism and to pour out their scorn by way of satire or parody using irony and sarcasm. Vives provided good parodies of "those godlike syllogisms",[112] invoking, for instance, one of "those truly theological statements that are of such primary importance to our faith",[113] namely a (well-invented) piece of scholastic reasoning concerning the rite of baptism:

> Water is required for baptizing, and for baptizing water is required. Should the minimal amount of water that is required be given, or the minimal which is not required? the maximum which is required, or the maximum which is not required? the maximum which suffices (and) is not required, or the maximum which does not suffice and is not required? the minimum which suffices and is not required, or the minimum which neither suffices nor is required?[114]

Another typical example of humanist mockery of scholastic philosophy can be found in Rabelais' *Gargantua*, where a "sophist" of the University of Paris addresses a comically absurd speech in the style of so-called terminism to the protagonist, trying to induce him to give back the bells he has taken away from the church towers. Referring to the disputed bells, the sophist explains that they are known for "the substantial quality of their elementary constitution, as established in the terrestrial aspects of their essential nature, by virtue of which they keep away thunderstorms and whirlwinds from our vineyards".[115] The speech culminates in an awkward syllogism:

> Well, I will prove to you that you must give them [the bells] back to me. I argue as follows: Every bellable bell that is belled in a belfry makes its bell-clappers bell bellishly by belling in a bell-like way. In Paris there are bells. Therefore, gluc.[116]

This caricature of a syllogism may give an impression of the strenuous style of discourse

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110 Erasmus, *Colloquia*; quoted in Margolin, *Érasme: précepteur de l'Europe* (Paris 1995), 143.

111 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, Prologe.

112 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, ed. and trans. Ch. Fantazzi (Leiden 1979), 72.

113 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 74.

114 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 74. Fantazzi hints at a parallel between Vives and Erasmus: while the former "here ridicules the formulas devised by the scholastic theologians for the administration of baptism", the latter "had taken them to task for their attempt to apply to the sacraments the four Aristotelian types of cause" (Fantazzi in Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 74-75, n. 78).

115 "la substantificque qualité de la complexion elementaire que est intronificquée en la terresterité de leur nature quidditative pour extraneizer les halotz et les turbines suz noz vignes,..... "; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 19.

116 "Ça! je vous prouve que me les doibvez bailler. Ego sic argumentor: Omnis clocha clochabilis, in clocherio clochando, clochans clochativo clochare facit clochabiliter clochantes. Parisius habet clochas. Ergo gluc."; *ibid*. *Ergo gluc* was a customary formula used to conclude an absurd argumentation. Cf. Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. P. Jourda, vol. 1 (Paris 1991), 74, n. 3.

practised in the Collège de Montaigu, where terminist logic had robust advocates such as John Mair, who may have been Calvin's teacher. Rabelais' syllogism is, indeed, "an exquisite send-up of the tortured speech that Mair's school had to use because their Latin did double duty as natural language and as thinly formalised metalanguage".[117]

In order to understand better contemporary interpretations of the relationship between humanism and philosophy, it may be useful to briefly consider the assessments of the philosophical relevance of humanism in the intellectual history of Europe after the Renaissance. Since it is impossible to go into any detail in this question here, a historical sketch and a few paradigmatic examples epitomising the main developments must suffice. On the whole it can be observed that philosophical interest in humanist and Renaissance thought has decreased in modern European thought since the seventeenth century[118] and that at the same time an anti-philosophical interpretation of humanism has gathered momentum.[119] The principal reasons for this development were "a subtle change of the notion of philosophy" on the one hand and the emergence of modern science on the other.[120] During the seventeenth century

> rising interest in the investigation of the natural sciences and Cartesian philosophy introduced into the thought of Western Europe new elements that were essentially antagonistic to both the classical and religious revivals of the preceding period.[121]

One of the most influential agents of change in this development was, as mentioned, Descartes, whose incisive criticism of the humanistic outlook and method had important consequences. The French thinker qualified the humanistic disciplines (for him philology, history, rhetoric, poetry or literature) as non-philosophical on the grounds that they did not promote clarity in thinking but on the contrary induced unnecessary obscurity. Descartes deemed humanist thought unoriginal and disparaged of the humanists as literary enthusiasts, asserting that

> we can see that those are the wisest who have never dedicated themselves to literary pursuits; they are by far more solid and clear in their judgement of difficult things than those who are constantly engaged in learned controversies.[122]

In the eighteenth century humanism increasingly came to be appraised as a movement of literati who had created a "pleasing reign of poetry and fiction" which was to be "succeeded by the light of speculative and experimental philosophy", to cite Gibbon.[123]

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117 Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 98.

118 Cf. Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 335, 339. The recent resurgence of scholarly activity in the field of Renaissance philosophy has not yet remedied the deficiencies of the long-lasting neglect of critical attention and thus "the failure of memory is [still] a large one"; Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 343. Cf. also "Introduction" to Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 2.

119 Cf. E. Grassi, *Einführung in die humanistische Philosophie* (Darmstadt 1991), 1-18.

120 Hösle, "Philosophische Grundlagen eines zukünftigen Humanismus" in F. Geerk (ed.), *Kultur und Menschlichkeit: Neue Wege des Humanismus* (Basel 1999), 74.

121 Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, 68.

122 "Saepissime videamus illos, qui litteris operam nunquam navarunt, longe solidius et clarius de obviis rebus judicare, quam qui perpetuo in scholis sunt versati"; Descartes, *Regulae at directionem ingenii*, 4.1. Quoted in Latin in Grassi, *Einführung in die humanistische Philosophie*, 13-14.

123 E. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; quoted in Ferguson, *The Renaissance in*

In the nineteenth century Hegel shaped one of the most important and influential Romantic theories of the humanist movement. The German philosopher held that the *studia humaniora* were one of the three main elements which characterised the Renaissance as "a necessary phase of man's destined progression toward freedom".[124] However, Hegel did not regard humanism as genuine philosophy, arguing that it relied too much on the imaginative and artistic side of the mind instead of focusing on the rational power of the analytic intellect. He held that the humanistic approach was unsuitable for philosophical inquiry in scientific style since it was not capable of representing ideas directly as they are (which meant to him: in abstract form) but always employed some natural or artistic imagery.[125] In Hegelianism we encounter the standard argument of modern philosophy against humanism: philosophy is a science based on the systematising effort of the speculative intellect following the rules of rational logic, and since humanist thought does not correspond to the norms of this science, it cannot be considered genuine philosophy. Humanism, then, is a form of popular philosophy: writers like Ficino, Pico, Erasmus or Vives cannot be regarded as belonging to the canon of philosophy, strictly speaking, just as their spiritual forebears, Cicero, Seneca, and Quintilian are not philosophers, but skilful orators. In the twentieth century, after the two catastrophes of the World Wars, humanism has again come under attack. One of the most prominent opponents of humanism was Martin Heidegger, who in his *Letter on Humanism* (handed to Grassi two months after the end of the war in summer 1945 and published in 1947)[126] argued in a radical way that no original thought was to be expected from humanism because of its basic principle of taking the human being as the starting point of philosophy.[127] Heidegger's view has proved influential, and perhaps Kristeller, who had been his pupil,[128] was inspired by his teacher in his critical assessment of the philosophical dimension of humanism.

The humanist tradition was positively endorsed after the Renaissance principally in "literary" thinkers who continued to focus on the phenomenon of the human being. In Italy, the birthplace of Renaissance humanism, there emerged a late defender of its heritage who criticised Descartes' rejection of the humanistic studies and attempted to provide a corrective to the new rationalism in his *nova scientia*: Giambattista Vico. As one expert has pointed out, Vico's work "was designed in part to repair the damage to and the neglect of the old 'encyclopedia' [i.e. the cycle of humanistic studies] that Descartes had

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Historical Thought, 107.

124 Apart from the rise of art and the discoveries. "The next step in the dialectic process was, of course, the Protestant Reformation"; Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, 172-173.

125 Cf. Grassi, *Einführung in die humanistische Philosophie*, 14-15.

126 Cf. Grassi, *Einführung in die humanistische Philosophie*, 12.

127 Cf. Grassi, *Einführung in die humanistische Philosophie*, 17-18.

128 Cf. Ginzburg, "Préface" [to] Valla, *La Donation de Constantin*, xiv.

encouraged".[129] Later, there occurred a resurgence of humanistic values in the Enlightenment and in Romanticism which is sometimes subsumed under the name of *New Humanism* or *Second Humanism*.[130] Philosophically deeper than Renaissance humanism, *New Humanism* formulated a clear central doctrine: the development of individuality, which is declared the main purpose of life. The representatives of this neo-humanistic outlook include figures like Rousseau, Voltaire, Herder, Winckelmann, Humboldt, Schiller or Goethe,[131] all of whom shared the vision that individuals should realise in themselves the ideal of true humanity through the cultivation of the study of languages and anthropology. Even Nietzsche can be regarded as a belated exponent of *New Humanism*: he was a typically "literary" thinker with a Hellenistic outlook whose elaborate rhetoric "shows the remains of humanism in a remarkable way".[132]

In the twentieth century humanism lives on in various schools of thought such as phenomenology (especially the existentialist type), modern hermeneutics or philosophical anthropology.[133] More particularly, we encounter a current which is sometimes referred to as *Third Humanism* and which is characterised chiefly by an emphasis on the continuity of the study of the classics as well as of history.[134] This kind of modern humanism is represented by classical scholars like Werner Jaeger, who restated the ideals of the humanistic outlook in the context of their Graeco-Roman origins.[135] There are also important connections with modern depth psychology. The emphasis on knowing the nature of human beings in Renaissance humanism inevitably constituted an imperative to investigate the human mind more closely, and as such it contained a research impulse into the direction of psychology, if psychology is taken in a broad sense as the probing inquiry into the workings of the human psyche. There are a number of similarities between humanism and modern depth psychology, most conspicuous among which is perhaps the stress on individualism. As one expert has argued, today's

> psychoanalytical development theory [of the Freudian type] draws in each individual case on that process which the rediscovery of [Renaissance] humanism represents for modern history: the discovery of the perspective of the individual human being".[136]

In Jungian thought we encounter a similar notion of individualism which is reminiscent of the humanist position. Jung himself "thought no man properly educated without a

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129 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 128.

130 Cf. Hösle, "Philosophische Grundlagen eines zukünftigen Humanismus", 73-77.

131 We can mention his poem *The Secrets*, in which the figure of Humanus represents the ideal of true humanity: "Und fragst du mich, wie der Erwählte heisse, / Den sich das Aug' der Vorsicht ausersah, / Den ich zwar oft, doch nie genugsam preise, / Und dem so viel Unglaubliches geschah? / *Humanus* heisst der Heilige, der Weise, / Der beste Mann, den ich mit Augen sah; / Und sein Geschlecht, wie es die Fürsten nennen, / Sollst du zugleich mit seinen Ahnen kennen". J. W. von Goethe, *Die Geheimnisse* (Ein Fragment), vs. 241-248.

132 Hösle, "Philosophische Grundlagen eines zukünftigen Humanismus", 81.

133 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 132.

134 Cf. Hösle, "Philosophische Grundlagen eines zukünftigen Humanismus", 67-69, 77-86.

135 Cf. W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, 3 vols., trans. G. Highet (Oxford 1939-1945).

136 H. Raguse, "Humanistische und antihumanistische Elemente in der jüdisch-christlichen Tradition" in Geerk (ed.), *Kultur und Menschlichkeit*, 74.

thorough grounding in Classics"[137] and, as we shall show further on, he was a determined defender of the ideal of self-realisation.[138] Jung even credited the humanists with having furnished the material for the development of one of the key notions of his psychology, namely the principle of the feminine psychic element in man, stating that "already in the sixteenth century the humanists discovered that man has an anima; each man carries his female within himself, they said".[139]

We have already mentioned the psychoanalytical sociology of Fromm, who explicitly situated his thought in an ancient tradition of humanism going back to Socrates.[140] More recently, we have been able to witness the impact of what has been called the "linguistic turn" of the twentieth century engineered by intellectuals like Chomsky, whose theories of language and society contain distinctly humanistic philosophical implications. In Germany Gadamer has attempted to re-vindicate the humanist tradition, while in America the movement of "new rhetoric" has revived humanistic values. The advocates of the latter have declared in typical humanist fashion that their work represents a "*break with a concept of reason and reasoning due to Descartes* which has set its mark on Western philosophy for the last three centuries".[141] Humanism came increasingly under attack in the twentieth century, and its idealism has been seen as out of step with present patterns of thinking. In the late 1940s Jaspers, one of the outstanding advocates of modern humanism, regretted that "in our own day it has grown weak".[142] There is no doubt that at the beginning of the new millennium humanism is in decline and in crisis. The main reason why, as one author put it, "a humanistic confession is so difficult to make in our time" is the loss of belief in the value of classical antiquity and the dignity of human beings, for "humanistic slogans appear strangely helpless in a time when the mistrust of human nature by far exeeds that prevailing in the Middle Ages".[143]

Criticism of humanism has been incisive and has focused on questioning the virtues of individualism and classical education. Humanism has been accused of entertaining a

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137 F. McLynn, *Carl Gustav Jung* (London 1996), 390 (order of words inverted). Cf. also *C. G. Jung Speaking*, eds. W. McGuire / R. F. C. Hull (Princeton 1977), 348.

138 The thinker Jung disliked most was Heidegger (the antipode of humanism); cf. McLynn, *Carl Gustav Jung*, 358, 453. Jung also eschewed forms of thinking characterised by a high degree of systematisation and rational consistency, confessing that he was "unsystematic very much by intention"; Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (London 1963), 153. Concerning scholasticism he observed: "The Schoolmen left me cold, and the Aristotelian intellectualism of St. Thomas appeared to me more lifeless than a desert. I thought, 'They all want to force something to come out by tricks of logic, something they have not been granted and do not really know about. They want to prove a belief to themselves, whereas actually it is a matter of experience'"; Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 87.

139 *C. G. Jung Speaking*, 296. Cf. also Jung, CW 11, 30 n. 30.

140 Cf. chapter 1, pp. 49-50.

141 Ch. Perelman / L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric* (Notre Dame 1969), 1; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 132. *The New Rhetoric* was originally published in French as *Traité de l'argumentation* (Brussels 1958).

142 K. Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom* (London 1951), 179.

143 Hösle, "Philosophische Grundlagen eines zukünftigen Humanismus", 68.

cult of the ego, of fostering an elitist attitude (especially in education), of excessive aestheticism or of disregarding the scientific branches of knowledge. Some of this criticism is justified, but the fact must not be overlooked that some of it is tainted with ideological bias. A cursory glance at the different perceptions of Renaissance humanism from a historical perspective reveals that the present division into a non-philosophical and a philosophical interpretation is rooted in distinct intellectual traditions, such as Hegel-Heidegger-Kristeller or Vico-Croce-Garin. Moreover, this division is also related to "the contemporary *Kulturkampf* between the sciences and the humanities", for the predominance of the non-philosophical approach to humanism can in part be explained by the increasing tendency today to associate the discipline of philosophy with the sciences.[144] The importance of the humanities has been decreasing steadily, and this development has undoubtedly affected the appreciation of Renaissance humanism, promoting interpretations which are more critical and, on the whole, more negative. However, faced with the results of increased recent research activities in the field, experts have become quite cautious about committing themselves to any definitive view favouring, in general, a thorough reappraisal of the question of the philosophical significance of humanism. Even Kristeller has stated that the humanists' treatises on issues of moral philosophy

> have rightly attracted the attention of recent intellectual historians, but their direct impact on later philosophers and moralists is hard to assess ..... and it should probably be further investigated.[145]

Kraye and Stone have criticised the "prevalence of [a] caricatured view of Renaissance humanism" in contemporary research, in which the humanists are frequently portrayed as "narrow-minded pedants" obsessed with linguistic detail questions, and in which "the noteworthy contributions ..... [humanism] made to the whole range of philosophical disciplines have all too often been overlooked". The same scholars have asserted that Renaissance humanism is "a distinctive element of the philosophical and intellectual culture of this period" and as such "is very relevant to our understanding of the practice and development of philosophy in the early modern era".[146]

Having analysed the discussion on humanism and philosophy, we must find a way of dealing with the philosophical aspects of humanism. In chapter one we have encountered the idea of tackling the philosophical aspects of humanism in a separate line of inquiry; now, in the light of our considerations concerning humanism and philosophy, we can appreciate this idea better. Breen, who wrote the first book on Calvin and humanism, suggested (in a later study on humanism and the Reformation) adopting a twin-track approach to humanism in which the philological-historical elements would be distinguished

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144 Trinkaus, "Renaissance Ideas and the Idea of the Renaissance", 674. Trinkaus speaks of "the aspiration of many academic departments of philosophy in recent times to be bracketed with the natural sciences" (Trinkaus, "Renaissance Ideas and the Idea of the Renaissance", 674).

145 Kristeller, "The Cultural Heritage of Humanism: An Overview" in A. Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism* (Philadelphia 1988), vol. 3, 522.

146 J. Kraye / M. W. E. Stone (eds.), *Humanism and Early Modern Philosophy* (London 2000), xii.

from the philosophical ones.[147] This approach was taken up by Linder in an article on Calvinism and humanism[148] but has not been applied since. From our preliminary considerations it appears that the basic concept of Breen's and Linder's method is adequate for dealing with the intricate difficulties inherent in the subject of Calvin and humanism. A twin-track approach can provide a clear structure for this inquiry, but before separating the philosophical from the non-philosophical aspects, we should give an integral description of humanism without the intrusion of criteria related to the Reformation, supplying a concise intrinsic definition of humanism.[149] We can then work out a more detailed notion under two headings in accordance with the terminology proposed by Breen, *particular* and *general*.[150] In this way we may hope to attain something that comes near the desired "sharply-defined checklist of humanist traits".[151]

A concise intrinsic definition of humanism reflecting the major developments in recent research could be formulated as follows: humanism was an intellectual movement of the Renaissance which engineered a comprehensive revival of antiquity, championing on the one hand the Graeco-Roman ideal of *humanitas* or *παιδεια*,[152] that is, the view of a self-contained and anthropocentric culture, and promoting on the other hand the programme of the *studia humanitatis*, a cycle of studies consisting principally of the disciplines of philology, rhetoric, literature, history and moral philosophy. Advocates of humanism restated the contents of classical *humanitas* with a view to adapt them to the needs of contemporary society. They focused on what is in today's discourse on ethics sometimes called the *humanum*,[153] that is, a common set of values perceived as constituting the essentials of the human condition - which represented the basis of classical culture. Starting out from the ideal of *humanitas*, the humanists came to emphasise the human element and dimension in everything, designing with reference to ancient sources the curriculum of the *studia humanitatis*, the subjects of which we are accustomed to subsume under the name of *humanities*. There is a certain tendency in modern Renaissance scholarship to separate the concept of *humanitas* from the programme of the *studia humanitatis*. Kelley has observed that there are "two sorts of 'humanism' ..... one refers to the study of the humanities, the *studia humanitatis*, and the other to the study of humanity, *humanitas*, itself", and he underlined that "both indeed are relevant to an understanding of that cultural phenomenon located in the Renaissance".[154] There are,

147 Cf. chapter 1, p. 68.
148 Cf. chapter 1, p. 69.
149 Cf. introduction, p. 34 and above, p. 86.
150 Cf. chapter 1, p. 68.
151 Cf. introduction, p. 4.
152 There is no direct Greek equivalent, but the Roman concept is clearly based on the ideals of Greek culture. Cf. R. Riecks, "Humanitas" in J. Ritter / K. Gründer (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie,* vol. 3 (Basel 1974), 1231. Cf. the passage from Aulus Gellius quoted on the next page.
153 Cf. e.g. H. Küng, *Global Responsibility* (London 1991), 90.
154 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 130.

however, many specialists who have disassociated the notion of *humanitas* from that of the *studia humanitatis*, marginalising the former and putting the emphasis on the latter. This approach derives from an anti-philosophical view of humanism, and the separation it makes between *humanitas* and *studia humanitatis* corresponds more or less to the distinction between what we have called *general* and *particular* humanism. The approach we propose integrates both categories in equal measure, combining them for the concise description of humanism in this chapter, while setting them apart for the detailed description in chapters three and four.

The contents of the concept of *humanitas* were stated eloquently by Erasmus along the precepts of classical learning: the *bonae litterae* (that is, the *studia humanitatis*) are capable of making the individual truly human according to the principle - sometimes referred to as the "golden rule" of humanism - that "one is not born human; one must become human".[155] *Humanitas* signified the fulfilment of the individual's inborn potential as a civilised being, and thus "the word of *humanitas* does not just refer to our nature, but to a conduct worthy of human nature".[156] Human beings must not be governed by their instincts, but they must become truly human in the sense of developing the higher faculties of their mind and the nobler traits of their nature. Thus in the Renaissance *humanitas* came to symbolise a call for individuals to realise the potential of their own humanity and so to advance the civilisation and culture of their own day's society.[157] All humanists harboured the aspiration of making the world more human; Erasmus, for instance, confessed that "my aim has been ..... to promote human conduct, not to thwart it".[158] One of the most important classical sources for the humanists' concept of *humanitas* was Aulus Gellius, who wrote that

> those who have spoken Latin and have used the language correctly do not give to the word *humanitas* the meaning it is commonly thought to have, namely, what the Greeks call *philanthropia*, signifying a kind of friendly spirit and good feeling toward all men without distinction. Rather they gave to *humanitas* about the force of the Greek *paideia*, that is, what we call "learning and instruction in good or liberal arts". Those who earnestly desire and seek after these are most highly humanized. For the pursuit of that knowledge and the training given by it have been given to man alone of all animals, and for that reason it is termed *humanitas*, or humanity.[159]

Before Gellius Cicero had associated the term *humanitas* loosely with a "liberal" education, referring to the broad literary culture of a well-read representative of Roman civilisation.[160]

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155 Quoted in Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 4.

156 "humanitatis vocabulum non iam naturam nobis declaret, sed mores hominis natura dignos"; Erasmus, *Querela pacis* LB 627; quoted in H. E. Bödeker, "Menschheit, Humanität, Humanismus" in Brunner / Conze / Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart 1982), 1071.

157 Cf. P. Dresden, "Érasme et la notion de *humanitas*" in J. Coppens (ed.), *Scrinium Erasmianum*, vol. 1 (Leiden 1969), 529-540.

158 Erasmus, *Letter to Martin Dorp*, May 1515; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 69.

159 Aulus Gellius, *Noctes atticae*, 13.17.1.; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 2-3. Aulus Gellius was a second century (A.D.) Roman scholar; his *Noctes atticae* were a compilation of ancient wisdom resembling a concise one-volume dictionary.

160 Cf. Cicero, *Pro Archia*, 1.1-3.4; cf. Kristeller, "Humanism", 113. Cf. chapter 3, p. 146.

It is not easy to determine the contents of the concept of *humanitas* from the writings of the humanists for the whole movement, as there does not appear to have existed a common consensus and therefore an established doctrine among them. This is not surprising, since *humanitas* represents a notion which is embedded in idealist and utopian conceptions of the world. Indeed, *humanitas* is for the humanists a pure ideal and also the cornerstone of a utopia, and as such it is present in humanist thought from the beginning, crystallising more and more as the movement develops. Erasmus expressed his conviction that the renaissance of classical letters would give a whole new impetus to the cultural life of Europe, renewing the arts and transforming society in such a way that a new age could begin - an age in which the ideal of *humanitas* would emerge prominently and humanity prevail over barbarity.[161] The idea of a pacifist *humanitas* brought up by Erasmus is defended again by Rabelais, who confronts a peace-seeking "humanité" with a war-raging "inhumanité" in his *Gargantua*.[162] Grandgousier personifies the ideal of humanity, and he represents the typical "philosopher king" according to the Platonic model, which he explicitly evokes.[163] His humanity is manifest, apart from his pacifist inclinations, in his considerate approach to waging war and in the humane treatment of prisoners.[164] We also encounter the ideal of *humanitas* in the Rabelaisian utopia of Thélème. The strangely poetical inscription over the entrance to this imaginary temple of humanistic perfection gives a rough idea of the qualities constitutive of the ideal of humanity. The ideal is defined negatively by contrast with everything that is not human: "Non-human face / Of such people, to another place / It may go and appear: / It cannot stay here; / *Go away from this place*, / *Non-human face*!"[165] But the champions of humanity are defined positively as educated people who are capable of leading society from a barbaric state to a civilised condition and intent on promoting the development of culture. Those pioneers of humanity are "Good people, / Serene and subtle, / Shunning villainy, / *They are the instruments / Of civility*, / Those good people".[166]

In a more fundamental sense the concept of *humanitas* stands for an anthropocentric outlook on life in analogy to classical thought. As such it epitomises the re-emergence of the anthropocentric perspective of antiquity in the Renaissance. The humanists were the chief

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161 Erasmus, *Letter to Martin Dorp*, May 1515; quoted in Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. B. Radice (Harmondsworth 1971), 226.

162 "Où est raison? Où est *humanité*?"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 31.

163 "C'est (dist Gargantua) ce que dict Platon, *lib. v. de Rep.* [*Politeia*, 5. 473d]: que lors les republiques seroient hereuses quand les roys philosopheroient ou les philosophes regneroient"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 45.

164 Cf. e.g. Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 46, heading: "Comment Grandgousier traicta *humainement* Toucquedillon prisonnier" (italics added). The notion underlying Rabelais' pacifist ideal of *humanitas* is the belief that "nature created man in the first golden age as a being born for peace, not war ..... later, in the iron age, nature inspired him to get armed"; cf. Rabelais, *Le Tiers Livre*, chapter 8 [1546].

165 "Face non humaine / De telz gens, qu'on maine / Raire ailleurs: céans / Ne seroit séans; / *Vuidez ce dommaine, / Face non humaine*"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 54 (italics added).

166 "Compaignons gentilz / Serains et subtilz, / Hors de vilité, / *De civilité / Cy sont les oustilz*, / Compaignons gentilz"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 54 (italics added).

promoters of the revival of the ancient anthropocentric approach and introduced a strong new accent on the human being into contemporary culture. They began to lay emphasis on the knowledge and cultivation of the self. Vives asserted that the key principle in the pursuit of wisdom (*sapientia*) was "that most celebrated axiom among the ancients, 'Know Thyself'";[167] Rabelais proclaimed that "the first principle of philosophy is: know yourself",[168] adding that "this sentence *ΓΝΟΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ*, which was found in Delphi on the front of the temple of Apollo, was written by a divine hand".[169] Thus *humanitas* became a symbol of self-exploration and self-realisation, deriving from the culture of classical antiquity and manifest in that famous maxim of Delphi, which taught that the individual was the central point of reference and the main determinant in the attainment of wisdom.[170] Apart from self-knowledge, *humanitas* also signified a Socratic and questioning attitude to life characterised by a fundamental focus on the human being. Rabelais is one the chief exponents of this anthropocentric approach. When he describes the new education Gargantua receives after having undergone the rigid procedures of scholastic routine, he underlines that it is a priority in humanistic studies to establish the relevance of all intellectual activity for human beings and their condition, affirming that what is taught in school must always be set in relation to and supplemented by "practical cases *concerning the human situation*".[171] These words constitute indeed one of the catchphrases of the humanist movement, and they represent a general indicator of its main thrust. There are also other typical phrases which attest to this new stress on investigating the human condition. We can again refer to Rabelais, whose defence of the principle of *humanité* contains expressions such as "from the *human* view-point"[172] or "conceived by *human* understanding".[173]

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167 Vives, *Introduction to Wisdom*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 65.

168 Rabelais, *Le Tiers Livre*, chapter 25.

169 Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*, chapter 48 (syntax changed).

170 At the end of the Renaissance this meaning of *humanitas* was echoed in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Before his squire assumes political responsibility the illustrious knight advises him to "consider what you are and try to *know yourself*, which is the most difficult study in the world"; Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 42, 824 (italics added). The squire, in turn, addresses the people of his home town thus on returning home after all the adventures: "Open your arms and welcome your son Don Quixote too, who, though he was conquered by another, nevertheless conquered himself; that is the best kind of victory a man can wish for, and I have his own word for it"; Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 72, 1038.

171 "cas practicques et *concernans l'estat humain*"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 23 (italics added).

172 "sus l'estimation *humaine*"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 31 (italics added).

173 "par *humain* entendement conceue"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 31 (italics added). The anthropocentric "turn" championed by Rabelais in France in the first half of the sixteenth century lived on in the second half of the century in the figure of Montaigne. For the latter the human element was at the centre of all intellectual inquiry and "*human* capacity" ("l'*humaine* capacité") represented the measure of all things; Montaigne, *Essays*, 1. 21 (italics added). The French humanistic philosopher drew his contemporaries' attention away from the outside world to the individual and, more particularly, to himself: "We entangle our thoughts in generalities and the causes and conduct of the universe, which conduct themselves very well without us, and we leave behind our own affairs, and Michel, who concerns us even more closely than man in general"; Montaigne, *Essays*, 3.9; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 118. Considering himself one of the "moderns", Montaigne still looked up to the "ancients": the Roman saying "nothing human is alien to me" ("humanum nihil a me alienum puto") was (and still is) carved, among other classical mottoes, in the ceiling above his writing table; cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 118.

We must not overlook the fact that the humanist quest to explore the inner world of the individual represents essentially an inquiry into human psychology. Indeed, the urge to discover the self and the concomitant emphasis on self-knowledge signify the opening of new avenues of investigation, anticipating (in a very tentative way) some of the advances made in modern depth psychology. We recognise in the humanists the faint beginnings of that intensive fascination for the human soul which centuries later grows to more substantial proportions in psychoanalysis and analytical psychology.[174] The notion of the development of the self is central to both humanism and modern psychology, and we can see a common ideal of culture tied to that notion which only came to explicit expression in the twentieth century. Thus when Jung said that "attainment of consciousness is culture in the broadest sense, and self-knowledge is therefore the heart and essence of this process",[175] he struck a familiar humanistic note the echo of which can also be perceived in Freudian psychology.[176]

The ideal of classical *humanitas* was revived by Petrarch but it remained vaguely defined in his work. Petrarch's heirs, most prominently among them Salutati and Bruni, elaborated the concept and linked it with the notion of the *studia humanitatis*, a term adopted by Bruni from Cicero and Pliny the Younger.[177] Both Salutati and Bruni suggested what Erasmus would disseminate later more efficiently in print: that the *studia humanitatis* were the proper means to refine the nature of human beings in order to make them cultivated and civilised, and that only education in the humanities made the individual a true human being. The humanists after Petrarch held that the *studia humanitatis* were the appropriate educational instruments to realise the ideal of *humanitas*. Bruni expressed the basic conception of the *studia humanitatis* when he wrote in a letter to one of his friends that "for this reason these studies are called *humanities*: because they make man perfect and adorn him".[178] On a more fundamental level, the *studia humanitatis* embodied for the humanists a new type of learning which they often called "true" or "genuine" or "honest"[179] because they thought it contained elements of existential relevance and significance for the human condition. It was this concern for the human relevance of these studies which made Erasmus say in that all learning was "blind" without the humanities.[180]

As far as the terminology employed by the humanists to refer to the concept of the *studia humanitatis* is concerned, there was no standardised code of usage, but a variety of

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174 Cf. above, p. 94 (n. 99).
175 Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 357.
176 Cf. above, p. 99.
177 Cf. Cicero, *Pro Murena*, 61 and *Pro Caelio*, 24; Pliny the Younger, *Paneg.*, 47.
178 "propterea *humanitatis studia* nuncupantur, quod hominem perficiant atque exornent"; Bruni to Nicolao, *Epistolarum*; quoted in Bödeker, "Menschheit, Humanität, Humanismus", 1070 (italics added).
179 Cf. below, p. 114 n. 226.
180 Erasmus, *Antibarbarus*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 66.

expressions were employed. This applies to the humanist movement as a whole, as well as to its distinct strands and, to a certain degree, even to the individual authors, who were not always very consistent in their use of terms when referring to the humanistic studies. While some of the Italian humanists of the early fifteenth century showed a marked preference for the expression *studia humanitatis*, Erasmus, and with him many Northern humanists of the sixteenth century, often called the humanistic studies *bonae litterae*, but often also *litterae humanae*, *litterae humaniores* or *studia humaniora.*[181] As regards the concrete meaning of the expression *studia humanitatis* and its associated terms, a more or less clear definition of the individual disciplines of which the humanistic studies consisted only emerged in the first half of the fifteenth century. According to this definition, the humanistic studies comprised the subjects (or fields) of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history and moral philosophy, while they were based on the body of the Greek and Latin classics.[182] They did not, formally, include the subjects of logic, mathematics and astronomy from the traditional curriculum of the liberal arts, and they did not include, either, the new "advanced" subjects of theology, law, medicine, natural philosophy and metaphysics.[183]

From the beginning the concept of the *studia humanitatis* was associated with the Ciceronian idea of the unity of wisdom and eloquence, that is, it was connected with the notion of a broadly based erudition combining the elements of philosophical and literary learning.[184] And from the beginning, the humanists recognised that their promotion of the idea of wisdom and eloquence in conjunction with the programme of the *studia humanitatis* would be subject to the reproach that philosophy could all too easily be outweighed by rhetoric - a reproach which, as they were aware, had already been levelled against the underlying classical authority, Cicero. Anticipating this criticism, Salutati and Bruni emphasised that moral philosophy, not grammar or rhetoric, was the actual core of the *studia humanitatis*, and their principal discipline. They uttered the (often ignored) warning that the new humanistic studies must not be allowed to be diluted into a purely "cultural" or "literary" matter.[185] A century after the two Florentines had spoken, Erasmus showed that Salutati's and Bruni's apprehensions were justified. He complained that traditionalist

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181 Cf. P. S. Allen, "Humanities" in *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 14 (1971), 130.

182 Cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 22, 98. As evidence Kristeller cites, among other testimonies, Nicholas' V library canon for Cosimo de Medici of 1463: "de studiis autem humanitatis quantum ad grammaticam, rhetoricam, historicam et poeticam spectat ac moralem"; Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 282 n. 60. A reflection of this concept illustrative of French humanism can be found in Loys Le Roy, who wrote that "in this period grammar, poetry, history, rhetoric, and dialectic [i.e. philosophy] have been illumined by expositions, annotations, corrections, and innumerable translations". L. Le Roy, *De la vicissitude ou variété des choses en l'univers*, quoted in Ross / McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader* (New York 1953), 92.

183 Cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 23. Kristeller has stated that "after the rise of the universities ..... it became apparent that the seven arts no longer represented the sum total of secular learning ..... and that the new university subjects, that is, theology, philosophy, medicine and jurisprudence, were different from the liberal arts and were more advanced subjects of study and instruction"; Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 244.

184 Cf. Kristeller, "Humanism", 122-123. Cf. also chapter 3, pp. 153-154.

185 Cf. Bödeker, "Menschheit, Humanität, Humanismus", 1070.

academics never grew tired of affirming contemptuously that the humanist "is a grammarian, not a philosopher", or "a rhetorician, not a lawyer", or "an orator, not a theologian",[186] commenting that his opponents "call those who have learned Good Letters grammarians, thinking the name a severe reproach".[187]

The concept of the *studia humanitatis* represents one of the chief driving forces of humanism and reveals a substantial portion of its *raison d'être*: the aspiration to achieve a renewal of the intellectual world and "to reform education and society as a whole".[188] The humanists thought that by carrying out a thorough reform of the arts with reference to classical ideals, which suggested a closer identification of art with human life, they would be able to bring about a whole renaissance of contemporary culture and society. Naturally, this concept of rebirth is of universal significance applying (in varying degree) to every kind of renaissance at any time in history.[189] Various terms have been suggested for denoting this renovatory impulse of humanism; perhaps it is best to use the word "reformism",[190] so that we can speak of the *intellectual reformism* of humanism. The source of this intellectual reformism was the revival of the classics, in the wake of which antiquity emerged as "a cultural alternative",[191] providing an occasion for rethinking and a stimulus for innovation. From the point of view of psychological history, the renewed contact with classical thought mediated by the humanists brought about what has variously been called "a reorganisation of consciousness"[192] or "a restructuring of mentality".[193] The change of mentality or consciousness that occurred in the Renaissance was strongly influenced by humanist intellectual reformism, the nature of which was fundamentally liberal, secular, anthropocentric and individualistic. There is no doubt: the humanist movement was, particularly in its leading figures, often characterised by a spirit of openness and dynamism, and it was "essentially non-doctrinal, tolerant of diverse opinions and responsive to rational argument".[194]

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186 He added in optimist mood that "before long things will take another turn"; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 6.

187 Erasmus, *Letter to Henry Bullock*, 1516; quoted in Ross / McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, 405.

188 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 34.

189 We cannot examine this issue in detail here. However, instead of referring back to the period of the Middle Ages, which is - for obvious reasons - usually chosen for comparisons of this kind, we can pick an example from recent history in order to illustrate the meaning of the concept of cultural rebirth from a more modern perspective. Let us take, for instance, the Celtic Renaissance and one of its major exponents, William Butler Yeats. When Yeats tried to define the literary aspects of the Celtic Renaissance, he described the feeling of rebirth from the point of view of the artist, declaring with regard to the genre of drama that "in every art, when we consider that it has need of a renewing of life, we *go backward* till we light upon a time when it was nearer to human life and instinct". "We examine", he continues, "that earlier condition and think out its principles of life that we may be able to separate accidental from vital things", for, he concludes, "in this, as in all other arts, one finds its law and its true purpose when one is *near the source*"; W. B. Yeats, *Explorations* (London 1962), 210, 211 and 214 (italics added).

190 Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 80.

191 The term was coined by Thomas M. Greene; cf. R. G. Witt, "The Humanist Movement" in Brady / Oberman / Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History 1400-1600*, vol. 2 (Leiden 1995), 94.

192 The term was coined by Michael Baxandall; cf. Witt, "The Humanist Movement", 94.

193 Witt, "The Humanist Movement", 94.

194 Witt, "The Humanist Movement", 119.

It has been affirmed that "humanism began as an insurrection of the liberal and lowly 'arts' against the intellectual hegemony of the 'sciences', installed at the top of the medieval university".[195] The humanistic "insurrection" evoked here can be interpreted as a reaction against the dogmatic stagnation into which some schools of late medieval thought had fallen, and it can be regarded as a protest against a certain artificiality manifest in some currents of scholasticism and especially nominalism. The proclamation of the programme of humanistic studies was, to some extent, the result of a revolt against authoritarian and conformist tendencies in medieval intellectual life. The early humanists stirred up resistance against what they judged a kind of institutional inertia, complaining of a sterile atmosphere in the university faculties - the institutions embodying the very spirit of the medieval "school". Those early humanists were indeed a "lunatic fringe", an "avant-garde ostentatiously observing a set of values outside the normal intellectual framework", and they represented "an intellectual rebellion more complete and bizarre ..... than the rebellion of Wycliffe or Hus".[196] The expression "intellectual rebellion" is quite appropriate, for the humanist movement championed a new ideology of intellectual and civic emancipation which we could call in analogy to today's *liberation theology* a *liberation philosophy*. This liberation philosophy derived essentially from the ideas associated with the ideal of *humanitas*; its central concern was the conception of a humanisation of the intellectual world. However, if we speak of a humanising liberation, we should try and define the terms of this notion: liberation from what?, and to what? Humanist liberation philosophy had two principal emancipatory ambitions. First, it aimed at reducing the artificial elements in contemporary thought, focusing on providing correctives to remedy the alienation of some schools of late scholastic philosophy and theology from human reality. Second, it intended to get away from the authoritarian patterns of thinking which had come to determine many aspects of the intellectual life of the epoch and which had led to a sort of intellectual stagnation, inhibiting the dynamism in the world of letters and learning.

The vindication of the two main emancipatory ambitions of humanist liberation philosophy was based on the promotion of two positive values: nature and freedom. As far as the former is concerned, there existed in humanism right from its beginning a distinct tendency to lay emphasis on thinking and acting in accordance with the principles of nature, and to advocate a general orientation (or re-orientation) towards nature and what is natural. Even before the ideal of *humanitas* had taken concrete shape and the *studia humanitatis* had been elaborated as an educative programme, there was a conscious sense among the humanists that nature represented a fundamental norm for human beings. This awareness and the concomitant proclamation of nature's way and rule as a decisive factor of culture and civilisation was partly rooted in the opposition against the artificial elements

195 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 5 (quote abbreviated).
196 Holmes, *The Florentine Enlightenment 1400-1450* (Oxford 1969), 4 (order of citations inverted).

in late medieval Aristotelianism. Petrarch recommended that "the best is to follow Nature in everything, for to go against her is to fight a losing battle".[197] In quattrocento humanism the theme of nature as a guideline for humanity attained some prominence. Although it never reached such a degree of explicitness as in the Enlightenment, it gradually developed into a kind of leitmotif of humanist liberation philosophy, and as such it can be perceived as a keynote in humanist discourse. By the sixteenth century the leitmotiv of nature had spread into almost every field of study. In medicine Paracelsus thought he had been "chosen by God to extinguish and blot out all the phantasies, delusive words [and] dogmas" of Aristotle and his followers (among others) by means of his new "theory proceeding from the light of nature".[198] Thus the humanists can be seen, from this point of view, as forerunners of Enlightenment philosophers like Rousseau, whose call *retour à la nature!* they anticipated, without, however, displaying the sharp programmatic awareness of the latter.[199]

As far as the second positive value of humanist liberation philosophy is concerned, it is clear that since the intellectual reformism of the humanists aimed at repudiating the rigid attitudes prevailing in scholasticism, the ideological programme of humanist liberation philosophy contained a campaign for more freedom. This campaign responded to a rising desire for the independence of the individual from traditional forms of thinking, while its key-instrument, the *studia humanitatis*, represented a new type of secular, anthropocentric education establishing itself in competition with the orthodox mode of the *studia divinitatis*. Erasmus illustrates the progress of this liberating impulse: he was dedicated to promoting the new ideal of classical *humanitas*, attempting to vindicate the independence of the individual against the predominance of the old *divinitas* and proposing a humanistic theology which would foster a more tolerant and undogmatic form of Christian belief. The affirmation of the individual's new freedom, however, varies from humanist to humanist, and it seems impossible to discern a common doctrine for the whole movement. Nevertheless, the assertion of freedom as an essential part of the human condition, or simply its endorsement as a relevant factor from the individual's subjective view-point, mostly - if not exclusively - in the form of attributing a substantial portion of free will to human beings, is a distinctive feature of humanist thought.

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197 "Obedir a Natura in tutto è il meglio, / ch'a contender con lei il tempo ne sforza"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 361; the second line literally means "for to go against her means to lose one's strength in the long run".

198 Paracelsus, *The Book Concerning the Philosophers* (c. 1520); quoted in Ross / McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, 553 (quote abbreviated).

199 Cf. chapter 3, pp. 138-140, 158-160. By the end of the Renaissance, the influence of the humanist idea of nature is evident in all areas of culture from science to art and religion. While Cervantes stated that in "verisimilitude and imitation of nature ..... lie the highest qualities of literature" (*Don Quixote*, part 1, chapter 47, 478), Montaigne, after considering the possibilities of the will's "disobedience" towards reason, concluded "however that may be, ... meanwhile nature will have its way" ("Quoi qu'il en soit, ... nature tirera cependant son train"; *Essays*, 1. 21). Humanist thought is echoed in Boileau's remark "chase away nature, and it comes back galloping", which represents something like the precipitate of humanist liberation philosophy with regard to its defence of nature ("Chassez le naturel, il revient au gallop"; quoted in S. de Madariaga, *Don Quixote*, 2nd ed. (London 1961), 2).

Rabelais is a representative example of the humanist attitude in France at the time of Calvin. His affirmation of freedom is inextricably linked with his passionate opposition to medieval scholasticism and monasticism. In the utopian temple of Thélème "it was decreed ..... that *everyone should live in freedom*";[200] the whole life of the community "was not absorbed by laws, statutes or rules, but it was spent according to their *liking and free will*. ..... Their rule only consisted of one clause: *DO WHAT YOU LIKE*".[201] Personal freedom was a crucial ingredient of the Thelemite outlook, and so it was of humanist moral philosophy in general. Most humanists shared the idealistic belief that only a free human being could be a good human being, for in their eyes any kind of servitude or bondage engendered a potential to do evil. Rabelais argued that "free people ..... have by nature an instinct and spur which always drives them to do virtuous deeds and makes them shun vice": if human beings, naturally born to be free, are subjected to the pressure of moral constraint, their natural impulse to do good is inhibited and they will inevitably seek the illicit evil, for "we always do the forbidden things and desire what is denied us".[202]

Perhaps the most important part of the humanists' rebellion and struggle for intellectual liberation was their criticism of what they perceived to be the overvaluation of logic and rational argumentation in scholastic philosophy. On the constructive level, this criticism consisted in the attempt at promoting all forms of "sentient cognition"[203] and in the effort at developing the powers of "emotional intelligence".[204] Since these aspects of humanism figure among the more controversial issues, we have discussed them in the introduction with regard to questions arising from Calvin's thought.[205] We can now present these issues here in the context of the intellectual current to which they properly belong, that is, we can place them in the conceptual framework of the humanist outlook. Thus from an intrinsic perspective the tendency to attribute importance to "sentient cognition" and to shift the focus of attention to "emotional intelligence" can be interpreted as a vital part of the humanists' plea for freedom and their campaign for intellectual liberation, particularly from the straight jacket of scholastic thought. In a wider sense, the defence of "sentient cognition" and "emotional intelligence" can also be seen as an outgrowth of the ideal of *humanitas*, for in general *humanitas* meant human wholeness or the free development of the total potential of one's humanity, and this implied that the underrated or suppressed faculties of the human mind, in this case the non-rational ones, should be promoted and developed.

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200 "fut constitué ..... que *chascun ..... vesquist en liberté*"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 52 (italics added). The author argues "the greatest folly in the world was to let oneself be ruled by the sound of a bell, and not by the precepts of one's common sense and understanding", Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 52.

201 "Toute leur vie estoit employée ..... selon leur *vouloir et franc arbitre* ..... *FAY CE QUE VOULDRAS*"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 57 (italics added).

202 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 57.

203 Cf. introduction, p. 28.

204 Cf. introduction, p. 27.

205 Cf. introduction, pp. 27-30.

If we understand *humanitas* as human wholeness or completeness, we recognise that the demands of the humanist liberation philosophy, particularly the stress on the dimension of "emotional intelligence", amounted to a thorough challenge of the traditional conceptions of the mind. According to the medieval Aristotelian view, the mind consisted of four faculties, namely reason, will, memory and imagination, of which the first, that is, reason, was rated the dominating power. The humanists were prepared to accept this classical fourfold division, but they strongly questioned the tenet of the absolute primacy of reason. Just as they rejected the rational mode of thought cultivated by the scholastic philosophers, they repudiated the exclusive valuation of reason the latter undertook, arguing for a more "egalitarian" distribution of power among the faculties of the mind and thus "for the emotional integrity of the mind and its various aspects".[206] In accordance with the ideal of *humanitas*, the individual disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* specifically promoted the three faculties judged inferior in Aristotelian philosophy and marginalised in scholastic education: rhetoric and moral philosophy invigorated the will, poetry animated the imagination and grammar and history trained the memory.[207] Therefore in educational theory the humanists would advocate the idea of a harmonious balance between the individual faculties of the mind,[208] while in their writings on moral philosophy they would tend to focus on the phenomenon of the will, asserting in vivid (and pedagogically motivated) rhetoric the superiority of the will over reason.[209]

In summary, the conception of *humanitas* as human wholeness and of the *studia humanitatis* as a means of forming that wholeness allows us to interpret the humanists' liberation philosophy as a kind of intellectual reformism which did not emphasise rational knowledgeability and logical coherence to the point of excluding other possibilities of cognition and understanding, but which also admitted intuitive or emotive forms of intelligence. This attitude is illustrated by the catchphrase "I know it because I feel it"[210] or by the humanist stress on increasing "the capacity to feel and become wise".[211] From this point of view, humanist intellectual reformism can be interpreted as an apology for psychology within philosophy and, by extension, within theology. It can be understood, moreover, as an effort at providing a psychological corrective to the traditional scholastic ways of philosophising and theologising. Thus the transition from *divinitas* to *humanitas* can be seen as a liberation process in the psychological sense.

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206 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 117.

207 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 117.

208 Cf. below, p. 114.

209 Cf. chapter 4, pp. 196-198. Obviously, the defence of the faculties of will, memory and imagination was not strictly bound to the categories we have just mentioned. Montaigne discussed the phenomenon of the imagination in the context of the question of the power of psychological suggestion, stating that "a strong imagination creates facts" ("fortis imaginatio generat casum") and avowing that "I am among those who feel the great pull of the imagination. Everyone is struck by it, but some are knocked down. Its impression pierces me. And my talent is to escape from that pull, not to resist against it"; Montaigne, *Essays*, 1. 21.

210 Quoted in introduction, p. 27.

211 Quoted in introduction, p. 29.

The crucial link in the transition from *divinitas* to *humanitas*, particularly if we emphasise the association of *humanitas* with emotional intelligence, was the discipline of poetry, which, as the humanists claimed, connected the study of humanity with that of divinity in a special way.[212] Poetry was a human creation, but according to ancient doctrine it proceeded from divine inspiration, so that the poet could be seen as a kind of mystic delivering God's messages from the human point of view. As Boccaccio wrote:

> poetry, which ignorant triflers cast aside, is a sort of fervid and exquisite invention, with fervid expression, in speech or writing, of that which the mind has invented. It proceeds from the bosom of God, and few, I find, are the souls in whom this gift is born; indeed, so wonderful a gift it is that true poets have always been the rarest of men.[213]

Petrarch stressed that for the humanists poetry enjoyed a privileged status among the arts and was indeed the domain of the chosen few:

> you must recollect that although the delights of poetry are most exquisite, they can be fully understood only by the rarest geniuses, who ..... possess a marked contempt for the things of this world, and who are by nature especially endowed with a peculiar elevation and freedom of soul.[214]

Poetry, moreover, had a universal signification: in the context of the classical revival and before the invention of the novel it could mean "literature" in a general sense. In the Renaissance poetry became a subtle symbol of true *humanitas*; it was seen as containing old and divine truths in contemporary and personal form, appealing to the individual because written from the perspective of the human condition. From the point of view of *humanitas*, the reborn art of poetry was the earliest messenger of modernity because it anticipated the coming change of mentality by introducing the subjective mood into literature, thereby laying the basis for the new outlook of individualism.

The function of poetry as an agent of change in the transition from *divinitas* to *humanitas* was already manifest in the declarations of the so-called pre-humanists. Against the anti-poetical outlook of the Middle Ages, which rested largely on Aquinas' qualification of poetry as "the lowest of all sciences" and on Aristotle's judgement that "poets lie",[215] Albertino Mussato defended the status of poetry by advocating the divine origin of the art and by affirming the divine inspiration of the poet.[216] According to Mussato poetry could be regarded as a form of philosophy or, as ancient doctrine suggested, theology, and as such it was destined to be an intermediary between the human and the divine, representing "an actual link between the terrestrial and the celestial".[217] Petrarch illustrates the function of poetry as an agent of change in the transition from *divinitas* to *humanitas*: he was the first fully-fledged humanist, and he was a poet. In his famous canzone "Italia mia", which is quoted at the end of Machiavelli's *Prince*, he restates the

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212 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 108.

213 Quoted in Ross / McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, 421.

214 Quoted in Ross / McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, 122.

215 The Platonic heritage was more ambivalent, but part of it could equally be interpreted in an anti-poetical way. Cf. D. Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics" in Rabil, *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 3, 85.

216 Mussato was a pre-humanist active in Padua; cf. Arguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 86.

217 Arguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 86.

topos of the poet as the proclaimer of divine truth when he invokes God and says: "let your truth be heard through my mouth, unworthy as I am".[218] The Italian humanist endorses the classical idea of the poet as an *alter Deus*, thereby contributing substantially to that "heaven-storming program"[219] of Renaissance poetics. His devotion to poetry almost assumed mythical proportions;[220] it was such that in moments of literary enthusiasm he could assert that "there is nothing in the world that verses cannot do".[221]

The humanist movement advanced the process of intellectual emancipation epitomised by the progress from *divinitas* to *humanitas*, promulgating the idea of a reformed education that would be "liberal" in the sense of fostering the individual's capacity of thinking independently, which is to say, an education that would be "liberal in the sense that studying makes people free human beings", to cite Vergerio.[222] The idea of a liberal education implied the construction of a new type of self-contained education more detached from the traditional theological or philosophical schools, thus enabling individuals to realise their potential of humanity in a more independent way.[223] The humanists were convinced that such a liberal education was an important tool for making the world more civilised and for creating a new sense of culture on the basis of the ideal of self-realisation, for they held the belief that "man is, as it were, created a second time by education".[224] Their conception of a reformed liberal education was based, among other things, on the idea of restoring a better balance between the individual faculties of the mind after the long-lasting one-sided focus on rational elements in the medieval schools, particularly in nominalism.[225]

As far as the concrete contents of a viable programme for the new education was concerned, it is evident that the corpus of classical literature would suggest itself to the humanists. Indeed, they argued that ancient letters would serve the purpose of educating in a truly liberal way very well, since they were less permeated with the idea of philosophical (or theological) orthodoxy than medieval literature. Therefore Erasmus endorsed the classics as the proper basis of a reformed liberal education, calling the ancient letters alternatively "good", "human" or "fine".[226] Criticising the pretensions of scholastic

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218 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 128 (vs. 15-16).

219 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 108.

220 We are aware that poetry lost importance for Petrarch towards the end of his life, when he increasingly turned to sacred literature and confessed that "I came to regard the works of the poets as mere amenities"; Petrarch, *Letter to Posterity* in *Selections from the "Canzoniere" and Other Works*, 3. There is, however, no doubt that Petrarch proved more influential as a poet and man of (profane) letters than as a theological thinker.

221 "Nulla al mondo è che non possano i versi ..... "; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 239.

222 Quoted in Garin, *La educación en Europa, 1400-1600: Problemas y programas*, trans. M. E. Méndez LLoret (Barcelona 1987), 112.

223 Representatives of Northern humanism were inclined to put less emphasis on the "liberal" element in their programme of education.

224 A. Buck, *Humanismus* (Freiburg, Munich 1987), 154.

225 Cf. above, pp. 111-112.

226 Viz. "bonae litterae", "litterae humanae", "litterae humaniores" and also "studia humaniora". Cf.

philosophy and theology, the humanist remarked ironically that "the *bonae litterae* make men, philosophy more than men, and theology makes gods".[227] These words show what the aim of the humanists was: to create a type of education that produces human beings, nothing more, nothing less - but human beings that are modelled on the ideal of *humanitas* and are free from the shackles of the old *divinitas*. Rabelais, too, argued that classical letters formed the basis of a school reform which would rid the medieval curriculum of the liberal arts from all corruption and so make it again a means for sound instruction. He held that the new humanistic education provided a kind "liberal and honest knowledge"[228] which was superior to scholastic learning and the virtues of which derived from its close association with the reborn "good letters"[229] or "letters of humanity".[230]

It was the revival of classical thought that provided the humanists with the idea of a self-contained and liberal education, and it was the renewed awareness of antiquity that fostered in them the attitudes that led to the constitution of a liberation philosophy and to the elaboration of the cycle of the *studia humanitatis*. Vives proclaimed a vision of "liberty of letters", denouncing the "monstrous perversions" of the scholastic *ars dialecticae*:

> Enough - indeed, more than enough - that for almost five hundred years they have brought many evils upon men's minds! It is time that the other arts, asleep for so long, are awakened together with the Latin language, which is their seed ground.[231]

The humanist predicts that humanity will progress "from darkness to light", asserting that "little by little men's natural talents will unfold and their minds will advance from darkness to light and ..... they will embrace what are for them the true disciplines".[232] After this vivid plea for the "true disciplines", Vives advocates the ideal of the freedom of the "city of letters" (*civitas litteraria*). He foresees the coming of a rebellious generation of intellectuals who will jettison the scholastic arts and embrace the humanistic studies:

> I think I see already the advent of this time; bright, outstanding, free talents arising among all the nations, talents who cannot stand servitude and who boldly throw off the yoke of this foolish and violent tyranny [i.e. scholasticism] from their necks. They call their fellow citizens to freedom and will straightforwardly assert for the whole world of letters that delightfully sweet *liberty* which has been lacking for so many centuries. And they will obey not these mad and violent lords, but those kind and holy masters, the true arts and sciences.[233]

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above, p. 106.

227 "Bonae litterae homines reddunt ..... philosophia plusquam homines, theologia reddit divos"; *Querela pacis*, LB 628; quoted in Bödeker, "Menschheit, Humanität, Humanismus", 1071.

228 "sçavoir liberal et honeste"; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 8. Cf. also "lettres et honeste sçavoir"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 23, and "ceste celeste manne de honeste sçavoir"; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 18.

229 "bonnes lettres"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 28.

230 "lettres de humanité", Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 10; or "lettres humaines", Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*, chapter 53.

231 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 87.

232 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 87.

233 "Erigunt enim sese apud nationes omnes clara, excellentia, liberaque ingenia, impatientia servitutis, et iugum hoc stultissimae ac violentissimae tyrannidis ex cervicibus suis animose depellunt, civesque suos ad libertatem vocant, vindicabuntque totam prorsus litterariam civitatem in *libertatem* longe suavissimam, qua tot saeculis caruerunt, parebuntque non his furentibus et violentis dominis, sed benignissimis et sanctissimis illis magistris, veris artibus atque scientiis"; Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 89 (italics added).

Vives concludes his vindication of that "very sweetest liberty" (to give a literal rendering) of the "city of letters" with a personal reminiscence. Referring to his studies at Montaigu, the high fortress of nominalism where Erasmus, Rabelais, Calvin, Loyola and Montaigne also studied, he comments:

> I give great and immense thanks to God, because one day I left Paris and, emerging into light from this darkness which was like Homer's underworld, I saw which were those disciplines that are called "worthy of man" and often "human".[234]

The reformism of the humanists and their elaboration of a liberation philosophy were essentially motivated by the rising force of individualism. Individualism was cultivated first among the early humanists and then became one of the chief characteristics of the Renaissance. It is a debated notion but has been reaffirmed by leading scholars as a distinctive trait of the Renaissance and as a key feature of humanism, representing subjectivity in the wider literary and philosophical sense. According to Kristeller individualism is a "perfectly valid" notion if it is understood in a general sense as the new "air of subjectivity" which emanated first from humanist writings and gradually came to pervade modern literature, particularly Romanticism.[235] Kristeller explains the phenomenon in the context of the waning of scholasticism and its ways of thinking, stating that in the Renaissance "abstract generalisation gave way to personal opinion and individual experience".[236] Renaissance individualism, then, signifies the establishment of "the tendency to express ..... the concrete uniqueness of one's feelings, opinions, experiences, and surroundings".[237] Kristeller's view derives from Cassirer's theory, according to which the Renaissance marked "the beginning from which was to emerge the newer, deeper concept of 'subjectivity'".[238] This beginning of modern subjectivity was based on a new dualistic approach to the "subject-object problem" devised by leading thinkers of the epoch. Individualism, however, is not just subjectivity in an aesthetic or epistemological sense, but it also implies the affirmation of the intellectual and emotional independence of the individual. Hence the intellectual rebellion against scholasticism and the educational reformism of the humanists, and hence their stress on the factor of emotional intelligence: both serve the purpose of boosting the assertion of the self.

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234 "ego ..... gratias et habeo et ago permagnas Deo, quod aliquando e Parisiis quasi ex Cimmeriis tenebris in lucem egressus sum, vidique quae essent illae *disciplinae*, quae *homine dignae* ac subinde *humanae* dicuntur"; Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 89 (italics added); for the popular and amusing rendering of Vives' "Cimmerian darkness" I am indebted to the old Spanish translation reprinted in *Obras completas*, ed. L. Riber, vol. 2 (Madrid 1948), 311.

235 Kristeller, "Humanism", 126.

236 Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 134.

237 Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 30. For the humanists individualism signifies, similarly, "the tendency to take seriously their own personal feelings and experiences, opinions and preferences"; Kristeller, "Humanism", 126. Among the numerous testimonies illustrating the continuity of the subjective tendency in modern literature, there is Yeats' declaration that "literature is always personal, always one man's vision of the world, one man's experience, and it can only be popular when men are ready to welcome the visions of others" (1903); Yeats, *Explorations*, 115. Yeats reinforced this declaration by stating that "all art is founded upon personal vision; and the greater the art the more surprising the vision; and all bad art is founded upon impersonal types and images, accepted by average men and women out of imaginative poverty and timidity" (1905); Yeats, *Explorations*, 194.

238 Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, 141.

The notion of Renaissance individualism was coined by Burckhardt in the last century. It has been much debated ever since and represents, according to Kristeller, "a concept that has been more often criticised than understood".[239] In his epoch-making study *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, Burckhardt defined Renaissance individualism as follows:

> In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness - that which was turned within as that which was turned without - lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossession, through which the world and history were seen clad in strange hues. Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, party, family, or corporation - only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air; an *objective* treatment and consideration ..... of all the things of this world became possible. The *subjective* side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis; man became a spiritual *individual* and recognized himself as such. In the same way the Greek had once distinguished himself from the barbarian, and the Arab had felt himself an individual at a time when other Asiatics knew themselves only as members of a race.[240]

There is no doubt that the chief idea presented in this passage springs from considerations of a fundamentally psychological nature. The argument is that in the Renaissance there occurred a transformation of human consciousness into two directions (objectivity and subjectivity) and that this transformation amounted to a significant change in the constitution of the human mind - a change which had far-reaching consequences. Perhaps this argument was so often criticised and misunderstood because Burckhardt lacked adequate means to advance it in a convincing way, for psychology was little developed as a science in his day. However, it seems that Burckhardt was perfectly aware of the psychological character of his argument and of the difficulties this implied. He knew that it would not be easy to gather evidence from the sources in support of such an argument, since the Renaissance knew no scientific approach to the problems of human psychology, for "the study of the intellectual side of human nature began, not with the *search after a theoretical psychology* ..... but with the endeavour to observe and to describe".[241] Obviously Burckhardt could not know that the twentieth century would bring a significant breakthrough in that "search after a theoretical psychology". Thus, he adopted that "endeavour to observe and describe" as his own method of research. However, he was aware of the discrepancy between the "greater achievement" of "first discerning and bringing to light the full, whole nature of man"[242] and the scarcity of concepts available to capture the phenomenon, confessing that

> The facts which we shall quote in evidence of our thesis will be few in number. Here, if anywhere in the course of this discussion, the author is conscious that he is treading on the perilous ground of conjecture, and that what seems to him a clear, if delicate and gradual, transition in the intellectual movement of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, may not be equally plain to others. ..... Time will judge ..... .[243]

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239 Kristeller, "Humanism", 126.

240 J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 3rd ed. (London 1995), 87. Burckhardt adds a note concerning the idea of Renaissance man as a "spiritual individual"; he writes: "Observe the expressions *'uomo singolare'* and *'uomo unico'* for the higher and highest stages of individual development" (Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, 367 n. 27).

241 Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, 198 (italics added).

242 Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, 198.

243 Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, 198.

It appears that we can best understand today what Burckhardt meant by individualism if we try to conceptualise his thesis in terms of modern psychology. From the point of view of a psychological history of culture, the Renaissance corresponds to a shift of emphasis in the human mind from the unconscious to the conscious, implying the increasing activation of the conscious sphere.[244] This activation of the conscious sphere is manifest, on the one hand, in the rebirth of the individual as a predominantly empirical and rational being, which is what Burckhardt meant by *objective*. It is, on the other hand, manifest in the rebirth of a personal perspective in the mental outlook of early modern Europe, which is what Burckhardt meant by *subjective*. In terms of modern psychology, this process of transformation in the human mind could be described as "the coming of the ego into consciousness".[245] Thus, if we look at Burckhardt's theory from the angle of modern psychology, we recognise that what he meant by *individualism* was the amplified emergence of the conscious ego as the principal constituent of a new subjective consciousness; and that what he meant by *Renaissance* was the rebirth of the individual ego-consciousness after classical antiquity with its subjective and objective concomitance, namely individualism on the one hand, and rationality and empiricism on the other hand.

It is acknowledged that the humanists figured prominently among the agents bringing about the new individualism, although it must not be overlooked that their attitude was also characterised by reluctance at times. Historians have emphasised that humanist anthropology contributed essentially to the shaping of the modern notion of individuality. They speak, in this respect, of the development of "the autonomous and eventually sovereign self, the thinking and creating agent" or, with regard to intellectual history, of the emergence of the "maker's theory of knowledge".[246] At the root of the new notion of the "autonomous and eventually sovereign self" was not just an increasingly conscious ego in the abstract sense, but a critical awareness of the individual's actual potential for self-control, together with a desire for personal independence. The humanists showed a deep disdain for authoritarian attitudes, and at the same time they displayed an irrepressible taste for anarchic assertions of the self. Rabelais provides a telling illustration of this aspect of humanist individualism when he makes his Brother John reject the offer to be the head of a monastery in the conventional style, asking "how could I govern others if I am not even able to govern myself?"[247]

With regard to philosophy the individualism of humanism generally signified an aversion to Aristotle and a preference for Plato, Platonism or other schools of classical thought. The humanists undermined the privileged status Aristotle had enjoyed in medieval thought; they aimed at reducing his status to more realistic dimensions and at

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244 Cf. above, p. 84.
245 Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, 2nd ed. (London 1969), 226.
246 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 48.
247 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 52.

establishing a better balance between him and other classical philosophers, especially Plato. The extensive humanist discoveries of non-Aristotelian sources fundamentally challenged Aristotelianism and "led to increasing doubts about the exclusive validity and authority of that tradition".[248] Thus Aristotle, considered "the master of those that know" by Dante[249] and the Middle Ages, "ceased to be an *auctoritas* and became a thinker like all the others", not representing "eternal truth" any more.[250]

It was Petrarch who set the tune for the dislike for Aristotle and the preference for Plato. In his *De ignorantia* he launched a piercing attack on contemporary Aristotelians who had denounced his learning as shallow declaring him "a scholar of poor merit".[251] The humanist questions Aristotle's position as the prince of all philosophers, arguing that Aristotelianism is not a philosophy in the true sense of the word because it does not represent philo-sophia, or love of wisdom:

> Sometimes I smiled and asked how on earth Aristotle could have known something for which there is no reason and which cannot be proved by experience. ..... Thus we clearly ceased to be philosophers and eager lovers of wisdom and became Aristotelians ..... I certainly believe that Aristotle was a great man who knew much, but he was human and could well be ignorant of some things, even of a great many things.[252]

Moreover, Petrarch accuses Aristotle of being liable to erring in fundamental questions - an accusation which was quite daring for the time:

> By God, I am convinced and I have no doubt that "he went astray", as the saying goes, "the whole length of the way", not only in what is of little weight, where an error is unimportant and by no means dangerous, but in matters of the greatest consequence .....[253]

Having criticised Aristotle, Petrarch reveals his intellectually rebellious conviction that Plato is superior to Aristotle, asserting that

> Plato is praised by the greater men, Aristotle by the bigger crowd; and both deserve to be praised by great men as well as by many, even by all men. Both have come as far in natural and human matters as one can advance with the aid of mortal genius and study. In divine matters Plato and the Platonists rose higher, though none of them could reach the goal he aimed at. But ..... Plato came nearer to it.[254]

Petrarch concludes by referring to the Greek tradition as recorded in Proclus, according to whom Plato was called "divine" and Aristotle "demonious".[255]

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248 Kristeller, "Humanism", 135.

249 Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 1.4.130.

250 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 7.

251 Quoted in Nachod, "Introduction" [to Petrarch's *De ignorantia*] in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 29.

252 Petrarch, *De ignorantia* in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 74. Petrarch reinforces this argument further on in his treatise, stating that "he [Aristotle] was a very great man, I know, but ..... he was human. I know that much can be learnt from his books, but I am convinced that outside of them much can be learnt also; and I do not doubt that some men knew a great deal before Aristotle wrote, before he studied, before he was born"; Petrarch, *De ignorantia* in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 107.

253 Petrarch, *De ignorantia* in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 74. The saying reported is a classical one recorded by Terence in *Eunuchus*, 2.2.4(245).

254 Petrarch, *De ignorantia* in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 111.

255 Petrarch, *De ignorantia* in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 111.

The issue of Plato and humanism is a complicated one and is under debate at present. Recent research has confirmed the humanist inclination to Plato, but it has questioned the traditional close association of humanism with Platonism. Thus one expert has affirmed that "Plato was to be the philosopher most favored by scholars devoted to the humanist program".[256] Perhaps the humanists' attitude can best be understood in the context of one of their primary goals, namely the restoration of a sound balance between Aristotle and the other classical philosophers, many of whom had long been forgotten or ignored. According to Garin the frequent humanistic preference for Plato means two things. First, it represents a revolt against Aristotle and the prevalent tendency to logical systematisation along the lines of medieval Aristotelianism. Second, it signifies the creation of a new and more open philosophy, that is, of a freer form of philosophising which is able to accommodate the variability and fluctuations of the real world and which accounts for the incoherences and contradictions belonging to the human condition.[257] In the Renaissance Plato became the model of an alternative and more holistic form of philosophising which admits the ineluctable ambiguity in the individual's search for truth, accommodating paradox and not insisting on absolute logical rigour. Thus Platonic philosophy was "the philosophy of all openings and all convergences",[258] and

> to say Plato signified above all to sweep away the oppressive Aristotelian world, which was closed, hierarchic and finite, and to conquer against all systematisations a new spirit of research, unprejudiced and truly free, while the theme *ubi spiritus, ibi libertas* was joined to the new programme of *iuvat vivere*.[259]

We should draw attention to a further, more obscure aspect of humanism which is also linked, although more loosely, to the Platonic spirit resurging in the Renaissance. There is in the work of the humanists an idealistic and utopian streak, an almost other-worldly element, which shows an undeniable affinity to Plato's outlook and which exhibits strong resemblances with the Platonic and Neoplatonic traditions. In the Renaissance the name of Plato came to represent something like the symbol of an idealistic counter-reaction against the predominance of the dry and rational Aristotle of the schoolmen. The most famous example of humanist utopianism was no doubt More's *Utopia*, which gave the phenomenon a name, and which reinforced the idealistic mode of thinking present in humanism from the beginning and inspired by Plato. The idea of utopia and a certain mood customarily described as utopianism were ubiquitous in humanistic literature and thought, before and after More.[260] Before More they are present in more implicit form, while after him they tend to be more explicit, occasionally taking the shape established by his own masterpiece.[261] Sometimes humanistic utopianism is less fantastic and more positive and

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256 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 9.

257 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 9-11.

258 "filosofia di tutte le aperture e di tutte le convergenze": an elegant formulation that is difficult to translate; Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, 3rd ed. (Rome, Bari 1964), 18.

259 Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, 19.

260 Cf. J. Servier, *Histoire de l'utopie*, 2nd ed. (Paris 1991), especially 121-168.

261 Among the major examples of the genre of utopian literature are Patrizi's *La città felice* (1553), Campanella's *La città del Sole* (1602) or Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1624).

concrete; above all when the emphasis is not so much on the prominent word of *utopia* itself, the meaning of which is "no place" (from Greek *ου-τοποσ*), but on its explanatory counterpart coined by More in a pun, and closely associated with it, namely *eutopia*, that is, "the place where all is well" (from Greek *ευ-τοποσ*).[262] Rabelais' "eutopian" conception of Thelema, for instance, represents a positively idealistic utopia in miniature.[263] The French humanist also uses More's term as a label for his own version of humanist idealism. Gargantua's letter to his son, in which he expounds the humanistic ideal of liberal education, is signed "from Utopia, ... your father",[264] because Rabelais is aware that what is advocated in it is in many ways a utopian conception, that is, an ideal that can probably never be executed fully in reality - except perhaps by a super-human being like Pantagruel, whose avowed home lies in Utopia, too.[265]

The beginnings of humanistic idealism and utopianism can be detected in Petrarch, who in many ways anticipated the spirit of the Platonic revival, although his knowledge of Plato was still small and his contribution to this revival more theoretical than practical. In Petrarch's work there are explicit statements illustrating the incipient idealistic reaction against late medieval philosophy.[266] But there are also more implicit statements and suggestions evoking those mental moods associated with Platonism which manifest themselves in idealistic and utopian ways of thinking. One of these moods is represented by the belief that the essential goodness and dignity of human beings pertain to the spiritual sphere and can never be perfectly translated into the material one. There are many passages in Petrarch which illustrate this belief and in which the poet acknowledges with disillusionment that everything good and pure belongs to another world and can never be fully realised and enjoyed in this one. Evidently, these Platonic attitudes are based on the conviction that the ultimate significance of human existence is of a transcendental nature. This conviction finds expression in the poet's typical leaning to other-worldly preoccupations, such as when he declares that his soul's true homeland lies in the celestial realm: "I fly on the wings of my thoughts to heaven / so often that I almost believe I am / one of those who have their treasure there, / leaving their torn veil on earth".[267] The motif of flying is typical of the humanist attitude, and Petrarch adds that "having wings" it would be reproachful not to "elevate myself into flight".[268] These flights on the wings of his thoughts often carry the poet to the realm of antiquity, inspiring him with the typically humanist utopian vision of civilisation that is based on the adoration of classical culture. When Petrarch contemplates the decadence of papal Avignon, he expresses the wish that

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262 Cf. J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth 1979), 733.

263 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapters 52-58. We have discussed the Thelemite ideal with reference to the conceptions of *humanitas* and free will above, pp. 104, 111.

264 "De Utopie, ... ton pere"; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 8.

265 Cf. the utterance "mon pays de Utopie"; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 9.

266 Cf. the comparison of Plato with Aristotle quoted above, p. 119.

267 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 362.

268 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 365.

all medieval monuments may burn down and make space for a Renaissance utopia, namely that utopia which was to be a favourite theme in humanism and which consisted in the dream that once there would be a time when: "noble souls and friends of virtue / will govern the world, and we will see it turn / golden all around, and full again of ancient splendour".[269]

Another aspect of humanist utopianism is the devotion to the ideal of peace, manifest in eloquent professions of pacifism.[270] A less well-known aspect of humanist utopianism is the peculiar fascination with the world of dreams which many humanists display. Petrarch, for instance, exhibits a devotion to the realm of dreams which manifests itself, in the most general and basic sense, in his poetic reevocation of the classic simile that compares life to a dream. The Italian humanist comments that as he grows older he comes to regard life as a dream - a dream which passes quickly and which one only recognises as such when one wakes up from it sensing the approach of death: "Suddenly, just as when water extinguishes a fire, / I wake up from a long and deep sleep: / and I realise that our life's time passes flying, / and that we cannot live more than once".[271] The same dream sentiment is also summed up in Petrarch's acknowledgement that the insight he has gained from the vicissitudes of his life is "the clear knowledge that all the joyful events in this world are like a short dream".[272]

Petrarch's dedication to the world of dreams and dreaming was, however, characterised by more specific features. We can observe that it appears connected, on the one hand, with a resigned acceptance of the Platonic shadow-world, while it seems accompanied, on the other hand, by the conviction that every dream vision or image contains a core of truth. Petrarch avows that he is "happy in dreams and content to embrace shadows",[273] and in an imaginary dialogue with himself, he has one part of his self say that "no nocturnal phantasm has ever been so full of error as he [i.e. the other part of himself] is".[274] On a more personal level, Petrarch's devotion to dreams is linked to his own ideal of Platonic love. Thus he complains to the imagined spirit of the departed Laura that "if at least you made my sleep worthy of your sight" and so would "soothe my wails with your shadow",[275] that is to say, if you only appeared to me in my dreams and would thus perhaps create the illusion of a comforting spiritual nearness. This seemingly unreal

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269 "Anime belle et di virtute amiche / tornanno il mondo; et poi vedrem lui farsi / aurëo tutto, et pien de l'opre antiche"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 137.

270 Cf. above, p. 104. Cf. also K. Garber, "Die Frieden-Utopie im europäischen Humanismus" in *Modern Language Notes* 101 (1986), 553- 591.

271 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 361.

272 "'i conoscer chiaramente / che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 1.

273 "Beato in sogno et ..... / ..... contento d'abbracciar l'ombre"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 212.

274 "Mai nocturno fantasma / d'error non fu sí pien com'ei ver'noi"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 360 (ls. 131-132).

275 "Già suo' tu far il mio sonno almen degno / de la tua vista, ... / con la tua ombra acqueta i miei lamenti"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 340.

wish receives some fulfilment, for Laura eventually appears in the dreams of the poet. Petrarch confesses that "I can feel my lady returning",[276] that "the blessed spirit of my Laura blows so often in my tired sleep",[277] or that at night the venerated lady "comes to the left side of my bed / to bring some rest to my tired life".[278] Apart from personal references to the world of dreams, Petrarch also uses universal dream images as an inspiration for his poetry,[279] sometimes writing, as he himself states, "like a man who dreams".[280]

Modern psychology has not so far produced a study on humanism and the world of dreams, although it is evident that both Freud and Jung drew on humanistic material in their researches. This material was either authentically humanistic, that is to say, representing the humanists' own ideas and experiences, or purely of ancient origin, for instance, classical texts restituted by the humanists. As regards the latter, we can refer to the revival of Plutarch or of Neo-Platonic authors, which brought to light new aspects of the thought of antiquity on the human psyche.[281] As regards the former, Jung used Alciatus' *Emblemata* in his investigations of the meaning and history of symbols.[282] In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud reports the contents of a curious dream of the elder Scaliger, quoting an anecdotal story about that humanist grammarian,

> who [- it is said -] wrote a poem in praise of the famous men of Verona, and to whom a man appeared in a dream, calling himself Brugnolus and complaining that he had been forgotten. Although Scaliger could not remember ever having heard of him, he wrote some verses on him, and his son got to know in Verona afterwards that such a Brugnolus had been famous there as a critic.[283]

The humanists shaped a new historical consciousness which derived to a large extent from their pursuit of philological researches and partly came to be identified with it. It has correctly been pointed out that in the context of the Renaissance "humanist philology is knowledge of the past as such"[284] and that the humanist study of classical languages led to

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276 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 341.

277 "L'aura mia sacra al mio stanco riposo / spira sí spesso"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 356. "Riposo" is a rhyming word, the meaning of which is more closely defined in verse 14 as "sonno".

278 She does so, according to the poet, "with her sweet and discrete talk", which contains symbolic signs and edifying admonitions, recommending the virtues of a spiritual life. When this "sweet and discrete talk" is over, the dream finishes, characteristically as follows: "and after that she leaves, and with her my sleep"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 359. Modern dream interpretation suggests that the left is the side of the unconscious; thus Laura's appearance on "the left side of my bed" would mean that Petrarch's beloved lady is something like his *femme inspiratrice*.

279 So e.g. in Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 190, a sonnet which ends typically in the words "I fell into water, and she disappeared". Cf. also Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 323, where Petrarch describes six dream-like visions in terms of allegories.

280 " ..... 'n guisa d'uom che sogna ....."; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 264.

281 Plutarch's psychological insights became influential again in the Renaissance. Cf. e.g. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in which the protagonist voices some of the views expressed by Plutarch in his *Morals* (*Macbeth*, 3. 2.). Cf. K. Muir, "Introduction" to Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (London 1984), lxi.

282 E.g. the magnet as *lapis animalis* (cf. Jung, GW 9(2), 158) or the tree as an image of the human condition (cf. Jung, GW 13, 293 n. 33), or the inverted tree as a symbol of man (cf. Jung, GW 13, 336).

283 S. Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* (Frankfurt 1961), 22. According to Freud, this is an example of a so-called "hypermnestic" dream, i.e. a dream which is characterised by the unconscious recollection of forgotten or ignored conscious material (cf. Freud, *Die Traumdeutung*, 21-25).

284 Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, 24.

the creation of "a method valid for any kind of research",[285] that is, a historical-critical method which was universally applicable. Some humanists even used the term *philology* to denote the *studia humanitatis* as a whole,[286] but it cannot be inferred from this that philology, which corresponds to the humanistic disciplines of grammar and rhetoric, represents the core of the *studia humanitatis*. On the contrary, the humanists made it clear from the beginning that history, poetry and moral philosophy were the most important subjects or "the true school of humanity". Occasionally they spelled out the other side of this assertion, namely that philology was an ancillary discipline for recuperating ancient culture and its ideals.[287] The principal achievement of the humanists in philology was the development of a new technique of textual criticism based on purely historical criteria. Humanist textual criticism flourished chiefly in commentaries on works of ancient literature, anticipating in this genre the practice of modern classical philology.[288] However, the new critical method was not championed exclusively by specialists in grammar, rhetoric or history, but poets and philosophers, the representatives of the other two *studia humanitatis*, made decisive contributions, too - and this may help explain why distinct linguistic conceptions emerged together with the new method. Patrizi stipulated that "a methodologically sound investigation of the problems of poetics must have its foundation on documentary evidence",[289] elaborating on questions of philosophy of language only after establishing the textual basis according to historical principles.[290]

With the humanist method of textual criticism a new conception of language appeared, competing with the old medieval one. The conception of language forged by the humanists, which is often referred to as "rhetorical", was characterised in the first place by a dynamic approach to linguistic phenomena, whereas the medieval conception of language, which is frequently labelled as "grammatical", remained committed to statically fixed principles. In the medieval view words were either seen, according to scholastic realism, as unalterably linked to things, supposedly mirroring the arcane higher order of the universe, or they were regarded, according to nominalistic doctrine, as the accidental and arbitrary creation of the human brain. From the humanistic point of view language came to be perceived as historically conditioned and rhetorically variable; being a product of human culture, which was constantly changing and developing, it was subject to constant change and development.[291] Their dynamic and historical approach led the

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285 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 17.

286 Viz. Budé; cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 60.

287 Alessandro Piccolomini, for instance, argued that the Greeks had not cultivated the study of languages and that therefore the *studia humanitatis* could not be identical with grammatical and linguistic studies; cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 174-175.

288 Cf. Witt, "The Humanist Movement", 104.

289 Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 136.

290 For his conception of language, cf. chapter 3, p. 185.

291 Cf. Witt, "The Humanist Movement", 100-101. Note that Witt, like many other authors, omits the distinction between the scholastic and the nominalistic approach. For a more detailed description of the humanist conception of language cf. chapter 3, pp. 135-140.

humanists to look at language in the first place as a means of communication which was adaptable to different circumstances and used with various degrees of eloquence according to audience. Establishing a whole new set of linguistic criteria based on historical and critical principles, they emphasised that language was liable to evolutionary change and that it was always conditioned by its historical environment. This was in part a response to the new world of the Renaissance in which change was faster and in which eloquence was again in demand. In this new world humanism was the avant-garde supplying the means for forming language for the purpose of moving people or realising ideas. Humanist education, which was based on the new conception of language, was ideally suited for "the movers and shakers of Renaissance society", that is, "the professional, social and political elite".[292]

Humanist philology embodied major scholarly and educational reforming aspirations. It aimed at establishing a reliable record of every testimony of the history of human culture - a record which serves as a basis for better and more encyclopedic learning. According to Garin recovering the past in a more accurate and intelligible way by means of a historical-critical method is the chief purpose of philology, the consequences of which are the following:

> While the most venerable texts were being re-examined in the light of their historical reality, while the charters of ancient privileges were subjected to devastating criticism, people were also tracing back the origin of equally well enshrined ideas about the cosmic order to old superstitions and ancient errors.[293]

In education humanist philology was employed to develop people's writing and speaking skills with the aim of enabling them to handle with precision and elegance the abundance of words and ideas[294] restored by the renaissance of classical literature, and of imparting to them the perfection in eloquence needed for "moving and shaking society". Humanistically educated individuals are masters of words and ideas in the sense that they possess the rhetorical know-how to exploit the potential of eloquence and reach the desired aim of persuasion. Drawing the portrait of the ideal humanist orator, Erasmus remarked that "it belongs to the same artist to speak with few words or with many", for "he is in command of the treasury of words and ideas".[295] The latter phrase indeed epitomises one of the key concepts of humanist reformism, and it represents one of the principal aims of humanist philology.

The results of humanist philology are manifest in the publication of scholarly books and in the foundation of educational establishments where the classical languages were taught. Following Valla, who argued that Latin was a dead language and should therefore be used in its classical form, the humanists produced new manuals of grammar and

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292 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 26.
293 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 16.
294 The terms derive from Erasmus' *De duplici copia verborum et rerum* (1512).
295 Quoted in Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 62.

rhetoric which drew on authentic ancient examples of the old languages and which were "radically different both in form and in the manner in which they were to be used".[296] While the teaching material was indeed much more modern than what had been used in the Middle Ages, the techniques of instruction were not always very different from the medieval ones.[297] Apart from manuals, the humanists complied vocabularies and dictionaries.[298] As far as institutions are concerned, the humanists founded a number of so-called trilingual colleges which, beside promoting classical Latin and literature in general, made Greek and Hebrew for the first time accessible to a wider audience. Among these features the Royal College in Paris, which was created by Francis I at the instigation of Budé, and which opened its doors in 1531.[299] It is in this Parisian college where Calvin may have had the opportunity to attend lectures given by illustrious humanists.

As regards the curriculum of early modern higher education, humanist philology certainly implied a reform of the medieval *trivium*, especially grammar and rhetoric, but the actual extent of change brought about by the humanists in this field is not always clear. Margolin's prudent judgement is that the traditional curriculum of the liberal arts "was not greatly modified" by the humanist programme of the *bonae litterae*.[300] However, humanist philology signified, if nothing more, a greater emphasis on the linguistic and historical parts of the ordinary studies. Some authors have argued that in the late Renaissance, humanist endeavours at educational reform simply amounted to the addition of an eighth art to the seven liberal arts.[301] The principal problem with the evaluation of the impact of humanism on the traditional curriculum is that the situation varies considerably from country to country and even from institution to institution. In Italy the emergence of the *humanista* as an academic professional indicates a very direct and real humanist influence: universities offered courses in the humanities that were widely attended, also by foreign students who would carry the acquired knowledge across Europe. In England, too, humanism entered the universities, where it established itself at the expense of scholasticism. In Oxford and Cambridge new colleges were founded for the promotion of the "new learning".[302] In France and Spain, however, the humanist culture never penetrated deeply into the university world. In the Sorbonne the tradition of

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296 Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 54.

297 Cf. Witt, "The Humanist Movement", 102. One of the paradigmatic examples was Perotto's *Cornucopiae* of 1489, which was widely used for a long time and appreciated by humanists like Vives and Dolet.

298 Cf. Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 55. A milestone among these was Robert Estienne's *Thesaurus linguae latinae,* published in Paris in 1536, the year of the first edition of Calvin's *Institutes* in Basel.

299 In 1509 Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros founded the Complutense University at Alcalá de Henares, where the famous Antonio de Nebrija taught and where the monumental Complutensian polyglot Bible was produced. In 1515 Erasmus founded the Trilingual College of Louvain.

300 Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 53.

301 Cf. D. Klemenz, "Humaniora" in J. Ritter / K. Gründer (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 3 (Basel 1974), 1216.

302 Cf. Witt, "The Humanist Movement", 110-112.

scholasticism continued - some speak of "the antihumanism of the Faculty"[303] - while humanism represented a dispersed opposition party gathering around the Royal College. In Spain humanism remained under the authoritarian tutelage of the Church, surviving "largely in amalgam with scholasticism".[304]

The new critical method developed by the humanists meant that each text was seen as the creation of a specific author and placed in the context of its time, and so every document was regarded as "a human product, a human vestige and resonance":[305] This was a new attitude which, as the case of Aristotle shows, could have incisive consequences. One of the most significant consequences was a shift in the Western canon, in the course of which some authorities lost importance while others gained prominence. In religious history the documents of divine revelation came to be looked at with a scientific scrutiny highlighting the human factors in their composition. This implied the acknowledgement of an element of human ambiguity and fallibility in the sacred scrolls and thus fostered an attitude of relativism and, at least in principle, of religious tolerance. Thus the new approach to the sources brought about by humanist philology produced a change of mentality, signifying "the detachment from an old way of thinking".[306]

To conclude this general description of humanism the question of terminology must be discussed. Revisionist historians have pointed out that the concepts of *humanism* and *Renaissance* were shaped in the nineteenth century, one in Germany (*Humanismus*) and the other in France (*re-naissance*, that is rebirth), and they have claimed that these notions reflect German and French romantic preoccupations rather than the actual historical reality. There is a grain of truth in this argument, but we should not forget that the terms *humanism* and *Renaissance* rest on closely related notions that belong to the epoch in question, being either authentic coinages or derived concepts adapted from classical antiquity. Sometimes revisionist criticism has been excessively pedantic, for instance when it has argued that the expression *humanism* did not exist at the time of the Renaissance in precisely that (nominal) form which was chosen by the nineteenth-century historians. The notion of *Renaissance* is clearly based on authentic contemporary conceptions,[307] and with *humanism* the situation looks similar. The term is derived from the notions of *humanitas*, *studia humanitatis* and *humanista*. *Humanitas* and *studia humanitatis* were introduced in

303 K. M. Comerford in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996), 1157 (book review).
304 Witt, "The Humanist Movement", 115.
305 Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, 15.
306 Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, 14 .
307 It was Petrarch who created the notion (if not the word) of *rinascità* to denote the resurrection of classical literature after a dark and barbaric time (Petrarch, *Epistolae de rebus familiaribus*, 6.2.; cf. Delumeau, "Une histoire totale de la Renaissance", 1). The notion of *rinascità*, once set into the world by the father of humanism, was echoed in manifold tones throughout the age (cf. M. L. McLaughlin, "Humanist concepts of renaissance and middle ages in the tre- and quattrocento" in *Renaissance Studies* (1988), 131). Vives speaks of *renascentium litterarum* (cf. Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 27), More of *bonae renasci litterae* (cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 64), while Vasari coined the term *rinascità* (cf. Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 587-588).

the Florentine Enlightenment and came to represent key concepts of humanism. The notion of *humanitas* appears in humanist writings either directly as such, sometimes in conjunction with *civilitas* or *Romanitas*,[308] or it appears, as is more often the case, indirectly, in the form of the adjective *humanus* or some derivative of the word family *homo / humanus / humanitas / humane*. Whereas the concept of *humanitas* is elusive and therefore difficult to grasp, that of *studia humanitatis* is less problematic since it is better defined, despite all the variations it includes. Erasmus referred to the humanistic studies preferably as *bonae litterae*, but also used the expressions *litterae humanae*, *litterae humaniores* and *studia humaniora*,[309] while Vives explained the *studia humanitatis* in terms of *disciplinae humanae* or *disciplinae homine dignae*.[310] In the vernacular, Rabelais used the expressions *bonnes lettres*, *lettres de humanité* or later simply *lettres humaines*.[311]

The term *humanism* also goes back to the word *humanista*, which was coined in Italy towards the end of the fifteenth century to designate the newly emerging academic job category of "teacher of the humanities".[312] Thus *humanism* can be interpreted as deriving from *humanista* (naturalised as *umanista* by Ariosto in 1523) which in turn can be seen as coming from *studia humanitatis*,[313] so that a line can be drawn from nineteenth century *Humanismus* via fifteenth century *humanista* to classical Roman *humanitas* and *studia humanitatis*. The meaning of *humanista* does, however, not encompass the whole historical reality of the humanists' wide range of thought and action but only covers a part of it (the official teaching function). It must not be forgotten, either, that the expression is fraught with prejudice, and has been so from the very beginning when it was first coined. As regards the first point, most humanists, understood in the sense of advocates of *humanitas* or the *studia humanitatis*, were not *humanistae*, but pursued other professional careers. They preferably worked outside university, especially the leading figures.[314] Most humanists were public officials, councillors, chancellors, secretaries or historiographers; they were churchmen, statesmen, bankers or merchants, or they were scribes and printing editors, private tutors, and educators.[315] The role of the humanists as *humanistae* was not a powerful one since it was confined to holding the few chairs of Latin and Greek oratory and poetry that were available.[316]

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308 E.g. Valla; cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 35.

309 Cf. above, p. 107.

310 Cf. above, p. 116 (n. 234).

311 Cf. above, p. 115 (ns. 229-230).

312 As we have pointed out above (p. 126), this formally confirms the entry of humanism into the Italian universities. For the term *humanista* cf. A. Campana, "The Origin of the Word 'Humanist'" in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 9 (1946), 60-73. Cf. also Kristeller's famous essay of 1944 (discussed above, pp. 88-89) "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance", 99.

313 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 3.

314 Cf. above, pp. 89-90.

315 Cf. Kristeller, "Humanism", 114-118.

316 Although, as Kristeller has argued, it was perhaps "not as insignificant as is often believed"; cf. Kristeller, "Humanism", 115.

Considering the phenomenon of humanism in its entirety, the meaning of *humanista* appears too small for a comprehensive interpretation of the humanist movement. As regards the prejudice attached to the expression of *humanista*, we must be aware that the explanation of humanism from the view-point of *humanista* has often been used to defend an anti-philosophical interpretation of humanism. It has been argued that humanism must be different from philosophy because in university documents there occasionally occurs a formal distinction between the professional categories of "humanist" and "philosopher". This argument appears questionable if it is placed in the context of the problematic of humanism and philosophy.[317] Moreover, we must ask ourselves the question whether "we should make all judgement on the history of culture depend on university ordinances, and this in an age which often saw its greatest figures act outside any 'school'"?[318] Another problematic aspect of the word *humanista*, especially in its vernacular version of *umanista*, is its frequent derogatory connotation. *Humanista* and *umanista* are relatively late coinages and as such inevitably reflect the decadence of the original ideals which was already apparent by the end of the fifteenth century or at the beginning of the sixteenth, and which was in part a consequence of the gradual establishment of humanism in the "schools" and, more generally, of its assimilation into current culture. As humanism spread across Europe, the appearance of the academic type of *umanista* became more universally familiar. With Ariosto it began to emerge as a character in the literature of the time, and by the end of the Renaissance Cervantes drew an unflattering portrait of the Spanish variant of *umanista*.[319]

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317 Discussed above, pp. 86-101.

318 Garin, *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 7 n. 2 (syntax changed).

319 In his *Don Quixote* Cervantes presents a *humanista* as a mediocre would-be scholar whose intellectual attitude has become completely conventional and "scholasticised". However, Cervantes' parody of the humanist as a pseudo-erudite does not mean that he disparages of humanism as such, but it signifies an attack on a degenerated form of humanism that has become all too common. The *humanista* of *Don Quixote* is "a famous scholar ..... much given to reading books of chivalry", who guides the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance to the mysterious cave of Montesinos:

"On the way Don Quixote asked the cousin of what kind were his pursuits, his profession, and studies. To which he replied that his profession was that of a humanist [*humanista*], and his pursuits and studies were to write books for publication, all of great profit and no less entertainment to the state; that one of them was entitled *The Book of Liveries*, in which he described seven hundred and three devices, with their colors, mottoes and ciphers, from which the gentlemen at court could select and use whichever they pleased on the occasion of festivals and revels, without having to beg them from anybody or rack their brains, as they say to invent them to suit their wishes and purposes.

'For', he said, 'I give appropriate devices to the jealous, the scorned, the forgotten, and the absent, which fit them like a glove. I have another book as well, which I mean to call *Metamorphoses*, or *The Spanish Ovid*, a new and most original work in which, while parodying Ovid, I describe the Giralda of Seville, the Angel of the Magdalen, the Gutter of Vecinguerra at Córdoba, and the Bulls of Guisando, the Sierra Morena, the fountains of Leganitos and Lavapiés in Madrid, not forgetting that of the Piojo, that of the Golden Gutter, and that of the Priora; and all this with such allegories, metaphors, and transformations that they will entertain, astonish, and instruct at the same time. I also have another book that I call the *Supplement to Polydore Virgil*, which deals with the invention of things. It is a work of deep learning and research, because I clarify and verify in most elegant style the subjects of great importance that Polydore omitted. He forgot to tell us who was the first man who ever had catarrh and who was the first to use ointments to cure himself of the French pox. All this I explain with the utmost precision on the testimony of twenty-five authorities. So your worship may judge whether I have not worked well, and whether this book will not be indispensable to the whole world'.

Sancho, who had been listening carefully to the cousin's narrative, said to him: 'Tell me, sir, and best of luck with the printing of your books, but can you inform me - of course you can, as you know everything - who was the first man who scratched his head? I'm of the opinion that it must have been

The word *humanism* was coined in Germany as *Humanismus* in 1808 by F. J. Niethammer to denote the educational theory of the Renaissance humanists and especially its chief tenet, the development of the higher nature of the individual by means of the humanities. Niethammer introduced the term to distinguish the tradition of the humanities from the increasing scientific and materialistic trends which he subsumed under the designation of *Philantropinismus* - a name that, unlike *Humanismus*, did not survive.[320] However, the meaning of the word *Humanismus* remained vague in the first half of the nineteenth century, revolving, apart from Niethammer's notion, principally around newly emerging revolutionary political concepts such as civic liberty, democratic distribution of power, social justice and even aspects of the developing communist ideals.[321] It was Voigt who in 1859 first used the term in its modern historical meaning, calling the movement that brought about the revival of classical antiquity *Humanismus*. Burckhardt, too, used the term in the same sense, giving it a philosophical significance.[322] Today we have come to define its meaning in a more precise and empirical way, as we have indicated above and as we will see in the more detailed description which is to follow. Nevertheless, *humanism* has retained the association with education, the humanities and the classical revival indicated by Niethammer and Voigt; it has also retained to some degree the meaning of a modern manner of thought or "the detachment from an old way of thinking".[323] The distinction in Italian between *umanesimo* and *umanismo* is unique and reflects the unique importance if Italian humanism, but it is not indispensable, for there are close connections between Renaissance humanism and Graeco-Roman culture on the one hand, and *New Humanism* or *Third Humanism* on the other. The traditional Italian periodisation scheme of *scolasticismo*, *umanesimo*, *rinascimento*, is perhaps not so wrong as is often believed - provided it is not taken too literally. Kristeller and his followers have rejected this scheme, arguing that humanism and scholasticism were parallel

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our father Adam'.
'Yes, it must have been', answered the cousin, 'for there is no doubt Adam had a head and hair; and that being so, and as he was the first man in the world, he must sometimes have scratched himself'.
'So I believe', answered Sancho; 'tell me now, who was the first tumbler in the world?'
'Frankly, brother', replied the cousin 'I am not able to solve that at present, until I have gone further in my studies. I shall look into the matter when I get back to my books, and I'll answer you when we meet again, for this must not be the last time'.
'Look here, sir', answered Sancho, 'don't go to any trouble about it, for I've hit upon the answer to my question. The first tumbler in the world, let me tell you, was Lucifer, for when they threw or pitched him out of Heaven, he went tumbling into the pit of hell'".
Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 22, 681-682. Note that Cervantes embeds the word *humanista* in a phrase that is slightly ironic: "su profesión era ser humanista" (literally: "his profession was to be a humanist", which may, among other things, imply that "he was perpetually engaged in the task of becoming one, but never quite succeeded").

320 Cf. Bödeker, "Menschheit, Humanität, Humanismus", 1121-1122. Strictly speaking, the neologism *Humanismus* appears first around 1800 in the vaguest possible sense of "unspecific denotation of human conduct" in the travel diary of Johann Friedrich Abegg (cf. Bödeker, "Menschheit, Humanität, Humanismus", 1121).

321 Cf. Bödeker, "Menschheit, Humanität, Humanismus", 1124.

322 Cf. above, p. 88.

323 Cf. above, p. 127.

developments in Italy in the fourteenth century.[324] However, if the scheme is understood figuratively, it makes sense: *umanesimo* initiates modernity, but at the same time it occupies an intermediary position between *scolasticismo* and *rinascimento*, thus marking the transition between the Middle Ages and modernity.

If the Renaissance can be characterised as a period of transition, we can speak of humanism as a *factor of transition* - a factor that represented one of the chief catalysts of change. The humanists had a vision of the path to modernity, but they always retained an awareness of the significance of the past and a respect for what they considered the essential contents of old and laboriously discovered truths - a respect which was often lost by Renaissance people who were not imbued with humanism. The humanist attitude is illustrated by scholars like Pico , who emphasised the universal values in all ancient traditions in an attempt to harmonise the variety of doctrines contained in them. Pico, the "arch-syncretist" of the Renaissance,[325] was conscious of the increasing preponderance of the Western tradition, yet he conceded that its origins lay in the East, remarking that "all wisdom has flowed from the East to the Greeks and from the Greeks to us".[326] The humanists did not value originality in the same way as we do today, and so they did not want to be original at any price but preferred reaffirming old truths to forging new falsities at a time when it was difficult to be intellectually original due to the renascent "abundance of words and ideas".[327] Originality for the humanists did not so much signify the creation of something entirely new but rather the intelligent treatment of something old. What is considered today the lack of originality in humanist thought can be explained as a consequence of the need to come to terms with a newly discovered past culture and to state its relevance for the present. It can further be explained by the fact that the vast renaissance of learning also created an awareness of the relativity of human originality, which shifted the emphasis from inventing new things to reasoning out old things. It appears that the sheer scope of the classical revival tended to make humanist intellectuals somehow philosophically timid. Their situation is well described by Kristeller, who stated that

> as the originality of wrong ideas is worth little, it is often more valuable if true doctrines which have been known for some time, but doubted for the wrong reasons, are repeated in a new form or context.[328]

Being aware of this, the humanists forged a syncretistic conception of originality which was rooted in their belief in a *philosophia perennis*. To them originality often signified a kind of adept eclecticism, that is,

> "originality" implied not absolute novelty but rather an informed as well as ingenious sort of imitation (*mimesis*) that selected an appropriate source and treated it with

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324 Cf. Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 131. Cf. also Trinkaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism*, xiv.

325 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 42.

326 Pico, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, trans. E. L. Forbes in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 244.

327 Cf. above, p. 125 n. 294.

328 Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 147.

elegant and perhaps virtuoso skill.[329]

The term *Christian humanism* is often used in connection with Erasmus and Erasmianism to describe the critical application of humanist scholarship to the texts and doctrines of the Christian theological tradition. As Kristeller has stated,

> the term has some validity if we denote by it those humanists who applied their classical scholarship to biblical and patristic studies and who adopted and defended in their writings some tenets of Christian religion or theology.[330]

From this point of view, *Christian humanism* constitutes a distinct strand within the wider general current of humanism.[331] Although most humanists can be regarded as Christian believers, many of them never devoted themselves to religious questions but pursued other, preferably philological, literary, historical or philosophical interests. It is fair to say that on the whole the humanists did not oppose Christianity in itself, but nevertheless brought about a secularisation of studies and culture.[332] They did not like to confine themselves to a narrowly defined religious orthodoxy but they preferred to study and consider the Christian heritage on the cultural and intellectual background of classical antiquity. Therefore, the term *Christian humanism* should not be taken to distinguish belief from unbelief or Christian from pagan, as is sometimes suggested with reference to Erasmus' claim that

> I brought it about that the humanistic studies [*bonae litterae*], which among the Italians and especially among the Romans savored of nothing but pure paganism, began nobly to celebrate Christ.[333]

It appears that the *studia humanitatis* did not imply any definite theological position, and if we identify humanism chiefly with those studies we can assert with Kristeller that humanism was basically neutral with regard to religion. Neutral or not, it is certainly true that the humanistic studies fostered individualism in moral matters and created a liberal atmosphere in which "each humanist was free to formulate his opinions according to his own convictions and inclinations".[334] Thus when we speak of humanism in a general sense, we often refer to an explicitly or implicitly Christian type of humanism, that is, a religious type, or we refer to a worldly kind that is compatible with the other-worldly concerns of a religious attitude. There existed, however, also a rationalist and purely secular kind of humanism, the exponents of which espoused materialistic outlooks and were hostile to religion; they were:

> brilliant, cultured, and sometimes profound minds who knew better than to declare unambiguously that they were enemies of religion - but who nonetheless were expressing ideas and living in ways that were for all practical purposes detached from religion.[335]

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329 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 27; with reference to D. Quint, *Origin and Originality in the Renaissance* (New Haven 1983).
330 Kristeller, "Humanism", 133.
331 Cf. Kristeller, "Humanism", 133.
332 Cf. Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 134.
333 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 67.
334 Kristeller, "The Renaissance in the History of Philosophical Thought", 136.
335 Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 51.

This rationalist type of humanism represented a very distinct and marginal strand in the general context of the humanist movement. Typical representatives of rationalist humanism include Pomponazzi and the Paduans in Italy, or Dolet, Des Périers and some of the so-called Parisian free-thinkers around the Valois court in France. Calvin's attack on the latter as impious *literati* does not necessarily imply a total rejection of the humanist movement, since they cannot be considered representative of humanism as a whole. The question, however, is whether Calvin distinguished between rationalist humanism and humanism in a broader sense.

To conclude our overview of humanism we can affirm that the movement signified "a cultural revolution of the first magnitude" in which its members "led the intellectual, social and moral foundations for a type of civilization that constituted the grandeur of Europe".[336] Margolin's concise general definition of humanism aptly summarises the present state of research:

> European humanism is a cultural and intellectual movement, characteristic of the Renaissance, which opened the way to a transformation of worldview, a renewal of manners and types of knowledge, an enlargement of the sources of literary and artistic inspiration, a reorganisation of academic life, a freedom to be critical of traditions and institutions, and a new vision of the human condition.[337]

336 Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 81.
337 Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 3.

3 Particular Humanism

What is left now for us is to provide a more detailed description of the individual elements of humanism in order to draw that "sharply-defined checklist of humanist traits"[1] - or something approaching it - which our comparative analysis requires. We will divide this descriptive definition of humanism into two major parts according to the criteria of "non-philosophical" and "philosophical", which corresponds to the distinction between *particular* and *general* humanism. Let us first turn to what is commonly considered the less problematic part, namely that of *particular humanism*. By *particular humanism* we mean the literary and historical aspects of humanism, which are represented by those four disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* that are regarded as "non-philosophical": grammar, rhetoric, poetry and history. We shall examine these humanistic studies - or rather fields of study - in this sequence.

According to Polydore Vergil's popular encyclopaedia *On the Inventors of Things* (1496), grammar was the first invention after the discovery of letters and therefore took its name from the Greek word for "letters", that is, γράμμα.[2] Grammar was, according to the traditional definition prevailing in the Renaissance, "the knowledge of how to speak correctly and write correctly", and as such it represented "the origin and basis of all the liberal arts".[3] The principal branches of grammar were orthography, prosody, etymology and syntax, which corresponded to the study of letters, syllables, words and sentences. If we have described the ordinary technical meaning of *grammar* as the skill of speaking and writing correctly, we must be aware that in the Renaissance *grammar* in a wider sense also meant "literature", referring to the broad general knowledge of someone who is well-read.[4] The foundational status of grammar had always been undisputed, but while scholasticism had tended to regard the discipline as a "low" and less significant auxiliary science, the humanists came to consider it as an important branch of knowledge, developing it into a highly efficient tool for research. The humanists' championship of grammar was motivated not only by their linguistic concerns, which were of paramount importance from a professional view-point, but also, and perhaps more essentially, by their intention to promote the non-rational faculties of the mind, which they saw neglected in what they judged the one-sidedly rationalistic culture of scholasticism, and among which the faculty of memory was, as they emphasised, closely associated with the discipline of grammar.[5] In fact, it is the achievement of the humanist movement that it vindicated the intellectual independence of grammar from the other disciplines, especially logic, and promoted its

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1 Cf. introduction, p. 4 and chapter 2, p. 102.

2 Cf. D. R. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism* (Boston 1991), 76.

3 "Grammatica est scientia recte loquendi recteque scribendi, origo et fundamentum omnium liberalium artium"; quoted in W. K. Percival, "Renaissance Grammar" in A. Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism* (Philadelphia 1988), vol. 3, 68, 79 n. 2.

4 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 77.

5 Cf. chapter 2, p. 112.

emancipation as a distinguished professional activity, thus giving grammar a new scholarly dignity. Grammar, if derived from the study of the classics, and not of scholastic logic, so the humanists argued, would train the memory in a natural and highly efficient way, so that the mind's capacity for linguistic, and in a wider sense philosophical, comprehension could be substantially enhanced. Thus in order to increase the mind's intellectual power, students should dedicate themselves from the beginning of their education to reading the outstanding monuments of literature. The new humanist attitude towards grammar first emerged in Italy; Aeneas Sylvius declared in his treatise on the *ars grammatica* that

> Grammar ..... is the portal to all knowledge whatsoever. As a subject of study it is more complex and more fruitful than its name would imply, and it yields its full profit only to such as enter early and zealously upon its pursuit. The greatest minds have not been ashamed to shew themselves earnest in the study of grammar.[6]

In the first place, humanist grammar was the result of a fundamental change in the approach to language: the humanists turned away from the abstractions of the medieval *grammatica speculativa* and attempted to frame a more empirical and natural notion of grammar. This change entailed a repudiation of essential scholastic conceptions, in particular the traditional distinction between different "modes of signification" (*modi significandi*), which derived from Aristotle's scheme of four causes and which represented the basis of the old *grammatica speculativa*. Therefore, humanist grammar emerged from the negation of the formal and structural emphases of the scholastic "modists" (*modisti*) and rested on the affirmation of a new concept of language which was "more semantic, historical, and relativist".[7] The new approach to language from which humanist grammar emerged contributed essentially to form the new conception of language which has been called "rhetorical" and which became predominant in the Renaissance.[8] According to this rhetorical conception of language, words were no more seen as absolutely constant values, divinely determined and embedded in a static cosmos, as in scholasticism, nor were they seen as accidental products of the human mind, subject to the arbitrariness of the intellect, as in late medieval nominalism, but they were understood in a dynamic way as historically and culturally conditioned, and as rhetorically variable: finally, the narrow medieval notion of a word as a *verbum*, or a *nomen* respectively, had yielded to the wider Renaissance vision of it as a λόγος. The restitution of the Greek language contributed to widen the scope of intellectual enquiry in the Renaissance, for the philologically proficient humanists could now consider each word in its historical and philosophical context, and they were able to treat "every text as a contingent artefact of the particular language in which it happens to be written".[9] This meant that words were recognised as subject to semantic change, and that language as a whole was seen as the product of a slow and gradual evolutionary

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6 Aeneas Sylvius, *De Liberorum educatione*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 80.

7 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 77.

8 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 124-125.

9 Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford 1992), 83. Cf. also Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 214.

process. In other words, language was seen in a historical perspective, from which it appeared to be an integral part of the history of humanity, for it represented a specific result of the complex development of culture and civilisation.[10]

However, for the humanists the acknowledgement of distinct factors of transformation and adaptability in the denotation and connotation of words, such as semantic development or rhetoric diversification, did not imply the idea of a separation of word and thing advocated in some nominalist strands of thought. A word was not just a *flatus vocis*, that is, an acoustically distinct stream of air which bore no evident relation to the thing it signified, as some nominalist thinkers argued. On the contrary, the humanists considered each word from the point of view of the classical Greek notion of λόγος, maintaining that *res* and *verba* ultimately belonged together. As Garin has stated, Salutati held that "words and things must not be separated" and that "the word is born together with the thing".[11] As another expert has put it, one of the basic elements of Poliziano's theories on language was "the primary value conferred by the humanist on the word as 'an equivalent of the *res*', as the main tool of [poetic] creation".[12] Accordingly, the grammatical instruction of the humanists was characterised by an integral approach and purported to be more than just memorising definitions and endings, namely an "approach to real things" and a "preparation for all genuine understanding".[13] Grammar was the foundation of language, and whoever could comprehend the real logic of human language, so the humanists argued, was able to understand the real logic of human beings - and, by extension, of their world also. In the evolution of humanist grammar we can observe the typical stages in the process of the establishment of the humanist movement, stages which we have tried to describe in the previous chapter in terms of protest and rebellion against nominalism on the one hand, and in terms of critical engagement with medieval conceptions and independent constructive theorising on the other hand. We can also interpret these three stages as the progressive manifestation of the voice of *humanitas*, for we can understand the emergence of humanist grammar on the negative side as deriving from a sustained effort to put away everything that is "linguistically inhuman", while on the positive side we can recognise it as the result of an attempt to advance a reform of grammar in accordance with the ideal of true humanity.

The first stage is illustrated by the stinging remarks of Alexander Hegius, the Deventer teacher who revolted against the nominalist view that grammar must be

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10 For a recent and exhaustive treatment of the complex issue of language theory in the later Renaissance cf. M.-L. Demonet, *Les voix du signe: Nature et origine du langage à la Renaissance* (Paris 1992).

11 E. Garin, *Italian Humanism* (Oxford 1965), 30.

12 D. Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics" in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 3, 97 (invoking a phrase by the Italian Poliziano expert Vittorio Branca).

13 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 30 (Garin makes the statements we quote in the context of discussing Salutati's letters to Dominici).

subordinated to the rules of philosophical logic:

> no one is denied the title of grammarian because he does not know which *modi significandi* are essential and which accidental, which material and which formal, which absolute and which representative of the parts of a sentence, but he is unworthy of the name grammarian who does not know how to speak and write correctly, no matter how many words he may write about the *modi significandi*.[14]

Vives and Rabelais were more passionate indicters of the scholastic conception of grammar. The latter once remarked scornfully that "he [Gargantua] proved to his mother on his fingers that *de modis significandi* was no science".[15] Vives, who was more fully and seriously engaged in the controversy over grammar, not only criticised the nominalist doctors' system of linguistics, but also dedicated himself to the task of responding to the scholastic reactions to the humanist reforming propositions. According to the Spanish humanist, contemporary Aristotelian academics attempted to perpetuate medieval notions in a stubborn conservative way - asserting continuously that grammar was the most elementary discipline of the arts curriculum and as such had to bend to the laws of logic -, and they also disparaged the new humanist approach to that discipline. Vives criticised the nominalists' resistance to the idea of a "free" discipline of grammar, that is, a grammar independent of formal logic, and he mocked at their disdainful consideration of the humanists as "mere grammarians":

> If anything is written with a semblance of style, whatever its contents, these men in their stupidity and ignorance do not call it philosophy or theology, or law, or medicine, but label it grammar. As far as they are concerned, Cicero's *Offices* or *Paradoxes* or *Tusculan Disputations* or *Academics* are all grammar. The only thing that is not grammar is what they teach, because it is not subject to the laws of grammar and overflows with all the impurities of language. ..... How is it possible, they say, for philosophy and theology and the other arts to be conveyed in such a terse and elegant style, and not in the non-Latin and impure, distorted language that they are used to? Have you ever heard anything more preposterous? If by God's favour I shall live for another ten years in reasonably good health, I shall rid their minds of this error, not by arguments, but by example.[16]

In the face of the traditionalist prejudices attached to the word "grammarian", against which Erasmus had to defend himself,[17] the humanists never grew tired of vindicating the new professional dignity of the grammarian. They were still obliged to defend themselves against widespread prejudice in the late Renaissance, as the following anecdote about Jacques Cujas attests:

> 'When they wanted to humiliate M. Cujas, they called him *grammarian*', remarked the great J. J. Scaliger, 'but he laughed and said that such people should be ashamed not to be such'.[18]

The first significant constructive theorist of humanist grammar was Lorenzo Valla. He redefined the rules of the Latin language from the standards of the classical ideal and challenged the current nominalist conceptions of language in his *Dialecticae disputationes*,

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14 A. Hegius, *Dialogi* (1503); quoted in N. L. Brann, "Humanism in Germany" in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 2, 131.

15 "et prouvoit sus ses doigtz à sa mère que *de modis significandi non erat scientia*"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 14.

16 J. L. Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, trans. Ch. Fantazzi, (Leiden 1979), 76-78.

17 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 107-108.

18 *Scaligerana* (1740); quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 79.

arguing against contemporary Aristotelian views that the basis of grammar was "not reason but example, not a rule of speech but observation [or] custom".[19] Valla censured the scholastic grammarians for having deviated from "the most established linguistic customs"[20] distorting the old and true forms of logic and language, and he reproached them for having thus "created a mass of fictive abstractions and categories".[21] What the Aristotelian academics of his time produced was mere "locution" as opposed to the refined "elocution" exhibited by the elegant eloquence of the classical authors. Valla was the first to advocate in a comprehensive way the idea that usage or, more precisely, expert usage, and not theory, was the proper norm of language, thus implicitly proposing that grammar was a descriptive, not a prescriptive science. He cemented this idea, which proved to be crucial for the development of modern grammar and linguistics, by reaffirming Quintilian's classical maxim that "custom is the surest master of speech",[22] declaring it a fundamental guideline for good grammaticising. While Salutati had already suggested explicitly "the ideal of a Latin style purged of nonclassical words and constructions and observing classical orthographical conventions",[23] Valla was the first to actually demonstrate in practice the nature and relevance of classical usage, as he was capable of illustrating his grammatical conceptions with a vast amount of concrete examples drawn from ancient Roman literature.[24]

Valla also made the point that all the arts and sciences, inasmuch as they were dependent on language, were subject to this norm of usage, which, he insisted, was nothing but the norm of nature, not necessarily that of abstract logical thinking in the first place. Thus Valla was something like a "Renaissance Rousseau" for language theory: he uttered a call *"retour à la nature!"* concerning grammar, demanding that the discipline should again be dominated by the ideal of *humanitas*, that is to say, by the rules of human nature and conduct.[25] The potential contrast between the laws of logic and those of the *studia humanitatis* was readily recognised by the nominalist philosophers of the day. Johannes Dullaerd, Vives' teacher in Paris, observed that "the better you are as a grammarian, the worse you will be as a logician".[26] Valla's call *"retour à la nature!"* was amplified in the Northern Renaissance by Vives, who contended that proper grammar was always based on usage, or rather on living usage, because the norms of language were ultimately determined by society in general, and not just by an intellectual elite. As a representative of the later Renaissance, Vives was already more empirical in his outlook than Valla and

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19 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 78.

20 "usitatissima verborum consuetudo"; cited in J. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric" in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 3, 191.

21 Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 191.

22 "consuetudo certissima magistra loquendi"; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 78.

23 Percival, "Renaissance Grammar", 73-74.

24 Cf. Percival, "Renaissance Grammar", 75.

25 We have outlined the humanist defence of nature and natural principles in the context of what we have called the movement's *liberation philosophy*. Cf. chapter 2, pp. 109-110.

26 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 78.

therefore less exclusive in his reference to antiquity. He argued that since the structure and the precepts of grammar were the result of a process of natural evolution, it would be detrimental to culture and sound learning to try to impose artificial norms in an arbitrary way. Thus from the humanist point of view any attempt to determine language from above would appear as an obtrusion into the natural order of things. What counted was the norm set by the ancient Roman authors, not the usage developed by the medieval schoolmen, which seemed to the humanists "to rest on the mistaken assumption that language could be created by an act of rationality".[27]

It is evident that for the Latin language the new linguistic conceptions of humanism implied the imposition of a radical stop to the innovative operations of scholastic academics. Latin was acknowledged by the humanists to be a dead language with regard to society as a whole and therefore came to be treasured by them as a valuable object for linguistic conservation. Vives repudiated the introduction of new rules for Latin and Greek as anachronistic and conceded only what could be considered as natural:

> since we do not now have a people speaking Latin or Greek, it would be difficult to think up new rules for expression in those languages. The old rules will do, along with some universal ones *drawn from nature* and applicable to all languages.[28]

Vives defined his descriptive approach to grammar against the nominalist theories:

> These three arts [i.e. grammar, rhetoric, logic] deal with language which came from the people and not from teachers, for first the Latin and Greek languages existed, and afterwards grammatical, rhetorical, and logical formulas were observed in them. *Language was not twisted to suit the rules, but rather the rules followed the pattern of language*. We do not speak Latin in a certain way because Latin grammar bids us so to speak; on the contrary, grammar recommends us to speak in a certain way because that is the way Latin is spoken.[29]

This declaration was indeed a perfect epitome of the humanist programme for linguistic reform, and it embodied Vives' full endorsement of the descriptive approach to grammar proposed earlier by Valla. What the Spanish humanist stated for grammar in general applied especially to words, the meanings of which should not be altered arbitrarily: the Latin language should be handled with respect for the customary expression of its authentic representatives, the classical writers. The humanists accused the schoolmen of mismanaging the heritage of the Latin language in this respect, reproaching them for having forged a new kind of Latin divorced from the Roman original. Paul Cortese, a humanistically oriented theologian, attacked the scholastic philosophers because they refused to accept the norm of classical usage proclaimed by the humanists:

> There are in fact many philosophers who, since they believe that the power of forming new words is optional, and think that they have as much right to create as the ancients had, say that there is no reason why their freedom to create new words should be narrowly restricted by *the usage of antiquity*. ..... we must take arms against these philosophers.[30]

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27 K. Jensen, "The Humanist Reform of Latin and Latin Teaching" in J. Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge 1996), 69.

28 Vives, *De tradendis disciplinis*, 4.3. (1531); quoted in Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 171 (italics added).

29 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 36 (italics added).

30 P. Cortese, *Introduction to the First Book of the "Sentences"* (1504) in L. A. Kennedy (ed.), *Renaissance Philosophy* (The Hague 1973), 32 (italics added).

If the humanist conception of language derived principally from the critical reflections of erudite classicists on Latin, the ideas it contained and the conclusions it entailed were also to be applied to the vernacular. Rabelais transferred the linguistic notions elaborated from the analysis of Latin to the French language, affirming with a reference to Aulus Gellius that "the proper thing is to follow *the common use of language* in speaking",[31] and insisting that the best was if people expressed themselves "*in a natural way*".[32] The French humanist humorously commented that he who "disdains the common usage of speaking", although "he may think he is a great orator",[33] in fact only "forges a kind of diabolical language - perhaps in an attempt at enchanting us".[34]

The humanist vindication of grammar as a discipline in its own right, independent from logic, paved the way for the development of the modern science of philology, the beginnings of which lie in the scholarly constitution of humanist grammar. This constitution occurred in the second half of the fifteenth century when the first specialised humanist philologists, such as Angelo Poliziano or Ermolao Barbaro, began to work in Italy. These were fully dedicated grammarians who were mainly active as editors of classical texts and who, in the judgement of modern historical research, "undertook a new kind of work: that written by a specialist for the benefit of other specialists".[35] It is not easy to determine with precision when and where the theoretical foundations of humanist philology were laid; some attribute the achievement to Niccolò Perotti, a papal curialist and Archbishop of Siponto, and at the same time a devoted humanist scholar. Perotti, who was esteemed by Erasmus as "the most accurate, yet not pedantic ..... among contemporary Latin grammarians",[36] seems indeed to have made one of the first attempts at formulating the basic principles of the new humanist philology in a manner that can be called, even if only approximately, scientific. When drawing up a list of suggestions for the critical edition of classical texts (specifically those intended for print) Perotti made a number of points which, taken together, represent something like a rudimentary body of essential criteria of humanist literary scholarship. The editorial principles the humanist put forward were the following: first, no personal additions to the text from the editor; second, strict collation of existing manuscripts; third, semantic cross-examination, for instance, verification of quotations; fourth, location and indication of (unacknowledged) sources, especially in

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31 "il nous convient parler selon *le langage usité*"; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 6 (italics added).

32 Panatagruel meets a young student from Limoges who has acquired in Paris the scholastic habit of using a highly Latinised, academic type of French. In his aversion to anything unnatural, the giant grasps the student by his throat and only lets him go after he recovers, under shock, his natural expression and native accent, remarking, at that moment, contentedly: "A ceste heure parle tu *naturellement*"; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 6 (italics added).

33 "et luy semble bien qu'il est quelque grand orateur en françoys, parce qu'il dedaigne *l'usance commun de parler*"; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 6 (italics added).

34 "Je croys qu'il nous forge icy quelque langaige diabolique, et qu'il nous cherme comme enchanteur"; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 6.

35 S. Prete, *The Humanists and the Discovery of Printing* (Krefeld 1982), 21.

36 Erasmus, *De ratione studii*; quoted in Jensen, "The Humanist Reform of Latin and Latin Teaching", 68.

imitative passages; and fifth, identification of Greek and other non-Latin elements.[37] These criteria, which can be considered representative of the achievements of humanist philological scholarship in the Renaissance, confirm the traditional assertion that the *editiones principes* of the humanists, although they showed certain flaws (and excluded better manuscripts found later) were not replaced, but only supplemented, by later editions until the establishment of Lachmann's method in the nineteenth century.[38]

The most fundamental implication of the new scientific approach to language introduced by the Italian humanists of the quattrocento was the emergence of an attitude of historical relativism. Attempting to gain a more accurate understanding of the development of civilisation, the humanists emphasised the investigation of the concrete origins of words, documents and objects, and of their precise meanings, so that each text or artefact could be interpreted with reference to its actual historical, cultural and social context. The new philological approach of humanism inevitably fostered a certain sense of relativity and critical detachment, which began to grow during the Renaissance but only developed fully after the sixteenth century. The emergence of relativism is already manifest in the humanists of the fifteenth century. Rudolf Agricola, the Dutch theorist of the pragmatic school of humanist rhetoric, pointed out that most of the knowledge we acquire was of relative validity, resting on reasonable probability rather than absolute certainty.[39] Agricola justified his focus on invention (in contradistinction to syllogistic reasoning) by referring to the relativity of all rationally acquired knowledge and, invoking the principle of Socratic doubt, he wrote: "Indeed, merely a small part of what we learn is certain and unchangeable, and if we believe the Academy, we only know that we do not know anything".[40] The attitude of historical relativism engendered by humanist philology also reinforced the descriptive approach to language and, in general, implied a definite separation of grammar and logic.[41] Moreover, there is a common consensus on the basic fact that in the Renaissance "there is a clear sense in which the approach to antiquity on the part of grammarians changed".[42] An essential part of this change was the introduction of the study of Greek letters, a development which had far-reaching consequences.[43] On

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37 Cf. Prete, *The Humanists and the Discovery of Printing*, 11-15.

38 Cf. Prete, *The Humanists and the Discovery of Printing*, 18-19.

39 "Agricola justified writing *De inventione* on the grounds that almost everything we 'learn' involves probability (and therefore is best developed by dialectical *topoi*) rather than certainty (what enters the domain of the syllogism and scientifically demonstrated truth"; Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 196.

40 "Exiqua enim portio eorum quae discimus certa et immota est, adeoque si Academiae credimus, hoc solum scimus, quod nihil scimus"; R. Agricola, *De inventione dialectica* (1479); quoted in Latin in Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 229 n. 253.

41 However, these issues are not entirely clear but form part of the ongoing dispute about humanism. There are scholars who defend the medieval way of grammaticising, highlighting the merits of the prescriptive and logical approach. Cf. e.g. Percival, "Renaissance Grammar", 68, 72.

42 Percival, "Renaissance Grammar", 67.

43 Percival has stated that: "The most signal innovation of Renaissance humanism in the area of grammar was the incorporation of Greek instruction into the curriculum. This change must be regarded as profound in the western pedagogical tradition for the simple reason that it represents the first time that a second language was taught alongside Latin"; Percival, "Renaissance Grammar", 76.

the formal level, it is noteworthy that the humanists gradually moved away from writing grammatical commentaries.[44]

The humanistic approach to language engendered a whole new type of research activity which we are today accustomed to call textual criticism, and which was manifest mainly in practical applications such as the evaluation of a document's authenticity or the consideration of questions concerning authorship or attribution. Examples include Petrarch's refutation of the so-called Habsburg donation and Lorenzo Valla's exposure of the Donation of Constantine.[45] While Petrarch can be credited with anticipating humanist textual criticism in its essential elements, Valla may be considered its actual founder, since he formulated explicitly (and to some degree scientifically) its conceptual basis. In the fifteenth century textual criticism was further developed by Poliziano, but it was only in the sixteenth century when it became a notable branch of philological research.[46] Indeed, humanist textual criticism reached its apogee only in the late Renaissance, that is, in the second half of the sixteenth century, when it was established on a solid basis by increasingly concerted scholarly efforts. Thus only by the end of the Renaissance the interest in historical linguistics had developed into a universal scholarly pursuit. [47]

The most significant aspects of the restitution of letters were the full restoration of the Greek language and the almost complete recovery of the body of surviving Greek sources, both of which created a profound sense of cultural revival. The scope of this "restitution of Hellenism", as the phenomenon was often called, was immense, comprising the bulk of Attic oratory, poetry, epic, drama, and historiography; the larger part of Plato and the Platonic tradition, as well as most of the other non-Aristotelian traditions, that is, Scepticism, Stoicism, Epicureanism and popular philosophy; and in addition to this patristic theology and some new scientific material. There is no doubt that the restitution of Greek letters in the Renaissance represents, as Kristeller has put it, "a cultural development of the very first order" (P. O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York 1979), 149) and a cursory glance at the long list of authors confirms this. Partly new were Aristotle (the *Poetics* in a certain sense, and the Greek commentaries on his work), Hippocrates and Galen (there was a shift of emphasis from the former to the latter), Archimedes, Ptolemy (notably the *Geography*). Largely new were Plato (basically everything except *Timaeus*, *Phaedo* and *Meno*, but most importantly the *Republic* and the *Laws*), Sextus Empiricus and Proclus. Almost fully new were Epicurus, Lucretius, Epictetus, Plotinus, Xenophon, Plutarch, Lucian, Diogenes Laertius, Marcus Aurelius; Lysias, Isocrates, Demosthenes (and the other orators); Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius; Homer, Hesiod; Sophokles, Euripides, Aeschylus, Aristophanes; Pindar (and the other lyrical poets); previously unknown lesser writers and epigrams were collected in new anthologies. Cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 27, 56-57, 138, 148-149. For the note on Hippocrates and Galen cf. J. Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London 1993), 544, 557.

44 Cf. Percival, "Renaissance Grammar", 72.

45 Cf. below, pp. 189-190, 192.

46 Cf. Percival, "Renaissance Grammar", 78.

47 This can be seen in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*: the whole idea of the involved structure of the narrative framework in this novel reflects the distinct preoccupation with philological inquiry typical of humanist textual criticism. There is an interesting passage which vividly depicts the new linguistic curiosity and the keen awareness of historical relativity: "The translator of this history, when he reaches the fifth chapter, declares that he considers it apocryphal because in it Sancho talks in a style that is far superior to what one would expect from one of so limited an understanding, and he makes such subtle comments that they seem beyond the range of his intelligence. However, in order to fulfill the duty he owed to his office, he was unwilling to omit translating it, ... "; Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 5; trans. W. Starkie (London 1957), 557. The irony in this passage derives from the acknowledgement of a certain decadence of the original humanist ideas at the end of the Renaissance, not from an averse attitude to humanism itself. We have encountered the same situation in the passage on the *humanista*; cf. chapter 2, pp. 129-130 n. 319.

The critical approach of humanist philology promoted the activity of translation and enriched the corresponding discourse on theory with distinct and sometimes contradictory ideas. On the one hand the humanist approach endorsed the medieval tradition of word for word rendering, carrying it to higher levels of linguistic precision and refinement, while on the other hand humanist scholarship also strongly encouraged a tendency towards free paraphrasing. The issue of translation is a typical example of what we have called humanist doctrinal pluralism: if Bruni advocated a reformed kind of literalism,[48] Petrarch had been inclined to defend the opposite principle. The latter thought that slavish fidelity to the letter might betray the spirit, and that an all-too strict literalism indicated a lack of interpretative capability and linguistic feeling on the translator's part. Free paraphrasing would be preferable if it helped transfer a given author's intention from one cultural and historical context into another:

> the majority of the ignorant lot clings to words, as the shipwrecked do to a wooden plank, and believe that a matter cannot be better said and cannot be phrased otherwise: so great is the destitution of their intellect or of their speech, by which conceptions are expressed. ..... it is occasionally more agreeable for the hearer and more convenient for the speaker to express Aristotle's mind not in the words he used but in one's own.[49]

The contrast between the ideals of an improved literal and a new free way of translation, typical of early humanism, set up a pattern for the debates in later humanism. The tendency to free paraphrasing gradually became stronger in the Renaissance, although there were always "fundamentalist" currents defending literal rendering. Ermolao Barbaro, the fifteenth century Venetian humanist and diplomat, vindicated the right of the translator to forge free renderings with reference to the norms of classical antiquity. In the dedication to his Latin translation of Themistius' *Paraphrases Aristotelis* he declared that it was not his intention to present a literal rendering, "but", he commented, "we have used metaphors and figures and tropes in a free way according to Roman custom".[50] Barbaro held that proper translating did not consist in literal rendering, but in free interpretation; it should not follow the words of the Greek original, but the spirit of the Latin language. For this humanist, therefore, translation did not mean stiff literal loyalty but constant adaptation to a living reality, for "he considered that translation was not mere slavish fidelity but a sort of sporting test".[51]

However, humanist translation theory is not adequately characterised by simply describing the antagonistic positions of literal rendering and free paraphrasing. There are at least two areas in which agreement and a common doctrine prevailed. First, the humanists were unanimously of the opinion that the old medieval techniques were insufficient and that the level of linguistic competence in translators had to be raised in

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48 L. Bruni, *On the Correct Way to Translate*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 79.

49 Petrarch, *De ignorantia*, trans. H. Nachod in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago 1948), 102.

50 "sed libere et translationibus et figuris et tropis usi sumus ad morem romanum"; E. Barbaro, *Epistolae* (1480); quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 102.

51 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 102.

order to produce reliable Latin versions of ancient Greek, Hebrew and Arabic texts. There was agreement among the humanists that "philosophical translation should conform to superior classical standards" and reproduce the original "accurately without the coarse contrivances of medieval translators".[52] Bruni thought that to translate Aristotle competently meant to take into account both the peculiarities of the Greek original and the characteristics of classical Latin - that newly restored Latin which was the humanists' chosen means of expression. The second point on which the humanists were agreed was the idea of considering any document in a critical and historical way, that is to say, to treat it in the social, intellectual and religious context of the time in which it was created. Bruni insisted on approaching the ancient Greek and Latin languages in terms of their historical relevance and reality, stipulating that the monuments of classical literature be regarded as aspects of the manifold and indelible record of humanity. Indeed, Bruni "required the translator to master the broader cultural context in which a text had emerged", since he saw translation "as movement from *lingua Graeca* to *lingua Latina*, where both terms of the transaction were embedded in historical particulars".[53]

Etymology also played an important role in humanist grammar; it provided a fertile field of application for the humanist interest in historical investigation. The new historical consciousness shaped by the humanists manifested itself in the increasing researches into the origins of words and the relationships between these linguistic roots. This humanist interest in the history of words "culminated in the ingenious and speculative use of etymology, on the basis of which Vico erected his 'new science'".[54] However, the limitations and shortcomings must not be overlooked, for although etymology "was beginning to acquire some linguistic rigor" in the Renaissance, the speculative element, "suspect but ever popular", sometimes prevailed over the historical one to such a degree that the research into the origins of words could degenerate into a mere "game" or "sport".[55] Carrying out accurate linguistic investigations into the origin and history of words, Lorenzo Valla came to criticise the semantic corruptions of medieval Latin and jettisoned some of the more bizarre scholastic interpretations of ancient texts. His etymological researches enabled him to retrieve the genuine (and often lost) meanings of words, and thus he contributed substantially to the restoration of classical literature in its authentic form. Valla's main argument was that since the history of a word reflected the history of human custom and mentality, tracing etymologies signified proper reconstruction of the past and meaningful interpretation of history.[56]

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52 Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 82.
53 Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 83.
54 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 81.
55 Kelley, "'Tacitus Noster': The 'Germania' in the Renaissance and Reformation" in Luce / Woodman (eds.), *Tacitus and the Tacitean Tradition* (Princeton 1993), 162.
56 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 54.

After the discipline of grammar came that of rhetoric in both the traditional medieval curriculum of the *artes liberales* and in the humanist cycle of the *studia humanitatis*. In theory rhetoric had always been acknowledged as a liberal art of foundational status, but in practice it had increasingly been marginalised during the Middle Ages. As one expert has observed, "in the various educational and encyclopedic schemes produced by medieval scholars, rhetoric consistently received limited attention", and in the Late Middle Ages the discipline "became conspicuous by its absence from the arts requirements of northern universities".[57] Another expert has pointed out that "while records of medieval university curricula are of course fragmentary ..... the pattern in respect to rhetoric is nevertheless quite clear. It is a pattern of omission".[58] There are numerous contemporary accounts attesting to the neglected state of the teaching of rhetoric in late medieval universities. Around 1458 Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II) described the situation at the University of Vienna as follows:

> the greatest flaw in this center of learning is that they give too much attention to dialectic and too much time to a study which is not very fruitful. Those who are honoured with the title of master of arts are examined especially in this one art. For the rest, they have *no concern for* music or *rhetoric* or the metrical art, although they require that certain verses and letters unskilfully edited by others should be taught. *Oratory* and poetry are *almost unknown* among them.[59]

Topical invention,[60] one of the classical branches of rhetoric, was particularly neglected; it "had a minuscule place in medieval university education" and was considered in the schools, if it was considered at all, as a part of logic, not of rhetoric.[61] For the humanists, rhetoric was a discipline of paramount importance; they regarded it as a distinctive feature and an indispensable component of the culture of a highly developed civilisation. Thus they campaigned for its restoration in contemporary culture, arguing that Europe should cease to be barbaric and become more refined and eloquent.

Rhetoric was considered by the humanists as a discipline of fundamental significance also because it represented an essential part of their campaign against the scholastic stress on rationality and logic, which dominated the education and intellectual life of the Late Middle Ages.[62] Therefore, if grammar was for the humanists a "gateway to knowledge", rhetoric represented to them a "highroad to true wisdom".[63] After the long-lasting neglect of rhetorical theory and practice in the Middle Ages, the humanists engineered the "reintegration"[64] of rhetoric into European culture by means of the *studia humanitatis* and under the banner of the ideal of *humanitas*. According to the humanists, diligent application to the *studia humanitatis* and devotion to *humanitas* could bring about such a

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57 Cf. J. Monfasani, *op. cit.*, 173.

58 J. J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley 1974), 95 n.21.

59 Quoted in J. B. Ross / M. M. McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader* (New York 1953), 210 (italics added).

60 Viz. the discovery of ideas and facts, and their skilful literary or oratorical presentation.

61 Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 174.

62 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 111-112.

63 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 82.

64 The term was coined by Brian Vickers; cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 88.

reintegration, for the study of the humanities and of the principle of humanity itself would develop the articulative power in human beings and reform their ways of thinking. The figure of Eudemon in Rabelais' *Gargantua* is a representative product of humanistic education: he "rather resembled some little angel than a human being", symbolising the new ideal of rhetoric by virtue of his fine talk and manners, which is manifest in his "fitting gestures", "distinct pronunciation", "eloquent voice", "adorned language" and "good Latin".[65] Good pronunciation as a distinctive feature of the humanistically educated individual is also emphasised in the figure of Panurge, who, when showing his wide knowledge of languages, earns the compliment of "well-pronounced and articulated with rhetorical skill".[66]

It was Petrarch who marked the beginning of the "reintegration" of rhetoric, inaugurating a new movement of literary classicism.[67] The exiled Florentine initiated the humanist revival of rhetoric at Liège in 1333 when he unearthed Cicero's oration *Pro Archia*.[68] This speech from the ancient Roman Republic, written to defend a poet, was also Petrarch's first antique discovery,[69] and although it was no more than an ordinary example of forensic eloquence, dealing with poetry it happened to contain one of the chief statements on the classical concept of *humanitas* and the associated notion of liberal education.[70] It could be argued that the year 1333 marks the beginning of humanism, namely if we look at the phenomenon from the view-point of the combined ideals of *humanitas* and the *studia humanitatis*, and if we take into account the transcendental significance of poetry.[71] The humanists after Petrarch followed his example and gradually restituted the rest of Cicero's orations, most of which had been ignored in the Middle Ages.[72] The pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which had been known from the thirteenth century on and had already played a certain role in the Late Middle Ages, particularly in pre-humanism, became the main textbook of rhetorical instruction in the Renaissance and remained so until the end of the sixteenth century, although its authorship was increasingly questioned from about 1500 on.[73] If the history of this manual appears to suggest continuity in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, we have to remember that the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* played very different roles in the respective epochs and experienced very different degrees of comprehension and application.

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65 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 15.

66 "bien rhetoriquement prononcée"; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 9.

67 Cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 176.

68 Cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 177.

69 Cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 177.

70 Cf. chapter 2, p. 103 n. 160. The early humanists immediately made use of Petrarch's discovery, invoking Cicero's speech to define and defend the humanistic studies. Boccaccio, for instance, cited from *Pro Archia* in his writings on poetry; cf. Boccaccio, "In Praise of Poetry" in Ross / McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, 423.

71 The fact that Petrarch's first antique manuscript discovery was a defence speech for a poet further illustrates, if only in an indirect way, the function of poetry as an agent of change in the transition from *divinitas* to *humanitas*. Cf. chapter 2, pp. 113-114.

72 Cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 173.

73 Cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 185.

The handbook could only unfold its full pedagogical potential in the Renaissance, that is, in the changed context of the revived Attic and Roman oratory on the one hand and the emancipation of rhetoric as a discipline of its own on the other hand. Petrarch also began the restoration of classical epistolography, discovering Cicero's letters,[74] and his humanist successors established the fashion of collecting letters.[75] Thus the letters of many humanists circulated in manuscripts or appeared in print. Devoted to the letters of classical antiquity and to those of their contemporaries, the humanists "elevated the letter to a favorite literary genre"[76] and edited various kinds of collections arranged, for instance, by author or theme, with allusions to which their writings abound.

The revival of rhetoric and its "reintegration" into intellectual life were processes which were influenced decisively by the anthropocentric tendencies prevalent in humanism. The humanists conceived of the discipline of rhetoric as an antidote of humanity to the scholastic cult of rationality.[77] The renewed emphasis on rhetoric introduced by the humanists implied above all a shift from logic to language in a general sense, or a turn from *ratio* to *oratio*, to use the original humanist terminology. This means that speech came to be seen as something more distinctively human than reason, and therefore attention focused increasingly on the skilled practice of the art of rhetoric, with the corresponding cultivation of a varied and rich verbal expression. The idea that language was superior to logic was, of course, not new; it could be found in the writings of the ancients. Erasmus wrote that "I have learnt from Galen that what differentiates man from the animals, or brutes [*alogi*], as they are called, is not reason, but speech".[78] Indeed, the paramount position of rhetoric in humanism can only be understood in the context of the high estimation of the phenomenon of human speech. In their quest for understanding the human condition, the humanists came to rate language above logic and therefore, they considered literature in the broad sense, especially the classics, as a more truthful mirror of humanity than speculative philosophy. They argued that if people wanted to discover human nature, they should study language and literature rather than follow the ratiocinations of a philosophy that had become all too abstract. This is to say, they thought that people should not subscribe to a culture dominated exclusively by reason and intellect, as this would tend to cover up the reality of life and eliminate what is decisive for a meaningful human existence: inner experience.

We have recognised that the "literary" attitude and rhetorical way of argumentation of the humanists was essentially motivated by their opposition to scholasticism and its

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74 Cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 178.
75 Cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 194.
76 Cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 194.
77 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 111-112 and above, p. 145.
78 "non ratione sed oratione"; Erasmus, *The Right Way to Speak*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 89.

pronounced tendency to rational conceptualisation. We have also recognised that the humanists saw in scholastic philosophy a kind of intellectual escapism, for which they intended to provide a corrective - a corrective which can to a certain extent be qualified as psychological.[79] The humanists judged the learned systematisations of the medieval doctors as misguided efforts at drawing a world-picture in which everything is dominated by the intellect. Thus their programme of rhetoric was aimed at combating the overabundance of sophisticated philosophical concepts in scholasticism. According to the humanists, philosophy should never lose touch with human reality and be dominated by ideas that are disconnected from it, for the reality of human existence should not be covered up by notional inventions which have no genuine correspondence with human life. Their rhetorical campaign, then, contained a critical exposure of the tendency to abstract conceptualisation which is omnipresent in Western thought and which was particularly accentuated in nominalism. At the root of the humanist campaign there was a preoccupation with living experience as against sterile conceptuality, or in other words a criticism of the ivory tower syndrome. As we have shown, the humanists were literary advocates of a humanity which challenged the exclusive dominion of rational thinking in scholasticism and particularly nominalism. This humanity can also be understood as a kind of psychologically conceived ideal of *humanitas*, which implies a struggle for wholeness in all areas of life and thought, and at the same time an attempt to create new forms of living and thinking that do justice to the realities of the human psyche. The humanists recognised the danger of excessive intellectualisation for Western civilisation and attacked corresponding tendencies by means of rhetoric and the other *studia humanitatis*, as well as under the banner of *humanitas*. Their criticism of scholastic philosophy contained a distinct warning against the rise of rationalism in the intellectual life of their time. With their juxtaposition of rhetoric and reason they pointed at the potential of dehumanisation inherent in the unchallenged progress of rationality.

A closer look at the humanist enthusiasm for rhetoric reveals that it did not only derive from a spirited defence of culture and civilisation manifest in the adoration of the beauty of elaborate speech, or from a psychologically motivated apology of irrationality as apparent in the opposition against scholastic intellectualism, but that it was also rooted in another important preoccupation, namely the fascination with the potential of creativity contained in the human mind, especially the power of the imagination as apparent in what was called topical invention.[80] The humanists had an intuitive belief that the deeper meaning of human existence could only be grasped "rhetorically" by way of symbol, metaphor, mythological images, allegories or similar figurative devices, which is to say, by means that are related to the faculty of literary imagination. This belief was rarely expressed explicitly - who could have done this without attracting dangerous suspicions of

79 Cf. chapter 2, p. 112.
80 Cf. above, p. 145 n. 60.

heresy? - but it was demonstrated amply by example. The humanists resuscitated the world of pagan mythology in their restitution of ancient texts, such as Homer's epics and Greek tragedy, and in their own literary activity they often chose the form of fable or used the motifs of ancient myths to explain the riddle of human existence. Vives presented his view of the human condition in his famous *Fable on Man*, a short tale with a completely mythological setting, in which everything is explained in terms of ancient Roman divinities.[81] Valla stated his main argument in his dialogue *On Free Will* with reference to the ancient fable of Sextus consulting Apollo's oracle[82] - a fable on which Leibniz focused and which he extended in his interpretation of Valla's treatise.[83]

The humanists hinted at what they perceived to be a fundamental fact of the human mind, namely that there was an intimate connection between the ornamental splendour and effusiveness of eloquent speech and the non-rational faculties of the human mind, such as the so-called the "mythopoeic" imagination. In other words, they assumed that there was a meaningful link between the flow of rhetoric and the "stream of consciousness", to borrow a term from modern literary theory. In fact, it appears that the humanists had a dim intimation of the modern idea that rhetorical phenomena display the characteristics of the deeper strata of the human psyche, anticipating the insight that the "archetypes [of the collective unconscious] speak the language of high rhetoric, even of bombast", as this is "the style selected by the unconscious itself".[84] The humanists seem to have appreciated rhetoric as a manifestation of the hidden side of the human mind or, to put in terms of modern psychology, they recognised rhetoric as the mode of expression of the voice of the unconscious.

Naturally the rhetorical apology for irrationality formulated by the humanists was intimately connected with their vindication of what we have described as emotional intelligence or sentient cognition.[85] Both the repudiation of medieval rationalism and the defence of rhetoric as something like the voice of the unconscious were rooted in a broad conception of the human mind which included the appreciation of faculties other than pure reason. Thus the humanist turn from *ratio* to *oratio*[86] can be interpreted in terms of a shift of emphasis from rational to emotional intelligence. The humanists thought that individuals who cultivated their intellect at the expense of the other faculties of the mind, and not in living interrelation with them, would become a contradiction to themselves from the point of view of *humanitas*, which is to say, they would not be complete human beings

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81 Cf. Vives, *Fabula de homine* (1518); trans. N. Lenkeith in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 387-393.

82 Cf. Valla, *De libero arbitrio*; trans. Ch. Trinkaus in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 170-175.

83 Cf. Valla, *De libero arbitrio*, 173 n. 20.

84 C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (London 1963), 202.

85 Cf. introduction, pp. 27-30 and chapter 2, pp. 111-112.

86 Cf. above, p. 147.

anymore in the basic sense of universal humanity. We must also point out that the attribution of an essential meaning to the phenomena of rhetorical figurativeness was based on the assumption of the fundamental validity of the factor of emotional intelligence. The appreciation of the non-rational manifestations of rhetoric presupposed a belief that something of significance lay hidden under the sumptuous dress of rhetoric, namely messages - often strangely codified - from the deeper strata of the psyche, and that there was a kind of intelligence which was capable of capturing and deciphering them.

If the repudiation of rationalism and the affirmation of emotional intelligence can be characterised as the theoretical motivation of the humanist defence of rhetoric, it was the fascination with the power to move people and with the capacity to induce concrete change in this world which can be seen as representing its practical motivation. The anti-scholastic campaign of humanist rhetoric did not only aim at promoting invention and imagination, but it also purported to foster that non-rational faculty of the mind which was less delicate but more dangerous than the imagination: the will.[87] This is the more evident side of rhetoric that is reflected in the traditional definition, according to which the aim of rhetoric is to "teach, delight and move", to cite Cicero's words.[88] This classical definition focuses on the practical aspects of rhetoric, and those aspects were then often seen as the most important ones, so that the discipline came to be associated chiefly with the acquisition of the capability of moving the human will. Salutati claimed that rhetoric could "inspire souls and set hearts afire" asking:

> what could be more important than to control the motions of the mind, to turn your hearer where you will, and to lead him back to the place from which you moved him, pleasantly and with love?[89]

In their attack on medieval scholasticism the humanists always argued in a very pragmatic way that rhetoric was superior to philosophy because it penetrated deeper into the human mind and managed to target the essential force of the human will, thus being able to achieve that goal which makes all the difference in life, namely to put ideas into practice and to produce change in the world. They held that the rhetorician was above the philosopher because he had the power to stimulate people's urge for action and their initiative, which, as they stressed, was the motor of progress in this world and thus the basis for enriching human life. Bruni proclaimed the superiority of rhetoric over philosophy thus:

> It is the orators who teach us to praise the good deeds and to hate the bad; it is they who teach us how to soothe, encourage, stimulate, or deter. All these things the philosophers do, it is true, but in some special way anger, mercy and the arousal and pacification of mind are completely within the power of the orator.[90]

George of Trebizond also argued that rhetoric was more useful than Aristotelian logic and

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87 Cf. chapter 2, p. 112 and chapter 4, pp. 196-198.

88 "docere, delectare, movere"; Cicero, *De oratore*, 2.115, 121, 310.

89 Quoted in W. J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin* (New York 1988), 114.

90 Bruni, *On the Study of Literature*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 91.

philosophy, particularly "in deliberations and trials".[91] Valla wrote that "truly, philosophy is like a soldier or lower officer at the orders of oratory, his commander and (as a great writer of tragedies [i.e. Euripides] calls her) his queen",[92] and claimed that logic was simply a subdivision of rhetoric.[93] Valla's view was amplified in the following century by Nizolio, who affirmed that logic was a branch of rhetoric and that rhetorical instruction was superior to an education based on logic.[94]

To sum up, from the point of view of humanist rhetoric language meant power, namely power over people's will. But that is not all, for to say that language is power only describes the surface profile of humanist rhetoric, while the essential element was the belief in emotional intelligence and the value of *oratio* as against *ratio*. According to the humanistic conception of language, a skilled orator or writer could mould his expression in such a way as to reach beyond the sphere of rational consciousness and penetrate to the remote recesses of the mind, tapping the hidden resources of the soul and thus transmitting the message with appeal to the subliminal strata of the human psyche. This was the way to move the will of the individual, and this was what Cicero's *movere* meant to the Renaissance humanists: to address the unconscious layers of the mind and so elicit deep-rooted emotional responses in the audience. Thus the humanists appreciated rhetoric as a distinct form of power based on their probing insights into human psychology. They believed that rhetoric was a factor to be reckoned with in this world, arguing that the force of well-shaped words was more subtle and enduring than that of mere physical strength or pure intellectual power. It becomes clear that the two main motivations of humanist rhetoric - the reduction of reason and the appeal to the will - were inextricably linked, for according to the humanists the power to move people actually sprang from the skill of touching on the non-rational levels of the individual's consciousness, which could only be comprehended by a kind of intelligence that allowed space for emotional response.

It has to be underlined that the humanist devotion to the subtle powers of rhetoric was always connected with the explicit stipulation that these powers be used in peaceful ways and for honourable ends. The humanists were dedicated to a pacifist ideal of *humanitas*,[95] arguing that the potential of eloquent rhetoric was superior to that of plain physical force, particularly if the effects of either were considered in the long term. Hence, the conception of language as a higher form of power and the demand that the skills of rhetoric had to be at the service of humanity were the motives underlying the humanist motto "eloquence is superior to strength" (*eloquentia fortitudine praestantior*). Alciatus linked the motto in typical fashion with the Ciceronian phrase "that arms may yield to

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91 Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 190.
92 Valla, *On Pleasure*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 91.
93 In his *Dialectica*; cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 191.
94 Cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 210.
95 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 104, 122 n. 270.

peace",[96] using the mythological figure of the so-called "Gallic Hercules". In his collection of emblems entitled *Emblemata*, which was one of the most popular humanist books ever,[97] we read: "Arms yield to peace and, however hardened the hearts, Eloquence has the power to lead them as it wishes".[98] Alciatus also records another motto concerning rhetoric, namely that "eloquence is difficult" (*facundia difficilis*). This motto, apart from telling that eloquence is hard to learn, refers to its inherent power of persuasion: "the splendour and fluency of eloquence attracts everybody, but a lot of hard work is required to attain it".[99] Again the description includes a mythological reference: eloquence is symbolised by the mythical plant *moly*, which Mercury gives to Ulysses as an antidote against the magic potions of Circe. *Moly* has a black root and a bright flower, and this signifies that eloquence is arduous to learn (the dark root) but once acquired, it endows its bearer with the power of persuasive speech (the beautiful bloom).[100]

In the Renaissance, just as today, the term *rhetoric* also had distinct derogatory connotations. Despite the increasing appreciation of rhetorical skills, it had become increasingly clear that the power to produce eloquent speech had two unfavourable side-aspects. On the one hand it was associated with an all too frequent proneness to vain verbosity or empty rhetoric, and on the other hand there was a keen awareness that it possessed a dangerous potential for manipulating the masses. The humanists admitted that the art of speaking and writing well could become empty speech-making in the hands of dilettanti, or that it could degenerate into mob oratory in the hands of demagogues. They were well aware of these dark sides of rhetoric, and they recognised the contrast these negative aspects made with their ideal of *humanitas*. As the official champions of eloquence they were not inclined to dwell on these dark sides at length, but the leading figures among them always conscientiously highlighted the ethical demands implied by the concept of *humanitas*. Thus we encounter clear, if not very frequent, statements on this issue in the works of all the major humanists. Already Petrarch proved that a humanist could be critical towards rhetoric, for he acknowledged that there was an inner voice which warned him from excessive verbosity: "how much better would it be for you if you weighed judiciously all that sweet and fallacious abundance of words".[101]

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96 "cedant arma togae"; Cicero, *De officiis*, 1.22.77.

97 A. Alciatus, *Emblemata*, 1st (ascertained) ed. Augsburg 1531, followed by innumerable editions successively expanded from 99 to 212 emblems.

98 "Cedunt arma togae, et quamvis / durissima corda / Eloquio pollens ad sua vota / trahit"; Alciatus, *Emblemas*, no. 180, 2nd ed., ed. S. Sebastián (Madrid 1993), 223.

99 "Eloquii candor facundiaque allicit / omnes: / Sed multi res est tanta / laboris opus"; Alciatus, *Emblemas*, no. 181, 224.

100 The obscure Latin phrase "sed multi res est tanta laboris opus" also admits the speculation that the black root does not simply refer to the somehow trivial assertion of "hard work required", but to the special quality or type of work involved: perhaps the image of the black root contains an allusion to the subliminal sphere of the human psyche which is targeted with eloquent speech.

101 "Quanto era meglio .... / ..... queste dolci tue fallaci ciance / librar con giusta lance"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 359. However, Petrarch may have underestimated the dangers inherent in accomplished rhetorical skill, for he once claimed that "style cannot surpass intelligence" (Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 339).

The awareness of the negative aspects of rhetoric fuelled the humanists' enthusiasm for the ideal of the combination of rhetorical proficiency with competent knowledge, an ideal which was expressed in the famous formula of *wisdom and eloquence*.[102] It is important to recognise that the terms of the formula of *wisdom and eloquence* are what we could call "mutually inclusive". This is to say, they represent a *double* stipulation, which can be spelled out as follows: every orator must be knowledgeable, and every philosopher must be eloquent. The same stipulation was also expressed in negative terms: no rhetorician must ever be without adequate information about his topic, and no philosopher must ever be without literary skill to express his ideas in an elegant way. The first part of this stipulation was expressed quite frequently by the humanists, who declared with insistence that true rhetoric rested on solid competence and wide knowledge. This competence and knowledge, they maintained, should be of two kinds, namely of books and of the world, proceeding from two distinct sources: education and experience. John Rainold, a lecturer of rhetoric at Oxford in the sixteenth century, argued that

> those who teach rhetoric immediately after grammar are wrong to do so because the practice of rhetoric depends upon knowledge of the great arts, and upon practical judgement of public life.[103]

The first part of the stipulation inherent in the maxim of *wisdom and eloquence* was also frequently expressed in negative terms: Petrarch once observed that "mere elegance of language can result at best in an empty reputation".[104] The humanist ideal of wisdom and eloquence, with regard to the first stipulation it contained, implied the notion of the perfect orator who combined in himself encyclopedic knowledge and wide experience. This notion came from Cicero and was championed by humanists like Valla and Nizolio with reference to the celebrated Roman orator's portrait of the good rhetorician as a truly universal human being.[105] The humanist notion of the perfect "manager" of the word contributed to shape the Renaissance ideal of the *uomo universale*, one of the most typical conceptions of the time.[106] For Nizolio rhetoric was "the one universal art encompassing all that could be said or thought", and therefore the true orator "must join in his person both wisdom and eloquence, and therefore be the embodiment of the best that a culture can produce".[107]

The second part of the above-mentioned stipulation, which states that knowledge should not be without eloquence, appeared more often and prominently in humanist discourse than the first one. Valla asked:

> Who does not know that when the Latin language flourishes, all studies and disciplines thrive, as they are ruined when it perishes? For who have been the most profound

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102 Cf. chapter 2, p. 107.

103 J. Rainold, *Lectures on Aristotle's Rhetoric*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 92.

104 Petrarch, *Letter to Posterity*, trans. M. Musa in Petrarch, *Selections from the "Canzionere" and Other Works* (Oxford 1985), 4.

105 Cicero, *De oratore*; cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 186.

106 As Kristeller has correctly pointed out, the ideal of the *uomo universale* is not often declared explicitly in the literature of the time, but it is exemplified by the actual life of such men as Alberti, Leonardo or Michelangelo. Cf. Kristeller, "Humanism and Moral Philosophy" in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 3, 287.

107 Cf. Monfasani, "Humanism and Rhetoric", 209-210.

> philosophers, the best orators, the most distinguished jurisconsults, and finally the greatest writers, but those indeed who have been most zealous in speaking well?[108]

The stipulation that no knowledge should be without eloquence was more popular with the humanists because it expressed a demand which was integral to their anti-scholastic polemic which they considered so important, whereas the first part of the stipulation belonged essentially to the humanist movement's reflection on self-definition and to its self-defence. The humanists regarded their attack on medieval Aristotelianism as a priority task in their cultural reform enterprise, and thus much of the movement's energy flowed into the criticism of the scholastic disregard for eloquent speech - perhaps hampering the efforts at constructive theorising. The criticism soon spread beyond the humanist movement and came to play an important role in the formation of the modern mentality. Cortese aired his discontent with the medieval neglect of eloquence by announcing that "an assault must be made on the citadel of those theologians who separate elegance of discussion from theology".[109] The Italian theologian contends against Aristotelian stylistic clumsiness and scientific sobriety that the rich rhythms of eloquent speech enhance clarity of thinking and stimulate the discerning faculties of the intellect. This is a key argument in the conceptual framework of the humanist outlook and, considering it in the context of the discussion of humanism and philosophy, it is precisely what Descartes and modern rationalism would later reject:

> No one can doubt that philosophy which is presented as something pleasant is more suitable to studies than philosophy which is harsh-sounding, because *pleasantness suffusing the intellect fosters the study of philosophy. For those who engage with delight in any branch of learning make more precise judgments in it*, just as those who are delighted by the art of the lute very easily become good lute players.[110]

This statement amounts exactly to an inversion of Descartes' assertion: "we can see that those are the wisest who have never dedicated themselves to literary pursuits; they are by far more solid and clear in their judgment of difficult things".[111] Cortese, apart from delivering a typically rhetorical vindication of philosophy and a literary definition of the act of philosophising, also restates the humanist doctrine of the unity of eloquence and wisdom, in particular with regard to philosophy and theology. He argues that any divorce of rhetoric and knowledge would be unnatural, just like a separation of flesh and skin in the human body, for "surely, philosophers will be forced to admit that those who separate elegance from philosophy are separating skin from flesh".[112] Cortese is perhaps more objective in his affirmations than the major humanists, who tended to express themselves in a more aggressive way. Erasmus simply hated the scholastics, and his disdain for their deficiency in eloquence manifested itself sometimes in bitingly ironic, sometimes in humorously scornful tones. There is an anecdote about the Rotterdamer which says that

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108 Valla, *De elegantiis linguae latinae*; quoted in Ross / McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, 133.

109 Cortese, *Introduction to the First Book of the "Sentences"*, 33.

110 Cortese, *Introduction to the First Book of the "Sentences"*, 33 (italics added).

111 Quoted in chapter 2, 97.

112 Cortese, *Introduction to the First Book of the "Sentences"*, 36.

when he wanted to receive his doctor's degree, he wrote to a friend that he was trying to refrain from saying anything graceful or witty.[113]

The next discipline after rhetoric in the canon of the *studia humanitatis* was poetry. As Kristeller has pointed out, the teaching of poetry represented a central concern in the humanists' new educational programme:

> For the humanist poetry is a prominent part of the *studia humanitatis*, and in praising and defending poetry the humanists are actually defending their own intellectual domain.[114]

Kristeller's statement conveys a fundamental truth about humanism and the outlook generally associated with it - and it does more than that, for if we go beneath the surface of the concise assertion, we also find that an intriguing question is raised therein, namely the question of what that "intellectual domain" of the humanists precisely consisted of. We shall try to tackle this question (which is a difficult one because it touches on the issue of humanism and philosophy) in the context of poetry, since it is natural to do so from the humanist point of view - and therefore from the point of view of an intrinsic analysis also. Perhaps we will be able to move a little closer to answering the question of the nature and character of the humanist intellectual domain if we apply the approach we have developed in the preceding section on rhetoric.

According to the humanists, there existed an essential affinity between poetry and rhetoric: they shared a fundamental aspiration to appeal to aesthetic sensibilities and to elicit emotional responses. In practice, this aspiration amounted to the objective of endowing the speech of the individual with suitably moulded eloquence in order to reach and move the heart of the listener. On the theoretical or ideological level, it reflected the humanists' will to reform the intellectual world by promoting the non-rational faculties of the mind, or conversely, it mirrored their disdain for the scholastic doctors' devotion to the discipline of logic. The affinity between rhetoric and poetry was perceived and expressed in various ways. In France poetry was sometimes called a "second rhetoric" on the grounds that it involved the same authorial activities, namely - in terms of the reestablished classical categories - invention, disposition and elocution.[115] More generally, the humanists also underlined that the requirements of poetry and rhetoric were similar from the point of view of their ideal of eloquence and wisdom, for they thought that both disciplines had to be exercised in devotion to that ideal. This implied, again, the stipulation to fuse universality of content with perfection of form, and therefore it represented a demand for a fundamental versatility of mind.[116] The humanist and Renaissance idea of

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113 Cf. B. Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London 1961), 500.

114 Kristeller, "Foreword" to C. C. Greenfield, *Humanist and Scholastic Poetics, 1200-1500* (Lewisburg (Pennsylvania) 1981), 9; quoted in Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 85.

115 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 102-103.

116 For the connection between the ideals of eloquence and wisdom on the one hand and universality on the other in the various contexts cf. above, pp. 153-154 (rhetoric) and chapter 2, p. 107 (humanism in general).

the universal character of poetry is illustrated by many authors. Boccaccio stated that in order to write good poetry

> it is necessary to know at least the principles of the other Liberal Arts, both moral and natural, to possess a strong and abundant vocabulary, to behold the monuments and relics of the ancients, to have in one's memory the histories of the nations, and to be familiar with the geography of various lands, of seas, rivers, and mountains.[117]

Salutati repeated the stipulation that the poet's mind should have an encyclopaedic range, pointing out that "the art of Poetry presupposes the whole *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*, all philosophy, things divine and human, and in short all knowledge".[118] Girolamo Fracastro, the Italian natural philosopher of the first half of the sixteenth century, argued that the true poet should never be limited to one or several particular topics, but that on the contrary "all subjects are appropriate for the poet".[119]

Many humanists were prolific writers of poetry or dedicated admirers of the art, but in general they were quite slow in developing their critical reflections on the subject, and the same applies to the Renaissance in general. The outline of humanist and Renaissance poetics emerged very gradually, and it was only by the sixteenth century that poetry actually established itself as a discipline in its own right, independent from history and philosophy. The development of Renaissance poetry and poetics was a process of emancipation from tradition which was comparable to that of grammar and rhetoric insofar as it led to the vindication of a new and fully distinct branch of learning and artistic mastery. However, the emancipation of poetry was less complete and spectacular than that of grammar and rhetoric, and on the whole the discipline remained more enveloped in traditional notions. Nevertheless, poetry became much more popular, and the poets expressed their newly acquired confidence in the potential of their art with a keen sense of pride.

As far as poetical theory was concerned, we can point out that although its development was slow, its beginnings can be detected at an early stage - and evidently so, since a certain critical reorientation was inevitable after Petrarch had put into the world

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117 Quoted in Ross / McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, 422.

118 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 104.

119 "omnis materia poetae convenit"; G. Fracastro, *Naugerius sive de Poetica Dialogus*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 169. At the end of the Renaissance, Cervantes characterised the universality of poetry by portraying the art in terms of an all-embracing sublime virginity. According to Cervantes, poetry integrates all other arts and sciences, and it has the power to elevate them to spheres of higher perfection. Thus he writes in his *Don Quixote* that poetry "has to exact service from all [other sciences], and all of them can only become exalted through her" (Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 16, 635). Against the reservations of Don Diego de Miranda, the "wise gentleman of La Mancha" whose son has, much to the displeasure of his father, become a passionate devotee of the humanistic study of classical poetry, Don Quixote defends the art of poetry by saying: "Poetry, my dear sir, I would compare to a tender, young, and ravishingly beautiful maiden, whom many other maidens, namely *all the other sciences*, strive to enrich, to polish, and to adorn. *And she has to exact service from all, and all of them can only become exalted through her.* But this maiden refuses to be manhandled, or dragged through the streets, or exposed to the public at the market corners or in the antechambers of palaces, for she is fashioned of an alchemy of such power that anyone who knows how to treat her will transmute her into purest gold of inestimable price" (Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 16, 635-636).

his poetical *œuvre* and had rediscovered highly relevant classical writings from classical antiquity. The Italian humanist himself described the purpose of poetry with the word *fingere*, that is, to conceive, shape or invent, and he held that the task of the poet lay in presenting the truths of life in the form of elegantly adorned fiction.[120] There was not so much critical discussion about poetry in the earlier phases of humanism, but it is not difficult to encounter analytical attempts which reveal the prevailing notions concerning the subject. Petrarch had set the tone, and his voice was echoed in many different ways. A representative basic definition of poetry was advanced in the first half of the fifteenth century by the humanist Guarino, who wrote that "the true significance of poetry ..... consists, as Cicero says, in the exhibition of realities of our own life under the form of imaginary persons and situations".[121] However, the first treatise in the Renaissance exclusively dealing with the theoretical aspects of poetry, that is to say with poetics, was Bartolommeo della Fonte's *De poetica*, written between 1490 and 1492.[122] In general, the discussion about poetry focused on practical issues in the first half of the fifteenth century, while in the second half of the century it was "enriched by new theoretical elements of fundamental importance".[123] As far as the latter are concerned, the new approach to poetry forged by the Florentine Academy and especially Ficino, namely "the treatment of poetry as a subject of philosophical analysis", can be considered "an event of unique historical importance for its intrinsic merits and for its influence on the later developments of literary criticism".[124]

Just as the science of poetics only evolved very gradually, the anti-Aristotelian criticism (so typical of humanism) was slow to manifest itself in the field of poetry. It was, in fact, only in the wake of the revival of Platonism that a conscious sense of opposition against Aristotelian conceptions arose and that the growing rejection of the tradition linked with those conceptions became fully explicit. The slow emergence of anti-Aristotelian criticism in humanist poetics can partly be explained by the fact that the discipline of poetry represented something like the humanists' "own intellectual domain"[125] which Aristotelian thinkers were not, at least initially, very eager to explore. We must remember, too, that a genuinely critical discussion of Aristotle was only possible after the Greek text of his *Poetics* was made available, which happened as late as 1508.[126] The humanist opposition to Aristotle which was based on familiarity with the original source texts became manifest, for instance, in the literary criticism of the sixteenth century Neoplatonic philosopher Francesco Patrizi. Patrizi rejected the traditional authority of Aristotle,

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120 Cf. Petrarch, *Seniles*, XII. 2 (1370); quoted in N. Mann,"Introducción" [to] Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, ed. and trans. J. Cortines (Madrid 1989), vol. 1, 108.

121 Guarino, *De Ordine*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 104.

122 Cf. Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 98.

123 Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 92.

124 Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 95.

125 Kristeller's expression, quoted above, p. 155.

126 The first Greek edition of Aristotle's *Poetics* was published in 1508 by Aldo Manuzio in Venice.

dismissing in particular the idea that poetry consisted in imitation (μιμησις). He claimed that for poetry

> the most common teachings of Aristotle ..... are not true either with respect to its universal origin or with respect to many particular species; neither true, again, nor proper insofar as it is said that poetry is all imitation, or that every poet is an imitator.[127]

Patrizi's refutation of the concept of *mimesis* culminated in the following conclusion:

> Therefore imitation by resemblance does not make poetry; therefore poems are not imitations; therefore the Aristotelian teaching that all poems are any more imitations than all the other writings in prose is neither good nor true.[128]

But not always was the criticism of Aristotelian theories so brusque and categorical. As we have mentioned, poetics remained more conservative on the whole than the other disciplines of the *studia humanitatis*, and there were many compromises with tradition. Fracastro made an attempt in his *Naugerius* at integrating Aristotelian notions into a conceptual framework that was predominantly Platonic. He was convinced that the principal function of poetry consisted in representing universal ideas or, in other words, in seeking a way of depicting those invisible primordial forms or images described by Plato. However, he admitted the concept of imitation, but redefined the meaning of *mimesis* from a Platonic view-point, claiming that the poet imitated ideas, not things, and that by so doing he achieved the most perfect treatment of a subject, representing things as they were ideally or with respect to their true essence or "ultimate reality".[129] As is evident, Fracastro's theory represents a subtle attempt at reinterpreting the chief concept of Aristotelian poetics according to the main precepts of Platonism and at integrating it into a fundamentally Platonic framework.

The anti-Aristotelian criticism, moderate or violent, was a catalyst in the development of the new humanist notion of poetry, not its origin. Its origin lay elsewhere, namely in the Platonic revival and, more importantly perhaps, in the defence of nature advanced by the humanists[130] and in the new conception of language which they forged in accordance with their general defence of nature.[131] The ideas of the natural, the original and the real were predominant in the new humanist approach to philosophy and language: hence the demand that poetry, like grammar, should follow the call *retour à la nature!*[132] and be more intimately related to the idea of humanity. This meant above all that poetry should be freed from the obtrusive intellectualism of an excessively cerebral approach and become more centred on the human being, more humane and at the same time more idealistic. It also meant that any poetical theorising should occur within the perimeters set

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127 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 107.
128 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 107.
129 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 168.
130 For the humanist defence of nature in the context of what we have called liberation philosophy cf. chapter 2, pp. 109-110.
131 For the humanist conception of language cf. above, pp. 135-140 and chapter 2, pp. 124-125.
132 Cf. above, pp. 138-140.

by the new appreciation of nature and language. The humanist tendency to go back to nature and what is natural was manifest increasingly in poetical theory towards the end of the Renaissance. In the poetry of Joachim du Bellay, a leading figure in the humanistic Pléiade group in France, we encounter the outline of a concept which has been called "le naturel travaillé" by literary critics.[133] The clearest definition of this concept offered by Du Bellay is given in a poem of 1559 entitled *Le poète courtisan*:

> It is enough if you are guided
> By nature only, without art and without doctrine,
> Except that art which teaches how to make things appear nice.[134]

In Italy Patrizi emphasised that poetry came before poetics or poetic rules and that nature, or the natural genius, was at the origin of the creation of true poetry. Thus the Italian humanist repeatedly claimed in his *Della Poetica* that "all that is great is without art".[135] In England Sidney celebrated the emancipation of poetry from the tutelage of philosophy and history in terms of a return to nature or an approximation to what is natural,[136] while in Spain Cervantes exalted the virtues of "the natural poet", that is, the poet in whom received knowledge and acquired artifice does not dominate over inborn talent and originality.[137]

As we have shown in chapter two, the emphasis on nature and what is natural in humanism generally favoured a fundamental focus on human beings and encouraged a closer consideration of their actual state and situation. Consequently, as far as poetry was concerned, the humanists believed that it should be more natural and human in a basic sense. Principally, they thought that poetry must not be artificial or determined by some abstract theory, and they argued that the conceptual framework of a proper poetics would have to be elaborated in accordance with the distinctive features of the human condition. If Vives had maintained that the rules of genuine grammar were the result of a process of

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133 O. Soutet, *La littérature française de la Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (Paris 1987), 77 n. 1.

134 "Il suffit ici que tu soies guidé / Par le seul naturel, sans art et sans doctrine / Fors cet art qui apprend à faire bonne mine"; quoted in Soutet, *La littérature française de la Renaissance*, 77 n. 1.

135 Patrizi, *Della Poetica*, 2. 29, 3. 203; quoted in Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 137. According to Patrizi the poet is in fact inspired in his compositions by a principle called "convenevole di natura", a rare term which literally means "necessity of nature" but which is usually rendered as "artistic necessity"; Patrizi, *Della Poetica*, 3. 228; quoted in Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 139.

136 According to Sidney, the mind of the perfect poet worked in analogy with nature - going "hand in hand with nature", as he says - and thus created something like a "second" or "other" nature in verses: "Onely the poet disdeining to be tied to any such subjection [i.e. to philosophy and history], lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect into *another nature*: in making things either better then *nature* bringeth foorth, or quite a new, ... so as he goeth *hand in hand with nature*"; Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry* (1595); quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 107 (italics added).

137 According to Cervantes, art cannot simply be declared superior to nature but rather has to be regarded as a perfection of it, so that he is a true poet who manages to achieve a fitting fusion of art and nature, for "according to true belief, the poet is born - that is to say, *the natural poet* sallies forth from his mother's womb a poet, and with that impulse that Heaven has given him, without further study or art, he composes things ..... "; Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 16, 636 (italics added). Cervantes continues by contrasting natural talent with skilled craftsmanship, commenting as follows: "Let me also say that *the natural poet* who makes use of art will improve himself and be much greater than the poet who relies only on his knowledge of the art. The reason is clear, for art is no better than *nature*, but merely perfects her. So, *nature* combined with art and art with *nature* will produce a most perfect poet"; Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 16, 636-637 (italics added).

natural human evolution, Campanella would later claim the same for poetry: its rules must not be artificially invented and be superimposed in an arbitrary way on the creative spirit, but they must be derived from a natural and unprejudiced observation of human beings and their world. Campanella highlighted the factor of nature in his criticism of traditional poetics, in which he argued against Aristotelian theories that

> the ancients never submitted to rules set up in advance for them, except those set by God ..... and by *nature*, ... for in truth these pedantic rules darken and deaden the pure and lucid spirit of the poet ..... Therefore to follow minutely the rules of writers according to somebody else's judgment and not according to what is seen to happen in *nature*, always makes a man less admirable and of lesser fame than other men who are not so subjected.[138]

The assertions "never submit to rules set up in advance" and "not according to somebody else's judgement", which we can extract from Campanella's statement, embody (apart from a virulent anti-scholasticism) two aspects of paramount importance in humanism and in the Renaissance: individualism and subjectivity. The humanists recognised that individualism and subjectivity had already been linked with poetry in classical antiquity, and they declared that it was their intention to revive and reshape this link. They shared the belief that there was an intimate connection between individualism, subjectivity and the art of poetry,[139] and defending this belief in their own age they became heralds of the new subjectivity and individualism. Moreover, it has to be underlined that the humanists did not consider poetry as merely "connected" with subjectivity and individualism, but that they regarded it as one of the most perfect means to express one's innermost feelings and to mark the uniqueness of one's personality according to Renaissance fashion - and indeed, they cultivated the art in this way.

However, if poetry had become an instrument of the new Renaissance subjectivity, it had also become a vessel for accommodating two aspects of that subjectivity prominent in humanism: ambiguity and emotional intelligence.[140] Thus poetry developed into a symbol of the humanistic sense of the modern self, in which the personal dimensions of that attitude epitomised by the literary "double value" and of that sensation apparent in the utterance "I know it because I feel it"[141] - would be emphasised. Moreover, we must remember that the humanist attachment to the principle of ambiguity and to the modes of insight based on emotional intelligence implied a fundamental acceptance of paradoxicality as an undeniable feature of human existence.[142] There will be no need to demonstrate that this applies in particular to poetry, which, in the opinion of the humanists as well as in our own opinion today, tries to give expression to the whole complexity of the individual's inner life, including those contradictory tendencies which cannot be comprehended in the light of

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138 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 108 (italics added).

139 Cf. chapter 2, p. 113.

140 We have described the humanist defence of literary ambiguity and emotional intelligence in the introduction (pp. 24-30) in a general historical context without, however, explicitly pointing at the significance of the context of poetry.

141 Cf. introduction, pp. 26-27.

142 Cf. introduction, p. 25.

reason, and of which "every motive must be followed through all the obscure mystery of its logic" by the true and conscientious poet, as Yeats observed.[143] It should, however, be pointed out that the humanists embraced poetry with so much dedication because they were convinced that it accounted for a vital aspect of the human condition, for it admitted candidly what the orthodox philosophy of the schools was often reluctant to accept, namely that contradiction and paradox were inescapable companions in the individual's journey through the world and that, therefore, a certain elementary contradictoriness and paradoxicality constituted integral traits of human nature.

However, we have to be aware that it is precisely due to this tolerance of a basic contradictoriness and paradoxicality that humanism sometimes appears so difficult to describe with analytical precision, particularly from an extrinsic perspective. If we have earlier spoken of an "indeterminacy principle" in humanist and Renaissance studies with regard to the problem of definition,[144] we must now speak of the necessity of adopting an intrinsic point of view in our analysis,[145] for such a point of view will contribute substantially to solve the problem of definition and, moreover, to attain a better understanding of the matter. We are now in a position to justify the intrinsic approach better, for as we examine the humanist notion of poetry, in which ambiguity and mythological symbolism, paradoxicality and what we have called emotional intelligence play an important role, we realise increasingly that these "poetic" features represent core values of humanism and that we can only comprehend these values "from within", that is to say, from an intrinsic interpretive perspective. This means that we can only capture the "poetic" essence of humanism if we place ourselves inside the conceptual framework of that Renaissance mentality in which spiritual individualism and literary subjectivity counted as quintessential features of true humanity.

It is no doubt "from within" that we are able to recognise the full significance of that programmatic component which, apart from the recurrent emphasis on nature, probably constituted the chief element in the humanist defence of poetry, namely the promotion of the imagination. However, in order to explore the deeper meaning of that "poetic" promotion of the imagination, it is not sufficient to look at the question just from an extrinsic literary view-point, as is the common practice, but it is imperative to consider the issue in the wider context of what we have called humanist "intellectual reformism"[146] and, since this reformism had a distinctly psychological character,[147] we may try and apply the intrinsic approach of modern psychology. To start with, we must repeat that the

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143 W. B. Yeats, *Explorations* (London 1962), 242.
144 Cf. introduction, p. 36.
145 We have already done so more than once. Cf. introduction, p. 34, chapter 2, pp. 86, 102, 111 and above, p. 155.
146 Cf. chapter 2, p. 108.
147 As we have suggested repeatedly before. Cf. e.g. chapter 2, p. 112 and above, pp. 148-151.

humanists' defence of poetry formed part of their aspiration to reach a better balance in the cultivation of mental faculties by enhancing the imaginative powers.[148] It is clear - even if it was not always stated with utmost explicitness - that the promotion of the imagination implied a demotion of reason, and accordingly the humanists' championship of the art of poetry played a vital part in their criticism of the preponderance of rational thinking in scholasticism. In fact, the humanists stressed the point that the making and taking of beautiful verse activated in the human mind something that was supplementary or complementary to the insights of reason - or even something that was quite frequently opposed diametrically to those insights, namely the force of fantasy, or φαντασία, as the Platonists put it.[149]

The humanists had a keen eye for perceiving the supplementary or complementary qualities which the poetic imagination possessed with regard to reason, but they showed an even acuter sense for its potential to oppose and challenge the precept of logical coherence. Their sensitive literary temperament told them to listen respectfully to the curious resonances of poetic inspiration and to esteem the sometimes perplexing revelations of poetic creation, even though the contents of these resonances and revelations might be plainly contrary to reason and reasonability. As one critic has observed, Ronsard, the illustrious member of the Pléiade circle of poets, "embraced the whole universe in his works" (a typically humanistic aspiration) but he did so "at the risk of becoming entangled in insurmountable contradictions which defy our demands for logic".[150] It appears that the humanists believed in the wisdom of a certain inner dialectic - a dialectic of the soul, so to speak - according to which the individual's mind was subject to a fundamental principle of polarity, manifest, among other things, in the antagonism between reason and imagination. This belief implied the conviction that reason, which stands for consciousness in its most palpable form, constantly faced the challenge of inner supplementation, complementation or opposition originating in the faculty of the imagination. It also implied the conviction that any higher development of the human mind would be dependent on the effort and readiness to integrate these supplementary elements arising from within, to assimilate corresponding complementary impulses or to reconcile possible inner opposites, following the conception of something like a *coincidentia oppositorum*, to use the Renaissance term coined by Nicholas of Cusa.[151]

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148 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 111, 114.

149 The Platonists usually contrasted φαντασία with the Aristotelian concept of μιμησις, which they regarded as reflecting rationalistic tendencies. Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 107.

150 Soutet, *La littérature française de la Renaissance*, 80.

151 Cf. Nicolas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance* (1440) in Nicolas of Cusa, *Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. and ed. H. L. Bond (New York 1997), 87-206. We use the term *coincidentia oppositorum* in a free way here. In the Renaissance it represented an important philosophical concept which strongly influenced humanism. Cusa's idea of conceiving of divinity in terms of a *coincidentia oppositorum* is here seen as an epitome of his humanistic epistemology, in which transcendental phenomena appear embedded in the notion of polarity: when human beings strive to attain substantial knowledge of these phenomena, they are inevitably confronted with paradoxical and contradictory configurations, and their intellectual task will consist in construing the opposites therein contained as somehow compatible in terms of what we could call an "egalitarian

If we take a closer look at this humanistic idea of an inner dialectic, we realise that it actually resembles a fundamental psychological insight formulated scientifically only in modern analytical psychology and amounting, approximately, to the proposition that the operations of the human mind are conditioned by an inborn mechanism of opposing psychic forces. The poetically inclined humanists had a fine feeling for sensing the presence of these forces and this made them reject the purely extrinsic scholastic conception of a rigorously logical *ars dialectica* in favour of a new intrinsic notion of dialectic derived from the unprejudiced observation of the inner life of human beings. The problem with this intrinsic notion of dialectic is that it is usually postulated indirectly or assumed implicitly in humanist thought, and that it is not very easy to describe in terms of current humanist or Renaissance conceptions. Apart from the term *coincidentia oppositorum*, which comes from fifteenth century philosophy, there exist two alternative formulas, namely *coniunctio* or *complexio oppositorum*, which are both adaptations from classical Latin used particularly in mystical and alchemical writings of the sixteenth century. In spite of their different origins, the three terms are rather similar and can be seen as referring, broadly, to one single concept.[152] However, we should be aware that these terms represent the exception rather than the rule, for there are no other clear-cut notions in the epoch which describe the humanistic idea of inner dialectic.

Given the lack of a proper conceptual framework and given the tentative and pioneering character of the humanist inquiry into the inner nature of human beings, it appears that there is a good chance that we can better understand the humanist idea of inner dialectic if we look at it from the perspective of modern psychology. Such a comparative approach may contribute to elucidate the contents of the intellectual preoccupations of the humanists and state them in a more explicit way, depicting them as what they often were in reality: daring attempts of intuitive probing into the secrets of the human psyche.[153] Certainly, the comparison with psychology is not inappropriate; in fact, it has been made before to explain various ideas about the inner life of human beings suggested by humanist descriptions. Nicholas Mann has remarked that an analogy

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togetherness". Nicolas of Cusa has been characterised as "the first modern thinker" by E. Cassirer on account of his humanistic approach to the fundamental problems of epistemology, and Pico has been portrayed as Cusa's successor in this respect by the same critic. Cassirer's interpretation is not uncontested, but it is thought-provoking and has proved highly influential. Cf. Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford 1992), 164. For a concise definition of the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum* from Cusa's works cf. *Selected Spiritual Writings*, 335-336 (glossary of Cusan terms). Lefèvre d'Etaples edited Cusa's works in Paris in 1514.

152 Cf. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 370-373. Cf. also A. Aromatico, *Alchimie* (Paris 1996), 29.

153 The comparison of humanist poetical discourse with modern psychology may, of course, reveal certain philosophical tendencies inherent in humanist thought. Some of these tendencies will naturally be discussed here in the context of linguistic and literary theory, while others will be considered more appropriately in the context of moral philosophy in chapter five. The stress is here primarily on the promotion of the imaginative faculties in the human mind, although the concomitant philosophical comments and their inevitable implications for the outlook of the humanists are not disregarded and will be sketched out briefly.

between Petrarch's dialogue *The Secret* and modern psychoanalysis "is not far-fetched, provided we remember that its [i.e. the dialogue's] two participants are in fact contrasting aspects of one single personality".[154] Mann argues that the poet's dialogue represents "the echo of a profound inner conflict", emphasising that one of the interlocutors is "a privileged and complacent observer of the psychological processes of his creator".[155]

If we try to interpret the vaguely defined humanist conception of inner dialectic along psychological lines, we should first of all restate that from the literary humanistic perspective the individual's internal condition appeared to be chiefly and most fundamentally characterised by that distinctive dichotomy between the mythopoeic force of the imagination and the analytical powers of reason. From the point of view of the contemporary intellectual culture of nominalism, that dichotomy seemed to be a disturbing division in the human mind causing an unsalutary tension which would have to be eliminated some way or other in order to achieve the desired predominance of reason. The humanists, however, believed that this dichotomy was something natural and untouchable, and they insisted that it should be appreciated in a positive way. They regarded it not so much as nature's doom but as nature's wisdom, for to them it epitomised an essential principle of inner polarity which represented a source of mental dynamism and, more generally, of human creativity and vitality. As the humanist attitude became more and more influential, the dialectic interplay between reason and imagination came to represent an increasingly important and fertile topic of debate in the literary and philosophical discourse of the Renaissance.

In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there is an example of the juxtaposition of reason and imagination in the new Renaissance manner alluding to the notion of a humanistically conceived inner dialectic. Shakespeare shows a typical "interest in the pathology of imagination",[156] contrasting in his drama "cool reason" with a kind of imagination that is both "strange and admirable".[157] Hippolyta (the feminine principle) disagrees with Theseus (the masculine principle) and repudiates the latter's rationalistic depreciation of the faculty of imagination, vindicating the imagination as a power in its own right. Theseus, on the other hand, asserts in an anti-humanistic tone that "I never may believe these antique fables", arguing that for him the poet is similar in his attitude to "the lunatic" or "the lover" because his activity, like theirs, is based on a certain "airy nothing".[158] However, when Theseus confidently claims that "the poet's pen ..... gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name", Hippolyta promptly retorts that the imagination is more than mere fancy or empty space, for, so she argues, it contains

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154 Mann,"Introducción", 101.
155 Mann,"Introducción", 103.
156 H. F. Brooks, "Introduction" to Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (London 1979), cxl.
157 Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5. 1. (ls. 5, 27).
158 Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5. 1. (ls. 2-3, 7, 16).

"something of great constancy; but howsoever, strange and admirable".[159]

The vagueness of Hippolyta's words illustrates the fact that specific terms denoting the humanist idea of inner dialectic are rare in the Renaissance. Shakespeare, like many writers of the epoch, describes the conflict between reason and imagination made prominent by the humanists, but he does not coin any new terms defining the "poetic" view-point, nor does he adopt any technical vocabulary from Renaissance philosophy or humanist discourse. He merely attributes to the seemingly impalpable phenomenon of the imagination some meaningful "constancy" or consistency, couching it in the rather paradoxical and ambiguous terms of "strange and admirable" - an elusive formulation reflecting the indefinite terminological situation in which the freshly developing notion of *coincidentia oppositorum* was caught at the end of the Renaissance. This situation did not change after the Renaissance, but precise verbal designations for the idea of inner dialectic as the humanists had conceived it remained rare.[160] The Renaissance spread the three terms we have cited above, namely *coincidentia*, *coniunctio* or *complexio oppositorum*, and it is a curious coincidence (not of opposites but of similarity) that in modern psychology the same terms have been used again.[161] Jung gave them a more precise meaning, associating them in particular with the idea of individuation or self-realisation.[162] According to this idea, the coincidence or conjunction of opposites epitomises a vital aspect of the development of personality and represents, at the same time, a central concern of modern depth psychology, namely the harmonisation of the contrast and the bridging of the gap between people's intellectual and rational faculties on the one hand and their emotive and intuitive potential on the other hand. Within the general framework of this conception, Jung applies the notion of the coincidence or conjunction of opposites more specifically to the process of integrating and admitting the symbols of the imagination as complementary values to reason - a process which, as he underlines, is "an indispensable prerequisite for

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159 Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5. 1. (ls. 15-17, 26-27). Hunter has captured the humanistic spirit in Hippolyta's remarks, which suggest, according to him, that "where the imagined facts hang together with inner logic and inner consistency, as of a world that could be lived in, then the imagination may have some claim to truth"; G. K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier* (1962); quoted in Brooks, "Introduction", cxli, n. 2.

160 Perhaps this specific terminological insufficiency reveals a peculiar deficiency in the European intellectual tradition, as Jung suggested: "Unfortunately our Western mind, lacking all culture in this respect, has never yet devised a concept, nor even a name, for the union of opposites through the middle path, that most fundamental item of inward experience ..... "; Jung, "Anima and Animus" in *Aspects of the Feminine* (London 1986), 94.

161 Cf. e.g. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 370-371.

162 The notion of *individualism* must not be mixed up with that of *individuation* as determined in analytical psychology. For while the former denotes the establishment of the individual ego-consciousness (with emphasis on the conscious sphere) the latter refers to the process of "becoming one's own self" in the sense of realising the totality of one's personality with regard to both its conscious and unconscious part. Jung used the term *individuation* "to denote the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'individual', that is, a separate, indivisible unity or 'whole'"; Jung, CW 9(1), 275. He held that: "Individuation means becoming a single, homogeneous being, and, in so far as 'in-dividuality' embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. One could therefore translate individuation as 'come to selfhood' or 'self-realisation'"; Jung, CW 7, 171.

wholeness".[163] Jung confirms what we have pointed out when describing the humanists' cultivation of ambiguity and their defence of emotional intelligence,[164] namely that paradoxicality is an essential feature of the human condition:

> Naturally the conjunction [of opposites] can only be understood as a paradox, since a union of opposites can be thought of only as their annihilation. Paradox is a characteristic of all transcendental situations because it alone gives adequate expression to their indescribable nature.[165]

On the background of the above considerations we can now formulate more explicitly what we have only alluded to at the beginning:[166] that literary ambiguity in general and the poetic ambiguity of humanism in particular are the natural manifestations of the "mythopoeic" creativity and the imaginative potential of human beings, and that emotional intelligence (understood in the modern or historical sense) is the kind of intelligence which is suitable for comprehending the ambiguities of the irrational "poetic" side of human beings. An important, if basic, consequence of this insight is that ambiguity and emotional intelligence are characteristic features of human nature which have their roots in the deeper strata of the human psyche and are therefore to be considered as an integral part of the human condition. The chief representatives of the humanistic movement can be seen as sharing this opinion and thus as subscribing to the view that "paradox is a characteristic of all transcendental situations because it alone gives adequate expression to their indescribable nature". Rabelais illustrates the humanistic attachment to the value of literary ambiguity when he says that the old poet who is approaching death (certainly a transcendental situation) "only speaks in contradictory terms".[167] It is clear that the humanist belief in the significance of poetic ambiguity was rooted in the awareness that any denial of the inborn human sense of poetic symbolism and of the natural human ability for intuitive comprehension of mythology would entail a loss of human wholeness, a diminution of *humanitas*. The humanists' high estimation of the "poetic" side in human beings also constituted a powerful motive for their opposition to late medieval intellectualism.

The humanists' inclination to the use of literary ambiguity can be interpreted as a psychologically conditioned counter-reaction against the strong stress on logic imposed by the medieval doctors. Similarly, the humanist defence of an emotional kind of intelligence can be explained as the visible manifestation of a protest of the healthy mind against the oppressive preponderance of the rational intellect in scholastic culture and the concomitant norms of "normality" proposed by the exponents of that culture. Indeed, the humanist inclination to contrast clarity with ambiguity and rational with emotional intelligence is the conscious expression of a natural tendency to psychological complementation, which is

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163 Jung, CW 9(2), 31.
164 Cf. introduction, p. 25 and above, p. 161.
165 Jung, CW 9(2), 70.
166 Cf. above, p. 160 n. 140.
167 "Il ne respond que par disjonctives"; Rabelais, *Le Tiers Livre*, chapter 22.

based on something like a "fair share" principle in the economy of the human psyche. In summary, we can say that the humanists' cultivation of poetic ambiguity is rooted in an inner mechanism, the function of which consists in maintaining a sound balance between the individual faculties of the mind. It is no coincidence that those who displayed the most acute awareness of the operations of this psychic mechanism in the Renaissance (and afterwards) were literary artists or thinkers with a literary bent - as the humanists were. The anti-rationalistic defence of poetry which the humanists formulated constituted a distinct tradition in the history of ideas which lived on in nineteenth century Romanticism or in twentieth century existentialism.[168]

In the light of the above considerations on poetic ambiguity, the notion of the coincidence of opposites which the humanists adapted can be interpreted as referring to the attainment of some sort of "egalitarian togetherness" of contrary impulses in the human mind, or more concretely, as denoting the attempt at bringing about a balanced rapprochement between such antagonistic categories like intellect and emotion, reason and imagination, reality and myth, or logic and intuition. The affirmation of such an inner "togetherness" implied the belief that the irrational "poetic" potential of human beings was an integral part of their *humanitas*, their civilised inner nature, and that it should be admitted as such. As mentioned above, the humanists thought that any suppression of the impulses of the poetic imagination would have unsalutary consequences, upsetting that fragile balance of the mind which they considered indispensable for the higher development of the individual and for the advancement of civilisation. Therefore, they insisted that it was the individual's task to try and weave the figments of irrationality into the fabric of consciousness, thus aiming at establishing a sound combination of imagination and reason.

There was no adequate conceptual framework in the Renaissance to formulate the humanist proposition and view-point in an intellectually persuasive way. This explains why the humanists' arguments sometimes lacked clarity, and it also explains why their philosophical "conclusions are often ambiguous"[169] - which, again, is one of the reasons why humanism is so difficult to understand.[170] Moreover, it means that the humanist position often has to be construed indirectly, with a certain measure of interpretative feeling and requiring a judicious choice of the hermeneutic means. As the Renaissance did not have an adequate model for the scientific explanation of the human psyche, we must

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168 We cannot describe this in detail here, but we may illustrate the point with two examples. The first is Novalis, the German Romantic, who exalted the humanist view of poetry in his criticism of enlightened rationalism, proclaiming that "poetry heals the wounds inflicted by reason" ("Die Poesie heilt die Wunden, die der Verstand schlägt"). The second is Albert Camus; he defended the necessity of poetic ambiguity from the point of view of modern literary existentialism, contending that "if the world was clear, there would be no art".

169 Cf. introduction, p. 24. The statement is by Kristeller.

170 Cf. introduction, pp. 24-30.

furnish one ourselves if we want to understand humanism "from within"[171] (and at the same time from the view-point of our present mentality). At the time of the Renaissance the inside of human beings was not explored in the same way as the outside world, and hence the inner discoveries which the humanists made were rarely accompanied by descriptions we could call scientific. The humanist efforts at exploring the complex structure of the interior of human beings did not automatically produce a systematic survey of their inner dimensions, or a "microcosmography" of the psyche, so to speak. While for the horizontal discovery of the surface of the earth there were courage, compass and quadrant ready, the situation was different as regards the humanist attempts at the "vertical discovery" of the human being, for no light or lantern existed to descend into the dark caves of humanity's interior world and illuminate its hidden spaces. The humanists tried to tackle the task and show the way, while a solitary genius like Paracelsus would formulate a first approach usable for science.[172] But the Renaissance lacked that conceptual framework, set up by Freud and Jung, which has given us essential new insights into the workings of the inner nature of human beings and which is epitomised by two major notions: the individual and the collective unconscious. It was precisely with reference to these notions that Jung defined his idea of the conjunction of opposites. On the basis of those psychological deliberations we have recorded above, he drew the conclusion that the "union of opposites is equivalent to *unconsciousness*, so far as human logic goes, for consciousness presupposes a differentiation into subject and object and a relation between them".[173]

In our attempt at explaining the humanists' attitude towards poetry and their defence of the art as one of the *studia humanitatis* from a psychological view-point, we have so far considered the issue in the context of an inner dialectic between critical reason and mythopoeic imagination. We can now expand this interpretation and place that inner dialectic in the framework of the dichotomy between consciousness and unconsciousness.[174] In this way it is possible to reformulate the antagonism between reason and imagination in terms of an inner polarity between consciousness and unconsciousness: reason represents the ordinary faculties of consciousness in us, while the imagination stands for the irrational potential of unconsciousness which engages in a continuous interplay with its conscious counterpart. From the point of view of modern psychology, which has attributed increasing significance to the power of the unconscious, we could make the same argument in a more precise way and state the following. The

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171 We have emphasised the advantages of the intrinsic point of view before (cf. above, p. 161 n. 145), and we realise here the connection with the perspective of modern psychology.

172 Paracelsus' psychological researches could bear fruit only much later, e.g. in the work of Jung, who thought that "the writings of Paracelsus contain a wealth of original ideas" and pointed out that he had drawn substantial inspiration from them for his own work. Cf. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 236.

173 Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 193 (italics added).

174 In modern analytical psychology we distinguish, of course, not only between consciousness and unconsciousness, but between distinct layers of consciousness and unconsciousness. However, this is not necessary here as our argument is a general and fundamental one.

logical rules of reason prevail in the sphere of the conscious mind and are often believed to be the decisive factors in life, but they are constantly challenged by the symbolic language of poetic imagination, which governs the sphere of the unconscious and which, in reality, often proves to be the prime mover of human thought and action. Similarly, we can reformulate the notion of *coincidentia oppositorum*: the conjunction of opposites is a mysterious occurrence in the unconscious mind, the concrete relevance of which has to be established by trying to make its contents, or elements of it, conscious. This is to say, human beings should learn how to appreciate the dialectic interplay between reason and imagination as a fertile inner conflict from which they can gain insight and draw inspiration.

It is in the context of this interplay between opposite forces in the human mind that we can fittingly situate Jung's assertion that the humanists of the Renaissance had discovered the principle of the "anima",[175] that is, the mechanics of the antithetical irrational power working from within the unconscious which challenges and complements the usually predominant conscious commitment to logicality in human beings. There is no doubt that the focal point of the humanist discovery to which Jung alludes was the re-establishment of the ancient texts belonging to the *Corpus Hermeticum* and, in a wider sense, to the Neoplatonic tradition, by Ficino and others in Italy.[176] In the sixteenth century the *Hermetica* were edited in France by various humanists. Adrien Turnèbe (1512-1565), who lectured on Plato's *Phaedo* and *Timaeus* at the Royal College in Paris after 1547, produced the first Greek edition of the *Corpus* in 1554.[177] Lefèvre d'Etaples even included "a most extraordinary work" of that tradition, the so-called *Crater Hermetis* (written by Ludovico Lazzarelli before 1494) in "a work which is something like a magical interpretation of the psychology of religious experience", according to Yates.[178] Pontus du Tyard from the Pléiade circle of poets was one of the humanistic advocates of the Platonic tradition engendered by the revival of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, namely the *Prisca Theologia*. As Yates argued, his "theological synthesis" had direct and palpable "bearings ..... on the poetry of the French Pléiade and particularly on the Academy of Poetry and Music founded by one of its members, Baïf".[179] Indeed, "Plato lasted longer at Paris", one author has pointed out (and the Platonic heritage, vaguely defined at the time, too, it could be added) "and from the early sixteenth century one hears echoes of this new philosophical voice in such quarters as the poetry of the Pléiade".[180]

Having considered the humanists' defence of poetry and their programme of

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175 Cf. chapter 2, p. 100.
176 Cf. chapter 2, p. 100 n. 139.
177 Cf. Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 186.
178 Viz. Lefèvre's Commentary on the Hermetic *Asclepius*; F. A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago 1964), 171-172.
179 Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, 175.
180 Copenhaver / Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 186.

promoting the imagination in the light of the insights of modern psychology, it appears now that the humanists possessed an amazing awareness of the meaning and significance of what we call today the human unconscious. If we venture to put forward a bit of an avantgardist claim, we could say that the humanists were in many ways forerunners of Freud and Jung, for with their focus on the inner dimensions of the human being, and on rhetoric and poetry, they inevitably played the role of early *advocates of the unconscious* - or perhaps we should say: *unconscious advocates of the unconscious*, as the concept did not exist yet in their time. We cannot underline enough that what they did in their discussion of poetry as a humanistic study was nothing else, really, than to suggest according the imagination equal status to reason, which signifies, of course, according to the unconscious equal status to the conscious. Thus from the perspective of modern psychology, the humanist defence of poetry amounted to boosting the unconscious in the sense of proposing the integration of portions of unconsciousness into consciousness, which corresponded, in the context of the increasing development of consciousness in the Renaissance, to an expansion of consciousness into the direction of the unconscious.

The connection between humanism and the unconscious has not gone entirely unnoticed, although the issue has never been explored in depth. Fromm observed that "the experience of humanism is related in an extremely significant way to a phenomenon with which it is not usually associated: the phenomenon of the unconscious".[181] The link between humanism and the unconscious, postulated vaguely by Fromm, seems to be the key to a deeper understanding of the humanist attitude towards poetry. Perhaps the combination of Jung's and Fromm's ideas enables us to amplify our interpretation of the two principal insights we have reached concerning humanism and poetry. These are the following: first, the humanists thought that poetry would help bring about a more harmonious and egalitarian balance between the individual faculties of the human mind, which they regarded as a precondition for the attainment of true *humanitas*. Second, they saw in the art of composing verse an effective medicine against what they perceived to be the disease of scholastic rationalism, which in their eyes prevented the development of an integral approach to the phenomenon of the human mind, thus obstructing the path to self-knowledge and the discovery of the nucleus of human nature.

As far as the first issue is concerned, we have already commented extensively on it.[182] What we can add here is to suggest that poetry represented to the humanists something like a voice of the unconscious and at the same time an instrument for

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181 E. Fromm, "Ein neuer Humanismus als Voraussetzung für die eine Welt" ("A New Humanism as a Condition for the One World") (1962) in *Humanismus als reale Utopie* (Munich 1992), 89-90. As we have seen earlier, Fromm understands humanism in a general historical sense as a kind of perennial anthropocentric philosophy (cf. chapter 1, pp. 49-50). However, it is clear from the context of the statement quoted here that the assertion made in it refers to Renaissance humanism in particular (cf. Fromm, "Ein neuer Humanismus als Voraussetzung für die eine Welt", 76-77 and 90).

182 Cf. above, p. 162 n. 148.

connecting the unconscious with the conscious, fostering, in both functions, the development of *humanitas* in the sense of building up human wholeness. Embracing a vision of life as a quest for self-knowledge and self-realisation, the humanists regarded the promotion of the imaginative faculties by way of poetical discourse as a substantial contribution to the discovery of the individual's inner nature and the attainment of inner completeness. They looked at poetry as a catalysing agent for the integration of hidden unconscious contents into consciousness, and thus they considered it as an important factor in the extension of the conscious horizon and the development of the personality. If we understand the extension of the horizon of the conscious mind as a gradual "attainment of consciousness", which, in a fundamental sense, signifies culture and civilisation,[183] then poetry and its creations appear to represent an important pillar of culture and civilisation. The humanist quest for self-knowledge and self-realisation thus emerges as a core value of what we have called culture and civilisation, since attainment of consciousness and self-knowledge are two processes that are inextricably linked. This anthropocentric conception of poetry, which resurged in the Renaissance through the efforts of the humanists, was similar to that which had prevailed in classical antiquity.

Naturally, our deliberations on poetry as one of the *studia humanitatis* in the light of modern psychology have implications for the definition of the ideal which we have recognised as superordinate to that cycle of studies, namely that of *humanitas*. If we look again at this ideal from the view-point of twentieth-century psychology, we realise that it signified the attainment of human wholeness in the sense of psychic completeness, which is to say, it meant, generally speaking, living interaction between the conscious and the unconscious components of the human mind and, more specifically, the integration of unconscious contents into the conscious life of the individual. Thus, if we regard poetry as a valid part of *humanitas* with respect to its quality of bringing up the unconscious in human beings, we can confirm our interpretation of *humanitas* as the ideal of self-realisation. This ideal must be distinguished from the cultivation of the conscious ego, which was manifest in the emergence of rationality and empiricism in the Renaissance.[184]

It has become clear at this point that our psychological deliberations on humanism and poetry also contribute to clarify the difference between humanism and the Renaissance further. Considered from the point of view of modern depth psychology, humanism implies the expansion of the conscious mind by means of interaction with its unconscious sphere, whereas Renaissance stands for the tendency to focus on the development of the conscious faculties of the mind alone, such as reason and sense perception. In other words, we could say that humanism means *expansion of consciousness*, whereas Renaissance signifies

183 Cf. chapter 2, p. 106. As we recognise better now, defining culture as "attainment of consciousness" is a fundamentally anthropocentric consideration which fits quite perfectly into the tradition of Renaissance humanism.
184 Cf. chapter 2, p. 118.

promotion of consciousness.[185] This is to say, the Renaissance represents the principle "consciousness for consciousness's sake", for it embodies the development of consciousness principally with regard to itself, whereas humanism rather represents a principle like "consciousness for the sake of unconsciousness", since it advocates the development of consciousness with regard to the unconscious. In historical reality, the Renaissance promotion of consciousness corresponds, in a general sense, to the advancement of the rational faculties in human beings, and if we look at the phenomenon in the larger context of intellectual history, we recognise that promotion of consciousness is rooted in the development of logical thinking as manifest in late medieval philosophy, and that it leads to the elaboration of the empirical method in modern science. Thus, to interpret the Renaissance as *promotion of consciousness* means to understand it as an age of transition: it appears, now, as the epoch which witnessed the transition from "pre-logical" to logical, and from logical to rational and empirical thinking.[186]

Burckhardt could not make such a psychological distinction in an explicit way in his epoch-making study on the Renaissance, although his central argument was clearly of a psychological character.[187] The Basel historian just died in that year (1897) when Freud began to write on his seminal study *The Interpretation of Dreams* - the book which, in many ways, signalled the beginning of modern psychology. Today, more than a full century later, both Burckhardt's and Freud's works continue to be read, but it appears that a combination of the former's historical approach with the approaches of modern psychology initiated by the latter has not so far been attempted. Perhaps this is why Burckhardt's central idea "has been more often criticised than understood",[188] and perhaps this is why there has been so much confusion in Renaissance studies over the precise definition of the notions of *humanism* and *Renaissance*. If we try to explain the phenomenon of individualism from a psychological view-point, it would seem to follow from what we have stated above that there exist two kinds of individualism, one associated with humanism

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185 In the (scanty) literature on history and depth psychology, the term *deflationing of unconsciousness* has been used to convey the idea we have described as *promotion of consciousness*. The two terms can theoretically be regarded as equivalent, but the former has two disadvantages: first, it defines the phenomenon in a negative way, and second, it inevitably contains a confusing allusion to the related notion of *inflation of consciousness*, which is a professional designation from psychiatry referring to a pathological over-emphasis on the conscious faculties of the mind, also known under the name of *mania*. *Deflationing of unconsciousness*, then, is not a sufficiently neutral term and therefore not suitable to describe in an objective way the historical process we have called *promotion of consciousness*. It does, though, point to the psychological dangers inherent in the development of the Western rational and scientific attitude. There remains, as an alternative, the terminological possibility of *inflationing of consciousness*, coined in analogy to *deflationing of unconsciousness*, but this is too near *inflation of consciousness*, which represents, as we have pointed out, a neurotic type of mental disturbance resulting from excessive repression of the unconscious. Cf. E. Neumann, *Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewusstseins* (Zürich 1949), 256, 264, 268, 271-272 (*deflationing of unconsciousness*) and 307 (*inflation of consciousness*).

186 Neumann argued with reference to Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* that the process of *deflationing of unconsciousness* does not correspond excusively to the evolution of science but has its beginnings in the turn from "pre-logical" to logical thinking; cf. Neumann, *Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewusstseins*, 268.

187 Cf. chapter 2, p. 117.

188 Cf. chapter 2, p. 117.

and the other with the Renaissance. However, considering individualism in the broad variety of its different manifestations, it becomes clear that such a distinction is more theoretical than practical. For in reality, individualism appears to belong as much to the former as to the latter and usually represents a blend in which one of the two tendencies we have distinguished (self or ego) is perceived to be predominating. Accordingly, we can suggest that what is generally called Renaissance individualism in modern historiography may stand for both *expansion* or *promotion* of consciousness: it could be the expression of both a quest for the integration of unconsciousness or a pursuit of consciousness. It appears that the humanists were among the first to show a philosophical awareness of the increasing prominence of the conscious ego at the dawn of the Renaissance and, reflecting on the direction in which this development would progress, they decided to emphasise the virtues of self-knowledge, advocating an idealistic kind of individualism that was more than exclusive subscription to the precepts of the conscious personality.[189] Humanistic individualism was a transcendental and therefore evasive notion; it was a very elitist and to a certain degree utopian ideal which was rarely comprehended or realised in its full scope.

Perhaps one of the purest expressions of Renaissance individualism was the *uomo universale*. If *humanitas* signified the development of individuality by contact with the unconscious and attainment of human wholeness, then the universal human being was the natural expression of the realisation of *humanitas*. This illustrates that the humanists were not the only, nor necessarily the most ingenious, representatives of the ideal of *humanitas*, although it was certainly them to whom the credit goes for attempting to formulate the concept intellectually. In Michelangelo the link between *humanitas* and the *uomo universale* is clearly manifest: he provided many depictions of the idea of humanity, for instance, the *Ignudi* in the Sistine Chapel ceiling, who can perhaps be counted among the most telling portrayals of the ideal of *humanitas*.[190] Fromm explained the relation of *humanitas* and the *uomo universale* with regard to the notion of unconsciousness, suggesting that "our unconscious is *humanity*, the universal man", or "the whole man".[191]

Let us now turn to the second point mentioned above, namely the humanist attack on scholastic intellectualism in the name of poetry, and consider this issue in the context of the distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness. Looking at the matter from a psychological perspective, it appears that the humanists were able to appreciate the creative expressions of poetic inspiration as meaningful manifestations of a deep-seated inner resistance, coming from dark, unconscious regions, against that stream of rationality

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189 Although the humanists shaped and propagated the ideal of *humanitas* themselves, it was not only them who carried this ideal out - nor were they necessarily the most perfect examples.

190 The *Ignudi* are the numerous nude youths between the pictures. The whole work was executed between 1508 and 1512, when the artist was around 35 years old.

191 Fromm, "Ein neuer Humanismus als Voraussetzung für die eine Welt", 90.

which was breaking forth in the Renaissance and which was visible, among other things, in the extensive application of the discipline of logic in the Aristotelian schools of thought. Indeed, from the beginnings of Renaissance humanism poetry signified to the humanists more than mere adoration of the wonders of lyrical charming, for they heard in it the voice of an inner protest against the narrow focus on the faculties of consciousness alone, or we could say, they perceived in it the expression of a rebellion of the human unconscious, and of the various powers associated with it, against the establishment of a one-sidedly cerebral intellectual culture. Petrarch epitomises this view-point: he was a poet who incessantly criticised the exclusive "occupation with dialectic", which, he insisted, "ought never to be the goal [of life]",[192] and which he confronted with poetic symbolism drawn from the realm of the imagination. The Italian humanist was convinced that the cultivation of reason as practised in contemporary intellectual circles only represented one side of human beings (the conscious side), and he warned that if the other, the "poetic" side (the unconscious one) was neglected, all attempts at educational formation would amount to nothing.

Petrarch's apology for poetry contributed to shape the open attitude towards the "other" side of human beings and the integrative approach to the unconscious which were to be characteristic features of humanism. His prose and his verse contained a number of important notions anticipating that crucial reforming aspiration inherent in the humanist defence of poetry, namely the promotion of the art as an effective unconscious corrective to the growing cult of the conscious faculties of the mind, manifest in the scholastic emphasis on rational brainpower and in other contemporary tendencies, such as the valuation of empirical observation. Indeed, the humanists saw in their devotion to poetry a wholesome antidote to the cult of rationality and empiricism, which had begun to establish itself more firmly in the world of the Renaissance and which, as they saw it, threatened their own culture of *humanitas* and of everything this ideal implied, above all the notion of human wholeness as we have described it from the psychological view-point, that is to say, contact with the unconscious and gradual integration of its contents into consciousness.

It is on the basis of these considerations that we begin to understand the deeper motives of the humanist desire to revive classical poetry and mythology, for if mythopoeic creativity originates in unconsciousness and if unconsciousness equals *humanitas*, then to revive ancient poetry and mythology means to integrate unconscious contents into consciousness and, ultimately, to foster and form *humanitas*. It is against the background of the above considerations, too, that we have to set Erasmus' complaints about the increasing prominence of rational thought in Western religious history,[193] which we can explain now, in a certain sense, as the protest of a humanist *against* his own age. Thus we

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192 Petrarch, "A Disapproval of an Unreasonable Use of the Discipline of Dialectic", *Letter to Tommaso Caloria*, 12 March 1335, in *Epistolae de rebus familiaribus*, 1, 7; trans. H. Nachod in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 138.

193 Cf. chapter 2, p. 95.

can say that Erasmus and his brothers in arms were, in a way, not so much *Renaissance humanists* (a debatable term) but *humanistes malgré la Renaissance*, that is to say, humanists in spite of the Renaissance. If we look at the humanists from this angle, we realise that they stood in opposition to one of the prevailing trends of the time, namely to value consciousness increasingly above unconsciousness. We realise, too, that the positive side of this opposition consisted in advancing the idea that the poetic revitalisation of myth should check the progress of purely rational and empirical approaches. The rebellious humanist attitude appeared more easily comprehensible when it was based on promulgating the tales of ancient mythology (preferably in their Graeco-Roman form) but it could be difficult to understand when it derived from the adherence and propagation of a new universal or a unique personal myth that was felt to arise from within society or the individual, that is to say, from something like "contemporary collective unconsciousness" or the personal unconscious. It is indeed conspicuous that most humanists did not just dedicate themselves to retell classical mythology, but felt themselves driven to create new myths for their time or to seek out their own personal myths, either of which they would then present to the world as a symbol of itself, or of themselves, alternatively, and according to which, in the case of a personal myth, they would mould their lives.

Thus the humanists' defence of poetry stands, in the wider sense, for their conviction that each age, country, culture or movement on the one hand, and each individual on the other, has a myth of their own, and that this myth is hidden in people's *humanitas*. *Humanitas*, however, is composed of the individual and the collective unconscious, and so poetic images can capture this myth and bring it to the surface, making it visible and thus providing a psychological mirror of society and the individual - a mirror which is capable of promoting the process of attainment of consciousness, that is, the development of culture in a general sense, on the personal and social level. The humanists' fondness for fashioning universal or personal myths is manifest in testimonies such as More's *Utopia* or Rabelais' *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* (universal myths), and Petrarch's Laura or Vives' tree symbol on his coat-of-arms (personal myths).[194] More and Rabelais express the half-unconscious hope of the epoch for a more egalitarian society, while Petrarch and Vives embody the individual's desire for a profoundly rooted self-knowledge, represented by a tree.[195] The humanists' efforts at reviving classical mythology (or old mythology in general) and their desire to create new myths for a new age, were inspired essentially by the belief that the great poetic monuments of the past, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* or Virgil's *Aeneid*,

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194 The personal mythology of the humanists has often been the cause of misunderstanding. We can take the example of Erasmus, who has been called "a maverick innovator" concerned with boosting his own *ego* (not his self!) by forging a favourable but false "myth" of himself. Cf. L. Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters* (Princeton 1993), 7. It is evident that we are referring here to a very different conception of the meaning and significance of myth.

195 Modern psychology has recognised and reaffirmed the validity of universal and personal mythology. Jung, for instance, believed that every individual had a personal myth and that he should live his life according to the pattern suggested by that myth; cf. Jung, GW 5, 13-14 and *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 17.

were true repositories of deeper wisdom containing vast treasures of "high mythology".[196] Homer was for the humanists something like the archetype of the creative potential of the mythopoeic imagination, and therefore they called him the "model of all philologists", which is to say, they thought he was the prince of all erudites because he was intuitively aware of the deeper meaning of the myths and thus "knew how to write about those sublime subjects and profound sciences".[197] Many humanist scholars delved in the poetic symbolism of that "high mythology" in order to discover the timeless values in its figurative meanings and to adopt and transform its rich language, trying to make the literary manifestations of the mythopoeic imagination intelligible to their contemporaries. They were convinced that poetry contained elements of universal significance for humanity and that poets were capable of conveying some of the essential insights into the human condition gained by the study of ancient mythology.

Considering this, we become aware how important the poetic element in humanism was for the renaissance of ancient mythology and for the invention of new, modern myths. The humanists felt alienated from the intellectual culture of scholasticism, and they had to try and define a common basis for their opposition to it, so that their criticism could be effective and constructive. However, the question of what the basis or foundation of humanist criticism was in essence represents an intricate and controversial issue which touches on the problem of humanism and philosophy[198] but which is pivotal for the interpretation of humanism. If we assume that the humanists were early advocates of the unconscious, then the potential for conflict with the professional philosophers of the Renaissance was considerable, for the latters' thought and method for the most part contained itself within the parameters decreed by scientific orthodoxy - an orthodoxy which was largely determined by precepts of an Aristotelian-rationalistic nature and which did not include any notion referring to anything coming near the unconscious. Evidently, the sudden and intensive preoccupation with psychological phenomena on the part of the humanists was bound to create conceptions which would run counter to what could be rated as mainstream academic philosophy in the Late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. In fact, the world of the universities of that time tended to marginalise the humanist researches into the non-rational side of the human mind, insisting on the traditional framework of scholastic logic.[199]

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196 "haulte mythologie"; Rabelais, *Le Tiers Livre*, chapter 12.

197 "d'escrire ces haultes matieres et sciences profundes, comme bien faire sçavoit Homere, paragon de tous philologes"; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, prologe.

198 We have discussed this issue in chapter 2, pp. 87-101, and it was in the context of this discussion that we first mentioned the connection of humanism with psychology (p. 94).

199 The humanists' struggle to attain some philosophical legitimacy or "respectability" in the intellectual world of their time can perhaps be compared to Freud's and Jung's struggle for scholarly acknowledgement. It seems that the humanist outlook clashed with the established philosophical schools of the Late Middle Ages or the early Renaissance respectively in a similar way as Freud and Jung's conceptions clashed with the prevailing currents of thought of their time. Both Freud and Jung faced strong philosophical resistance to their work, and their manner of coming to terms with this resistance was in many ways comparable to the humanists' treatment of scholasticism, and in particular nominalism: they brushed aside what they perceived to be an obstacle to their vision and

Let us go back now to reconsider the issue of humanism and philosophy in the light of the insights gained from the psychological analysis of the humanist attitude towards poetry. Recalling our reflections on humanism and psychology, it becomes clear that we are in a better position to give an answer to that much-debated question of what the intellectual basis of the humanist criticism of scholastic culture was. The psychological deliberations on the vindication of poetry as a part of *humanitas* and the *studia humanitatis* have shown that it was the world of myths and of mythopoeic imagination, or in other words, the world of the unconscious, which constituted the foundation of humanist criticism and (the inevitable philosophical extension of this argument) of humanist thought in general.[200] The assumption that the exploration of the unconscious was the (implicit) basis of the humanist outlook helps explain many features of humanism. For instance, the resistance against the philosophy of the schools can be seen as rooted in an attachment to the values of poetic myth. Further, the antagonism between poetic myth and critical reason, which emerged from the very beginning of the humanists' campaign against scholasticism, can be identified as a motivating force of their reformist endeavours, so that it can be said that the identification with unconscious "poetic" contents played the role of a catalyst in the process of the restitution of classical mythology and the invention of new myths. Most humanists shared the conviction that the poet had to carry out the task of resuscitating the treasure of old myths that had vanished from the horizon of the conscious mind through the gradual establishment of the hegemony of rational thinking, and that he would thus bring back to human beings an integral but neglected part of their nature. By making the poet into a proclaimer of mythical truths, the humanists attributed a significant role to poetry in the framework of their ideal of culture, which can be seen as

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moved on to explore the new ground they had discovered. Trying to advocate their views, the humanists may, at times, have felt like Freud, who complained that when defending the idea of the unconscious "one would certainly meet with the opposition of the philosophers, for whom 'conscious' and 'psychic' was identical and who swore that they could not imagine such an absurd thing as the 'psychic unconscious'" (S. Freud, "*Selbstdarstellung*": *Schriften zur Geschichte der Psychoanalyse*, ed. I. Grubrich-Simitis (Frankfurt a. M. 1971), 61). This statement is followed by the remark that "there was no remedy; one had to shrug off this idiosyncrasy of the philosophers" (Freud, "*Selbstdarstellung*", 61). This was easy for Freud, who did not feel at home with philosophy and once confessed that he had a "constitutional inability" to appreciate philosophical discourse (Freud, "*Selbstdarstellung*", 87; Jung judged that "in the field of philosophy he [Freud] lacked even the most basic elements of education", arguing that this was the precondition for Freud's "apparently complete lack of philosophical prejudice"; cf. Jung, GW 15, 53). Nevertheless, Freud recognised the affinities between the psychoanalytical outlook and the philosophy of Schopenhauer or Nietzsche respectively (cf. Freud, "*Selbstdarstellung*", 87). Jung showed similar preferences, and we may recall here his aversion to the philosophy of the schoolmen (cf. chapter 2, p. 100 n. 138). One must not be deceived by the fact that Freud's theory of the unconscious is largely recognised today into believing that the divergent view-points of psychologists and philosophers have been reconciled. Current philosophical debates show that the old argument is still alive. To give an example, Jerry Fodor, a leading contemporary expert in the field, has recently commented that "I know a philosopher who holds that bona fide mental states must all be 'potentially' conscious (take that, Dr Freud) because, having considered the issue closely, he is unable to think of anything but potential consciousness that their bona fides qua mental states could consist in. He thus regretfully requests that cognitive psychology and linguistics cease forthwith"; J. Fodor, "It's all in the mind: Noam Chomsky and the arguments for Internalism" in *Times Literary Supplement* 5073 (June 23 2000), 3.

200 As stated above, p. 163 n. 153, some aspects of the philosophical implications of humanist poetics as interpreted from the view-point of modern psychology will be dealt with elsewhere.

epitomised by the maxim of "attainment of consciousness".[201]

Poetry, then, was for the humanists an agent of intellectual change and at the same time an important promoter of cultural progress. As a comparison of humanism and modern psychology shows, the humanist position was corroborated in the twentieth century by thinkers like Freud, Jung or Fromm, all of whom reaffirmed the relevance of poetic creativity for humanity. Jung, for instance, argued that poetry fulfilled the vital task of keeping the individual in touch with the world of the unconscious:

> Myths which day has forgotten continue to be told by night, and powerful figures which consciousness has reduced to banality and ridiculous triviality are recognised again by poets and prophetically revived; therefore they can also be recognised "in changed form" by the thoughtful person.[202]

The humanist position in poetics was not only revindicated theoretically by psychologists, but it was also reaffirmed practically by a number of twentieth-century poets.[203] If modern psychologists and poets have redefined the positive role the poet can play for humanity in terms of the artist's function as a promoter of unconscious contents, we must not forget that they have also pointed at the negative role which the opposite pole of poetry, rational thinking, can play. According to Jung, the preponderance of rational over imaginative elements in human culture, which he thought was established in Western civilisation at the time of the Renaissance,[204] destabilised the natural equilibrium of mental faculties, upsetting the balance of power in that inner dialectic interplay between reason and imagination which represents a vital source of psychic dynamism. Thus in the Renaissance "the fantasy world of the unconscious", which "was recognised more clearly ..... in the Middle Ages",[205] gradually began to move into the background of human consciousness.

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201 Cf. above, pp. 171 (n. 183), 175.

202 Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 313.

203 Among whom figures prominently Yeats, who dedicated himself to reviving Celtic mythology and explored the connection between the world of myths and that of dreams. This is evident in many of his works, e.g. in his poem *To Ireland in the Coming Times*, where he writes: " ..... to him who ponders well, / My rhymes ..... tell / Of things discovered in the deep, / Where only body's laid asleep", concluding that "I write for you / ..... the dream I knew" (Yeats, *Collected Poems*, 2nd ed. (London 1950), 57). Some of Yeats' poems were direct transcriptions of actually experienced dreams, such as *The Cap and Bells* (1893), of which the author acknowledged later (1899) that "I dreamed this story exactly as I have written it" (Yeats, *Collected Poems*, 526). He acknowledged that some of his drama originated in dreams, too, so e.g. *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, of which he said that "I had a dream one night which gave me the story" (Yeats, *Explorations*, 199). Yeats stated that he had the habit of "letting my work shape itself under the casual impulses of dreams and daily thoughts [i.e. day-dreaming]" (Yeats, *Explorations*, 116). In his autobiography Yeats stated that he "was ..... to write many poems where an always personal emotion was woven into a general pattern of myth and symbol", and that he was dedicated to creating "verses that were all picture, all emotion, all association, all mythology" (Yeats, *Autobiography* (London 1965), 101-102, 142). Yeats was also a literary defender of the imagination in connection with the unconscious, confessing that "I ceased to read modern books that were not books of imagination" and asking himself the question: "Was modern civilisation a conspiracy of [i.e. against] the subconscious?" (Yeats, *Autobiography*, 177-178). The Irish poet believed that modern civilisation had "driven the living imagination out of the world" and that therefore "the chief intellectual value" of reviving and studying old languages such as Gaelic lay in recovering "a portion of the old imaginative life" (Yeats, *Explorations*, 148, 151). Cf. also chapter 6, p. 339 n. 365.

204 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 84, 118.

205 M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation" in Jung (ed.), *Man and His Symbols* (London 1964), 196.

Considering what has just been stated, it becomes clear that the defence of poetry was probably the most incisive element of the humanists' criticism of scholasticism, and perhaps of humanist cultural criticism in general. The humanist defence of poetry actually touched on a central aspect of the human condition, namely the issue of the nature of consciousness and of its - ontogenetical as well as phylogenetical - development. There is no doubt that when the humanists accused the schoolmen and other contemporary intellectuals of excessive emphasis on rational intelligence, highlighting the virtues of its counterpart (emotional intelligence),[206] they were undertaking to formulate what could be considered the basic principles of a (fragmentary but coherent) theory of anti-rational criticism. The anti-rational orientation of humanist poetics has often been acknowledged in specialist literature. According to one critic, Patrizi employs "an impressive background of humanistic learning ..... to reevaluate the irrational as proper subject of poetic language";[207] in his literary criticism

> poetry ..... is considered a legitimate expression of moments of irrationality and emotionalism; consequently, this activity cannot be viewed from the same perspectives as other arts or sciences based on unequivocally rational foundations.[208]

Another brief comparison of Renaissance humanism and modern psychology shows that the humanist defence of poetry anticipated some aspects of the anti-rational criticism of modern psychology. The humanists believed that the disappearance of mythology would entail a loss of existential vitality in general and an impoverishment of the non-rational faculties of the human mind in particular. They thought that a one-sided promotion of conscious faculties would obstruct the road to the expansion of the mind's horizon, which, from their view-point, was a process of paramount importance in human development. The increasing emphasis on the rational intellect contained, according to humanist opinion, the danger of divorcing reason from imagination (that is, of disassociating consciousness and the unconscious) which threatened to reduce the human potential of creativity and originality. The relevance of the humanists' apprehensions concerning the tendency to favour rational at the expense of emotional intelligence was demonstrated by the researches into the human mind carried out in the twentieth century. Neumann pointed out that

> In its extreme the differentiation of consciousness and the tendency to suppress emotion - both characteristic features of the Western development of consciousness - lead to unproductiveness and prevent the process of expansion of consciousness.[209]

Jung added that:

> The more critical reason dominates, the more impoverished life becomes; but the more of the unconscious, and the more of the myth we are capable of making conscious, the more of life we integrate. Overvalued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion the individual is pauperised.[210]

These statements are, in a broad sense, a modern scientific reflection of the old humanistic

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206 Cf. introduction, pp. 27-30.
207 Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 135.
208 Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 137.
209 Neumann, *Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewusstseins*, 309.
210 Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 333.

concern for what has been called "the emotional integrity of the mind and its various aspects", that is, for the equal status of the individual mental faculties.[211] They embody what can be considered one of the principal humanist arguments against the increasing tendency to cultivate rational modes of thinking based on sophisticated forms of logic elaborated in different schools of scholastic thought, whose representatives, according to the humanists, were prone to spoil the fertile soil of the human mind with their sterile rationalism. The call for reviving ancient mythology, that is, for making old but perennial myths conscious, can be interpreted as reflecting the chief concern of the humanist defence of poetry, which was the promotion of the unconscious by way of recounting myths, evoking dreams, using symbolism and producing fantastic images.

For the humanists, their championship of poetry meant that a human being without poetry was not a proper human being, for all "unpoetical" human beings would be divorced from their *humanitas* (that is, they would be separated from their unconscious) thus being incapable of reaching adequate self-knowledge and of realising the full potential of their humanity in order to attain human wholeness. Absence of poetry or poetic sense, then, signified absence or lack of humanity to the humanists, whereas presence of poetry amounted to affirmation of humanity and everything that was associated with it. To be a poet or to develop poetic feeling (or, in a wider sense, to be able to appreciate literature) meant to be truly human and humane, for this implied identification with one's *humanitas*. Therefore, the humanists' defence of poetry was an important source of their visionary reformism, their dynamism, their originality and potential for innovation, as well as their liberalism and tolerance. The humanists of the Renaissance were aware of the fact for which only modern psychology was able to furnish a scientific explanation, namely that if human beings lack personal and universal myths, or more generally, if they have no relation to the unconscious world of mythology, they become inclined to focus on consciousness alone and stick to what it provides without the stimuli of the unconscious, which is often a tendency to abstract rationalism and to rigorous dogmatism. Thus the humanists can be seen as anticipating the warning given by modern psychologists: "Cut off the intermediary world of mythic imagination, and the mind falls prey to doctrinaire rigidities".[212]

The psychological interpretation of the humanists' view of poetry enables us to understand better another distinctive feature of humanist poetics, namely the attribution of divine inspiration to the poet. The humanists commonly believed that the true poet was divinely inspired or somehow partook of higher inspiration in his writing. They were convinced that the world of the mythopoeic imagination, on which they thought the poetic genius was able to draw in a unique way, represented a hidden realm of superior insight

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211 Cf. chapter 2, p. 112.

212 Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 348.

containing a special kind of knowledge which could be characterised as transcendental and the sum of which is often referred to as "poetic wisdom" after Vico's conception.[213] Renaissance writers would tend to subscribe (in some form or other) to the humanist belief in the poet's ability to reach such sublime poetic wisdom, maintaining that "the poet is capable of attaining a superior kind of knowledge".[214] The conviction that true poetry derived from divine inspiration was present in humanism from the beginning.[215] It was Bruni who defined poetry as the product of divine inspiration after Plato's theory, asserting that

> not every work is a poem, even though it may consist of verses, but only that excellent piece of writing which issues from *a certain divine inspiration* deserves this honourable name.[216]

The theory of the divine inspiration of the enlightened poet derived from Plato's *Ion* and was maintained more or less unchanged as far as the essentials were concerned by the humanists (and other writers) throughout the Renaissance. In France Du Bellay and Ronsard from the Pléiade circle of poets embraced the Platonic theory, which, according to one critic,

> imposed a new mission on the poet: he can no longer be a light versifier, learned, delicate and witdrawn from a court which saw in him, ultimately, only an entertainer, [but] his language has [now] something sacred and thus universal.[217]

For the humanists the models of divinely inspired poets were not to be found exclusively in classical antiquity. Although Homer and Virgil represented paragons of higher inspiration,[218] Dante and Petrarch were also seen as having an aura of divinity around them. The new emphasis on humanity and subjectivity manifest in Petrarch and his followers was always reconciled with the claim to divinity, for poetry was regarded as an important link between *divinitas* and *humanitas*, and it was seen as capable of delivering the messages of divine wisdom from a human point of view, thus contributing essentially to the introduction of the subjective mood into literature.[219] In the later phases of humanism, when the focus on subjectivity became more prominent, this conception of poetry was maintained intact. J. C. Scaliger, for instance, argued that

> by poetry the soul is sent back on itself, and it draws forth from its celestial force whatever there is within it of divinity, which part indeed cannot be exhausted even by perpetual drawings off.[220]

If poetry was for the humanists more than the enchanting harmony of beautifully sounding words, this was not only because they heard in it the voice of an inner protest

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213 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 103.

214 Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 128 (the statement is made with reference to Fracastoro).

215 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 113-114.

216 "afflatu quodam divino"; Bruni, *Letter to Marasio Siculo of 9 Oct 1429* in M. Ficino, *Sobre el furor divino*, ed. P. Azara (Barcelona 1993), 82 (italics added).

217 Soutet, *La littérature française de la Renaissance*, 73.

218 Cf. above, pp. 175-176.

219 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 113-114.

220 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 106.

against the establishment of a one-sidedly cerebral intellectual culture,[221] but because they regarded it as the manifestation of divine inspiration. Landino wrote that

> what Plato calls poetry is not only what charms the ears with sweet words, like ordinary music, but what conveys higher, secret and divine senses, thus nourishing the spirit with heavenly ambrosia.[222]

There is no doubt that the "higher, secret and divine senses" that make up Landino's "heavenly ambrosia" correspond to Vico's transcendental knowledge, thus constituting the "poetic wisdom" of humanism. There remains, however, the question of how the poet is able to "convey" in his verses those "higher, secret and divine senses". The answer is given by Landino himself, for he explains that "poetry does not come from art but from a certain frenzy"[223] - a frenzy which he qualifies as "divine"[224] and which is variously denoted in humanism by the Latin terms *furor* and *ingenium*, or by the Greek term ἐνθουσιασμός.[225] Ficino conceived of that divine frenzy in terms of a "mystical return of the human soul to the bosom of God",[226] describing it as

> a certain illumination of the rational mind, by means of which God brings the mind back from the inferior to the superior regions [of the spirit], after it had descended from the superior to the inferior ones.[227]

In humanist poetics this divine frenzy is usually defined as *furor poeticus*, a notion referring to a state of quasi-mystical literary trance in which the mind is supposed to be transported away to the dream-like world of the mythopoeic imagination by the force of the divine *afflatus* or πνευμα.[228] Bruni describes *furor poeticus* more philosophically as "a divine alienation of the mind" or as something "like self-oblivion", and he declares it the principal distinctive feature of true poetry, stating that "the poets are good only when they are seized by that frenzy of theirs".[229] Bruni makes a sharp distinction between mere literary craftsmanship and the added quality of higher inspiration, stating that

> He ..... who approaches the door of poetry, as Plato says, without the frenzy of the Muses, in the hope of becoming a good poet by means of a certain technical mastery [*arte*], he himself and his art are worthless compared with that art which is based on frenzy - and that art of his, which is based on acquired skill [*prudentia*] only, will go to ruin.[230]

Bruni's distinction between *furor* and *prudentia* became a standard theory in Renaissance poetics. This theory was important to the humanists, since it enhanced the status of poetry and helped establish the art as an independent discipline. With the

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221 Cf. above, pp. 173-174.

222 Landino, *Che cosa sia poesia e poeta e della origine sua divina et antichissima*; quoted in A. Chastel, *Marsile Ficin et l'art*, 3rd ed. (Geneva 1996), 145.

223 Landino, *Letter to Bocci Ugolino* (1473); quoted in Chastel, *Marsile Ficin et l'art*, 144-145.

224 Landino, *Che cosa sia poesia*; quoted in Chastel, *Marsile Ficin et l'art*, 145.

225 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 103. Cf. also Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 137.

226 Azara, "Estudio introductorio" in Ficino, *Sobre el furor divino*, lv.

227 Ficino, *De Amore*, 7.13; quoted in Azara, "Estudio introductorio" in Ficino, *Sobre el furor divino*, xliii.

228 Cf. Azara, "Estudio introductorio" in Ficino, *Sobre el furor divino*, lvii.

229 "divina mentis alienatione", "velut sui ipsius oblivio"; Bruni, *Letter to Marasio Siculo of 9 Oct 1429* in Ficino, *Sobre el furor divino*, 82, 86, 84.

230 Bruni, *Letter to Marasio Siculo of 9 Oct 1429* in Ficino, *Sobre el furor divino*, 84.

Platonic conception of *furor poeticus* it was possible to argue that poetry possessed a quality which made it superior to the other arts. Taking up Bruni's argument, Landino stated that "whoever wishes to become a poet without this divine furor labors in vain",[231] and he contended

> But that the origins of poetry are more noble than the other human arts is proved by the fact that the *divine frenzy* by which poetry is generated is more excellent than the human skills by which the other arts are generated.[232]

However, not only are the origins of the art of poetry nobler but, argues Landino (following Salutati) "the subject matter of poetry is much more divine than that of the other arts, since it embraces all of them".[233] The significance attributed to the irrational factor of frenzy in poetry fits into the humanist outlook (also as characterised from the view-point of psychology) and can therefore be regarded as a typical feature of humanism.

In sixteenth century humanism the concept of frenzy still played a prominent role. In France Sébillet advanced a Platonic theory of poetic inspiration, employing the term "afflation divine" in the sense of "fount of poetic creation". In an important treatise on poetry he argued that "the genuine poet only sings his verses and songs when he is stirred by the power of his mind and inspired by a divine spirit".[234] Among the poets of the Pléiade group it was Pontus du Tyard who provided the clearest formulation of the concept of poetic frenzy. In his *Solitaire premier* or *Dialogue de la fureur poétique* of 1552 he interpreted "fureur poétique" as "a superior form of knowledge based not on the encyclopedia but on the gift of inspiration", as one expert has put it.[235] The adventures of Rabelais' Pantagruel and his associates conclude with their transportation into a state of poetic frenzy,[236] while Bruno proclaimed the superiority of the ingenious, frenzy-stricken poet in his *Heroic Furors*.[237] We must not overlook the fact that the humanists, following Platonic theory, also applied the idea of frenzy to religion. Bruni argued that *furor* (or *alienatio mentis*) was a crucial ingredient not only of all poetical dedication but also of any genuine pious devotion, for just as "there cannot be any good poet without such a frenzy ..... God cannot be worshipped in a perfect and excellent way without such an alienation of the mind".[238] This is an important humanist statement about religion which reveals adherence to a mystical ideal of Christian devotion, presupposing a fundamentally non-rational conception of faith.

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231 Landino, *Comento sopra la Comedia di Dante*; quoted in Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 94.

232 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 104 (italics added).

233 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 104.

234 "Le poète de vraye marque ne chante ses vers et ses carmes que excité de la vigeur de son esprit et inspiré de quelque divine afflation"; Th. Sébillet, *Art poétique français* (1548); quoted in Soutet, *La littérature française de la Renaissance*, 71.

235 Soutet, *La littérature française de la Renaissance*, 86.

236 Cf. Rabelais, *Le Quint Livre*, chapter 48.

237 Cf. Bruno, *De gli eroici furori* (1585).

238 Bruni, *Letter to Marasio Siculo of 9 Oct 1429* in Ficino, *Sobre el furor divino*, 86.

Another intriguing aspect of the humanist notion of *furor poeticus* was its prophetic dimension. Already the early Italian humanists embraced the belief that the art of poetry possessed a prophetic quality by virtue of which it could anticipate future things. Salutati maintained that poetry contained "marvelous hidden truths" and prophecies,[239] while Bruni held that the great poets could be called "prophets" (*vates*) because they were moved by "a certain frenzy" when they were writing.[240] Reuchlin stated: "What poets write is worthy of Apollo, the god of the muses, and enraptured by his spirit they speak prophetically".[241] For Ronsard "the poet is not only inspired[,] he becomes a seer and a visionary", as one expert has stated.[242] As Ronsard wrote "he [the poet] predicts all things before they happen, he knows the nature and the secrets of the Heavens, and with fiery passion he rises up among the Gods".[243] In Rabelais' *Third Book* Pantagruel claims that "the poets, who are under the protection of Apollo, generally become prophets when they approach death, singing vaticinations of future things by Apollinian inspiration".[244] The poets' prophetic capability, however, is not only explained by Rabelais with reference to the mythological figure of Apollo, but also by means of a symbol - a symbol which had become almost a standard sign of poetry at the time of the Renaissance: the swan.[245] Rabelais compared the vaticinal voice of the poet to the legendary song of the swan, which that tender animal uttered, according to classical belief, at its death.[246]

The notion of *furor poeticus* also formed the basis of the humanist idea, widespread in the Renaissance, that poetry must tell tales of myth, marvel and miracle in the sense of recounting the fantastic stories coming from the world of mythopoeic imagination (which can be located in the unconscious regions of the human mind). This is to say, poetry must speak of those things which human beings are always ready to reject rationally but which they are disposed to accept emotionally, following an innate desire to evoke the shadowy figments of their imagination. The humanist idea that poetry should activate the potential of the mythopoeic imagination was epitomised by terms like "the marvellous" in the literature of the Renaissance. Patrizi declared that "the poet is a maker of the marvellous in verse ..... a maker of the marvellous in marvellous language ..... a maker of marvellous concepts and marvellous words", concluding that "the marvellous is the essential form of poetry, and it is also its end".[247] Devoted to the study of human beings and their mind in

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239 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 104.

240 "Qua de causa vates eas nuncupamus quasi furores quodam correptas"; Bruni, *Letter to Marasio Siculo of 9 Oct 1429* in Ficino, *Sobre el furor divino*, 84

241 Reuchlin, *Henno* (*Scaenica progymnasmata*) (1497); quoted in *Johannes Reuchlin: Deutschlands erster Humanist*, ed. H.-R. Schwab (Munich 1998), 88.

242 Soutet, *La littérature française de la Renaissance*, 81.

243 Ronsard, *Hymnes*; quoted in Soutet, *La littérature française de la Renaissance*, 81.

244 Rabelais, *Le Tiers Livre*, chapter 21.

245 The association of poetry with the swan is illustrated by Alciatus' *Emblemata*, where the "beautiful swan" is declared suitable to represent the art of poetry on the grounds that the aesthetic delicacy of its appearance fits that refined art better than other, more "cruel" animals, such as the snake or the lion. Cf. Alciatus, *Emblemas*, no. 183, 226.

246 Cf. Rabelais, *Le Tiers Livre*, chapter 21.

247 Patrizi, *Della Poetica*, 2.284, 2.332; quoted in Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 137-

typical humanist fashion, Patrizi recognised some connections between the symbolic patterns of poetic language and the characteristic features of the human psyche, maintaining that "words [in the poetic context] are ..... symbols and signals and expressions of the concepts and of the movements of the soul".[248] If we look at the discipline of poetry from this humanistic perspective, poetry indeed appears to be something like a *voice of the unconscious*, that is, a voice which brings up to the surface of consciousness testimonies of a wisdom stored deep down in the "mythological" memory of human beings, confronting them with the archetypal symbolism of their personal and collective identity, and thus allowing them to reach the aims prized so highly by the humanists: attainment of consciousness (which equals culture) and acquisition of self-knowledge.[249] If we link poetry with the unconscious we can understand better what was meant by "divine inspiration", for we can conceptualise poetic creativity in terms of a stream of symbols and images issuing forth from the unconscious. We can understand, too, that the humanist notion of the mythopoeic imagination was based on the conviction that poetry had to fulfil a "mythological mission", according to which one of its functions were to confront human beings with the mirror of myth, showing them what had by common consent always been regarded as transcendental. This attitude, which is typical of Renaissance humanism, is illustrated by Giulio Cammillo, who wrote that

> All phantastic images, like Saturn, the Titans, the Giants, the Centaurs, the Sirens, the Tritons, the Cyclops and Perseus are suitable for poetry. For poetry has to state things that transcend man's nature in a miraculous manner ..... It must speak of the inanimate things of which the Gods avail themselves, as if those things were possessed of senses ..... It must mention universally and in an extraordinary manner things that are incredible ..... [250]

The capacity to conjure up "phantastic images" representing "things of which the Gods avail themselves" was, according to the humanists, what characterised divinely inspired poets in a unique way: it was a distinctive feature of true poets which lent them an aura of god-like microcosmic activity, and which earned them the attribute of *alter deus*.[251] The notion of the poet (or even of poetic art) as "another god" is quite typical of humanism, for it alludes to the pivotal role which poetry played in the transition from *divinitas* to *humanitas* and in the concomitant emergence of subjectivity.[252] In the literature of the Renaissance the notion of the poet as a small human god occurs with appreciable frequency, although this aspect has been rather marginalised in defining humanism. This is perhaps because the influence of poetry is generally considered slight and because there exists a deep-rooted suspicion (expressed already by Plato) that the craft

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248 Patrizi, *Della Poetica*, 2.174; quoted in Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 137.

249 Cf. above, p. 178 n. 201.

250 G. Cammillo, *Discorso sopra Hermogene* (published by Patrizi); quoted from *Opere* (Venice 1560) in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 167.

251 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 108.

252 Both aspects are visible in Petrarch, who was the first fully-fledged humanist and at the same time a poet. Cf. chapter 2, pp. 113-114.

of verse-making involves an element of illusion or deception. However, the ideal of the poet as "another god" is omnipresent in the whole Renaissance. In the humanistically inspired defence of poetry Cervantes presents in his *Don Quixote*, he maintains that the proper poet "composes things that prove the truth of the saying: *est Deus in nobis*."[253] J. C. Scaliger does not associate the concept of *alter deus* with the ideas of *furor* and divine inspiration but links it in a more rational way with the faculty (and traditional category) of invention, stating that

> Poetry fashions images more beautiful than reality of those things which are, as well as images of things which are not; ..... [it does not seem] as in the case of other arts, to narrate things like an actor, but like *another God* to produce the things themselves.[254]

The idea of the divinely inspired poet was not new; it was simply another element of the anthropocentric thought of Graeco-Roman civilisation which the humanists revived. If we consider the poetic *Deus in nobis* from the point of view of modern psychology, we can associate the idea of *alter deus* in humanist theory with the modern notion of the unconscious, according to which the imaginative powers are constantly stirring in the human mind, bringing up unconscious contents to the surface of consciousness. But if the poetic "other god" in human beings can be seen as corresponding to the unconscious drive to form symbolic images, and if this drive is understood as mythologically oriented, then there must exist some essential inner affinity between poetry and religion. Indeed, the humanists thought that as an *alter deus* the individual was capable of accessing a universal kind of wisdom which could be qualified as "poetic" or "transcendental"[255] and which had a distinct religious dimension. Thus poetry was for the humanists not just an art but also a form of human theology or mystical philosophy: they believed that "poetry had its roots in myth and so in religion, especially in hymns, paeans, songs in praise of heroic figures, and epic".[256] This belief existed from the very beginnings of the humanist movement. Already Mussato, the Paduan pre-humanist, had maintained that poetry could be seen as a form of theology or philosophy. Mussato had also anticipated what Petrarch proclaimed more explicitly later, namely that poetry, especially the verse of ancient Greece, and Scripture were not only related in their contents but essentially compatible.[257] Boccaccio reiterated the same point and stated that "theology is nothing but the poetry of God", adding that the art of verse-making, properly practised, could be considered as "a faithful guardian of truth".[258] Salutati, who was eager to look at the Bible from the viewpoint of the *studia humanitatis*, exclaimed: "Do you not see that sacred literature, the

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253 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 16, 636. Cf. also above, pp. 156 n. 119, 159 n. 137. Cervantes is alluding to Ovid's verse "*est deus in nobis*, agitante calescimus in illo": "there is a god in us, he stirs and lo! we feel his fire"; Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.5; quoted in Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 636, n. 1.

254 J. C. Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem*; quoted in Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 132 (italics added).

255 Cf. above, pp. 181-182.

256 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 109.

257 Cf. Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 86-87.

258 " ..... dico più: che la teologia niuna altra cosa è che una poesia di Dio"; quoted in Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 88, 143 n. 19.

whole body of Holy Scripture, is, rightly considered, nothing else in its method of expression, than poetry?"[259] Later humanists, especially those of Platonic orientation, further elaborated on these conceptions. Landino advanced more confidently, like an established maxim, the declaration that "God is the supreme poet and the world is his poem".[260]

The humanist conception of poetry was challenged by Bacon and (more fundamentally) by the "new philosophy that called everything into doubt".[261] Vico again vindicated the humanist beliefs, maintaining that "the poets were the first philosophers, and superior to their academic successors".[262] "The poet teaches by delighting what the philosopher teaches austerely", Vico wrote, and he creates "imaginary figments which are, in a way, more real than physical reality".[263] According to Vico, poetry represented a kind of culture which was opposed to the rationalism predominant in scholastic and Cartesian philosophy. In his *Scienza nuova*, he portrayed poetry in typically humanist fashion as the beginning and foundation of all higher civilisation, considering it an essential part in the process of the construction and development of human culture. Learned people who were instructed in the humanities were capable of appreciating the wisdom hidden in poetry, for "what he [Vico] called 'poetic wisdom' was divine in origin but was accessible to the historian through the techniques of philology".[264] After Vico the humanist conception of the primordialism of poetry continued to be upheld, but less by philosophers than by poets, who were naturally inclined to put up resistance against the growing tide of rationalism in Western culture.[265] The degree of explicitness found in the later humanistic or humanistically-oriented tradition did not exist in the Renaissance, but one can put together a relatively coherent picture from the various humanist testimonies, which always describe poetry as a kind of fundamental civilising force, sometimes referring to it as "the mother of all knowledge". Pontano sums up the humanist view in his *Actius*:

> poets were the first sages and expressed themselves in songs and other rhythms ..... Hail to thee, oh poetry, *most fertile mother of all knowledge!* And hail again! For thou, because of the immortality of thy authors, truly didst come to the succour of a mankind destined to death. *Thou didst lead men forth from their forests and caves.* Through thee we arrive at knowledge, through thee we can revive and recall in front of our eyes, things of the past. Through thee we know God; through thee we have both religion and devotion .....[266]

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259 Salutati, *Letters in Defense of Liberal Studies*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 104.

260 Quoted in Aguzzi-Barbagli, "Humanism and Poetics", 94.

261 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 109. In his critique of poetry Bacon stated that what the imagination needed was "weights, not wings"; cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 108.

262 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 109-110.

263 Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time* and *The New Science*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 110.

264 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 110.

265 In the twentieth century post-Romantic poets like Yeats defended the humanist notion, evoking the old idea of the primordial nature of poetry: "Somebody has said that every nation begins with poetry and ends with algebra, and [lyrical] passion has always refused to express itself in algebraical terms"; Yeats, *Explorations*, 167-168.

266 Pontano, *Dialoghi*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 74 (first italics added).

The interpretation of the humanistic discipline of poetry has included extensive excursuses the purpose of which has been to deal with some debated issues exploring new avenues of research. It is time now, however, to look at the fourth discipline of the *studia humanitatis*: history. The humanists gradually established history as a discipline of its own, distinct from the genres of artistic literature with which it had been associated during the Middle Ages. They maintained that the historian must be faithful to the ascertained facts and deliver an account of events which is objective and neutral insofar as it moves within the parameters of earthly reality. A poem dedicated to Sigonio accompanying a Renaissance emblem says:

> History is simple, illuminating and preserving time, / mother of truth, bringing glory to good men. / She shows no favor, admits no preference; / she judges not, but leaves judgment to others. / She simply tells, from the beginning what was done.[267]

Due to the humanist efforts history acquired the status of an empirical science which, according to Johann Sleidan, avoids value judgements and describes each event "as it actually happened".[268] The new status of history is described by Cervantes:

> it is one thing to write as a poet, another as a historian. The poet can tell or sing of things, not as they were, but as they ought to have been; the historian must relate them not as they should have been, but as they were, without adding or subtracting from the truth.[269]

This is an echo of Lorenzo Valla's assertion that "history is more robust than poetry because it is more truthful".[270] Cervantes also idealises the new discipline, stating that: "history is like a sacred text, for it has to be truthful, and where the truth is, there is God".[271]

With its emphasis on reality, history came to be seen by the humanists as the true teacher of humanity, imparting a body of concrete knowledge they judged more relevant for life than the evasive ratiocinations of scholastic theology and especially the abstractions of nominalist philosophy.[272] Valla maintained that history "is directed not to abstraction but to concrete truth ....., teaching by example", and he argues that "historians are superior to philosophers; and with respect to divine things we may mention Moses ..... and the evangelists ....., who are no more than historians".[273] Understood as the narrative evocation of people's memorable actions, history was appreciated as a treasure of worldly wisdom indispensable for the conduct of human affairs, and as a salutary potion of distilled experience which could provide a corrective to the schematic framework of medieval interpretations by confronting human beings with the undisguised reality of their recorded accomplishments. The new humanist conception of history created a different attitude towards the past manifest most prominently in a "well-defined historical consciousness"

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267 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 75.
268 Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 591.
269 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 3, 547.
270 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 96.
271 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 3, 550.
272 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 15.
273 Valla, *De rebus a Ferdinando Hispaniarum rege*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 96-97.

which has been characterised as an essential feature of humanism.[274] Indeed, experts are agreed that the products of this "well-established historical consciousness" mark the beginnings of modern historiography with regard to method and perspective. The works of the humanists illustrate the beginnings of modern historiography in various respects. First, they developed and applied a critical approach to the source documents chiefly based on the methods of the evolving discipline of classical philology. Second, they widened the range of their practice, relying not just on the conventional means of written records or literary texts of historical relevance, but also using other materials and techniques, namely archaeology, epigraphy, numismatics, sphragistics, legal codes, psychology and topography, which came to be regarded as "auxiliary sciences" of history. Third, in their writing they improved the quality of definition, increased the clarity of expression and enhanced the sense of organisation following the principles of the newly restored theory of rhetoric.[275]

It was (again) Petrarch who blazed the trail for the humanist innovations in the field of history: indeed, he "is as seminal a figure in the humanist conception of history, as of philosophy in general".[276] The Italian humanist was "one of the first to exemplify the methods of historical criticism characteristic of humanist scholarship",[277] and "whatever their provenance, [his] sentiments and attitudes have been essential for the modern study of history".[278] Petrarch declared that he "delighted in history", admitting, too, that he disliked the present and wanted to forget his own time. What fascinated him most was the age of classical antiquity:

> Though I was interested in many subjects, I devoted myself especially to the study of antiquity, for I always disliked our own age - so much so, that had it not be for the love of those dear to me, I would have preferred to have been born in any other time than our own. In order to forget my own times, I have always tried to place myself mentally in another age; thus I delighted in *history* ..... [279]

Petrarch redefined history with reference to Cicero, asserting that its chief purpose or "first law" was, unlike poetry, to tell the truth about what happened in the world, separating fact from fiction, and to produce a "narration of the events and deeds" of the past.[280] Championing the study of ancient history, Petrarch applied the knowledge acquired in it also to the investigation of the Middle Ages, an epoch he himself defined. He declared the so-called Habsburg donation (allegedly made by Caesar to the Habsburgs) as inauthentic after critical historical examination: the document contained linguistic and factual errors

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274 Cf. Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, 3rd ed. (Rome, Bari 1964), 23.

275 Cf. R. G. Witt, "The Humanist Movement" in Brady / Oberman / Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History 1400-1600*, vol. 2 (Leiden 1995), 103-104. For the "auxiliary sciences" cf. also Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 30-31.

276 Kelley, "Humanism and History" in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. 3, 237.

277 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 13 (order of words inverted).

278 Kelley, "The theory of history" in Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge 1988), 748.

279 Petrarch, *Letter to Posterity* in *Selections from the "Canzionere" and Other Works*, 3 (italics added).

280 "narratio rerum gestarum"; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 95. According to Cicero, history was "the witness of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, the mistress of life, and the messenger of antiquity" (testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuncius antiquitatis); Cicero, *De Oratore*, 2.9.36.

readily recognised by those who possess a thorough familiarity with ancient history; moreover, it was written in a language that was in many respects "barbarous", that is to say, not classical.[281]

The new historical consciousness Petrarch had decisively contributed to create was developed further in the fifteenth century when humanists like Bruni, Valla or Biondo solidly established a critical way of making history, laying the basis for modern historiography. While Petrarch had valued poetry, history and moral philosophy most,[282] Bruni would rank history highest among the subjects of the *studia humanitatis*,[283] which he formally elaborated with Salutati. Bruni appreciated history for the moral lessons it teaches and particularly for the orientation it provides in contemporary political life. Restating classical theory, he observed that

> knowledge of the past gives guidance to our counsels and our practical judgement, and the consequences of similar undertakings [in the past] will encourage or deter us according to our circumstances in the present.[284]

The moral dimensions of historiography were further emphasised in the elaboration of the new discipline. Sigonio thought that history provided the factual basis for all moral teaching and represented "an industrious and clear demonstration of the truths of moral science".[285] While abstract philosophising postulates the precepts of what should be, historiography furnishes the evidence of what actually is, thereby indicating the guidelines for what the individual can in reality morally achieve. The collected records of the past make up a practical compendium of ethics, for they furnish, according to Giannotti, "the living examples of the things one ought to imitate and the things one ought to avoid".[286] In general the humanists stressed the connection between history and moral philosophy, arguing that the study of the former would naturally lead to a renewal of the latter enhancing the principle of practical applicability. Vergerio wrote:

> History, then, gives us the examples of the precepts inculcated by philosophy. The one shows what men should do, the other what men have said and done in the past, and what practical lessons we may draw therefrom for the present day.[287]

With regard to theology, Salutati repudiated medieval convention suggesting that the Bible was of little use without its historical components: "Take away from the Sacred Scriptures what is historical: the remains will assuredly be most holy and wonderful things, but ..... so unpleasant that they will not have much appeal to you".[288] As far as the writing of contemporary history and political theory is concerned, Machiavelli illustrates the fact that

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281 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 13.
282 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 7.
283 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 22.
284 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 22.
285 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 182.
286 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 184.
287 Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 97.
288 "tolle de Sacris Litteris quod hystoricum est: erunt profecto reliquie res sanctissime, res mirandae; sed ..... taliter insuaves, quod non longe poterunt te iuvare" (the ambiguity of the term "iuvare" - to help / to please - cannot easily be rendered in English); from *Letter to Don Juan Fernández de Heredia*, 1 February 1392; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 7-8.

"the idea of knowledge based on practical experience was gaining ground": the Florentine historian, "though a lover of book-knowledge, stressed the statesman's need to study 'the actual condition of affairs'".[289]

The establishment of a comprehensive theory of history which can be considered the ancestor of modern historiography occurred relatively late. Like poetics, history as a science emerged only towards the end of the Renaissance. While Valla and Poliziano had created a new theory of grammar and rhetoric (together with a new conception of language) in the fifteenth century, humanist poetics was only elaborated by Patrizi, Sidney or Campanella in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, and historical method began to be formulated systematically in the second half of the sixteenth century by Jean Bodin and others. With the emergence of history as a science it became increasingly clear that this discipline represented what has sometimes been called the "reality principle"[290] of humanism. This terminology is quite appropriate since history was a key factor in the "transition of Renaissance philosophers from divine to earthly learning":[291] it sent the human intellect back from the metaphysical speculations of the scholastic doctors to earthly reality, activating the empirical side of the human mind. If history had become the "mother of truth" to the humanists, this was a truth which was different from what was considered the "eternal" truth of medieval Aristotelianism. Historical truth represented something like a repository of factual reality from which Renaissance intellectuals could draw inspiration and which provided the basis for reorientation and a fresh start in every field of study. It is not exaggerated to say that history, especially by virtue of fulfilling the function of a "reality principle", "became a dominant mode of inquiry, understanding, organization, and expression in the Renaissance".[292]

However, apart from performing the functions associated with the "reality principle", history also served the purpose of finding self-knowledge, which was a central humanist tenet. Bodin's pupil Pierre Droit de Gayard argued that the fulfilment of the ancient exhortation "Know Thyself" "depends upon history, sacred as well as profane, universal as well as particular".[293] Indeed, in history Renaissance individuals could find self-fulfilment, for instead of losing their mind in endless metaphysical speculations, they could start digging and discovering another, more earthly reality: this was the rediscovery of the discipline of history in its original sense, for Herodotus had coined the word ἱστορία as "inquiry". Descartes and other exponents of the new science such as Galileo disdained historians classifying them as unphilosophical.[294] The outcomes of the new humanist

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289 Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 509.
290 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 95.
291 Trinkaus, "Renaissance Ideas and the Idea of the Renaissance" in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51 (1990), 677.
292 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 95 (order of words inverted).
293 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 100.
294 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 101.

"inquiries" or attempts at history-making, however, could be very palpable manifestations of the "reality principle". Apart from Petrarch's refutation of the "Habsburg donation", the most conspicuous example of humanist ιστορια was perhaps Valla's exposure of the false Donation of Constantine,[295] immortalised in Ariosto's verses:

> He [Astolpho] passed a heap of flowers, that erst distilled
> Sweet savours, and now noisome odours shed;
> The gift (if it may lawfully be said)
> Which Constantine to good Sylvester made.[296]

295 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 101-102.

296 L. Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, canto 34 (Astolpho's Journey to the Moon), trans. W. S. Rose; quoted in Ross / McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, 438.

4 General Humanism

After analysing the four non-philosophical disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* which make up what we have called *particular humanism*, what is left for us is to examine the explicitly philosophical aspects of humanism which represent the distinctive features of what we have called *general humanism* and most of which fall under the formal category of moral philosophy, the fifth discipline of the *studia humanitatis*. According to Polydore Vergil, moral philosophy was the invention of Socrates, who shifted the emphasis in philosophising from cosmic concerns to the matters of human life.[1] The humanists recovered the Socratic approach via Cicero and their thought centred on the concrete questions of earthly existence neglected for so long by the scholastic "sophists". Thus their dedication to moral philosophy was rooted in a preoccupation with human beings and their world, a preoccupation that was in turn inspired by the revival of the classical ideal of humanitas or *παιδεια* respectively. The humanists believed that after the alienation of scholastic thought from human concerns "moral philosophy needed to be *humanized*, not reduced to rational or authoritarian precepts, but given practical meaning through example, persuasion, and links with human emotions".[2]

From the beginning humanist thought tended to focus on the human being, and this anthropocentric tendency manifested itself first in the revival of the ancient motto "Know Thyself" and then, towards the end of the Renaissance, in the formulation of the maxim "the true science and study of man is man himself",[3] which can be seen as an example of the adaptation of antiquity's wisdom for modernity. The latter maxim was popularised by Pope in the Enlightenment, but it originally represents a humanist coinage typical of the Renaissance, made by Pierre Charron, the French philosopher and friend of Montaigne. The anthropocentric outlook of humanism proved a pervasive influence for the whole of Renaissance thought. Indeed, humanist moral philosophy in the variety of its aspects and views covered more or less "all the central themes of the Renaissance philosophy of man".[4] In fact, one cannot completely separate humanism and the Renaissance in this respect, for "despite the strictures of P. O. Kristeller, it is difficult not to associate 'humanism' with the values of Renaissance 'anthropology' in a general sense".[5] There is no doubt that as far as the inquiry into the problems of human existence is concerned, humanism was the dominant force of the epoch, setting the tone of expression, providing the techniques and methods, determining the texts and topics and, finally, suggesting distinct approaches and views.

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1 Cf. D. R. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism* (Boston 1991), 112.
2 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 116 (italics added).
3 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 119.
4 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 112.
5 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 111.

Humanist moral philosophy developed in a mixed atmosphere permeated with poetry and politics; its representatives were literati with a strong taste for individual freedom and civic liberty - and, moreover, with a distinct desire for change. Petrarch, again, was a "founding and defining figure";[6] his innovative impulse consisted in relativising the pessimistic view of the human condition prevailing in the Middle Ages by shifting the emphasis from the Augustinian insistence on human depravity to an affirmation of human dignity. He acknowledged and partly retained the Augustinian notion of human depravity but begins to advance the appreciation of the human potential for dignity and virtue. Petrarch shows a keen awareness of his own depravity, complaining that the "old yoke" of his "faults and bad habits" weighs him down;[7] in his poem "Italia mia" he expresses his conviction that the majority of people are corrupted when alluding to "the valiant few who love the good";[8] and in his praise of the solitary life he airs his deep disdain for the ignorant lot of disoriented people: "I have always sought the solitary life / (the river banks, the fields and the woods know it) / to escape from those plump and stupid people / who have missed the road to heaven".[9] Petrarch also admitted the Augustinian argument of the reduction of human dignity after the fall: "I admired the nobility of the mind, had it not degenerated and strayed from the primordial state of its origins, converting into disgrace what God had given to be its honor".[10] The Italian humanist equally acknowledged Augustine's anthropological pessimism, letting the church father state his argument as follows:

> Indeed, just as I do not deny that your soul has been well formed and of heavenly origin, so you should not doubt that it has degenerated much from its original nobility due to the contagion of this body where it is buried.[11]

Petrarch, however, leaves open the crucial question: *how much* has the soul degenerated from its original nobility? This ambiguity is typical of him and, as we have seen, of humanism in general. But we can gain a more precise idea of Petrarch's view if we consider the issue in the light of other passages from his work. In his *Remedy for Both Kinds of Fortune*, he responded to Pope Innocent III's treatise on *The Misery of the Human Condition* and took the revolutionary step of giving a more optimistic evaluation of human nature. On the background of the Middle Ages this appeared like a *creatio ex nihilo*, although in reality it was a *recreatio ex antiquitas*, a re-creation from antiquity, since Petrarch simply revived one of the typically anthropocentric notions of classical thought. Petrarch's introduction of the idea of human dignity is one of the striking innovations which marked the beginning of humanism and ushered in the age of the Renaissance. He

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6 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 112.

7 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 81.

8 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 128; trans. M. Musa in Petrarch, *Selections from the "Canzionere" and Other Works* (Oxford 1985), 46.

9 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 259.

10 Petrarch, *Ascent of Mont Ventoux*; trans. H. Nachod in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago 1948), 45.

11 Petrarch, *The Secret*; quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 113.

acknowledges the medieval tradition, saying that "I do not deny that the misery of the human condition is great and manifold and that some have mourned it in entire volumes".[12] However, he insists on the validity of a different point of view which according to him has been unjustly ignored in the Middle Ages, and continues his argument as follows:

> But if you regard the matter differently, you will see that there is also much which can render life happy and pleasant, although no one, unless I'm mistaken, has attempted to write about this previously ..... Happiness is small and hidden and must be dug out by a more thorough investigation in order to be shown to the incredulous.[13]

Petrarch draws up a list of arguments in favour of human dignity, and among these we discover strong anti-Augustinian tendencies, such as an emphasis on the similarities between human beings and God or the belief in the individual's power to control the forces of sin:

> As I select the best from many, are these a small cause of joy to you: the image and similitude of God the Creator within the human soul? the mind, memory, providence, eloquence, so many inventions, so many arts, which serve the soul, or the body? so many opportunities, virtue, material pleasures. ....., for unless you have willingly submitted to the yoke of sin, you may have dominion over all things which are under heaven.[14]

The new and revitalised notion of human dignity became a prominent feature in humanism. Although there was no complete agreement (something difficult to imagine among the humanists) the dignity of human beings was a theme which profoundly permeated humanist philosophical discourse. It is perhaps the theme which reflects most clearly the shift of emphasis from an outlook centred on *divinitas* to a world view increasingly based on *humanitas*. The notion of human dignity gained ground in Italy from Petrarch to Pico and was consolidated in the North from Erasmus to Bruno. Its rapid progress to prominence in cultural and intellectual life was a manifestation of the rising force of individualism, which promoted the emergence of the self as an autonomous agent. This is fully apparent already in Petrarch, who assertively proclaims that "you may have dominion over all things which are under heaven", explicitly presupposing that those who do not attain that capacity to "dominion" have "willingly submitted to the yoke of sin". As a mirror of the resuscitated ideal of *humanitas*, the theme of human dignity frequently appeared associated with the praise of virtue or with the portrait of the human being as a microcosm implying the assumption that the human being is the measure of things.

We cannot give a full overview here of the development of humanist anthropology in the Renaissance, but we may select a few examples to illustrate it. A typical exponent is Giannozzo Manetti, the intellectual successor of Bruni and author of the treatise *De dignitate et excellentia hominis* - a treatise which he wrote, like Petrarch, in response to Innocent III's work *On the Misery of Man*. Manetti's conception of dignity is chiefly based

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12 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 114.
13 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 114.
14 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 114.

on a positive appreciation of worldly activity, although the humanist also acknowledges the argument of a similarity between the human and the divine. Thus to Manetti human value derived fundamentally from God-given dignity, but this value and dignity are manifested principally in the excellency of earthly works.[15] In another treatise, the *Dialogus Consolatorius de Morte Filii,* the humanist criticised the rigidity of Stoicism concerning emotions, advocating the ideal of *humanitas* as a remedy and presenting virtue as its "glorification" and "valid expression".[16] Manetti recommends virtue with a typically humanist reference to the etymology of the word: "*You have to appropriate virtue with all the forces of your soul and body*, because, according to Cicero, the word 'virtue' is derived from *virilitas*".[17] The notion of virtue shaped by the early humanists developed soon into a general motto typical of the whole Renaissance: "virtù vince fortuna", which is to say, virtue defeats fortune. The motto features prominently, for instance, in the work of Alberti, where it is evoked in connection with the glorification of human works[18] and presented as a manifestation of *humanitas*, that is "the humane, prudent, wise and virtuous form of behaviour".[19] Alberti forcefully asserts the motto "virtù vince fortuna", attributing to human beings the capacity of controlling their lives and destinies: "It is not in the power of *fortuna*, nor is it an easy matter, to vanquish those who do not wish to be vanquished. She can only defeat those who submit willingly".[20] We find here the same notion of the assertion of power of the autonomous self as we have met in Petrarch: human beings are capable of controlling their destiny, and if they fall it is because they "submit willingly". Of course *virtù* is to Alberti, as to the quattrocento humanists, a "moral good", and not yet the Machiavellian power principle consisting of a mixture of goodness and ruthlessness.[21]

Another prominent topic of humanist moral philosophy is the primacy of the will.[22] From Petrarch on, the humanists advocated the anti-Augustinian conception that human beings possessed the will power to realise the ideals of virtue. The question, however, was the same as with dignity: how corrupted was the human will in the earthly body? The answers varied, but generally speaking there was a strong tendency among the humanists to evaluate the matter in an optimistic way. Most humanists thought that "the human will had a large role to play in attaining the good life",[23] and that it was basically capable of following the precepts of faith and reason in the pursuit of moral perfection. This view was often expressed with eloquent rhetoric in conscious repudiation of the medieval outlook. The humanists produced veritable exaltations of the human will, the sum of which can be

15 Cf. E. Garin, *Italian Humanism* (Oxford 1965), 59-60.
16 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 57.
17 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 57 (italics added).
18 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 61.
19 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 63.
20 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 63.
21 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 64.
22 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 29.
23 Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 114.

seen as epitomised in statements such as: "the will is the king of our mind" and "the firm will is the emperor of the universe".[24] Salutati was one of the most prominent advocates of the primacy of the will. He made it clear that the humanist doctrine was based on what has been called "a practical certainty"[25] rather than on speculative inquiry and that, accordingly, it implied a relative devaluation of reason with respect to will. For Salutati the primacy of the will was something that was evident in action, not so much in thought, and therefore the idea is always associated with public life and political activity. Salutati's philosophy of the will was rooted in an opposition to the Aristotelian conception that reason dominates human behaviour, and it rested on the assumption that the new humanist education manifest in the programme of the *studia humanitatis* had the inherent capacity to strengthen the will power of human beings, thus moving them to achieve deeds of dignity and realise the ideal of the good life.[26] This idea runs through the whole literature of the humanist educational movement; in the school of Guarino Guarini "*litterae* were considered the cause of the development of all civilised energy", as Garin has put it.[27]

As we have pointed out, the humanists tended to highlight the constructive capacity of the will in their theory of its primacy, insisting, as we would perhaps call it today, on "the power of positive thinking". However, this does not mean that they refuse to recognise the other side of the coin, namely the negative aspects of the primacy of the will, but they did not want to emphasise them as their primary goal was to provide a corrective to the predominant Aristotelian doctrine. Right from the beginning, the humanists acknowledged the dark sides of the human will, such as loss of control under the influence of emotion or passion. Already Petrarch admitted this dark side of the primacy of the will, thus relativising the splendour of human willing. In one of his poems he describes how reason can be overpowered by the will, confessing "I cannot deny ..... and I do not deny it, / that reason, which has control over any good mind, / may be vanquished by the will".[28] In another poem Petrarch observes how his own rational control diminishes due to emotions and makes him go astray. Here Petrarch, like a figure in Greek tragedy, watches himself committing an error, depicting himself incapable of changing anything: "I fail, and I can see my failing, / but I act like a man ..... / ..... whose reason is waning".[29]

If the humanists *acknowledge* the dark side of the doctrine of the primacy of the will, we must be aware that they hardly ever *emphasise* it. Therefore, emphasis on the negative potential of the human will is not a typical feature of humanism, but rather of other branches of Renaissance thought, such as the Machiavellian movement, and, in a different

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24 Bernadino of Sienna; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 37.
25 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 31.
26 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 29-30.
27 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 76.
28 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 240.
29 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 236.

sense, of Reformation doctrine. The humanist theory of the primacy of the will was based on distinctly positive pedagogical aspirations, since, as we have stated before, it chiefly promoted the ideal of a more "egalitarian" distribution of power among the individual faculties of the mind, thus challenging the traditional Aristotelian conceptions of the human mind, in which reason dominated over the will. The humanists always tried to stress the positive aspects of the primacy of the will, aiming at strengthening the will power of the individual by means of an education in which the disciplines of rhetoric and moral philosophy, both considered suitable to invigorate the will, occupied a prominent place. Going against scholastic opinion, the humanists defended the so-called "inferior" faculties of the mind and campaigned "for the emotional integrity of the mind in its various aspects".[30]

Joined with doctrines of human dignity and the primacy of the will appeared the assertion of the freedom of the will, which formed an integral and important part of humanist moral philosophy. In contradistinction to the innovative attitude towards the questions of virtue and volition, the humanist endorsement of the notion of free will was basically traditional, for the idea of free will belonged to the heritage both of antiquity and of the Middle Ages. What was new in the humanist conception of free will was, first, its detachment from the framework of medieval Aristotelianism, second, its worldly or "civic" accent and third, its reintegration into the context of revived Platonism. The result of these developments was that the doctrine of free will became a more prominent issue in Renaissance thought and that it came to occupy a central position in humanist moral philosophy. Vergerio, a pupil of Chrysoloras at Florence, said of moral philosophy that "its purpose is to teach men the secret of true freedom".[31] However, the concept was not understood exclusively as a precept of moral philosophy, but it was also held as an important tenet in political philosophy, psychology and educational theory. Moreover, it represented a general fundamental principle of humanist reformism which we have characterised in terms of a "liberation philosophy".[32]

The precise interpretation of the humanists' views on free will has often been controversial and (how could it be otherwise) has also been subject to the bias of distinct ideological or confessional perspectives. Some scholars have denied that a unified pattern of thought can be identified in humanism concerning the question of free will, while others have asserted the contrary, characterising the humanists as the forgers of modern freedom.[33] On the whole one can affirm that humanism introduced a new approach to the

30 Quoted in chapter 2, p. 112.

31 Quoted in Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 97.

32 Cf. chapter 2, p. 109.

33 Kristeller speaks of an opposition between "civic humanism" and "despotic humanism" in fifteenth-century Italy; cf. P. O. Kristeller, "Humanism and Moral Philosophy" in A. Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism* (Philadelphia 1988), vol. 3, 289. Garin insists on the close association of humanism with the ideals of political and intellectual freedom; cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 199

problem of human freedom which was at the same time more idealistic and concrete, and that there was a conspicuous tendency in the movement to adopt a more positive attitude towards the issue - an attitude which would often manifest itself in an enhanced enthusiasm about the vantage of being free. There is abundant evidence to illustrate the emergence and establishment of the new humanist approach to the question of free will. While Vergerio emphasised the philosophical significance of freedom, Salutati underlined its political implications, legitimising Florentine liberty as the true successor of ancient Roman liberty.[34] He advocated free will from the perspective of practice, not theory, and argued that while pure reason tended to speak against freedom in human volition, experience and observation of earthly reality proved the contrary, for human beings, according to Salutati, were capable of making freedom a reality by the free acts of their will.[35] Freedom was a central idea also for Manetti, who understood it both as a divine gift and as a human achievement. Like Salutati, Manetti argued from a practical point of view, holding that free will was manifest above all in works. He extolled the glory of the individual's free will, arguing, as Garin has put it, that "man incessantly shows himself deserving of freedom" and that "this freedom enables him to make all the things created by God ever more beautiful and more perfect".[36]

Lorenzo Valla's discussion of the problem of free will was highly influential but also controversial. His treatment of the question in the dialogue *On Free Will* was original and thought-provoking, although it was incomplete and in a sense unfinished. The ambiguities inherent in its humanist rhetoric proved powerfully suggestive, and the dialogue gave rise to different interpretations. Ideological bias has influenced the evaluation of Valla's position of free will, and this was particularly the case in the Reformation controversy, in which the topic of freedom became prominent in the discussions on religious doctrine, and in which attitudes began to harden. Erasmus, Luther and Calvin all claimed Valla for themselves; Erasmus held that the Italian humanist's dialogue spoke in favour of free will, while Luther and Calvin construed it the opposite way.[37] Naturally, the controversy continues in our own century; some (Cassirer, Niebuhr) have characterised Valla as "another Renaissance prophet of man's newly grasped rational freedom",[38] while others (Kristeller, Trinkaus) have argued that the Italian humanist "solved the problem of human liberty by a psychological determinism".[39]

(cited below, p. 203).

34 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 27, 79.

35 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 31.

36 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 60.

37 Cf. Erasmus-Luther, *Discourse on Free Will*, ed. and trans. E. F. Winter (New York 1961), 15, n. 3 and 49, n. 2; Luther, *De servo arbitrio* in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol. 18 (Weimar 1908), 640; Calvin, *Inst.*, 3.23.6. The problem of interpreting Calvin's reception of Valla's *On Free Will* was discussed in the introduction, 35-36.

38 Ch. Trinkaus, "Introduction" [to Valla's *On Free Will*] in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 152.

39 Trinkaus, "Introduction" [to Valla's *On Free Will*], 154 (order of words inverted).

Valla's *On Free Will* was, as almost all of the humanists' writings, largely a piece of protest against the philosophical approach of medieval Aristotelianism. The main target of criticism was Boethius, whom Valla had already characterised as the first "scholastic" in his *Dialectical Disputations* of 1435, denouncing him as the initiator of medieval barbarism, that is to say, of the corruption of the classical heritage.[40] Boethius was customarily recognised as the authority on the question of free will, but Valla criticises him for treating the problem in an unintelligible way and polemically reproaches him for not understanding it properly. The humanist disliked the sophistic reasoning of Boethius, according to which the human will was free with regard to its own nature, but subject to necessity with regard to divine foreknowledge. Valla argued against Aristotelian philosophy that the exclusive powers of human reason were insufficient to comprehend and solve the problem of free will, since that problem belonged to the realm of supernatural things and thus, properly speaking, to the sphere of theology. His main contention was that divine foreknowledge or providence, contrary to Boethius' opinions, did not imply necessity for the human will. The reason he adduced in defence of this capital contention was based on a comparison with the human world: knowledge, he claims, whether divine or human, whether of the present, past or future, never caused things to actually happen, for, he wrote, "you would not say that something *is* because you *know* it is".[41] Valla insisted that the human will was fundamentally free with respect to foreknowledge or providence, explaining that "although God may foreknow some future act to be done by man, this act is not done by necessity because he may do it willingly".[42]

Within the framework of this assertion of human freedom in the face of divine foreknowledge, Valla advocates the compatibility of foreknowledge and free will in a non-Aristotelian way, stating that "foreknowledge is valid and free will abides. This will make a choice between two alternatives, for to do both is not possible, and He [God] foreknows by His own light which will be chosen".[43] Valla holds that free will is not properly understood if it defined merely as "the possibility that something might turn out otherwise than as it had been foreseen", for, he argues, "something that can happen and something that will happen are very different", because "though I can do otherwise that will happen, nevertheless I shall not do otherwise".[44] The Italian humanist criticises the notorious "formulas" of Aristotelian philosophy, especially "the philosophical rule that whatever is possible ought to be conceded as if it were",[45] declaring them as inadequate for dealing with the problem of free will. He holds against traditional rationalist argumentation that "it is not to be conceded that whatever is possible will likewise happen. It is possible for you

40 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 36.
41 L. Valla, *On Free Will*, trans. Ch. Trinkaus in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 163.
42 Valla, *On Free Will*, 163.
43 Valla, *On Free Will*, 168.
44 Valla, *On Free Will*, 168.
45 Valla, *On Free Will*, 168.

to do otherwise than God foreknows, nevertheless you will not do otherwise ....."[46]

Valla illustrates his argumentation by means of a fable distinguishing divine foreknowledge, symbolised by Apollo, from divine will, represented by Jupiter. He repeats the assertion that the former does not imply necessity for human volition and adds that as far as the latter is concerned, no one knows the answer. Human beings are inclined to think that God's will ultimately determines their actions by means of election or predestination, but according to Valla God's will operates in such a way that it does not impede or abolish free will in them. Valla argues that this *modus operandi* of the divine will cannot be grasped rationally or explained philosophically, for no human being is able to penetrate into the secret of divine election - and this even applies to St. Paul. Thus the Italian humanist concluded that "free will abides" even with respect to divine will - something which is also reflected in the choice of title[47] - and he comments:

> Now, indeed, He [God] brings no necessity, and His hardening one and showing another mercy *does not deprive us of free will*, since He does this most wisely and in full holiness. He has placed the hidden reason of this cause in a certain secret sort of treasury.[48]

After the rise of the Medici to power, the humanists continued to maintain the ideals of freedom and free will, although - evidently - in a less candid and more indirect way, lamenting lost liberties, praising freedom platonically or criticising the evil of tyranny from exile. Thus the "civic" accent on humanism disappeared and freedom was not any more associated so much with action but rather became a matter for meditation. Francesco Filelfo, who was exiled from Florence for conspiring against Cosimo de' Medici, characterised the latter as a "Caesarian destroyer" of Florentine liberty and declared him a danger for all Italy, thus alluding to Poggio Bracciolini's notorious denunciation of Caesar as a murderer of freedom and the concomitant praise of Scipio as the defender of the republic.[49] Alamanno Rinuccini, equally in exile, also condemned Cosimo de' Medici for annihilating the freedom of the Florentine citizens. In his dialogues *De libertate* he argued that liberty was an indispensable prerequisite for a fulfilled life and that no individual could develop properly except in a free society.[50] The criticism of tyranny voiced by the humanists found a broad resonance in Renaissance culture; Machiavelli's *Discorsi*, for instance, abound with "invective against Caesar and Caesarism".[51]

Matteo Palmieri, the Florentine humanist and follower of Bruni, illustrates the transition from the original "civic" or "activist" conception of freedom and free will to a more Platonic and abstract notion. In his philosophical poem *The City of Life*, which was

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46 Valla, *On Free Will*, 169.
47 We must not forget that Valla called his dialogue *De libero arbitrio*, not *De servo arbitrio*.
48 Valla, *On Free Will*, 177 (italics added).
49 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 79.
50 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 80.
51 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 79.

not published because of fear of censorship, Palmieri interprets free will in the context of Pythagorean and Platonic doctrines. He argues that human souls corresponded to those angels who remained undecided which side to take in the primordial cosmic battle between God and Lucifer, and who were therefore sent out from heaven and appointed to live on earth. Thus the terrestrial world was intended by God as an opportunity for human beings to make up their minds about good and evil in a battle which represented a replay of the original heavenly conflict and in which they fight freely relying on their own judgement.[52] In Palmieri's "city of life" free will plays a crucial role giving a transcendental meaning to human existence; it appears embedded in an interpretation of earthly reality which is typical of humanist thought: "This world is the arena which God offers to the souls so that they can decide freely about their own destiny".[53]

Pico della Mirandola reflects the "inward turn" and speculative tendency of Ficinian Platonism, which transformed the "civic" ideal of freedom into a more philosophical concept determined with careful deliberation. In his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* Pico gave a more systematic treatment to the sometimes imprecisely formulated ideas of his humanist predecessors, a treatment which included a philosophically coherent and significant theory of human freedom. According to Pico, human beings are the only creatures that are born without any definite inherent condition and are therefore not determined by nature to exercise any specific activity. Thus the human condition must be understood as essentially characterised by the absence of any condition, a peculiar circumstance which implies that human beings are their own masters and makers, endowed with complete freedom. As Garin has written:

> the compulsion he [man] is subject to is the compulsion to be free and the compulsion to choose his own destiny, to build the altar of his own fame with his own hands or to forge his own change and convict himself.[54]

In Pico's philosophy free will is declared a central feature of human existence; it is, paradoxically, the only "condition" or "compulsion" human beings have to accept or submit to in their lives. However, the undetermined nature of human beings signifies that they possess the potential to be everything. Thus it is the lot of human beings to use the possibilities inherent in free choice and make the best decisions for their best development, for they have to look at themselves as the result of their own actions. Pico himself suggested that the true development of the individual consisted in advancing towards the heights of angelic life. He insisted that human beings were created free and that the laws of nature did not affect this freedom; on the contrary, the law of nature "stands still and sounds retreat" at the threshold of the soul.[55]

Most of the sixteenth century humanists continued the tradition of their

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52 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 68-69.
53 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 69.
54 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 105.
55 Pico, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 111.

predecessors of the previous century and maintained the doctrine of free will in various ways. While Erasmus defended the principle of freedom from the point of view of patristic and Biblical studies, Vives advocated it in the field of education, making a passionate plea for "that delightfully sweet liberty" of the *civitas literaria*.[56] Nizolio, the foremost Ciceronian of his day and a radical reformer of logic, tackled the theme in a philosophical way in his important treatise *De Veris Principiis et Vera Ratione Philosophandi*, a work which won the admiration of Leibniz, who republished it with his editorial notes in 1670 under the "Erasmian" title of *Antibarbarus Philosophicus, sive Philosophia Scholasticorum Impugnata*.[57] Nizolio represents the entire heritage of humanism, for his "attitude had been formed by the whole of the accumulated experience of humanism".[58] He is certainly a typical example of the rebellious humanist "grammarian" who enters the field of philosophy with thoughts of "rhetoric revenge".[59] Nizolio's "true principles of philosophising" contained the notion of freedom and free will in several ways. First, he held that the study of the classics was an efficient means of developing an independent mind and of regaining the lost liberties of "true philosophising". Second, he insisted on complete freedom of research, arguing that genuine improvement of knowledge could only be achieved by free thinking. Third, his emphasis on freedom of research implied the idea of intellectual and religious tolerance, manifest in his notorious call for "liberty and true freedom of thinking and of declaring one's opinion on everything".[60]

Nizolio's philosophy summarised the essence of the ideals which had inspired humanist reformism for more than a century and constituted the basis of the wide-ranging humanist plans to advance civilisation. As we have pointed out, the reformism of the humanist movement was characterised by a non-doctrinal and tolerant spirit, which is sometimes epitomised in sixteenth-century France by the term *cuyder*, that is, independent thinking.[61] Biblical philology fostered an attitude of broad-minded relativism with regard to the sacred texts,[62] while the revival of Platonism and in particular Platonic theology created a spirit of openness which anticipated the ideal of toleration.[63] Garin has highlighted the liberalism of humanism, stating that "humanism stood for freedom, a revaluation of humanity, a respect for every belief, free criticism and universal toleration".[64] Nizolio's work containing the avant-gardist message of free expression and tolerance was published in 1553, which was the year of Servetus' execution. Nizolio was a

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56 Quoted in chapter 2, p. 115.

57 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 157, n. 7.

58 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 158.

59 Cf. J. E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism* (Princeton 1968), 137-169; quoted in B. Vickers, "Rhetoric and Poetics" in Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge 1988), 733.

60 "libertas et vera licentia sentiendi ac indicandi de omnibus rebus"; quoted in Garin, *Der italienische Humanismus* (Berne 1947), 191.

61 Cf. chapter 2, p. 108 and chapter 1, p. 47 n. 32.

62 Cf. chapter 2, p. 127 and chapter 3, p. 141.

63 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 113.

64 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 199.

significant lexicographer, and his major work, the dictionary *Thesaurus Ciceronianus*, came out first in Basel in 1536 and reached its definitive form in 1559, precisely like Calvin's *Institutes*. The progressive tendencies of humanism as a "liberation philosophy" became more accentuated later in the century in the work of Giordano Bruno, who openly criticised the orthodox Aristotelianism of the Genevan Academy and eventually decided to leave the Swiss city after having undergone the painful public humiliation which the Consistory inflicted on him, part of which was to apologise for the capital audacity of questioning the authority of Aristotle.[65] Later, in his *Spaccio*, Bruno would reproach the Calvinists for denying human freedom and the efficacy of human works, both of which he regarded as essential doctrines of true religion.[66]

The humanist ideals of freedom and tolerance were absorbed into Renaissance culture in both their "civic" and "philosophical" forms, featuring as topics of discussion in philosophical writings and appearing as themes in literature, poetry and drama. Giovan Battista Gelli, the Italian popular philosopher who fused Ficinian Platonism with Peripateticism, restates the doctrine of free will along the lines of Pico. Gelli writes that among all beings man alone is capable

> of choosing for himself both a status and a goal; of travelling along the path that pleases him most; of conducting his life as he wills, guided by his will rather than by his natural inclination.[67]

Picking up Pico's conceptions Gelli portrays human beings in terms of "Prometheus" and "Chameleon", asserting that their distinctive feature is the ability to freedom. "For", he explains,

> all other creatures are subject to a certain law and for that reason cannot reach a goal other than the one set by nature. They cannot transgress the limits that have been led down for them by nature. But man, since he has free will, may set himself goals that are more worthy and goals that are less worthy. This is left to his discretion. He may lower himself towards base things or keep higher ones in mind.[68]

Gelli's conception of freedom differs from Pico's in that the former sees freedom from the perspective of a pessimistic Peripatetic as "an imperfection that causes suffering"[69] and therefore as something that does not need enthusiastic exaltation.

In the literature of the Renaissance the humanistic approach to the theme of freedom appears in different variations. It is impossible to examine this in detail; instead, a brief look at Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which can be regarded as a mirror of the whole age in this respect, may convey a general impression representative of the sixteenth century. Written by an author who was "a complete, integral man of the Renaissance"[70] and whose works

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65 Cf. chapter 6, p. 313 n. 208.

66 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 201.

67 G. B. Gelli, *Circe* (1549); quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 177.

68 Gelli, *Circe*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 178.

69 Gelli, *Circe*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 178.

70 J. B. Avalle-Arce, "Cervantes and the Renaissance" in M. D. McGaha (ed.), *Cervantes and the Renaissance* (Easton (Pennsylvania) 1980), 3. Cf. also A. Castro, *El pensamiento de Cervantes* (Madrid 1925) and M. Bataillon, *Érasme et l'Espagne* (Paris 1937). One can today certainly speak of Cervantes as "a humanist in the wide sense of the term, formed far away from the dust of the

"appeared to be permeated by Erasmian ideas and attitudes",[71] *Don Quixote* has been called "the novel of the Renaissance" precisely with regard to its humanist elements.[72] Cervantes was a fervent advocate of the humanistic ideal of freedom (his life demonstrates this) and so the themes of freedom and free will feature prominently in his *Don Quixote*.[73] The most explicit affirmation of the ideal of free will is made effectively against a background of captivity (that is, absence of freedom) in a comical passage in which some prisoners (actually, a group of galley slaves) "are being taken to their destination by force and not by their own free will", as Don Quixote observes.[74] In the ironical context of liberating criminals -which does not devalue the ideal of freedom but rather defines it in terms of "an imperfection that causes suffering" - the protagonist solemnly proclaims that "our will is free and no herb nor charm can compel it", and he insists that "it is impossible to force a man's will".[75] Cervantes' defence of the humanistic ideal of free will is accompanied by a pacifist declaration reminiscent of humanist utopianism. "Let each man be answerable for his own sins", says Don Quixote,

> there is a God in Heaven who does not fail to punish the wicked nor to reward the good. It is not right that honest men should be executioners of others when they have nothing to do with the case.[76]

Another aspect of Cervantes' humanistic conception of free will is manifest in the figure of Marcela, the young lady in *Don Quixote* who turns her back to civilised life and becomes a shepherdess. Marcela embodies an idealistic attitude towards freedom which is less "civic" and less ostentatiously assertive than that of the protagonist, but more introverted and escapist, thus reflecting the Platonic character of humanist utopianism. Both Marcela and Don Quixote fuse in humanistic manner the exaltation of free will with an unfailing belief in the supremacy and firmness of the will. For Marcela the freedom of the will is an essential feature of human existence without which her fiercely independent personality cannot find meaningful expression in life. Set in the context of a pastoral idyll (certainly a prudent way of presenting ideas pertaining to a humanistic "liberation philosophy" at the time) Marcela's utterances reveal the subjective dimension of Cervantes'

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libraries in the school of life and adversity"; J. Canavaggio, *Cervantès* (Paris 1986), 262.

71 Avalle-Arce, "Cervantes and the Renaissance", 6.

72 Avalle-Arce, "Cervantes and the Renaissance", 10.

73 Cervantes is aware that this theme represents a traditional doctrine which links up his own age with the previous one, and therefore he attributes to his protagonist, the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance, a prominent place in proclaiming it. It was natural for Cervantes to associate humanist themes, and especially that of freedom, with the past, or to speak more concretely, with the reign of Charles V, in which Erasmus circulated more or less freely, rather than with the era of Philip II, in which humanist books were marginalised by the Inquisition. Cf. Avalle-Arce, "Cervantes and the Renaissance", 5.

74 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 1, chapter 22, trans. W. Starkie (London 1957), 209.

75 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 1, chapter 22, 213. There are two parallel passages, one in *Persiles* and the other in *Licenciado Vidriera*; cf. Castro, *El pensamiento de Cervantes*, 2nd ed. (Barcelona 1972), 337-338. The fact that Cervantes himself shared the experience of being a prisoner adds meaning to these utterances and helps explain the underlying irony. The captive's words "there is no joy on earth in my opinion that can compare with regaining one's lost liberty" undoubtedly contain an autobiographical echo; Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 1, chapter 39, 400.

76 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 1, chapter 22, 216.

conception of freedom: "I am free and have no taste for subjection ..... I was born free, and to live free I chose the solitude of the fields".[77] These assertions are echoed in a veritable panegyric uttered by Don Quixote, in which we encounter the same humanistic enthusiasm for freedom, but with a "civic" accent (and an unmistakably autobiographical tint):

> Liberty, Sancho, my friend, is one of the most precious gifts that Heaven has bestowed on mankind; all the treasures the earth contains within its bosom or the ocean within its depths cannot be compared with it. For liberty, as well as for honor, man ought to risk even his life, and he should reckon captivity the greatest evil life can bring. ..... The obligations that spring from benefits and kindnesses received are ties that prevent a noble mind from ranging freely. Happy the man to whom Heaven has given a morsel of bread for which he is obliged to thank Heaven alone.[78]

Apart from singing humanistically inspired praises of freedom, Cervantes also offers a more critical treatment of the complex problem of the relation between free will, fortune and providence in his *Don Quixote*. Invoking the popular proverb "every man is the maker of his own fortune" he declares the notion of fortune in the sense of chance happening as invalid and points to a "special disposition of providence", the precise character of which is left undetermined. Cervantes' reasoning is subtle and ambiguous: he alludes to the Renaissance motto "virtù vince fortuna"[79] and displays a somewhat hesitant attitude reminiscent of Valla's cautious approach to the question of foreseeing and foreknowing in his dialogue *On Free Will*.[80] Indeed, there is a basic similarity between Cervantes' and Valla's conception of free will with respect to both the "civic" and the "Platonic" humanist ideals. This is confirmed by a passage from *Don Quixote* in which Sancho provokes Don Quixote into philosophising about the question of the freedom of the human will when he evokes the popular pagan notion of fortune:

> "I've heard say that she they call Fortune is a drunken, freakish drab, and above all, blind, so that she doesn't see what she's doing, and she does not know whom she raises or whom she pulls down".
>
> "You are much of a philosopher, Sancho", said Don Quixote, ... "but I must tell you that there is no such thing as Fortune in the world. Nothing that happens here below, whether of good or evil, comes by chance, but by the special disposition of Providence, and that is why we have the proverb: "Every man is the maker of his own fortune". I, for my part, have been the maker of mine, ...[81]

This appears a paradoxical conception in which providence coexists with free will in a kind of "mutually exclusive" compatibility. Cervantes' idea of free will (and that of humanism) is best understood if fatality is not conceived as a purely external factor but as possessing an internal (or psychological) dimension. In fact, Don Quixote's humanistic reasoning is quite modern: fatality does exist in the world; it is, however, a power that is not so much of an extrinsic as of an intrinsic character; it must therefore be considered as partially inherent in human nature and is, as such, indistinguishable from the will, which always appears free to the individual. Thus free will signifies to Cervantes something like "the right to

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77 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 1, chapter 14, 144, 142. There is a parallel passage in *Gitanilla*; cf. Castro, *El pensamiento de Cervantes*, 338.

78 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 58, 935.

79 Quoted above, p. 196.

80 Cf. above, pp. 200-201.

81 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 2, chapter 66, 999.

follow one's destiny without hindrance".[82] The human will is a psychological force that is experienced as autonomous, but nevertheless affected by some unconscious and latent kind of internal foreseeing. Each individual possesses an inborn "trajectory",[83] from which it would be unwise to depart since it is implanted in the individual by natural law.[84]

Closely linked with the conceptions of the primacy and freedom of the will was the notion of the active life, which constituted a major theme of humanist moral philosophy. If human beings by nature possessed an able will and were free creatures, then they needed a forum to exert these properties, and this forum could consist of nothing else than real deeds and actions. Moreover, human beings had virtue and a distinguished capability for works, both of which destined them, too, for being active in the world. Thus the humanists advocated the ideal of the active life in the context of the assertion of the intact will power and the free choice of human beings on the one hand, and of the positive evaluation of human works and virtue on the other hand. Their defence of the active life was inspired by a typical preoccupation with this world paradigmatic of classical Graeco-Roman civilisation, and it signified a break with the otherworldly tendencies of the medieval tradition, in which the ideal of the contemplative life had prevailed. More concretely, the humanist championship of the *vita activa* was based on a renewed affirmation of the ancient ideal of *humanitas* or *παιδεια*, which implied the active involvement of the individual in society and in public affairs. *Humanitas* meant "community" and "full participation" in civic and social life for most humanists from Salutati to Ficino and beyond.[85]

Already in Petrarch we can recognise the emergence of the humanist ideal of the active life, although these were only the first beginnings and the ideal remained submerged in the prevalent praise of the solitary life. Petrarch advocated the values of the active life at length in a letter to a friend, whom he tried to dissuade from becoming a monk.[86] This defence of the active life against monastic asceticism - which was to be imitated frequently in the Renaissance - is not incompatible with the poet's predilection for the solitary life, if one keeps in mind that Petrarch did not aim at demonstrating the primacy of active virtue, but merely wanted to enhance its status with respect to the better acknowledged contemplative virtue.[87] Thus Petrarch's epistolary emphasis on the *vita activa* has to be seen as a plea for a better balance between the contemplative and the active life, neither of which, according to the humanist, should be preferred to the exclusion of the other. Salutati and Bruni began to attribute pre-eminence to the ideal of the active life,

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82 Castro, *El pensamiento de Cervantes*, 338.
83 Castro, *El pensamiento de Cervantes*, 338.
84 We recognise here that what we have described as the humanists's call *"retour à la nature!"* applies particularly to the conception of the will. Cf. chapter 3, p. 138.
85 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 40-41.
86 Cf. Petrarch, *Epistolae de rebus familiaribus*, 3.12; cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 20.
87 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 25.

elaborating it into a programmatic doctrine propagated under the banner of *humanitas*. Salutati, similar to Petrarch, evoked the advantages of the active life in a letter to a friend who wanted to enter a monastery, attempting to abandon the secular for the sacred. He argued that in this life it was the individual's duty to cultivate preferably active pursuits, since in the life to come only contemplative ones were left. Accordingly, a truly religious life, that is, a life devoted to spiritual ideals, signified active involvement in human affairs and dedication to terrestrial tasks. Salutati addressed these words to the prospective monk:

> Do not imagine, Pellegrino, that one can seek perfection by fleeing from the crowd, shunning the sight of everything beautiful and locking oneself up in a monastery or a hermitage. Do you really believe that God prefers a solitary, inactive Paul to a creative Abraham? Do you not think that God looked with greater pleasure upon Jacob and his twelve sons, two wives and large herds than upon the two Macarii, upon Theophilus and upon Hilarion? In an attempt to run away from the earth, you may well tumble down from heaven to earth. But I, while I am busily engaged on earthly things, can always raise my heart from earth to heaven. As long as you are serving, as long as you are striving for your family, children, relatives, friends, and for the fatherland which comprises them all, you cannot help lifting your heart heavenwards and thus please God.[88]

Bruni advocated the ideal of the active life with a strong emphasis on social and political commitment. He opposed the Aristotelian ideal of secluded scientific devotion, the so-called βιοξ θεωρητικοξ, and dispised scholarly withdrawal:

> Great and high-minded intelligences do not need those tortures [of solitude]. And it is certain that things that are not apparent at once will not come out later. Therefore, detachment and withdrawal are becoming to those who have an inferior mind, incapable of starting any enterprise.[89]

Bruni added a new and important accent to the humanist conception of the active life, namely the praise of marriage and of family life:

> it seems to me appropriate to correct the erroneous opinion of many ignorant people that only those can be numbered among the scholars who hide themselves in solitude and leisure. I for my part have never known one of those remote people, hostile to all convivial conversation, who was able to read as much as three consecutive letters ..... It is the opinion of the philosophers that man is a political animal. The first community, the proliferation of which gave rise to the city, was the community which consisted of man and wife. And there can be nothing perfect when such a community is lacking.[90]

After Bruni the defence of married life became a major theme in humanist moral philosophy. Like the active life, it was a theme that was treated with reference to the idea of *humanitas*. In Valla *humanitas* stood for everything that was natural in human beings; his affirmation of natural principles made him a stout defender of married life and an inveterate enemy of asceticism who would proclaim his ideas with a frankness that often appeared offensive. If the suppression of *voluptas*, that is to say, nature in human beings, should ever prevail, he argued, "what a disaster would that be for the whole of mankind".[91] The more pious and philosophical Ficino thought that disdain of married life indicated a lack of humanity. He called the family "a domestic republic in miniature in which he [man] exercises the force of his whole intelligence and virtue", and said that "wife and family .....

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88 Salutati, *Letter to Pellegrino Zambeccari*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 28.

89 Bruni, *Preface* to his translation of Aristotle's *Politics*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 42.

90 Bruni, *Vita di Dante*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 39.

91 "quantum naufragium de genere humano"; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 52.

are a thorough schooling in moral philosophy".[92] Of course, "Valla goes much further in exalting the flesh" than Ficino,[93] but the latter, who advocated married life in spite of his Platonic asceticism, illustrates how pervasive the theme had become in humanist moral philosophy. Valla also displayed a fully positive attitude towards the active life: he was an enthusiastic advocate of *humanitas*, for whom this ideal signified a stipulation for human beings to yield to their natural urge for self-expression and manifest themselves in action. Valla thinks that people possess an inborn drive for deeds and a "love of action" which they must allow to issue forth. According to the humanist

> it is the vocation of man not to kill his own self but to display his own *love of action* and to enjoy the serene movement of the soul, the agreeable gaiety of the body which is called ηδονη.[94]

Poggio Bracciolini was in the forefront of the humanist polemic against ascetic withdrawal from the world. He praises work, considering it a "blessing", not a "punishment", on the grounds that it allows people to develop their humanity and to make the world more human and civilised.[95] He despises the studious erudites who, perpetually bent over their books, spend their lives in fruitless engrossment. Disparaging of contemplative scholarly seclusion, Poggio advocates the ideal of active virtue, commenting that "I, on the other hand, approve of and aim at that virtue that is confirmed by life".[96] According to Manetti, who emphasises the significance of worldly activity in connection with the praise of human dignity,[97] "man shines mainly through his earthly works".[98] With Alberti the praise of the active life and the glorification of human works, both proclaimed in association with the motto "virtù vince fortuna", became a universal feature of the Renaissance. Similar to Manetti, Alberti held that the most important result of human activity was the construction of the perfect city. In humanist fashion Alberti linked the notion of the excellence of works with that of human virtue and happiness:

> I am of the opinion that man is born not in order to rot away in laziness, but in order to be active ..... He ought to be convinced that he is not in this world in order sadly to prolong his existence through lack of action, but in order to aim at great and far-reaching goals. Through this he will please God and will worship God and for himself he will thus attain to the exercise of perfect virtue as well as to happiness, the fruit of perfect virtue.[99]

Alberti exhibits a strong belief in the individual's capacity for action and urges everybody to realise their potential, arguing that human beings must not spend all their time meditating upon ideas, but must translate them into action, exclaiming: "Stop molesting the gods always with a lot of prayers and vows! Make use of your own power".[100]

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92 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 40.
93 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 41 n. 6.
94 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 51 (italics added).
95 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 44.
96 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 45.
97 Cf. above, pp. 195-196.
98 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 60.
99 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 64.
100 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 66.

On the other hand the revival of Platonism also brought about an increased emphasis on the ideal of other-worldly contemplation among humanists. Most humanists tried to harmonise this renewed tendency towards a meditative attitude with their programmatic affirmation of the active life, which they perceived to be an integral part of their reformist approach to life. There were exceptions, though; Landino advocated the superiority of contemplation, arguing that thinkers have contributed more substantially to the advancement of civilisation than doers and that outstanding individuals, such as Cicero, have been more important with respect to their capacity of thinking than of acting.[101] However, mainstream humanism continued to endorse the concept of the preeminence of the active over the contemplative life, integrating the former with the latter and adapting the concept to the new needs. Palmieri, while acknowledging the superiority of the *vita contemplativa* in theory, underscored the overriding importance of the active life for a meaningful human existence from the point of view of practice. According to Palmieri human beings are destined to be immersed in society and to strive actively for its improvement. In civic commitment, their potential of virtue can unfold and contribute to attain the most humane of all goals: the increase of the common good. Civic commitment, however, implies that true virtue is inseparable from utility and that its real merit lies in activity. Palmieri considered that

> to value what is honourable as distinct from what is useful, amounted to straying from the correct road ..... People who despise what is useful and what can be achieved reasonably, deserve to be reproached and cannot be considered virtuous ..... The true merit of virtue lies in effective action ..... And he who loves solitude can be neither just, nor strong, nor experienced in those things that are of importance in government and in the affairs of the majority ..... It follows that it becomes those who are virtuous to seek what is useful, so that they can lead a righteous life .....[102]

In the sixteenth century the defence of the active life continued in humanist moral philosophy, but, inevitably, it lost importance and vigour in the new absolutist climate. The theme was gradually removed from its original political and practical context and came to be treated in a more theoretical manner. The sixteenth century did not witness the elaboration of new arguments or theories but was rather an echo of fifteenth century humanism. Bernardo Segni repeated an established humanist commonplace when he wrote that "pure speculation is not becoming to man as such but has its rightful place only in a super-human form of existence", arguing that it was therefore more appropriate to treat of "the active life in which men engage to much greater extent".[103] Speroni's treatment of the theme of the active life was dominated by humanistic motives. Corresponding to the Petrarchan topos, Speroni's defence of the active life was embedded in a sharp criticism of the academic world, in which the contemplative life was usually regarded as preeminent.

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101 Landino wrote that "the works of those who did not lead an active life have shown men the road from barbarism and ignorance to gentleness and humaneness ..... Deeds die with men. But thoughts vanquish time. They are immortal and lead to eternity"; Landino, *Quaestiones Camaldunenses* (1475); quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 85.

102 Palmieri, *Il libro della vite civile*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 68.

103 Commentary to the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1550); quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 176.

Speroni attacked the ideal of the contemplative life, stating that it was neither Christian nor human, but simply vain. The Italian philosopher compared human beings to swords made by God for the purpose of active combat, not passive pondering.[104] He argued that the contemplative life was a mode of existence invented by weak and useless but clever people who wanted to avoid the struggles of real life. He told a tale of a man who was

> no better, but perhaps less naive than his fellows. In order to disguise his cowardice, he invented a new form of life. In this way he made himself appear as if he despised those goods which he was not capable of achieving anyway. To this sterile life, spent in the fruitless contemplation of the grounds of the works of God and Nature ..... he gave a beautiful and high-sounding name which nobody can understand: he called it the speculative life.

"Thus", Speroni concluded, "originated, grew and flourished ..... happy among the foolishness of ordinary men, the vain, contemplative mode of life".[105] Following humanist fashion Speroni stamped the academics of his time as ignorant, saying that the "speculative philosophers ..... who are devoted to this idle speculation, know as little of our human existence as a man ..... who is born among the mute and who lives outside the world".[106] One of the latest examples of the formal humanist eulogy of the active life can be found in the work of Paolo Paruta, who repeated the "civic" argument that the real purpose of moral philosophy was to move human beings to action:

> Pindar was right in saying that philosophy is anything but a mere art of sculpture which creates insensitive and mute beings. On the contrary, it is the function of philosophy to awaken the mind and to prepare it for civic action .....[107]

Giordano Bruno marked the end of the long humanist tradition of discussing the *vita activa* in comparison with the *vita contemplativa*. At the close of the Renaissance he reevokes the beginnings of the age and reverts to striking a balance between the two modes of existence in a way reminiscent of Petrarch. Bruno "was an ardent believer in the efficacy of human action"[108] who would go as far as glorifying human works as a kind of "competition with divine acts",[109] but he also praised contemplation as an indispensable means for attaining inner harmony and happiness in the struggle of life. Bruno's argumentation in favour of activity is dominated by the idea of development and progress. The Italian humanist holds that the active life is a civilising force that enables human beings to overcome their inborn laziness and to free themselves from the compulsions of their lower nature, or in other words, to become more human. Earthly activity stimulates the higher faculties of the mind and contributes to advance culture and society. For Bruno to be active means to be inventive, for

> in competition with divine acts and through the application of intellectual urges, battling with difficulties and newly emerging needs, the intelligence is sharpened, crafts are invented and the arts discovered. And so, from day to day, because of deprivations, new and marvellous inventions are brought forth from the depths of the

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104 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 180.
105 Speroni, *Dialoghi*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 180.
106 Speroni, *Dialoghi*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 180.
107 *Perfezione della vita politica* (published in the late 1570s); quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 182.
108 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 201.
109 Bruno, *Spaccio*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 211.

human intellect.[110]

However, the relevance of the active life is not limited to the development of the individual and the progress of culture, but it extends into the realm of religion. Bruno underlined the efficacy of human works for salvation and sharply repudiated the Reformation concept of *sola fide*, for he believed that "works are in truth the goal of all religions".[111] Contemplation, on the other hand, has for Bruno a "liberating power"[112] insofar as it frees human beings from worldly worries and makes them indifferent to earthly goods, thus leading them to "despise all those things that are valued by childish minds".[113] The contemplative life helps individuals find "the true way of true morality" and allows them to attain inner happiness and peace of mind, so that they can enjoy the "true beatitude ..... of being in the present".[114]

The humanist discussion of the *vita activa* versus the *vita contemplativa* is reflected in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, in which the theme is treated in terms of a dichotomy between "arms" and "letters". "Arms" does for Cervantes not only refer to military pursuits but also to active participation in worldly affairs, while "letters" is equivalent to academic study and the occupations attained through it. Don Quixote juxtaposes arms and letters, advocating the humanist position of preferring the active over the contemplative life. Embodying Speroni's humanistically inspired idea of the individual as a divinely fashioned sword ready for righteous action in the world, he proclaims the superiority of arms over letters:

> There is no doubt that this art and profession [i.e. arms] surpass all that men have ever invented; ..... Away with those who say that letters win more fame than arms! Whoever they may be, I will tell them they do not know what they are saying.[115]

Don Quixote adduces three arguments to vindicate the preeminence of arms over letters. First, arms require as much intelligence (or more) than letters, while they require more physical strength. Second, the ultimate goal of arms, which is peace, is to be considered of higher value than the end of letters, which is the good administration of human affairs. Third, the hardships endured by the soldier are much greater than those of the scholar. The second argument rests on a statement by Cicero which was criticised as insufficient by some Christian commentators (among them Calvin)[116] namely that war should only be made in order to attain peace.[117] Don Quixote's presentation of the argument involves a comparison of human and divine letters:

> The aim and goal of letters - I am not now speaking of divine letters, whose sole aim is to guide and elevate the soul of man to Heaven, for with that sublime end none can be compared - I speak of human letters, whose end is to regulate distributive justice, to give every man his due, to make good laws, and to enforce them strictly: an end most

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110 Bruno, *Spaccio*; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 211.
111 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 201.
112 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 208.
113 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 209.
114 Quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 209.
115 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 1, chapter 37, 387.
116 Cf. *Inst.*, 4.20.12.
117 "Bellum autem ita suscipiatur, ut nihil aliud nisi pax quaesita videatur"; Cicero, *De officiis*, 1.23.80. Cf. also Plato, *Nomoi*, 628d-e and Cicero, *De officiis*, 1.11.35.

> certainly generous, exalted, and worthy of high praise, but not so glorious as the aim of arms, which is peace, the greatest blessing that man can enjoy in this life.[118]

Don Quixote is interested in the first place in comparing the active with the contemplative life, or arms with letters respectively, not human with divine letters, which is Calvin's first concern.[119]. He concentrates on demonstrating the superiority of the active over the contemplative mode of existence, and does not dwell on what seems to him evident and not in his brief: the fundamental fact of the preeminence of divine over human letters or sciences.[120] This attitude is paradigmatic of humanism: to focus on the idea of *humanitas* and the programme of the *studia humanitatis*, not on the concept of *divinitas*, to study the different aspects of the human mind and the human world *sub specie humanitatis*, that is, from the human point of view.

The analysis of *Don Quixote* helps define more precisely the position of humanism with regard to the dichotomy between *humanitas* and *divinitas*, which provides clarification of the question of how to interpret the (superficially similar) comparisons between human and divine sciences made by Calvin and Petrarch?[121] We have pointed out that Petrarch's depreciatory remarks about human letters are rhetoric exaggerations which do *not* derive from a fundamentalist attitude towards religion and which are compatible with his devotion to the humanistic studies, concluding that the stance expressed literally by those remarks does *not* constitute a major trait of humanism.[122] If our formulations in the introduction have been couched in negative terms, we can now be more affirmative and define the position of humanism with regard to the dichotomy between *humanitas* and *divinitas* as follows. The humanists are primarily interested in the realm of humanity and human letters, not in that of divinity, and they prefer to look at the world from the perspective of human beings. This signifies a dedication to the ideal of *humanitas* and to the programme of the *studia humanitatis*. As regards *divinitas*, the humanists occasionally acknowledge its theoretical superiority over *humanitas* in the manner of restating an eternal truth, thus expressing their recognition of the fundamental value of genuine religion. However, they do not normally argue from the view-point of divinity against the humanities or human sciences, but rather from the view-point of *humanitas*, which is their proper domain, against the old scholastic approach to divinity,

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118 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 1, chapter 37, 387.

119 Cf. introduction, p. 19.

120 We cannot discuss in detail the question of how Don Quixote, whose mentality appears to be principally medieval, can be seen as a representative of humanist ideals, but we can consider two arguments in brief. First, the Knight of La Mancha reflects all the aspects of the continuity of medieval thought in humanism, and it mirrors all those tendencies of humanism which contradict the tide of the time, that is to say, which make the movement's representatives, as we have pointed out earlier, humanists against or in spite of the Renaissance (cf. chapter 3, p. 175). Second, we must bear in mind that Cervantes had to disguise his Erasmianism very well in order not to attract the attention of the Inquisition. The most ingenious strategy, it would seem, was to embed his humanism in an ambiguous, yet affable, character like Don Quixote, whose figure was designed to serve the purpose - at least on the surface - of representing a ridicule of the Middle Ages, while allowing, on a deeper level, the portrayal of humanist ideals.

121 Cf. introduction, pp. 18-21.

122 Cf. introduction, p. 20.

criticising it as obsolete, but not calling into question the special substance and status of theological studies. Naturally, no humanist ever condemned *divinitas* in absolute terms, so that we do not have any humanist statement that corresponds to an inversion of Calvin's words about the human sciences, such as: "I would rather that all the *divine sciences* were banished from the earth than that they would be the cause for cooling the zeal of Christians and for turning them away from God".[123]

Closely connected with the moral philosophy of the humanists (and with their philosophical endeavours in general) were the new educational theories and programmes which they elaborated and actively promulgated.[124] Since humanist educational thought contains distinct implications concerning questions of world-view (which form part of the controversial philosophical side of humanism), those who advocate a non-philosophical interpretation of humanism tend to treat humanist educational theory marginally,[125] while those who defend a philosophical view of humanism are inclined to devote more extensive study to it.[126] An integral reform of education was one of the chief ambitions of the humanists, and this ambition formed part of their larger aspirations to achieve a thorough renewal of the intellectual world.[127] The fundamental principles on which humanist educational reformism was based were the ideals of *humanitas* and the *studia humanitatis*.[128] These were classical concepts which the humanists revived and which inspired them to forge a kind of liberation philosophy, that is to say, a philosophy that would help emancipate the individual from predetermined paths of thinking. This development can also be characterised in terms of a transition from medieval *divinitas* to the *humanitas* of the Renaissance, or from the *studia divinitatis* to the *studia humanitatis* respectively. According to the new conception of liberal education shaped by the humanists, education should be liberal in the sense that it should be fully self-contained and independent of the interests of particular schools of thought, enabling everyone to develop their inborn humanity. In concrete this meant that the reformed curriculum should be free from philosophical or theological bias in order to allow the student's mind to grow independently. Naturally the idea of the independent mental development of the individual presupposed an implicit endorsement of the doctrine of free will. In accordance with the concept of the active life, humanist education aimed at moving people to deeds and at putting ideas into practice. The humanistic studies, which "were considered the cause of

123 Cf. introduction, p. 19.

124 We have described the chief ideas of humanist pedagogy in the context of defining humanism from the view-point of *humanitas*; cf. chapter 2, pp. 114-115.

125 Cf. e.g. Kristeller, Trinkaus or Nauert.

126 The best-known example is Garin, *L'educazione in Europa 1400-1600*, 3rd ed. (Rome, Bari 1976). This textbook on education in the Renaissance has become a standard work and has been translated into several languages, e.g. German (Reinbek 1964-1967, 3 vols., ed. E. Kessler), French (Paris 1968), Spanish (Barcelona 1987).

127 Cf. chapter 2, p. 108. It has to be noted that the very term *Humanismus* was coined with reference to the pedagogical thought of the Renaissance humanists; cf. chapter 2, p. 130.

128 Cf. chapter 2, p. 106.

the development of all civilised energy",[129] were designed to prepare people for a life of useful activity, spurring their will into action and motivating them to perform worthy deeds. Being conceived, in part, as a corrective to the scholastic emphasis on reason, they served the purpose of re-establishing a harmonious balance between the individual faculties of the mind.[130]

The humanist reform of education mainly concentrated on the *trivium* of the traditional curriculum of the *artes liberales*, and within that *trivium* the innovative efforts concerned principally grammar and rhetoric. These two disciplines served the purpose of enabling the student to handle the "abundance of words and ideas" and to be "in command of the treasury of words and ideas".[131] This means that the basic disciplines of the humanist cycle of studies give people the eloquence and linguistic skill needed for moving the will of others. Thus the individual who is trained in humanist philology is a master of words and ideas capable of "moving and shaking society".[132] In a wider sense, that is to say, beyond the limits of the *trivium*, the humanistic disciplines implied the renewed direct study of the classics. Humanist education promoted the ideal of an encyclopedic knowledge based on a comprehensive reading of Latin and Greek literature.[133] According to the humanists, this reading would enable the individual to develop a sense of the perfect life, since the literary monuments of Graeco-Roman civilisation were seen by them as leading examples of human perfection, and

> to come into contact with these monuments and with the minds behind them was like an ideal conversation with perfect men and allowed one to learn from them the meaning of existence.[134]

To the humanist enthusiasts of antique culture entering the world of antiquity was like passing the threshold of a temple, and therefore the classics were approached with an attitude of almost religious devotion.[135]

Petrarch was the first to recognise the value of the classics for education.[136] He criticised the nominalists of his time for their lack of knowledge and teaching skills, arguing that erudition and pedagogy were intimately connected according to Aristotle's maxim "it is a mark of one who knows that he can teach".[137] To Petrarch, clarity of mind and profundity of knowledge - both attainable from the classics - were the basis of all good education. He declared that "the strongest argument for genius and learning is clarity"[138]

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129 Quoted above, p. 197.
130 Cf. chapter 2, p. 112.
131 Erasmus; quoted in chapter 2, p. 125.
132 Cf. chapter 2, p. 125.
133 Cf. Kelley, *Renaissance Humanism*, 46-47.
134 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 77.
135 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 77.
136 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 19.
137 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1.1.981 *b* 7; quoted in Petrarch, *De ignorantia*; trans. H. Nachod in Cassirer / Kristeller / Randall (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 96.
138 Petrarch, *De ignorantia*, 96.

and recommended that "we should not follow vague and deceptive thoughts, but sound and clear ones that lead us to a good end".[139] The humanist insisted that genuine skill of teaching

> has its foundations doubtless in the clarity of intellect and knowledge. For though there is need for such skill besides knowledge, no such skill will get clear speech out of an obscure intellect if it comes to expressing the conceptions of the mind and imprinting them on others.[140]

Salutati thought that the new education procured by the *studia humanitatis* would help correct the tendency to alienation from worldly reality prevalent in some schools of scholastic thought. For him the humanistic training in grammar (in which, according to the new conception of language, words were not separated from things) meant a renewed confrontation with reality or "an approach to real things".[141] Bruni emphasised the ideal of universality[142] stating that the *studia humanitatis* were capable of shaping "the complete man" and claiming that the revived letters had come back "to form whole men, not just scholars".[143] Bruni argued that in order to become "complete" individuals should give up their preoccupation with scholastic philosophy and embrace the humanistic studies:

> you should not be instructed only by the philosophers, as fundamental as this study may be, but you must learn from the poets, the orators, the historians, so that your discourse is varied, rich and in no way rustic .....[144]

For the Florentine humanist the ideal of *humanitas* was the basis of all real education, which would foster the formation of a well-rounded personality with a wide intellectual horizon. Bruni thought that the *litterae* were called *humanae* because they contributed to bringing the individual's humanity to full development.[145] According to the humanist the study of poetry in particular would stimulate the process of self-regeneration.[146]

In the school of Vittorino da Feltre, education was considered as the promotion of everything that was valuable in human beings.[147] Feltre, the educator who was given the attributes of "Christian Socrates" and "omnis humanitatis pater", and who insisted on teaching "in a delightful way", declared it his aim to form people that are free and in control of themselves.[148] He emphasised the importance of the free will of the students, holding that "only if you train the pupils in freedom, you can recognise what their particular inclinations are".[149] The ideal of freedom cherished in early humanism waned as the movement developed and had to adapt itself to the changed political circumstances. After the decline of the Florentine Republic, education does not serve anymore the purpose of forming a free citizen of a free republic, but the more complacent courtier. Thus what

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139 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 273.
140 Petrarch, *De ignorantia*, 96.
141 As Garin has put it; cf. chapter 3, p. 136.
142 Cf. chapter 3, p. 153.
143 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 41, 38.
144 Bruni, *Epistolae*; quoted in Garin, *El Renacimiento italiano* (Madrid 1986), 76-77.
145 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 75. Cf. also chapter 2, p. 106 (n. 178).
146 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 75.
147 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 77.
148 Garin, *La educación en Europa 1400-1600* (Barcelona 1987), 128, 132, 130.
149 Quoted in Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 130.

had fundamentally been conceived as a "civic" education became a "mannerist" one through a process of "progressive exteriorisation".[150] This is to say, education does not shape a free personality anymore, but "it is only formal, an external form which defines precise relations".[151] Ficino emphasises that "there is only one path for the prosperity of the young, the method of Socrates".[152] Suggesting the figure of Socrates as the model of perfect education, the Florentine humanist highlights the principle of love in the formation of young people. According to Ficino the teacher who loves his pupils elicits in them a reciprocal emotion of affection, and this allows him to "draw out" (*e-ducere*, that is, educate) the good and divine elements in them.[153] Young people cannot be educated by laws only but the presence of a positive emotional element is required to make them grow to maturity, for

> The city does not consist of stones but of men. It is necessary to tend men like trees while they are young and to guide them to bear fruit. [.....] One cannot improve them by laws. We cannot all be a Solon or a Lycurgus. Few men have the authority to make new laws; and fewer obey the laws that have been made".[154]

For adults, education signifies the possibility of recuperating the forgotten other half of their self and thus of coming to recognition of their inborn "divine light" as well as of the divine "architect" of this world.[155]

Castiglione's *The Courtier* is a typical example of "mannerist" education; it deals with human beings as social creatures in an aristocratic sense, proposing that they can be refined and made truly human by means of "artful custom".[156] There are in *The Courtier* remote echoes of fifteenth century humanism: Castiglione held that there was "enclosed and buried in the soul" a seed of moral virtue which can grow if it is cultivated by a "good tiller".[157] This attitude was representative of the first half of the sixteenth century, when education often came to mean "the attempt to make the hidden seeds of virtue blossom, to remove the 'thorns and tares' so that desirable fruit may ripen".[158] Speroni shows other aspects of "mannerist" education, namely the emphasis on eloquence and the belief in "the power of pleasure". He underlines that efficient education depends on rhetoric, arguing that the effort to be eloquent fosters the important skill of giving form to ideas and intuitions. Once a satisfactory level of eloquence is attained, speech procures pleasure and with pleasure, persuasion, without which truth cannot be reached: "It would be vain if we tried to teach without delighting ..... . And by delighting, such is the power of pleasure, we acquire the power to persuade".[159]

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150 Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 137.
151 Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 136.
152 Ficino, *De Amore*, 7.16, ed. R. de la Villa Ardura (Madrid 1986), 227.
153 Cf. Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 100.
154 Ficino, *De Amore*, 4.5; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 100.
155 Ficino, *De Amore*, 4.5, ed. de la Villa Ardura, 75.
156 Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 1.14; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 171.
157 Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 1.14; quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 171.
158 Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 172.
159 Speroni, *Dialogo della Rhettorica* (1542); quoted in Garin, *Italian Humanism*, 16.

In Vives we find again undiluted (and even reinvigorated) the ideals of Italian quattrocento humanism. One of the most significant educational theorists of his age, he advanced his ideas principally in three works: first, the important pedagogical treatise *De disciplinis*, a massive work of several hundred pages which he wrote in 1531;[160] second, another long disquisition on the education of women composed in 1523;[161] and third, two letters on the education of children, equally written in 1523.[162] The most fundamental humanistic trait in Vives' educational thought is certainly "his great confidence in man, who should look at 'the whole universe as if it was his dominion'", since he can have control over it by virtue of his knowledge."[163] Vives assimilated all the pedagogical notions elaborated by Erasmus, but the most original and important aspect of his educational theory consists of his "psychological observations".[164] Vives was unique in that he investigated the mental condition of children and adolescents in order to gain a more accurate picture of their inner life and development, of their ways of cognition and emotive response, and of their characters, temperaments and attitudes. His pedagogical researches led to an attempt at framing a new type of education which would be adequate to the needs of young people in the process of growth. The Spanish humanist advocated an educational programme which would be adapted to the real intellectual capabilities of the pupils at the different stages of their mental development. Concretely, this attitude implied a strong vindication of the value of the *studia humanitatis* for elementary education and the propaedeutic arts course in university. It signified that children should not be initiated anymore into the realm of letters with the logical abstractions of nominalist metaphysics, which represented a product of the adult mind, but that they should receive a treatment adequate for their age.[165]

One of the most prominent humanistic features of Vives' educational theory is his sharp rejection of scholastic logic and the concomitant attack on the nominalist teachers of such logic in the "decrepit Sorbonne".[166] In his polemic treatise *Against the Pseudo-Dialectitians*, Vives reveals some of his best ideas about education in a sketchy but highly suggestive manner. He emphasises that scholastic logic does not train the intellect in a profound and permanent way since large parts of it are artificially contrived and alienated from the realities of the human sphere. A mind formed by the methods of medieval dialectics may appear momentarily acute, but it will fail when confronted with the reality of life. The preparation at Montaigu is completely inadequate for a proper understanding of the world, for by the teaching of nominalist dialectics

> the wits of the students are sharpened temporarily, only to lose their edge immediately

160 Cf. J. L. Vives, *Obras completas*, ed. L. Riber, vol. 2 (Madrid 1948), 337-687.
161 Viz. *Institutio foeminae christianae*; in *Obras completas*, 987-1175.
162 *De rationae studii puerilis*; in *Obras completas*, 317-335.
163 Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 150.
164 Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 150.
165 Cf. Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 150, 199.
166 Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 26.

> in contact with other subject matter, no matter how slight, and to become duller than a pestle.[167]

The humanist denounces the deficiencies of an education based on the subjects of scholastic logic, lamenting that "with how much detriment to souls and to the whole of religion do the friars learn and teach these things!"[168] Vives stresses the point that logic is an auxiliary discipline preparing the pupil for the study of the higher and more important disciplines. This is to say, logic is the "servant" or "handmaid"[169] of the other disciplines, especially the philosophical ones, and thus a subject "which is learned not for its own sake, but in order to serve as a basis for the other arts".[170] "Therefore", Vives argues, "no more effort is to be employed in it than is necessary for the service that logic contributes to the other arts".[171] This means that "only that knowledge of the art of logic should be imparted which is necessary to ensure that the other arts will not be harmed by an insufficient knowledge of logic".[172]

As far as the concrete question of university curriculum is concerned, Vives insists that logic should not occupy the studies of young boys "for too long a time".[173] It should, in fact, never extend over two full years, as was customary in Paris at the time. "Let those who are so eager to learn such subjects do so in a few months", Vives writes, "and discover what kind of madness it is".[174] Scholastic logic must not be allowed to subdue the pupil's receptivity and talent for the other branches of knowledge. Those who apply themselves to the study of logic are advised to

> take care in so doing, that they are not prevented from reaping the advantages of better studies by their indoctrination in distorted habits of speech, ugly barbarisms, and inverted meanings of words. I should not wish them to be of such tenacious memory that these perversions cannot be easily dispelled once they have taken root.[175]

Vives accuses the scholastic professors, and especially the directors of schools, of spoiling the intelligence of the young and of entertaining them fruitlessly in abstract pursuits. They indulge in their own sophistries when they teach, instead of taking into account the actual needs of the pupils.

Vives' deliberations on education did not only concern pedagogical theory, didactics and methodology, but also dealt with practical questions. One of the most basic questions in this respect was that of financing. Vives thought that schools should be founded and maintained by the municipality, which is to say, the community of citizens should pay for them. He held that it was the responsibility of civil society to provide for the education of

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167 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, ed. and trans. Ch. Fantazzi (Leiden 1979), 78.
168 "quanta cum iactura et animarum et totius religionis haec a monachis discuntur docenturque"; Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 71 (my own translation).
169 "famuletur"; Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 81.
170 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 80.
171 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 80.
172 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 80.
173 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 68.
174 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 78.
175 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 78.

its youth, arguing that the institution of public schooling substantially promoted the common good and represented an investment that would yield ample profit in the long run.[176] Vives also emphasised the aspect of location. Recalling unpleasant memories of his student years at the college of Montaigu, he stipulated that schools for young people should be placed in decent surroundings which help the effort of learning. Ideally, a school should be located in the countryside or at the fringe of a city, not in the centre of busy and densely populated places, the hustle bustle of which was not considered conducive to concentrated study and the development of good manners. Moreover, the Spanish humanist stressed the role of recreation between the hours of mental effort, and recommended in particular sportive activities in the open air. He also advocated the idea that girls deserved an elementary education equal to that of boys, although he was more reserved as regards the access of women to higher education.[177]

176 Cf. J.-C. Margolin, *Humanism in Europe at the Time of the Renaissance* (Durham (North Carolina) 1989), 58-59.
177 Cf. Margolin, *Humanism in Europe*, 58-59.

5 The Young Calvin

As we turn from the examination of humanism to the comparative analysis of Calvin's work, we have to tackle the task of investigating the reformer's formative phase in order to evaluate early humanistic tendencies and assess their significance for Calvin's mature thought. If we try to identify the humanistic elements and influences in Calvin's early intellectual development, we should be able to get an idea of the continuities and discontinuities in the work of the mature reformer with regard to humanism. However, it is clear from our preliminary deliberations that the attempt to determine the precise role humanism played in the growth of Calvin's mind is subject to certain limitations, so that the goal of establishing the nature and size of the humanist components in the young Calvin often remains a wish which cannot be fulfilled in practice.[1] Studying Calvin's youth can be a fairly thankless task because we are confronted with a considerable lack of documentation and even literature, and because we are therefore forced to rely on certain conjectures based on approximate reconstructions of the relevant backgrounds, or on inferences drawn from evaluating the impact of alternative currents such as the various strands of late medieval nominalism.

For a full consideration of the problems involved in researching Calvin's youth we may refer back to the relevant sections of the introduction, where we discussed the essential issues.[2] Here we have to limit ourselves to indicating the precise period of time which we are considering and to spelling out the concrete implications for carrying out the task at hand, which consists in estimating the probable dimensions of the humanistic aspects in the young Calvin. If we speak of Calvin's youth, we mean the period from about 1520 to 1535, the year when Calvin's mind can be regarded as more or less "definitively shaped", a fact which is manifest in the completion of the first version of his doctrinal masterpiece, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion.* As far as the concrete implications for carrying out the task of investigating the period mentioned are concerned, we can say that they include three inevitable methodological obligations, which have to be fulfilled before tracing in chronological sequence the course of Calvin's early intellectual development.

The methodological obligations are, in short, the following. First, it is indispensable to outline the scope and nature of the extant primary sources. These are mainly texts by Calvin, namely those he wrote *in* his youth on the one hand, and those he wrote *about* his youth later in his life on the other hand. However, because of the lack of documentation on the young Calvin we are also obliged to take into consideration the information provided by the early biographies of the reformer. Second, we should summarise the different views

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1 Cf. introduction, pp. 6-8, 31-32.

2 Cf. introduction, pp. 6-8, 31-32.

advanced in the secondary literature, insofar as this has not yet been done in chapter one.[3] It may be appropriate to recall an important preliminary remark, namely the statement that no conclusive answer has so far been given to the question of the extent and significance of the humanist influences on the young Calvin.[4] It is evident that we cannot possibly hope to propose a definitive answer here, but the attempt to grapple with the problem remains, nevertheless, a scientific necessity and a research challenge which will increase the awareness of the complexity of the issue.

Let us look first briefly at the items which constitute the primary literature. As far as the texts by Calvin are concerned, we can divide them into two groups, as we have indicated above, namely those written before 1536, that is to say, *in* his youth, and those written afterwards - *about* his youth. The first group comprises the following material.[5] First, there are a handful of letters that have survived from Calvin's years as a student and wandering scholar.[6] The first of these letters, which is sent from Meillan and dated 13 September 1530,[7] is actually the oldest written testimony by Calvin that we possess. The letters are especially valuable since they represent the only direct personal testimonies by the young Calvin and are thus an indispensable help in the reconstruction of his formative phase. The original manuscripts are lost but some of the letters are preserved in transcripts made by Pierre Daniel, the son of François Daniel, one of Calvin's friends from the Orléans student days.[8] There is one exception: the letter from Paris to François Daniel in Orléans, dating 28 October 1533, which is the oldest known autograph by Calvin we possess.[9] However, many of the early letters have disappeared,[10] and therefore the picture we can draw from the extant material is incomplete.[11] Moreover, we have to consider the possibility that Pierre Daniel could have made changes when he copied Calvin's letters,

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3 The specialist literature about the young Calvin has only been treated marginally in chapter 1, which chiefly deals with arguments about Calvin the reformer. Cf. chapter 1, p. 41 n. 4.

4 Cf. introduction, p. 7.

5 The bibliographical references given here include those modern critical editions which are normally used for citation, English and sometimes French translations, and occasionally (if of interest) the original printed editions. The manuscript material is generally not specified here, but information about it can be found in the modern critical editions indicated.

6 Cf. CO 10(2) and A.-L. Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, vols. 2-3 (Paris 1868-1870). There is an (unreliable) English translation of these letters in J. Bonnet (ed.), *Letters of John Calvin*, vol. 1, trans. D. Constable (Edinburgh 1855).

7 CO 10(2).3-6; cf. A. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Edinburgh 1988), 70.

8 Calvin used to put only the date and the month but not the year, which was supplied - correctly or incorrectly - by Pierre Daniel. Cf. T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin* (London 1975), 186.

9 CO 10(2).25-26 [nr.18]. Cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 77, 328 n. 5. There is another very old autograph by Calvin, namely the letter of 4 September [1534] to Bucer (cf. CO 10(2).[nr.20] and Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs*, vol. 3 [nr. 457]), which was considered the oldest Calvin autograph by Lefranc; cf. A. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin* (Paris 1888), 189. However, the dating of this letter is disputed. In the sixteenth century the year 1532 was suggested, while today we are inclined to place it around 1534. Cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 87-90. A later date remains nevertheless possible, including 1536 or even after (in which case the letter could not be regarded as belonging to Calvin's youth any more, strictly speaking).

10 Between Calvin and François de Connan, for instance, there was, as Wendel pointed out, "an active correspondence which is almost entirely lost"; cf. F. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme* (Paris 1976), 21.

11 The question of what was lost and why has given rise to interesting but fruitless speculation, especially concerning Calvin's conversion; cf. below, p. 224 n. 22.

and consequently we have to reckon with a certain distortion of the picture these letters give, although it has to be underlined that this is mainly a matter of conjecture as there is no way of furnishing proofs in the form of comparative evidence.[12]

Second, we have the preface to the so-called *Antapologia* by Nicolas Duchemin, a friend and fellow student of Calvin.[13] The *Antapologia* was a controversial writing defending Pierre de l'Estoile, professor of law at the University of Orléans, in an ongoing dispute against the illustrious Italian humanist Andreas Alciatus, then professor of law at the University of Bourges.[14] The preface shows Calvin supporting Duchemin in his criticism of the humanist; it is dated 6 March [1531] and represents Calvin's first published text. That Calvin is seen turning against a famous Italian humanist - and one belonging to his own profession, jurisprudence - in his first printed pages is no doubt a curious fact, and it is rendered no less curious by the appearance of his first scholarly production a year later, a production which can be regarded as humanistic in many ways, but in which, nevertheless, the same humanist is severely criticised again.

The next item we have to look at is precisely the scholarly production we have just mentioned, namely the often-cited but not so well-known *Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia* of 1532.[15] This is Calvin's first published book, and it marks what has been called his "literary start",[16] embodying all his ambitions as a young intellectual. This commentary is of prime importance for the assessment of humanism in the young Calvin, for here we can witness the fresh graduate engaged in a typically humanist occupation, namely that of producing a critical edition of a text by a classical author. The *Seneca Commentary* may indeed be considered as a fairly paradigmatic representative of the Renaissance tradition of editorial criticism initiated and shaped by the humanists. The writer is making use of the new methods and techniques put at his disposal by humanist scholarship, and the approach to treating the ancient text reflects some of the characteristic features associated with the cycle of the *studia humanitatis*. Calvin's concerns are principally of a literary and historical character, while his commentary does not show any conspicuous signs of religious preoccupation. "Religious questions", Wendel observed, "are still in the background",[17] and Ganoczy has asserted that the commentary

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12 Cf. e.g. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 77.

13 CO 9.785-786 and Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs*, vol. 2, 314-318. This Latin preface was first translated into English by Quirinus Breen in his study on Calvin and humanism; cf. Q. Breen, *John Calvin* (Grand Rapids 1931), 53-55. There is a newer English translation in *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. and trans. F. L. Battles / A. M. Hugo (Leiden 1969), 385-386.

14 *Nicolai Chemyni Aureliani antapologia adversus Aurelii Albucii defensionem pro Andrea Alciato contra D. Petrum Stellam* (Paris, 1531).

15 *L. Annei Senecae, Romani Senatoris, ac Philosophi Clarissimi, Libri duo de Clementia, ad Neronem Cæsarem: Joannis Calvini Noviodunaei Commentariis Illustrati* (Paris 1532). There is an English translation (together with the Latin text) in the modern critical edition *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. and trans. Battles / Hugo.

16 B. Cottret, *Calvin* (Paris 1995), 75.

17 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 61. Cf. also Wendel's judgement quoted below, p. 261.

"contains nothing of an evangelical character", adding that "Beza himself does not try to present it as such".[18] Most modern interpreters have concluded from an intrinsic analysis of the *Seneca Commentary* that Calvin converted to Protestantism only after its publication. However, as we shall see, Beza and most of the other early biographers had claimed that Calvin had already undergone or was just undergoing conversion at the time of the composition of his classical commentary.[19]

After the *Seneca Commentary* we have to take into consideration what is known as Cop's Address, that is, the inaugural speech held by the young academic Nicolas Cop when he became rector of the University of Paris on All Saints' Day in 1533.[20] Cop was the son of Francis I's Swiss physician and a professor of philosophy in the Collège Sainte-Barbe. Calvin was associated with him, and it has sometimes been assumed that he assisted in the composition of this notorious speech, or even that he wrote it.[21] The assumption derives from the fact that Calvin actually possessed a manuscript by his own hand containing large parts of the speech. The address upset the venerable academic audience with some theological audacities, and although these audacities were as much of an Erasmian as of a Lutheran character, the doctors of the Sorbonne immediately saw the spectre of the Reformation arising within their walls - and reacted accordingly. Calvin had to escape from Paris and most of his papers were seized.[22]

Next we must mention the *Psychopannychia*, Calvin's second book, which was drafted in 1534 but published only in 1542.[23] The *Psychopannychia* is not a book of any significance or distinction, but it represents an important step in Calvin's life because it is his first writing dealing with a theological topic. Calvin composed the treatise, possibly at

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18 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 74.

19 Cf. the analysis of the major early biographies carried out below, pp. 230-245.

20 "La harangue de Nicolas Cop", ed. J. Rott in "Documents strasbourgeois concernant Calvin" in *Regards contemporains sur Jean Calvin* (Paris 1965), 43-49. The texts given in CO and OS are incorrect. There is an English translation in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [1536 ed.], 2nd ed., ed. and trans. Battles (Grand Rapids1986), 363-372.

21 Colladon scribbled the following note on Calvin's manuscript: "Concio nomine rectoris Nic. Copi scripta cal. nouemb. MDXXXIV". In his *Vita Calvini* Beza concluded from this note that "Oratio ..... , suggessit eam Calvinus"; CO 21.123; cf. Rott, "Documents strasbourgeois concernant Calvin", 28 n. 3.

22 Cf. the report in Colladon's biography quoted below, p. 233. Calvin's hurried escape helps explain the lack of documentation on his youth. Doumergue's hypothesis that there existed a religious or "evangelical" correspondence which disappeared because it was confiscated (while the non-religious or religiously neutral letters survived) is interesting but remains pure speculation as no piece of documentary evidence has been provided in support of this theory so far. Cf. É. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, vol. 1 (Lausanne 1899), 354-355.

23 The title of the first (printed) edition read *The Souls of the Saints Who Died in the Faith of Christ Live with Christ Rather than Sleep* (Strasbourg 1542). Only the second edition, which came out in 1545, bore the name of *Psychopannychia*; cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 328 n. 39. The original version of the treatise has probably not survived, with the exception of the preface, which is signed "Orléans 1534". The manuscript of the original version was known to some of Calvin's friends. Calvin was dissuaded by one of these friends, the humanist reformer Wolfgang Capito, from having it printed. Later, however, he decided to publish the treatise in revised form, rewriting it twice. Cf. H. A. Oberman, "*Initia Calvini*" in W. H. Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor* (Grand Rapids 1994), 121 n. 24, 131, 141 n. 95. There is a modern critical edition (with detailed introduction), viz. *Psychopannychia*, ed. W. Zimmerli (Leipzig 1932), although CO 5.165-232 is also frequently quoted. A French translation appeared in Geneva in 1558; it was reprinted in *Œuvres françaises*, ed. P.-L. Jacob (Paris 1842), 25-105.

the request of his friends, to refute the sectarian belief in the sleep of souls, then spread by certain Anabaptist preachers in France. In this "strangely peripheral contribution to theology",[24] Calvin defends the - orthodox - doctrine of the immortality of the souls against the idea that the souls of human beings remain in a state of sleep until Judgement Day. The reason for writing about "this relatively insignificant fragment of Anabaptist speculation" was probably none other than that this very fragment "had been more than ordinarily discussed in the circle of friends surrounding Calvin".[25] In contrast to the *Seneca Commentary* the *Psychopannychia* shows us a mind with distinct religious concerns, although these are not yet defined very clearly and are perhaps best described as fitting into the frame of the reformist ideals of French evangelicism. "One is struck by the fact", an expert has observed, that the *Psychopannychia* "does not contain any anti-Roman references or even allusions".[26] However, the *Psychopannychia* contains an important autobiographical passage concerning Calvin's conversion experience,[27] but this passage (the earliest of its kind) yields no evidence as to the impact of this experience on the previous humanistic pursuits. Calvin's stress on "the weight of the omnipotent" and "the terrifying nature of his wrath", together with his confession that "this is truly death",[28] suggest a turn from an anthropocentric manner of thinking to a God-centred approach - an approach which already appears to contain some anticipation of the doctrine of election elaborated by the established reformer.[29]

Last but not least, there are two prefaces which Calvin wrote for the French Bible translation by Olivétan published at Neuchâtel in 1535.[30] These prefaces were most probably composed in the first half of 1535 when Calvin was working on the first version of his *Institutes* in Basel.[31] The first preface is in Latin and appears on the back of the title page, standing in place of a so-called royal privilege, that is, a kind of copyright granted by the crown, and questioning the very institution and tradition of such privileges in provocative terms.[32] The second preface is in French and is inserted later in the volume, representing an introduction to the New Testament.[33] The Latin preface sounds quite

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24 J. T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York 1954), 120.

25 W. Walker, *John Calvin* (New York 1906), 124.

26 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 87.

27 Cf. Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*: The Conversion of John Calvin" in Oberman / Saxer / Schindler / Stucki (eds.), *Reformiertes Erbe*, vol. 2 (Zürich 1993), 295.

28 *Psychopannychia*, ed. Zimmerli, 67-68; quoted in Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 295 n. 74.

29 The latter point is made by Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 295 n. 74.

30 *La Bible Qui est toute la Saincte escripture. En laquelle sont contenus / le Vieil Testament & le Nouveau / translatez en Francoys. Le Vieil / de L'ebrieu: & le Nouveau du Grec* (Neuchâtel: Pierre de Wingle, 1535).

31 For the dating cf. CO 9.lxii and Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 334 n.19.

32 CO 9.787-790 (very faulty). This preface was not printed again in the subsequent revised editions of this Bible (including the so-called Geneva Bible). A modern French translation with critical notes is offered by B. Roussel in *Revue Française d'Histoire du Livre*, special number entitled *Le Livre et la Réforme* (1985). There is an English translation in *Institutes* [1536 ed.], ed. and trans. Battles, 363-372.

33 CO 9.791-822. There are two critical editions of this preface in French; one in Backus / Chimelli (eds.), *La vraie piété* (Geneva 1986), 17-38, and the other in O. Millet (ed.), *Œuvres choisies* (Paris 1995), 29-50.

harsh and shows an important new feature: it signals a clear opposition to Rome and contains "the first indisputable antipapist and antisacerdotal statement by Calvin".[34] The French preface is "a masterpiece of literary clarity",[35] advancing an unambiguous disapproval of compromising attitudes, among which the humanist ideal of peaceful reform, held dear in evangelical circles in France, can be seen as included, if only by way of indirect allusion.

The second group of texts by Calvin concerning his formative phase consists of the rare material of autobiographical relevance which we can find in the writings of the active reformer. These texts are certainly of considerable significance, since Calvin was a man who was very reticent in talking about himself, following an inborn tendency to introversion and reservedness, and cultivating an attitude of "instinctive mistrust".[36] There are six texts which have to be taken into account here: four explicitly autobiographical ones and two that have sometimes been regarded as possessing some autobiographical relevance. Not surprisingly, two of the explicitly autobiographical testimonies revolve around the theme of the reformer's conversion, and the two testimonies which can be seen as implicitly autobiographical are also related to that theme in an indirect way. However, we also have two explicitly autobiographical passages which primarily deal with aspects of Calvin's university education, and in which religious concerns are in the background.

The first and most famous text is a passage from the preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms*, published in 1557.[37] This text is commonly acknowledged as Calvin's only really authentic statement about his conversion and is therefore often quoted in the literature.[38] It contains a concise and rational account of Calvin's early religious development, written at a distance of almost a quarter of a century. But the text remains ambiguous in some crucial points, and some terms and expressions employed in it, such as "sudden conversion" or "the other studies", have intrigued Calvin researchers, eliciting different critical interpretations. The key question for the analysis of humanism is the following: what is the nature and role of the "other studies" in relation to the supposed "sudden conversion"? A "sudden conversion", if taken literally, would imply a rather sharply defined point in time, and according to how this point is determined, the "other studies" can be regarded as primarily legal (c. 1528-1531) or humanistic (c. 1531-1533).

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34 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 96.

35 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 96.

36 Cf. introduction, p. 7.

37 CO 31.21-24 (VL). VG dates from 1558. There is an English translation in *Commentaries*, ed. and trans. J. Haroutunian / L. Pettibone (Philadelphia 1958), 53. An extract is offered in *John Calvin*, eds. G. R. Potter / M. Greengrass (London 1983), 10-11.

38 Cf. e.g. A. E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford 1990), 70: "There is only one passage in his writings which may realistically be taken as an authentic account of his decision to break with his past: the preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms*".

The second text to be considered is a passage from Calvin's *Second Reply to Westphal*,[39] published in 1556, just one year before the above-mentioned *Commentary on the Psalms*. This text, the interpretation of which is also controversial,[40] contains indirect, but concrete allusions to the process of conversion. Calvin appears to suggest that his conversion took place at a very early stage and that his path to Protestantism was straighter than usually assumed, for he puts at its beginning the figure of Luther, not that of Lefèvre or Erasmus. The reference to Luther and the hint at an early point in time (1529) obviously seem to imply that Calvin did not attribute so much significance to the role of humanism in his intellectual growth as to concede to it the status of something like a ruling principle over a distinct phase in his life, that is, a purely humanistic phase free from major religious concerns. But this is precisely the point where opinions differ: some scholars (mainly historians) insist on the existence of such a humanistic period in Calvin's youth,[41] while others (mainly theologians) are inclined to deny it.[42] This is a notable divergence, the significance of which has not been considered or explained sufficiently in Calvin studies. Perhaps this is why today the passage from Calvin's *Second Reply to Westphal* is not discussed so much anymore; or perhaps it is simply because the debate about the reformer's conversion has receded recently.[43] Be that as it may, one fact remains unchanged, namely that scholars generally disregard the passage's possible implications regarding the interpretation of humanism in the young Calvin.[44]

The third text we have to look at consists of certain passages from Calvin's *Reply to Sadoleto*, an open letter to the humanistically-oriented Cardinal Jacopo Sadoleto, bishop of Carpentras, published in 1539.[45] The passages to which we refer are not autobiographical

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39 CO 9.51. For an English translation cf. *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 252-253; quoted in *Institutes* [1536 ed.], ed. Battles, li.

40 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin*, 2nd. ed. (Geneva 1985), 7 n. 12.

41 Cf. Wendel, described in chapter 1, pp. 69-72. Cf. also W. J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin* (New York 1988), 12-13.

42 Cf. Parker, *John Calvin*, 26-27, 31-32. Cf. also Neuser, *Calvin* (Berlin 1971), 20. Neuser even affirms his position only with reference to the passage from the preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms*.

43 There is another, very brief passage from the *Sermon on II Samuel* (5: 17) delivered by Calvin in 1562, which can be taken as suggesting that Calvin had converted perhaps as early as 1532, that is, at the time of the *Seneca Commentary*. But, as Ganoczy has pointed out, this passage is "another typical example of Calvin's imprecise chronology" (Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 380 n. 101), and, as Oberman has observed, its interpretation is very controversial, especially with regard to the question of Calvin's supposed Nicodemism (cf. Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 290 n. 52). The passage, which is also marginalised in Calvin studies today (like the *Second Reply to Westphal*), is indeed not of much use for precise dating, for Calvin speaks of "twenty or thirty years ago" [i.e. 1542 or 1532 respectively]. It can be found in *Supplementa Calviniana*, vol. 1, ed. H. Rückert (Neukirchen 1936), 122 and is quoted in Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 380 n. 101.

44 Wendel, for instance, discusses the passage, but only with respect to the conversion, not to humanism; cf. Wendel, *Calvin*, 21 n. 71. In the same author's (unfinished) *Calvin et l'humanisme* the passage is not quoted. Bouwsma and McGrath do not refer to the passage; cf. Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 10-12, 238 n. 2 and McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 69-78.

45 OS 1. 480-486. There is an English translation in *A Reformation Debate*, ed. J. C. Olin, trans. H. Beveridge (New York 1966), 49-94. There are two critical editions of the French versions of Calvin's and Sadolet's letters; one in Backus / Chimelli (eds.), *La vraie piété*, 57-119, and the other in Millet (ed.), *Œuvres choisies*, 59-126 (the latter edition only contains Calvin's *Reply*). Olin's widely-used edition (featuring a slightly amended version of Beveridge's old translation) has been corrected in an important passage by Oberman; cf. Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 284 n. 24.

in the strict sense of the term, that is to say, Calvin is not making statements about himself in an explicitly acknowledged way, but they can be regarded as autobiographical if the term is taken in a wider sense, namely as indirectly reflecting some of the reformer's own experience of his religious development.[46] Since the decisive turning-point in this development does not lie far back - a bit more than five years perhaps - the memory of it can be considered as relatively fresh at the time of writing the treatise and may thus have exerted a certain influence. Moreover, what is of interest to us is the fact that the addressee is a man of letters with distinct humanist inclinations. This must have elicited in Calvin memories of the time spent in dedication to the humanist studies.

The expatriate Italian prelate and declared friend of humanism wrote from the south of France to the Genevans during Calvin's absence, attempting to bring them back to the Catholic camp, and Calvin, asked by the Genevans to answer from Strasbourg, composed a reply that corresponded in structure and style to that of his counterpart. Sadoleto contrasted two figures of different faith, one Catholic and the other Reformed, as they appear before the Divine Judge, while Calvin presented two figures of the same faith - his own - defending the Protestant position in the same imaginary setting. In his letter, the reformer mentions, for instance, "a very different form of doctrine" which brings "the Christian profession ..... back to its fountainhead" and has it "restored to its original purity".[47] This statement sounds humanistic, although in a very general way, namely insofar as it evokes the programmatic slogan *ad fontes*, back to the sources. However, we must ask ourselves the question whether these words are inspired directly by humanist thought or whether they are not simply an echo of the religious conception of humanism forged by Luther - a conception in which the humanistic disciplines are rigorously subordinated to the ideas of the Reformation.[48] Luther liked Calvin's letter immensly, and commenting on it to Bucer expressed his satisfaction with Calvin: "I have read the treatise with singular pleasure. I wish that Sadoleto believed that God is the creator of human beings outside of Italy".[49]

The fourth text to be considered is a passage from the first book of the *Institutes*, namely the beginning of chapter eight, which was newly written for the second Latin edition of 1539 and translated by Calvin himself for the first French edition of 1541.[50] This passage is not normally included in the discussion of the autobiographical testimonies of Calvin, but it has to be regarded as relevant for our inquiry as Calvin compares here the

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46 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin*, 21. Cf. also Walker, *John Calvin*, 73.

47 *A Reformation Debate*, ed. Olin, 88; OS 1.485. Ganoczy renders, perhaps more aptly, "returned it to its *source*"; cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 258 (italics added).

48 Cf. in particular Luther's attitude towards the revival of letters, as described in the introduction, pp. 15-18.

49 *Letter of Luther to Bucer*; CO 10(2).402; quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 163.

50 *Inst.* 1.8.1. Unless otherwise indicated, our references to passages from the *Institutes* are always according to the subdivision scheme of the 1559 edition, i.e. book, chapter and section.

classics with the Bible in terms of a transition or "transfer"[51] from the study of the former to that of the latter. It is quite possible that this description of the transition from pagan to sacred letters has a connection with Calvin's own conversion, for such a type of inner turn with a distinct intellectual accent is far from common and in fact appears to bear the stamp of Calvin's cerebral personality. Moreover, the reformer probably wrote this section of the *Institutes* in Strasbourg shortly before his *Reply to Sadoleto* at what can be regarded a small distance from his conversion, the memory of which must still have been quite fresh and may thus have influenced him, in one way or another, just as in the case of that *Reply*. If we are disposed to grant the passage from the *Institutes* some autobiographical relevance, then we can perhaps move a little closer to determining the nature of Calvin's conversion with regard to humanism, and we may again try to answer (from another point of view) the question whether that conversion implied a transition to theology directly from law or indirectly from law via letters.[52]

The two last texts we must take into account are the well-known dedicatory epistles which Calvin addressed to his former humanist teachers of Latin and Greek, Mathurin Cordier and Melchior Wolmar. The first is the preface to the *Commentary on I Thessalonians*, which was published in 1550,[53] and which contains a heartfelt homage to Cordier, the pedagogically skilful Latin instructor at the University of Paris,[54] as well as a rare autobiographical account of Calvin's modest beginnings in that famous university, the theological schools of which he would later call "the mothers of all errors".[55] The second text is the preface to the *Commentary on II Corinthians*, which, published in 1546,[56] expresses Calvin's thankful reminiscence of the German scholar who first introduced him to the study of the classical Greek language at the universities of Orléans and Bourges. It is clear that the two prefaces exhibit a certain degree of exaggeration, but this should be considered as normal in proper dedicatory letters and is in part due to the fact that the two humanist teachers had also turned to Protestantism and had become friends of Calvin. However, despite "the almost obligatory exaggeration in such matters",[57] the prefaces do not reveal a heightened level of explicitness concerning the topic of humanism.

After giving a brief overview of the texts by Calvin that are essential for the study of

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51 VL [1539] is abstract: "te conferas" (turn to, apply to), while VG 1541 is more concrete: "transferons". VG [1560] has "transportons", but this is probably not Calvin's own rendering.

52 Cf. above, pp. 226-227.

53 VL in CO 13.525-526. VG in *Commentaires sur le Nouveau Testament*, vol. 4 (Paris 1855), 109.

54 Cordier's college association appears to have been with La Marche at the time when Calvin attended his classes, but Sainte-Barbe is also possible; cf. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 26.

55 *Inst.* 3.15.7. VL [1539]: "sorbonicae scholae, errorum omnium matres" / VG[1541]: "escoles Sorboniques, meres de tous erreurs". Note that the name "Sorbonne" here typically stands for the whole Theological Faculty of the University of Paris.

56 VL in CO 12.364-365. VG in *Commentaires sur le Nouveau Testament*, vol. 3 (Paris 1855), 517. Now also in the *Opera omnia denua recognita*, Opera Exegetica, 15, ed. H. Feld (Geneva 1994). Feld has paid special attention to the issue of humanism.

57 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 12.

his youth, we can now move on to look at what are commonly considered the most important contemporary or near-contemporary sources concerning the formative period in the life of the reformer. As regards records of public and ecclesiastical administration, it would be impossible to examine them in detail here, but we may refer to Lefranc's thorough study on the young Calvin, where all the known and relevant source material is compiled,[58] and to other comprehensive studies which contain precise analyses.[59] As regards the early biographies, we have to refer the reader to the relevant literature for a full analysis.[60] Here we will limit ourselves to considering the works of major significance, written by authors who had known Calvin personally or who had access to people who had known him - or who searched the archives, principally those of Noyon, for evidence concerning the reformer's youth. As is known, the early biographies of Calvin are not always very reliable sources of information. Their authors display partisan attitudes and treat their subject in a declaredly partial way, practising an arbitrary imposition of personal bias, and creating, consequently, what one could call "specimens of typification" - usually subsumed under the labels of hagiography or demonography respectively.[61] Of course, in the context of the increasing confessionalisation of the second half of the sixteenth century, the deliberate cultivation of religious prejudice can be considered as normal, for "history did not have then the univocity which was attributed to it by positivism".[62] The intensive historical research carried out in the second half of the nineteenth and in the twentieth century (inspired by the positivist outlook) has demolished many of the myths propagated by the early biographers of Calvin, and in this way many legends about the reformer have disappeared. Not surprisingly the early *Lives* are generally regarded with suspicion today, and they are quoted with hesitation only or omitted from consideration altogether.[63]

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58 Cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, xii-xvi. Selected extracts from various sources are given in topical arrangement at the end of this book (175-211). Lefranc's study is still indispensable today, not only because it is a work of supreme scholarship, but because it presents and digests a wide range of documentary evidence, some of which is not available any more as it was destroyed in World War I.

59 Cf. principally Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, vol. 1 and Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*. Other works are mentioned in our survey of the secondary literature on the young Calvin below, pp. 245-263.

60 A very concise survey of the early biographies of Calvin, with detailed bibliographical information, is offered by J.-R. Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin aux XVI^{e} et XVII^{e} siècles" in Ph. Joutard (ed.), *Historiographie de la Réforme* (Paris 1977), 45-59 (bibliography, 57-59). For further literature cf. Armogathe's article, especially the notes, and introduction, p. 12 n. 63.

61 Cf. introduction, pp. 11-12.

62 Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 51.

63 Wendel's *Calvin* of 1950 can be seen as a milestone in the marginalisation of the early Calvin biographies. Wendel's rigorously rational approach has generally prevailed ever since in Calvin studies. Ganoczy, for instance, applied it to the investigation of Calvin's youth in his *Le jeune Calvin* of 1966, declaring that his "chosen method" was that "of preferring documents contemporary with Calvin to later statements by or about the reformer"; cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 7. Ganoczy does not list any of the early sources in his bibliography, 399-400, but occasionally quotes from Beza's and Colladon's *Lives* in the *Corpus Reformatorum* edition (acknowledged as *Opera Calvini*), as well as from Florimond de Ræmond's *Histoire* in the Rouen edition of 1623, which does not feature in the bibliography but is acknowledged in the notes. Wendel used the same approach he had applied in his *Calvin* in *Calvin et l'humanisme*, in which he does not examine the testimonies given by the early biographers concerning Calvin's relation to humanism. Only Beza's and Colladon's *Lives* are quoted; the former six times (cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 29) and the latter once (cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 22), and there is no analysis of the question of how Calvin's relation to humanism is described in these early testimonies. However, there are exceptions to the prevailing

Nevertheless, it does not seem fair to dismiss the early Calvin biographies on the whole as mere exercises in calumny or adulation respectively, for there are appreciable differences in approach or in the degree of bias, and these differences should be taken into account when passing judgement on the value of these biographies. We should not forget that these works have traditionally played an important role in the reconstruction of Calvin's youth, especially since they sometimes represent the only means to fill the large gaps that we encounter due to the considerable lack of documentation - a fact that is not so often acknowledged by modern writers. We must bear in mind, moreover, that some of the authors possessed invaluable first-hand information about Calvin. It is indeed patent that they know, in some instances, what no other record knows. The problem is that it can be difficult to distinguish fact from fiction in their accounts, for there is often no way of ascertaining their statements, especially those which appear to rely on oral transmission, by means of comparative historical investigation, but the credibility of the assertions has to be determined by indirect inferences or simply by judicious estimation. Good critical editions of Calvin's early *Lives* might help to improve the situation, but the marginalisation of these *Lives* in modern Calvin research is, it would seem, largely responsible for the absence of such editions today.[64] As far as humanism is concerned, we face the same situation as with Calvin's own texts: the clues as to the role it played in the reformer's youth or as to his attitude towards it are rare, vague and sometimes enigmatic. There is no historiographical study on the topic of the relation between the young Calvin and humanism in the judgement of his early biographers, and the literature we have mentioned pays little or no attention to the issue.[65]

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practice of marginalising the early *Lives* in Calvin research, such as Parker's biography of the reformer, in which those works are used quite frequently and in which, moreover, their value is defended explicitly; cf. Parker, *John Calvin*, 205. The currently predominant tendency in Calvin scholarship to marginalise the early Calvin biographies is illustrated by two recent examples. The first is Bouwsma's *John Calvin* of 1988, in which all the early Calvin biographies are categorically dismissed as obstacles to the "quest for the historical Calvin" (Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 1-3). In this book there are only four references to Beza's *Life* (Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 14, 19, 236 n. 8, 249 n. 8), which is described as "a work that, from an author who had known Calvin so long and so closely, is curiously lifeless and lacking in human insight" (Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 236 n. 8). Beza, according to Bouwsma, "was sensitive to the charge that, after accusing Catholics of idolatry, he had made Calvin into a 'god'" - however, Bouwsma is of the opinion that "his [Beza's] response seems rather to support than to refute this charge" (Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 236 n. 8). Apart from Beza's *Life*, no other early biographies or sources are mentioned or discussed in Bouwsma's study. The second example of the current marginalisation of the early Calvin biographies is McGrath's *A Life of John Calvin* of 1990. McGrath is less radical than Bouwsma; he sporadically quotes the early biographies and comments on them. The "Bolsec myth" is analysed in the introduction and there are three references to de Ræmond in the analysis of Calvin's formative phase (McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 16-17, 72-73). Beza's and Colladon's biographies are used in the reconstruction of Calvin's youth, although some corrections are added. Concerning the former, McGrath thinks that "it gives every indication of being at least partly based upon his recollection of Calvin's personal reminiscences" (McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 23). Concerning the latter, the same author states: "it is ..... difficult to establish the identity and reliability of Colladon's sources. Whatever his considerable merits may have been, they are perhaps not best judged from his skills as Calvin's biographer, particularly in relation to the enigma of Calvin's life prior to 1534" (McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 23).

64 The Strasbourg editors included Beza's and Colladon's *Lives* in the *Calvini Opera* of the *Corpus Reformatorum* (cf. the references given below, ns. 66, 74, 83). No new editorial effort was made in the twentieth century .

65 Cf. above, n. 63.

Let us have a look at the principal early biographies of Calvin. First, there is Beza's French *Life*, composed immediately after Calvin's death in 1564 and published in Geneva in the same year, as a preface to the reformer's posthumously appearing *Commentary on Joshua*.[66] This biography is a concise account, "limited to the essentials",[67] which Beza wrote "in some haste"[68] in order, it is supposed, to be the first to actively shape the reformer's memory with a printed testimony which would have a strong claim to authenticity. Beza certainly anticipated a variety of publications on Calvin after his death, and he must have been anxious to bring his own influence as the great reformer's friend and legitimate successor to bear as soon as possible. Beza's *Vie de Calvin* offers a rough outline of Calvin's life, with few names and almost no dates given.[69] It has been observed that Beza's biography represents "the effort of someone who is trying to do the work of a historian in placing his master's venerable 'logion' in a chronological context".[70] Indeed, the writer does not hesitate to correct some of the reformer's autobiographical statements in order to reconstruct what he believes to be the proper sequence of events. His sources, apart from Calvin's written testimonies, are his "personal recollections", of course , as well as "contemporary oral traditions".[71] One of Beza's chief concerns, naturally, is Calvin's conversion, the interpretation of which, as given by Calvin, he completes with information from his own memories and from extant oral tradition. Beza maintains that Calvin's initiation into Protestantism already began with Olivétan, through whom he "tasted something of pure religion".[72] Later, Calvin's acquaintance with the new doctrine gradually deepened until he decided "to dedicate himself entirely to God" at the time when he was studying with Wolmar.[73]

The next biography was written by Nicolas Colladon, a close associate of Calvin, and appeared only one year after Beza's account under the latter's name.[74] Colladon was a Frenchman from Berry, and a lawyer like Calvin, whom he succeeded as professor of theology in the Academy of Geneva. His biography was largely based on Beza's but offered more detailed information, although it also contained a number of inaccuracies. If Beza had undoubtedly known Calvin well, Colladon can be said to have known him even better, for while the former dwelled in Lausanne from 1549, just after his arrival in Geneva, until 1559, when he returned to Calvin's city as rector of the newly founded Academy, the latter

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66 Th. de Bèze, *[Vie de Calvin]* as "Théodore de Besze au Lecteur chrestien" in Calvin, *Commentaires sur le livre de Iosue* (Geneva 1564); CO 21.1-50.

67 Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 45.

68 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 23.

69 Cf. D. Ménager, "Théodore de Bèze, biographe de Calvin" in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 45 (1983), 231-255.

70 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 262.

71 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 262.

72 CO 21.29; quoted in Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 261.

73 CO 21.30; quoted in Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 261.

74 N. Colladon, *[Vie de Calvin]* as "Preface de Théodore de Besze, contenant en brief l'histoire de la vie et mort d'iceluy [i.e. Calvin, the author of the commentary]" in Calvin, *Commentaires sur le livre de Iosué* (Geneva 1565); CO 21.51-118.

stayed continuously in Geneva after coming to the city at roughly around the same time, and he was always in close contact with Calvin. It is Colladon's merit to have shed more light on Calvin's youth, and we should note in particular that his description of Calvin's undergraduate studies in Paris "became accepted as normative".[75] Moreover, Colladon mentions the *Seneca Commentary*[76] and informs us that Calvin temporarily lectured at Orléans and began to become active as a preacher there.[77]

Colladon's biography also tells us more about the incisive event of Calvin's flight from Paris after Cop's Address in November 1533. We have mentioned this event before as it appears to be of some significance with regard to the problem of documenting Calvin's early years. Here is the account Colladon gives us:

> Because of his association with Cop, Calvin also was forced to leave Paris. The bailiff Morin even went to his room at the Collège de Fortet, where he resided, thinking to take him prisoner; but not finding him, he seized all he could of his books and papers, among which were several letters from his friends in Orléans.[78]

This report is interesting, for it might help explain the curious fact stated by researchers that for the "period ..... from 15 May 1532 to 27 October 1533 ..... we do not possess a single testimony or witness"[79] to document Calvin's life. It could well have been that Calvin's letters, as well as his other papers, disappeared because they were confiscated by the police.[80] Be that as it may, the lack of information with which we are confronted is awkward, because it is precisely in the period we have indicated "in which most historians think the decisive turning point in Calvin's reformist attitude should have occurred".[81] As far as events after the conversion are concerned, Colladon reports that the young Calvin went to visit the legendary old humanist Lefèvre d'Étaples at the court of Marguerite d'Angoulême in Nérac, but we are not told what the contents of their conversation was.[82]

In 1575, ten years after Colladon's *Life*, Beza revised his own account and synthesised it with his colleague's to produce a new and more definitive biography of Calvin, which came to be known as Beza's Latin *Life* or *Vita Calvini*. This biography was included in the new and fairly complete edition of Calvin's letters, edited by Beza himself,[83] and was destined to become the most authoritative version of Calvin's life in

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75 "for reasons which are ultimately impossible to establish"; McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 23.

76 Cf. CO 21.56.

77 Cf. Parker, *John Calvin*, 19, 25, 205.

78 CO 21.56; quoted in Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 330 n. 36. Beza retains this account in the final version of his Calvin biography (discussed immediately below); cf. CO 21.123.

79 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 75.

80 It is irrelevant to argue that Calvin's own letters were not in his possession and could therefore not be lost, for on the one hand it is possible - or even probable - that he kept copies of them and on the other hand the police may have searched his friends' homes in Orléans and elsewhere, too, and confiscated Calvin's letters there.

81 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 75.

82 Cf. CO 21.57.

83 de Bèze, *Ioannis Calvini Vita* in de Bèze (ed.), *Joannis Calvini epistolae et responsa* (Geneva 1575); CO 21.119-172. There was a second edition of the *Calvini epistolae et responsa* already in 1576. An English translation (by Beveridge) can be found in Calvin, *Tracts*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh 1844), xix-c.

Protestant circles for centuries to come, thus shaping the picture of Calvin in a decisive way. It is a current judgement among modern historians that "the canonisation of Calvin began as early as Beza's *Life*",[84] a *Life* which illustrates "our very human tendency to invent the fathers we need, even if it means making very sure that they cannot rise up to contradict us".[85] As far as Calvin's youth is concerned, Beza maintains that the process of Calvin's conversion, begun by Olivétan in Paris, was completed under the influence of Wolmar in Bourges. According to Beza, the encounter with the Lutheran humanist contributed to spur Calvin into religious action, so that he began to become active as a preacher in the region, namely in Lignières, a town approximately 40 kilometres south of Bourges. In a passage of his *Vita Calvini* ("a very curious passage which bears every mark of truth")[86] Beza recounts that

> In that same period he [Calvin] preached sometimes in a small village in the countryside of Berry, called Lignières, and was a welcome guest in the house of the Seigneur of the place who was then there. This man, without understanding very much about such things, simply said in a general way, that it seemed to him that Monsieur Jean Calvin preached better than the monks, and that he went straight to the point.[87]

Colladon, who was probably well-informed as a native of Berry, had already reported that Calvin had been active as a preacher in the region,[88] and there is no reason why we should not believe that this was possible, since Calvin may have exercised this religious activity "in his priestly function as a curé",[89] that is, as someone who is designated to become a priest (holding a benefice, for instance) but has not taken orders yet. Beza adds an important hint at the intellectual concomitants of this early preaching, suggesting that it implied a turn from legal to theological preoccupations, for he tells us that while Calvin was "well versed" in the studies of civil law, "he nevertheless passed the time constantly studying the sacred writings".[90]

If we consider what has been said so far about the young Calvin from Beza's *Vita Calvini*, and if we add to this the distinct emphasis we find in this biography on the role which Pierre de l'Estoile, the staunch defender of religious and intellectual traditionalism, played in Calvin's studies,[91] then we recognise that Beza evidently made no special effort at highlighting humanism in the young Calvin. On the contrary, his insistence on an early conversion, as well as his brief comment on the *Seneca Commentary* and his description of Calvin's early religious activity, suggests that Calvin was seen by him as turning from the study of law straight to that of theology, with humanistic pursuits featuring perhaps as a secondary occupation - an occupation, certainly, which would be subordinated to and

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84 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 236 n.8.
85 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 2.
86 Hugo, "Introduction" [to] *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. Battles / Hugo, 40.
87 Beza, *Vita Calvini*; quoted in Hugo, "Introduction" [to] *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, 40.
88 Cf. Colladon, *Vie de Calvin*; CO 21.55; quoted in Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 325 n. 60.
89 Hugo, "Introduction" [to] *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, 40.
90 Cf. CO 21.122; quoted in Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 325 n. 61.
91 CO 21.122; cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 19.

motivated by divine concerns. However, we must not ignore that Beza does occasionally acknowledge something like a "humanistic sideline" in Calvin. He stresses the importance of Mathurin Cordier's teaching for Calvin, although this is but a restatement of the reformer's own acknowledgement.[92] Further, he briefly mentions the *Seneca Commentary*, praising it as an excellent work and suggesting a certain affinity in character between the commentator and the classical author. Beza does not draw our attention to any humanist traits which the *Seneca Commentary* might display, but he hints at the role moral considerations may have played in the election of the author and the subject:

> That commentary he wrote on Seneca's *De Clementia* was outstanding. It is known that Calvin was quite delighted by that most serious writer whose character was so agreeable to his own.[93]

Beza's association of Calvin with Seneca with regard to their seriousness is natural - and not so incorrect, as Calvin's contemporary correspondence shows, for the future reformer appears as a serious, demanding and sometimes touchy person in his letters written at the time of the composition of the *Seneca Commentary*.[94] Moreover, there is no doubt that Seneca was appreciated as one of the more serious authors of classical antiquity, becoming more and more popular in the troubled sixteenth century:[95] "Stoicism, with Seneca (a longer-lived contemporary of Christ) as its spokesman, was an attitude whose appeal was strengthening".[96] Indeed, Calvin's occupation with Seneca can without difficulty be placed in the context of the beginnings of the sixteenth century renaissance of Stoicism, if only in a general sense.[97] In commenting on Seneca's work Calvin showed himself "attracted by the vogue of Stoicism current at the epoch",[98] but his attachment to Stoic ideas must not be overinterpreted, for "of any special pleading for Stoic thought ..... there is not a trace in this Commentary".[99]

We must remember that while Calvin himself had not cared to re-edit the classical commentary of his youth later as a reformer, Beza included it - as an appendix - in his edition of Calvin's *Tractatus theologici omnes* of 1576.[100] This is a fact which is often overlooked,[101] and which shows that Beza did not have any serious intention of hiding

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92 Cf. above, p. 229.

93 CO 21.122; cf. also CO 21.56; quoted in Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 327 n.30.

94 Cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 70-71, 95-96.

95 Cf. L. Zanta, *La renaissance du stoïcisme au XVIe siècle* (Paris 1914).

96 J. Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London 1993), 209.

97 Cf. P.-F. Moreau, "Calvin: fascination et critique du stoïcisme" in P.-F. Moreau (ed.), *Le stoïcisme au XVIe et XVIIe siècle* (Paris 1999), 52-54.

98 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 41.

99 Hugo, "Introduction" [to] *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, 60.

100 Cf. H. Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque (1532)" in *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 24 (1891), 52 n. 1 (note continued from p. 51). Cf. also *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. and trans. Battles / Hugo, 398 (features a list of all known editions of the commentary).

101 Gilmont, for instance, in his recent study on Calvin and the printed book, not only ignores the matter but omits the *Seneca Commentary* from his systematic table of contents of the *Tractatus theologici omnes*; cf. J.-F. Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (Geneva 1997), 379-380 (=Appendix IV).

Calvin's commentary away, or of confining the work, and with it Calvin's youthful enthusiasm for the study of classical letters, to oblivion.[102] But apart from his brief remark on the *Seneca Commentary*, there is more in Beza's Latin Life on Calvin's "humanist sideline". He repeats Colladon's report of Calvin's visit to Lefèvre d'Étaples,[103] although without any further information. When describing Calvin's visit to the court of Renée de France in Ferrara, Beza presents the desire of a zealous convert to further the cause of Protestantism as the main motive for travelling across the Alps, but he also mentions the wish of a learned man of letters to see Italy as a secondary motive.[104] Towards the end of his biography, Beza presents an appraisal of Calvin's eloquence, emphasising the clarity of his expression and the purity of his style, and although there is no reference to the humanist studies of the young Calvin, the appraisal demonstrates Beza's readiness to recognise what may be regarded as the fruits of those studies.[105]

In 1577, just two years after the publication of Beza's Latin *Life*, which had furnished a classical pattern for Protestant hagiography, the archetype of Catholic demonography appeared in Lyons, written by an inveterate enemy of Calvin who had been expelled from Geneva twenty-six years previously: Jerome Bolsec.[106] Bolsec was a former Carmelite monk who had come to Veigy near Geneva as a refugee and practised there as a physician. When he attacked Calvin's teaching on predestination - mainly on the grounds that it made God the author of sin - the reformer initiated proceedings against him and succeeded in having him banished from Geneva after a lengthy trial,[107] the records of which are included in the *Corpus Reformatorum* edition of Calvin's works, together with the preceding deliberations of the pastors on the case.[108] In his biography of the reformer, Bolsec not only expressed the full scope of his own discontent, but he gathered all the accusations against Calvin which were available at the time, fusing them into an account that represented something like "the opposite model to a life of a saint".[109] As was the fashion, Bolsec claimed that his biography was based on reports of "trustworthy

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102 This is also apparent in Beza's *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France* of 1580, in which he described - at length and in positive terms - what, as he must have known, represented an important part of the intellectual background of Calvin's *Seneca Commentary*, namely the establishment of the Royal College in Paris by Francis I at the instigation of Budé. Beza makes no explicit connection, however, between this foundation and Calvin's commentary, but the relevant passage from his *Histoire*, which is highly interesting to read, reveals a pragmatic attitude towards the issue of humanism on the part of the author. A representative extract from Beza's *Histoire* is quoted in chapter 6, p. 304. Doubts concerning Beza's authorship of the *Histoire ecclésiastique* have recently been dispelled by a thorough analysis of the correspondence surrounding the publication of the work. Cf. Beza, *Correspondance* [1580], vol. 21, eds. A Dufour / B. Nicollier / H. Genton (Geneva 1999).

103 CO 21.123.

104 CO 21.125; cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 152.

105 CO 21.169-170; quoted in *John Calvin*, eds. Potter / Greengrass, 174. We will come back to Beza's appraisal of Calvin's eloquence later. Beza's statement is quoted in chapter 6, p. 332.

106 J.-H. Bolsec, *Histoire de la vie, mœurs, actes, doctrines, constance et mort de Iean Calvin* (Lyons 1577).

107 Cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 218-222.

108 *Procès de Bolsec*, CO 8.141-248; *Congrégation sur l'élection éternelle*, CO 8.85-140.

109 Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 46.

individuals" (*personnes dignes de foy*) but modern scholarship has found these "of questionable merit".[110] Indeed, Bolsec's account is, on the whole, too bizarre to be true and appears untrustworthy in many respects; in fact, the author's excessive subjectivity and his proneness to sensationalism reduce his biography's contribution to scientific historiography to an absolute minimum. However, despite its complete lack of reliability, Bolsec's *Histoire* enjoyed widespread popularity and proved an influential source of calumny for almost three centuries.[111]

Among the objective arguments concerning humanism which can be extracted from Bolsec's bizarre narrative as well as from the court proceedings concerning his case, we can mention the following. First, Bolsec censures Calvin for having introduced undue novelties into Christian doctrine, for instance, the changes regarding the Lord's Supper. Further, on a more personal level, he reproaches the reformer for his cruel and inhumane attitude as an organiser.[112] However, it is doubtful whether one could derive a valid negative argument concerning Calvin's relation to the ideal of *humanitas* from Bolsec's insistence on the reformer's inhumanity, since the latter's subjectivity forbids any general conclusions. In the Bolsec proceedings, on the other hand, one can find a defence of an anthropocentric attitude against Calvin's rigorous theocentrism, although this defence is often quite unspecific. If we look for concrete points, we encounter the controversial interpretation of Calvin as a follower of Lorenzo Valla on predestination. Bolsec advanced his criticism of Calvin's position in a meeting of the Geneva pastors, who recorded the dissident's protest in the minutes of the meeting, reporting that:

> then this dubious fellow stood up and said that this false and impious opinion that God's will was the cause of all things, which was put into the world by Lorenzo Valla, had reemerged in our century. But in this way sin and the cause of all evil were attributed to God, and a tyrannical arbitrariness was invented for Him, just as the classical poets imagined Jupiter.[113]

However, making Calvin an ally of Valla on predestination, or free will respectively (which amounts to the same), does not imply a definite judgement about the reformer's general attitude towards humanism.[114]

One of the first effective correctives to Bolsec's denigration of Calvin's character and achievement was the *Life of Calvin* by the "Italianising humanist" Papire Masson (1544-1611).[115] This biography, or rather biographical sketch, was written around 1583, undoubtedly with access to first-hand information about its subject, but the first published edition known to us dates from 1620.[116] Masson's portrait of Calvin's life was relatively

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110 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 17.

111 Cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 48-52.

112 Cf. Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 46.

113 *Congrégation sur l'élection éternelle*, 16 October 1551; quoted in Neuser, *Calvin*, 75.

114 Cf. introduction, pp. 35-36.

115 Cf. P. Ronzy, *Un humaniste italianisant: Papire Masson (1544-1611)* (Paris 1924); quoted in Breen, *John Calvin*, 5 n. 13.

116 P. Masson, *Vita Ioannis Calvini* (Paris 1620). Masson's *Life of Calvin* is usually quoted from his

moderate, balanced and accurate considering the time in which it was written - a time of continued confessional wars. It signified a big step forward from Bolsec's manifestly unjust treatment, and became a very important and useful source for the Catholic authors of the seventeenth century.[117] Bayle confirmed the progress it had achieved, stating in his dictionary that it "did great harm to the copyists of Bolsec".[118] In the twentieth century Masson's account continues to be appreciated by some Calvin experts - experts with different views, also as regards the issue of humanism. [119]

As regards the question of humanism in the young Calvin, Papire Masson is famous in the first place for being the author of the notorious assertion that Calvin's *Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia* contained a hidden appeal to the king of France for clemency towards his persecuted Protestant subjects.[120] This much-debated assertion, which proved very long-lived but is generally rejected in Calvin studies today, suggests that Calvin would have been a so-called Nicodemite at the time of writing the *Seneca Commentary*, that is to say, a person inwardly committed to Evangelical or Protestant principles but conformist towards the outside world. This would imply, in turn, that the twenty-two year old Calvin was perhaps not primarily seen as a humanist by Masson, but rather as a somewhat reticent religious dissenter who pursued classical studies as a means to an end, namely, the end of penetrating the mysteries of the New Testament. This view can basically be seen as agreeing with Beza and Colladon insofar as Calvin is portrayed as proceeding from law to theology in his intellectual development - with humanism as a sideline - and not as passing through an actual humanist phase which could be qualified as independent, that is, which would represent a distinct period or a major station on the way of his life. This agreement between Beza, Colladon and Masson appears more substantial if we consider the fact that as a Catholic writer, Masson could easily have felt more inclined to portray the young Calvin as a fully-fledged humanist, since humanism was increasingly associated with heresy in the second half of the sixteenth century and this would have meant that Calvin would simply have appeared as more deeply steeped into heresy.

Another important step in the unmaking of the Bolsec myth was the Calvin biography by Florimond de Ræmond, "the celebrated humanist and jurist of Bordeaux" who held important public offices, and who applied his knowledge and literary talent to the purpose of establishing "the cultural and religious superiority of Counter-Reformation

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later *Elogia varia* (Paris 1638), a collection of biographies.

117 Cf. Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 47.

118 Bayle, "Calvin" in *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*; quoted in Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 47.

119 Breen called Masson's *Life* "a studiously impartial biography" (Breen, *John Calvin*, 5 n. 13), and Parker has judged it as "very fair" (Parker, *John Calvin*, 205).

120 Cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 61.

Catholicism".[121] Written more than a decade later than Masson's,[122] Ræmond's biography was published fifteen years earlier than the former's as part of a weighty and influential *History of Heresy*.[123] That *History*, composed in its entirety by Ræmond, was of crucial importance for the Catholic historiography of the French Reformation, and its author was not inappropriately called the "general munitioner of the Catholic writers who talk about the reformers" by Bayle.[124] The Calvin biography which Ræmond's *History of Heresy* contained presented a life that was "more precise and at the same time less malevolent than Bolsec's, and therefore more credible".[125] Ræmond's account is mainly based on the narrative of Pierre Cayet, a former servant of Calvin,[126] but the author also appears to have known people who had met Calvin before his exile.[127] A distinctive feature of this biography is its extensive coverage of Calvin's youth. Ræmond draws a fairly detailed picture of the reformer's intellectual and religious progress in the years before he left France, and he offers abundant information on the period Calvin spent in the south-west of that country.

As regards Ræmond's principal statements concerning the question of Calvin and humanism, we can say the following. Ræmond ascribes Calvin's conversion chiefly to the influence of the German humanist Melchior Wolmar, claiming that it was this teacher of Greek - and zealous Lutheran - who induced his pupil to give up law in favour of theological studies.[128] This interpretation appears to attribute more importance to the factor of humanism in Calvin's religious development than Beza's or Colladon's, since the latter both insisted on the young Olivétan as the prime agent of change. However, Ræmond's emphasis on the role played by Wolmar does not necessarily imply an increased stress on the impact of humanism, for we must recognise that this emphasis belongs to the underlying agenda of Ræmond's *History of Heresy*, part of which is to show that the Reformation is a phenomenon of German origin and character and is imported into France from Lutheran lands.[129] What Ræmond's statement really implies is that Calvin turned from law to theology, although less directly perhaps than suggested by Colladon and Beza, but with more explicit emphasis on humanism, in the form of Greek studies, as a catalyst in the process of religious change.

As a native and resident of Bordeaux, Ræmond would naturally focus on Calvin's

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121 R. A. Mentzer in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 25 (1994), 221 (book review).
122 Between 1595 and 1600; cf. Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 47.
123 F. de Ræmond, *Histoire de la naissance, progrès et décadence de l'hérésie de ce siècle* (Bordeaux 1605). Usually quoted from the Rouen edition of 1623.
124 Bayle, "Ochin" in *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*; quoted in L. Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au 16e siècle* (Paris 1942), 403.
125 Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 47.
126 Dating of 1595; cf. Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 47, 58.
127 E.g. Jean Boisseau, sieur de la Borderie, who died in 1591; cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 122.
128 Cf. Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 47.
129 Cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 79-80.

stay at neighbouring Angoulême in his investigations, for there he would be able to carry out some actual "field work" and find some of the traces the reformer left in the region. Certainly, his indication that "Calvin stayed for several years in the city of Angoulême"[130] is an exaggeration, but perhaps this exaggeration reveals where the author's chief interests lay and what his main focus was. Despite this obvious inaccuracy, some of Ræmond's assertions concerning the period Calvin spent in the south of France are undoubtedly important. First, there is the allegation that Calvin was given the popular nickname "the Greek of Claix" as he was instructing his humanist friend and host Louis du Tillet in Hellenic letters.[131] Second, there is the claim that Calvin prepared or actually wrote part of his *Institutes* at Angoulême, using du Tillet's extensive library, which was distinctly humanist in character. Ræmond reports that

> Angoulême was the forge where this new Vulcan [Calvin] shaped on his anvil the strange opinions which he published afterwards. It is there where he first wove, to surprise Christendom with it, the fabric of his *Institutes*, which can be called the Koran, or rather the Talmud, of heresy.[132]

The claim that Calvin began to work on his *Institutes* while dwelling at Saintonge has some credibility,[133] although it cannot be substantiated except by internal evidence from the first edition of the *Institutes*, for instance, the frequency and quality of references to the church fathers, or the style and general manner of expression. Concerning the latter, the observation has been made that the earlier parts of the first version of the *Institutes* are "less polemic, more simple and calm", whereas the later parts are "more vivacious and controversial in tone".[134] This observation would permit the assumption that the earlier parts were written before the affair of the Placards, that is, before October 1534, when Calvin was - assuredly - staying at Angoulême and his plan was perhaps simply to compose "a peacefully wrought-out work of Christian instruction".[135] Third, Ræmond furnishes very concrete indications regarding Calvin's early religious activities. He gives more detailed information than Beza about Calvin's preaching, relating that the reformer first began to assume the function of a pastor in Poitiers, where he is said to have celebrated a primitive form of the Lord's Supper secretly with some friends in a cave outside the city.[136] Fourth, Ræmond provides an interesting piece of information concerning the content of the conversation which the young Calvin is supposed to have had with the illustrious old humanist Lefèvre d'Etaples at the court of Marguerite de Navarre in Nérac in 1534, reporting that Lefèvre advised Calvin to take Melanchthon as a model.[137]

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130 de Ræmond, *Histoire de l'hérésie* (Rouen 1623), 889; quoted in Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 331 n. 10.

131 Cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 84.

132 de Ræmond, *Histoire de l'hérésie*, 883-884; quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 89.

133 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin*, 24.

134 Walker, *John Calvin*, 137.

135 Walker, *John Calvin*, 138. Ganoczy is of the opinion that the whole of the *Institutes* was written in Basel; cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 93-94, 99-102, 231.

136 Cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 122.

137 Cf. O. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole* (Paris 1992), 123.

Masson and Ræmond both contributed substantially to establish a more objective picture of Calvin with their biographies, which still belong, at least with regard to the date of composition, to the sixteenth century and thus to the late Renaissance. However, in the climate of confessional hatred generated by the Religious Wars,[138] which was, of course, favourable to the spread of the Bolsec myth, these two seemingly moderate and to some extent critical biographies did evidently not succeed in attracting much attention.[139] It was only later, when they finally appeared in print[140] after peace had returned to France - and after their authors had died[141] -, that they were read and came to be appreciated.[142] Judging Masson's and Ræmond's Calvin biographies from today's critical perspective, we may emphasise two important points: first, that the rectification of Bolsec's distorted picture "did not coincide with the supply of new documents" and, second, that it occurred "prior to the development of [modern] historical criticism".[143]

As far as the former point is concerned, there appeared two local historians in the early seventeenth century who would fill part of that gap and furnish some new documentary evidence, by means of which Calvin's portrait could be drawn more accurately, especially with regard to his youth. The first was Jacques Desmay, vicar-general of Rouen, who availed of the opportunity of staying at Noyon as a preacher in 1614 and 1615 in order to search the registers of Calvin's birthplace for material about him.[144] From his archival findings, as well as from "conversations which I had with those who had seen and lived with Calvin's contemporaries",[145] Desmay composed his biography of Calvin.[146] The second was Jacques le Vasseur (a "fiery enemy of Calvin and Calvinism", and a "very partial" writer),[147] whose account[148] is "no less virulent than Bolsec's", but whose author "nevertheless took the trouble to consult the Noyon registers as well as some aged inhabitants of that city".[149]

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138 1562 (massacre of Vassy) - 1598 (Edict of Nantes).

139 Masson wrote his biography during the Religious Wars (around 1583), and Ræmond around the time of the Edict of Nantes (between 1595 and 1600).

140 As indicated above, the first editions date of 1605 (Ræmond) and 1620 (Masson).

141 Florimond de Ræmond died in 1602, and Papire Masson in 1611.

142 We may cite the testimony of Dom Pierre de Saint-Romuald [i.e. Pierre Guillebaud], author of the large *Trésor chronologique et historique*, who, when specifying his sources concerning Calvin (vol. 3, Paris 1637), writes that "those who have written about him in the most truthful and sincere way are Papire Masson, Father Feuardent, cordelier, and Florimond de Ræmond ..... . For as regards Theodore de Bèze, Jerome Bolsec, doctor of Lyons, and Jacques Laingey, Scotsman, doctor at the Sorbonne, everything they have written on Calvin is suspicious of flattery or of excessive harshness for and against him"; quoted in Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 47-48.

143 Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 54.

144 Cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 23.

145 Desmay, *Remarques*, 398 (for detailed reference cf. the following footnote); quoted in Parker, *John Calvin*, 205.

146 J. Desmay, *Remarques sur la vie de Jean Calvin, tirées des registres de Noyon, ville de sa naissance* [Rouen 1621]. Always quoted from L. Cimber / F. Danjou (eds.), *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France*, vol. 5 (Paris 1835), 387-398. For further information cf. bibliography, section 2, p. 365 n. 13.

147 Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, xiii-xiv.

148 J. Le Vasseur, *Annales de l'église cathédrale de Noyon*, vol. 3 (Paris1634), 1151-1202. For a more detailed description cf. bibliography, section 2.

149 Parker, *John Calvin*, 205.

By means of the new documentary evidence which Desmay and Le Vasseur furnished it was possible to dispel some of the darkest shadows of the Bolsec myth, by which the figure of the reformer was surrounded. Desmay in fact identified another Jean Calvin who was condemned to be beaten, and this finding proved that the reformer had never been subject to any accusation concerning moral misconduct in his youth.[150] Le Vasseur confirmed Desmay's finding and "expressly repudiated" the alleged charge of "heinous moral turpitude",[151] thus demolishing forever the so-called legend of the hot iron.[152] The portraits of the young Calvin Desmay and Le Vasseur drew represented a genuine improvement, for they depicted the future reformer as a serious and committed young man keen on studying and gifted for intellectual work. Desmay reports about Calvin at preparatory school, that is, the Collège des Capettes near Noyon, stating that: "there he betrayed a fine intelligence, a natural readiness to comprehend the humanities".[153] Desmay further claims to know that Calvin was an official lecturer at the Collège de Fortet in the University of Paris, without indicating, however, faculty or subject.[154] These two affirmations signal a sincere acknowledgement of talent, and the latter would suggest an indirect appreciation of the *Seneca Commentary* as the means by which the young intellectual got access into the famous university. Be that as it may, Desmay's acknowledgement of Calvin's talent was certainly more significant than similar statements by Beza.

Having provided a brief overview of the most important early biographies of Calvin, we can now try to summarise their statements concerning the relation between the young Calvin and humanism and formulate a general conclusion derived from the smallest common denominator of these statements. First a preliminary remark: we have noted that the issue of humanism does not represent a focal point in any of these narratives, but is, on the contrary, marginalised quite distinctly. Therefore, we must be aware that direct and substantial affirmations concerning Calvin's attitude towards humanism are rather rare, while short and superficial remarks, together with indirect allusions, prevail. We can in fact observe a certain tendency to tabooise or marginalise humanism in the authors of these early biographies, who, on the whole, betray an attitude similar to that of the reformer in his works with respect to this issue.[155] However, apart from the tendency to marginalise humanism, which can partly be explained from the historical context, as will be done just below, we can observe another tendency of compensatory nature, which is manifest in the curious fact that among the early Catholic biographers those who were

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150 Cf. Armogathe, "Les vies de Calvin", 49.

151 Walker, *John Calvin*, 117-118.

152 According to which Calvin had a fleur-de-lys mark branded on his shoulder; cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 117.

153 Desmay, *Remarques*, 388; quoted in Parker, *John Calvin*, 3. The term *humanities* here refers in a general way to the elementary curriculum taught at preparatory schools (cf. below, p. 263).

154 Desmay, *Remarques*, 393; quoted in Parker, *John Calvin*, 31.

155 Cf. introduction, pp. 14, 34, 38, where we have characterised Calvin's attitude towards humanism in terms of tabooisation or marginalisation.

actually professed humanists, namely Masson and Ræmond, give the fairest portrait of Calvin, and especially of his youth, drawing attention to the intellectual pursuits before or at the time of his conversion.

The tabooisation or marginalisation of humanism can be explained in part as historically conditioned. That humanism should represent a forbidden topic (or one that is avoided) towards the end of the Renaissance is not surprising, since in the context of the increasing confessionalisation any close association with humanism or humanists could arouse dangerous suspicions of heterodoxy on either side, Catholic and Protestant. We have to remember that the humanist movement in its diverse branches was severely discriminated by official or unofficial censorship. In France, for instance, the major humanists were silenced before the middle of the sixteenth century by decrees of prohibition forbidding the distribution of their controversial writings. Thus, already in 1544, when the first comprehensive catalogue of prohibited books was compiled in Paris by the theologians of the Sorbonne, "works by Erasmus, Lefèvre and Rabelais were listed alongside the publications of Luther and Calvin".[156] As far as Calvin's and Beza's Geneva is concerned, it is fair to state that the very same humanists (Erasmus, Lefèvre and Rabelais) could not find much of an audience there either, although they were not formally prohibited.[157]

But let us go back now and try to answer the question of what common affirmations concerning the young Calvin and humanism we can extract from the early Calvin biographies, taking into account their "marginalising" treatment of humanism. In order to answer this question, we must proceed in an indirect way and first consider the fact that all these biographies suggest a relatively early date for Calvin's conversion and report an active religious involvement that follows. The indication "relatively early", however, is not to be interpreted exclusively with reference to today's common dating of Calvin's conversion, which is late by comparison,[158] but it is to be understood also in relation to the

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156 P. Benedict, "Settlements: France" in Brady / Oberman / Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History 1400-1600*, vol. 2 (Leiden 1995), 424.

157 It is not clear in detail in how far the circulation of humanist books was tolerated in Geneva. One gets the impression that there existed a kind of implicit censorship of some of the major humanist authors which could be characterised in terms of marginalisation or even tabooisation. Rabelais, for instance, was certainly anathema, and Lefèvre d'Étaples seems not to have been mentioned, while Erasmus and Vives were appreciated - in most cases tacitly and anonymously - as Biblical grammarians but marginalised as thinkers. There is no doubt that "the control of what was read" in Geneva was "strict" and that Calvin was largely the active manager of that control; cf. Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé*, 338, 347. Explicit prohibition applied to some contemporary humanists hostile to Calvin, for instance, Castellio. When the latter's *De haereticis an sint persequendi* came out in Basel, Calvin and Beza were furious, and Beza wrote: "Je souhaiterais que les Bâlois soient sérieusement avertis de nettoyer cette cloaque en temps utile"; Beza, *Correspondance*; quoted in Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé*, 347. However, in the library of the Geneva Academy there was, as Gilmont has put it, "a massive presence of sixteenth-century humanists", although, as the same author has pointed out, the *Opera omnia* of Erasmus, for instance, which the library held, had been Vermigli's (1500-1562), and not Calvin's, possession; cf. Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé*, 191. Note that Gilmont's researches are largely based on Ganoczy's *La bibliothèque de l'Académie de Calvin* (Geneva 1969).

158 Roughly between the middle of 1532 and early 1534. Cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 78 and, more generally,

point in time when Calvin's humanist occupations start, which is easier to determine from the evidence available.[159] If we compare, then, the beginning of humanism with the inception of the conversion as described in the early biographies, we can say that according to the old authors Calvin's dedication to humanistic pursuits came *after* his conversion or possibly at the same time, but *not before*, as we are inclined to assume today.[160] This would suggest that the pattern of Calvin's intellectual and religious development did not correspond, in the eyes of these early biographers, to the classic models provided by Luther, Zwingli and Melanchthon, for those three reformers, belonging to the first generation, inevitably moved from the historically previous humanist influence, strong or not so strong, on to the creation of the Reformation, which was their proper contribution to history.

Calvin, however, was a second-generation reformer, and he was therefore not bound to repeat ontogenetically the phylogenetical progress of history from the birth of humanism in the late fourteenth century in Italy to the emergence of the Reformation almost 250 years later in Germany. Actually, the course of his development may have gone the inverse direction: first the contact with Reformation thought through Olivétan, and then the acquaintance with humanism through Alciatus - or it may have been shaped by a simultaneous initiation into humanism and the Reformation through Wolmar. In any case, the growth of Calvin's mind occurred under unique circumstances, for while the ideas of the Reformation were spreading rapidly, humanism was not yet established in the French universities but was just in the process of emerging into a more prominent position. It is impossible to prove either of the old interpretations of Calvin's intellectual and religious development, but perhaps both of them - in contradistinction to the modern interpretation - can help explain the varying degrees of humanism in Calvin's work, especially with regard to the evolution of the *Institutes*, in which we witness a clear increase of humanist elements in the later additions.

Be that as it may, the conceptions of Calvin's conversion and his humanistic occupations advanced in the early biographies have four principal implications for a theory about the young Calvin and humanism. First, Calvin's conversion meant a direct transition from legal studies to theology, without any purely humanistic phase in between. Second, there was no "secular turn" from law to letters, that is to say, from legal to humanistic studies in Calvin's life, preceding a "religious turn" from humanism to reform. Third, humanism may have played the role of a catalyst in the process of Calvin's conversion, especially according to the later biographers, who assume that Wolmar was the chief

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77-82. Oberman has suggested that "the available evidence and the best arguments advanced in the scholarly tradition strongly point to the year 1533"; cf. Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 283.

159 Around 1529-1530 under the influence of Wolmar and Alciatus.

160 Focusing exclusively on the writings which Calvin composed *in* his youth, following the approach adopted by Wendel, Ganoczy and others (described above, p. 230 n. 63).

influence on Calvin in that turning-point.[161] Fourth, humanism was a secondary occupation of the converted or the converting Calvin, a "sideline", so to speak, of the developing reformer, and as such it was subordinated from the beginning in all its aspects to the concerns of church reform. It is clear that this old and in a sense original theory which we have just reconstructed - at least approximately - is not in agreement with the conclusions of modern Calvin research, in which the non-religious character of the *Seneca Commentary* and of the letters dating from the period of its composition have become the chief argument for a "secular turn" from law to letters and for the existence of a wholly humanistic phase in Calvin's life.[162] However, it has to be underlined that there are no testimonies by Calvin for the time just after the apparition of the *Seneca Commentary* until just before Cop's Address,[163] which means that we are completely in the dark regarding the state of Calvin's mind during that crucial epoch. Moreover, we must not overlook the fact that Calvin's later autobiographical statements can be seen as basically agreeing with the accounts of the early biographers, except perhaps on the question of which role precisely Wolmar played.

In our survey of the early Calvin biographies and of the texts by Calvin from and on his youth, we have already had occasion to indicate some of the tendencies and conceptions prevalent in contemporary Calvin studies. We will now have a brief look at the principal modern interpretations of the relation between the young Calvin and humanism, thus supplementing the information given in chapter one, where the focus was on Calvin the reformer and his attitude towards humanism. Just as in that chapter, our overview of research will cover a bit more than a century, namely the period from the end of the nineteenth century to the present time. The reasons for reaching back so far are basically the same as the ones stated at the beginning of chapter one, and as far as the volume of literature is concerned, we can say that it is even smaller than the material concerning the mature Calvin and humanism, the scope of which we have already estimated as not very extensive.[164]

There is no in-depth treatment of the issue of humanism in the young Calvin, but there is one study which can almost be regarded as a full-scale treatment, namely Breen's thesis of 1931, a work which we have already discussed with regard to its statements

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161 The sharp distinction Lefranc made between the earlier and the later biographers concerning the influence of Olivétan or Wolmar respectively on Calvin's conversion is exaggerated. It is not true, for instance, that Beza does not mention Wolmar at all in connection with Calvin's conversion; cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 39-40.

162 Although Lefranc accepts Olivétan's influence, he dates the conversion only after the publication of the *Seneca Commentary*, namely in the second half of 1532. Thus Lefranc can be seen as choosing the earliest point in time which a strict scientific assessment of the available evidence permits; cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 98-99. More recently it has become customary to put the conversion to a later date, as we have indicated above (cf. above, pp. 243-244 n. 158).

163 Cf. above, p. 233.

164 Cf. chapter 1, p. 41.

concerning the mature reformer.[165] Breen's book is not fully dedicated to Calvin's youth, but two thirds of it deal with humanism in the young Calvin.[166] Apart from Breen's thesis there are three comprehensive studies on Calvin's youth which offer information about humanism. Two of these include brief analyses of the relation between the future reformer and humanism. The first is the ground-breaking book by Lefranc from 1888, which we have mentioned because of the source collections it contains,[167] and the second is the comprehensive analysis by Ganoczy,[168] which we have also mentioned because of the method it employs.[169] Both studies contain a separate chapter dealing with the question of the young Calvin and humanism,[170] but these chapters are not really compact syntheses of all the relevant information provided in the whole length of the studies. The third study is the more recent analysis on Calvin's youth by Reuter, but this inquiry focuses on scholastic influences and is therefore only of secondary importance here, serving principally as a source of indirect evidence.[171]

In addition to the four in-depth treatments just mentioned, we have three shorter and concise studies on Calvin's intellectual and religious development which explicitly address and investigate the question of humanism. The first two are an essay and a collection of lectures by Jacques Pannier, both admirable in plan but not adequate in execution,[172] and the third is Wendel's *Calvin et l'humanisme*, a work which is mainly an inquiry into the reformer's youth, with special emphasis on the various aspects of humanism.[173] Pannier's investigations were, like Breen's researches, significant with regard to their method and approach if not necessarily with regard to their conclusions, which were often still tentative and general. Their merit lies, however, in making a new beginning and in opening a new avenue in the research on Calvin's youth. Among the more general works which include a detailed consideration of the issue of the young Calvin and humanism we have to mention the monumental Calvin biography by Émile Doumergue, which includes a special chapter with abundant material on the topic.[174] More recently Thomas Torrance has conducted a detailed analysis of the traces which the early intellectual and religious influences on Calvin left in the work of the reformer, using categories which range from scholasticism to nominalism and from humanism to

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165 Cf. chapter 1, pp. 61-64.

166 Cf. Breen, *John Calvin*, 1-99.

167 Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*; cf. above, p. 230 n. 58.

168 Ganoczy, *Le jeune Calvin* (Wiesbaden 1966); English translation *The Young Calvin* (Philadelphia 1987 / Edinburgh 1988) with a new preface. Selective consultation of this long book is not easy as no index is provided.

169 Cf. above, p. 230 n. 63.

170 Cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 86-108; cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 178-181.

171 K. Reuter, *Vom Scholaren bis zum jungen Reformator: Studien zum Werdegang Johannes Calvins* (Neukirchen 1981).

172 J. Pannier, *Recherches sur l'évolution religieuse de Calvin jusqu'à sa conversion* (Strasbourg 1924) and *Recherches sur la formation intellectuelle de Calvin* (Paris 1931).

173 Cf. chapter 1, p. 69 (ns. 197, 198).

174 Cf. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, vol. 1, chapter 9 (193 ff).

Lutheranism.[175]

Apart from the larger studies indicated above, most of which are rather old and must in many ways be considered out of date (although there is often nothing to substitute them), there are some important specialist contributions which focus on particular aspects or phases of Calvin's youth and provide valuable clues about the future reformer's attitude to humanism. Some of these contributions are also very old, but we find items among them which have remained indispensable despite their age, such as Doinel's article about Calvin in Orléans, which proved that Calvin was in that city in 1533,[176] or Clouzot's essay on Rabelais' social contacts in the region around the same city, which suggested that Calvin may have known Rabelais via the intermediary of François Daniel.[177] There are other contributions which deserve to be mentioned because they represent a step forward in the research on the young Calvin and his relation to humanism, such as Lecoultre's article on the *Seneca Commentary*, which was the first scholarly essay on Calvin's long-forgotten first book.[178] Perhaps the essay by Dörries on Calvin and Lefèvre d'Étaples signalled something like a caesura in research,[179] for as far as the young Calvin is concerned, the result of Dörries' investigations was minimal and can be summarised in the sober acknowledgement that due to a total lack of direct documentary evidence we do not know anything except what Beza tells us in his *Life of Calvin*, namely that the young evangelical scholar and the old humanist met in Nérac in the spring of 1534. Judging from the reformer's total silence on Lefèvre and from the character of his work, Dörries argues that the only fair conclusion is to state that "the personal acquaintance of the two men ..... can only have been very superficial".[180]

The *Seneca Commentary* did not attract further scholarly attention until the 1950's,[181] when André Malan Hugo, a postgraduate student in the Department of Classics of the University of Utrecht, made it the object of a detailed analysis in his doctoral dissertation.[182] Hugo later applied his knowledge to the production of a critical edition of Calvin's commentary, undertaken in collaboration with Ford Lewis Battles,[183] who had

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175 Cf. T. F. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin* (Edinburgh 1988).

176 J. Doinel, "Jean Calvin à Orléans: Date précise de son séjour d'après des documents inédits" in *Bulletin de la société d'histoire du protestantisme français* 26 (1877), 174-185. This article demonstrated that Calvin was *substitut annuel du procureur* of the Picard Nation at the University of Orléans in May and June 1533 (a fact, incidentally, which Desmay had already reported in his *Remarques*; cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 105).

177 H. Clouzot, "Les amitiés de Rabelais en Orléanais" in *Revue des Études Rabelaisiennes* 3 (1905), 156-175 (cf. especially 171, 174-175).

178 Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 51-77.

179 Cf. H. Dörries, "Calvin und Lefèvre" in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 44 (1925), 544-581.

180 Dörries, "Calvin und Lefèvre", 578. For Dörries' further argumentation concerning Calvin and humanism cf. introduction, p. 14.

181 Niesel, for instance, has no entry in his bibliography; cf. W. Niesel, *Calvin-Bibliographie, 1901-1959* (Munich 1961).

182 Hugo, *Calvijn en Seneca: Een inleidende studie van Calvijns Commentaar op Seneca, De clementia, anno 1532* (Groningen 1957).

183 *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, ed. and trans. Battles / Hugo. This edition

himself written an essay on the *Seneca Commentary* which served as a preliminary study to that edition.[184] The two scholars not only provided a critical edition of the Latin text, but they also supplied an English translation (mainly done by Battles) as well as an incisive analysis of Calvin's commentary, which is presented as an introduction,[185] and the second half of which is structured according to the categories of the *studia humanitatis* as suggested by Kristeller.[186] Meanwhile the *Seneca Commentary* had also become the object of academic study in France, where Pierre Mesnard, an expert on humanism, examined Calvin's commentary in the context of juridical humanism.[187] More recently, the *Seneca Commentary* has even been included in the interpretation of the connections between Stoicism and Protestantism, and we can say that this is no doubt due to the efforts of Battles and Hugo.[188] Today scholars are increasingly aware of the direct or indirect relevance of Calvin's early humanistic treatment of Seneca for his later work as a reformer. There is growing recognition of the literary and, to a certain degree, philosophical implications which Calvin's youthful involvement in classical studies and, more specifically, in textual criticism, had for the development of his doctrine. Thus the topic of Calvin and Stoicism, which was perhaps rather marginalised in earlier research,[189] has just been reconsidered.[190]

In current research, scholars have turned to analysing the echoes of humanist anticlericalism in the young Calvin,[191] or they have reconsidered the problem of Calvin's conversion, taking into account the role humanism played.[192] In general, we can say that there is a tendency to investigate the very beginnings of Calvin's Reformation with regard to the reformer's early intellectual development in order to understand the ideas of

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replaces the text presented in the *Corpus Reformatorum*, CO 5.1-162.

184 Cf. Battles, "The Sources of Calvin's Seneca Commentary" in G. E. Duffield (ed.), *John Calvin* (Appleford 1966), 38-66.

185 Cf. *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, ed. and trans. Battles / Hugo, 3-140.

186 The application of Kristeller's approach was certainly endorsed by Breen, who was one of the principal advisors to the editors. Battles and Hugo include the categories of philology (or grammar) (85-99), rhetoric (72-84), history (115-124), and philosophy (125-133). Law is added, for evident reasons (134-140), while poetry, interestingly, has no heading, although it can be considered as featuring, to some extent, in the section on proverbial wisdom (100-114).

187 Cf. P. Mesnard, "Jean Calvin, étudiant en droit, à Orléans" in *Actes du Congrès sur l'ancienne université d'Orléans* (Orléans 1962), 83-91. Note that Mesnard judged Lecoultre's article as an "excellent work" (Mesnard, "Jean Calvin, étudiant en droit, à Orléans", 89).

188 Cf. M. Todd, "Seneca and the Protestant Mind: The Influence of Stoicism on Puritan Ethics" in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 74 (1983), 182-200. Todd makes extensive use of Battles and Hugo's edition.

189 Cf. J. Cadier, "Le prétendu stoïcisme de Calvin" in *Études théologiques et religieuses* 41 (1966), 217-226.

190 Cf. Moreau, "Calvin: fascination et critique du stoïcisme" in Moreau (ed.), *Le stoïcisme au XVI^e^ et XVII^e^ siècle*, 51-64.

191 Cf. C. M. N. Eire, "Antisacerdotalism and the Young Calvin" in Dykema / Oberman (eds.), *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden 1993), 583-603.

192 Cf. e.g. Oberman, *"Subita Conversio"* in Oberman / Saxer / Schindler / Stucki (eds.), *Reformiertes Erbe*, vol. 2, 279-295. Cf. also D. Fischer, "Nouvelles réflexions sur la conversion de Calvin" in *Études théologiques et religieuses* 58 (1983), 203-220.

reformed theology in relation to other currents of thought, particularly humanism.[193] Thus, among other things we are now getting a clearer picture of the familiarity with humanist literature which Calvin acquired in his youth. Concerning the controversy over the issue of free will between Erasmus and Luther, for instance, Oberman has affirmed that "Calvin can be shown to have read intensively Erasmus' *Diatribe* (1524), Luther's *De servo arbitrio* (1525), and Erasmus' response in the *Hyperaspistes* (1526) - probably in the time he describes himself as still wavering before his conversion".[194] This sounds promising, but the word "probably" betrays the existing uncertainty in making assertions about the young Calvin.

In summary we can say that research on the young Calvin in general and on his relation to humanism in particular was intensive from about 1888 (Lefranc) to 1931 (Breen and Pannier). Later, interest in the young Calvin, and especially in the humanistic aspects of his intellectual development, receded and scholarly efforts chiefly focused on issues of the mature reformer's theology. Perhaps this was in part due to the vogue of the anti-humanistic interpretation of Calvin from about 1900 (Brunetière) to 1960 (Heer).[195] It was only with Ganoczy's *Le jeune Calvin* of 1966 and with Wendel's *Calvin et l'humanisme* of 1976 that scholarly attention returned, in a more systematic way, to the issue of the growth of Calvin's mind and to the examination of formative influences such as humanism. Nevertheless, there have been attempts at interpreting Calvin's relation to humanism without special regard to the reformer's formative phase, such as Bouwsma's *Sixteenth Century Portrait*.[196] But more recently, this manner of proceeding, which must be considered as methodologically inadequate, has been corrected by researchers like Oberman, who has begun the preparatory studies for his planned biography of Calvin with the investigation of the reformer's youth.[197]

If we have observed that the relation of Calvin (meaning mainly the reformer) to humanism represents one of the most controversial issues in Reformation research,[198] we can say that the same basically applies to the young Calvin, although the spectrum of opinion is less diverse. The attitude of the young Calvin towards humanism is a disputed matter, too, but there is also some basic consensus, namely on the fact that humanism

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193 Cf. Oberman, "*Initia Calvini*" in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde NR Deel* 54, 4 (1991), 107-147; also in Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, 113-154; Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness: Calvin between Humanism and Reformation" in O'Malley / Izbicki / Christianson (eds.), *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation* (Leiden 1993), 251-283; Oberman, "Calvin and Farel: the dynamics of legitimation of early Calvinism" in *Journal of Early Modern History* 2 (1998), 32-60.

194 Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 283 n. 14.

195 Cf. chapter 1, pp. 45-54.

196 Bouwsma's preliminary studies for his *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* did not include an inquiry into the young Calvin either. An earlier example of the same method, omitting consideration of the young Calvin, is J. Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin* (Graz 1950).

197 Cf. Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", "*Initia Calvini*" and "'Europa afflicta': The Reformation of the Refugees" in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 83 (1992), 91-111.

198 Cf. introduction, p. 4 (n. 18) and chapter 1, p. 41.

constituted a distinct formative influence in the growth of Calvin's mind, a shaping power and cultural force which the student of law could not evade. The question of how strong and pervasive the humanist influence was, is, however, the object of a debate, and accordingly judgements vary considerably. A cursory glance at the literature reveals that we can distinguish three fundamentally different types of interpretation. These types correspond, approximately, to the categories we have established in chapter one,[199] except that the anti-humanistic interpretation does not really exist for the young Calvin. We therefore have a non-humanistic, a scholastic and a humanistic interpretation of the intellectual profile of the young Calvin. Of these three interpretations, the humanistic one is clearly predominant in current Calvin research. The reason for this is not only change of perspective in the second half of the twentieth century,[200] but also the fact that many advocates of the anti-humanistic interpretation of the mature reformer are ready to admit that the young Calvin had distinct humanist inclinations.

The main advocates of the non-humanistic interpretation today are Wilhelm Neuser and Thomas Parker, two theologians who no doubt rank among the most prominent contemporary Calvin scholars. Both Neuser and Parker rely on the statements made by the mature reformer about his youth, as well as on the information provided in the early biographies (especially Beza).[201] As far as Neuser is concerned, he emphasises that what Calvin experienced in the period of his legal studies was primarily the influence of "religious humanism", which he encountered in the evangelical movement of church reform then active in France, and which, on the personal level, was represented to him by the Lutheran humanist Melchior Wolmar.[202] The alternative secular current of humanism, which had a distinguished advocate in the brilliant Italian jurist Andrea Alciatus, was politely but explicitly rejected by the young Calvin, who censured Alciatus for his "excessively sharp eloquence".[203] Thus, according to Neuser, Calvin's interest in humanistic studies is inextricably linked with his religious concerns, so that his dedication to humanism can be said to coincide with his turn to Protestantism. For Neuser the "sudden conversion to docility" mentioned in Calvin's preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms* signifies "the abandonment of the Catholic church doctrine and the devotion to the (humanistic) study of the Holy Scriptures".[204] This means that Calvin's attachment to humanism is seen as a concomitant of the most fundamental change in his religious development. Regarding the ambiguous words from Calvin's above-mentioned preface "although I did not immediately put to one side all my other studies, I pursued them more

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199 Cf. chapter 1, p. 45.

200 Cf. chapter 1, pp. 43-44.

201 We have already presented their views on Calvin the reformer and humanism in chapter one under the same category, that is to say, in the context of the analysis of the non-humanistic strand; cf. chapter 1, p. 57 (Neuser) and p. 56 (Parker).

202 Cf. Neuser, *Calvin*, 17.

203 Neuser, *Calvin*, 17.

204 Neuser, *Calvin*, 19. Typical of the non-humanistic interpretation, the word "humanistic" appears in brackets.

spasmodically",[205] Neuser explains that "by 'other studies' the legal studies must be meant, not the dedication to the language and doctrine of classical philosophy, for it is only now that he [Calvin] eagerly begins to apply himself to the latter".[206] Neuser concludes that in retrospect Calvin the reformer considers the humanistic activities he pursued in his youth "as a step forward on the way to understand the language and the message of the New Testament".[207]

As far as Parker is concerned, he recognised the necessity of giving increased consideration to the young Calvin, stating in the preface to his biography of the reformer that one of the distinctive features of his book was that "it draws more attention to Calvin's student days by portraying university life and studies more fully than has been done in previous lives".[208] Parker's deliberations on Calvin's youth have already been summarised,[209] and we can add now the more specific points the author makes concerning the encounter of the future reformer with humanism. As we have said in chapter one, the young Calvin was, according to Parker, never a pure humanist fully devoted to the cause of letters, but he familiarised himself with various aspects of humanist learning in order to enlarge the scope of his competence, which would enable him, initially, to advance his planned career as an academic jurist and, later, to develop his reformed theology from a close reading of the Scriptures.[210] The range of Calvin's familiarity with humanist learning is apparent in his *Seneca Commentary*, manifesting itself particularly in "his use of Greek, his linguistic approach, his attention to the context, his too careful, something brittle style, his heaping up of authorities".[211] However, the *Seneca Commentary* was neither a success in the scholarly world, nor was it a truly humanistic book in the sense of revealing a profound attachment to the values and the world-view of the humanists on the part of the author. It is true that the young Calvin is "well read in the classics and, more important, able to handle his borrowed tools with ease", but, as Parker points out, "some of our respect wanes when we learn that ..... a large part of his learning is ..... derivative".[212]

Parker's interpretation, despite the ground note of "no humanism" which permeates its argumentation, nevertheless contains an indirect suggestion that humanism was not a purely technical affair for Calvin but may have had a positive philosophical impact on him. If humanism cannot have been responsible, or fully responsible, for Calvin's *religious* conversion, which Parker dates as early as 1529 or 1530,[213] it might have contributed to

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205 Calvin, Preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms*; quoted in *John Calvin*, eds. Potter / Greengrass, 10.
206 Neuser, *Calvin*, 20.
207 Neuser, *Calvin*, 20.
208 Parker, *John Calvin*, viii.
209 Cf. chapter 1, p. 56.
210 Cf. chapter 1, p. 56.
211 Parker, *John Calvin*, 32.
212 Parker, *John Calvin*, 32.
213 Cf. Parker, *John Calvin*, 26, 195.

bring about a kind of *intellectual* conversion which Parker thinks Calvin underwent at some stage in the course of the formation of his mind. According to Parker Calvin experienced "a complete intellectual reversal"[214] which brought him away from the nominalist epistemology taught with "near certainty"[215] at Montaigu and made him embrace a completely different theory of knowledge - one that could be characterised, in a broad sense, as "realistic". This is an important point which few authors have made and which is of some significance for the evaluation of Calvin's relation to the philosophical aspects of humanism. To be more precise, Parker holds that after Calvin emerged from his training in the mode of the *via moderna* at Montaigu

> a complete intellectual reversal would be necessary before he could confidently and joyfully understand that knowledge was relationship between subject and object, that the term genuinely stood for the object by inherent character, and that the intellect, far from moulding the object, is itself formed to the capacity of the knowledge of the object by the object itself.[216]

The outline of this epistemological perspective corresponds (historically) to the conception of cognition and perception maintained principally in classical scholastic realism. This conception, however, was also defended by the humanists with regard to its fundamental assertions of objectivity and universalism, as we have seen in our discussion of the humanist theory of language.[217] Therefore, we could say that Parker's observation - which is made without any further explanations concerning the history of philosophy - seems to suggest that humanism had a concrete philosophical impact on Calvin inasmuch as it contributed to bringing him away from nominalist epistemology and making him espouse a kind of timeless realism, associated at the time with both the "revisionist" type of Aristotelianism and with humanism. If we consider Calvin's "intellectual conversion" or "reversal" in the context of the contemporary history of philosophy, we recognise that his mental turn corresponds, in a general way, to a universal pattern in the development of epistemology in the later Renaissance. This pattern is characterised by the partial integration and synthesis of opposed theories of knowledge and logic, which was due to the inevitable "cross-fertilisation" between different schools of thought taking place in the period.[218] These opposed theories are often considered in the context of philosophy of language, not of theory of knowledge,[219] and they are characterised in terms of

> two central doctrines, which can only be fully understood in conjunction: the doctrine that spoken language is purely conventional and the doctrine that spoken language

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214 Parker, *John Calvin*, 14.

215 Parker, *John Calvin*, 13.

216 Parker, *John Calvin*, 14.

217 We have emphasised the principle of equivalence between *res* and *verba*. Cf. chapter 3, p. 136.

218 L. Jardine, "Humanistic logic" in Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge 1988), 174.

219 The problem is that "the theory of knowledge, as *a* or *the* central branch of philosophy, is a post-Renaissance phenomenon" which, however, "develops from certain critical movements in Renaissance thought", as one expert has put it (R. H. Popkin, "Theories of knowledge" in Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 668). Humanistic theories tend to be discussed as an aspect of philosophy of language, while Aristotelian concepts are more often seen as belonging to philosophy proper.

corresponds to a mental language, which has natural signification.[220]

The result of the partial integration of these opposed theories was that from the traditional scholastic and the humanist approaches there developed a kind of mixed approach which has been called "hybrid" with regard to textbooks of logic.[221] At the same time, both the new scholastic and humanist philosophers "have tacitly discarded the more technical aspects of medieval logic", particularly nominalist theories, "which had grown up independently of the material contained in Aristotle's texts on logic".[222]

The conclusions of the above deliberations about Calvin's supposed "intellectual conversion" may serve as a preliminary remark to the consideration of the scholastic interpretation of the young Calvin. From what we have just stated, it emerges that if Calvin is interpreted as having been shaped by nominalist influences, two difficulties arise. First, it appears that the *reformer* (perhaps not the young Calvin) repudiated the basic epistemological precepts of terminist philosophy, with which he had become familiar at Paris. We cannot examine this question here since no relevant and decisive evidence can be found in the writings of the young Calvin, but we will discuss the issue in the following chapter.[223] Second, the borderline between high scholasticism and humanism is not always defined very sharply, and it is therefore possible that Calvin came to endorse certain aspects of older medieval philosophy by way of humanism or in conjunction with it. We do not consider the scholastic interpretation in detail here, but focus on those points that are relevant for determining Calvin's attitude towards humanism more closely.[224]

Pierre Imbart de la Tour, the chief advocate of the scholastic interpretation in the first half of the twentieth century, stressed the "decisive influence"[225] of Calvin's undergraduate training at the Collège de Montaigu. The "education in logic" Calvin received in that institution, "no less than the contact with Aristotelianism" he made there, "would leave a profound mark in his mind", Imbart maintained.[226] In particular the training in dialectics endowed Calvin with "this skill of analysing, defining, discussing, demonstrating", Imbart explains, "which made the doctor of Geneva one of the masters of controversy".[227] Indeed, the intellectual profile of the mature reformer reveals that his methods did not change and that "the former pupil of Montaigu takes pleasure in jousting".[228] Imbart claims that Calvin sometimes even resembled those Parisian sophists he despised so much, and concludes that "in reality, by virtue of his first education, his

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220 E. J. Ashworth, "Traditional logic" in Schmitt / Skinner / Kessler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 155.
221 Jardine, "Humanistic logic", 174.
222 Jardine, "Humanistic logic", 174.
223 Cf. chapter 6, pp. 315-320.
224 Cf. chapter 1, p. 58.
225 P. Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4 (Paris 1935), 10.
226 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 10.
227 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 10.
228 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 183.

methods, his 'disputes', he is related more closely than he thinks to the intellectual disciplines of the preceding centuries".[229]

Imbart's chief arguments concerning humanism have already been summarised.[230] They can be seen as epitomised in the proposed antagonism between the reformer of Geneva and the Renaissance with respect to classical anthropology. According to Imbart, Calvin believes that "antique wisdom, divided into so many systems, is not united except in one error: the belief in the natural goodness of man and the ignorance of his corruption".[231] This attitude is already manifest, Imbart insists, in Calvin's *Seneca Commentary*, in which the young author emphasised the incapacity of the classical philosophers to understand and explain evil in human nature.[232] Thus, Calvin's anti-humanistic stance with regard to anthropology is fixed, Imbart points out, *before* his conversion,[233] that is to say, before his definitive adherence to Luther's negative anthropology. Apart from anticipating the reformer's pessimistic views of human nature, the *Seneca Commentary* also foreshadows another anti-humanistic feature of the mature Calvin, namely his appreciation of the deterministic components inherent in Stoic philosophy. Calvin's preference for Stoicism, one classical school of thought among others revived by the humanists, is not representative of humanism on the whole by virtue of the selection of elements he chooses to make from it. In a sweeping statement, Imbart highlights what he believes to be the prevailing influences of Stoicism on Calvin, asserting that

> a streak of Stoicism permeates all our humanism and Calvin has perceived it. It is not without reason that this influence has been indicated. His doctrine of providence, his psychological determinism comes to us like an echo of Stoic paradoxes.[234]

The controversial theses of the main representative of the scholastic interpretation in the second half of the twentieth century, Karl Reuter, have already been mentioned.[235] We may add here that in the light of our examination of the arguments of the non-humanistic interpretation of the young Calvin, some of these theses appear doubtful, even in McGrath's reinterpretation. It is difficult to reconcile the hypothesis of "a strict epistemological nominalism or terminism"[236] with the assumption of an "intellectual conversion" formed on the basis of Parker's interpretation. Reuter's theory concerning the young Calvin can be summarised in the claim that Calvin was not only taught scholastic

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229 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 185.
230 Cf. chapter 1, pp. 58-59.
231 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 17.
232 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 18.
233 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 18.
234 Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 4, 16; quoted in Cadier, "Le prétendu stoïcisme de Calvin", 225. Cadier approved of the first part of Imbart's assertion but disagreed with the second (cf. Cadier, "Le prétendu stoïcisme de Calvin", 225). This attitude illustrates the controversy in Calvin studies concerning the question of humanism, both with regard to the young Calvin and to Calvin the reformer. For a more recent critical opinion on the *Seneca Commentary* and the revival of Stoicism cf. Moreau, "Calvin: fascination et critique du stoïcisme", 52-54.
235 Cf. chapter 1, p. 59.
236 Quoted in chapter 1, p. 59.

philosophy at Montaigu but also theology, and that the training in these disciplines exerted a direct, as well as indirect, influence on the intellectual and religious development of the future reformer. This claim, which has provoked sharp controversy, has largely been refuted by Ganoczy and other scholars.

Ganoczy has argued that "such a hypothesis [as Reuter's] is not confirmed by any historical document and is difficult to reconcile with what we know of the program for students of the arts at this college [Montaigu]".[237] Ganoczy's analysis of the writings of the young Calvin, especially the *Institutes* of 1536, has shown that there is no trace of any theological influence from Major",[238] whose name "is never directly or indirectly mentioned",[239] and that there is "not a single allusion ..... to the authorities upon which Major drew, neither Scotus, Ockham, Gregory of Rimini, Bradwardine, nor Pierre d'Ailly".[240] Although Calvin had undoubtedly acquired some knowledge of scholastic philosophy in his youth, he does not appear to have had "a profound understanding of true scholastic theology or even the books of the *Sentences*"[241] as a young man. Calvin only studied scholastic theology after 1536, when he began to construct the system of his own doctrinal teaching.[242] On the other hand, "it is quite likely", Ganoczy has argued, that the philosophical training received at Montaigu "contributed to the dialectical structure of Calvin's thought and indirectly to the elaboration of his theological doctrine".[243] This is, in general terms, what has remained valid of Reuter's thesis with regard to the young Calvin. As we recognise, this conclusion does not go substantially beyond Imbart's assertion reported above and can therefore be regarded as representative of the scholastic interpretation.

The founding father of the modern humanistic interpretation of the young Calvin was Lefranc, who established this interpretation on the solid basis of scientific principles in his penetrating study on Calvin's youth.[244] Lefranc is a convinced advocate of the anti-humanistic interpretation as far as Calvin the reformer is concerned, but he recognises at the same time the humanistic dimensions of Calvin's life before his conversion, arguing that this turning-point radically changed Calvin's attitude towards humanism and transformed him from a "scholar and humanist" into an "apostle" of the reformed faith.[245] Thus for Lefranc Calvin's religious conversion does not imply an equally complete intellectual conversion but simply signifies the abandonment of his humanist pursuits in

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237 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 177.
238 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 176.
239 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 177.
240 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 177.
241 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 177.
242 Cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 177-178.
243 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 178.
244 Cf. above, p. 230 n. 58.
245 Quoted in chapter 1, p. 48.

favour of his religious reform work. Before Calvin's conversion to Protestantism, however, there was a purely humanistic phase in his life. Having been introduced to classical Greek by Wolmar during his legal studies, Calvin decided to become a humanist after qualifying as a lawyer,[246] and so he went to Paris to study with Danès. There follows a quiet and happy period in Calvin's life, in which he "gathers his thoughts" and is able to pursue freely his favourite literary and philological studies.[247] "At this moment", Lefranc comments, "his only manifest ambition is to make a name for himself in humanism".[248] The *Seneca Commentary* is the fruit of the scientific labours of this humanistic period; it is an exclusively philological work which was written for the purpose of winning recognition in the scholarly world.[249] However, when Calvin converted to Protestantism in the second half of 1532, he began to neglect his humanistic studies, which can be identified with the "other studies" mentioned in the Preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms*, and came to admit that humanism had been the wrong way for him.[250] As far as the encounter with Alciatus is concerned, Lefranc is of the opinion that although Calvin sided with de l'Estoile against the Italian humanist, he did full justice to Alciatus' "impartial and noble character".[251]

Lefranc's portrait of the young Calvin as a happy humanist scholar leisurely engaged in literary pursuits made a considerable impact on the development of Calvin research. It encouraged scholars to pay increased attention to the question of the young Calvin and humanism, and it was echoed in several broader studies synthesising the results of Calvin research. To give an example of the first case, we can mention Henry Lecoultre, the young Swiss scholar who, after having analysed Calvin's conversion,[252] dedicated an essay to the *Seneca Commentary*. In this study (the first scholarly essay on Calvin's commentary)[253] Lecoultre maintained that Calvin did not want to become a practising lawyer[254] but a humanist scholar, and therefore his intention in writing the *Seneca Commentary* was "to carve out a place for himself in the brilliant troop of the humanists".[255] Calvin praises Budé and Erasmus,[256] and when he criticises a humanist, he generally does it with "exquisite courtesy", except with Alciatus, whom he censures severely.[257] It has to be admitted that Calvin focuses on interpretation in his commentary, and not on textual

246 Cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 81-82.
247 Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 91. The period is the academic year 1531-1532.
248 Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 92.
249 Cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 92-93.
250 Cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 98.
251 Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 80.
252 Lecoultre, "La conversion de Calvin: Étude morale" in *Revue de théologie et philosophie* 23 (1890), 5-30.
253 Cf. above, p. 247.
254 Cf. Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 52.
255 Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 54.
256 Cf. Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 70.
257 Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 53 n. 1.

criticism;[258] thus he does not bring up anything new in the field of philological investigation, but concentrates mainly on explaining the text.[259] With regard to the moral philosophy of classical antiquity, Calvin displays a "terrible severity": its virtues are but sins, its praise of human nature is an error and its belief in natural law is naive.[260] It has to be noted that this verdict is more absolute than the judgement advanced on the matter in the later editions of the *Institutes*.[261] However, Calvin can be seen, in one instance, as criticising the scholastic educators of his day in a brief but harsh comment - a rare occurrence in Calvin to which Lecoultre lucidly drew attention.[262] Finally, as far as the conversion is concerned, Lecoultre agreed with Lefranc that "the scholar gave way to the apostle": "Calvin gave up philology", Lecoultre argued, "to dedicate himself more directly to the service of God", while his "erudition preserves its value as an instrument".[263]

Lefranc's picture of the young Calvin also inspired Williston Walker, whose influential Calvin biography dealt extensively with the reformer's youth.[264] Walker says about Calvin the law student that "the humanistic spirit of the age strongly moved him",[265] while the *Seneca Commentary* is presented as "the work of an unusually high-minded, ethically strenuous humanist" who "knows and admires the world of classical antiquity"[266] and shows a conspicuous "zeal for humanistic scholarship".[267] Thus the young Calvin can on the whole be characterised as an "eager young humanist" before his conversion[268] - except in one aspect, namely his encounter with Alciatus. Although it is evident, Walker argued, that the training offered by Alciatus "must have been of the highest value"[269] for Calvin, it is nevertheless surprising that Calvin favoured de l'Estoile over Alciatus. "Contrary to one's presuppositions as to what would have been the case", Walker reasoned, "Calvin preferred the severely churchly and rather mediæval instructor at Orléans to the brilliant innovating Italian at Bourges".[270] The conversion, finally, entailed a marked, if temporary, diminution of humanism; this is visible, for instance, in the first edition of the *Institutes*, which, compared with the later editions, "shows more of a departure from the classics-loving Calvin who had commented on Seneca".[271] On the other hand, Calvin's "strenuous conviction regarding the absolute and exclusive divine authority of the Scriptures", which became very prominent in him after the conversion, was, so

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258 Cf. Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 55.
259 Cf. Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 60.
260 Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 67-68.
261 Cf. Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 67.
262 Cf. Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 74.
263 Lecoultre, "Calvin d'après son commentaire sur le *De Clementia* de Sénèque", 61.
264 Cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 18-158 (this is almost a third of the whole text).
265 Walker, *John Calvin*, 49.
266 Walker, *John Calvin*, 60-61.
267 Walker, *John Calvin*, 95.
268 Walker, *John Calvin*, 97.
269 Walker, *John Calvin*, 51.
270 Walker, *John Calvin*, 51-52.
271 Walker, *John Calvin*, 138.

Walker insists, "the logical outcome of that return to the sources which was the groundnote of the Renaissance".[272]

Breen amplified Lefranc's interpretation of the young Calvin as a humanist, giving increased consideration to the sources (principally the preface to the *Antapologia* and the *Seneca Commentary*) and to the background of intellectual history. We have summed up Breen's most important statements about the young Calvin,[273] and we shall add here some information concerning the two texts by the young Calvin which Breen investigated in detail. As regards the preface to the *Antapologia* (or the person of Alciatus respectively) Breen judged the humanist's *Emblemata* unappreciatively as "light bits of innocuous advice", the appeal of which "was to the leisure class".[274] Alciatus himself is portrayed not just as a superficial man but as "a typical Italian hedonist", who can not possibly have been liked by "the personally ascetic Calvin".[275] Breen concluded that "Calvin may have regarded him as a frivolous Italian".[276] This strange judgement can be explained by the fact that Breen relied heavily on Henry Green's puritanical biography of Alciatus of 1870 in his appraisal of that humanist. We cannot blame Breen for ignoring the relevance of the *Emblemata* for modern psychological research, which was only established, at least formally, about two decades later.[277] However, one might perhaps expect a more adequate appreciation of the power of pictorial symbolism, an appreciation that would be less dependent on patterns of interpretation suggested by established schools of thought.

As regards the *Seneca Commentary*, Breen sees in it "the culmination of Calvin's youthful humanism"[278] and at the same time "a contribution to reform in the spirit of Erasmus".[279] In writing it "Calvin had learned that the classics could be studied without appeal to the church",[280] although he did not separate humanism from evangelicism as a young scholar.[281] However, Breen pointed out that "the work of Calvin is a commentary, not a critical edition of *De Clementia*", arguing that the author neglected almost entirely the aspect of textual criticism: "It appears", Breen stated, "that Calvin had paid practically no attention to the request of Erasmus for young humanists to devote themselves to the task of further emending the text of Seneca".[282] Nevertheless, Calvin can be seen as having acquired the skills associated with the humanist method, for he is able to apply a historical approach to the text and to supply a philological interpretation of it, using the

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272 Walker, *John Calvin*, 77.
273 Cf. chapter 1, p. 62.
274 Breen, *John Calvin*, 50-51.
275 Breen, *John Calvin*, 52.
276 Breen, *John Calvin*, 51.
277 Cf. chapter 2, p. 123 (n. 282). Jung's references mentioned there date from roughly 1945-1954.
278 Breen, *John Calvin*, 67.
279 Breen, *John Calvin*, 79.
280 Breen, *John Calvin*, 9.
281 Breen, *John Calvin*, 36.
282 Breen, *John Calvin*, 92.

various techniques of rhetorical and grammatical explanation.[283]

Ganoczy's interpretation of the young Calvin and humanism centres primarily on the evaluation of the *Seneca Commentary* and the *Psychopannychia*.[284] As far as the *Seneca Commentary* is concerned, Ganoczy builds on Lecoultre's and Breen's analyses[285] and has no hesitation to affirm that Calvin's commentary "is the epitome of a humanist study of an ancient document".[286] Apart from the common emphasis on Calvin's use of the humanist method and approach in treating a classical text, which was established by his predecessors, Ganoczy highlights two other humanistic aspects prominent in the *Seneca Commentary*, namely its author's preoccupation with ethical and political issues.[287] According to Ganoczy the *Seneca Commentary* reveals "the perspectives of the Christian moralist, a disciple of Paul and Augustine",[288] and it "bears the mark of Erasmian moralism".[289] In addition to that, the commentary "gives ..... witness to solid social and political thought",[290] showing the influence of the French "royal jurists", who argued in favour of absolutist principles.[291] Thus, viewed on the whole, the young Calvin of 1532 appears as a supporter of law and order who emphasises "the need for a strong central authority;" he does not criticise, explicitly or implicitly, the king's persecution of Lutherans in his *Seneca Commentary*.[292]

As far as the *Psychopannychia* is concerned, Ganoczy asserts that "with this study Calvin presents himself for the first time as a true 'biblical' humanist".[293] However, as Ganoczy concedes, the scope of this assertion is limited by the fact that Calvin chiefly relied on the traditional version of the Vulgate in his references to the Bible and that he did not use any humanist commentaries in his exegetical discussion. On the other hand, Ganoczy points out that Calvin mainly "followed the Augustinian principle of interpreting the Bible by the Bible", which was an approach recommended explicitly by Erasmus.[294] The fact that these two tendencies - marginalisation of external humanist material and advancement of an intrinsic interpretation of the Bible - become more accentuated in the first edition of the *Institutes*, permits the conclusion that after his conversion, "humanism

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283 Breen, *John Calvin*, 96.
284 Following the precepts of his adopted method (cf. above, p. 230 n. 63), Ganoczy almost exclusively concentrates on the known texts by the young Calvin.
285 Cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 327 n. 18.
286 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 179.
287 It should be noted that Imbart de la Tour had already stressed these points, although principally with regard to Calvin the reformer, not the young Calvin. Cf. chapter 1, p. 58.
288 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 179.
289 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 74.
290 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 179.
291 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 73.
292 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 74.
293 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 179.
294 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 180.

ceased to be an end in itself for Calvin, and simply helped to support the reform".[295] In fact, Ganoczy argues that Léfèvre and Erasmus "only served to introduce Calvin to an intellectual and religious current" - evangelicism - which "made it easier for him later on to choose a direction quite different from theirs" - Protestantism.[296]

Wendel was one of the first to make use of Battles and Hugo's edition of the *Seneca Commentary*, and the results can be appreciated in his *Calvin et l'humanisme*, the first two parts of which deal with Calvin's intellectual development before his conversion.[297] But before discussing the *Seneca Commentary*, Wendel draws attention to the influence of Cordier on the young Calvin, maintaining that "Cordier's lessons were for Calvin a first initiation into philosophical humanism".[298] Wendel further suggests that Alciatus constituted a positive humanist influence on Calvin, despite the latter's negative attitude towards the famous Italian professor. "Calvin followed the lessons of Alciatus ..... perhaps not without profit", and the future reformer may have retained something from the humanist's "precise and elegant Latin" as well as "something from his juridical teaching and even his method of interpretation".[299] In his preface to Duchemin's *Antapologia*, Calvin exhibits an aristocratic attitude towards learning which "is well in line with humanism,"[300] and which is manifest in his suggestion that only those could judge properly in the matter of this controversy who were initiated into the mysteries of the law.[301] During his second stay at Paris Calvin was a typical humanist of the sixteenth century insofar as "the sum of all knowledge was to be found for him in the works of the classical authors" and insofar as he believed that "the key to all learning" was "knowledge of the ancient languages".[302] At the time of his private studies in Paris Calvin "probably admitted a renewed theology fashioned in the frame of humanist studies",[303] following the example of Erasmus, who had tried to reconcile Christian thought with classical philosophy.[304]

At the time of the publication of his *Seneca Commentary* Calvin is a fully dedicated humanist who "is entirely absorbed in his philology and in his classical antiquities".[305] Wendel observes that the humanistic method of analysis and interpretation employed by Calvin in his commentary is derived from the philological and historical approach which Budé had developed in his *Annotations on 24 Books of the Pandects* (1508) and with which

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295 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 180.
296 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 180.
297 Cf. chapter 1, p. 69 (n. 197).
298 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 11.
299 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 23.
300 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 28.
301 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 27.
302 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 30.
303 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 30.
304 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 31.
305 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 44; quoted in chapter 1, p. 70.

Calvin was familiar from his legal studies.[306] However, Calvin does not only apply the humanistic method as shaped by Budé but he improves the whole humanist approach by laying increased stress on accuracy in the execution of a critical literary task. According to Wendel, Calvin has acquired "from his legal studies and from his extensive reading of Budé's work ..... a care for scientific precision which the humanists usually lacked".[307] However, Wendel argues that in general "Calvin defends a purely humanist point of view" in his philological analysis; so, for instance, when he praises Seneca with reference to Quintilian's judgement, highlighting the rich texture of the Stoic philosopher's eloquent rhetoric in terms of *copia verborum* and drawing attention to his wide erudition.[308]

As regards Calvin's conversion, Wendel holds that the *Seneca Commentary* "does not reveal ..... any religious preoccupations", contending that "one would really have to be very biased if one wanted to find in this book the beginnings of the work of the reformer".[309] Thus the sixteenth-century hypothesis that *Seneca Commentary* contained a hidden appeal to the king to exercise clemency towards his Protestant subjects cannot be maintained on any substantial grounds.[310] In reality Calvin was neither a Protestant nor a Nicodemite when writing the *Seneca Commentary*, but he "still shared at that moment the religious attitude of an Erasmus, of a Budé and of the majority of humanists he could approach", that is, he was an "advocate of leniency" as far as Lutheranism was concerned.[311] That the author of the *Seneca Commentary* had not undergone conversion yet is manifest precisely in his much-discussed assertion of a negative view on anthropology, an assertion which has often been taken as foreshadowing the mature reformer's anti-humanistic convictions, and which can also be construed as pro-Lutheran in character.[312] However, when Calvin emphasised the human potential for evil and sin against Seneca's and the other classical philosophers' belief in the natural goodness of human beings, he was not inspired in his pessimism by the reformed doctrine of original sin, for the corresponding assertion that "certain people are wantonly [gratuito] wicked" is followed by the vague statement "it happens, I do not know how".[313] If Wendel clearly separates Calvin's early defence of a negative anthropological perspective from the Lutheran view, he does not try to explain this defence in relation to humanist (or scholastic) thought but effectively leaves this important question unanswered. With regard to the moral philosophy of humanism, or more specifically, Christian humanism, Wendel stresses the fact that while Calvin

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306 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 48-49.

307 Note that Wendel qualifies: "at least those [humanists] of the first generation"; Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 56-57.

308 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 42-43.

309 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 44. Cf. also above, pp. 223-224.

310 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 46. As we have seen, the early humanist biographer Papire Masson was the author of that hypothesis (cf. above, p. 238).

311 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 47.

312 Cf. e.g. Imbart de la Tour's interpretation (summarised above, p. 254).

313 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 52; cf. also *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. and trans. Battles / Hugo, 320.

generally advocates the superiority of Christian ethics to the moral philosophy of classical antiquity, he does not neglect to identify the various areas of agreement between Christian and pagan thought in this respect.[314] In one instance, namely Calvin's criticism of the Stoic ideal of impassivity, Wendel points out that Calvin cites several pagan authors against only one Christian authority (Augustine), and he concludes that "Calvin seems to be happy to be able to show the agreement of pagans and Christians on this point".[315]

After the publication of Ganoczy's, Battles', Hugo's, and Wendel's studies, Calvin scholars tended to adopt the major conclusions of these detailed investigations in their interpretation of the relation of the young Calvin to humanism - without doing further research. Bouwsma, for instance, did not re-examine or reconsider Calvin's youth when drawing his *Sixteenth-Century Portrait* of the reformer,[316] but he based his humanistic interpretation of the young Calvin, which is summed up in the sweeping assertion that "between 1527 and 1534 ..... Calvin inhabited the Erasmian world of thought and breathed its spiritual atmosphere",[317] on the studies of Breen, Wendel[318] and, to a certain extent, Ganoczy.[319] Only in recent times there have been fresh efforts at examining independently the young Calvin and his attitude towards humanism. These efforts are mainly due to the initiative of Oberman, who has undertaken to revisit the topic of Calvin's youth in the course of preparing his planned biography of the Geneva reformer.[320]

Oberman has, among other things, tried to explain the contradictions inherent in Calvin's different conversion accounts by suggesting that two of the most important texts concerned, namely the *Reply to Sadoleto* and the preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms*, present what can be regarded as substantially the same content but from distinct, or more precisely, opposed perspectives. Thus according to Oberman the *Reply to Sadoleto* describes Calvin's conversion from a human perspective as a "horizontal search for truth by trial and error", while the Preface to the *Commentary on the Psalms* depicts the same turning-point from a divine perspective, highlighting the "vertical dimension" of the individual's search for truth, that is, the unexpected illumination coming from God.[321] The implication of this theory - which is not spelled out fully by Oberman - is that Calvin gradually turned from a more anthropocentric outlook, possibly influenced - one could speculate - by his early involvement in humanistic activities as well as by the humanistically-oriented intellectual environment of Strasbourg, to a accentuatedly theocentric outlook in his later theological

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314 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 55. For the citation containing Wendel's judgement cf. chapter 1, p. 70.
315 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 53.
316 Cf. above, p. 249 (n. 196).
317 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 13. For the full quotation cf. chapter 1, p. 73.
318 Cf. Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 240 n. 18.
319 Cf. Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 239 n. 11.
320 Cf. above, pp. 248-249 (ns. 192, 193, 197).
321 Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 289.

writings. Be that as it may, Oberman concludes that Calvin's conception of conversion - a twofold conception, as we have seen - inspired his followers with a resolute sense of action. The Dutch scholar argues that since "for Calvin the primary connotation of conversion is not salvation but vocation as a call to service",[322] and since this vocation includes the "toleration of an ignorant majority [i.e. the Catholic populace]" in the sense of "the duty of a minority [i.e. the Protestant elite] to endure amidst the travails caused by a majority unwilling to accept God's dominion",[323] "the militancy of later Calvinism can be retraced to the very cradle of the sudden conversion of Calvin himself".[324]

Having examined the various old and modern interpretations of the young Calvin, we can now proceed to discuss the important issues related to humanism individually, following, more or less, the chronology of Calvin's early life. As relatively little is known about Calvin's youth, our systematic examination of the main primary and secondary literature will prove useful, and we can select from the original texts by Calvin and from the spectrum of critical opinion we have reviewed what seems appropriate for the argument of our analysis. As we have seen, the first station of Calvin's scholarly career was the Collège des Capettes near Noyon, where the boy received what was supposed to be a preparatory instruction for university. Calvin does not say anything about this school, and very little is known about this initial phase of his intellectual development, except the early biographers' reports about the candidate's remarkable proficiency. Among these reports the most credible, because least hagiographic, testimony, is Desmay's affirmation that "there he [Calvin] betrayed a fine intelligence, a natural readiness to comprehend the humanities".[325] We must repeat here that the term *humanities* does not refer specifically to the *studia humanitatis* in this context but rather designates the cycle of elementary disciplines taught at a preparatory school.[326] That cycle was of course in part identical, at least formally, with the humanistic subjects, but we have no indication that the humanist approach had penetrated the provincial schools of Picardy in any substantial degree at the time Calvin attended the Collège des Capettes.

After the preparatory training received at this local school Calvin went to study in the University of Paris, attending the obligatory undergraduate course in arts from approximately 1523 to 1527.[327] However, it appears that before he could begin his course in the Faculty of Arts, Calvin needed some additional instruction in Latin grammar, which he got, we assume, at the Collège de la Marche.[328] Having acquired sufficient knowledge of

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322 Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 291.
323 Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 289.
324 Oberman, "*Subita Conversio*", 295.
325 Quoted above, p. 242. Already Papire Masson had reported that Calvin was a pupil of superior talent at the school of the Capettes; cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 27.
326 Cf. above, p. 242 n. 153.
327 For an alternative dating cf. Parker, *John Calvin*, 186-191 (=Appendix 1). Parker suggests the period from 1520/21 to 1525/26.
328 Or Sainte-Barbe, according to another tradition; cf. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 21-27.

Latin to follow the beginners' course in logic, he was finally admitted to the Collège de Montaigu, a famous institution with some notorious teachers but several outstanding *alumni* including Erasmus, Vives, Rabelais, Loyola, Ramus and Montaigne. At Montaigu Calvin attained the proficiency in the lower arts necessary to obtain the degree of *Magister Artium*, which would enable him to pursue higher studies such as theology, law, or medicine. On the whole, we can say that Calvin's experiences at the University of Paris were twofold. On the one hand, he made his first - and short - contact with humanism in the person of Mathurin Cordier, who taught him some of the basic Latin he needed to enter the faculty and take up his studies. On the other hand, he underwent what was probably the sternest nominalist training of the day - and this was no doubt the dominating influence.

Of course we may assume with Bouwsma that "the more important part of his [Calvin's] Paris education seems to have been informal, as has often been the case with good students", but the implied conclusion that Calvin assimilated humanist ideas through contact with "like-minded fellow students and congenial mentors"[329] represents a pure speculation which is not warranted by any substantial evidence. If we are disposed to believe what Beza[330] reports and what Lefranc[331] and Ganoczy[332] accept, namely that Calvin was in touch with Olivétan already during his first Paris years, then Bouwsma's argument about the influence of the social environment takes a different turn, and we must admit that apart from nominalism and humanism, Lutheranism played a major part in Calvin's intellectual and religious development at Paris. It is clear that there are no hard proofs to identify the precise character of Calvin's social environment at Paris - and to evaluate its impact on the future reformer. Scholars have advanced different theories,[333] and McGrath has rightly pointed out that "uncertainty ..... is a word which recurs throughout our discussion of Calvin's Paris period".[334] The same author has suggested in his recent Calvin biography that nominalism and Lutheranism, not humanism, were the dominant influences shaping Calvin's mind in his years at Montaigu, the former coming from the university and the latter from the urban environment.[335]

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329 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 12 (sequence of clauses inverted).

330 Cf. above, p. 232.

331 Cf. Lefranc, *La jeunesse de Calvin*, 68, 99-104.

332 Cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 61.

333 The judgements vary considerably, and the best is perhaps not to go beyond Ganoczy's and Wendel's cautious affirmations. Ganoczy suggests that "the young Calvin marched along the straight path indicated by his educators [i.e. terminism and the *devotio moderna*], while taking note of troubling facts that he saw at the edge of the road and in the surrounding countryside [i.e. humanism and Lutheranism]", concluding that "for the time being, the young man seems only to observe"; cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 62. Wendel laid more emphasis on humanism, but his statement is equally guarded. He suggested that "it is *possible* that Calvin entered relationship with a certain number of people who may have counterbalanced the purely scholastic influence of his school"; cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 16 (italics added).

334 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 50.

335 Cf. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 40-47 (nominalism), 47-50 (Lutheranism). McGrath emphasises "the Parisian preoccupation with Lutheranism" (McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 47).

As far as Cordier is concerned, we are certain that the impression he made on Calvin was profound and pervasive, although Calvin attended Cordier's classes for a short while only, perhaps about three to four months.[336] We are also quite certain that Cordier's teaching conveyed some of the ideals of humanist pedagogy and philology - probably in very elementary form. However, judgements vary again considerably as to the precise nature and scope of Cordier's influence on Calvin. Walker's assertion that "such facility in the mastery of Latin reveals the young scholar [Calvin] as giving brilliant promise ..... of conspicuous humanistic attainments as within his ultimate grasp"[337] (an assertion which was echoed in many studies) is certainly exaggerated, and so is Wendel's claim that "Cordier's lessons were for Calvin a first initiation into philosophical humanism".[338] Even the affirmation that Cordier "was considered the best master teaching then at Paris",[339] which echoes Beza's description of him as "a man of great worth and erudition and of the highest repute in almost all the schools in France as a teacher of the young,"[340] cannot be accepted without qualification.

In order to get a realistic picture of Cordier's influence on Calvin, we must consider the reformer's own statement on his former Latin teacher as well as the essential facts about that teacher's humanism. Calvin acknowledged his gratitude and indebtedness to Cordier in a dedicatory epistle figuring as the preface to his *Commentary on I Thessalonians* of 1550, and he does not depart from his customary attitude of implicitness towards humanism in that personal letter of dedication.[341] However, a close inspection of the text allows us to identify two points that can be considered as allusions to humanism. First, Calvin points out that Cordier "taught me the true way and right manner to learn, so that I could continue with greater profit".[342] This is no doubt a reference, even if only a very general one, to the new humanist programme of education, which aimed at improving learning techniques and teaching methods, and which was proclaimed under the labels of *The Method of Study* or *The Right Institution of the Study of Letters* by Erasmus,[343] Vives[344] or Budé.[345] Calvin repeats the general formulas suggested by the humanists, namely "the true way and the right manner to learn", and he adds a remark concerning the enhanced performance made possible with Cordier's method: "so that I could continue with greater profit". Moreover, the reformer underlines the latter aspect by concluding that "I

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336 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 11.
337 Walker, *John Calvin*, 38.
338 Quoted above, p. 260.
339 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 11.
340 Beza, *Vita Calvini*; CO 21.121; quoted in *John Calvin*, eds. Potter / Greengrass, 2.
341 Cf. above, p. 229.
342 Preface to the *Commentary on I Thessalonians*; CO 13.525; VL and VG conflated. VG quoted in Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 12; English translation in *John Calvin*, eds. Potter / Greengrass, 3.
343 Erasmus, *De ratione studii* (1511), a treatise based on the humanist's experiences at Montaigu.
344 Vives, *De ratione studii puerilis* (1523).
345 Budé, *De studio literarum recte et commode instituendo* (1532).

was so helped by you that whatever progress I have since made I gladly ascribe to you".[346] The second point made by Calvin is of a very general nature, too, and reflects the intense humanist criticism of the incompetence of traditional medieval Latin teachers, whose pupils - in contradistinction to those of Cordier - "lacked a sound foundation and solid knowledge, and had nothing but show" according to Calvin.[347] It is evident from Calvin's preface that he appreciated the difference between the clumsy Latinity prevalent in the schools and Cordier's superior command of classical Latin, which was based on the clear-cut precepts of Ciceronianism. There is no doubt that "what Calvin learnt from Mathurin Cordier in the Collège de la Marche as a boy of fourteen, was Ciceronian prose".[348]

If we want to know, however, what Calvin's general appreciation of Cordier's teaching signifies in concrete terms, we must draw a picture of the latter's pedagogical method - which is not too difficult a task. Cordier, who is sometimes considered as one of the fathers of modern pedagogy,[349] was mainly famous as a man of action in the classrooms of elementary school, not as an educational theorist. His written legacy principally consists of his celebrated manual of Latin instruction entitled *De corrupti sermonis emendatione libellus* (Paris 1530) which is a compilation of 1800 faulty expressions, gathered from pupils' mistakes, together with the corrected forms.[350] Cordier's manual, which was widely used in the sixteenth century and even later, reveals the main principle of his method. This principle consists of a simple rule which is acknowledged today as fundamental in language teaching. It says that the teacher must not play the role of a propagator of the norm of good usage in the first place, but that he must take the difficulties which his pupils encounter as the point of departure, thus leading the learner from the realisation of the mistakes he makes gradually to an awareness of what the correct form is and how he can attain it.[351] However, a closer look at Cordier's method as applied in his *De corrupti sermonis emendatione libellus* shows that this approach had its limitations, too, for the French schoolmaster, in order to prevent the invasion of Latin by French expressions, relies precisely on these French expressions, of which he first provides a typically bad translation - to be avoided - and then a good one - to be imitated.[352]

Apart from the method just described there are a few other points of Cordier's pedagogy which deserve to be mentioned. First and foremost, we should call attention to

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346 Preface to the *Commentary on I Thessalonians*; CO 13.526; quoted in Parker, *John Calvin*, 7.

347 Preface to the *Commentary on I Thessalonians*; CO 13.526; VL and VG conflated. VL quoted in Parker, *John Calvin*, 7; VG quoted in Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 12.

348 Hugo, "Introduction" [to] *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. and trans. Battles / Hugo, 42.

349 Cf. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 57, 320 n. 2 (the relevant literature is listed in the note).

350 Cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 27.

351 Cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 27. For the more recent literature on Cordier (supplementing Ganoczy's references) cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 371-372 ns. 42-44.

352 Cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 775-776.

his courageous opposition to the widespread contemporary practice of physical punishment in education. He strongly condemned the use of the rod in school, arguing that "never did the sages approve of this custom, which goes against nature, that the pupils should be led to use the language correctly only by whips and sanctions".[353] Instead of alienating the teacher from the student with the constant threat of the rod, Cordier urged "the establishment of familiar and friendly relations between teacher and scholars".[354] In the context of a humane attitude towards education and educating, teachers can fulfil their "prime task", which is to motivate their pupils and "arouse interest for study" in them.[355] In this way it is possible to reach the humanists' ulterior aim in teaching Latin, namely to make the language come alive in the mind of the student.[356] The "soft" approach to teaching advocated by Cordier, which focuses on activating the pupil's innate potential for intellectual development, is epitomised by him in the metaphor of the plant - a metaphor, incidentally, still used today in certain educational theories. Thus the humanistic schoolmaster tells the teachers that "your job is only to plant or to water: God will make the plant grow".[357] As can be noticed from this statement, education and religion were inseparable for Cordier, who, ordained early as a priest, "proved himself to be an heir of biblical humanism and the *devotio moderna*".[358] His pedagogy, as one critic has observed, "proceeds from theology",[359] and accordingly, Cordier aimed at furthering not only the intellectual faculties of the pupils but also at stimulating their moral development.[360]

We must be aware that the above description of Cordier's pedagogy is largely based on documentation dating from 1530 - the apparition of *De corrupti sermonis emendatione* - and later, and that it therefore has to be considered as a reconstruction by inference if it is taken to apply to Calvin's period in Paris. However, we must remember that when Calvin wrote his dedicatory epistle to Cordier in 1550 (Cordier was teaching at Lausanne at that time) his judgement, although declaredly retrospective in character, was clearly influenced by his positive appreciation of Cordier's considerable contribution to the enterprise of Protestant education and may thus include an implicit approval of the French schoolmaster's practice after his period in Paris (1514-1530). As is known, Cordier (1479 / 80-1564) left France for his faith and later taught at Neuchâtel (1539-1545), Lausanne (1545-1559) and Geneva (initially 1536-39 and then again 1559-64); perhaps he even assisted in the composition of Calvin's *Leges Academiae Genevensis*.[361] Therefore, considering the historiographical inadequacies concerning the reconstruction of Cordier's

353 Quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 28.
354 Walker, *John Calvin*, 35.
355 Walker, *John Calvin*, 34.
356 Cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 34.
357 Quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 28.
358 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 57.
359 Cottret, *Calvin*, 28.
360 Cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 35.
361 Cf. E. Garin, *La educación en Europa, 1400-1600* (Madrid 1987), 182 n. 15. Cf. also Walker, *John Calvin*, 364 n. 2.

Paris period and the connotations of the historical context in which Calvin's preface was written, it becomes clear that a brief look at Cordier's educational work performed in Protestant Switzerland is vital to round off the general assessment of his achievement given before, in particular with regard to the question of humanism.

Apart from the key features of Cordier's pedagogy, which we have described above, there is one minor but nevertheless significant aspect which merits mentioning as it touches on a controversial issue of humanism. This aspect consists in Cordier's insistence on the imposition of Latin not only as a written but also as a spoken language for those pupils who aimed at higher education. In the Collège de la Rive in Geneva, for instance, Cordier allowed the children to use the vernacular alongside Latin in the lower grades (the first three years), while for the upper grade (the remaining four years) he prescribed the exclusive application of Latin in the strictest fashion. According to Cordier it was the teacher's task to realise the ideal of cultivating Latin both as a written and spoken language to the fullest extent possible, which meant, in concrete, that the master should bring his pupils to the point where they love Latin so much that they always speak it - and become ashamed of their own mother tongue.[362] Back in Geneva in 1560, Cordier could actually realise this Ciceronian ideal and impose, with Calvin's support, a rule obliging all students to use Latin constantly, in and out of school, and providing that those who broke this rule should be denounced.[363] However, as Garin has reminded us, to transform classical Latin into a spoken language was not the original purpose of the humanist revival of letters and went against its principal educational objective and cultural ambition, which was to impart "a profound knowledge of an almost exemplary literary language in order to relate it historically to the living language just emerging then".[364] But if classical Latin is converted into a spoken language and its potentially fruitful relation to the vernacular destroyed, then, Garin argues, "that is abolished which was precisely the sense of the 'return' and the 'imitation': to provide a larger historical background and a critical awareness for our culture, our life and our time".[365]

The Collège de Montaigu, "hardly a humanist academy",[366] is usually considered the focal point of the scholastic interpretation of the young Calvin. There is no doubt that this famous college of the University of Paris was a stronghold of nominalism and a highly influential institution, but the degree in which its undergraduate education in arts contributed to shape Calvin's mind is uncertain and rather minimised today, especially with regard to the thought of the mature Calvin. We have already discussed the scholastic

362 Cf. Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 182.
363 Cf. Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 182.
364 Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 182.
365 Garin, *La educación en Europa*, 182.
366 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 12.

elements,[367] and we must now turn to the question of humanism during Calvin's stay at Montaigu. It is obvious that since nominalism was the predominant intellectual culture and code in that college, an inquiry concerning humanism will focus on items of circumstantial or indirect evidence. As regards the former, we have stated that it is not possible to draw any definite conclusion.[368] As regards the latter, we may repeat that there are no clear proofs in Calvin's youth for the conception of an "intellectual conversion" from a nominalistic notion of epistemology to a realistic theory of knowledge (either scholastic or humanistic).[369] However, there is another aspect which we are able to analyse here, namely Calvin's attitude towards the humanist polemic against the nominalist approach to philosophy, theology and education prevalent in the University of Paris. Although this is a clear instance of indirect evidence derived from negative criticism, it is not completely irrelevant to determine the young Calvin's stance on the issue, because this polemic was advanced by some of the most illustrious humanists of the day and because it occupied a very prominent place in the agenda of the humanist reform movement. Moreover, some of this polemic was forged precisely in, or in connection with, the Collège de Montaigu.

If we look at Calvin's share in the humanist polemic against nominalism we find that it is limited almost exclusively to the field of theology, while issues of a philosophical and educational character are strongly marginalised, although not entirely absent. As regards theology, there is ample evidence of Calvin's opposition to nominalism in the first edition of his *Institutes*, where he refers to the representatives of Parisian nominalist theology as "scholastic sophists" or simply as "sophists".[370] These learned men, according to Calvin, "dispute [theological] matters under the shade in benches and chairs" and "gossip about in schools and corners"[371] - the corners of the Sorbonne, as the French translation reveals.[372] Engrossed in the mysteries of dialectics, the notorious sophists pass their time "philosophising over nothing"[373] and "wish to appear to have spent their whole life in framing syllogisms".[374] By means of the syllogism, which is their chief instrument, they can, as Calvin points out, "neatly prove to themselves" a certain doctrine, "but if their consciences happen to be troubled by some graver feeling", Calvin argues polemically, "they will easily, along with their syllogisms, be overturned, be dissolved and melt away".[375]

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367 The scholastic interpretations of Calvin are discussed above, pp. 253-255 (the young Calvin) and in chapter 1, pp. 58-60 (Calvin the reformer).

368 Cf. above, p. 264 (ns. 333, 335).

369 According to Parker's suggestion; cf. above, p. 252.

370 Cf. e.g. *Inst.* [1536] *Epistle Dedicatory to Francis*, 1.14, 5.16, 5.69; ed. Battles, 8, 24, 133, 173 (=*Inst.* [1559] *Epistle Dedicatory to Francis*, 2.8.34, 3.4.1, 4.19.34). Calvin does not yet use the label of "Sorbonne" for the Theological Faculty of the University of Paris in the first edition of his *Institutes*, nor does he make a clear distinction between nominalism and realism when using the term "sophist" (cf. introduction, p. 15 n. 82 for Calvin's later terminology).

371 *Inst.* [1536] 1.29; ed. Battles, 32-33 (=*Inst.* [1559] 3.14.15).

372 VG [1541]: "babiller ou mentir en quelque anglet d'une Sorbonne"; *Inst.* [1541] chapter 6; ed. Pannier, vol. 2, 299 (=*Inst.* [1559] 3.14.15. VG only).

373 *Inst.* [1536] 1.26; ed. Battles, 30 (=*Inst.* [1559] 2.8.57).

374 *Inst.* [1536] 5.16. (=*Inst.* [1559] 3.4.1).

375 *Inst.* [1536] 4.32. (=*Inst.* [1559] 4.17.35).

Finally, considering certain points promulgated in the *Determinatio Theologica facultatis Parisiensis, super doctrina Lutherana* in 1521, Calvin contends that the theologians of the Sorbonne "truly betray themselves as sons of Satan".[376] Thus in the belief of being confronted with "diabolical"[377] doctrines, Calvin occasionally breaks his accustomed rule of reforming the medieval theology maintained at Paris by critical analysis and systematic "deconstruction", and he opts for a sweeping dismissal, conjuring up the classical image of the Gordian knot and declaring that "it is better to cut than to toil so hard to untie".[378]

As far as the attitude of the young Calvin towards nominalistic philosophy is concerned, we can say that the same applies, on the whole, as we have maintained with regard to theology above. According to Calvin, medieval philosophy, and especially late medieval philosophy, is responsible for drawing the human mind away from the truth of divine revelation, distorting the Word of God with complicated deliberations of an abstract and hypothetical nature. The "sophists" and "dialecticians" of the schools have fashioned, Calvin asserts polemically, "a brawling art which they call speculative theology"[379] - that is to say, a type of philosophically oriented theology which is based on sophisticated dialectical disputations and which, by virtue of its intricately ramified ratiocinations, contributed to alienate pious people from God. In his Prefatory Address to Francis I, which is signed 23 August 1535,[380] Calvin complained that "God's Holy Word has been contaminated by the subtleties of sophists and involved in the squabbles of dialecticians", and he depicts these "sophists" and "dialecticians" disdainfully as people who "do nothing in their whole life but enshroud and obscure the simplicity of Scripture with endless contentions and worse than sophistic brawls".[381]

However, the young Calvin not only accuses the late medieval philosopher-theologians of corrupting the Holy Scriptures with ungodly speculations, but he agrees that they have created a new religion apart from the message contained in the sacred scrolls of Biblical revelation by merging the original and genuine doctrines of Christian thought with ideas taken from other spiritual currents such as the Jewish or the classical Graeco-Roman tradition. In a significant passage of that small handbook which the first edition of the Institutes was, Calvin criticises what he believes to be a philosophically inspired syncretistic attitude to religion, commenting in an ironical tone about those speculative theologians that "obviously, they are attempting something ingenious: to shape one religion

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376 *Inst.* [1536] 1.26. (=*Inst.* [1559] 2.8.57); VG [1541]: "enfans de Sathan"; ed. Pannier, vol. 1, 279.
377 *Inst.* [1536] 4.7. (=*Inst.* [1559] 4.14.14).
378 *Inst.* [1536] 5.8. (=*Inst.* [1559] 4.19.11). The classical allusion in VL ("Nodus Gordianus est") is dropped in VG ("C'est un nœud insoluble"). Cf. *Inst.* [1541], ed. Pannier, vol. 4, 84, 313 (84 n. b).
379 *Epistle Dedicatory to Francis* in *Inst.* [1536]; ed. Battles, 8.
380 For the dating cf. *Inst.* [1559], ed. McNeill, 31 n. 51 and *Inst.* [1536], ed. Battles, 243.
381 *Epistle Dedicatory to Francis* in *Inst.* [1536]; ed. Battles, 8. This famous passage is also quoted in Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 156. VG [1541] has "enveloppeé de combatz et contentions philosophiques"; cf. *Inst.* [1541], ed. Pannier, vol. 1, 23.

out of Christianity and Judaism and paganism by sewing patches together".[382] This criticism is clearly directed at the medieval schoolmen, but we should be aware that it could also be construed as applying, in a general sense, to the integrist approaches to religion devised by the humanists[383] and cultivated in the circle of the royal lecturers at Paris, for instance by Danès or Vatable, and later, from 1538 on, also by Postel, who, "obsessed by the idea of universal concord", as one author has put it, "would increase the comparative studies of religion, the most famous of which is *The Concord of All the Differences of Religions and Sects*".[384] Be that as it may, as far as Calvin's relation to nominalist philosophy is concerned, we can add by way of conclusion that the young reformer's negative attitude is clearly confirmed in his later work, where, as we shall show, he becomes more explicitly dismissive on the whole. Moreover, the reformer's rejection of nominalism is perhaps also reflected in the conspicuous absence of nominalist authors in the library of the Genevan Academy,[385] where, by contrast, many humanist books can be found.[386]

The last point we have to look at in relation to Calvin's period of study at Montaigu is his stance on nominalist or simply traditional education. Obviously, the use and abuse of teaching in the existing institutions of higher education was for the humanists a crucial theme fit for public discussion, and the Collège de Montaigu - as is well known - happened to be a central subject of that discussion. The problem we encounter here is, again, that of Calvin's implicitness, for we can observe that he does not tune into the choir of the humanist criticism of nominalist pedagogy, which could be heard all over Europe. While Vives, Erasmus and Rabelais, for instance, air their discontent with Montaigu without hesitation and - for once - ambiguity, the young Calvin shows himself very reticent in censuring his former preceptors publicly. This strange silence, which he only breaks very rarely later, and which he shares, incidentally, with Loyola,[387] has sometimes been interpreted as a tacit approval of the old way of education, or as indifference to the burning pedagogical questions of the day. The little evidence we have, however, does not support these views but rather points to the contrary, as we shall see later. But in order to

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382 *Inst.* [1536] 5.64; ed. Battles, 170 (=*Inst.* [1559] 4.19.31). VL [1536] has "velut consutis centunculis", which literally means "like sewing together cloths of many colours". VG [1541] adds the idea of "apart": "Certes ilz machinent une chose ingénieuse, de faire une religion *apart*, composée de Chrestienté, Juifverie, Paganité, comme cousue de plusieurs pièces"; cf. *Inst.* [1541], ed. Pannier, vol. 4, 117-118 (italics added).

383 E.g. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in his *Conclusiones* of 1486.

384 G. Gadoffre, *La révolution culturelle dans la France des humanistes* (Geneva 1997), 317.

385 Gilmont has drawn attention to the fact that "la bibliothèque de l'Académie montre une nette préférence pour l'école réaliste, la *via antiqua*, avec de nombreux écrits théologiques et exégétiques de Thomas d'Aquin. La *via moderna*, celle du nominalisme de Duns Scot et de Guillaume Ockham, est totalement absente"; cf. Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé*, 191.

386 As we have pointed out earlier, also with reference to Gilmont's study mentioned in the preceding note. Cf. above, p. 243 n. 157.

387 According to one of his recent biographers, Loyola was not insensitive to the critical questions concerning nominalist education while studying (as a 40-year old man) at the University of Paris, but these questions simply "were neither his preferred field, nor the centre of his preoccuaptions"; cf. J. I. Tellechea Idígoras, *Ignacio de Loyola*, 3rd ed. (Salamanca 1990), 224.

establish an appropriate estimation of Calvin's stance on nominalist education from his rare statements, we should have a brief look at the abundant humanist criticism.

The clamorous polemic against the Collège de Montaigu and the University of Paris counts among the sharpest attacks on scholasticism launched by the humanists. Fuelled by a strong desire for educational reform, the humanists' criticism is full of acute wit, biting irony and sometimes bitter sarcasm. It is, in spite of its destructive thrust, a spirited defence of the newly elaborated principles of intellectual reformism,[388] and it contains a plea for the human rights of the young pupils, who were treated with complete disregard for their personal dignity. In the framework of our interpretation we could also characterise the humanist polemic as the protest of emotional intelligence against the preponderance of rational intelligence. But be that as it may, the humanist criticism of Montaigu represents an important aspect of the intellectual background to Calvin's youth, and as such it must be briefly considered here.[389] If Calvin cared to listen to the critical voice of the humanists in his youth, as we suppose he did, then we can say that he was accompanied in his studies by the constant humanist offensives against Montaigu and the concomitant sabre-rattling in Paris. In 1520, not long before Calvin entered that college, Vives published his tract *Against the Pseudo-Dialecticians*,[390] which was greeted with rapturous applause by Erasmus, More and other humanists, and in which he denounced the institution he had attended as an *arx ignorantiae*, that is, a "bulwark of ignorance".[391] In 1526, when Calvin was studying at Montaigu, Erasmus' *Colloquia* appeared, including the notorious *Ichtyophagia*, which contained some very spicy comments on what the celebrated humanist chose to call "Vinegar College".[392] And from 1532 on, when Calvin's *Seneca Commentary* had come out, Rabelais starts firing his shots at what he would refer to in 1534 as "that lousy college called Montaigu".[393]

Two major themes can be discerned in the humanists' polemic against Montaigu: first, the denunciation of what they perceived to be a flagrant disregard of the principle of humanity - a principle which they held in high esteem; and second, the expression of a

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388 Cf. chapter 2, p. 108.

389 Some authors have omitted this aspect altogether (Ganoczy, Bouwsma), while others comment on it citing from the humanist sources (e.g. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 13-15; McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 28; Cottret, *Calvin*, 30-32). Ganoczy acknowledges the most important humanist sources (Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 320 n. 6), but he argues that "what interests us is the ethos of the establishment and the intellectual and spiritual formation that was disseminated there", not "the unhealthy premises, the poor food, and the inhuman nature of its regimentation" (Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 58). Wendel, on the other hand, observes that "qu'il y ait quelque exagération dans ..... les témoignages d'Erasme et de Rabelais ..... la chose est certaine. Ils n'en reflètent pas moins l'opinion des milieux humanistes sur cet établissement" (Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 13).

390 In Sélestat and Louvain. Cf. Ch. Fantazzi, "The Text" in Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, ed. Fantazzi (Leiden 1979), 3.

391 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 28/29. We retain the singular of the Latin original.

392 Erasmus, "Concerning the Eating of Fish" in *Colloquies*; quoted in *The Essential Erasmus*, ed. J. P. Dolan (New York 1964), 320.

393 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 37.

desire for radical "unteaching" or "unlearning"[394] respectively, which is to say, the declaration of a wish to confine to oblivion all the "unlearned learning"[395] acquired at Montaigu. As far as the first theme is concerned, the accusations ranged from the subtle charge of intellectual torture to the more solid indictment of physical maltreatment. Vives says of his former teachers that "they behave in an insolent and completely *inhumane* way" and that they go "against all customs and conventions of mankind" in their rigid imposition of an arbitrary usage of words.[396] Erasmus is more concerned with condemning his former headmaster's[397] "cruelty against his neighbour", which "is cruelty that amounts to murder"[398] and "ruins many people of intelligence".[399] "I shall say nothing of the unmerciful whippings even of innocent people", the Dutch humanist adds, concluding that "I thought it would be worthwhile to give this example of human severity under the pretence of religion to warn the young and inexperienced".[400] The result of all the terminist tuition received at "Vinegar College" is, so Erasmus underlines, "nothing except many maladies and lice".[401]

Rabelais was another mocker of Montaigu who could move the masses with his talent to write in the vernacular. The French humanist began his attack on the "lousy college" in his *Pantagruel* by attributing invented book titles to his former teachers: *On the Excellence of Tripe* to the obese Béda,[402] *On the Manner of Making Sausages* to John Major, who is said to have hated all refined literature,[403] and finally, *On the Manner of Crapping* to Pierre Tartaret, the redoubtable commentator of Aristotle.[404] In his *Gargantua*, which came out in August 1534, the French humanist intensified his attack against Montaigu, recalling "the enormous cruelty and vileness that I experienced there" and claiming that "the galley slaves of the Moors and Tartars, the murderers in jail and even the dogs in your house are treated better than the unlucky ones in that college".[405] Rabelais denounced the absolute contempt for the ideal of humanity prevailing at Montaigu:

> If I was the king of Paris, the devil should take me if I didn't set that place on fire and burn the principal and the professors, who tolerate that such *inhumanity* is practised

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394 Vives uses the terms "dedocere", or "dediscere" respectively, which are both classical antonyms to "docere" and "discere"; cf. Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 33. Cf. also the passage cited below, p. 274.

395 "ineruditae eruditio"; Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 33.

396 "insolenter atque adeo parum humanae agunt"; Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 49 (italics added).

397 Viz. John Standonck, who directed Montaigu from 1483 to 1504. Erasmus studied at the college from 1495 to 1499.

398 Erasmus adds: "the intention to cause death may indeed be lacking, but murder it is"; cf. Erasmus, "Concerning the Eating of Fish", 320.

399 Erasmus, "Concerning the Eating of Fish", 321.

400 Erasmus, "Concerning the Eating of Fish", 321. It is perhaps important, too, to mention Erasmus' introductory remark to the second statement. It reads: "I don't mention these things because I bear any ill will towards the college"; Erasmus, "Concerning the Eating of Fish", 321.

401 Erasmus, "Concerning the Eating of Fish", 320 (quote abridged).

402 *De Optimitate Triparum*; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 7 [1532].

403 *De Modo faciendi boudinas*; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 7 [1532]. "Boudin" in French means "black pudding".

404 *De modo cacandi*; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 7 [1532]. We also find an anonymous work with the title *Sorboniformium* (*On the Fashion of Jesting in the Sorbonne*) or *Badinatorium Sophistarum* (*The Jesting of the Sophists*) respectively; Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapter 7 [1532 / 1542].

405 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 37.

> under their eyes.[406]

Eighteen years later, Rabelais had still not forgotten Montaigu and inserted a new passage into his *Quart Livre*[407] in which he dishonoured the memory of his former headmaster, Pierre Tempête, with an epitaphical Latin verse reading *Horrida tempestas montem turbavit acutum.*[408] This verse, which means as much as "a horrible Tempest raged at Montaigu", was a parody of Horace's line "horrida tempestas caelum contraxit".[409] It was followed by the explanation that "Tempête was a great flogger of schoolchildren in the Collège de Montaigu" and one of those "pedagogues" who are condemned to suffer terrible tortures in the underworld "for whipping poor little children and innocent pupils".[410]

As far as the second major theme of the humanist polemic against Montaigu is concerned, we can again cite Vives, who declared sarcastically that what he had learned in the University of Paris was nothing but a useless heap of knowledge, which had little or no value in itself and could not be put to any practical use. The Spanish humanist ridiculed the "hideous form of barbarism"[411] espoused by the so-called sophists of the university, invoking "the current saying that in Paris our youth are taught nothing save to rant and rave in displays of endless verbosity".[412] However, the knowledge acquired in Montaigu was not only useless, but it was also an impediment to better forms of learning. Therefore, Vives argued, the terminist teaching received should be deleted from memory (or simply "untaught") to clear the road for proper scholarship and open the way to real wisdom. The student who has undergone a nominalist formation faces a hard inner struggle if he wants to free himself from the burden of his acquired knowledge. Vives talks about such an inner struggle when he confesses

> I wish I had never progressed so far in this nonsense, which took such root in my tender mind and youthful enthusiasm that I cannot rid myself of it. Even against my will it presents itself to my mind and obsesses my thoughts. I am made more aware of its detrimental effects when I turn to more worthwhile pursuits, for it often forces me to be trivial and foolish in very serious matters. If there were teachers who could *unteach* these subjects, as there are those who teach them, I should seek them out with all haste and offer them a rich reward, as did the famous musician Timotheus. I find myself in the same predicament as the Greek hero Themistocles, who is said to have replied to Simonides, a teacher of the art of memory: "I would rather like to forget than to remember". Similarly, I should be willing to pay as much to *unlearn* certain things as I would to learn others. If only one could exchange or give away these useless bits of knowledge, as one does with money, clothing, books, and other such possessions. There are those who spend much money to attain this learning, but I should pay them just as much to unburden me of what I know and take it for themselves. In this way they would be making a threefold profit, as they could immediately perceive; viz., the money saved, which they would have had to spend for the acquisition of this knowledge, the money that they would be receiving from me, and the gratuitous gift of this unlearned learning.[413]

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406 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 37 (italics added).
407 1st ed. Lyons 1548 (incomplete); definitive edition Paris 1552.
408 Rabelais, *Quart Livre*, chapter 21.
409 Horace, *Epodes*, 13.1.
410 Rabelais, *Quart Livre*, chapter 21.
411 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 26.
412 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 28.
413 Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 30 / 32 (translation slightly adapted in one passage; italics added).

Fourteen years after this half-humorous, half-serious statement by Vives, Rabelais struck a similar chord in his *Gargantua*, complaining that

> it would be better not to learn anything than to study such books with such teachers, for their knowledge was nothing but stupidity and their wisdom nothing but silliness, causing the good and noble spirits to degenerate and corrupting the whole flower of youth.[414]

In the first edition of *Gargantua*, Rabelais chose to appear himself in his book to intervene in the action and to make his point against Montaigu personally, so to speak. As Gargantua's new tutor Ponocrates sets out to educate his pupil in the humanist way, he finds himself confronted with a problem: he realises that he must first undo the teaching of the nominalist school before he can make a fresh start and proceed to sound instruction in the humanistic disciplines. In order to achieve this, he calls in a physician who is capable of clearing Gargantua's mind of all the traces scholastic tuition has left. The physician is nobody else than Rabelais himself, who appears as "Séraphin Calobarsy"[415] - an anagram for "Phrancois Rabélays" - and later under the name of "Master Theodore",[416] and who deletes the pupil's acquired medieval education with ingredients from the legendary plant hellebore of Anticyra, which, according to classical tradition, has the quality of curing madness and mental disease.[417] Thus the happy pupil is able to forget everything he had been obliged to memorise under his former preceptors, and the erasing effect of "unteaching" is achieved. This is what happens to Gargantua when

> a learned doctor of that time called Séraphin Calobarsy ..... purged him canonically with hellebore of Anticyra, and with this medicine cleared away all the aberrations and corrupted habits of his brain. By the same means Ponocrates also made him forget all he had learned with his old teachers ..... .[418]

414 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 15.

415 In the first edition [Lyons], August 1534.

416 In the definitive edition of Jean Juste, Lyons 1542.

417 The hint at hellebore was a standard topos in humanist literature; cf. e.g. Vives, *In pseudodialecticos*, 38. Calvin has two passing references to the plant in his *Institutes*, but, typically, they are made in the context of theological discussion, not in that of education; cf. "hellebore" in *Inst.*[1536] 5.32; ed. Battles, 147 (=*Inst.*[1559] 3.5.1.) and "in Anticyram mittendus sit" after Horace, *Satires*, 2.3.83 in *Inst.*[1536] 5.69.; ed. Battles, 173 (=*Inst.*[1559] 4.19.34).

418 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 23.

6 Calvin the Reformer and Humanism

Having tackled the intricate task of tracing the humanistic traits of the young Calvin and of considering them in the light of the most important primary and secondary literature available, we can now proceed to deal with what can be regarded as the principal assignment of this investigation, namely to carry out an analysis of the elements of humanism which can be found in the work of the mature reformer, and to try, on the basis of this analysis, to draw a detailed and comprehensive picture of Calvin's attitude towards humanism on the whole and towards the humanistic disciplines in particular. Such a picture will convey a broad impression of the difficult subject matter, enabling us to formulate a general conclusion, the validity of which rests, as we have pointed out at the beginning, on the solidity and the range of evidence produced as well as on the soundness and transparency of the approach chosen.[1] As far as the latter point is concerned, we have underlined the fact that the results of our investigation depend to a large extent on the method and approach adopted, especially with regard to humanism,[2] and that the appreciation of these results in turn depends on the clear declaration of the premises involved in determining method and approach, particularly in relation to controversial or hypothetical preliminary assumptions about humanism.[3] A good part of the deliberations just evoked can be seen as summed up in McGrath's pertinent remark which we have cited in the introduction: "It will be obvious that any discussion of the relation of humanism and the Reformation will be totally dependent upon the definition of humanism employed".[4]

As far as the former point is concerned, we can say that in this chapter we will focus on writings by Calvin composed from 1536 onwards (that is, excluding the first edition of the *Institutes*), and we will compare selected statements on or related to humanistic issues against the definition of humanism set forth in chapters two, three and four. The structure of our analysis will reflect, more or less, the outline of chapters three and four, thus corresponding, roughly, to the arrangement of the subject matter made in these chapters. This is to say, the framework of our analysis is determined by the individual disciplines which make up the cycle of the *studia humanitatis* according to the subdivision proposed by Kristeller, which is, at least from an extrinsic or formal point of view, acceptable to most scholars. This method was not suitable for dealing with the young Calvin because of the problem of the lack of documentation and because of the necessary focus on the process of intellectual development. It is suitable, however, for dealing with Calvin the reformer, since it allows us to proceed in topical order and thus to separate the controversial issues from the uncontroversial ones,[5] or the philosophical from the non-philosophical ones

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1 Cf. introduction, pp. 30-36.
2 Cf. introduction, p. 23.
3 Cf. introduction, p. 36.
4 A. E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1993), 45; quoted in introduction, p. 23.
5 Cf. introduction, p. 31.

respectively[6] - which amounts, as we have pointed out, to the distinction between what we have called particular and general humanism.[7]

Adopting the method just described does not mean that we disregard the aspect of development in Calvin's thought with respect to humanism, since we can establish a chronological profile by discussing the statements under consideration in the order of their date of publication or composition respectively.[8] This applies to all works by Calvin but especially to the *Institutes* in its different versions, which will occupy a prominent place here according to our methodological intentions stated in the introduction.[9] As far as the method of comparison is concerned, we can briefly recapitulate what we said at the beginning, namely that any judicious juxtaposition of Calvin and humanism must take into account the actual degree of comparability of the issue and the statements at hand. This principally means that the most adequate procedure is to concentrate on establishing positive links in uncontroversial areas, while in the case of negative parallels, we should try and work out the positive implications.[10] Finally, in dealing with connections or contrasts in controversial areas, we should proceed with adequate caution and draw attention to the fact that any conclusions drawn are subject to what we have called an "indeterminacy principle", which is mainly due to the influence of preliminary assumptions made axiomatically.[11]

Before we turn to the consideration of the various aspects of humanism in Calvin's work under the headings of the individual disciplines of the *studia humanitatis*, we must try to determine more closely the meaning of the different terms associated with the notion of the *studia humanitatis* in the writings of Calvin. We have discussed this question briefly in the introduction,[12] and we now have to carry out the task proposed (and partly begun) there, namely to investigate the semantic field circumscribed by the terms Calvin employs to express the concept of the *studia humanitatis*, such as *bonae litterae*, *artes liberales*, *bonnes lettres*, *sciences humaines*, etc.[13] A short study of this semantic field is indispensable for an objective assessment of humanism in Calvin, principally because the terminology applied by the humanists is, as we have shown, not quite standardised in their works and is not uniform even in the individual strands of the humanist movement, although there do exist some common features.[14] As regards Calvin, we can confirm this humanist characteristic and state that the reformer is not consistent in his use of the

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6 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 86-87.
7 Cf. chapter 2, p. 102.
8 Cf. introduction, p. 32.
9 The preferential treatment of the *Institutes* is, admittedly, a disputed methodological point, but we have argued our case in the introduction, pp. 37-38.
10 Cf. introduction, p. 35.
11 Cf. introduction, p. 36.
12 Cf. introduction, pp. 20, 34.
13 Cf. introduction, pp. 19-21.
14 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 106-107.

above-mentioned or similar terms when referring to the notion of the *studia humanitatis* in a general or specific sense. However, the matter is made more complicated by what we have described as Calvin's implicitness, for we can observe that he uses the terms which correspond to the concept of the *studia humanitatis* rather infrequently and with some reticence as regards clear definition. It has to be pointed out that this goes against his accustomed tendency to "aim at the correct form of expression" and to avoid "affecting forms of speaking which induce obscurity without reason".[15]

Let us first look at the *Institutes*. As far as this magisterial summary of reformed theology is concerned, it is surprising but true that Calvin makes no mention of the humanistic studies at all, and he does not make any direct comment either about the renaissance of letters, the revival of classical learning or the so-called restitution of the ancient languages. In fact, the terms *bonae litterae*, or *litterae humaniores*, *bonnes lettres* or *sciences humaines* are conspicuously absent from the reformer's main doctrinal work. What we encounter repeatedly in the *Institutes* is the evocation of the image of darkness in relation to the Middle Ages,[16] an age of which Calvin speaks in terms of ignorance,[17] blindness,[18] corruption,[19] degeneration,[20] barbarity[21] and, perhaps most typically, of "immersion in a deep night of errors".[22] The darkness of the Middle Ages, however, is never explicitly contrasted with the light of classical letters reborn in the Renaissance, but always with the purer illumination coming from the Gospel and the Reformation. There are, in fact, two references only to the contemporary "clear light"[23] which can be interpreted as an allusion to the achievements of humanist philology (of course, in an ecclesiastical context), but normally "the light shining from on high" dispelling the medieval darkness is identified with the movement of the Reformation, which represents "the dawning truth".[24]

As we have mentioned in the introduction, the silence which Calvin observes in the *Institutes* concerning humanistic issues can be regarded as reflecting a strategy of

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15 *Inst.* 4.1.2. Conflated reading from VL [1539] and VG [1541]; quoted in introduction, p. 23 (n. 117) and below, p. 324.

16 Cf. e.g. *Inst.* 4.10.5, 4.18.1.

17 Cf. e.g. *Inst.* 4.7.18, 4.12.21.

18 Cf. e.g. *Inst.* 4.10.32.

19 Cf. e.g. *Inst.* 4.19.27, 4.18.9, 4.7.22.

20 Cf. e.g. *Inst.* 4.17.49.

21 Cf. e.g. *Inst.* 3.4.24, 4.17.19.

22 "alta errorum nocte immersi fuerint ..... homines"; *Inst.* 3.5.1.

23 VL [1543]: "adhuc in tanta luce", *Inst.* 4.7.11 and VL [1559]: "claram lucem", *Inst.* 4.11.12. The first reference alludes to Erasmus and other humanists in connection with the exposure of the Pseudo-Isidorian decretals, and the second reference represents a clear hint at Valla's treatise on the Donation of Constantine.

24 *Inst.*, *Prefatory Address to King Francis*, ed. and trans. McNeill / Battles, 28. Cf. also *Inst.* [1536], ed. Battles, 11-12. VL [1536]: "lux e supernis affulgens tenebras ..... aliquantum discussit ..... illucescentem veritatem"; CO 1.23 and CO 2.26. VL [1541]: "la lumière, luysante d'en hault, a aucunement dechassé ces ténèbres ..... la verité commenceante"; *Inst.* [1541], ed. Pannier, vol. 1, 31.

marginalisation or tabooisation,[25] for to suppress the highly debated theme of humanism in what he knew would be his most widely read work can most probably be attributed to some definite purpose - and perhaps it can also be traced back to an appreciation of the humanistic studies which was more modest than in most sixteenth-century humanists. There is no doubt, then, that the *Institutes* reveal something about the author's relation to humanism: they show an attitude of distinct reservation, of hesitation and perhaps, judging from a psychological perspective, even inhibition. These features characterise the apparent ground note of Calvin the dogmatist's stance on humanism, a ground note which is manifest in his peculiar tendency to implicitness. As we have stated in the introduction, this tendency permeates his whole work, but it is most accentuated in the *Institutes*, which can almost be regarded as enjoying the status of a symbol in this respect.[26]

Calvin only employs one term in his *Institutes* which belongs - in the wider sense - to the semantic field of the *studia humanitatis*, namely the expression of *artes liberales*, and he uses this expression no more than twice in the course of his long work. In one passage he associates the liberal arts vaguely with "astronomy, medicine and physics",[27] and in another he distinguishes them from the "mechanical" or "manual arts" on the one hand and from politics, economics and philosophy on the other.[28] The variation in the original and the final French rendering of the first passage further permits us to regard the terms "liberal disciplines" and "science" as roughly synonymous.[29] Thus it is easy to conclude that in the *Institutes* Calvin employs the term of *artes liberales* in a rather free manner to refer in a very general way to the field of the arts and sciences, or to a part of it - possibly, but not necessarily including the humanistic studies. If we go beyond the *Institutes*, however, we find that Calvin occasionally mentions - if only in passing - the humanistic studies as well as the renaissance of letters, the revival of classical learning and the restitution of the ancient languages. The terms which he uses most frequently to refer to the *studia humanitatis* are *bonae litterae*[30] or simply *litterae* in Latin, and *bonnes lettres* or just *lettres* in French. Apart from other terms and formulations, such as *sciences* or *sciences humaines* - which we will discuss later - he also employs the expression of *artes liberales*, with its customary variants of *doctrinae liberales* or *ars ingenuae*, in the specific sense of the *studia humanitatis*.

The application of the terms *artes liberales*, *doctrinae liberales*, etc. to refer to the

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25 Cf. introduction, p. 37.

26 Cf. introduction, p. 37.

27 *Inst.* 1.5.2. [1539/41].

28 *Inst.* 2.2.13-14. [1539/41].

29 *Inst.* 1.5.2.; "disciplines libérales" of VG [1541] is rendered as "science" in VG [1560]. If this change cannot be attributed to Calvin with complete certainty, it shows the customs of contemporary usage in Calvin's intellectual environment.

30 Bohatec claimed that the expression *bonae litterae* could often be met in Calvin's works, but he did not provide any references to substantiate this claim; cf. J. Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin* (Graz 1950), 257 n. 19.

cycle of humanistic studies is not uncommon and also occurs in humanist usage, which does, as we have just pointed out above, not have an entirely consistent or unified code in this respect. The humanists do in fact not strictly distinguish the term *litterae humaniores* from that of *artes liberales*, for they are aware that the latter, despite its well-defined medieval meaning, ultimately derived from a coinage of classical origin. We have encountered a classical reference to *artes liberales* earlier in Aulus Gellius, who defined *humanitas* as "learning and instruction in good or *liberal arts*".[31] But there is another reason why the humanists did not repudiate the term: they did not fully reject, at least theoretically, the formal ouline of the medieval arts curriculum, but aimed at bringing about a shift of emphasis in the trivium,[32] reforming the three lower arts according to their ideals and giving them a new meaning and (to a large extent) a new content.[33] The essential humanist sense of continuity with regard to the medieval arts[34] also manifested itself in the way the new trilingual colleges were established, for these institutions, which epitomised the humanist aspirations of intellectual reformism, were integrated to a considerable degree into the existing university structures and therefore had lecturers in the humanistic disciplines who bore the official title of *lector artium humanitatis*.[35]

As far as French humanism is concerned, we can observe that Budé, with whose work and thought Calvin was in all probability well familiar, occasionally associated the liberal arts with the humanistic studies in a general way. Thus we can find passages in the writings of the French humanist in which he refers to "the disciplines that are called *liberal* or also human".[36] But apart from such instances, which demonstrate a certain semantic ambivalence in the humanists' terminology - and perhaps also show that formal precision was not their primary concern, we must remember that the adjective "liberal" was applied by the humanists to describe the essential quality of their new educational programme based on the *studia humanitatis*, which lay, so they stressed, in its

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31 Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 13.17.1. (italics added); quoted in chapter 2, p. 103.

32 Described in terms of a "subversion of dialectic to grammar" by R. McKeon, "Renaissance and Method in Philosophy" in *Studies in the History of Ideas*, vol. 3 (New York 1935), 87; quoted in P. O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York 1979), 276 n. 24.

33 This implied the emancipation of grammar and rhetoric from logic and their establishment as fully independent disciplines (cf. chapter 3, pp. 134-135, 145).

34 Kristeller made a strong argument for continuity in humanism in his controversial essay of 1944, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance", of which mention has already been made in chapter 2, pp. 88-89. Kristeller's argument is, however, based to a large extent on the debated assertion that the humanist movement was profoundly unphilosophical in character, and must thus be considered as limited in its affirmative strength (cf. the principles elaborated in our methodological reflections in the introduction, p. 35). To give an example, the claim that humanism had "*nothing* to offer" which could replace the contents of the traditional branches of medieval learning is not tenable without substantial qualification (Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 92 (italics added)).

35 And not *lector studiorum humanitatis*, as one would perhaps expect. Cf. e.g. the customary denomination of the humanist lecturers in Corpus Christi College at Oxford, a college which was "a rough parallel to the Louvain foundation", as Burke has pointed out, and which was established in the same year as the latter, that is, in 1517; cf. P. Burke, "The Spread of Italian Humanism" in Goodman / MacKay (eds.), *The Impact of Humanism on Western Europe* (London 1990), 15.

36 "disciplinae ..... *liberales* humanae quoque adeo appellantur" (italics added); Budé, *Opera*, 86; quoted in Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 257 n. 19.

independence from other disciplines, especially theology but also logic, and which consisted in its power of making young people capable of realising the possibilities hidden in their own *humanitas* in freedom and with appeal to their individual sense of responsibility.[37] In a wider sense the attribute of "liberal" was even given to the whole new body of knowledge available in the Renaissance, including especially those branches that had been restored or reformed by the humanists. We have seen this in Rabelais' *Gargantua*, in which the aged giant father of the same name, who still partly belongs to the medieval world, advises his son Pantagruel in a notable - and often-quoted - letter to acquire the full scope of the "*liberal* and honest knowledge" of the Renaissance.[38]

There is a difference, however, in the way in which the liberal arts are associated with the humanistic studies by Calvin and the humanists. We can observe that the latter almost invariably link the *litterae humaniores* - or the *artes liberales*, if referred to in the humanistic sense - with the concept of *humanitas* or *παιδεια*, even if only in a formal manner which may appear superficial, while the former never mentions *humanitas* in conjunction with the *bonae litterae* or the *artes liberales*. To give an example from French humanism, we can again mention Budé, who frequently includes an allusion to the idea of *humanitas* when evoking the notion of the *studia humanitatis*. However, we must be aware that Budé's frequent allusion to *humanitas* does not imply that he always refers to the concept in a positive sense, for sometimes he can be seen as critically distancing himself from the ideal, and sometimes he simply reports the thought of classical antiquity approvingly or disapprovingly as happens to be the case.[39] But if we compare this with Calvin, we note that the reformer's persistent omission of *humanitas* from his discourse dealing with aspects of the humanistic studies makes a sharp contrast with humanist usage and suggests that the reformer was inclined to disassociate *humanitas* from the *studia humanitatis* in his work. Such a disassociation, even if made only on a formal level, is indeed not common in the majority of humanists, in particular those who were influential in France at the time of Calvin's youthful literary exploits and later, such as Lefèvre d'Étaples, Budé, Erasmus and Rabelais.

Let us turn now to the consideration of the passages from Calvin's work which

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37 Cf. chapter 2, pp. 114-115.

38 Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 8 (italics added); cf. chapter 2, p. 115 ns. 228-230.

39 Bohatec provides a number of quotations from Budé's work, from which we may cite two: "quibus *artibus* eum honorem Romana detulit antiquitas, *humanas* ut eas *scientias* dicerent, utpote sine quibus existimarent homines morum *humanitatem* amplecti ac retineri vix posse ..... artifex et magistra expoliendae *humanitatis* et concinnandae"; Budé, *Opera*, 1-2; "animus ipse coli dicitur, cum *liberalibus artibus* instituitur. Animi cultus erat ei [Cicero] quam *humanitatis* cibus. Quam [scientiam] *Paediam* Graeci, nomine parum ambitioso, nos *literarum scientiam* vocamus ..... quae choro *disciplinarum liberalium* constant"; Budé, *Opera*, 40; quoted in Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 257 n. 19 (italics added). Another important passage from Budé's work is provided by Millet: "Quod si *literarum elegantiae* et ea quae *humanitas* a moribus excolendis dicta est, kai hè kat' anthrôpismon *paideia*, tam adversa veritati sunt atque sapientiae, ut non nisi fabulis ludibriisque rectae rationis accommodari decore et consentanee possint"; Budé, *Commentarii linguae graecae*; quoted in O. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole* (Paris 1992), 16 n. 13 (italics added).

contain comments concerning the *studia humanitatis* and which can thus contribute first to clarify the meaning of the terms employed by Calvin to denote these studies, and second to explain the reformer's general attitude towards them. Having shown the current association of the attributes of "human" and "liberal" in humanist terminology, we are prepared to interpret the meaning of what is reckoned to be one of Calvin's most significant positive statements about humanism, namely the assertion supposedly implicit in a rhetorical question put in his *Commentary on I Corinthians*, a question which reads: "How much honour do the liberal arts deserve, which so refine human beings that they make them truly human?"[40] This question seems to be purely rhetorical, suggesting that an affirmative answer is self-evidently implied, and it has indeed been interpreted as such by Bohatec, who claimed that for Calvin "the humanities are of great propædeutic value, since they give human beings the formal education which so refines them that they become true human beings".[41]

However, the author of this statement has not considered Calvin's utterance in the context of his Biblical commentary, which tries to explain why Paul condemns so sharply the arts and sciences created by the efforts of natural human reason.[42] In his letter to the Corinthians Paul puts three rhetorical questions, but the answer he gives - in the negative interrogative mode - is fundamentally, if not completely,[43] dismissive. Paul asks: "Where are the philosophers[44]? Where are the experts[45]? And where are the debaters of this age? Do you not see how God has shown up human wisdom as folly?"[46] Now if the question Calvin asks about the humanities constitutes a parallel to Paul's first three questions, which is quite obviously the case, then a negative answer will indeed clearly be implied - and the qualification of "truly human" could even be interpreted as having an ironic touch. Be that as it may, the exegetical explanation furnished by Calvin contains an answer which is, like Paul's, basically negative. Calvin holds that Paul does not reject categorically all inborn intellectual abilities and the sciences created by them, but he suggests that the apostle thinks of these sciences that "they are of no importance for the attainment of spiritual wisdom".[47] One can argue, of course, that this answer, like Paul's, does not signify an absolute and complete rejection of human wisdom, but then one intriguing question remains: why did Calvin choose the humanistic studies to stand as representatives of what can be identified from the Bible more or less as philosophy,

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40 VL [1546]: "doctrinae liberales quantum honoris merentur, quae ita hominem expoliunt, ut reddant vere humanum?"; *Comm. I Cor.* 1:20; CO 49.325; quoted in Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 257 n. 18.

41 Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 257.

42 Cf. the criticism presented by David Lerch in his review of Bohatec's book in *Theologische Zeitschrift* 7 (1951), 293.

43 This can be recognised from the context of the passage, especially the following verse.

44 σοφός literally means "wise man".

45 γραμματεύς literally means "scribe".

46 *I Cor.* 1:20.

47 VL [1546]: "ad perscipiendam spiritualem sapientiam nullius esse momenti affirmat"; *Comm. I Cor.* 1:20, CO 49.325. *Not* quoted by Bohatec, but brought up for discussion by Lerch.

grammar and dialectic, or otherwise simply as "the wisdom of the world"?[48] Calvin seems to reveal a tendency here to substitute the *studia humanitatis* for the "sciences humaines" in the sense of the whole of human science.

The statement from the *Commentary on I Corinthians* turns out to be typical of Calvin insofar as he first conveys a neutral or favourable impression of the humanities only to relativise this afterwards by highlighting the ultimate irrelevance and even uselessness of the humanistic studies for capturing the essence of the Christian message as contained in the Gospel. We recognise that this statement by Calvin represents one of the rather rare cases where he breaks the rule of his implicitness and speaks more clearly. But we are aware that when the reformer becomes explicit in addressing the issue of humanism he also tends to pass a more negative judgement, or to add a remark of reservation.[49] It is clear that Calvin is familiar with one of the basic maxims of humanism, namely that the *studia humanitatis* make the individual truly human,[50] but it seems that he is only disposed to acknowledge the existence of this maxim marginally and in passing. The meaning of Calvin's qualification of the humanistic disciplines as "of no importance for the attainment of spiritual wisdom" becomes clearer later in the commentary, where the reformer asserts with regard to theological studies that "the liberal arts ..... must be the servants and not the masters".[51] Thus we can state in summary that if the passage from the *Commentary on I Corinthians* does not reveal a wholeheartedly and unambiguously positive attitude towards humanism, it positively shows two things: first, that Calvin uses the term *liberal arts* as a synonym of *humanistic studies* and second, that the reformer stipulates an absolute subordination of the humanistic studies to theology, or by implication, of humanistic interests to concerns of religious reform.

One could argue, of course, that Calvin's words about the humanistic studies, "which so refine human beings that they make them truly human", also contain an implicit hint at the concept of *humanitas* by virtue of their appeal to the quality "truly human". However, it is obvious by comparison with statements made by humanists, which usually evoke the concept in an explicit way, that the reference as a whole is too vague to warrant any firm conclusion in that direction. There is no doubt that Calvin's reference is to the *studia humanitatis*, which are mentioned in humanistic fashion from a formal point of view, but it is clear that the allusion does not go beyond that. Moreover, we can understand the passage from the *Commentary on I Corinthians* better if we take the circumstances of its

48 τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου; *I Cor*. 1:20.

49 Cf. introduction, p. 22.

50 Cf. chapter 2, p. 106.

51 VG [1547]: "Les arts libéraux et tous les enseignements dont procède la prudence ..... il faut donc qu'ils soient les serviteurs et non point les maitres"; *Comm. I Cor.* 3:19. This is an anonymous French translation quoted in F. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme* (Paris 1976), 77. VL [1546]: "Artes ingenuae et doctrinae omnes, quibus prudentia colligitur ..... quare pedisequas esse oportet, non dominas"; CO 49.359; quoted in Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 257 n. 17.

composition into account. Calvin wrote this commentary in 1545,[52] after Castellio had left Geneva and after the polemical *Excuse à MM. les nicodémites* had been published, that is, at a time when he was likely to have harboured anti-humanistic sentiments.[53] On the other hand we must keep in mind that much of the material presented in the commentary was probably derived from lectures given at Strasbourg between 1539 and 1541[54] in an intellectual environment that was disposed favourably towards humanism. The context of Strasbourg's humanistically imbued atmosphere helps explain the relatively numerous allusions to aspects of humanism which the commentary contains, but it does not explain the absence of any explicit reference to the concept of *humanitas*, which is better accounted for by the specific circumstances prevailing in Geneva in the years 1544 and 1545.

We recognise that Calvin's allusion to the humanistic studies in his *Commentary on I Corinthians* fits into the pattern of his more explicit comments on humanism.[55] This pattern, which we have just recalled above, is indeed confirmed by other passages in Calvin's works, from which we may select one more example in illustration of our argument. In a sermon delivered in 1553 Calvin makes a short but explicit allusion to the humanistic studies which can also be regarded as containing an implicit hint at the concept of *humanitas*, but which exhibits the same degree of reticence and vagueness concerning that concept as the remark made in the above-mentioned commentary. In his allusion Calvin addresses the issue of the *studia humanitatis* under the label of "letters", affirming that the latter have the quality of refining people's inborn intellectual abilities. Preaching on the long "alphabetical" Psalm 119, Calvin makes the following remark: "we know that the letters are here to polish our good natural sense".[56] This is again a very general statement in which Calvin does not say more than in the assertion made in the *Commentary on I Corinthians* - actually, perhaps even less, as he chooses the vague words "un bon sens naturel" instead of "un bon sens *humain*" or "un bon sens d'*humanité*". However, the context of this passage shows that the positive assertion made about the "letters" is relativised in a way similar to the qualification added to the supposedly positive statement from the *Commentary on I Corinthians* quoted above. Calvin is not concerned here with subordinating the humanities to theology in the first place, but with separating the two spheres, for he draws a sharp dividing line between the human sciences and divine revelation, declaring that all the knowledge proceeding from the *doctrines humaines* - an alternative expression for *sciences humaines* - is but an ABC with regard to celestial wisdom. In his sermon the reformer says:

> It is true that one could study very well the *human sciences* [*doctrines humaines*] and so acquire some discernment in that field. But what is this if we are the most perfect that

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52 It was finished before November; cf. J.-F. Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (Geneva 1997), 372.

53 Cf. introduction, pp. 18-19.

54 Cf. Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé*, 374.

55 Cf. introduction, p. 22.

56 "nous savons que les lettres sont pour mieux polir un bon sens naturel"; *13th Sermon on the Psalm 119*; CO 32.633; quoted in Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 257 n. 18.

> can be named in all knowledge? It is only an ABC, for we do not reach heaven [with it], [but] all that [knowledge] is confined to the present life.[57]

If we look for further texts by Calvin containing references to the humanistic studies, we find that we can locate a number of passages which touch on various aspects of these studies, and which can help clarify the meaning of the corresponding terms. We have to discuss in particular those passages in which Calvin uses the term *sciences humaines*, the meaning of which is of essential relevance for the interpretation of Calvin's attitude towards humanism.[58] However, we must be aware that most of the passages that fall within the scope of our analysis share the characteristic that they cannot be regarded as including any indirect allusion, even in the vaguest possible sense, to the concept of *humanitas*, as two of the statements quoted above could, if interpreted very generously. Thus we are dealing with references here which are concerned quite directly and exclusively with the humanistic studies, be it in relation to their theoretical significance or their practical function. Considering the scarcity of the material available and following the emphasis indicated above, we shall limit ourselves to examining three passages from Calvin's work in which the reformer specifically refers to the concept of the *sciences humaines*. This will help find a solid and adequate interpretation of the debated statement from the *Apology to the Nicodemites*,[59] and it will also contribute to get a more precise picture of Calvin's attitude towards the humanities in general.

One of the earliest and most basic references to the *sciences humaines* can be found in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541,[60] which were drafted by Calvin immediately after his return to Geneva from Strasbourg. When Calvin discusses the issue of education in these *Ordinances* in connection with the so-called "order" of the doctors, that is, of lecturers in theology or, in a wider sense, of teachers in general, he proposes the establishment of a college "for instructing children to prepare them for the ministry as well as for civil government",[61] and for maintaining the church and especially "the true doctrine of God".[62] This college, which Calvin no doubt "sought to develop under ..... [an] ecclesiastical conception of the teachership", as a leading expert once aptly put it,[63] should prepare the pupils for the theological instruction provided by the teaching of the doctors, but, as Calvin argues,

> because it is only possible to profit from such teaching if one is first *instructed in*

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57 "Il est vrai qu'on pourra bien étudier aux *doctrines humaines*, et là on acquerra quelque jugement, mais que sera-ce quand nous serons les plus parfaits qu'on saurait dire en tout savoir; ce n'est qu'un Abc, car nous ne venons point jusqu'au ciel, tout cela demeure en la vie présente" (italics added); *13th Sermon on the Psalm 119*; CO 32.633; quoted in Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 77 and in Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 256 n. 13.

58 Cf. introduction, pp. 20, 34.

59 Quoted in introduction, p. 19.

60 *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques* [1541]; CO 10(2).1-64.

61 *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques* [1541]; quoted in *John Calvin*, eds. Potter / Greengrass (London 1983), 73.

62 *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques* [1541]; CO 10(2).21.

63 W. Walker, *John Calvin* (New York 1906), 270.

> *languages and humanities* [*sciences humaines*], ... we need a literate, scholarly and trained teacher who ..... should have under his charge *teachers in languages and logic*, if they can be found.[64]

Here we have indeed what seems at first sight a clear reference to the *sciences humaines* in the context of education, and more specifically, of languages. However, a closer look at this passage reveals that this reference is far from clear if the phrases "instructed in languages and humanities" and "teachers in languages and logic" are considered as parallel and therefore as associated statements, which would indeed appear to be suggested by the text. But since we may assume that Calvin is not contradicting himself by linking the humanistic studies to logic, we must conclude that his reference to the *sciences humaines*, although it occurs in relation to education and languages, has here again a very general meaning, comprehending, more or less, the whole field of the traditional liberal arts. Calvin's usage, then, confirms what we have stated above, namely that he does not distinguish between the *artes liberales*, which include the discipline of logic, and the *studia humanitatis*, which contain the "illogical" subjects connected with language and literature, especially rhetoric and poetry. As we have seen, this can roughly be regarded as compatible with the customary handling of terms practised by the humanists.

However, a closer look at the passage from the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* shows that the reformer's view-point is fundamentally different from that of the humanists insofar as the latter are not likely to employ the terms *sciences humaines* and *dialectique* in such a way as to suggest any association in the context of education - which is precisely what Calvin does. Therefore, the reformer cannot be seen as in line with the humanists in the essential question of the relation between language and logic. On the other hand, he shares the most basic element of the humanist view on the relation between the humanistic studies and theology, which consists in the stipulation that the latter cannot exist without the former. Calvin obviously approaches Luther in this respect, for when the Geneva reformer maintains that "it is only possible to profit from ..... [theological] teaching if one is first instructed in languages and humanities", he seems to repeat, on an elementary level, what the Wittenberg reformer asserted when he wrote to a young humanist: "I am persuaded that true theology cannot stand at all without knowledge of literature".[65] As can be seen, both reformers subscribe to the fundamental humanist tenet that knowledge of languages and letters is an indispensable prerequisite for the construction and the comprehension of genuine theology.

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64 "on ne peult proufiter en telles lecons [i.e. la lecture de theologie] que premierement on ne soit *jnstruict aux langues et sciences humaines* ..... quil aye ..... *lecteurs tant aux langues comme en dialectique*"; CO 10 (1).21-22 (italics added). English translation quoted from *John Calvin*, eds. Potter / Greengrass, 73 (italics added). Cf. also introduction, p. 19 n. 100 and chapter 1, p. 67.

65 "literarum peritia"; quoted in introduction, p. 15.

Calvin's French treatise *Advertissement contre l'astrologie judiciaire* of 1549 contains another interesting reference to the *sciences humaines* - a reference which is of special relevance for our inquiry since it is made in a statement touching on the typically humanistic topic of the renaissance of letters which the reformer only discusses very rarely.[66] However, the statement is not only important because of the prominent humanistic theme it evokes, but also because Calvin is quite explicit and at the same time not completely negative about that theme. As Millet has pointed out, the reformer's intention in his *Advertissement* was "to situate exactly the scope of a renewed astrology in the context of the *humaniores litterae*".[67] Advancing his argument Calvin again appears to walk in the footsteps of Luther, although he is less assertive and definitive in his statement than the German reformer. On the whole we can observe that Calvin adopts the basic notions and the theological framework of Luther's conception in his interpretation of the contemporary restitution of letters, which means that he departs from the assumption that humanistic studies were revived by God in the Renaissance for the sake of the promotion of the Gospel in its true form and content.[68]

However, if Calvin follows Luther conceptually in the main points, he does not quite follow him in the explicitness of his discourse. Luther's historical-eschatological frame remains more or less implicit, while the appraisal of the *sciences humaines* is typically sober and restrained. Moreover, the positive aspects of Calvin's assertion about these sciences are again qualified substantially by the theological context of the passage, and the argument is attenuated by the negative and hypothetical mode of expression used. Concerning the latter aspect, we must point out that the statement the reformer makes is embedded in a grammatical structure which can be characterised, linguistically speaking, as a negative conditional type three or, to put it in terms of French grammar, a conditionnel passé au négatif. This has the effect of undermining the affirmative potential signalled indirectly in the statement. Here is what Calvin says in his *Advertissement*:

> If God had not revealed to us the purity of His Gospel in our time - seeing that He has revived the *human sciences* [*sciences humaines*], which are proper and useful for the conduct of our life and which, by serving our utility, may also serve His glory - there would still be enough reason to punish the ingratitude of those who, not satisfied with solid and well-founded things, and driven by a presumptuous ambition, desire to flit about in the air. Now He has given us both, that is to say, He has brought us back the arts and sciences in their entirety, and He has, above all, restored for us the pure knowledge of His celestial doctrine in order to lead us to Him and to introduce us to His high and admirable secrets. Therefore, if it happens that some [people], instead of taking advantage of this, prefer to roam across the fields rather than keep themselves within the[se] bounds, do they not deserve to be doubly chastised? And this happens, in fact, as there are people who are so dull, or rather stupid, to devote all their study to a *frivolous abuse* in which they do nothing but fret without any profit.[69]

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66 And, as we have pointed out earlier, never in the *Institutes*. Cf. above, p. 278.

67 Millet, "Introduction" [to] *Advertissement contre l'astrologie judiciaire*, ed. Millet (Geneva 1985), 39.

68 For Luther's conception cf. introduction, p. 17.

69 "Quand Dieu ne nous auroit revelé de nostre temps la pureté de son Evangile, veu qu'il a resuscité les *sciences humaines*, qui sont propres et utiles à la conduite de notre vie, et, en servant à nostre utilité, peuvent aussi servir à sa gloire, encore auroit-il juste raison de punir l'ingratitude de ceux qui, ne se contentans point des choses solides et bien fondées, appetent, par une ambition

This statement is a typical example of how Calvin approaches humanistic issues: he advances a moderately positive argument in a vague or indirect way and then neutralises its affirmative strength by means of adducing a negative argument based on theological deliberations and therefore carrying superior authority. We have seen this in the statement from the *Commentary on I Corinthians*, where the propitiously-sounding question "how much honour do the liberal arts deserve, which so refine human beings that they make them truly human?" receives the dismissive answer "they are of no importance for the attainment of spiritual wisdom".[70] We have also encountered the same approach in the polemical treatise *De scandalis*, where Calvin's affirmation made in the declaration "we do not at all need to boast much how anxious we can be to care about the letters and sciences" is severely restricted by the theological comment which follows: "but since Jesus Christ, without excepting anything in the world, has commanded to preach the Gospel whatever may happen, we must obey this command".[71]

In the *Advertissement contre l'astrologie judiciaire*, the situation is similar, for the reformer seems to advance a genuine, if guarded, appraisal of the humanistic studies and of the achievements accomplished by the humanists, but by embedding the positive assertion in a sentence which is in the negative past conditional mode, he diminishes his already cool commendation of the humanistic disciplines almost to the point of revoking the positive assertion. Although Calvin's phrase "if God had not" signifies, strictly speaking, impossibility according to the grammatical rules (past conditional), implying the affirmation "but He did", we may take it here as indicating a certain indifference towards the humanistic issue of hand, that is, towards the theme of the revival of classical letters. From the point of view of syntactical logic, the initial phrase can legitimately be construed in combination with the *sciences humaines*, so that the meaning of Calvin's statement can be seen as adequately rendered in the following abbreviated form: "if God had not ..... restituted the human sciences ..... there would still be enough reason to punish those who ..... prefer to roam across the fields rather than keep themselves within the[se] bounds". This contracted version of Calvin's long-winded argument shows that the reformer's enthusiasm for the enterprise of the restitution of ancient learning and, by implication, for the establishment of the *sciences humaines*, is limited.

As far as the precise meaning of the term *sciences humaines* as employed here is

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outrecuidée, de voltiger en l'air. Maintenant, puis qu'il nous a eslargy tous les deux, c'est qu'il nous a remis les arts et sciences en leur entier, et sur tout nous a restitué la pure cognoissance de sa doctrine celeste pour nous mener jusques à lui et nous introduire en ses hautz secretz et admirables, s'il advient qu'aucuns, au lieu d'en faire leur profit, ayment mieux de vaguer à travers champs que de se tenir entre les bornes, ne meritent ilz pas d'estre chastiez au double? Ce qui advient de fait, lors qu'ilz sont si hebetez ou plustost abestiz d'appliquer toute leur estude à un abus frivolle où ilz ne font que se tourmenter sans nul profit." *Advertissement contre l'astrologie judiciaire*, ed. Millet, 52-53 (italics added).

70 Quoted above, p. 282.

71 Quoted in introduction, p. 21.

concerned, we can say that while Calvin's statement undeniably contains an allusion to the special role which the humanistic studies played in the process of the rebirth of ancient letters and thus undoubtedly associates the *sciences humaines* with the *studia humanitatis* to some degree, it has to be admitted that this reference to the *sciences humaines* has a predominantly general character because there exists an implicit parallel to the expression "the arts and sciences in their entirety". In fact, the second consideration, which indirectly associates the *sciences humaines* with the "ars et sciences en leur entier", proves that the term *sciences humaines* has again a very general meaning here, denoting, more or less, the whole realm of human science as opposed to theology. Our emphasis on this general meaning is, strictly speaking, philologically compelling, as the narrower meaning of a term must not dominate over the wider one if either is admissible in the interpretation of a passage, as is the case here - and as is the case with the controversial statement from the *Apology to the Nicodemites.*[72]

After considering two passages in which the term *sciences humaines* is used in the general meaning of referring to the whole realm of human science (including the humanistic studies but excluding theology) we must investigate whether the expression *sciences humaines* also occurs in Calvin's work in a narrower and more precisely delimited meaning corresponding, approximately, to the notion of the *studia humanitatis.* If we look again at Calvin's polemical treatise *De scandalis*, we can find an interesting comment on the *sciences humaines* which shows that Calvin also employs this term in the specific sense of the *studia humanitatis*. Discussing the problem of the appreciation of the Bible's language from a literary view-point, Calvin observes that "those who are accustomed to elegance and splendour reject or despise this manner of speech as uncultivated and colourless".[73] This is an unmistakable hint at the humanists and especially at the ideal of refined eloquence which they promoted, but the hint remains, strictly speaking, implicit in the Latin version, for that version, which we have just quoted, omits any direct and definite allusion to the humanist concept of rhetoric.

However, if we consult the French version, which can with reasonable certainty be attributed to Calvin,[74] and in which the reformer shows himself "anxious to define the terms ..... and to make precise distinctions", as one critic has observed,[75] we find that the translator provides two additions that make the reference to humanism more explicit. First, Calvin adds the word "style" to the phrase "accustomed to elegance and splendour" and changes the word "splendour", so that the new version reads "accustomed to a pure and elegant *style*". Second, he inserts a new relative clause identifying the people who "are

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72 Cf. introduction, p. 19.

73 VL [1550]: "qui etiam elegantiae assueti sunt ac nitori, incultam istam et nullis coloribus vestitam orationem vel respuunt vel fastidiunt"; *De scandalis*, CO 8.14.

74 Cf. O. Fatio, "Introduction" [to] *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio (Geneva 1984), 36.

75 "Il est soucieux de définir les termes ..... et de distinguer les espèces du genre défini"; Fatio, "Introduction" [to] *Des scandales*, 36.

accustomed to a pure and elegant style" with "those who have been instructed in the *human sciences* [*sciences humaines*]". Thus in the French translation Calvin can be seen as suggesting a fairly direct association of instruction in the *sciences humaines* and appreciation of "a pure and elegant style", which proves beyond doubt that he employs the term *sciences humaines* here in the sense of *studia humanitatis*, with particular emphasis on the discipline of rhetoric. Transposing his thought into his native tongue, the reformer chooses to include a specific reference to those contemporaries who enjoyed some humanist training, as he himself did, and he reformulates his Latin statement about the literary appreciation of the Scripture texts in a more explicit way, writing that "those also who have been instructed in the *humanistic disciplines* [*sciences humaines*] and are [thus] accustomed to a pure and elegant style reject or despise this way of speaking [i.e. of the Bible] as too rough and unpolished".[76]

The passage from *Des scandales* which we have just quoted provides an excellent example of the relevance and the significance of the French versions of Calvin's writings for the precise assessment of the reformer's relation to humanism. This is an example of how the French translation can contribute to define the meaning of the complex and often ambiguous Latin version more sharply and to render its abstract forms of expression in more concrete terms.[77] We must not think that because Calvin addresses himself to a popular audience when he writes in French, his message is of a lesser value with regard to intellectual issues like humanism. On the contrary, we must be aware that what was considered popular in the sixteenth century does not quite correspond to what we understand by that word today. As is known (but not so often emphasised), the so-called "popular" audience of the sixteenth century included a sensitive and alert reading public receptive for and interested in intellectual topics, among which questions related to humanism figured prominently. Today even specialists cannot deny that they sometimes depend on the information provided by the variations of a translation, as the passage we have discussed above has clearly demonstrated. But perhaps the most important point to be considered with regard to our inquiry is that Calvin's French translations have the quality of breaking (if only occasionally) his practice of implicitness concerning humanism, which can be seen as prevailing more strongly in the Latin version of the reformer's writings. Thus we can formulate the conclusion that Calvin's vernacular expression, especially in the polemical treatises, reduces some of the imprecision inherent in the Latin version and in many instances makes the meaning of vague Latin phrases clearer to the modern reader, who may be confused by Calvin's indirectness and reservedness with respect to humanistic issues.

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76 VG [1550]: "Ceulx aussi qui ont esté instruicts aux *sciences humaines* et sont accoustumez à un style pur et elegant rejettent ou mesprisent ceste façon de parler, comme trop rude et mal polie"; *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 64 (italics added).

77 Cf. introduction, p. 32.

After carrying out a selective analysis of the term *sciences humaines* and associated expressions in Calvin's writings, we can now reconsider that controversial passage from the *Apology to the Nicodemites* which cited in the introduction: "I would rather that all the *human sciences* were banished from the earth than that they would be the cause for cooling the zeal of Christians and for turning them away from God".[78] Our examination of Calvin's use of the term *sciences humaines* has shown that the reformer employs this expression in two different ways: first, to refer to all the human science as opposed to theology in a general sense and second, to speak more specifically of the programme of the humanistic studies. This ambiguity can be understood, at least in part, on the background of the customary inconsistencies of humanist usage concerning the terminology employed to denote the *studia humanitatis*,[79] and it can be explained, to a certain degree, by the fact that the modern French language, and especially its scientific vocabulary, was only in the process of being shaped. Moreover, since Calvin played a major part in the creation and development of the modern form of his native language,[80] we must grant him the privilege to coin and use expressions as he deems appropriate.

As regards the meaning of the term *sciences humaines* in the sixteenth century (particularly in the first half) we must point out that it is difficult to find a clear and uniform definition. Rabelais does not provide a norm since he appears not to use the expression at all in his work, employing other terms such as "sçavoir liberal et honeste" or, in a narrower sense, "lettres d'humanité".[81] A clearer definition of the *sciences humaines* only emerges in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the term comes to denote "the sciences of logical reasoning, of language, of moral values as opposed to theology and natural science", to quote a recent lexicographical source.[82] However, a narrower use, which corresponds to the humanistic sense, is also attested in older encyclopedias such as Furetière's dictionary of 1690, where we read that "by *sciences humaines* we mean the knowledge of languages, of grammar, of poetry, of rhetoric and other things taught in the humanities".[83] Those "other things" include the discipline of history, and the languages mentioned are identified as Latin and Greek.[84]

Considering the vague definition of the term *sciences humaines* in the sixteenth

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78 Quoted in introduction, p. 19.

79 Cf. above, pp. 277-278.

80 Cf. below, pp. 322-323.

81 Cf. chapter 2, p. 115 (ns. 228-230).

82 "L'expression *sciences humaines*, aux XVIIe et XVIIIe s., désigne, par opposition à la théologie et aux sciences de la nature, les sciences du raisonnement (logique), du langage, des valeurs (morales)"; *Le Grand Robert*, vol. 8, 636.

83 "*Science*: ..... On appelle les *sciences* humaines, la conoissance des Langues, de la Grammaire, de la Poësie, de la Rhetorique, & autres choses qu'on apprend dans les Humanitez"; Furetière, *Dictionnaire*, vol. 3, Ddd 2.

84 "*Humanitez*: au pluriel, signifient les lettres humaines, la Grammaire, la Rhetorique, la Poësie, & c.", and "*Humain*: ..... Au College on appelle les *lettres humaines*, l'estude des langues Grecque & Latine, la Grammaire, la Rhétorique, la Poësie & l'intelligence des Poëtes, Orateurs et Historiens"; Furetière, *Dictionnaire*, vol. 2, Ff 3.

century and, more particularly, its ambiguity in Calvin's work, the conclusion is inevitable that the meaning of the expression can only be determined with regard to the context in which it is situated. If the interpretation of the context is not certain then the rule of common linguistic logic applies, according to which the narrower meaning must yield to the wider meaning as the latter, being more generally applicable, is more likely to be the appropriate option.[85] Having established the basic criteria for the determination of the meaning of the expression *sciences humaines* in Calvin's work, we can now return to the controversial statement from the *Apology to the Nicodemites* and try to interpret it critically in the light of the evidence provided by its context. We have suggested that the contemporary intellectual background of Geneva, that is, the controversy around Castellio and his dismissal, might have influenced the reformer in his harsh judgement of the *sciences humaines*.[86] It remains to be seen now in how far this argument can be substantiated by a close reading of the intrinsic context of the statement in question.

In the passage where the debated statement about the *sciences humaines* occurs, Calvin deals with the third of four different groups of Nicodemites which he distinguishes, namely the so-called "men of letters".[87] The reformer defines these people as "those who half turn Christianity into a philosophy" and are inclined, in part, to "excuse the majority of the foolish superstitions of the Papacy" with reference to "Platonic ideas".[88] "This band consists almost entirely of men of letters", Calvin points out, adding that "this is not to say that all men of letters belong to it".[89] As Higman has pointed out, it is possible that this assertion contains an allusion to Marguerite de Navarre and the circle of humanist intellectuals gathered at her court in Nérac,[90] which Calvin had visited himself once meeting the aged Lefèvre d'Étaples.[91] The expression "gens de lettres" could therefore also be regarded as implying a hint at the humanistically-oriented movement of French evangelicism.[92] However, if we take into account what Calvin says in the second part of his assertion about the "gens de lettres", we realise that the distinctly restrictive comment the

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85 Cf. above, p. 289.

86 Cf. introduction, pp. 18-19. Cf. also above, p. 284.

87 The four groups are: priests, courtiers, men of letters, and tradesmen and common people; cf. *Excuse aux Nicodémites* in *Three French Treatises*, ed. F. M. Higman (London 1970), 136-141. Calvin also mentions a fifth group, namely the freethinkers (whom he calls "Lucians" and "Epicureans"), but he does not discuss this group since its members, judged mostly as atheists by him, cannot even be regarded as Nicodemites in the proper sense of the word. It would be "lost time" anyway, Calvin argues, to talk to those who do not believe in the Word of God; cf. *Excuse aux Nicodémites*, ed. Higman, 141.

88 "Il y a la troisième espece, de ceux qui convertissent à demy la Chrestienté en philosophie ..... . Davantage, il y en a une partie d'eux, qui imaginent des idées Platoniques en leurs testes, touchant la façon de servir Dieu; et aussi excusent la pluspart des folles superstitions qui sont en la Papauté, comme choses dont on ne peut passer"; *Excuse aux Nicodémites*, ed. Higman, 139.

89 "Ceste bende est quasi toute de gens de lettres. Non pas que toutes gens de lettres en soyent"; *Excuse aux Nicodémites*, ed. Higman, 139.

90 Cf. *Excuse aux Nicodémites*, ed. Higman, 23-24, 139-140.

91 This would appear to have taken place ten years before the composition of the treatise under consideration; cf. chapter 5, p. 233 (Colladon), p. 236 (Beza) and p. 240 (de Ræmond).

92 Calvin's possible allusion to Gérard Roussel in the section dealing with the group of the priests can be explained by the fact that the latter had accepted a post as a bishop; cf. *Excuse aux Nicodémites*, ed. Higman, 136-138.

reformer makes there has an important bearing on the interpretation of the debated statement concerning the *sciences humaines*, which comes immediately after that assertion. Judged in the context of this restrictive comment - "this is not say that all men of letters belong to [this band]" - Calvin's controversial statement loses some of its rigour, for the reformer does not appear from this point of view as someone who really wishes that the *sciences humaines* are "banished from the earth" entirely, because not all the "men of letters" mentioned belong to that "band" whose members are prone to "cool the zeal of Christians and turn them away from God" by means of these *sciences*.

Thus, independently of whether one identifies the "men of letters" Calvin attacks with the French humanists or not, the reformer is, in the light of the linguistic logic of the preceding text, not delivering a wholesale condemnation of these "gens de lettres" or the sciences humaines associated with them. Having said that, however, we should be aware that this relativisation of Calvin's severe verdict, which is evident from the immediate context, may actually only have been motivated by the fact that some of the "men of letters", possibly of humanistic orientation, have changed allegiance and turned to Protestantism. Be that as it may, if we look at the further context and consider the lines that follow the debated statement which we are discussing, we recognise that the expression "gens de lettres" has a wider meaning than that suggested by the text preceding that statement, for Calvin associates it with three distinct professional categories, namely law, medicine and philosophy.[93] But since these categories correspond exactly to the three existing secular careers established in the distinct faculties of the late medieval universities,[94] it is evident that the group Calvin designates as "men of letters" comprises all people with higher education of a secular type, and not just the humanists, who do, of course, also belong to this group.[95]

Therefore, taking the whole contextual evidence of Calvin's debated statement into consideration, we can conclude that the term *sciences humaines* must not be interpreted in the narrow sense as referring to the humanistic studies only, but, on the contrary, has to be understood in the wider sense as denoting the whole realm of human science as opposed to theological doctrine. Accordingly, Calvin's censure of the *sciences humaines* in the *Apology to the Nicodemites* does clearly not signify a denunciation of humanism in the first place, but has to be seen as expressing the reformer's strong religious reservations against the potential of any secular-minded scientific endeavour - including humanist attempts - to "cool the zeal of Christians" and to "turn them away from God". However, the fact that

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93 Calvin mentions "advocatz" and "juges", "medecins", "philosophes" and "dialecticiens"; cf. *Excuse aux Nicodémites*, ed. Higman, 139-140.

94 On the development of the undergraduate curriculum and of the postgraduate disciplines cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 244; B. G. Kohl, "Humanism and Education" in A. Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism* (Philadelphia 1988), vol. 3, 5-22; A. Grafton / L. Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (Cambridge (Mass.) 1986).

95 Cf. *Excuse aux Nicodémites*, ed. Higman, 139-140.

Calvin's censorious statement is not directed primarily against the humanistic studies should not be interpreted uncritically as supporting the positive argument that since "Calvin ..... never condemned humanism in general", he was disposed favourably towards the movement as a whole.[96] It is evident that Calvin, although he does not criticise humanism exclusively in his statement, expresses here his strong reservations against all the sciences - including the humanistic disciplines and those branches of learning - and they were many - which were affected by the new body of knowledge unearthed by the humanists. Moreover, given Calvin's general attitude of implicitness and the associated strategy of marginalisation or tabooisation, it would be unrealistic to expect a straightforward and clear condemnation of humanism anyway. Finally, we must not forget that since the term *sciences humaines* can also mean *studia humanitatis* in Calvin's writings,[97] and that since Calvin sometimes uses a very general Latin term such as *doctrinae liberales* to refer to the humanistic studies,[98] the reformer's censure of the *sciences humaines* in his *Apology to the Nicodemites* inevitable retains a certain anti-humanistic connotation.

Be that as it may, if we look back on the analysis of Calvin's declarations concerning the humanistic studies conducted in the first part of this chapter, we must not forget to state the basic but important fact that most of the statements examined, although dealing with the issue of the *studia humanitatis* in a fairly explicit and often also direct way, exhibit a common emphasis on theoretical deliberation. This emphasis permits us to draw an approximate picture of the theoretical part of Calvin's conception of the humanistic studies, but due to the reformer's peculiarly reticent attitude towards explicit expression and clear formulation of his thought in matters of humanism, this picture remains very fragmentary and only conveys an incomplete impression of his real appreciation of the *studia humanitatis*. Nevertheless, the reformer's theoretical assertions about the humanistic studies reveal some general and fundamental aspects of his attitude towards humanism. We may mention here the three most important of these aspects, which emerge as essential and basic conclusions from Calvin's theoretical assertions analysed above. First, it has to be emphasised that Calvin does not condemn the humanistic studies in an absolute way or reject them categorically as useless or pernicious pursuits. Second, it has to be admitted that the reformer has strong religious reservations of a fundamental character against the humanistic studies - he thinks that they have a secularising potential

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96 Cf. e.g. Bouwsma, quoted (in full) in chapter 1, p. 73. Bouwsma's assertion is not made with reference to Calvin's strong statement from the *Apology to the Nicodemites*, which the American scholar omits from consideration, but it rests on the assumption that Calvin's negative comments concerning humanistic issues or individual humanists are not to be taken literally and do not constitute statements of fundamental significance. Bouwsma's indirect manner of arguing and his selective way of handling the evidence is typical of some of the recent advocates of the humanistic interpretation, who show a tendency to favour a narrow focus of definition. This method is obviously not adequate and has produced misleading affirmations, such as the above-mentioned statement.

97 E.g. in *De scandalis*; cf. above, p. 290 n. 76.

98 E.g. in *Comm. I Cor.* 1:20; cf. above, p. 282 n. 40.

undermining faith and piety -, but it has to be pointed out that these reservations apply to all the arts and sciences in equal measure. Third, it is evident that Calvin's intellectual engagement in the ongoing discussion on the qualities and possibilities of the humanistic studies[99] remains on a rather modest level, and it is more than obvious that his interest in the theoretical discourse on the new disciplines, to which the humanists dedicated so much effort,[100] is slight and superficial.

Considering what has been said so far, it has become increasingly clear that Calvin's attitude towards humanism cannot be judged adequately from his rare theoretical assertions concerning the humanistic studies. Because of his marked reticence regarding candid declarations about humanistic issues, because of his distinct reservations against the secularising potential of the humanistic studies, and because of his slight interest in any theoretical discussion of the topic of the humanists' programme of education and their principles of pedagogy, the true nature of Calvin's relation to humanism can only be assessed by gauging the degree of practical application he concedes to the reformed or newly developed disciplines, and by investigating the manner and scope of the actual implementation of the new means and methods put at his disposal by the humanists. This is precisely what we are going to do in the remaining parts of this chapter, where we will systematically examine the elements of humanism encountered in Calvin according to the concrete criteria provided by the categories of the individual disciplines of the *studia humanitatis*. This is to say, we will analyse Calvin's attitude towards humanism in an inductive way and chiefly in practical terms, focusing on the relevant evidence from the reformer's writings which documents his relation to specific features of the humanistic studies. As is obvious from the above considerations, the point of view of practical application will be predominant in the subsequent search for humanistic elements in Calvin, but this does not mean that aspects of theoretical discussion emerging in connection with practical issues will be disregarded.

However, before turning to the examination of Calvin's writings from the perspective of the individual disciplines of the *studia humanitatis*, that is to say, according to the scheme of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, historiography and moral philosophy, we should consider a passage in which the reformer speaks of these disciplines in a very concrete and utilitarian manner, but without referring to them as a whole under one of the generic names used by the humanists, such as *bonae litterae* or *sciences humaines*.[101] This passage

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99 We may refer to Budé's *De studio literarum recte et commode instituendo* of 1532 as an example.

100 Vives' massive treatise *De disciplinis* was published in 1531. It was approximately the same length as the second Latin edition of Calvin's *Institutes* of 1539 (around 200,000 words); cf. Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé*, 371. For an example of the humanist literature concerning the study of languages cf. below, p. 301 n. 138.

101 As we have seen, Calvin used the term *sciences humaines* in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541, but we have pointed out that the meaning of this term in these *Ordinances* does not necessarily correspond to that of *studia humanitatis* (cf. above, p. 286).

is from the *Academy Ordinances* of 1559,[102] and it demonstrates, despite the omission of current standard terminology, that Calvin's appreciation of the humanistic studies manifests itself most clearly in the domain of practical application, and not in the sphere of theoretical deliberation concerning, for instance, the pedagogical qualities of these studies. The fact that the cycle of the humanistic disciplines is not mentioned by name, and that the humanist programme of education is in no palpable way alluded to, typically illustrates the attitude of implicitness concerning humanism cultivated by the reformer, for whom usefulness and efficacy obviously constituted the prime criteria in the elaboration of the curriculum of the new Academy of Geneva.

The *Ordinances* are indeed a good example of Calvin's peculiarly taciturn manner of treating humanism: the major formal features of the humanist cycle of studies can easily be recognised (at least in outline) and this applies particularly the five disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* as distinguished by Kristeller, but the ideals associated with the humanist educational programme remain, strictly speaking, implicit in Calvin's draft. This implicitness is mainly manifest in the fact that the humanistic disciplines are in no way identified as pertaining to a revolutionary enterprise of intellectual reformism and cultural renewal, or as belonging to a new (and mainly secular) body of learning. It is, however, also revealed in the conspicuous absence of the concepts of *humanitas*, or *παιδεια* respectively, from the *Leges Academiae Genevensis*. As we recognise, the former aspect cannot be considered as entirely unusual in the context of Calvin's work,[103] while the latter appears to be a standard trait of Calvin's attitude towards humanism.[104] If we compare Calvin's implicitness, manifest in the *Academy Ordinances* as well as in his other writings, with the approach prevalent in other Protestant programmes of educational reform (for instance, the directives issued by Luther and Melanchthon in Wittenberg)[105] we must admit that Calvin's attitude is not representative of the whole Reformation and can therefore be considered as atypical in the larger context of the Protestant renewal before 1580 approximately. As has been pointed out, Melanchthon used the term *humaniores disciplinas* and invoked the concept of *humanitas* in connection with the establishment of the new constitution of the Wittenberg school and university.[106]

Calvin's implicitness in the *Academy Ordinances* does not represent any surprise if one is familiar with the phenomenon from his earlier writings - as we certainly are from

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102 *L'ordre du Collège de Genève*; CO 10(1).65-90; OS 2.365-385.

103 We have seen that Calvin acknowledges, if only marginally, the existence of a secular renaissance of learning, declaring that "He [God] has revived the human sciences, which are proper and useful for the conduct of our life", and commenting that "He has brought us back the arts and sciences in their entirety" (quoted above, p. 287).

104 Cf. above, p. 281.

105 Cf. Luther's and Melanchthon's letters to Eoban Hess from 29 March 1523, discussed in the introduction, pp. 15-16 (ns. 85-87).

106 Cf. Melanchthon's reform programme and his *Encomium eloquentiae*, which accompanied that programme (cf. H. Scheible, *Melanchthon* (Munich 1997), 36-40).

the numerous observations concerning the matter which we have made in the course of this investigation. But since this feature has not been sufficiently highlighted in the literature,[107] the reformer's ambivalent attitude has, as is to be expected, intrigued scholars and accordingly, very different interpretations have emerged. Some authors have argued that the *Academy Ordinances* are a document which shows that Calvin, in typical humanist fashion, "has dedicated a great part of his efforts to educational questions".[108] Others have suggested that through Beza, whom Calvin had appointed as rector of the new establishment, the door was opened to Renaissance Aristotelianism, so that "Aristotelian syllogistic logic became an essential component of the curriculum of the Genevan Academy"[109] - a component which signalled the reimposition of scholastic methods, favouring the development of a type of theological thinking later termed "Calvinist scholasticism".[110] Others again, recognising the conflict of critical opinion, have marginalised the issue of humanism in their studies of Calvin's academy.[111] In summary, there is no substantial agreement today on the question of humanism in the *Leges Academiae Genevensis*, the authorship of which is not even always attributed to Calvin.[112] The assumption that Calvin had one or two collaborators in drafting the *Ordinances* would account, though, for some of the contradictions inherent in the document. Beza, for instance, could be seen as responsible for the emphasis on Aristotelianism, while the Ciceronian influences might be attributed to Cordier.

To conclude our analysis of the *Academy Ordinances* we shall try to bring together the different interpretations of the establishment of the Genevan Academy with regard to humanism. As Wendel has pointed out, the new foundation, rightfully called "the crown of Calvin's Genevan work",[113] illustrates the fact that

> the humanists and the reformers, who appeared to be divided by so many differences, were at least in agreement in one point: the necessity, for the shaping of the Christian individual, of an education which is as complete and advanced as possible and which is

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107 The issue of Calvin's implicitness concerning humanism has not so far formed the object of a critical analysis, but some recent studies contain allusions to the fact. These allusions are often only of a very elementary kind, but they are nevertheless revealing. As far as the *Academy Ordinances* are concerned, there is an indirect hint, for example, in Bouwsma's *Sixteenth-Century Portrait* of the reformer, where we read that "the durability of Calvin's humanism, and the importance he attached to it as a resource for the Gospel, are *implicit* in one of the major achievements of his last years, the establishment of an academy in Geneva for the training of leaders for the Genevan church and state"; W. J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin* (New York 1988), 14 (italics added). One can ask oneself why the author does not elaborate on making the individual aspects of this point *explicit* from Calvin's *Academy Ordinances*, or comment on the problems involved in doing so.

108 R. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités" in *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du protestantisme français* 126 (1980), 28.

109 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford 1990), 216. Backus has examined Beza's emphasis on Aristotle in some detail; cf. I. Backus, "L'enseignement de la logique à l'Académie de Genève entre 1559 et 1565" in *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 3 (1979), 153-163.

110 Cf. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 208.

111 Cf. e.g. K. Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education 1560-1620* (Aldershot 1995).

112 But to Beza, and formerly sometimes also to Cordier; cf. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 34 (Beza) and chapter 5, p. 267 (Cordier).

113 By Walker, *John Calvin*, 367 (quoted in Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse*, 2nd ed. (Geneva 1985), 73).

based on the study of antiquity.[114]

It is evident that humanism played a prominent part in the curriculum of the new Genevan Academy insofar as the courses offered provided a thorough grounding in philological studies and imparted what has always been recognised as "a fundamental basis of philological learning".[115] On the other hand, it has to be acknowledged that Calvin tolerated the introduction of a new kind of revised Aristotelianism, which had been elaborated in Italy as an alternative method to humanism,[116] into the curriculum of his academy. Moreover, the fact has to be taken into account that the academy was "strongly marked by doctrinal Calvinism", although it was clearly not an ecclesiastical institution.[117] The coexistence of humanism and Aristotelianism under the same roof was, at any rate, not predestined to be a harmonious one, and under the pressure of an increasing stress on dogmatic theology, humanism was soon marginalised by "Calvinist scholasticism". The beginning of this process was well visible already at the time of Calvin's death, and one may ask oneself whether the reformer was aware and content with this development or not.

The advocates of the humanistic interpretation of Calvin have compared the Genevan Academy to the trilingual colleges founded at Alcalá, Louvain and Paris.[118] One author, for instance, has recently affirmed that "his [Calvin's] academy was a typical Erasmian 'trilingual' institution ..... [which] prepared students, like bachelors of arts in the Scholastic curriculum, for professional training in theology, law, or medicine".[119] Another author, who is slightly more precise in his judgement, has declared that the *schola publica*, that is, the upper section, of the new educational establishment at Geneva, was "a theological seminary to which a trilingual college, *more or less* copied from that of Erasmus, was attached".[120] The remark "more or less" is very appropriate, for the borrowings from Erasmus or from the famous trilingual colleges founded in his spirit are chiefly indirect and very selective. As has been pointed out by experts, the academic constitution of the Genevan school was based in the first place and to a large extent on the examples furnished by Simon Sulzer in Lausanne (1547), Johann Sturm in Strasbourg (1538) and Claude Baduel in Nîmes (1540).[121] However, Calvin did not only copy from the humanistically-oriented Protestant educationalists and reformers, or from Erasmian models, but he also drew on his own experiences with humanism from his youth. Wendel has emphasised this point, referring to Calvin's early dedication to the classical languages. "Reading the regulations of the Genevan schools", Wendel writes, "one gets the impression

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114 Wendel, *Calvin*, 73.
115 Walker, *John Calvin*, 360.
116 Cf. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 208, 213.
117 B. Cottret, *Calvin* (Paris 1995), 264.
118 Cf. chapter 2, p. 126 (n. 299).
119 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 14.
120 Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 36 (italics added).
121 Cf. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 37.

that Calvin did not only follow the example of Jean Sturm, with whom he had remained in contact, but that he remembered his own studies and his youthful enthusiasm for the ancient languages".[122]

The critical opinions we have just cited belong to the humanistic interpretation of Calvin. They are not wrong, but they require some qualification because they are based on an emphasis on the linguistic and the technical aspects of the *studia humanitatis*, as suggested by Kristeller's theory. This emphasis (mainly expressed with reference to trilingual scholarship) is made in terms of a historical and grammatical competence and at the expense of the literary (and irrational) component of humanism, which is associated with the disciplines of rhetoric and poetry, and which is, as we have tried to show, firmly rooted in the ideal of *humanitas*.[123] It will be clear that Calvin's *Academy Ordinances* cannot be characterised as fully humanistic simply because they correspond to the views of the humanistic interpretation as sketched out above, or to the technical criteria of a Kristellerian definition of humanism - which often amounts to the same. A close look at the *Ordinances* confirms, indeed, that all the five *studia humanitatis* as distinguished by Kristeller, and including especially the stipulation of trilingual scholarship, feature more or less prominently in the constitution of the Genevan school, but it also confirms the omission of any invocation of the ideal of *humanitas* - be it to characterise the educational programme as a whole and situate it in a humanistic context, or be it to express commitment to the artistically motivated non-rational side of the new humanist curriculum.

If we scrutinise the document of the *Academy Ordinances* from the point of view of the *studia humanitatis*, we recognise that Calvin includes the disciplines of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history and moral philosophy as aspects of the various subjects assigned to the three non-theological lecturers appointed, whose teaching charges are described under the titles of Hebrew, Greek and arts. As the Hebrew language is new to academy students, strong emphasis is inevitably placed on grammar, which fulfils a fundamental introductory function and therefore plays an unusually prominent role in third level education. The other disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* are almost exclusively linked to the teaching of Greek, a language with which the students are already well familiar, especially as regards grammar, from the courses they attended in the preparatory *schola privata*. The lectures in Greek correspond to what could be called an advanced level course in Hellenic letters, conveying a solid grounding in Attic oratory, poetry and historiography, as well as imparting a thorough knowledge of pagan and Christian moral philosophy. Finally, the discipline of rhetoric is also taught, among other things, by the arts lecturer, whose task includes reading on the theory and practice of both Greek and Latin oratory. Latin,

122 Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 82.
123 Cf. chapter 3, pp. 173-174.

incidentally, is not taught as a distinct subject anymore after the ample instruction received in preparatory school, but the study of Latin speeches in the arts lectures serves the purpose of further refining what can be considered an already adequate command of that language. Among the distinctive features of rhetoric which Calvin mentions explicitly figures his stipulation of formal perfection in writing, for he requires of the students in the highest class of the academy that they "diligently practise their style".[124]

Now let us look at those passages of the text of the *Leges Academiae Genevensis* in which the humanistic studies appear interwoven into the outline of the curriculum in the manner mentioned above. Defining the programme of studies, Calvin stipulates that apart from two lecturers in theology - Beza and himself -, who teach doctrine in the form of commenting on the Bible,[125] there should be three lecturers, two in old languages - the original languages of the Bible - and one in arts, covering also mathematics and physics.[126] The lecturers appointed in the "trilingual" section (Latin being the language of instruction) were Antoine Chevalier for Hebrew, François Béraud for Greek and Jean Tagaud for the arts, all of whom were placed under the rectorship of Beza.[127] These "public lecturers", as they were called, including Beza and some teachers from the preparatory school, had recently migrated from Lausanne, where they had been dismissed from their posts by the Bernese government for defending strictly Calvinian views on church discipline, especially the independent right of excommunication,[128] and on predestination.[129] Perhaps the most prominent academic among them was Antoine Chevalier, who had been the private tutor (in French) of Queen Elizabeth I when she was Princess,[130] and who would later also teach at Cambridge.[131] François Béraud was the son of Nicolas Béraud, the tutor of Admiral Coligny, and was himself also a poet writing in Latin and Greek.[132] The programme of studies which these lecturers had to follow in their instruction was determined by Calvin as follows:

> The Hebrew lecturer should comment upon some book from the Old Testament in the mornings. In the afternoons he should lecture on Hebrew grammar.
>
> The Greek professor should lecture after the Hebrew class on some book of philosophy concerning morals. The book will be chosen from the works of Aristotle, Plato, Plutarch or one of the Christian philosophers. After lunch he will deliver lectures ..... on some Greek poet, orator or historian, making a choice of the purest among them.
>
> The lecturer in arts will follow the professor of Greek and he will lecture on a book of physics for half an hour. After lunch ..... he will expound knowledgeably the Rhetorics of Aristotle, the most famous speeches of Cicero or the books of Horace.[133]

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124 "exercent diligement leur style"; *Academy Ordinances*; CO 10(1).79; quoted in McNeill, "Introduction" [to] *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, lxix.

125 In 1566 Colladon replaced Calvin as lecturer in theology; cf. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 40, 46.

126 Cf. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 36.

127 Cf. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 31.

128 Cf. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 30-31.

129 Cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 262.

130 Cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 364.

131 Cf. T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin* (London 1975), 152.

132 Cf. Parker, *John Calvin*, 152.

133 *Academy Ordinances* [1559]; CO 10(1).75-80; quoted in *John Calvin*, eds. Potter / Greengrass,

The extracts from the curriculum just quoted confirm what we have pointed out above, namely that Calvin incorporates the humanistic disciplines into his programme of studies without furnishing a formal justification of their application and use - individually or as a whole - in the context of the pedagogical aims and intentions of a Protestant academy. Most authors fill the methodological gap left by Calvin with his omission of an explicit vindication of the role of the humanistic studies by reverting to what the young reformer had said eighteen years earlier in his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*,[134] in which the intention of establishing an academy had already been declared, and in which Calvin, freshly arrived from the humanistic city of Strasbourg, presented what appears to be a basic theoretical explanation of his educational notion of the humanistic studies, stating that: "it is only possible to profit from such [theological] lectures if first one is instructed in the *languages and humanities*".[135] However, as we have shown, this assertion can only be rated as a vague reference to the *studia humanitatis*,[136] and it must therefore, strictly speaking, not be cited as demonstrating the existence of a conceptual basis of humanistic educational theory in Calvin. We may add to this a curious observation, namely that the reformer does not define the Genevan Academy in an explicit way as a trilingual institution in his *Ordinances*, and that he does not mention the name of Erasmus in connection with the foundation of the new establishment. While the latter fact is not surprising and can be understood in the context of what we have called Calvin's implicitness,[137] the former constitutes again a methodological omission which is rather unusual in humanist writers, who always took great care to furnish adequate theoretical vindication of trilingual scholarship, also with regard to theological studies.[138] Finally, as we have pointed out, the concept of *humanitas* is absent from the *Leges Academiae Genevensis*.

The lack of a clearly stated conceptual framework along the lines of humanist educational theory in Calvin's constitution of the Genevan Academy is basically confirmed by Beza, the first rector of the new establishment, in his inaugural speech delivered - in Latin - at the opening ceremony on 5 June 1559,[139] as well as in the course of his subsequent academic leadership. As is to be expected, Calvin's "right-hand man" and "admiring disciple", as Beza has aptly been called,[140] can be seen as essentially aligned

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134 Cf. e.g. Cottret, *Calvin*, 263; Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 14; Parker, *John Calvin*, 152.

135 *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* [1541]; quoted in Parker, *John Calvin*, 152 (italics added).

136 Cf. above, pp. 285-286.

137 Cf. introduction, p. 15 n. 82.

138 Cf. e.g. Latomus, *De trium linguarum et studii theologici ratione* (Anvers 1518). Bartholomaeus Latomus (i.e. Jacques Masson or Steinmetz) (1498?-1570) was a humanist scholar who resided in Paris from 1531 to 1541. He taught Latin at the Royal College, delivering an inaugural lecture entitled *Oratio de studiis humanitatis*, which was published in Paris in 1534 by F. Gryphius; cf. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 115-122.

139 VG in OS 2.380-385.

140 Walker, *John Calvin*, 363.

with his master's thought in the main points under consideration here, but since the disciple tends, nevertheless, to be slightly more explicit than the master with regard to humanistic issues, Beza's stance and statements may help clarify certain aspects that remain obscure in Calvin, whose attitude often appears vaguely defined because of his marked inclination to implicitness. Beza, to be sure, does not mention the concepts of the *studia humanitatis* or of *humanitas* either - nor does he call attention to the humanist ideal of trilingual scholarship in connection with the foundation of the academy. In his rectorial address, however, he offers an appraisal of "the arts and sciences"[141] from a historical perspective, exhibiting an sincere appreciation of what we could call the "profane sciences"[142] in terms of universal grace, that is to say, in a general context including non-Christian traditions such as classical philosophy or ancient Jewish thought.[143] Moreover, his declaration, made in the same address, that the students have "the means to be nourished by true piety and by good science",[144] can be construed as echoing the Erasmian ideal of *pietas litterata*.[145]

However, Beza's vague evocation of Erasmus' individualistic emphasis on Christian spirituality principally serves the purpose of endorsing the typically Calvinian insistence on the priority and predominance of the religious element in all forms of education and, more particularly, of accelerating what we call today the process of confessionalisation,[146] which is to say, of promoting the consolidation of the Reformed Protestant faith as distinct from other confessions. Beza concludes his inaugural discourse by declaring that the students of the newly founded academy are invited to "profit from the true religion and the knowledge of all good arts", not for their personal interest, but in order to "advance the glory of God" and to "bring profit and honour" to their country and people.[147] The new rector goes as far as proclaiming that those who register in the Academy of Geneva are enlisted in a "holy militia"[148] defending true doctrine and spreading the true faith. "Thus, for Beza, the students of Geneva are not just, like any other students, in pursuit of academic honours", as Stauffer has put it, but "they are soldiers in the service of God".[149]

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141 Beza says: "les arts et bonnes sciences, qui sont toutes comprises sous le mot de philosophie"; Beza, *Inaugural Discourse*; quoted in Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 32.

142 J. Courvoisier, "La haute école de Genève au XVI^e siècle d'après le discours de Théodore de Bèze à l'inauguration du Collège et Académie de Genève" in *Theologische Zeitschrift* 35 (1979), 171.

143 Cf. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 32.

144 "le moyen d'estre nourris en la vraye piété et ès bonnes sciences"; Beza, *Inaugural Discourse*; quoted in Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 33.

145 Cf. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 33.

146 It may be useful, in this context, to mention that the new term *confessionalisation* (from German *Konfessionalisierung*) is used in current research to describe the process of transition from the actual *event* of the Reformation to the definition of distinct Protestant *confessions* (cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 53, 378 n. 60). As Cottret has pointed out, Calvin "is a contemporary of the Reformation, but he is situated at this turning-point where the event of the Reformation gives way to confession", and he is destined to become "the principal agent of this confessionalisation in the francophone area"; Cottret, *Calvin*, 53-54.

147 Beza, *Inaugural Discourse*; quoted in Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 33.

148 "saincte milice"; Beza, *Inaugural Discourse*; quoted in Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 33.

149 Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 33.

Therefore, scholars are agreed that it is a distinctive feature of the new Genevan school to "attribute a decisive role to ecclesiastical authority",[150] which is manifest, among other things, in the fact that students were required - and this was clearly the will of Calvin - to sign a complicated and ultra-orthodox confession of faith before being permitted to enrol.[151]

If we compare the attitude expressed in Beza's speech (without doubt reflecting the convictions of Calvin himself) with humanist thought, especially as represented by Erasmus, we recognise that the fundamentalist emphasis on the religious element inevitably clashes with the humanist ideal of liberal education as it does not champion the free development of individual spirituality as envisaged by the humanists.[152] Moreover, it is evident that the Calvinian insistence on Christian piety in terms of a "confessionalising" conception of faith and of a compelling appeal to the glory of God (not of human beings) is incompatible with Erasmus' focus on the inner life of the individual, which is based on the ideal of *humanitas* or self-development[153] and to which the notion of *pietas litterata* is related. Therefore, what is visible in the foundation and the first years of the Genevan Academy is, in fact, an attempt at reversing the shift of emphasis from *divinitas* to *humanitas* which the humanists had laboured so much to bring about. This attempt is rooted in Luther, whose reproach to Erasmus "du bist nicht fromm!" had already demonstrated that he was not prepared to appreciate the human dimensions of the *pietas litterata* proposed by the Dutch man of letters. Calvin, who was more indirect and given to implicitness, would not openly criticise Erasmus (except in his *Seneca Commentary*) but he would tend to suppress the ideal of *humanitas*, marginalising it in his writings and thus eliminating that part of Erasmus and humanism which is not suitable for the "confessionalised" form of Calvinist piety.

After commenting on the aspects of the *studia humanitatis* and *humanitas* in the foundation of Calvin's academy in Geneva, we must examine the aspect of trilingual scholarship. As mentioned above, neither Calvin nor Beza ever characterise their newly built academy as a trilingual institution by formal declaration. This can partly be explained by the falling esteem for Erasmian and other humanist ideals and by the increasing marginalisation of humanism brought about by the imposition of censorship in the middle of the sixteenth century.[154] However, there is no doubt that the Genevan Academy, together with the high school college attached to it, reflected Calvin's strong emphasis on "the value of thorough preparatory linguistic studies"[155] in the curriculum

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150 Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 38.
151 Cf. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 39.
152 For the humanist ideal of liberal education cf. chapter 2, pp. 114-115.
153 The ideal of *humanitas* has been described in terms of self-knowledge and self-realisation in chapter 2, pp. 104-105.
154 Cf. chapter 5, p. 243 (n. 157).
155 Walker, *John Calvin*, 365.

and teaching. The *schola privata* already provided a very comprehensive instruction in (and of course, mostly through) Latin, as well as a firm grounding in Greek, apart from a sound religious education - which included attendance at sermons[156] - so that it is not exaggerated to state that the full course of seven college years "allowed [the pupil] to acquire an excellent classical education and a solid Biblical culture".[157] Thus the graduates of the college received a bilingual training, and to this the academy added a third language (Hebrew), expanding the knowledge of Greek and maintaining Latin as the language of oral and written communication. The Hebrew lectures mainly comprised grammar and the study of the Old Testament,[158] but they also included what was called "'the Commentaries of the Hebrews', which is to say, the writings of the Talmud".[159]

Having described the elements of the trilingual proficiency which the Genevan Academy aimed at producing, we are left with the task of explaining why Calvin and Beza do not explicitly define the new Protestant academy as a trilingual institution in humanistic style. We must also try to answer the question whether their understanding of the educational establishment they created corresponded to the humanist understanding of a trilingual college as manifest, for example, in Louvain, Alcalá or Paris.[160] Since we do not possess any direct testimony by Calvin and Beza regarding the matter, we have to take the small indirect evidence available from the latter into consideration, which is quoted frequently in the literature. Beza's large *Histoire ecclésiastique* contains a description of the foundation of the Collège Royal at Paris[161] which reveals a fundamentally positive attitude towards this humanist undertaking, exhibiting sincere acknowledgement of its historical significance from the point of view of the Reformation. There are explicit references to Budé, the "bonnes lettres" and "the three languages" in the account:

> Budé ..... was ..... fortunate with his erudition to encounter a king who, although he only knew his mother tongue, had an excellent understanding and a great love for classical letters [*bonnes lettres*]: Francis I. Having dedicated that excellent book entitled *Commentaries on the Greek Language* to him, Budé persuaded him that *the three languages* and the classical books [*bons livres*] written in them had to be studied in the schools and universities of his realm. But not only that: Budé also convinced the king to appoint certain excellent persons, whose names were suggested to him, as teachers in Paris, with good and reasonable salaries. Further, the intention was declared to build a magnificent *College of three languages*, with good provision, to maintain there a good number of teachers and students. However, the building of this college was never realised, but several professors were appointed, among whom there were some of great renoun. These professors were: for the Hebrew language, Agathius and François Vatable, to whom was added later on Paul Paradis, a Jew; for the Greek language, Pierre Danès and Jacques Tusan; and for mathematics Oronce Finée. Soon the whole kingdom of France felt the good [effect] of this [institution], which so much recommended the memory of Francis I to posterity that by tacit consent of everyone the attribute of "the Great" was given to him for this foundation rather than for any other exploit.[162]

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156 Moreover, the course included the study of the New Testament in Greek, the singing of Psalms, and memorising the catechism; cf. Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 35.

157 Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 35.

158 Cf. above, p. 300.

159 Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 36.

160 Cf. above, p. 298 (n. 118).

161 Cf. chapter 5, p. 236 (n. 102).

162 Beza (ed.), *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises reformées au royaume de France*; quoted (in French)

If we compare this passage with the *Academy Ordinances*, his rectoral address or the whole text of the *Histoire ecclésiastique* itself, we find that, contrary to what one might expect, no parallel to the Genevan Academy is drawn anywhere. The fact that neither Beza nor Calvin ever speak of their new foundation in clear terms as a trilingual college erected in the Erasmian spirit seems to suggest that they did not understand the Genevan institution in precisely the same way as they understood the Royal College of Paris, for example. The silence on the humanist conception of trilingual scholarship can to a certain degree be attributed to the increasing gap between the confessions: the first three and at the same time most authentically humanist trilingual foundations (Alcalá, Louvain, Paris) had remained Catholic, at least in appearance, and would therefore rather be seen as not suitable to be mentioned in connection with self-definition, whereas the new Protestant institutions of trilingual character (Strasbourg, Lausanne, Nîmes) were not ideal either for self-definition in humanist terms as they were already derived to some extent from the three original models. One could argue, however, in favour of Calvin's appreciation of the Royal College of Paris that he tried to bring Mercier, one of the lecturers of that college, to Geneva as a teacher of Hebrew.[163] This is true, but then Mercier declined to come, and it has been suggested that he did so because he had his reservations against Calvin and the kind of Reformation he engineered.

It is actually quite difficult to find out what Calvin thought about the Royal College of Paris, to which he had felt himself attracted as a young intellectual. There is, in fact, no single direct and clear statement about the institution or one of its lecturers by the reformer which could be quoted in this respect, but we are confronted with the typical and customary silence on Calvin's part. This is curious, for the Royal College not only figured in Beza's *Ecclesiastical History*, but it had also been mentioned by Olivétan in the introduction to his French translation of the Bible, which was published approximately at the same time as the first edition of the *Institutes*, and to which Calvin himself had contributed two prefaces.[164] In his introduction Olivétan praised the recent foundation of the Royal College in Paris, referring to its cultivation of trilingual scholarship.[165] Another explicit declaration which can perhaps throw some more light on the question of Calvin's attitude towards the Royal College of Paris is a piece of indirect evidence from Beza's *True Portraits* of 1581.[166] That work includes a critical judgement of François Vatable, the Hebrew lecturer at Paris, and certainly a very genuine humanist.

Vatable was, like Reuchlin, an adventurous spirit, crossing the whole of France in

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in Q. Breen, *John Calvin* (Grand Rapids 1931), 3-4 n. 8 (italics added).

163 Cf. Parker, *John Calvin*, 151.

164 Cf. chapter 5, pp. 225-226.

165 Cf. *Inst.* [1541], ed. Pannier, vol. 4, 323 (125 n. d).

166 Beza, *Les vrais pourtraits des hommes illustres* (Geneva 1581).

search of old manuscripts, and he was dedicated to researching the secrets of the Cabala in an attempt at expanding the scope of humanist study to include the non-Biblical aspects of the Jewish tradition. He was, as one expert put it, "rich in an immense erudition which he knew how to communicate to his students",[167] but which apparently never crystallised in the form of a book, although some of his lecture notes were published by his students.[168] Vatable, a native of Picardy like Calvin, is sometimes said to have been characterised "unmistakably by his care in commenting on the Bible with reference to authors who adhered to the literal meaning".[169] However, this was only one side of Vatable, perhaps his "official" side as a university lecturer and Hebrew philologist. There was another, equally important side, which can be seen in his pursuit of Cabalistic studies - a pursuit that was shared, for instance, by his colleague Paul Paradis, who, as he said himself, "cabalised with pleasure".[170] Vatable's dedication to the Cabala is manifest, incidentally, in the fact that he possessed one of the very rare manuscripts of the *Puñal de la Fe*, the great monument of the Christian Cabala of the Middle Ages composed around 1278 by the Spanish Dominican Raimundo Martín.[171]

"It is probable, though not altogether certain that he [Calvin] attended the lectures of ..... the celebrated Vatable", one expert has pointed out, adding, however, that circumstances were such that no regular attendance would appear to have been possible when Calvin resided in Paris in the academic year of 1531-1532 - and even later.[172] While Calvin could only have begun to study the Hebrew language in a systematic way at Basel or Strasbourg,[173] it is reasonable to assume that he experienced Vatable as a teacher in Paris a few times and thus got a direct, if only brief, impression of his personality and erudition. If Calvin had met Vatable in person, however, it would appear likely that Beza, who had not had the occasion to get to know the famous scholar, was influenced in his judgement of Vatable by Calvin's opinion of him. Beza's statement indeed reveals reservations against the Hebrew scholar which can be regarded as typical of Calvin, although they certainly also reflect the general intellectual mood of Geneva at the time. However, Beza's reservations are characterised by the same strict emphasis on the Word of God, and they are accompanied by the same suspicions against and relativisation of the *sciences humaines* - or human sciences - which we have encountered in most of Calvin's statements concerning the *studia humanitatis*. In his *True Portraits* Beza expresses his

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167 A. J. Baumgartner, *Calvin Hébraisant et interprète de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris 1889), 15; quoted in Breen, *John Calvin*, 64.

168 Cf. É. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, vol. 1 (Lausanne 1899), 205 n. 4; referred to in Breen, *John Calvin*, 64.

169 F. Secret, *La kabbala cristiana del Renacimiento* (Madrid 1979), 176.

170 P. Paradis, *On the Manner of Reading Hebrew* (dedicated to Marguerite de Navarre in 1534); cf. Secret, *La kabbala cristiana del Renacimiento*, 175.

171 Cf. Secret, *La kabbala cristiana del Renacimiento*, 176.

172 A. M. Hugo, "Introduction" [to] *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. Battles / Hugo (Leiden 1969), 5.

173 So "tradition has it", as Breen commented with reference to Baumgartner; cf. Baumgartner, *Calvin Hébraisant et interprète de l'Ancien Testament*, 8; referred to in Breen, *John Calvin*, 64.

opinion about the renowned humanist scholar in a rhetorical question that typically reflects, as we will recognise, Calvin's manner of dealing with humanism. In an eloquent gesture Beza asks as follows:

> You, Vatable, who are so much admired in your profession even by the Jews; you, who have taught so much to a great number of Christians - in what esteem shall we hold you, seeing that you have shown so little regard for the treasure of the Holy Scriptures that you, having made it known to others, even rejected it?[174]

From Beza's statement, which is as Calvinian as it is Calvinistic, and from our previous considerations concerning Calvin's academy, it can be inferred that the intellectual climate of the new educational establishment in Geneva was quite different from that of the Royal College in Paris. While the ground note of the former was one of narrow doctrinal definition with a concomitant tendency to notional delimitation, which manifested itself in restrictive dogmatic definitions like election or predestination, the latter was characterised by an idealistic universalism, the advocates of which aimed at attaining a broad and even all-embracing vision of the world, engaging in a spiritually adventurous quest for unifying principles on the basis of linguistic inquiry and, increasingly, of comparative research of different languages and civilisations. Thus while the chief focus in Geneva was on sharp analytical distinction within the compass of Christianity - for instance, the theoretical differentiation of elect and reprobate beings - the principal preoccupation of the "trilingual" intellectuals in the Royal College at Paris is the widening of the horizon of the human mind - for instance, the study of unknown or badly-known peoples and their customs, or the exploration of the neglected spheres of the inner world of human beings, in particular, the search for the self and for self-knowledge.

If we compare Vatable's or Danès' encyclopedic erudition and wide-ranging investigations, or Postel's utopian conception of universal concord and his learned efforts at religious synthesis[175] with Calvin's or Beza's rigorous and narrow focus on the Bible, by which strict limits were imposed on individuals in their search for truth, we recognise that the predominating culture among the humanist lecturers in Paris can be characterised in terms of an effort at what we have called *expansion of consciousness*, whereas Calvin's culture and that prevalent in the academy founded by him appears to be determined by the principles we have subsumed under the label of *promotion of consciousness*.[176] As the analysis of Calvin's attitude towards the *studia humanitatis* has revealed, the reformer detaches the humanistic disciplines from the ideal of *humanitas* and binds their

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174 "En quel rang te tiendrons-nous, Vatable, tant admiré en ta profession par les Juifs mesmes, qui as tant apris à grand nombre de chrestiens: vue que tu as tenu si peu de compte du thrésor des sainctes escritures, dont tu faisois part aux autres, que meme tu l'as rejetté?"; Beza, *Les Vrais Pourtraits*, 139; quoted in Breen, *John Calvin*, 64 n. 46.

175 Cf. G. Postel, *De orbis terrae concordia* (Basel 1544). Cf. also chapter 5, p. 271 n. 384. Gadoffre observes that "envoyé à Constantinople ..... il [Postel] est revenu avec une moisson de manuscripts arabes et hébreux; auteur de la première grammaire arabe, lecteur royal en mathématiques et langues orientales, il sera l'orientaliste le plus illustre d'Occident"; G. Gadoffre, *La révolution culturelle dans la France des humanistes* (Geneva 1997), 317.

176 Cf. chapter 3, pp. 171-172.

application as closely as possible to the study of the Bible, thus focusing on the rational powers of the human mind and orientating them in one definite direction. The humanists, on the other hand, can be seen as combining the *studia humanitatis* with the ideal of *humanitas* in various ways and with distinct emphases (strong with Rabelais and weaker with Budé) and by doing so, they activate the non-rational faculties of the mind, thereby achieving a diversification of the human intellectual potential, so that the individual develops in different directions according to pattern of the *uomo universale.*[177]

The comparison between the Calvinian *promotion of consciousness* and the humanist *expansion of consciousness* no doubt represents an extensive topic which would be worth exploring at some length. However, we have to limit ourselves to considering two examples here, while we will have further occasion to touch on other aspects of this topic later in the analysis of Calvin's relation to the individual disciplines of the *studia humanitatis*. As far as Calvin is concerned, we can refer back to the statements examined above, in particular to that from the *Advertissement contre l'astrologie judiciaire*, in which the reformer complains about these people who "prefer to roam accross the fields rather than *keep themselves within the bounds*" set by God's "celestial doctrine" (enshrined in the Bible) and in which he condemns the use of the *studia humanitatis* apart from the Scriptures as "a frivolous abuse" that does not yield any profit to pious souls.[178]

As far as the humanists are concerned, we can cite Postel, who proposes to employ the *studia humanitatis* for the purpose of creating a better understanding between the different nations, peoples and civilisations, suggesting a comparative study of cultures on the basis of a broad literary and historical analysis.[179] Postel argues, for instance, that if the language, literature and history of the Arab peoples is studied carefully and in depth, it will be possible to overcome the seemingly perpetual enmity between Christians and Moslems. He advocates the ideal of the concord of the world and, more particularly, of the ecumenical rapprochement of religions and confessions, with the enthusiastic fervour of a visionary on the one hand and with the realistic sense of a philologist on the other hand, for he does not just elaborate a utopian theory on purely speculative grounds, but he underlines in very concrete humanistic terms that there can be no political concord on religious rapprochement without "a knowledge of the ..... language, on which ..... history and its truth depend".[180] It is Postel's conviction that once the political leaders "are duly

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177 Cf. chapter 3, p. 173.

178 Quoted above, p. 287.

179 We chose Postel instead of Pico della Mirandola, for instance (who is another paradigmatic example of *expansion of consciousness* with his Hebrew and Arabic studies), because of our focus on sixteenth-century French humanism. The contrast between Calvin and Postel could also be studied with reference to the latter's *Apologia pro Serveto Villanovano* of 1554, but in accordance with what we have said in the introduction, p. 39, we omit this since the Servetus affair represents one of the most controversial and complicated areas in Calvin research.

180 Postel, *De la république des Turcs* (Poitiers 1560), trans M. M. McLaughlin; quoted in *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, eds. J. B. Ross / M. M. McLaughlin (New York 1953), 373.

informed of that truth, I am sure that a very easy way will be found to bring the whole human race into perfect concord".[181]

Thus, the French humanist's ideal of *concordia mundi* can be regarded as depending on the proper implementation of the *studia humanitatis* in a universalistic spirit, that is to say, in a manner which implies expansion of consciousness rather than delimitation or pure promotion of - already established - consciousness. In fact, Postel believes that the humanistic studies contain the components capable of bringing about that widening of the horizon of the human mind which is an indispensable prerequisite for the concord of the world, and which principally consists of the "knowledge of one another".[182] Approximately in the same year when Calvin founded the Genevan Academy and Beza proclaimed the institution of a "holy militia" to campaign for the true faith in his inaugural address as rector,[183] the humanist Postel wrote:

> Since it is impossible, because of the diversity of customs, languages, opinions, and religions, to achieve a community and union of diverse men before they truly understand each other, it is very certain that the most beautiful, useful, and necessary work in this world, for the perfect reconciliation of men, can be accomplished only by actually giving to men this *knowledge of one another*. By means of such knowledge, through an understanding of the vice and virtue of individuals and peoples hitherto unknown to one another, everyone in the world, tolerating the vice of others and approving their virtue, would be able to come to agreement.[184]

Calvin's indifference or opposition to most forms of humanistic expansion of consciousness probably manifested itself most palpably and concretely in his toleration, or perhaps rather tacit acceptance, of the introduction of scholastic methods and the concomitant installation of Aristotelian rationality in his academy, two developments which represent essential aspects of what we have defined as promotion of consciousness. If Calvin knew that the humanistic studies were indispensable instruments for the establishment of a reformation which was fundamentally Bible-centred, he was also aware that these studies could not provide the firm and solid conceptual framework which would hold the newly elaborated doctrines together, and which in the view of the majority should be of a rational and systematic nature. But unlike Melanchthon, for instance, who openly admitted Aristotelianism into the University of Wittenberg[185] and furnished a theoretical justification of its application,[186] Calvin allowed Aristotelianism to enter the Geneva Academy in an indirect and muted way via Beza, which is typical of him and especially of

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181 Postel, *De la république des Turcs*; quoted in *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, eds. Ross / McLaughlin, 373.

182 Postel, *De la république des Turcs*; quoted in *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, eds. Ross / McLaughlin, 372.

183 Cf. above, p. 302.

184 Postel, *De la république des Turcs*; quoted in *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, eds. Ross / McLaughlin, 372 (italics added).

185 Cf. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 213.

186 Cf. the prefaces to the successive editions of the *Loci Theologici* [1543-1559] (CR 21.603-605) and the letter of dedication to *Erotemata Dialectica* [1547] (CR 6.654-656); quoted in D. Sinnema, "Antoine de Chandieu's Call for a Scholastic Reformed Theology (1580)" in W. F. Graham (ed.), *Later Calvinism* (Kirksville 1994), 188 n. 125.

his implicitness concerning humanism.

There is no doubt that Beza, who "favored the use of Aristotelian logic in theology and [was] moving in a scholastic direction",[187] had laid a solid Aristotelian foundation in Calvin's academy by the time of the latter's death (1564). This development cannot be attributed fully and directly to Calvin himself, but it is impossible to think of Calvin as essentially disapproving of what his "right-hand man" and "admiring disciple" was engineering. On the contrary, there is good reason to suppose that Calvin was in substantial agreement with Beza and his scholastic undertaking, since it is hard to imagine that he would have allowed the introduction into the academy of a method to which he was fundamentally opposed. This seems indeed probable if we consider Calvin's legendary severity and keenness to supervise in detail the progress of "his" Reformation and particularly the spread of the "pure" doctrine as he had laid it down. In other words, if Calvin had been a thoroughly committed humanist, he would certainly have cared more to shape and influence the introduction of Aristotelianism into the Genevan Academy in a direct way, as Melanchthon had done in Wittenberg.

As is well-known, the principles of Aristotelian rationality established in the Genevan Academy at the time of Calvin's death gradually became more prominent in the further development of the institution under Beza's rectorship. The question whether or in how far this was what Calvin had intended is very difficult, and perhaps impossible, to answer conclusively. The only way of finding an answer to this question, or perhaps the beginning of an answer, is to investigate in detail how the reformer deals with the individual disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* in his work and how he uses the specific tools provided by these *studia* in the construction of his Reformation. In addition to this, it will be necessary to return to the issue of *humanitas*, especially in connection with the disciplines of poetry and moral philosophy, since this concept can be considered as an indicator of the degree of appreciation of the non-rational tendencies of the human mind, and hence of what we could call the aspects of the non-Aristotelian intellectual mentality. That Calvin's intellectual temperament tended to favour a working method characterised by rational systematisation is certain, but it remains to be determined in how far the method which the reformer employed in his theological discourse corresponds to the approach shaped by Renaissance Aristotelianism or to that prevalent in late medieval nominalism, with which Calvin was familiar from his undergraduate studies in Paris.[188] The claim that "where Calvin adopts an inductive and analytic approach to theology, ... de Bèze adopts a deductive and synthetic approach ..... [possibly] ..... derived ..... from the

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187 Sinnema, "Antoine de Chandieu's Call for a Scholastic Reformed Theology (1580)", 187.

188 It has to be noted that while the topic of Calvin and scholasticism (or nominalism respectively) is badly researched (cf. chapter 1, p. 59), the subject of the reformer's relation to Renaissance Aritotelianism has been utterly neglected.

writings of the Paduan Aristotelian Pietro Pomponazzi"[189] represents an oversimplification and does not contribute much to explain Calvin's seemingly undefinable stance on Aristotelianism in the process of the foundation of the Genevan Academy.[190]

It has often been claimed that Calvin's theological method involves a significant component of rationality, but it has proved very difficult to substantiate such claims because of "the paucity of textual and contextual evidence for this position in Calvin's writings".[191] Partee, who studied Calvin's relation to classical philosophy[192] (including Aristotle),[193] has declared that

> one might argue that any "reasonable" reader of Calvin would grasp the "evident" fact that Calvin consciously and deliberately shaped the concept of rationality as a tool for the presentation of the Gospel, and that a commitment to the use of this tool, forged by Calvin himself, is an essential (or important or at least helpful) part of being Calvinistic.[194]

However, the same author has also pointed out that

> while it is *not* asserted that Calvin *himself* developed a complete concept of rationality, he is regarded as implicitly *suggesting* a way of being rational which in its articulation goes beyond what Calvin actually wrote but is considered to remain faithful to his intention.[195]

This assertion would normally be thought of as referring in the first place to later Calvinism, but we must not forget that Calvin was already "regarded as implicitly suggesting a way of being rational" during his lifetime, namely by contemporary theologians. In 1555 the reformer was described as "addicted to human reason" by Westphal,[196] and six years later, he was alleged to have created "a new scholasticism" by Villegagnon.[197] There is no doubt that Calvin wrote some works using a rationalistic approach, such as the *Traité des reliques* or the *Advertissement contre l'astrologie judiciaire*,[198] and there is no doubt either that the attribute of "cerebral"[199] was not given to the reformer without justification. As far as Calvin's application of a rationalistic approach is concerned, we may refer to the *Traité des reliques*, in which the author reveals,

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189 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 213.

190 However, the fact that Beza ordered a book by Pomponazzi from Basel on 11 August 1563 shows that his "scholastic tendencies" were probably well established before Calvin's death. This is the interpretation, at least, of the editors of Beza's letters; cf. Beza, *Correspondance*, vol. 4, letter no. 282, 183 n. 5; quoted in McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 303-304 n. 54.

191 Ch. Partee, "Calvin, Calvinism, and Rationality" in Hart / Van der Hoeven / Wolterstorff (eds.), *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition* (Lanham 1983), 2.

192 Cf. Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Leiden 1977).

193 Cf. introduction, p. 39 (n. 192), where we have mentioned the problem of Calvin's links to Aristotle's philosophy.

194 Partee, "Calvin, Calvinism, and Rationality", 2.

195 Partee, "Calvin, Calvinism, and Rationality", 2.

196 Cf. introduction, p. 27 (n. 141). The reproach of overemphasising the rational faculties of the mind was made by the same author who had previously coined the term *Calvinist*. Concerning the former cf. Westphal's *Collectanea sententiarum* (1555); concerning the latter cf. the same author's *Farrago* (1552). Taken together, this seems like an early anticipation of the emphasis on rationality in later Calvinism.

197 Cottret, *Calvin*, 246. The argument is made in Nicolas de Villegagnon's *Les Propositions contentieuses* (Paris 1561).

198 Cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 286.

199 Cottret speaks of Calvin in terms of "cérébralité"; cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 52. We have also characterised Calvin's work as "cerebral" in the introduction, p. 9.

in one passage, that his intention was "to show how this madness [of forging (absurd) relics] goes *against all reason* and is without any excuse".[200] Further, we can say that Calvin's tendency to favour a rationalistic approach to theology, has led some authors to portray the reformer as a "pre-Cartesian philosopher" who

> participates in advance in the great cleaning-up of the seventeeth century, in the great liberation, where all superfluous things are put away. He [Calvin] is sober and clear. He thinks that it is possible to establish order in tradition by reconstructing it on the basis of the necessary and sufficient repository of Scripture.[201]

Perhaps the abundant parallels between Calvin's and Vermigli's works can provide an indication of the former's rationalist leanings.[202] Be that as it may, Partee has only dared to advance a very cautious conclusion, stating that

> to require the development of a sophisticated concept of rationality as an essential part of understanding or completing Calvin's theology, is debatable at best. At least it is obvious that Calvin himself did not provide one.[203]

After our brief exploration of the complicated issue of Calvin's relation to Renaissance Aristotelianism and to the contemporary rationalistic currents, we realise that an intriguing question is left to be answered, namely, as McGrath has put it: "How did a movement initially opposed to scholasticism in general, and Aristotelianism in particular, come to develop an Aristotelian scholasticism so soon after the death of its founder?"[204] How is it, indeed, we may ask with the same author, that "reason, regarded with a certain degree of suspicion by Calvin, was now seized upon as an ally" by the reformer's followers, such as Beza, Daneau, Vermigli or Zanchi?[205] And we may ask further: why did the emphasis on philological studies in Calvin's academy not last but was supplanted by a stress on dogmatics in Aristotelian style roughly a generation after Calvin? This shift of focus from humanism to scholasticism, which occurred in most Protestant academies, has been described by Stauffer as follows:

> it appears that philological training was gradually neglected in favour of doctrinal disputes, which, planned by Calvin in the *Leges Academiae Genevensis* as taking place side by side with exercises in preaching, did not seem to have always absorbed all the students' energy at the beginning.[206]

Finally, one may ask oneself why two humanists of the first rank, Pierre Ramus and Giordano Bruno, experienced rejection in Geneva in less than one and a half decade after Calvin's death. While the former was not admitted as a lecturer in the academy because of

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200 VG [1543]: "pour monstrer combien ceste folie est *contre toute raison*, et sans couverture aucune"; *Traité des reliques* in *Three French Treatises*, ed. Higman, 75 (italics added).

201 A. Besançon, *L'image interdite* (Paris 1994), 255; quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 346.

202 These parallels were established for the first time in Thomas Vautrollier's Latin edition of the *Institutes* of 1576. They are usually identified in terms of cross-reference from Calvin's *Institutes* to Vermigli's posthumous *Loci communes* of 1576, a compilation of notes left by the author after his death in 1562; cf. McNeill, "Introduction" [to] *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, vol. 1, xlviii n. 28. According to McNeill's index, only Augustine is more often alluded to in the *Institutes* than Vermigli; cf. *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, vol. 2, 1628-1632.

203 Partee, "Calvin, Calvinism, and Rationality", 13.

204 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 212.

205 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 212.

206 Stauffer, "Le calvinisme et les universités", 49.

his open opposition to Aristotelianism,[207] the latter was severely censured for his public criticism of Aristotle as a student.[208] It is clear that we cannot hope to answer all these questions here, but it is, nevertheless, unavoidable to inquire to what degree Calvin's influence may have affected the scholastic development of the Genevan Academy and of the other Protestant academies in France. One feels inclined to assume that if Calvin had advocated humanist learning more strongly and with deeper conviction in his works, and if he had implanted humanistic principles more firmly in his academy (for instance, by furnishing an explicit theoretical justification of the humanistic studies in the *Academy Ordinances*), the development of Calvinist scholasticism would not have been so fast and would perhaps have taken a different direction.

After examining Calvin's attitude towards the humanistic studies in some detail and with special regard to the role these studies played in the Genevan Academy, we may conclude our deliberations by considering two documents from the reformer's Strasbourg period, namely his famous *Reply to Sadoleto* and a less famous but equally instructive letter written at the same time to a friend in Orléans, presumably Guillaume du Costé, a humanistically-oriented cleric also known as Lateranus.[209] The two letters, one public and the other private, both show that the basic features of Calvin's position concerning the *studia humanitatis* were already more or less established when the young reformer was exiled in Strasbourg and immersed in the humanistic atmosphere prevailing there. At the beginning of his letter to Sadoleto, Calvin acknowledges the humanist prelate's "excellent learning and distinguished eloquence", adding that these scholarly attainments are appreciated by "all who would be thought studious of *liberal arts*",[210] which is to say, taking into account what has been said earlier in this chapter, by all "those ..... who have been instructed in the *humanistic disciplines*".[211] However, if the reformer shows himself conscious of the cardinal's accomplishments as a humanist man of letters, he is also aware that his own championship of the Reformation may arouse hostility among the humanist literati. Thus he confesses: "I do not ignore ..... that this may provoke the discontent of

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207 As McGrath has commented: "De Bèze's refusal to allow Pierre Ramus a teaching position at the academy was based upon his hostility towards Ramus' anti-Aristotelian programme evident in his logic"; McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 216.

208 Attending the lectures of Antoine de la Faye at the academy, Bruno compiled a list of what he called "Aristotelian errors" and created a scandal by publishing it. The humanist was arrested by order of the Consistory and had to retract publicly after a lengthy trial. Being rejected in Geneva, Bruno moved on to Toulouse, where he received both a doctorate and a professorship; cf. J. Kirchhoff, *Giordano Bruno* (Reinbek 1980), 31-32. The Italian humanist later wrote about the Calvinists that they were "grammarians and quibblers" [that is to say, a mixture of two decadent forms of humanism and scholasticism] of a "blind presumptuousness, who haunt the whole of Europe these days"; Bruno, *Spaccio* (1584); quoted in Kirchhoff, *Giordano Bruno*, 32.

209 The letter is dated by Herminjard beginning of September 1539; cf. A.-L. Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, vol. 6 (Paris 1883), 8. The *Reply to Sadoleto* was written, as Calvin himself says, in August 1539; cf. Calvin's letter to Farel in Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs*, vol. 5, 373. Printed copies of the *Reply to Sadoleto* were available in Geneva on 5 September; cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 252.

210 *Reply to Sadoleto* in *A Reformation Debate*, ed. J. C. Olin (New York 1966), 49 (italics added).

211 *Des scandales*; quoted above, p. 290 (italics added).

literary people",[212] but he defends his position by referring to the Reformation as a just cause which he "must in no way abandon"[213] and to which he is bound by "the strongest obligations of duty".[214] Compared with the just and compelling cause of church reform, humanism is a matter of no urgency and importance; it must therefore occupy second place and play a subsidiary role in the unfolding drama of the Reformation. In his *Reply to Sadoleto*, Calvin clarifies his reticent stance on humanism by referring to the position he has decided to defend as an advocate of the Reformation, justifying himself as follows:

> I am not unaware how reprehensible it would be to show any eagerness in attacking a man who has deserved so well of literature, nor how odious I should become to all the learned [*literatos*] were they to see me stimulated by passion merely, and not impelled by any just cause, turning my pen against one whom, for his admirable endowments, they, not without good reason, deem worthy of love and honor. I trust, however, that after explaining the nature of my undertaking, I shall not only be exempted from all blame, but there will not be an individual who will not admit that the cause which I have undertaken I could not on any account have abandoned without basely deserting my duty.[215]

Calvin's letter to Guillaume du Costé reveals a similar concern as his *Reply to Sadoleto*, but the young reformer expresses himself in a more personal and evangelical tone, speaking of the individual's devotion to the Biblical texts in the first place, not of any candid commitment to the public undertaking of the Reformation, and contrasting the canon of the Holy Scriptures with the newly available classical body of secular literature. Calvin praises du Costé for his zealous pursuit of literary studies, describing him as an example to others in a church in which a large part of the clergy neglect letters. However, the reformer admonishes his addressee that his studies must not be a mere "amusement" to him, but that they have to serve the purpose of furthering "the church of Christ".[216] "For", Calvin points out, "those who seek nothing else in letters [*literis*] than to overcome the weariness of leisure by engaging in some honest occupation, I compare them with people who spend their whole life looking at pictures".[217] Referring to these literary people, the reformer asks, "where does so much philosophising lead" and what does so much study of "secular literature" amount to except some "remote erudition", an erudition distant from reality?[218]

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212 "non enim ignoro ..... quam id sit futurum odiosum apud omnes *literatos*"; CO 5.385 (italics added); quoted in Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 141 n. 56. The interpretation of *literatos* as humanists, proposed by Bohatec, is justified by the context of the letter: the sender resides in a humanistic environment and the addressee is himself a prominent, if lesser known, humanist. Beveridge's rendering of "literatos" as "the learned", which is used in Olin's edition, does not convey the idea of *literatos* in the humanistic context of the *(bonae) litterae*; cf. *Reply to Sadoleto*, ed. Olin, 49.

213 "..... causam hanc, quae a me suscipitur, nullo modo fuisse deserendam"; CO 5.385.

214 *Reply to Sadoleto*, ed. Olin, 51; VL: "me summa officii mei necessitate constringi"; CO 5.386.

215 *Reply to Sadoleto*, ed. Olin, 49.

216 "Sed hoc quoque tibi in tuis studiis vivendum est, ut non oblectamenti loco tibi sunt duntaxat, verum in eum finem conferantur, ut aliquem usum Christi ecclesiae olim adferant"; *Letter to Guillaume du Costé*, September 1539; Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs*, vol. 6, 8. Also quoted in H. Hauser, "De l'humanisme et de la Réforme en France, 1512-1552" in *Revue historique* 64 (1897), 290 n. 3.

217 *Letter to Guillaume du Costé*; Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs*, vol. 6, 8.

218 "Quorsum enim pertinet in hoc tantum philosophari ut doctus sis et censearis? Atqui illud necesse est evenire omnibus qui et profanis scriptis perpetuo immorantur, vel potius incumbant, nec alio spectant nisi ut reconditam inde eruditionem referant"; *Letter to Guillaume du Costé*; Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs*, vol. 6, 8.

However, the true aim of the study of letters is the shaping of the individual's life according to religious principles,[219] and "this is done", Calvin declares, "if you dedicate a good part of your time to the reading of the sacred texts, and devote your soul to the oracles of God, the study of which the heavenly master requires from his disciples".[220] The reformer concludes by admitting that his "severity" may be odious to many, "but why, I pray", he asks, "should I flatter you to lead you into ruin?"[221] The way Calvin answers this rhetorical question is revealing, for it shows that he does not associate the notions of "human" and "Christian" very closely but, on the contrary, sets them apart quite clearly. When Calvin says that "this would not even be human and is very far from being Christian",[222] his statement, although unimportant in itself, confirms what we have found in our analysis, namely that Calvin marginalises the concepts of *humanus* and *humanitas* in his theology, and creates a distance between the notions of *humanus* and *Christianus*.

Let us now turn to the field of grammar, which corresponds to the first discipline in the cycle of the *studia humanitatis*, and which probably represents, together with history, the least controversial area in our analysis. If Bossuet, the prominent polemicist and critic of Calvin, said about the Calvinist reformers that "these gentlemen were humanists and grammarians",[223] is there any reason to doubt that this applies to their chief exponent himself? At this moment, we cannot determine conclusively if Calvin was a humanist *and* a grammarian, but we can examine if the reformer was a humanist *grammarian*. It was, at any rate, the latter point which Bossuet wanted to emphasise in his statement, for, as Cottret has pointed out, the French writer highlighted the general significance of rhetoric for the reformed movement and was of the opinion that Calvin, when confronted with the Christian mystery, "behaves in many respects like a logician or a grammarian, intent on making the language of faith transparent and on eliminating all unnecessary obscurity".[224] We have already discussed the question of Calvin's insistence on rational clarity, namely with regard to the contrast it makes with the humanists' inclination to literary ambiguity,[225] and we will consider this question again later.

Now we must first turn to the issue of language theory and examine in which epistemological current Calvin can be situated. Some authors have suggested that Calvin

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219 "studia ..... quae ad vitam tuam rite formandam valeant", or: "the reform of the individual's life" ("studia ..... quae ad vitam tuam reformandam valeant", as the *Corpus Reformatorum* editors suggest. The manuscript is a copy by the hand of Pierre Daniel, and both readings appear to be possible; cf. *Letter to Guillaume du Costé*; Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs*, vol. 6, 8.

220 "Id fiet si bonam temporis partem sacrae lectioni destinaveris, et eum animum ad legenda Domini oracula afferas quem coelestis ille magister a discipulis suis requirit"; *Letter to Guillaume du Costé*; Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs*, vol. 6, 8.

221 *Letter to Guillaume du Costé*; Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs*, vol. 6, 8.

222 "Ne id quidem *humanum* esset, tantum abest ut sit christianum"; *Letter to Guillaume du Costé*; Herminjard (ed.), *Correspondance des réformateurs*, vol. 6, 8 (italics added).

223 "Ces Messieurs étaient humanistes et grammairiens"; Bossuet, *Histoire des variations des Églises protestantes* (Paris 1688); quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 197.

224 Cottret, *Calvin*, 197.

225 Cf. introduction, pp. 23-30.

underwent an intellectual conversion which brought him away from nominalist epistemology to a humanistically inspired realist conception of language.[226] However, other authors have argued that Calvin adhered to the nominalist view of language, according to which words (or signs) were dissociated from things.[227] Calvin has been interpreted as a typical representative of the Reformation in this respect, and Cottret, adopting Foucault's terminology, has claimed that "words and things are not identical for Calvin", whose "thought ..... consists in a refusal of analogy".[228] Others again have claimed that "Calvin, like a humanist, understood language as conventional",[229] thereby ignoring the finer distinctions between the humanist and nominalist theories.[230] Thus while Calvin is seen by some as a Renaissance humanist or a medieval realist with regard to his attitude towards language, others have characterised him as a nominalist and even as a forerunner of rationalism in Western intellectual history. Cottret concluded his analysis of Calvin's conception of language and knowledge affirming that "there is something of Descartes in the reformer".[231]

There is only one passage in Calvin's mature work where the reformer makes a direct and substantial statement on the issue of language theory. This statement belongs to a series of additions made to the third Latin edition of the *Institutes* of 1543 and shows Calvin as adhering to a concept of language which can be qualified as essentially nominalistic, although the reformer has fundamental reservations and makes clear that his position is motivated by considerations of a pragmatic nature. Thus when Calvin advances his view on language, he remains in part ambivalent, for he allows two contrasting conceptions to stand side by side: the nominalist notion, which he officially advocates, on the one hand, and the realist or humanist notion, which he does not want to disregard completely, on the other hand. This attitude may appear confusing, but it is actually quite common in the later Renaissance, where humanists and reformers alike can be seen as making a compromise between the different concepts of language and of knowledge.[232] As one literary critic has pointed out, there existed, in fact, a kind of

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226 E.g. Parker; cf. chapter 5, p. 252.

227 Cf. e.g. Cottret, *Calvin*, 345.

228 Cottret, *Calvin*, 345. The author holds that Foucault focused on the seventeenth century and "simply forgot the Middle Ages and the Reformation" (Cottret, *Calvin*, 345) when he tried to determine "ce moment du temps où la ressemblance va dénouer son appartenance au savoir et disparaître, au moins pour une part, de l'horizon de la conaissance"; M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris 1966), 32; quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 345.

229 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 115.

230 *Convention* is not a distinctive feature of humanist language theory exclusively, but also belongs to the nominalist tradition, although in a different sense. Whereas in humanism convention is seen as the product of a natural process of development (bearing vestiges of ancient origin), in nominalism it is understood as a common (and conscious) assent to a voluntary act of creation of the human intellect. Compare what has been said concerning language theory in chapter 3, pp. 135-140 (particularly Vives' statements) and in chapter 5, pp. 252-253 (quote from Ashworth). The argument is developed further immediately below (cf. especially the citation from Rabelais).

231 "Il y a du Descartes chez le Réformateur"; cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 346. Cf. also the characterisation of Calvin as a "pre-Cartesian philosopher" cited above, p. 312.

232 The theories of language and knowledge are mentioned together because they cannot always be clearly distinguished in the cases of humanism and nominalism. As mentioned earlier, humanist

common consensus on linguistic theory in the sixteenth century, according to which words were principally seen as arbitrary signs endorsed by convention, but which included the concession that "names had originally been adapted to their object", and which stated that this quality of direct relation between word and thing was gradually lost in the development of modern languages.[233] Thus for the humanist Cabalists, for instance, the words and letters of the ancient Hebrew language could grant access to the knowledge of things.[234]

But let us look at Calvin's statement from the *Institutes*. It is situated in the context of the controversy about the sacraments, where the reformer says that a quarrel about a word, although not desirable in itself, is justified if the word has been "misused"[235] and if its misuse has obscured the truth of Christian doctrine.[236] Arguing that this has been the case with the word "sacrament", Calvin makes his important statement concerning the theory of language, declaring that human beings are the lords of language capable of coining words and of determining their meaning "according to their will".[237] However, the reformer makes it clear that his adoption of this view is only the result of practical considerations, for he insists that ideally the relationship between the word and the thing is the opposite, so that the words are derived from the things and not the other way round. As we recognise, Calvin's stance on the theory of language is quite typical of the late Renaissance in that a compromise is made between the rival theories elaborated in humanism and nominalism. The reformer can be seen as giving precedence to the nominalist view for practical reasons, but he adds two important qualifications. First, he contrasts the preferred and practical nominalist concept with the more idealistic notion, as we have just pointed out, and second, he puts a religious condition, stating that the nominalist view may be used in theology "provided a pious sense be kept".[238] Thus we can characterise Calvin's stance on the whole as something like a "pragmatic sanction": he accepts the theory of the nominalist school as a rational thinker, but he refers to the humanist conception as a devout Christian, perhaps to remind people that God, not human beings, was the creator of our language - a point which he emphasises in another context.[239] In 1543 Calvin wrote in his *Institutes* that

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epistemological conceptions tend to be considered as part of language theory or linguistics, while nominalist conceptions are usually treated as belonging to philosophy (cf. chapter 5, p. 252 n. 219).

233 Rabelais, *Quart Livre*, ed. M. Huchon (Paris 1998), 352 n. 1.

234 Cf. Rabelais, *Quart Livre*, ed. Huchon, 352 n. 1.

235 VL [1543]: "eius abusum"; *Inst.* 4.19.1.

236 Cf. especially VG [1545]: "l'abus du mot emporte une mauvaise queue ..... que la doctrine demeurast en son entier"; *Inst.* 4.19.1. Cf. below, n. 240 for the full French version.

237 VL [1543]: "pro suo arbitrio"; *Inst.* 4.19.1.

238 VL [1543]: "modo pius sensus retineatur", VG [1545]: "moyennant que le sens soit bon et sain"; *Inst.* 4.19.1.

239 Cf. e.g. *Contre la secte des Libertins*, where we find the often-quoted statement: "La langue est créée de Dieu pour exprimer la cogitation [i.e. la pensée], à ce que nous puissions communiquer ensemble"; CO 7.168-169; quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 284-285 and also in A. Lefranc, *Calvin et l'éloquence française* (Paris 1934), 27-28.

> I am not unaware that Christians are the masters of words, as they are of all things, and that, therefore, they may at pleasure adapt words to things, provided a pious meaning is retained, even though there may be some incorrectness in the way of expression. All this I concede, though it were better if words were subordinated to things than things to words.[240]

If these lines reveal very clearly Calvin's pragmatic attitude towards linguistic theory, the text which follows shows that the reformer did not just mention the alternative view of language for the purpose of maintaining common piety - indirectly proclaiming, as we have said, that God created all human language -, but also to state that the theologian may refer to that alternative view in case of need, that is, for instance, in a doctrinal controversy. Indeed, the sentence that comes immediately after the statement "it were better if words were subordinated to things than things to words" reads: "But in the word 'sacrament' the case is different".[241] With these words Calvin underlines that if words do not correspond in any way to the things they signify and are therefore not "subordinated" or "subject" to the things, then redefinition is necessary and a quarrel over the word is justified, because, so Calvin argues, the quarrel is not a controversy about the word,[242] but about the thing itself.[243] Accordingly, the reformer stipulates that the meaning of the word "sacrament" be redetermined, and he asks the Roman theologians to "either change the definition, or refrain from this use of the word, which may afterwards give rise to false and absurd opinions".[244] In another passage added to the *Institutes* in 1550, Calvin accuses his adversaries of attempting to solve doctrinal disputes "by the subtle device of a name",[245] which is to say, "by forging words at their pleasure".[246] He insists, however, that "the thing itself, not the word, is in question"[247] and asks the contenders involved in the dispute to "drop fine distinctions and examine the thing itself".[248] These assertions show that Calvin is capable of invoking, if only in a formal and perhaps superficial way, the humanist conception of the existence of some genuine correlation between word and thing when dealing with important theological terminology.

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240 *Inst.* 4.19.1, trans. H. Beveridge (modified). VL [1543]: "Non me latet, Christianos, ut verborum, sic rerum omnium esse dominos; posse igitur pro suo arbitrio voces rebus accomodare, modo pius sensus retineatur, etiam siqua sit in loquendo improprietas. Hoc totum concedo: etsi melius fuerit, verba rebus subesse, quam res verbis subiici"; OS 5.435-436. VG [1545] has no direct allusion to the issue of language theory but is mainly concerned with the preservation of sound doctrine: "Ie say bien que les Chrestiens ne doyvent estre *superstitieux* aux mots, moyennant que le sens soit bon et sain. Ie confesse donc que pour un mot il ne faudroit point esmouvoir noise, encore qu'il fust mal usurpé, moyennant que la doctrine demeurast en son entier"; *Inst.*, ed. Benoit, vol. 4, 468. (italics added). However, if VG is closely compared with VL in a parallel reading, the word "superstitieux" may be considered as constituting an indirect allusion to the issue of language theory, for it carries the suggestion that the humanist belief in an intrinsic connection between word and thing is something suspicious or dubious.

241 *Inst.* 4.19.1

242 VL: "vocabulo" / VG: "mot"; *Inst.* 4.19.2.

243 VL: "re ipsa" / VG: "la chose"; *Inst.* 4.19.2.

244 *Inst.* 4.19.1., trans. Beveridge.

245 VL [1550]: "subtili nominis commento"; *Inst.* 1.11.11.

246 VG [1551]: "en forgeant des noms à la volée"; *Inst.* 1.11.11.

247 VL [1550]: "de re non de voce ..... sit quaestio" / VG [1551]: "il est question de la chose, non pas du mot"; *Inst.* 1.12.2.

248 VL [1550]: "Omissis argutiis rem expendamus" / VG [1551]: "Laissant là ces subtilitéz, considerons la chose telle quelle est"; *Inst.* 1.12.3.

The genuine correlation between word and thing can be confirmed in theology from the usage encountered in the Greek and Hebrew Bible text, the philological examination of which fixes a certain margin of tolerance for what may be considered as actual correspondence between word and thing. Now Calvin had already furnished an example of this fundamentally humanistic approach in the first edition of the *Institutes* - without, however, supplying any theoretical explanation, but partly drawing on his practical experience with humanism, partly borrowing from Luther and Zwingli. Thus in 1535 we can see Calvin reproaching the Roman church for having distorted the essential correspondence between the word "sacrament" and the thing it signifies according to the Bible, and we can see him insisting that the term has to be redefined on the basis of a critical comparison with the Greek original. Indeed, the reformer "cogently argues ..... on philological grounds", as one editor has put it,[249] that the distortion of the relationship between word and thing was produced by the translator of the Vulgate, who had rendered the Greek term μυστήριον inappropriately as *sacramentum* instead of using the less confusing and more direct translation of *mysterium* or *arcanum*.[250] However, Calvin was in fact only following Luther and Zwingli, who had made the same observation before.[251] At the end of the long section (37 pages) dealing with the so-called false sacraments, Calvin comes back to what he had proposed at the beginning, namely "to challenge them [the Roman theologians] in the word itself",[252] and he inserts again what he had written in 1535:

> The thing which misled them was the term *sacrament*, which is in the common translation [i.e. the Vulgate]. But, was it right that the whole Church should be punished for the ignorance of these men? Paul called it a mystery, which means "secret". When the translator might have left this mode of expression as not uncommon to Latin ears, or converted it into "secret", he preferred calling it *sacramentum*, but in no other sense than the Greek term μυστήριον was used by Paul.[253]

Calvin's open but compromising adoption of the nominalist view in language theory, which is manifest in the third Latin edition of his *Institutes*, is already evident in implicit form in his early *Seneca Commentary*, where he declares that "it is usage rather than etymology or intrinsic meaning [*proprietas*] which distinguishes one word from another".[254] This statement has erroneously been interpreted as humanistic with

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249 *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, 1483 n. 85.

250 Calvin's claim that "both in the First Epistle to Timothy (1 Tim. 3: 9, 16), and also in the Epistle to the Ephesians, it [the term *sacrament*] is used by the Vulgate translator, and in every instance, for mystery" is not completely true, as McNeill has shown (1 Tim. 3: 9 uses *mysterium*); cf. *Inst*. 4.19.36, trans. Beveridge; cf. *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, 1483 n. 86.

251 This has been pointed out by Battles; cf. *Institutes*[1536], ed. Battles, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids 1986), 316.

252 *Inst*. 4.19.1

253 *Inst*. 4.19.36, trans. Beveridge (slightly adapted); conflated reading from VL [1536] and VG [1541]. Luther had written in his *Babylonian Captivity*: "For where we have [in the Vulgate] the word *sacramentum* the Greek original has *mysterium*, which the translator sometimes translated and sometimes retains in its Greek form". Zwingli had stated something similar in his *Commentary*: "two errors have been commited as to this passage: the first by the [Latin] translator, who as he should have rendered 'mystery' by 'secret' [*arcanum*], always translated it 'sacrament', although the latter word does not correspond to the former"; both statements quoted in *Institutes*[1536], ed. Battles, 316.

254 *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. Battles / Hugo, 91.

reference to the criterion of convention,[255] while in fact it is best understood when considered in the context of the compromising sixteenth-century consensus we have outlined above. At any rate, the interpretation of Calvin the reformer as a pragmatic nominalist with regard to language theory does not necessarily stamp him as an absolute adversary of humanism, for a comparison with the conceptions prevailing in French humanism - which most critics have not made[256] - reveals that many contemporary humanist writers were not fully in line with what we have tried to present as mainstream humanist doctrine.

A good example of the compromising attitude that existed on the humanist side is provided by Rabelais, who exhibits an ambivalent stance on the issue of language theory in his *Third* and *Fourth Book* of Gargantua and Pantagruel. In the *Third Book* the protagonist Pantagruel defends the nominalistic notion of language in a clear statement against Panurge, who advocates the humanistic concept of a natural language, although not in a very comprehensive way. Pantagruel, who has received a humanistic education after a bad experience with the scholastic doctors, somehow paradoxically maintains the nominalist view, arguing as follows:

> It is wrong to say that language is natural. Languages are constituted in an arbitrary way and by people's *conventions*. The words - or "voices", as the dialecticians say - do not have a natural meaning, but one given at pleasure".[257]

However, in the *Fourth Book*, Pantagruel alludes approvingly to the classical linguistic theory according to which names have a naturally implanted meaning and a universally valid intrinsic significance. The fact that Pantagruel only mentions names - referring especially to proper names - and therefore appears not to include words in general, is relativised by his explicit reference to "the *Cratylus* of the divine Plato",[258] a work which advances a natural theory about words in general and which represents one of the cornerstones of the humanistic conception of language. Rediscovered in the Renaissance,[259] Plato's *Cratylus* was frequently invoked by the humanist philologists to defend their realist or universalist position.

It would without doubt be rewarding to pursue questions related to the humanistic discipline of grammar further in Calvin's work, but we must limit ourselves to discussing one more subject, namely the humanist ideal of trilingual scholarship, or of proficiency in the ancient languages respectively. There is no doubt that Calvin defended the knowledge of the original Biblical languages against the scholastic establishment, although he does

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255 Cf. Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 115; quoted above, p. 316 (cf. also above, p. 316 n. 230).

256 So e.g. Bouwsma; cf. previous note.

257 "C'est abus, dire que ayons languaige naturel. Les languaiges sont par institutions arbitraires et convenences des peuples; les voix (comme disent les dialecticiens), ne signifient naturellement, mais à plaisir"; Rabelais, *Le Tiers Livre*, chapter 19 [1546] (italics added). Note that the nominalistic character of this statement is reinforced by a reference to Bartholus which immediately follows.

258 Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*, chapter 37 [1548].

259 Cf. chapter 3, p. 142 n. 43.

not deliver an explicit vindication of trilingual scholarship - neither in the context of a humanistic educational theory nor with regard to theological studies.[260] However, Calvin's fundamental championship of the Biblical languages was manifest from the start of his career as a reformer, and it continued without diminution throughout his life. Already in the first edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin made this point in a polemical way, attacking the ignorance of the medieval and contemporary scholastic theologians in the ancient languages and complaining that the lack of knowledge in Greek and Hebrew, together with the inadequate command of Latin, has led to basic errors in the interpretation of the Bible and hence, in the construction of doctrine. Alluding, no doubt, to the professors of the Sorbonne, who attempted to prohibit the teaching of Greek and Hebrew in the Royal College while ignorant of these languages themselves, Calvin exclaims: "Let them go now and cry out loudly against skill in languages, through ignorance of which they have for so long been disgracefully deceived .....[261]

The statement which we have just quoted is typical of Calvin in that it represents an indirect assertion couched in negative terms - which fits perfectly into the pattern of the reformer's general reticence and implicitness concerning humanism. Having witnessed himself the impact of the royal lecturers in Paris, some of whose classes he may have attended, Calvin does not proceed to affirm the value of the knowledge of the old languages in positive terms in the first edition of his *Institutes*, but contents himself with censuring those who oppose the new development towards better linguistic proficiency initiated by the humanists. Ten years later, in his *Commentary on I Corinthians* of 1546, Calvin still highlights the negative element of the obscurantism of the scholastic doctors, asserting that "they condemn these languages".[262] The exegete complains that "there are now great theologians who cry out furiously against these [languages] ..... [and] ..... who stir up as much invective against their study as they can".[263] There is, however, also a new positive note now, but on this note Calvin's explicitness does not go any further than using the phrase "more than necessary" to describe the desirability of a more widespread initiation into and an increased competence in the Biblical languages. Calvin here comes nearer Luther, who always emphasised the divine character of the restitution of letters, when he remarks that "today ..... the knowledge of languages is *more than necessary*, and God in his wonderful kindness has in this time brought them out of darkness into light .....[264] For Calvin the new proficiency in ancient languages is "more than necessary" because it

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260 Cf. above, pp. 300-302.

261 *Inst.* 4.19.36. VL [1536]: "Eant nunc, et linguarum peritiam clamose insectentur, quarum ignorantia ..... tandiu foedissime hallucinati sunt"; VG [1541]: Qu'ils voisent maintenant crier contre la cognoissance des langues, par l'ignorance desquelles ils s'abusent .....".

262 *Comm. I Cor.* 14: 5. VL: "Isti autem eas damnant linguas"; CO 49.518. For the background to the commentary cf. above, p. 284.

263 *Comm. I Cor.* 14: 5. VL: "sunt nunc magni theologi, qui furiose adversus eas [linguas] declamitent ..... qui earum studium quantis possunt contumeliis exagitant"; CO 49.518.

264 *Comm. I Cor.* 14: 5. VL: "Hodie ..... plus quam necessaria sit linguarum cognitio, et Deus hos tempore mirabili beneficio eas ex tenebris in lucem eruerit"; CO 49.518 (italics added).

represents an instrument through which the true contents of God's revelation can be established, serving as a foundation for the edification of a new and purer church. By means of these languages, the reformer says, "we must draw the pure truth of Scripture as if from the sources".[265]

Three years before the *Commentary on I Corinthians* was published, Calvin had inserted a statement into the third Latin edition of his *Institutes* in which he underlined in an indirect but positive way the crucial importance of linguistic expertise for the maintenace of true religion. The reformer implicitly described philological scholarship as the essential and indispensable means for fulfilling one of the most important tasks in the church, namely the safekeeping of revealed truth, which consists, so Calvin points out, in the faithful and accurate preservation of the Word of God as extant in the Biblical texts, and on which, he insists, "*everything depends*". The conclusion of the absolute dependence of the church on the textual integrity of its chosen canon is presented by Calvin as the end of a process of strict logical reasoning along syllogistic lines. In the context of refuting the doctrinal infallibility of the church, the reformer argues as follows:

> Truth ..... is not extinguished in the world, but remains safe, because it has the church as its faithful custodian, by whose work and ministry it is sustained. However, if this custody lies in the prophetic and apostolic ministry, it follows that *everything depends on whether the Word of the Lord can be preserved faithfully and retain its purity*.[266]

Calvin's relation to rhetoric, the second discipline in the cycle of the *studia humanitatis*, is characterised by a fundamental ambivalence. On the one hand the reformer contributed substantially to the so-called reintegration of rhetoric into European culture,[267] actively furthering the development of the French language and setting new standards of style in theological disquisition. On the other hand he was deeply suspicious of the powers of rhetoric, accepting the promotion of refined forms of speech only with distinct reservation. With regard to the reintegration of rhetoric, Calvin, in a basic sense, felt himself part of the humanist enterprise of instituting better forms of expression, and he showed a keen awareness of his own literary and oratorical skills, confessing, at the end of his life, that "God has given me grace to write".[268] As far as Calvin's French is concerned, the recognition of the immense contribution which the reformer made to the development of the vernacular was established from very early on. The humanist Florimond de Ræmond showed a genuine appreciation of Calvin's skills as a writer,[269] estimating the reformer's French eloquence as quite unequalled, and emphasising in

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265 *Comm. I Cor.* 14: 5. VL: "eas ..... linguas, e quibus tanquam a fontibus pura scripturae veritas est haurienda"; CO 49.518.

266 *Inst.* 4.8.12. VL [1543]: "totam inde pendere, si verbum Domini fideliter conservetur, suamque puritatem retineat"; OS 5.146; VG [1545]: "le tout dépend de là, que la parolle de Dieu soit entretenue en sa pureté"; *Inst.*, ed. Benoit, vol. 4, 166; (italics added).

267 Cf. chapter 3, pp. 145-146.

268 "Dieu m'a faict la grace d'escripre"; *Farewell to the Ministers of Geneva*, 28 April 1564; CO 9.893; *Letters of John Calvin*, selected from the Bonnet edition (Edinburgh 1980), 259 (also quoted in Walker, *John Calvin*, 437).

269 In his biography of Calvin; cf. chapter 5, pp. 238-240.

particular its elegance and fluency. Ræmond's judgement, cited by Wendel as "a rather peculiar testimony",[270] is often overlooked in the literature: "No one among those who preceded him has been able to write better than he did, and few after him have attained the beauty and ease of his expression".[271] There is no doubt that this flattering appraisal represents a genuine acknowledgement of Calvin's literary mastery, although it is clear that Ræmond's overall estimation of the reformer's achievement is less favourable, and praise does certainly not exceed criticism. Of the many writings with which Calvin contributed to the establishment of modern French, we can only mention the *Institutes* here. The first French edition of this important work, published in Geneva in 1541 by Michel du Bois, is commonly considered "a landmark in the Reformation and the development of the French language",[272] and it has often been described as the first or greatest monument of French eloquence together with Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.[273]

As regards Calvin's suspicions about rhetoric, it is undisputed that the reformer acknowledges the virtues of good style and elegant expression, but it is also clear that he rejects verbal exuberance and advocates moderation in the cultivation of rhetoric. This attitude is already manifest in a basic sense in the *Seneca Commentary*, in which the Roman orator is not praised for his verbal sophistication in the first place but for his abstinence from ostentation and his natural expression. As one critic has stated,

> Calvin does not enjoy praising the style or the rhetorical technique of the Stoic philosopher; on the contrary, he admires the refusal of refinement, the appeal to simplicity and naturalness.[274]

The result of Calvin's critical attitude towards rhetoric was a compromise which essentially shaped the evolution of Calvinist rhetoric, or *la rhétorique réformée*, to use the French term.[275] While the Calvinist "reformed rhetoric" can be characterised as anti-ciceronian insofar as it "denounces the hypocrisy and the artificiality of discourse in the church",[276] its chief features are epitomised by the principles of clarity, simplicity and brevity - three traits appreciated by Calvin above all in the Biblical texts, and all "qualities that he especially prized and sought to attain".[277] The fact that Calvin defines the principal features of his ideal of rhetoric with reference to the Bible shows that the most

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270 Wendel, *Calvin*, 19 n. 62.

271 It is difficult to render the French word-play in English: "Nul homme de ceux qui l'ont devancé ne l'a devancé à bien écrire et peu, depuis, ont approché cette beauté et facilité de langage qu'il avait"; de Ræmond, *Histoire de la naissance, progrès et décadence de l'hérésie de ce siècle* (Bordeaux 1605); quoted in Wendel, *Calvin*, 19 n. 62.

272 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 135.

273 Cf. G. Lanson, "L'Institution chrétienne de Calvin" in *Revue historique* 54 (1894), 60; cf. chapter 1, p. 48. Cf. also Higman, "Theology in French" in *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 23 (1979), 138.

274 B. Timmermans, "Renaissance et modernité de la rhétorique" in M. Meyer (ed.), *Histoire de la rhetorique* (Paris 1999), 117.

275 Analysed in detail in Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, particularly 185-434.

276 Timmermans, "Renaissance et modernité de la rhétorique", 117. Millet has argued that "la prophetie (et donc la prédication) visent sans cesse à 'demasquer l'hypocrisie' d'un culte formel et d'une charité défaillante"; Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 269.

277 McNeill, "Introduction" [to] *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, lxx.

fundamental concern of his rhetoric, and of Calvinist rhetoric, too, is interpretation, not effect,[278] which is to say, exegesis of the Holy Scriptures and theological writing based on this, and not exhibition of emotionally charged literary elegance. Therefore, as one critic has put it, "if it [Protestant rhetoric] appears strong and vehement, this is because it must, by its vivacity, make the basic and authentic intention of the Sacred Word intelligible".[279] Indeed, for Calvin and his disciples "rhetoric implies ..... progression towards divine truth", and accordingly, the Protestant orator can basically be defined as one who "trains himself to comprehend the original intention of the Scriptures in order to communicate it to others with enthusiasm".[280] Apart from the obvious limitations which this conception of rhetoric imposes, it has to be pointed out that from the perspective of humanist philology this attitude signifies that the Reformation "concedes to the individual the possibility of discovering truth through language".[281]

As regards the basic guidelines of Calvin's own ideal of stylistic expression, we have mentioned the precepts of clarity, simplicity and brevity.[282] It has become apparent in the course of our analysis that the precept of brevity played a decisive role in shaping the reformer's attitude of implicitness, manifest in his terse and sometimes brusque way of commenting on humanism.[283] However, of the three principles of clarity, simplicity and brevity the first is, considered on the whole, certainly paramount in Calvin's work and perhaps characterises best the reformer's approach to theological thinking and writing. There is a statement in Calvin's *Institutes* which is paradigmatic in this respect:

> I prefer to aim at the correct form of expression, by means of which the thing that is meant can be better expressed, rather than to affect forms of speaking which induce obscurity without reason.[284]

Calvin's defence of the principle of clarity must partly be interpreted in terms of an antagonism to the humanist espousal of literary ambiguity,[285] and seen as such it makes the reformer appear as a pre-Cartesian thinker who can be regarded as anticipating Descartes' maxim of *claro et distincte*, and who can be considered, to some extent, as subscribing in advance to the latter's typical assertion that "those are the wisest who have never dedicated themselves to literary pursuits; they are by far more solid and clear in their judgement of difficult things".[286] As we shall show when discussing the humanist discipline of poetry, Calvin's concern for clarity of thought and expression indeed outweighs his dedication to literature, especially to what he calls "profane literature", although this does naturally not affect his commitment to acquiring an adequate command of the Biblical

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278 Timmermans, "Renaissance et modernité de la rhétorique", 117.
279 Timmermans, "Renaissance et modernité de la rhétorique", 117.
280 Timmermans, "Renaissance et modernité de la rhétorique", 118.
281 Timmermans, "Renaissance et modernité de la rhétorique", 118.
282 Cf. introduction, pp. 14, 23, 33.
283 Cf. introduction, pp. 14-15, 18-22, and also above, pp. 282-294, 299-302.
284 Quoted in introduction, p. 23 (n. 117) and (partially) above, p. 278.
285 Cf. introduction, pp. 24-25.
286 Quoted in chapter 2, p. 97 (n. 122).

languages. This is already manifest in his early writings and in his activities as a young reformer. Exiled in Basel after his first failure in Geneva, he wrote to Farel that "expressions sometimes are thrown out which afford greater room for conjecture than for any meaning which they contain".[287]

Calvin's plea for clarity is not only directed against humanist ambiguity but it is also motivated by his opposition to the philosophical subtleties of scholasticism, which have, according to the reformer, obscured the "clear light"[288] of the Bible and contributed to create doctrinal confusion. With regard to his doctrine of spiritual presence, for instance, Calvin argues that "it contains nothing either absurd or obscure or *ambiguous*",[289] but that it reflects, on the contrary, that "*patent clarity*"[290] of Biblical truth which was "unworthily oppressed in the times when the enormous ignorance and barbarism of the Sophists reigned in the church".[291] Towards the end of his career, the reformer provides a pedagogical application of the principle of clarity in his *Academy Ordinances*, where he tells the teachers of the newly founded institution that "they are to confine themselves to making the meaning of the authors they are expounding clear" and that "they should warn their pupils about matters that are obscure".[292]

Simplicity, the second of the three chief precepts of Calvin's approach to rhetoric, is, like clarity, derived from the model of the Bible, and it is motivated, too, by the reformer's opposition to the humanist cult of ornate verbal elegance on the one hand and by his campaign against the scholastic proneness to academic casuistry and quibbling on the other hand. We have already had occasion to cite what can perhaps be considered the most fundamental statement concerning the rhetorical precept of simplicity by Calvin, namely the assertion that "truth has adequate support in simplicity".[293] These words, which represent something like a basic maxim of Calvin's approach to theology, are without doubt inspired by the ideal of Biblical expression. The same applies to Calvin's most comprehensive definition of eloquence, which, as has frequently been observed, is derived from the classical concepts provided by Cicero and Quintilian,[294] but which, as has less frequently been observed, is made in a Bible commentary and advanced in the context of highlighting the virtues of Biblical simplicity. As far as the Bible commentary is concerned, we may point out that Calvin makes his statement in the *Commentary on I Corinthians*,

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287 *Letter to Farel*, 4 August 1538; quoted in *Letters of John Calvin*, selected from the Bonnet edition, 49.

288 VL [1559]: "tam perspicua lux"; *Inst.* 4.17.19.

289 *Inst.* 4.17.19. VL [1543]: "nihil habet (1559: continet) vel absurdi, vel obscuri, vel *ambigui*". VG [1560]: "ne contient en soy, n'attire ou absurdité aucune, ou obscureté, ou *ambiguité*" (VG [1545]: "ne contient nulle absurdité, et n'est point si obscure qu'elle ne soit facile à entendre à un chacun") (italics added).

290 VG [1560]: "une clarté si patente"; *Inst.* 4.17.19 (italics added).

291 Conflated from VL / VG versions from 1543 to 1560; *Inst.* 4.17.19.

292 *Academy Ordinances* [1559]; quoted in *John Calvin*, eds. Potter / Greengrass, 125-126.

293 Quoted in introduction, p. 33 (n. 172).

294 Cf. e.g. Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 77.

the material of which is based on lectures delivered at Strasbourg and therefore constitutes, not surprisingly, a focal point of humanism.[295] As far as the immediate context of the commentary is concerned, we can see Calvin warning of the danger that the wisdom of the Gospel, which is expressed in simple forms, may be distorted if too much "verbal pomp" and "human wisdom" or "speculation" are used in explaining it. According to Calvin, there must be no "ambitious ostentation" or "inane verbosity" but only "true eloquence, which consists", he writes, "in prudent invention, ingenious disposition and elegant discourse".[296]

From the above considerations it is evident that the real meaning of Calvin's central statement on eloquence cannot be determined without taking into account the context into which it is embedded. If the statement is quoted out of context, it looks indeed like a typically humanistic assertion made with direct reference to the most common classical definitions of eloquence, but if it is situated in its proper context, it becomes apparent that what Calvin does is to contrast the humanist concept of elaborate rhetoric with the ideal of Biblical plainness and linguistic restraint, thus implicitly suggesting that the former should be remoulded according to the principles of the latter, which is to say, the humanist ideal of eloquence should be oriented towards the standard of Scriptural expression. In many statements the reformer censures the admirers of refined eloquence, reproaching them for their contempt of the simplicity of the Bible and at the same time justifying that simplicity in theological terms as the most adequate way of presenting in written form what is, in its essence, incomprehensible to the human mind. Calvin argues that the Bible uses simple language because its divine truth is exhibited more clearly without much adornment and because that truth is fundamentally independent of any rhetorical ornamentation. If the message of the Scriptures had been expressed in a highly eloquent way the formal refinement could detract the reader from the heavenly substance of its content, and the abundance of words could easily be decried as empty rhetoric by the enemies of divine revelation. In the second edition of the *Institutes*, which was composed and published at Strasbourg,[297] the question of the evaluation of the humanist ideal of eloquence with regard to the Bible was treated in a comprehensive manner. In a concise statement which can be regarded as containing Calvin's definitive answer to this question, the young reformer argued that

> our hearts are more firmly assured when we reflect that our admiration is excited more by the dignity of the matter [*rerum dignitate*] than by the grace of language [*verborum gratia*]. For it was not without an admirable arrangement of Providence, that the sublime mysteries of the kingdom of heaven have for the greater part been delivered with a contemptible meanness of words, and without great eloquence. Had they been adorned with a more splendid eloquence, the wicked might have cavilled, and alleged that this constituted all their force. But now, when an unpolished simplicity, almost

295 Cf. Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé*, 374.

296 *Comm. I Cor.* 1:17. VL [1546]: "..... eloquentiam veram, quae constat prudenti rerum inventione, dispositione ingeniosa, et elegantia sermonis"; CO 49.320; quoted in Wendel, *Calvin et l'humanisme*, 77.

297 Calvin revised and enlarged the *Institutes* from January to August 1539; cf. Walker, *John Calvin*, 227-229.

> bordering on rudeness [*inculta et tantum non rudis simplicitas*], makes a deeper impression than all the beautiful language [*ulla facundia / toute la faconde* (1560: *tout le beau langage*)] of the rhetoricians of the world, what does it indicate if not that the Holy Scriptures are too mighty in the power of truth to need the art of words [*verborum arte / artifice de parolles*]? ..... For the truth is freed from all doubt, when, unsupported by foreign aid, it has its sole sufficiency in itself.[298]

From the lines just quoted it emerges clearly that Calvin's appreciation of the art and discipline of rhetoric is marked by strong reservations of a fundamental nature. These reservations are stated more explicitly in the last edition of the *Institutes*, where the reformer not only characterises all kinds of rhetoric basically as hostile to Biblical simplicity but even brands rhetoricians as potential enemies of Biblical truth. Towards the end of chapter eight of the first book, at the beginning of which the passage cited above stands, Calvin refers to the rhetoricians as "proud folk" for whom "this simplicity [i.e. of the Gospel] arouses contempt", and he denounces them as "sharp-nosed faultfinders, whose highest desire is to drive the reverence for Scripture from their own and others' hearts".[299] When Calvin frames his own rule of rhetoric, he underlines that literary skill must neither distort the simplicity of the Scriptures nor obscure their clarity, but only enhance the intelligibility of the Biblical message in a straightforward and plain manner, which presupposes that the devices of eloquent speech are applied sparingly and in a spirit of pious modesty. This conception of rhetorical austerity defines the so-called "pastoral Biblical style" which represents the basis of Calvin's ideal of preaching.[300] Thus Calvin maintains that "the theologian's task is not to tickle the ear, but to confirm the conscience by teaching what is true, certain, and useful",[301] and to "examine in the simple teaching of Scripture what the Lord would have us know".[302] As far as the pulpit is concerned, the ministers "must not make a parade of rhetoric" in their sermons, although they should speak with "lively power and energy", as Paul prescribes, to persuade their listeners of the value of the Christian message. In a famous letter written in 1548 to the Lord Protector Somerset,[303] who was Regent of England at the time, Calvin outlines his ideal of pronouncing sermons as follows:

> Now, this preaching ought not to be lifeless but lively, to teach, to exhort, to reprove, as Saint Paul says in speaking thereof to Timothy [2 Tim. 4]. So indeed, that if an unbeliever enter, he may be so effectually arrested and convinced, as to give glory to God, as Paul says in another passage [1 Cor. 14]. You are also aware, Monseigneur, how he speaks of the lively power and energy with which they ought to speak, who would approve themselves as good and faithful ministers of God, who *must not make a parade of rhetoric* only to gain esteem for themselves; but that the spirit of God ought to sound

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298 *Inst.* 1.8.1. Conflated reading from VL [1539] and VG [1541], trans. Beveridge (slightly modified).

299 *Inst.* 1.8.11, trans. Battles. VG [1560] was faulty, and the word "simplicité" was added in the editions of 1561; cf. *Institution* [1560], ed. J.-D. Benoît, vol. 1, 108 n. b.

300 Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole*, 279. According to one critic, this "style pastoral biblique" implies that "l'Ecriture fait la parole de Calvin, la produit et la construit, et le Dieu vivant parle ainsi par Calvin sans qu'il y ait cette présence mystique de Dieu dont se prévalent les prédicateurs de l'Eglise romaine", D. Crouzet, *Jean Calvin* (Paris 2000), 118.

301 *Inst.* 1.14.4. [1543], trans. Beveridge.

302 *Inst.* 1.14.4, trans. Battles.

303 This is an important letter in which Calvin aptly conveys some of the central concepts of his doctrinal teaching in a highly condensed and yet very readable form. The letter was published several times and is extant in four French manuscripts. VG in CO 13.64-77 and VL in CO 13.77-90.

forth by their voice, so as to work with mighty energy.[304]

To conclude our deliberations on Calvin's ideal of simplicity in rhetoric, we must emphasise the fact that the reformer's suspicions and reservations - which are rooted, as we have seen, in his dedication to the Bible - are mainly directed against two groups of intellectuals: the humanists or "rhetoricians", who foster a taste for verbal elegance far beyond of what is necessary, on the one hand, and the schoolmen or "sophists", who induce a desire for excessively subtle and ultimately superfluous speculation, on the other hand. Both the humanist orators (including their medieval and classical predecessors) and the scholastic thinkers have, according to Calvin, been engaged in an intellectual struggle to discredit the spiritual authority of the Bible, thus leading pious souls astray in their search for truth. In the second edition of his *Institutes* Calvin associates, in a manner resembling that of Luther, the schoolmen and the orators with Satan assailing the Bible, and he exclaims: "Indeed, there has scarcely ever been either a *sophist* or a *rhetorician* of superior ability, who did not try his power against it [Scripture], applying all his subtle dexterity; yet all these efforts proved unavailing".[305]

Considering the distinction between the traditions of rhetoric and philosophy which some scholars have made in analysing the intellectual history of Europe,[306] we should bear in mind that Calvin shows himself very critical of both of these traditions and often rejects them in a fairly indiscriminate but explicit way in favour of an independent or rather Biblically-oriented discipline of theology. Of course, the assertions Calvin makes concerning this issue do not always have to be taken at face value, and he can be interpreted as associated with either tradition according to the particular aspects examined in his work. It remains, nevertheless, difficult to evaluate this work in a general way with respect to the categories of rhetoric and philosophy or, in the contemporary context of the Renaissance, of humanist literature and Aristotelian philosophy. It appears that Calvin has a rhetorical side despite his restrictive stance on employing the art of eloquent speech, and it appears, too, that he has a distinct rationalistic side despite his harsh formal repudiation of philosophy. The direct evidence we can gather from the reformer's work reveals that he does not make a clear distinction between rhetoric and philosophy. To give an example, when Calvin attacks the schoolmen, he does not only criticise their excessively convoluted ratiocinations, but - somewhat paradoxically - he also alludes to their "eloquence", reproaching them for using "nice rhetoric" when defending their theories. In a passage which Calvin wrote for the fourth edition of the *Institutes* and

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304 *Letter to the Protector Somerset*, 22 October 1548; *Letters of John Calvin*, selected from the Bonnet edition, 95-96.

305 *Inst.* 1.8.12., conflated reading. VL [1539]: "Siquidem nemo fere excellentiore ingenio, vel *sophista*, vel *rhetor* olim fuit, qui vim suam adversus ipsam non intenderet; nihil tamen profecerunt omnes". VG [1541]: "Car il n'y a eu gueres de *Philosophe* ou *Rhetoricien* d'excellent entendement, qui n'ait appliqué sa subtilité à l'encontre d'icelle: néantmoins tous n'y ont rien profité" (italics added).

306 Cf. e.g. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 23-25.

in which he argues his case against the worship of images, he qualifies the distinction between εἰδωλοδουλεία and εἰδωλολατρεία as an artificially contrived doctrinal device, and he excoriates the scholastic theologians who maintain it, exclaiming that "however *eloquent* they may be, never will they succeed by their *nice rhetoric* in proving to us that one and the same thing is really two things".[307]

The statement we have just quoted from the *Institutes* was written at the same time as the polemical treatise *Concerning Scandals*, in which Calvin summarised his theory of rhetoric in succinct and comprehensible form, repeating the main points from the *Institutes* and epitomising the matter in concise formulas. It is worth having a brief look at *Concerning Scandals* in order to try and reach a conclusion regarding the author's attitude towards humanist rhetoric. In the first place, Calvin underlines the fact that the Bible is written in simple language because God lowers himself to the level of "human infirmity"[308] in order to communicate the divine message to all human beings in persuasive and yet plain words. "God, who has shaped language for human beings", Calvin argues, "wants to stammer to us".[309] "However",

> by stammering, He strikes like lightening and has such a high and eminent gravity to tame human spirits as if the most elegant rhetorician that ever was displayed all the beautiful ornaments which can be found in his art.[310]

Having thus justified Biblical simplicity, Calvin proceeds to state what can perhaps be considered the central doctrine of his conception of rhetoric, namely that "there is a reciprocal correspondence between the spiritual subject and the language adopted",[311] which is to say, according to the Latin version, that "spiritual things go together with spiritual words".[312] This maxim is, of course, derived from the Bible itself, and Calvin presents it in terms of Pauline teaching with reference to the *First Letter to the Corinthians*: "And these are what we speak of, not in the terms learnt from human philosophy, but in terms learnt from the Spirit, *fitting spiritual language to spiritual things*.[313] Calvin contrasts this Pauline concept of rhetoric again with the forms of speaking cultivated by the philosophers on the one hand and by the rhetoricians on the other. He writes:

> We can rightfully boast that there are no disputes of any *philosophers*, even if they are very subtle, which can persuade with such efficacy, and that there is no vehemence of any *rhetorician* which touches and moves [people] so well as Holy Scripture with its simple and rough manner.[314]

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307 *Inst.* 1.11.11.; conflated reading. VL [1550]: "Quamlibet tamen sint diserti, nunquam sua *eloquentia* consequentur ut rem unam at eandem nobis duas esse probent". VG [1551]: "ne feront-ils iamais tant par leur *belle rhetorique*, qu'une mesme chose soyent deux" (italics added).

308 VG [1550]: "l'infirmité des hommes"; *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 66.

309 *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 67. VG [1550]: "Dieu qui a formé la langue aux hommes, veult besgueyer avec nous"; quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 213.

310 *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 67; quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 213.

311 *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 67. VG [1550]: "il y a une correspondance reciproque entre le subject spirituel et le langage de mesme".

312 *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 67 n. 46. VL [1550]: "spiritualia spiritualibus coaptari".

313 *I Cor.* 2: 13.

314 *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 66 (italics added).

This statement confirms the reformer's reservations about humanism and scholasticism described on the previous pages. In *De scandalis*, however, Calvin singles out the humanistically educated elite to give them a harsh scolding, accusing them of despising the language of the Bible. In an important passage the reformer rails against the humanists, asserting that: "those also who have been instructed in the *humanistic disciplines* [*sciences humaines*] and are [thus] accustomed to a pure and elegant style reject or despise this way of speaking [i.e. of the Bible] as too rough and unpolished".[315] Since Calvin had had first hand experience with humanism in his youth, he makes the same argument from a humanist point of view, and he says:

> I not only concede that the books of our religion which contain the heavenly wisdom of God are not made up with rhetorical colour, but I also admit readily that they have no such appearance as educated people [*gens lettrez*] might desire.[316]

Towards the end of his life, Calvin increasingly emphasised the Biblical roots and dimensions of his ideal of simplicity, maintaining that rhetorical simplicity is a mere mirror of doctrinal simplicity as exhibited in the Bible. In a passage written for the definitive edition of the *Institutes*, the reformer asserts - in connection with his radical statement that "outside Christ there is nothing worth knowing"[317] - that "it is not lawful to go beyond the simplicity of the Gospel".[318] In his last address to his fellow ministers in Geneva, he declares that the principle of simplicity occupied a prominent place in his approach to exegesis, revealing, again, that his adherence to this principle was inspired by his hostility against the speculative method of scholasticism. It is very telling that the reformer's last words to his colleagues contain a fervent defence of the rule of simplicity. After a modest reference to his rhetorical abilities (confessing that "God has given me grace to write")[319] the reformer proceeds to professing his attachment to the principle of simplicity:

> I have not falsified a single passage of the Scriptures, nor given it a wrong interpretation, to the best of my knowledge; and though I might have introduced subtle senses, had I studied subtlety, I cast that temptation under my feet and always aimed at simplicity.[320]

To conclude our discussion of the principles of clarity and simplicity, it remains for us to mention two concepts elaborated in recent research which may help explain Calvin's approach to rhetoric. The first is the notion of "accommodation" and describes Calvin's belief that God communicates with human beings in the Scriptures by adapting his speech to the limited understanding of the human mind.[321] The analogy implicit in this theory is

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315 Quoted above, p. 290.

316 *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 65.

317 Quoted in introduction, p. 20.

318 *Inst.* 2.15.2. [1559].

319 Quoted above, p. 322.

320 "i' ..... n'ay pas corrompu un seul passage de l'Escriture, ne destourné à mon escient; et quand i'eusse bien peu amener des sens subtils, si ie me fusse estudié à subtilité, i'ay mis tout cela soubs le pied et me suis tousiours estudié à simplicité"; *Discours d'adieu aux ministres*, 28 April 1564; CO 9.893; *Letters of John Calvin*, selected from the Bonnet edition, 259.

321 Cf. Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity" in *Interpretation* 31 (1977), 19-38 and in Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, ed. R. Benedetto (Grand Rapids 1996), 117-137. Cf.

that God is imagined as a skilled orator who knows how to adjust his words to the level of understanding prevailing among his earthly audience. If we look at this theory from a theological view-point, we may refer to McGrath's judgement that "Calvin's discussion of this question is generally regarded as one of his most valuable contributions to Christian thought".[322] If we look at this theory from the view-point of humanist rhetoric, we recognise that it is a Biblical adaptation of an aspect of the classical notion of oratory which was revived in the Renaissance. The second concept is that of Calvin's "linear thought" and proposes that the reformer's way of communicating can be characterised principally in terms of linearity, which is to say, Calvin is seen as structuring his discourse in strict logical sequence, presenting his thought with appropriate brevity and clarity.[323] Calvin's linear method is seen as contrasting with the more traditional and customary circular method, which may revolve around a central doctrine and which permits parallels in disquisitional structures. It has been suggested that Calvin invented both the short sentence and the linear method of argumentation,[324] and it has been claimed that his "linearity" constituted a singular feature at his time, by means of which the reformer managed to communicate more efficiently than his contemporaries.[325]

Finally, we must discuss Calvin's principle of brevity, and we must comment on a precept which is closely linked with brevity, as well as with clarity and simplicity, and which plays an important role in Calvin's work, namely the precept of sobriety. As far as brevity is concerned, Calvin's well-known confession "by nature I love brevity" must certainly not be taken too literally, but principally has to be interpreted in a psychological sense as the manifestation of an elementary desire for reticence of an introverted thinker type. The reformer's claim to brevity seems indeed untenable if we consider how long some of his main works are,[326] although it has to be admitted that these cover vast areas and, in the case of the *Institutes*, treat very large topics. However, it is clear that Calvin's claim to brevity has its justification chiefly as a quality of style and a way of formulation, for there is no doubt that the reformer's writing can be quite concise and to the point, and his expression, although sometimes long-winded, does not show, on the whole, excessive verbosity.[327] Some authors have suggested that "Calvin invented the short sentence",[328] arguing that the reformer's sentences are shorter than average for his time and "with relatively few subordinate clauses", and pointing out that "each of Calvin's sentences tends

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also D. Wright, "Accommodation in Calvin's Theology" in P. de Klerk (ed.), *Calvin Studies Society, Princeton, 1994* (Grand Rapids 1994), 25-41.

322 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 130.

323 Cf. Higman, "Linearity in Calvin's Thought" in *Calvin Theological Journal* 26 (1991), 100-110.

324 Cf. Higman, "Linearity in Calvin's Thought", 106-107.

325 Cf. Higman, "Linearity in Calvin's Thought", 108-110.

326 Cf. Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé*, 373.

327 Cf. McNeill, "Introduction" [to] *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, lxx.

328 Higman, "Linearity in Calvin's Thought", 106.

to make a single point, and often begins with a conjunction".[329]

It is quite difficult to find explicit statements by Calvin concerning his "love of brevity". In the preface to his *Seneca Commentary*, the young author praises the Roman philosopher for his elegant expression but agrees that he is sometimes too verbose.[330] The commentator appreciates Seneca as "a man of vast erudition and signal eloquence", whose "language is pure and polished", and whose "expression is elegant and florid, his style unlabored and smoothly flowing".[331] However, the young Calvin remarks that Seneca "bears the stamp of a moderate writer, such as becomes a philosopher", and he admits that "almost all critics reproach him [Seneca] for the luxurious verbosity of his language; and I must admit: there is rather too much of that".[332] These comments on Seneca's style can be regarded as anticipating, to some degree, the tendency to rhetorical austerity in the later reformer, which manifested itself in his "love of brevity". Eight years after returning to Geneva, Calvin writes a letter to his friend Farel in which he criticises his fellow reformer for cultivating an "involved and elaborate" style, contrasting it with his own, simpler mode of expression. Calvin even reproves Augustine, the great rhetorician, for being too verbose, but he confesses that his inclination to brevity may be somewhat too rigorous. He writes to his friend in Neuchâtel: "You know how reverently I feel toward Augustine, yet I do not conceal the fact that his prolixity is displeasing to me. Still, it may be that my brevity is too concise."[333] At the end of his life he confesses that "in all the disputes I have had with the enemies of truth, I have never made use of subtle craft nor sophistry, but have gone to work straightforwardly [*rondement*] in maintaining his [God's] quarrel".[334] Beza, finally, highlights the feature of brevity in Calvin's style, portraying the reformer as a confident but sensitive, and as a fluent but austere writer who "was sparing in his use of words" but nevertheless "wrote very much as he spoke". In his *Life of Calvin* Beza provides an interesting appraisal of his master's mode of expression, commenting that

> *He* [Calvin] *despised mere eloquence and was sparing in his use of words*, but he was by no means a careless writer. No theologian of this period ..... wrote more purely, weightily and judiciously, though he wrote more than any one else, either in our recollection or that of our fathers. For, by the hard studies of his youth and a certain acuteness of judgement, confirmed by practice at dictation, he was never at a loss for an appropriate and weighty expression and wrote very much as he spoke.[335]

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329 McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 135. McGrath summarises Higman's view, drawing on Higman, *The Style of John Calvin in his French Polemical Treatises* (London 1967) and other contributions of a later date (cf. bibliography).

330 Cf. McNeill, "Introduction" [to] *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, lxx.

331 *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. Battles / Hugo, 11.

332 *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. Battles / Hugo, 11.

333 *Letter to Farel*, 1 Septemper 1549; CO 13.374; quoted in McNeill, "Introduction" [to] *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, lxx.

334 *Calvin's Testament*, 25 April 1564; CO 20.299; *Letters of John Calvin*, selected from the Bonnet edition, 250. According to Huguet's *Dictionnaire*, vol. 6, 628, "rondement" means "franchement", "nettement" but he also mentions that "Parler rondement ..... signifie parler perfectement et amplement, en comprenant beaucoup de sens en peu des parolles" (quoted from Geofroy Tory, *Champ fleury* (Paris 1529), l.III, 5/v°).

335 "Facundiae contemptor et verborum parcus"; Beza, *Vita Calvini* [1575]; CO 21.169-170; quoted in *John Calvin*, eds. Potter / Greengrass, 174 (italics added).

If we have shown that Calvin's profession of brevity has a certain credibility, we must be aware that this stylistic principle may also serve the purpose of preterition,[336] to remain within the terminology of rhetoric, or of marginalisation (and perhaps even tabooisation, to use the language of psychology). Indeed, the context of Calvin's confession "by nature I love brevity" reveals that this statement is motivated by a wish to avoid a certain topic which the reformer dislikes discussing, namely the topic of virtue. Now since the question of virtue represents a typically humanistic issue, Calvin's evasive attitude invites the conclusion that he - consciously or unconsciously - seeks to eschew essential aspects of humanism, using the rhetorical principle of brevity as a justification for an act of (implicit) preterition which can be interpreted in terms of marginalisation (or even tabooisation) of humanism. In the passage in question Calvin declares that he does not intend to discuss the subject of virtue in any detail in his *Institutes*, arguing that "the nature of my present work requires me to frame a simple doctrine with as much brevity as possible".[337] In 1539 the reformer confesses that "I shall one day possibly find time for more ample discourse" on this theme, emphasising that for the moment "this must be sought in the writings of others".[338] However, twenty years later, in his last revision of the *Institutes*, he has not moved beyond this point of polite refusal to discuss the humanist topic of virtue. In a new insertion, he admits that "even if I could gain the highest applause possible by being more prolix, I would scarcely be disposed to attempt it", adding that "I may leave to others this task for which I am not so well suited".[339]

Therefore, we can conclude that the value of Calvin's assertion "by nature I love brevity" is relative, for (as is well known) Calvin is not all-too strict about observing the rule of brevity when he discusses topics opposite to virtue, such as the multi-faceted manifestations of vice and, more generally, the fundamental depravity of human nature. In his *Institutes*, as well as in the other writings, he provides abundant and sometimes lengthy descriptions of the sinfulness and the capacity for evil of human beings - many passages could be enumerated.[340] Nevertheless, Calvin's claim to brevity appears legitimate with respect to the stylistic austerity he observes and the formal concision he exhibits when engaged in the taxing task of explaining the complexities of Christian doctrine. However, the reformer's use of brevity may also simply serve the purpose of evading humanistic issues, revealing an attitude of implicitness concerning humanism which can be construed as an inclination to marginalise humanism or, on the unconscious

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336 For a good example of preterition cf. *Inst.* 4.7.21. (cf. especially *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, 1140 n. 45). Other examples include *Inst.* 4.7.26., 4.9.14. or 4.11.7. All these passages belong to the third edition of 1543/45. Typical formulas signalling preterition in Calvin's work are "taceo", "supersedeo" or "prudens omitto" in the Latin version of the *Institutes*, and "ie ne dy pas", "ie laisse là" or "ie me déporte de dire / d'en traiter / de toutes ces choses" in the French version (taken from the passages of the *Inst.* indicated above).

337 *Inst.* 3.6.1. [1539], trans. Beveridge (corrected and adapted).

338 *Inst.* 3.6.1. [1539], trans. Beveridge.

339 *Inst.* 3.6.1. [1559], trans. Beveridge (modified). This passage is omitted in VG.

340 Cf. e.g. *Inst.* 2.1.8., 2.3.2., 2.5.19., 2.16.2., 2.16.3., or *Petit traicté de la sainte Cène* (1542) in *Three French Treatises*, ed. Higman, 103-104.

level, to tabooise it. Thus, as a Renaissance rhetorician Calvin can be credited with having invented the short sentence and, perhaps, with having developed linearity in thought and language,[341] but he can be criticised for having used his rhetorical skill in order to suppress the issue of humanism. The latter feature may (as we have indicated) have a psychological explanation, for Calvin behaves in a manner which is characteristic of the so-called introverted thinker type.

What is left for us now is to discuss what could be called the fourth, or "associated", principle of Calvin's rhetoric, namely sobriety. This principle, which is so typical of Calvin, would deserve a deeper analysis, but as this would lead us into a controversial area, we must limit ourselves to a brief overview of the main facts and problems here. If we have said that by examining the notion of sobriety in Calvin we touch on a controversial issue, we must make it clear that this is evidently not because the reformer's adherence to the principle of sobriety is disputed but because of the implications that adherence has for certain debated aspects of humanism. What can be considered Calvin's central statement on sobriety is a brief declaration in the final version of the *Institutes* in which the reformer asserts that "it is our duty not to know anything except what is within the bounds of soberness".[342] Calvin's ideal of sobriety is, of course, derived from the Bible and Biblical teaching, and it is associated in particular with the rhetorical principles of simplicity and clarity. This is shown in a passage from the third edition of the *Institutes*, where the author declares:

> let us remember here, as in all religious doctrine, that we ought to hold to one rule of modesty and sobriety: not to speak, or guess, or even to seek to know, concerning obscure matters anything except what has been imparted to us by God's Word.[343]

If the principle of sobriety signifies, according to Calvin, strict limitation to the teaching of the Bible, it also means, in a narrower sense, confinement to the distinct range and variety of the Biblical vocabulary. Already in the second edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin presents the idea of such a terminological restriction, and he says:

> I could wish that Christian writers had always observed this soberness - that when there was no occasion for it, they had never thought of using terms foreign to the Scriptures [*extranea a scripturis vocabula / vocables estranges de l'Escriture*] - terms which might produce much offence, but very little fruit.[344]

Calvin's interpretation of the principle of sobriety in terms of confinement of religious doctrine and discourse to Biblical limits naturally implies that the theologian's approach to exegesis is shaped by the principle of sobriety. As Calvin is convinced that what is not known in a sober and clear spirit is better not known, he advises the interpreters of God's Word to look at the texts of the Bible with a keen but cold eye and to tackle Biblical problems in a dispassionate and rational way. In his *Commentary on Daniel* the reformer

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341 Cf. above, pp. 331-332.

342 *Inst.* 1.15.8., conflated reading from VL [1559]: "nostrum vero est ad sobrietatem sapere" and VG [1560]: "nostre devoir est de ne rien savoir qu'en sobrieté".

343 *Inst.* 1.14.4. [1543], trans. Battles.

344 *Inst.* 3.15.2. [1539 / 1541], trans. Beveridge.

writes:

> I would like indeed that everybody was convinced of this: that *nothing is better than to deal with Scripture in a sober way*, and not to fetch subtle senses from afar, which of themselves ..... disappear as soon as the matter itself is better studied.[345]

Finally, we can extract a formula from the *Institutes* which epitomises Calvin's championship of the precept of sobriety and which, if it is taken in a general sense, can be considered as a basic and typical maxim of Calvin: *nobis colenda est sobrietas* - "we must cultivate sobriety".[346]

To conclude our deliberations on Calvin's relation to the art of rhetoric, we must sum up the main points and set them against the description of humanist rhetoric elaborated in chapter three.[347] We can first state that Calvin comes nearest the ideal of the humanists in his advocacy of the principle of simplicity. The reformer shares the humanist disdain for the involved style and convoluted argumentation of the scholastic theologians, and he can be seen as fundamentally in line with humanism with his declaration "truth has adequate support in simplicity".[348] However, the reformer's strict Biblicism makes a contrast with the humanists' approval of the elegant forms of speech found in the classical literature. Calvin differs from the humanists in that he thinks that human beings should in the first place try to imitate the style of the voice of God as manifest in the Holy Scriptures, while the humanists themselves were inclined to let human expression be human, following that golden rule which they called "wisdom and eloquence": no wisdom without eloquence and no eloquence without wisdom. With regard to the latter rule it appears that Calvin advocates the ideal of a "wisdom without eloquence" according to the model of the Bible, for he argues that God commits an act of simplifying accommodation in communicating a portion of his knowledge to human beings.[349] Thus while the reformer's concept of rhetoric is based on the notion of the condescension of the divine mind, the humanists' concept is based on the notion of the elevation of the human mind, which is manifest, so they maintain, in humanity's cultural development and progress.

As far as Calvin's conception of clarity is concerned, it has to be emphasised that although the humanists advocated clarity in rhetoric, too, namely in their protests against the obscure intricacies contained in many of the convoluted arguments of the so-called "sophists of the schools", there is a fundamental difference between the reformer and humanism. This difference is manifest in theoretical discourse, that is, in the way in which the principle of clarity is defended. The reformer can be seen as insisting on clarity in

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345 *Comm. Dan.* 10: 5-6. VL [1561]: "nihil esse melius quam sobrie tractare scripturam"; CO 41.199 (italics added).

346 *Inst.* 3.25.10. VL [1559]: "Quo nobis in hac parte magis colenda est sobrietas" / VG [1560]: "Ainsi d'autant plus devons nous suyvre sobrieté en cest endroict". The context of this statement is the question of speculating about the eternal happiness of the elect.

347 Cf. chapter 3, pp. 145-155.

348 Quoted above, p. 325 and in introduction, p. 33 (n. 172).

349 Cf. above, pp. 330-331.

terms of rational intelligence, while the humanists' first concern is with clarity as a quality of emotional intelligence. This means that Calvin primarily seeks the clarity of the intellect, whereas the humanists aspire to reach the clarity of the whole human being, taking into account all the four faculties of the mind as conceived of in the Renaissance along Aristotelian lines. Thus the humanists' notion of clarity is formed with regard to the total scope of the human mind and is therefore as contradictory as the mind itself, allowing for the dialectic interplay between rational definition and emotional ambiguity - an interplay which, as is established today, constitutes the essential quality of the human capacity for the advancement of knowledge. The humanists' toleration of ambiguity and their readiness to reconcile opposed ideas was based on their probing insights into the human psyche, but it has earned them a reputation of being unscientific in their procedures and methods. However, the charge of being unscientific, which was mainly made by thinkers belonging to the Aristotelian or - later - the rationalist tradition, has been defused to some extent by the advances of modern psychology, and it is, of course, further relativised if we accept that there is a connection between humanism and modern psychology.[350]

Calvin's concept of brevity, like that of clarity, is substantially different from corresponding humanist notions. It is clear that neither Calvin nor the humanists can be taken very literally in their claim to brevity, although a certain justification undeniably exists on both sides. In the case of Calvin, brevity seems to be motivated by intellectual concerns mainly, whereas with the humanists it would be more appropriate to speak of "poetic brevity", that is, a kind of brevity based on the suggestive values of metaphors, symbols and similar literary devices. Thus while the reformer can be seen as taking rationally determined short-cuts, the humanists use indirect abbreviations appealing to the store of symbolic images inherent in the human mind. A distinctive feature of Calvin's defence of brevity is, as we have established, the fact that it is frequently motivated by a desire for preterition, marginalisation or even tabooisation of themes regarded as unsuitable for discussion. We have shown, for instance, that the reformer's application of the principle of brevity may serve the purpose of evading humanist issues, of marginalising them or of putting the veil of taboo over them.[351] If Calvin is an intellectual who shows a certain tendency to tabooisation, then there is no doubt that this trait characterises him as an opponent of the humanists, whose aspirations are oriented in the opposite direction, which is to say, towards bringing marginalised issues to the fore and breaking with taboos,

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350 As mentioned, Jung vindicated the use of ambiguity in scientific discourse (cf. introduction, p. 25 (n. 126) and chapter 3, pp. 165-166). He argued that since "all human experience is caught up in the ambiguity of the psyche ..... the language I speak has to be ambiguous, that is to say, with a double meaning, in order to do justice to the nature of the psyche with its double aspect. I consciously and deliberately aim at ambiguous expression, because it is superior to definiteness and corresponds to the nature of human existence. According to my natural disposition I could very well be unambiguous. This is not difficult, but it is done at the expense of truth"; Jung, *Letter to Z. Werblowski* (University of Leeds), 17 June 1952 in *Briefe*, vol. 2 (Olten 1972), 283-284.

351 Cf. above, p. 333.

and not maintaining or establishing them. The humanist tendency to do away with traditional taboos and their aversion to erecting new ones manifested itself in their inclination and readiness to approach and tackle the most sensitive and delicate issues of their time in a psychologically skilful manner, often taking a humorous stance and using irony or satire to expose outmoded attitudes.

Of all the precepts of rhetoric Calvin espouses, sobriety probably makes the sharpest contrast with humanism because it is opposed diametrically to what can be considered the core subject of the *studia humanitatis*: poetry. The reformer's defence of sobriety epitomises his negative attitude towards the promotion of the imaginative faculties of the mind or, to put it in terms of classical rhetoric, the practice of topical invention.[352] The contrast with humanism is also visible in the fact that Calvin marginalises the component of *humanitas* in his consideration of rhetoric. There is , in fact, no single passage in Calvin's work dealing with rhetoric in which the idea of *humanitas* appears. This indicates that the reformer is not ready to go the full way from *ratio* to *oratio* according to the humanist programme, but that his participation in the shift of emphasis from logic to language remains partial and incomplete.[353] Calvin can therefore not be seen as fully taking part in the broad humanist enterprise of providing an educational - and, in a wider sense, cultural - corrective to scholastic intellectualism, a corrective that would be based on the study of human beings or, to put it in more modern terms, on the pioneering investigation into the human psyche conducted by the humanists.[354] Indeed, the reformer does not make any move into the direction of promoting, or even tolerating, rhetorical irrationality at the expense of logical intelligibility, and if he appears to do so in a few theoretical affirmations, this must not be taken at face value, since it is not confirmed by practice.[355] It is evident that Calvin's defence of moderation, sobriety and modesty in rhetoric goes against the humanists' stress on emotional intelligence and their efforts at integrating the irrational impulses contained in the human mind,[356] thus hindering rather than advancing a holistic approach to human being.[357]

Finally, if we look at Calvin from the perspective of modern depth psychology, he

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352 Cf. chapter 3, p. 145.

353 Cf. chapter 3, p. 147.

354 Cf. chapter 3, p. 148.

355 Bouwsma is inclined to take Calvin too literally in this respect. The reformer's remarks concerning the emotional dimension of rhetoric, manifest in his occasional emphasis on the necessary appeal of religious discourse to the heart, are hardly ever followed by practical example. On the whole, Calvin's declarations give the impression of being a polite acknowledgement of what seems an inevitable truth - an old truth, incidentally, defended anew by the humanists in a polemical way. Some of Calvin's statements on the role of the appeal of rhetoric to the individual's heart, or, more generally, on the function of human feelings, are mentioned in Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 115-116, 131-134 (cf. also introduction, p. 28 n. 145 and chapter 1, pp. 73-74).

356 Cf. chapter 3, pp. 149-150.

357 Bouwsma's assertion that "through his understanding of the heart, Calvin was also moving toward, *though he never quite reached*, a conception of the wholeness of human being" is, even in this cautious formulation, highly debatable; cf. Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 132 (italics added).

appears as an *adversary of the unconscious* with his stress on sobriety and brevity - if it is true, as Jung held, that "the language of high rhetoric" is the "style selected by the unconscious itself".[358] However, Calvin is pragmatic and therefore dedicated to the practical aspects of rhetoric, such as the power to move people and bring about change in the world, but his insistence on sobriety and brevity implies that he reduces Cicero's formula "teach, delight and move"[359] basically to "teach and move", although he can be regarded as sharing the humanist belief in the capacity of the art of rhetoric to put ideas into practice and produce change in the world. Thus Calvin can be considered as agreeing with the humanists in his intention to appeal to and strengthen the faculty of the will. However, by promoting will and, to some degree, memory, at the expense of the imagination and, more broadly speaking, *humanitas*, Calvin creates a partial alliance of will, memory and reason against the imagination. This effectively constitutes a polarisation of the individual faculties of the human mind, which is against the humanist intention and prevents individuals from developing their humanity in the sense of existential completeness, thus hindering them in their search for wholeness and in their quest to become, if only on a modest scale, a *uomo universale.*[360]

If we turn to consider the humanist discipline of poetry now, we must first acknowledge that the topic of Calvin and poetry represents a theme on which little has been said and on which, it seems, there is little to be said. The reason why Calvin's relation to the art of making verse has hardly received any noteworthy critical attention is commonly seen in the reformer's unenthusiastic attitude towards the charms of poetic utterance, as well as in his lack of interest in the imaginative faculties of the human mind. Both of these traits are manifest in his slight appreciation of the creations of poetic skill and in the tiny amount of poetry he produced, adapted or translated himself. While it is probable that Calvin had a conscious or unconscious aversion to poetry, it is obvious that his understanding for what poets write was indeed rather limited. As far as the task of examining critically Calvin's attitude towards poetry is concerned, we can say that the relevant testimonies which can be gathered from the reformer's work are very few in number, and we can add that the secondary literature on the subject is extremely scanty. Regarding the latter we can state that there are only two recent contributions or so to the topic of Calvin and poetry. One is an edition of what is commonly considered Calvin's only poem, the so-called *Epinicion Christo cantatum.* This edition contains a detailed analysis of the historical and social background to that poem, and a brief discussion of the problems involved in discussing poetry in Calvin's work.[361]

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358 Quoted in chapter 3, p. 149.
359 Quoted in chapter 3, p. 150.
360 Cf. chapter 3, p. 153.
361 Cf. E. A. Drs. de Boer, *Loflied en Hekeldicht: De geschiedenis van Calvijn's enige gedicht, het Epinicion cantatum van 1 januari 1541* (Haarlem 1986).

The other contribution is an investigation into the poetical aspects of Calvin's prose in his *Institutes* by Ford Lewis Battles,[362] the well-known translator and editor of that work.[363] In the virtual absence of poetry by Calvin's pen, and in view of the scarcity of direct - or even indirect - poetical references in the work of the reformer, Battles decided to focus on poetical language in Calvin's doctrinal discourse, asserting that "the finest poetry in the theological tradition is what is called today by literary critics 'found poetry' - the poetic passages that the reader stumbles on embedded in prose contexts".[364] Battles' suggestion to look for "found poetry" in Calvin's work certainly helps discover traces of poetry in Calvin, but it also raises an important question, namely the question of how poetry should be defined. We must be aware that if we deal specifically with the humanist concept of poetry, we cannot just adopt any literary notion framed by modern critics or poets,[365] but we have to make sure that the view-point of sixteenth-century humanism is properly taken into account. This means that if we cannot focus directly on Calvin's activity as a poet because he hardly composed any poetry, we must concentrate in the first place on Calvin's relation to what we have defined in chapter three as the distinctive features of the humanist defence of poetry, and not necessarily on the so-called "found poetry", which does not have any palpable correspondence to the humanist idea of poetry. The typical traits of the humanist conception of poetry, however, are the following: promotion of the faculty of the imagination, reference to the archetypal tradition of myth, fable and symbolism, employment of the device of literary ambiguity, cultivation of emotional intelligence and, generally speaking, recourse to the ideal of *humanitas* or integration of unconscious contents into consciousness.

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362 Cf. Battles, "The Theologian as Poet: Some Remarks About the 'Found' Poetry in John Calvin" in D. Y. Hadidian (ed.), *From Faith to Faith* (Pittsburgh 1979), 299-337; also in Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, 249-287.

363 Cf. *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles and *Institutes* [1536], ed. and trans. Battles.

364 Battles, "The Theologian as Poet" in Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, 249.

365 Modern definitions of poetry such as W. H. Auden's simple ideal of poetic utterance as "memorable speaking" are not suitable, whereas W. B. Yeats' conception of a "human truth" conveyed by poetry and based on the conviction that "words alone are certain good" has some affinity with the humanistic tradition; cf. Auden, "Introduction" to his *Selected Poems* and Yeats, "The Song of the Happy Shepherd" from *Crossways* of 1889 in *Collected Poems*, 2nd ed. (London 1950), 8. Yeats' poetics endorses some of the essential theories of modern psychology, and there is a considerable degree of resemblance between his conceptions and the literary tenets of humanism. Yeats campaigned for the vindication of the rights of what we have called emotional intelligence, defending himself against the growing emphasis on rational intelligence. He once stated that "poetry is any flower that brings a memory of emotion, while an unmemoried flower is prose, and a flower pressed and named and numbered science" (Yeats, *Explorations* (London 1962), 251). He asked: "what shall I do ..... who have never observed anything, or listened with an attentive ear, but value all I have seen or heard because of the emotions they call up or because of something they remind me of that exists, as I believe, beyond the world?" (Yeats, *Explorations*, 254). Yeats could be explicitly anti-rational; he thought that "logic is a machine, one can leave it to itself" (Yeats, *Autobiography*, 7th ed. (London 1965), 311). He confessed that "I cannot discover truth by logic unless that logic serve passion, and only then if the logic be ready to cut its own throat, tear out its own eyes" (Yeats, *Explorations*, 301). The Irish poet was also an advocate of the ideal of humanity, arguing that "we artists suffer in our art if we do not love most of all life at peace with itself and doing without forethought what its *humanity* bids it and therefore happily" (Yeats, *Autobiography*, 321 (italics added)). In his literary reflections on the theatre Yeats stated with reference to Greek drama that "an art is always at its greatest when it is most *human*", adding that "an art of fading *humanity*" was "a decaying art" (Yeats, *Explorations*, 110 (italics added)); cf. also chapter 3, p. 178 n. 203.

The only text in which Calvin comments on his relation to poetry is a short autobiographical passage found in a letter written in 1557 and addressed to Conrad Herbert, Bucer's former secretary.[366] Calvin sends Herbert a little book which he probably does not want to keep for himself any more and which appears to contain some poetry. When he mentions the book the reformer confesses that he had had a certain "natural propensity to poetry"[367] when he was young, but that he decided to give up all poetic activity at the age of twenty-five, making one exception only: his religious hymn entitled *Epinicion Christo cantatum*, which he wrote at the instigation of the humanistically-oriented fellow reformers Melanchthon and Sturm while attending the Colloquy of Worms. In his letter to Herbert Calvin writes:

> I thought I would send you the little book edited not so long ago by Henry Stephanus to see if perhaps it would be of use to you. *I was by nature somewhat inclined to poetry,* but as once *I decided to bid farewell to it*, I have written nothing since I was twenty-five, except that at Worms I was led by the example of Philip [Melanchthon] and [Jean] Sturm to write for sport that poem which you have read. *Thus, I do not have [any more] what I have dismissed.* Viret says that the muses are so ill-disposed towards him that anything sounds poetical [to him].[368]

This testimony not only reveals the existence of a youthful leaning to poetry of which we would otherwise not know anything, but it also offers a vital clue concerning the nature of the reformer's conversion and its significance for humanism. When Calvin informs us that he stopped composing poetry at twenty-five "having decided to bid farewell to it", this effectively means that the young man of letters relinquished his poetical pursuits precisely at the time of his conversion to Protestantism, that is to say, around 1534. However, since the art of poetry constitutes an independent and important discipline in the humanist cycle of studies, this "anti-poetical turn" signifies that Calvin, when he became a reformer, turned his back on what can be considered one of the most typical parts of humanism[369] or even its central part.[370] Thus Calvin's late (and somewhat obscure) confession that "I do not have any more what I have dismissed" can be rated as an indirect acknowledgement of a partial rejection of humanism, a rejection which is confirmed by the act of giving away what seems to be a book of poetry.

Calvin's renunciation of the poetic component of humanism is, however, not completely representative of the whole Reformation, although it became, in a way, a typical trait of later Calvinism, in which the domain of poetry was not allotted the space humanism would have given it. A certain contrast with Lutheranism is indicated in Calvin's letter by his references to Melanchthon and Sturm, who, definitely disposed more

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366 *Letter to Conrad Herbert*, 19 May 1557; CO 16.488f (no. 2632). Cf. the editorial note in CO 16.488 n. 6. There is a facsimile reproduction of this letter at the very beginning of the CO 22 volume.

367 *Letter to Conrad Herbert*; quoted in McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York 1954), 232.

368 "..... Ad poeticen natura satis eram propensus: sed ea valere iussa, ab annis viginti quinque nihil composui ..... Itaque quod ex me conferam, non habeo ....."; *Letter to Conrad Herbert*; CO 16.488 (italics added).

369 Cf. Kristeller's judgement cited at the beginning of the section on poetry in chapter 3, p. 155.

370 If, as we have tried to show, *humanitas* has a close connection with the unconscious (cf. chapter 3, pp. 170-171).

favourably towards the art of making verse, managed to move the young reformer to break his "anti-poetical vow" and write some solemn verses. And even a comparison with Calvin's principal disciple and heir in Geneva, Beza, reveals a small but appreciable difference of attitude. Beza, who had written some "fashionable poetry" in "a youth of careless ease", and who later composed a play entitled *Abraham's Sacrifice* for the Lausanne School,[371] remained, as McNeill pointed out, "in his interests still a man of letters" when he was a reformer.[372] In contradistinction to Calvin, Beza confessed as an old man that "I have never been able to repent my love of poetry".[373] It is obvious that Calvin's rather indifferent attitude towards poetry stands in marked contrast with the position of most humanists. Although some humanists became more critical of poetry when they got old,[374] the majority maintained a lifelong dedication to poetry, actively committed to the practice and defence of the discipline. In the 1520s Erasmus wrote to Noel Beda (then at the Sorbonne): "You reproach me for reading the poets. In my youth I loved the poets and considered that they contribute to a liberal education. I do not regret it".[375] In the 1560s Ronsard from the Pléiade group of poets attacked the Calvinist pastors of Geneva because of their apparent disregard for the art of poetry.[376]

Turning back to Calvin, we recognise that all of his small poetic activity as a reformer belongs to the period of exile in Strasbourg. This is not surprising, for the Alsatian city was a focal point of humanism, the influence of which Calvin could not escape. The young reformer, as yet without firm destination, became acquainted with humanistically-oriented reformers like Bucer, Capito or Sturm, and he assimilated, as his later work shows, some of their ideas. When brought to the interconfessional colloquies taking place at that time, he got to know Melanchthon, whose company encouraged, as we have just seen, Calvin's latent literary leanings. As a pastor of the small community of French refugees in Strasbourg, Calvin compiled a book of music to be used in the Eucharist, which contained seventeen psalms translated in French metre, one in prose, and the Apostles' Creed, all provided with tunes for singing.[377] Five of these psalms were translated by Calvin himself,[378] while twelve were adopted in Marot's (then still unpublished) rendering. Calvin's versions were clearly inferior to Marot's, and the reformer decided to replace them with the latter's in later, enlarged editions.[379] However, as some

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371 The play was published in 1550 and staged at the school in May 1551; cf. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 196.

372 McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 196.

373 Quoted in McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 196.

374 As the case of Petrarch illustrates; cf. chapter 2, p. 114 n. 220.

375 *Letter to Beda*; quoted in R. H. Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom* (New York 1969), 243.

376 Cf. Ronsard, *Réponse aux injures et calomnies de je ne sais quels prédicants et ministres de Genève*; quoted in O. Soutet, *La littérature française de la Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (Paris 1987), 83.

377 *Aulcuns psaulmes et cantiques mys en chant* (Strasbourg 1539); cf. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 148. Calvin's compilation of 1539 cited here is not included in the *Corpus Reformatorum*.

378 Viz. *Ps.* 25, 36, 46, 91, 138; cf. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 148.

379 The edition of 1543 is included in CO 6.211-224.

critics pointed out, Calvin's renderings were "not without merit"[380] and, "if not of high poetic order", they were still "dignified, clear, and far removed from doggerel".[381] Other poetic productions by Calvin include a French verse rendering of the Ten Commandments, with introductory and concluding stanzas added, in twelve quatrains and set to music. Moreover, there is a contribution to the 1545 edition of the *Psalter* entitled "Je Te salue, mon certain Redempteur", which is, according to McNeill, Calvin's "best poem" and "an utterance of warm and personal faith".[382] Finally, Calvin is the author of the above-mentioned *Epinicion*, or *Chant de Victoire a Jesus Christ*, a controversial Latin poem attacking the Papacy and defending the principles of the Reformation, which is commonly considered his only original poetic creation.[383]

As far as Calvin's appreciation of classical poetry is concerned, we can say that the reformer only shows a limited sense for the beauty and wisdom of Greek and Latin verse. This is manifest in the fact that his work contains very few references to the extensive body of classical poetry and epic, a large part of which was newly discovered by the humanists. Moreover, the majority of these references are to those poets whose works were already known in the Middle Ages, such as Horace, Ovid, Virgil or Juvenal. As regards direct citations, we can observe that they are extremely rare, especially longer passages, while shorter explicit or implicit allusions occur a little more frequently, they are rather sparse, too. To give an example, in the *Institutes* there are but thirteen direct quotations from classical poetry or verse epic, only four of which are longer than one line: three are from Homer's *Iliad*[384] and one from his *Odyssey*,[385] one from Horace's *Satires*,[386] two from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,[387] three from Virgil's *Aeneid*[388] and one from his *Georgics*,[389] one from Catullus' *Poems*,[390] and, finally, one from Juvenal's *Satires*.[391] There is no trace of Pindar and the other lyrical poets of ancient Greece in the *Institutes*, and Calvin is quite indifferent to the mythological conceptions associated with classical Greek poetry.

On the whole, Calvin's references to classical poetry in the *Institutes* convey the impression that the reformer's attitude towards the lyric and epic literature of ancient Greece and Rome is fundamentally reserved and unenthusiastic. His use of the treasures of classical verse is often marked by moralistic intentions, for he likes to invoke old and

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380 McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 148.
381 Walker, *John Calvin*, 226.
382 McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 148.
383 VL [1544] in de Boer, *Loflied en Hekeldicht*, 109-116; also in CO 5.417-428 and OS 1.494ff. VG [1555] by Conrad Badius in de Boer, *Loflied en Hekeldicht*, 121-126.
384 Cf. *Inst*. 1.17.3. [1559], *Inst*. 4.6.8. [1543] and *Inst*. 4.20.24. [1536].
385 Cf. *Inst*. 2.2.17. [1559].
386 Cf. *Inst*. 1.11.4. [1559] (3 lines).
387 Cf. *Inst*. 1.15.3. [1559] (3 lines) and *Inst*. 2.2.23. [1539].
388 Cf. *Inst*. 1.5.5. [1559] (9 lines), *Inst*. 3.4.17. [1536] and *Inst*. 4.4.12. [1536].
389 Cf. *Inst*. 1.5.5. [1559] (9 lines).
390 Cf. *Inst*. 4.20.29. [1536].
391 Cf. *Inst*. 1.11.3. [1559].

poignant descriptions of human vice, for instance, in order to demonstrate the depravity of human nature, thus following a fashion of approaching the literature of classical antiquity established in the Middle Ages. Calvin's doctrinal aims in drawing on classical poetry are also reflected in his general condemnation of the principal aspects of "Hellenism", as he calls it after Budé, which are repudiated with an uncompromising rigour exceeding that of the latter humanist. These aspects include, for instance, the belief in the power of virtue and in the capacity for higher knowledge, and they include the espousal of pantheistic views or the exhibition of doubts about the idea of immortality. However, Calvin also invokes metaphors from classical poetry to sustain arguments on political order and the secular affairs of the state in his discourse. Similarly, classical metaphors serve the purpose of affirming the existence of some minimal natural knowledge of God implanted in the human mind. In summary, we can say that Calvin's attitude towards classical poetry does not mirror his overall relation to classical antiquity with complete accuracy because the negative or critical aspects clearly prevail in his judgement of the poetic tradition of antiquity and because the references are too few to be representative of the reformer's attitude on the whole.

Let us quote a few examples to illustrate how Calvin handles the poetic heritage of antiquity. We may make a representative selection from the references in the *Institutes* which we have listed above. Apart from a cursory glance at the shorter allusions, we shall have a closer look at the four longer direct citations from Virgil, Horace and Ovid, all of which were, curiously enough, inserted only in the last edition of the *Institutes*. When discussing the office of the magistrate in the first edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin lists some of the ideal qualities of the holder of that office, and in doing so he draws on well-known classical metaphors. He invokes the Homeric designation of Agamemnon as a "shepherd of his people",[392] and he repeats the formula of "pater patriae" from Seneca's *De Clementia*,[393] which he had already highlighted in his own commentary on that work[394] and which is itself an echo of Homer's reference to Odysseus as "friendly like a father" to his people.[395] In a passage near the end of the *Institutes*, Calvin writes:

> But as we have hitherto described the magistrate who truly is what he is called - viz. *the father of his country*, and (as the Poet speaks) *the pastor of the people*, the guardian of peace, the president of justice, the vindicator of innocence, he is justly to be deemed a madman who disapproves of such authority.[396]

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392 *Inst.* 4.20.24. VL [1536]: "pastor populi" / VG [1541]: "pasteur du peuple"; cf. Homer, *Iliad* 2.243 and 249 (ποιμενα λαων). In a sermon pronouced in 1562, Calvin again employs the simile, preaching that "even ..... the pagans ..... when they spoke of kings and princes ..... called them 'pastors', as their writings show"; *12th Sermon on 2 Sam. 5:2*; *Supplementa Calviniana* 1.30ff.; quoted in *Institutes* [1536], ed. Battles, 335 n. "people" to p. 221.

393 Seneca, *De Clementia*, 1.14.2.

394 *Seneca Commentary* 97.39-99.27; CO 5.106ff and *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. Battles / Hugo, 236-241.

395 Homer, *Odyssey*, 2.234.

396 *Inst.* 4.20.24, trans. Beveridge (italics added). The phrase "as the Poet speaks" is omitted in VG; cf. *Institution* [1541], ed. Pannier, vol. 4, 229.

Another allusion to classical poetry can be found in the context of Calvin's criticism of the traditional practice of the confessional. In order to illustrate the inner torment which may arise in the sinner when he tries to confess according to the old Catholic rule, Calvin evokes the Virgilian image of a voyager getting lost in the immeasurably broad expanse of the sea and facing the approach of a storm. The line which Calvin quotes from the *Aeneid*, namely "caelumque undique et undique pontus" - "and sky and sea on every side"[397] - is fittingly woven into the theological discourse and reinforces the idea of a deep-seated inner anxiety (*angoisse*) which pushes the sinner into despair and hopelessness. In a memorable passage from the first edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin depicts the gradual entanglement of the people's conscience in the complicated procedure which should lead them to a detailed knowledge of their sins. "By this ruinous procedure", the reformer argues,

> the souls of those who were affected with some sense of God have been most cruelly racked. First they betook themselves to calculation, proceeding according to the formula given by the Schoolmen, and dividing their sins into boughs, branches, twigs, and leaves; then they weighed the qualities, quantities, and circumstances; and in this way, for some time, matters proceeded. But after they had advanced farther, when they looked around, *nought was seen but sea and sky*; no road, no harbour. The longer the space they ran over, a longer still met the eye; nay, lofty mountains began to rise, and there seemed no hope of escape; none at least till after long wanderings. They were thus brought to a dead halt, and they were left in their anxiety, till at length the only issue was found in despair.[398]

After considering two typical passages from the *Institutes* in which Calvin includes short citations from classical verse epic, we may complete our impression of Calvin's approach to ancient poetry by looking at those passages in which the reformer provides more extensive quotations. The shorter quotations are, as we have seen, more frequent, but in general they do not reveal so much about Calvin's relation to classical poetry, while the longer citations convey a more distinct idea of Calvin's attitude in this respect. Of course, Calvin's relation to classical poetry, as apparent in the longer quotations, touches on the larger topic of the reformer's stance on the question of the value of Graeco-Roman literary and philosophical culture, but it will be clear that we cannot provide a full discussion of this issue here in the section on poetry. However, the longer quotations from Ovid, Virgil and Horace which Calvin includes in his *Institutes* can afford us some insight into this question, too.

When dealing with the theme of God's image in human beings, Calvin signals his readiness to recognise the classical description of human beings as the only creatures capable of moving the head upwards to behold the firmament, as demonstrating the existence of some divine likeness in the human soul. However, the reformer insists that his

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397 Virgil, *Aeneid*, 3.193.

398 *Inst.* 3.4.17, trans Beveridge (slightly modified) (italics added). Calvin's allusion to the *Aeneid* is not acknowledged in Beveridge's translation (1845-46). We conflate VL [1536]: "inter sacrum et saxum", which is a proverbial expression from Roman literature recorded e.g. in Plautus (reference below), and which was hard to understand for those who were not well-versed in classical letters, with VG [1541]: "Ilz demeuroient donc en ceste *angoisse*"; *Inst.* [1541], ed. Pannier, vol. 2, 204 (italics added). Cf. also Plautus, *The Captives* 617 in *Comédies*, ed. Les Belles Lettres, vol. 2, 124 (n. 1).

recognition of the classical conception shaped by Cicero[399] and Ovid[400] is made with some reluctance, and on condition that this conception is understood in a spiritual sense, not purely physically. In the last edition of his *Institutes* Calvin writes:

> I will not vehemently oppose any who may choose to include under the image of God that
>
> > "While the mute creation downward bend
> > Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,
> > Man looks aloft, and with erected eyes,
> > Beholds his own hereditary skies".
>
> Only let it be understood, that the image of God which is beheld or made conspicuous by these external marks, is spiritual.[401]

The verses Calvin adduces are a faithful quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*[402] and constitute a classical commonplace in humanist literature. The fact that Calvin includes these verses in his *Institutes* shows that his attitude towards classical poetry, although rather reserved and critical, is not entirely negative. We may imagine, though, that a contemporary humanist would have cited Ovid's verses with more enthusiasm and literary dedication.

In another section of the *Institutes*, also written for the definitive edition of 1559, Calvin inserts two quotations from Virgil, which appear to be the longest passages of poetry he cites in his whole work. In the context of discussing those qualities of the soul which help highlight its immortality, Calvin refutes the conception of the identification of God with nature, which was advocated in some strands of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy. The reformer rejects the classical idea according to which the whole world is animated by one life-giving principle, imagined in terms of a universal soul or intelligence permeating and governing the universe. Nature, Calvin argues, must not be substituted for God, since the universe is not its own creator but every created thing proceeds from God. "I admit, indeed", Calvin writes,

> that the expression, "Nature is God", may be piously used, if dictated by a pious mind; but as it is inaccurate and harsh (Nature being more properly the order which has been established by God), in matters which are so very important, and in regard to which special reverence is due, it does harm to confound the Deity with the inferior operations of his hands.[403]

Virgil is taken by Calvin as an example representing the pantheistic doctrine of a divine spirit animating the universe, epitomised by the maxim "Nature is God". The Roman poet has, Calvin maintains, "adopted a view common to both Greeks and Latins", exhibiting a belief in "a universal mind animating and invigorating the world".[404] This ancient pantheistic view is pernicious because its adherents effectively marginalise God in

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399 Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 2.56.140.

400 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.84ff.

401 *Inst.* 1.15.3, trans. Beveridge, who used Dryden's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Calvin's general reluctance is indicated by his introductory formula "nec vehementius contendam".

402 Calvin only changes the third person form with the subject "deus" into indefinite third person form.

403 *Inst.* 1.5.5, trans. Beveridge.

404 *Inst.* 1.5.5, trans. Beveridge.

his role as creator and rector of the universe, and thus "banish the true God" in favour of an "unsubstantial deity".[405] Calvin refutes classical pantheism as "silly" and "profane", illustrating it with twenty verses from Virgil, ten from the *Aeneid* and ten from the *Georgics*. The reformer writes:

> The talk of certain persons concerning a secret inspiration quickening the whole world, is not only silly, but altogether profane. Such persons are delighted with the following celebrated passage of Virgil:
>
> "Know, first, that heaven, and earth's compacted frame,
> And flowing waters, and the starry flame,
> And both the radiant lights, one common soul
> Inspires and feeds - and animates the whole.
> This active mind, infused through all the space,
> Unites and mingles with the mighty mass:
> Hence, men and beasts the breath of life obtain,
> And birds of air, and monsters of the main.
> Th' ethereal vigour is in all the same,
> And every soul is filled with equal flame".[406]
>
> The meaning of all this is, that the world, which was made to display the glory of God, is its own creator. For the same poet has in another place, adopted a view common to both Greeks and Latins:
>
> "Hence to the bee some sages have assigned
> A portion of the God, and heavenly mind;
> For God goes forth, and spreads throughout the whole,
> Heaven, earth, and sea, the universal soul;
> Each, at its birth, from him all beings share,
> Both man and brute, the breath of vital air;
> To him return, and, loosed from earthly chain,
> Fly whence they sprang, and rest in God again
> Spurn at the grave, and, fearless of decay,
> Dwell in high heaven, and star th' ethereal way".[407]
>
> Here we see how far that jejune speculation, of a universal mind animating and invigorating the world, is fitted to beget and foster piety in our minds. We have a still clearer proof of this in the profane verses which the licentious Lucretius has written as a deduction from the same principle. The plain object is to form an unsubstantial deity, and thereby banish the true God whom we ought to fear and worship".[408]

Calvin's handling of Horatian verse is almost harsher than his refutation of Virgilian pantheism as "silly" and "profane" - and as fostering impiety. Horace is not invoked by Calvin in the first place as an illustrious pagan exponent of philosophical error, like Virgil, but he is appreciated mainly as a keen observer of human habits who skilfully describes the manifold manifestations of sin and vice,[409] and who likes "to make fun of the world's madness".[410] However, the Roman poet is condemned uncompromisingly by Calvin as an "Epicurean" who, "[always] inclined to witty jesting, did not care about religion",[411] but his testimonies are readily invoked by the reformer as a "most just mockery"[412] of human folly. As Calvin criticises the proneness of many believers to present all-too immodest

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405 *Inst.* 1.5.5, trans. Beveridge.

406 Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6.724-733

407 Virgil, *Georgics*, 4.219-228.

408 *Inst.* 1.5.5, trans. Beveridge, who used Dryden's translation of Virgil's works. Calvin, literally translated, speaks of "the sacrilegious words of that filthy dog Lucretius", and the reference is to *De rerum natura* 1.54-79; cf. *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, 58 (n. 21).

409 Cf. e.g. *Comm. Gen.* 3: 19, where Calvin quotes from Horace's *Odes* (1.3).

410 VG [1560]: "ce Poete-là ..... a seulement voulu brocarder la folie du monde"; *Inst.* 1.11.4.

411 VL [1559]: "Epicureus ille facete ludendo nullam religionem curavit"; *Inst.* 1.11.4.

412 VL [1559]: "Iustissima ..... subsannatio"; *Inst.* 1.11.4.

wishes before God in their prayers, he principally alludes to Horace when mentioning that "profane writers have derided and even expressed their detestation of this presumption, and yet the vice has always prevailed".[413]

In another passage from the *Institutes*, when Calvin argues his case against idolatry, refuting the idea of representing God by a piece of inanimate matter, he quotes a few lines from Horace's *Satires* in which the Roman poet ironically describes from the perspective of a wooden god how such a god comes into being: a craftsman is undecided whether to make a stool or a god from a fig tree log, and finally opts for the latter without much deliberation. Calvin quotes Horace faithfully, but he suppresses the Roman poet's identification of the god as Priapus, that is, the garden deity whose statue was usually put up in the open air as a symbol of fertility - and sometimes also as a scarecrow. Calvin's omission of Priapus can easily be explained, for the god of the gardens often appears in obscene shapes and is effectively described in such terms by Horace in the immediate context of the passage from the *Satires* which Calvin quotes. Needless to say, this piece of obscenity is intolerable to Calvin, who substitutes a discreet "etc." for the all-too frivolous Priapus. Needless to say, too, that Priapus, by contrast, constitutes a tolerable topic for Rabelais, who does not share the Calvinian disapproval or taboo and mentions the god very freely and in coarsely humorous terms.[414] But be that as it may, in the passage on idolatry from the *Institutes* which we have just mentioned above, the reformer writes about Horace as follows:

> Most just is that profane poet's mockery:
>
> "Once I was a little fig tree trunk, a useless bit of wood,
> When the workman, in doubt whether he should make a stool, etc. [i.e. or a Priapus],
> Preferred that I be a god".[415]
>
> So then the earthly manikin, who almost every moment breathes out his life, by his own cleverness would transfer God's name and honor to a dead trunk! But because that Epicurean in witty jest had no regard for religion, let us pass over his witticisms and those of men like him.[416]

As has become evident, Calvin does not cite classical poetry to elicit emotional responses in his readers by the beauty of the lyrical language presented, or to appeal to the irrational side of the human mind by adducing metaphoric images or archetypal symbols, but he invokes the testimonies of ancient poets principally for rationally defined purposes, for instance, to demonstrate the doctrinal differences between Christian theology and pagan philosophy, or to document the sinfulness and to condemn the vices manifest in human beings. This pragmatic attitude towards poetry is confirmed by the only reference

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413 *Inst.* 3.20.5. [1559], trans. Beveridge; also quoted below, p. 353. The precise reference to Horace has not been established satisfactorily. Moreover, the passage also appears to contain an implicit hint at Erasmus' *Colloquy* "The Shipwreck"; cf. *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, 855 n. 7 (the reference to Horace's *Satires* 1.8.1-3 given by McNeill seems to be incorrect).

414 Cf. e.g. Rabelais, *Le Quint Livre*, chapter 41.

415 Horace, *Satires*, 1.8.1-3.

416 *Inst.* 1.11.4, trans. Battles (slightly modified). Since the "etc." is wrongly placed at the end of the Horace quote in Battles' translation, Calvin's omission of Priapus cannot be recognised; cf. *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, 104.

to a poetical utterance of a Renaissance humanist which can be found in Calvin's writings, namely a brief and passing allusion to Petrarch's criticism of the papal court. Calvin, typically, does not invoke any of the charming and emotionally charged verses for which the father of humanism was famous, but he focuses specifically on that part of the latter's work which is useful for the programme of the Reformation, particularly its anti-Roman campaign. In a polemical treatise addressed to the Lyons cleric Gabriel de Saconay, who had attacked the Protestant camp in a preface written for a new edition of Henry VIII's tract against Luther appearing in France,[417] Calvin asks his adversary not just to complain about the sad fact of religious dissent and schism, but to make an attempt at defining the forms it takes in a more precise way. The reformer criticises his opponent for being "vague and confused" about the question of how to identify heresy, and he confronts him with the view of heresy as an evil arising from within the church - and even from its very centre, that is to say, Rome. Referring to Saconay, the reformer writes:

> Our gentleman the cantor laments that the whole world is full of heresies, and rightly so, seeing that the poets, too, have sung this trite old song for a long time. But Petrarch, who was a slightly better poet than this musician here, inflicted a deep wound on his people and on the papal priesthood when he called Rome the mother of all heresies.[418]

If we have a closer look at Calvin's allusion to "Petrarch's observation that Rome is the mother of heresies", as one leading expert wrote,[419] we recognise that the reformer's reference is, strictly speaking, neither very accurate nor completely representative of the Italian's poet's stance on Rome and the papacy. In a sonnet of his *Canzoniere*, Petrarch indeed calls the papal court "the home of pain and *mother of errors*",[420] but this utterance has to be interpreted in the context of ecclesiastical schism, for the poet is clearly referring to Avignon, not to Rome. As is well known, Petrarch's condemnation of the contemporary papal court of Avignon was always strong, and the poet did not hesitate to draw a gloomy picture of that disputed institution which he knew from personal experience. In another sonnet of his *Canzoniere*, Petrarch speaks of Avignon as the "impious one", calling it a "nest of treachery in which is hatched / all evil that today spreads through the world".[421] Sometimes Petrarch also includes Rome in his criticism; for instance, when he reproaches the papacy for having turned against the founding fathers of Christianity, he refers to it as a "school of error and *temple of heresy*, / first Rome, and now false Babylon [i.e. Avignon]".[422]

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417 *Congratulation to the Venerable Presbyter Gabriel de Saconay* (1561).

418 *Gratulatio ad venerabilem presbyterum dominum Gabrielem de Saconay*. VL [1561]: "Haeresibus refertum esse orbem deplorat Praecentor, et merito: quando poetis quoque haec trita pridem fuit cantilena. Sed Petrarca qui paulo melior erat poeta, quam hic musicus, Romam vocans haereseon matrem, grave vulnus suis inflixit"; CO 9.429. VG [1561]: "Monsieur le Chantre se plaind que tout le monde est rempli d'heresies. Et à bon droict: veu que ceste chanson a esté de long temps en la bouche des Poetes. Mais Petrarque qui estoit un peu meilleur Poete, que ce Chantre n'est musicien, appellant Rome mere de toutes heresies, a fait une grande playe à la Prestrise Papale"; *Recueil des opuscules* (Geneva 1566), 1826. The French translation is by Calvin himself.

419 McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 206.

420 "albergo di dolor, *madre d'errori*"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 114 v. 3 (italics added).

421 Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 136 vs. 3, 5-6.

422 "scola d'errori et *templo d'eresia*"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 138 vs. 2-3 (italics added).

As we have seen, it appears that the expression "mother of (all) heresies" does not literally occur in Petrarch's poetry and that corresponding expressions conveying a similar notion are not applied to Rome in the first place.[423] Nevertheless, we must admit that the association of the expressions "school of errors" and "temple of heresy" with the Roman Papacy as a historical institution is clear enough, and we can observe that this association is established more clearly even by a critical allusion to the Donation of Constantine made further on in the same poem in which the above-quoted expressions are used. The allusion is placed at the very end of the poem, and it is made with the following words: "Now Constantine does not come back, / but the world that defends him is a sad one, and he may have it [for himself]".[424] Finally, however, we must not forget that on the whole Petrarch does not condemn the Roman institution of the Papacy as such in a categorical way, but, on the contrary, expresses his hope that one day there will be a Pope who will end the schism and make Rome again the centre of the church.[425] This vision, with its idealist tint, is typical of Petrarch and, in a wider sense, of humanist utopianism.[426] Calvin never cites those famous Petrarchan verses which are so characteristic of humanism: "noble souls and friends of virtue / will govern the world, and we will see it turn / golden all around, and full again of ancient splendour" - verses that mark the conclusion of the very sonnet referred to above in which Petrarch presents his dream of a renaissance and reformation of the papacy.[427] Perhaps *not* so needless to say, Calvin never cites any other lyrically captivating words by Petrarch either,[428] but the reformer deals with the Italian humanist's verses, as - it has to be underlined - with all other poetry, in a rational and sober way, using it as a means to defend and advance his cause. Thus poetry may serve the purpose of illustrating the decay of doctrine and the degeneration of morals, or the decadence of the church in general.

Calvin's controlled and rational attitude towards poetry is also reflected in his relation to music, the sister art of poetry which often accompanies it - as was the case with

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423 Neither the *Corpus Reformatorum* editors (cf. CO 9.429 and CO 9.XXXIX-XL [*Prolegomena*]) nor McNeill (cf. above n. 413) provide any source indication for Petrarch.

424 "Or Constantin non torna; / ma tolga il mondo tristo che 'l sostene"; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 138 vs. 13-14. These verses have been interpreted in many different ways. The basic context is an imagined juxtaposition of the figures of Christ and Constantine revisiting the papal world: Christ would be angry and Constantine would realise what the consequences of his having made the Donation are - or perhaps simply, of his having declared Christianity the state religion.

425 Cf. Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 137.

426 For humanist utopianism cf. chapter 2, pp. 120-122.

427 Viz. sonnet 137; quoted in chapter 2, p. 122 (n. 269).

428 The *index historicus* of the *Corpus Reformatorum* edition in CO 22 does not record any other reference by Calvin to Petrarch than the one quoted above from the *Congratulation to the Venerable Presbyter Gabriel de Saconay* of 1561. Only one other vague reference to Petrarch has been established so far, but this reference is uncertain, for it can at best be considered an indirect allusion to the humanist's *Epistolae rerum senilium*, namely if we assume that Calvin extracted from these *Epistolae* the words he quotes in his *Institutes* from Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*. This is possible, but we cannot say that it is probable or how probable it would be. Moreover, the words Calvin quotes are a prose statement, not poetry: they read: "verum sat cito si sat bene" ("but it is done soon enough if it is done well enough"); cf. *Inst.*, Epistola ad lectorem [VL 1539]; *Institutes*, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles, 3-4 n. 2.

the singing of the psalms Calvin introduced in Strasbourg and practised in Geneva.[429] In the manual for prayer and singing which Calvin wrote immediately after his return to Geneva, he considers music one of the most important means of recreation and asserts that it has "a secret and almost incredible power to move people's hearts", a power by which "it can turn and bend the will of human beings here and there, as Plato has wisely observed".[430] However, the reformer warns that "every bad word ..... when accompanied by music" is like "poison and corruption which is driven to the bottom of the heart by the melody".[431] Therefore, the pleasure produced by the sound of music "is to be condemned ..... except if it is joined with fear of God", and music can be regarded as useful and commendable only if "there is *no wicked charm* or empty delight in it", Calvin affirms later in his *Commentary on Genesis*.[432] If those conditions are fulfilled, then "music can be applied to the duties of piety" and employed for religious purposes instead of "keeping people occupied with vanities".[433] But what does that mean in practice? It meant, concretely, that Calvin disapproved of using any harmony in religious chant and "wished to confine the music to melody", as one critic put it.[434] In 1551, when Calvin was teaching on Genesis,[435] Louis Bourgeois, who composed the tunes for the psalms to be sung in the churches of Geneva, left the city because Calvin did not allow him to use arrangements involving a setting with harmony and insisted on strict limitation to melody in the medieval style.[436]

If we have described Calvin's attitude towards poetry as detached and rational, we must draw attention to the fact that emotional detachment and emphasis on rationality are features which are fundamentally incompatible with what the humanists and other humanistically-oriented intellectuals, not to speak of the artists, regarded as the spirit and essence of poetry. Thus when Calvin uses poetic verse for the ideologically determined and rationally calculated purpose of sustaining the doctrinal programme of the Reformation, he tends to disregard the element which was at the very centre of the humanist conception of poetry, namely the association of lyrical utterance with the irrational faculties of the mind - today we would say: the unconscious side of the mind - which the humanists wanted to

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429 The literature on Calvin and music is scanty. For a recent contribution cf. A. Perrot, "Calvin et le language musical: accord et mélodie" in *La revue réformée* 40 (1989), 24-35.

430 *La forme des prières et chants ecclésiastiques* (1542); quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 182.

431 *La forme des prières et chants ecclésiastiques* (1542); quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 182.

432 *Comm. Gen.* 4: 20; CO 23.100 (italics added).

433 *Comm. Gen.* 4: 20. "Damnada quidem est voluptas, nisi cum Dei timore, et communi humanae societatis utilitate sit coniuncta: sed musicae talis est ratio, ut pietatis officiis accommodari, et hominibus prodesse queat: *absint modo vitiosae illecebrae*: absit etiam inanis oblectatio, quae homines a melioribus exercitiis abductas in vanitate occupet"; CO 23.100 (italics added).

434 McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 191. In this attitude, incidentally, Calvin was like Philip II of Spain, who disliked harmony and fundamentally disapproved of the Renaissance trend to explore the newly discovered dimensions of polyphony, although Philip, unlike Calvin, allowed his composers to do what they liked for the most part.

435 The *Commentary on Genesis*, which was published in 1554, is based on lectures given between 1550 and 1552; cf. Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé*, 375.

436 Cf. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 191.

promote as an antidote to what they perceived as the overemphasis on reason in the Aristotelian tradition.

Now in the whole work of Calvin we cannot find a single passage in which the reformer cites a line or stanza of elegant verse with the intention of conveying a message by means of appealing to the readers' emotional sensitivity and to their capacity of comprehending subliminally transmitted contents. On the contrary, as is evident from Calvin's deliberations on music accompanying poetry, the reformer regards poetical language as a potential "poison" for the soul and "corruption" for the heart. Calvin is only disposed to accept poetry if it is used for doctrinal purposes in a cognitive way, as we have seen with his citation of Virgil,[437] or "if it is joined with fear of God" and if "there is *no wicked charm* or empty delight in it". It is typical of Calvin that he never speaks of the "good charm" of poetry (a notion which would, strictly speaking, be implied by his rejection of "wicked charm") and it is typical of the reformer, too, that he never alludes to the connection of the art of poetry with emotion. Indeed, Calvin does not make any effort to evoke the mysterious scent of such a lyrical "flower that brings a memory of emotion", to cite a modern humanistic definition of poetry.[438] He ignores Petrarch's lyrical works, and he is silent on the message conveyed by the latter's expression "I know it because I feel it", which constitutes an essential aspect of the humanist outlook.[439]

Calvin's negative attitude towards the humanistic discipline of poetry is also manifest in the fact that the reformer never mentions the concept of *humanitas* in conjunction with poetical issues.[440] As we have shown in chapter three, there is, however, an intimate connection between poetry and *humanitas* which is based on the humanist defence of the faculty of the imagination against the scholastic championship of the rational faculties of the mind.[441] This means that the humanist defence of poetic *humanitas* is essentially defined by the opposition or rebellion of the irrational and largely unconscious parts of the human mind against the domination of consciousness and rationality. Accordingly, the humanists appreciated poetry, in a fashion similar to that of the ancients in many ways, as a voice of the unconscious and as a wholesome corrective to

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437 Cf. above, pp. 345-346.

438 Quoted above, p. 339 n. 365.

439 Cf. introduction, pp. 26-27 and chapter 3, p. 160.

440 In *Inst.* 3.4.17 (VG [1541]) the allusion to Virgil's verse "caelum undique et undique pontus" (quoted above, p. 344), which is rendered as "ilz ne voyent plus que Ciel et Mer" (*Inst.*, ed. Pannier, vol. 2, 204), can be seen as loosely associated with the denunciation of those who forged the Catholic doctrine of confession as "*inhumane* torturers" ("bourreaux *inhumains*; *Inst.*, ed. Pannier, vol. 2, 204, italics added), which is the translation of VL [1536]: "cruel butchers" (or "torturers", "carnifices"; *Inst.* [1536], ed Battles, 141 and *Inst.* [1541], ed. Pannier, vol. 2, 395). However, this association is accidental rather than deliberate, and it does not warrant the conclusion that Calvin is here attempting to join poetry with *humanitas*. The argument that the reformer as a young man once denounced the scholastic teachers of his day in humanist fashion as "lash-loving torturers" ("plagiosis carnificibus"; *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's "De Clementia"*, eds. Battles / Hugo, 260-261) cannot be adduced to substantiate that conclusion either.

441 Cf. chapter 3, pp. 170-171, 173-175.

the increasing cultivation of the conscious faculties of the mind. If we try to evaluate Calvin's relation to the concept of *humanitas* in a general way in the context of our theory of the humanist defence of poetry, it appears that from the reformer's total disregard for *humanitas* in connection with the topic of poetry it can be inferred that Calvin was fundamentally hostile to the principle of *humanitas*, and that he was no advocate but rather an *adversary of the unconscious*. This remains to be shown, however, in some more detail.

It has become clear that Calvin was not very inclined to participate in the humanist enterprise of promoting the irrational faculties of the mind. On the contrary, as has frequently been pointed out in the literature, he wanted the creative potential of the imagination to be strictly contained within the bounds of sober rationality. Bouwsma, for instance, has drawn attention to the fact that "imagination and creativity are notably missing from Calvin's discussion of the higher faculties of the personality", and he has pointed out that the reformer "attacked them under the pejorative label 'fantasy' (*fantasia, fantasie*)".[442] The same author has also shown that in Calvin's view of human beings creativity and emotionality are relegated to a subordinate position. "For Calvin only God can create", Bouwsma states, adding that "the 'affections' ..... hardly seemed to Calvin to participate in the nobility of the soul".[443] Thus, according to Calvin, when people engage in creative poetical activity and try to give literary expression to their emotions or "affections", the result is, almost invariably, a mass of "lying fictions", because the products of the irrational faculty of the imagination cannot be, to Calvin, anything but a "sort of madness"[444] manifesting itself in fantastic errors - which could, appropriately, be termed "errors of fantasy" from the point of view of the reformer's logic.

As is evident, Calvin's stance on poetry and, more generally, literature - that is to say, prose fiction and drama (which was still mostly in verse) - is fundamentally and categorically negative, and, as has become evident, too, this negative attitude is rooted in the reformer's deep suspicions against everything literary and non-rational. In one of his rare explicit assertions concerning an issue of essential relevance for the assessment of humanism, Calvin utters his opinion on poets and poetry, declaring in a harsh tone that "*poets* have invented whatever pleases them, and thus they *have filled the world with the grossest and foulest errors*".[445] These "grossest and foulest errors", which corrupt the minds of the godly, are, moreover, the work of the forces of darkness according to Calvin, who warns that "when the devil lights the fire, we see how furiously both the learned and unlearned are carried away".[446] Calvin's association of the inventions of the poets - that is

442 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 80 (order of words altered).
443 Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 80.
444 *Comm. Dan.* [1561] 3: 3-7; quoted in Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 179.
445 *Comm. Dan.* [1561] 3: 3-7; quoted in Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 179.
446 *Comm. Dan.* [1561] 3: 3-7; quoted in Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 179.

to say, the products of the literary imagination - with diabolical forces reveals a deep-seated anxiety about the irrational potential of creativity inherent in the human mind, and it would further seem to suggest the existence of a real fear of the unconscious powers in human beings.

If Calvin has spoken about poetry in connection with drama in the statement quoted above, this is not only because the latter was still closely tied to the former at his time - most of the contemporary drama was written in verse form -, but also because his aversion to poetry was intimately linked with his hostility to the theatre. The common ground of his criticism of poetry and of drama consists in his general condemnation of the "foul errors" which the faculty of the imagination is, according to him, prone to produce, and in the repudiation of the individual aspects of these "errors" as manifest, for instance, in the ambiguities of highly rhetorical language and the enigmatic equivocality of the arcane symbolism of pagan mythology. As far as the latter is concerned, Calvin's rejection of the irrational mode of mythological thinking and the concomitant marginalisation of the world of myth is clearly apparent in the conspicuous and almost complete absence of any substantial allusions to classical mythology in his work. Sometimes the reformer mentions Roman and Greek gods in ironic tone, for instance, when he derides the presumptuous posture of those believers who proudly present exaggerated or unlawful desires before God. "Certain profane authors", Calvin writes in his *Institutes*,

> made fun of and even detested this effrontery, but the vice itself has always held sway; and hence it came to pass that ambitious men chose *Jupiter* as their patron; the miserly, *Mercury*; those greedy for knowledge, *Apollo* and *Minerva*; the warlike, *Mars*; the lecherous, *Venus*.[447]

Sometimes Calvin uses a name from classical mythology to apply it as a pejorative epithet to a historical or religious figure; so, for instance, when he calls the Empress Irene, who ruled from 780 to 802 in the Eastern Empire, "a wicked Proserpine"[448] for having consented to the approbation of the worship of images at the Council of Nicaea in 787.

The phenomenon of myth could also appear on the stage, and there Calvin's rejection was more explicit and concrete as it was, inevitably, manifest in a publicly demonstrated attitude. To give an example, once the syndics of the city of Geneva, no doubt at Calvin's instigation, refused to give permission to perform a play entitled *Bataille des puissances de Harcules*, which was then substituted by another play called *Les Actes des Apostres*.[449] Calvin obviously disliked the idea of having stories from classical mythology (though, in reality, probably mixed with a good portion of late medieval folklore) staged, and even after having - hesitantly - given his consent to the production of *The Acts of the Apostles*, he commented laconically in a letter to his friend and brother in arms Farel: "I realise that we

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447 *Inst.* 3.20.5. [1559], trans. Battles; first part also quoted above, p. 347.
448 *Inst.* 1.11.4. [1551].
449 The latter play was staged on 4 July 1546; cf. CO 12.347 n. a.

cannot deny every entertainment [to the people]".[450] In the same letter, which was written one month before the religious play about the Apostles was actually performed, Calvin reveals what his deeper feelings about the creations of the literary imagination as manifest in the theatre are. The lines he sends to Farel provide the context to the strikingly severe statement we have just quoted above:

> Here there is nothing new, except that already the second comedy is prepared. We have been observing this, and we do not approve of it in the least. However, we did not want to go to the last extreme in our opposition, because there was a danger that our authority could be weakened if we, after objecting [too] obstinately, were defeated in the end. *I realise that we cannot deny every entertainment [to the people].* Therefore, I am satisfied if they understand that when we allow them something which is not entirely vicious like this, it is with reluctance only that we do it.[451]

As far as Calvin's dislike of poetical or literary ambiguity is concerned, we have already commented quite extensively on the issue in the introduction and in chapter three, where we have linked the humanist inclination to ambiguity with a disposition to admit paradoxicality, attributing both features to a basic readiness to tolerate alternative views (alternately or simultaneously) and to accommodate contradictions.[452] Earlier in this chapter we have shown that Calvin's conception of rhetoric, especially with regard to the emphasis on clarity, confirms the reformer's rejection of ambiguity.[453] As we have seen, Calvin highlights the ideal of patent clarity in expression and structure of argumentation, and he underlines the fact that his teaching "contains nothing either absurd or obscure or *ambiguous*".[454] What is left for us, then, is to supply evidence for Calvin's fundamental reluctance to admit paradox and for his disinclination to appreciate paradoxicality as an basic feature of the human condition. This is not difficult, for we do not need to gather many indirect proofs (demonstrating, for instance, Calvin's strict insistence on logical coherence) as we dispose of explicit statements. In a letter to Socinus the reformer defends himself against the reproach of being contradictory and assures the Italian intellectual that "certainly no one can be more *averse to paradox* than I am".[455]

If we recall our deliberations on the humanist discipline of poetry, we can state that the accommodation of paradoxes is a distinctive feature of the humanistic concept of poetry and an integral part of the ideal of *humanitas*.[456] We can state, moreover, that Fromm's theory, which associates *humanitas* with the realm of the unconscious, is specifically

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450 "Video non posse negari omnia oblectamenta"; *Letter to Farel*, 3 June 1546; CO 12.347-348.

451 *Letter to Farel*, 3 June 1546; CO 12.347-348; quoted in J. Neuenhaus, "Calvin als Humanist" in Bohatec (ed.), *Calvinstudien* (Leipzig 1909), 22.

452 Cf. introduction, pp. 23-26 and chapter 3, pp. 160-161.

453 Cf. above, pp. 324-325.

454 Quoted above, p. 325 (n. 289).

455 "Ego certe, si quis alius, semper *a paradoxis abhorrui*"; *Letter to Laelius Socinus* 1551 / 1552; CO 14.229-230; *Letters of John Calvin*, selected from the Bonnet Edition, 128 (italics added). The context of Calvin's statement is the dispute over the doctrine of predestination, a doctrine which can be seen as the result of the uncompromising application of the principles of logical reasoning on the one hand but which contains certain contradictory aspects on the other hand.

456 Cf. chapter 3, p. 166.

corroborated from the perspective of humanist poetics.[457] However, if we compare Calvin's conceptions of poetry with the humanistic notion defined in such a way, we must acknowledge that the reformer appears as an antagonist of *humanitas* and an *adversary of the unconscious*. On the other hand, Calvin emerges as a "pre-Cartesian philosopher"[458] or a forerunner of rationalism who, by virtue of his tendency to suppress the irrational and emotional side of human beings, contributed to "prevent the process of expansion of consciousness",[459] while accelerating the process of promotion of consciousness. That Calvin is an adversary of the unconscious, or a promoter of consciousness respectively, could, of course, be demonstrated better and more comprehensively in a specialist study devoted to the problem of history and psychology. However, the method applied here, which is a comparison with humanism partly based on criteria of judgement derived from theories of modern psychology, can also produce appreciable results. That Calvin is an antagonist of the humanist ideal of *humanitas* can be shown both with and without reference to the concepts of depth psychology, and is more easily comprehensible within a purely historical context.

If we look at Calvin from the perspective of contemporary French humanism, it is not difficult to find an assessment which styles the reformer as an antagonist of *humanitas*. As is to be expected, Calvin's hostility to the ideal of *humanitas* did not go unnoticed among the humanists, who reacted in a very sensitive way to what they judged the annihilation of one of their central doctrines. We must limit ourselves to one example here, and as we are dealing with the topic of poetry or, more generally, with the question of the power of what we have called the mythopoeic imagination, we may refer to Rabelais, that inexhaustible fountain of fantasy, who openly if indirectly disassociates Calvin from the ideal of *humanitas*. The French humanist banishes the Geneva reformer from the community of humanists in an elegant and subtle manner: he discreetly adds Calvin and his followers - together with others - to the list of "reprobates" who are excluded from the select society of initiates represented by the Utopian confraternity of Thelema, the life of which is governed by the ideal of *humanitas*. In his *Fourth Book* Rabelais denounces Calvin and his disciples as unnatural miscreations, writing that "Antiphysis ..... engendered ..... the Calvinian devils, impostors of Geneva, ... and other deformed monsters misshaped against the rules of Nature".[460] This denunciation of Calvin and Calvinism - the term was only just about to be coined - was added later to the original text of 1548 and first published in the definitive edition of the *Fourth Book* in 1552.[461] The association of the list of people banished from

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457 Cf. chapter 3, pp. 170-171.

458 Besançon, quoted above, p. 312.

459 Neumann, quoted in chapter 3, p. 179.

460 Rabelais, *Quart Livre*, chapter 32. "Antiphysie ..... engendra ..... les Demoniacles [i.e. démoniaques] Calvins imposteurs de Geneve ..... et aultres monstres difformes et contrefaicts en despit de Nature".

461 Rabelais' revised version of the *Fourth Book* appeared in January 1552. The term *Calvinist* was coined by Westphal later in the same year, and Calvin did not like it; cf. Cottret, *Calvin*, 247.

Thelema presented in the *Fourth Book* with the earlier list provided in 1534 in *Gargantua*[462] is indirect but clear by the analogy of terms.[463] Rabelais' inclusion of a pejorative judgement about the Calvinists represented an answer to the reformer's attack on him launched in the polemical treatise *De scandalis* of 1550, in which the French humanist's name had featured in a list of alleged denigrators of true religion[464] who, so Calvin claimed, "spread the poison of their impiety here and there in order to fill the whole world with contempt for God".[465]

Calvin responded to Rabelais' counter-attack only after the humanist's death (1553), and in his answer he reinforces the charges of "impiety" and "contempt for God" which he had made in *De scandalis*. In a sermon pronounced in October 1555, that is to say, after the reformer's party had won a decisive political victory in Geneva,[466] Calvin denounced Rabelais as "a lout who always makes wicked gibes against Holy Scripture",[467] thereby evidently satisfying the taste of his zealous French followers who had recently received citizenship and voting rights in large numbers.[468] Calvin can be seen as taking offence at Rabelais' very liberal and light-hearted use of the exuberant pictures produced by his bubbling literary imagination, and he typically alludes to the "mad fantasies"[469] with which the humanist's *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, according to him, abound. However, those "mad fantasies", bad enough in themselves, can be considered harmless insofar as they are not employed for the purpose of "constructing some new religion".[470] Rabelais is not regarded as a founder of a sect or a proponent of heresy, but as a plain atheist who completely lacks any sense of piety. Calvin exclaims that the provocative French humanist and his associates are "mad dogs who pour out their dirt against God's majesty and have intended to corrupt all religion", concluding that "not only do they make fun of all religion but they would like to abolish it completely".[471]

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462 Cf. Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter 54.

463 The rhyme "Face non humaine / ..... Vuidez ce domaine .....", etc. (quoted in chapter 2, p. 104 n. 165) is not repeated, but some of the labels designating the outcasts, such as "Matagotz", "Cagotz", "Briffaulx", "Caphars" are mentioned again, whereby the parallel is established beyond doubt. Huchon comments that "suit une liste des personnages que Rabelais excluait de Thélème", providing a cross-reference to chapter 54 of *Gargantua*; cf. Rabelais, *Quart Livre*, ed. Huchon, 324 n. 25.

464 Cf. *De scandalis*, OS 2.201 / *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 138.

465 VL [1550]: "ut atheismo orbem repleant"; *De scandalis*, OS 2.201. VG [1550]: "pour remplir tout le monde d'un contemnement de Dieu"; *Des scandales*, ed. Fatio, 141.

466 By the middle of May 1555 Calvin's supporters had gained the upper hand in Geneva's General Council (cf. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 122-123).

467 "Voici un rustre qui aura des brocards vilains contre l'Escriture sainte"; *Sermon on Deuteronomy* 13, 6-11 [Wednesday 16 October 1555]; CO 27.261; also quoted in Cottret, *Calvin*, 244.

468 Over one hundred new names were added to the *Livre des Bourgeois* in 1555 (cf. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 122 fig. 6.1). The naturalisation of French refugees in Geneva had helped Calvin's party win the elections.

469 "folles phantasies"; *Sermon on Deuteronomy* 13, 6-11; CO 27.261.

470 "tous ceux-là ne prétendent point de mettre quelque religion nouvelle"; *Sermon on Deuteronomy* 13, 6-11; CO 27.261.

471 *Sermon on Deuteronomy* 13, 6-11. "Ce sont des chiens enragés qui dégorgent leurs ordures à l'encontre de la majesté de Dieu, et ont voulu pervertir toute religion. ..... non seulement ils se moquent de toute religion, mais ..... ils la voudraient abolir du tout"; CO 27.261-262.

Conclusion

The research carried out in this thesis has confirmed the general impression emerging from the overview of literature given in chapter one, namely that Calvin's attitude towards humanism remains one of the most controversial topics in Reformation studies. Four main strands of interpretation can be distinguished, offering contrasting views of the subject. These interpretations can be described as anti-humanistic, non-humanistic, scholastic and humanistic, and they are all advocated by major specialists: Augustijn and Crouzet (anti-humanistic), Neuser and Parker (non-humanistic), McGrath and Muller (scholastic), Millet, Bouwsma and Oberman (humanistic). Contrary to what has been claimed by some authors recently, there is no fundamental agreement in sight on the question of Calvin and humanism. The principal reason for this lack of agreement lies in the absence of an adequate and universally accepted definition of humanism. This applies in particular to French humanism, the complex outline of which reflects the contrast between the different tendencies prevalent in Italian and in Northern humanism. Another important reason is the approach Calvin takes to humanistic issues: he generally adopts a rather reserved or restrained attitude which can be characterised in terms of "implicitness", marginalisation, or even tabooisation. The reformer tends to marginalise humanism in his theological discourse, and it is therefore difficult to find clear and explicit statements in his work, so that conclusions rest on a relatively small body of source material and inferences often have to be drawn on the basis of indirect evidence. It has to be noted that Calvin is markedly different in his reticent attitude towards humanism from the other major reformers, who are clearer and more straightforward (if not always more prolific) in commenting on humanistic issues. Finally, there is another basic problem which accounts for the controversy over Calvin and humanism: the movements of the Reformation and humanism are very different with regard to historical definability. This difference can be explained in terms of the contrast between the programmatic emphases on rational clarity or literary ambiguity respectively, and it tends to make the comparison of the Reformation, which has a clear outline, with humanism, which exhibits an aversion to conceptuality, a difficult task.

In defining humanism the conflict between the philosophical (Garin) and the anti-philosophical (Kristeller) interpretation has been taken into account, since conclusions about Calvin and humanism are essentially dependent on the attitude adopted towards that issue. It appears impossible to bridge the gap between the philosophical and the anti-philosophical interpretations of humanism, which are rooted in distinct intellectual traditions (Vico-Croce-Cassirer or Descartes-Hegel-Heidegger respectively), and therefore an adequate treatment can only be reached if a twin-track approach integrating both views is adopted. Thus equal attention is given to the ideal of *humanitas* (usually emphasised by the philosophical interpretation of humanism) and to the cycle of disciplines referred to as

the *studia humanitatis* or *bonae literae* (usually emphasised by the non-philosophical interpretation of humanism). The former point of view, often marginalised today, suggests that the humanists embraced a fundamentally anthropocentric outlook in which the factor of self-knowledge played a key role as human existence was understood in terms of self-realisation. *Humanitas* was associated with the idea of establishing a harmonious balance between the individual faculties of the mind, implying the promotion of the non-rational faculties (imagination, will, memory) against the dominance of reason in scholasticism. This aspect of humanist intellectual reformism has been epitomised in terms of a shift from *ratio* to *oratio*, and it has been manifest most prominently in the humanists' anti-philosophical polemic and in their defence of freedom the imagination in the framework of the disciplines of moral philosophy and poetry. If humanist reformism is considered in this way as a protest against the increasing tide of rationalism (encountered, for instance, in nominalistic Aritotelianism), *humanitas* can be interpreted as corresponding, approximately, to unconsciousness (as Fromm suggested) and the humanists can be seen as agents or advocates of the unconscious in a basic sense. Humanism, then, can be seen as making a contrast with the prevailing intellectual tendencies of the time (the Renaissance), which in turn can be understood as the rise to prominence of the conscious sphere of the human mind, thus standing for a process of promotion of consciousness.

It is difficult to make any definite assertions concerning the young Calvin and humanism. Some authors claim that Calvin was fully immersed in the world of humanism for a time in his youth, while others doubt or deny this, suggesting that he had a detached attitude towards humanism or even an inclination to scholastic thought. As it is not possible to substantiate any of these claims from the sources, it appears best to situate the young Calvin between humanism and scholasticism, assuming that he did not take sides in this intellectual battle before undergoing religious conversion. This is not so surprising, for he was only 22 years old when he wrote the *Seneca Commentary* and probably around 24 when he definitively moved away from the traditional faith. Those who hold that the young Calvin was a humanist naturally see in humanism one of the prime factors of his conversion.[1] It is possible that apart from the religious conversion an intellectual conversion took place in the young Calvin, consisting in an abandonment of nominalism in favour of the adoption of a compromise between a conservative form of humanism and a reformed form of scholastic realism. However, Calvin's supposed abandonment of nominalism is hard to demonstrate, since he (like Loyola) never participated in the clamorous humanist polemic against Montaigu but remained silent.

Calvin's writings from his youth, most notably the *Seneca Commentary*, do not

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1 Cf. e.g. O. Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole Paris* 1992), 875-876: "..... sa 'conversion' ..... est peut-être chez lui - c'est le mystère de Calvin - la conséquence singulière d'une application au texte biblique du point de vue du grammairien et du rhéteur qui avait été le sien jusqu'en 1532-1533".

warrant the conclusion that there existed a purely humanistic period in his life. Some scholars have stressed the humanistic elements in Calvin's classical commentary, while others have highlighted its anti-humanistic aspects. The reformer's autobiographical statements do not prove, either, that there was a humanistic phase in his youth, but rather suggest a direct transition from law studies to theology without a humanistic interlude. The early biographies confirm this picture: they do not support the idea of an intellectual turn from law to humanism before the conversion, although they admit the possibility of humanism playing the role of a subsidiary occupation during or after (but not before) the religious conversion. It is interesting that those contemporary or near-contemporary biographers who were professed humanists (Masson and de Ræmond) draw the fairest portrait of the young Calvin. The reformer's encounters with humanists in his youth, as far as they can be reconstructed, give an ambiguous impression, confirming the interpretation that he adopted an attitude of cautious detachment. Calvin liked Cordier, who was a Ciceronian and turned Protestant, and he also liked Wolmar, who was a Protestant, but he disliked Alciatus, who was one of the most notable humanist celebrities of his day.

The attitude of Calvin the reformer towards humanism is characterised by a contrast between his relation to the ideal of *humanitas* and his approach to the *studia humanitatis*. The concept of *humanitas* is almost completely absent from the reformer's discourse, and if it is evoked it is by way of general allusion, usually made in passing. Calvin does not condemn the idea of *humanitas* in his work but he makes no effort to employ or recommend it either, sidelining it to a degree that his attitude can be described in terms of "implicitness", marginalisation or even tabooisation (if we want to include unconscious motivation factors). Allusions to *humanitas* tend to occur primarily in the sense of contrasting human with animal behaviour, or the higher with the lower instincts respectively, constituting an appeal to moderation. Thus Calvin shows that he is aware of the basic humanistic meaning of the term, but occasionally he also refers to *humanitas* in the sense of civilisation in a social and political context. However, the distinctive feature of Calvin's relation to the ideal of *humanitas* is his persistent disassociation of it with the cycle of the *studia humanitatis*. The reformer never mentions the humanistic studies in conjunction with *humanitas* and vice versa. This is rather atypical of humanism, and even Budé, who was critical of the humanist ideal, customarily associated the two notions.

Calvin shows less reservation towards the *studia humanitatis*, but basically the same attitude prevails: he visibly marginalises the concept in his discourse, and his lack of explicitness and seeming unwillingness to address the issue in a direct way sometimes suggest tabooisation. It is true that the reformer never openly condemns the humanistic studies, but his manner of talking about and dealing with them sometimes amounts to condemnation. Calvin - like Luther - was aware that there was no point in rejecting the humanities because this could alienate the educated and undermine the useful auxiliary

potential of these disciplines in the field of Biblical studies. Thus Calvin did not condemn the humanities from the pulpit, as Savonarola had once done:

> Go thou to Rome and throughout Christendom; in the mansions of the great prelates and great lords there is no concern save for poetry and the oratorical art. Go thither and see, thou shalt find them all with books of the humanities in their hands, and telling one another that they can guide men's souls by means of Vergil, Horace, and Cicero.[2]

However, Calvin maintained a distinctly critical attitude towards the humanities. He had fundamental reservations about the discipline of rhetoric, and he detached himself almost completely from the art of poetry. If we consider that Calvin was free to do and say what he liked in Geneva, his marginalisation of some aspects of humanism almost suggests a conscious (or perhaps to some degree unconscious) attempt at suppression. Using Orwell's language one could characterise such an attitude in terms of "voluntary censorship":[3] Calvin is not categorically and completely against humanism but he prefers to keep it on a low level because he is apprehensive about the possible philosophical liberating effects which the outlook associated with it might have.

If Calvin does not link the concepts of *humanitas* and *studia humanitatis* very closely, he also sets apart the notions of *humanus* and *Christianus* in his theology. Thus, on the whole the *studia humanitatis* are useful instruments for theology but they must be "helpers" performing an auxiliary function and never become "masters". The renaissance of letters is interpreted by Calvin according to Luther's theological framework: the humanistic studies were revived by God in order to further the cause of the Gospel and restitute the Bible in its original form. With his rational focus on theology and in particular the Bible Calvin can be characterised as a "pre-Cartesian philosopher" who is a typical representative of the Renaissance insofar as he advocates what we have called promotion of consciousness, that is, he defends the emphasis on the conscious side of the human mind (as found in most forms of Aristotelian philosophy). His preoccupation with imposing limits to human understanding and, in a wider sense, to the human urge for knowledge, reveals him as someone who resists what we have called expansion of consciousness, for which the humanists called. Thus Calvin is at odds with the impulses arising from the realm of *humanitas* or the human unconscious and does not encourage, as has been claimed, a quest for wholeness.

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2 G. Savonarola, "Advent Sermon" (1493); quoted in J. B. Ross / M. M. McLaughlin (eds.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader* (New York 1953), 645.

3 G. Orwell, "The Freedom of the Press" [=Introduction to *Animal Farm*] in Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Harmondsworth 1989), 98.

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1 The *Supplementa Calviniana* are intended to provide critically edited texts of those sermons which were not included in the *Corpus Reformatorum* series. It remains incomplete but is continued.

2 This edition offers a selection of Calvin's works only, but the standards of textual criticism are superior to those of the *Corpus Reformatorum*. Volumes 3-5 give what has to be considered the best Latin text of the *Institutes*.

3 This is a new complete edition of Calvin's works intended to replace the *Calvini Opera* of the *Corpus Reformatorum* and the *Supplementa Calviniana*. It is divided into seven sections: 1. *Institutes*, 2. *Commentaries*, 3. church, 4. didactic and polemical works, 5. sermons, 6. correspondence, 7. miscellaneous.

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4 This translation is used for those Old Testament Commentaries which have not yet appeared in the Rutherford Translation series (cf. below).

5 The editorial material is superseded by Herminjard and the *Corpus Reformatorum*, and the translation is not reliable (cf. T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin* (London 1975), 204).

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7 This edition offers a selection from the English 4-volume version of the Bonnet letters published by the Calvin Translation Society (cf. above). There are no new notes added.

8 The *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is always quoted as *Inst.*

9 Attributed to Calvin.

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10 This is a translation of and commentary on Calvin's unpublished essay *Consilium de Luxu*, dating approximately of 1546.

11 For research reviews cf. chapter 1 and bibliography, section 5 below.

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12 This Latin text is part of an article printed twice and listed below in section 5 under "Rott".

13 The only surviving old copy of this biography is an edition of 1686 preserved in the British Library. The beginning of the book was perhaps lost, and the extant material was reprinted in L. Cimber / F. Danjou (eds.), *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France*, vol. 5 (Paris 1835), 387-398, from which edition the work is usually quoted. Cimber and Danjou date the original edition as from 1621. They say that they omitted the first thirty pages "parce qu'elles ne donnent que des renseignements peu importants sur les parents de Calvin" (cf. Cimber / Danjou (eds.), *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France*, vol. 5, 387, n. 1). This cannot be confirmed from the copy in the British Library, the beginning of which consists of an essay on the Anglican liturgy (cf. Parker, *John Calvin*, 205).

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15 For a survey of the most important literature concerning Calvin the reformer and humanism cf. chapter 1. The literature on the young Calvin and humanism is treated separately in chapter 5, 245-263. All items mentioned in these two literature reviews are fully listed here, except book reviews.

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