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Erasmianism, Mediterranean Humanism, and Reception History.
The Case of Jerzy Liban of Legnica at the University of Cracow
(1518-1539)

The essay, divided into two parts – analytical and descriptive, offers a reconsideration of the notion of *Erasmianism*¹, and draws attention to the meanings of *Erasmianus* developed when German intellectuals set about interpreting Erasmus' ideas in the second and third decade of the 16th century. The author then attempts to systematize the cultural and doxographical ramifications of the myth of Erasmus, including its temporal, and spatial limitations. By revealing the predominant tendencies in Erasmus readership at the University of Cracow (based on correspondence, speeches, textbooks and lists of lectures), this essay will also attempt to reconstruct the image of Erasmus promoted by the most distinguished and influential Cracow lecturers in the 1520s and 1530s and to shed a different light on their intellectual agenda, concerned merely with the philological contents of Erasmus' works and devoid of features essential for Erasmianism. Hence, the article proposes a fresh, critical interpretation of phenomena identified so far as Erasmianism at the University of Cracow.

Erasmianism: the notion and its proper designatum

Although M. Bataillon warned against the reckless usage of the notion of *Erasmianism*² more than forty years ago, contemporary scholars constantly tend to use it in just such a way. This key notion still lacks its *Begriffsgeschichte* explanation, submitting a painless and functional answer for the questions covered by that term. Hence, *Erasmianism*, as a part of the vocabulary of modern humanities, seems to be nothing but a ghosting around wraithlike hypostasis, which can be understood only within the narrow limits of today's conventionally established usage. Everything that is above these limits and that basically defines the substantive, rather than the common meaning, however, is beyond scholarly comprehension. Therefore, unless the notion of *Erasmianism* is carefully examined in relation to its different sources and distinctive modes of usage, it will remain a disembodied ghost, devoid of substance, outline and, eventually, cognitive significance.

¹ I write the word "Erasmianism" in two ways: *Erasmianism* (in italics) as a notion taken from the vocabulary of modern humanities, and without italics as a highly specific early modern phenomenon. Written in italics *Erasmianism* is functionally similar to what Max Weber used to call *Idealtypus*.

² Bataillon 1991a.

The functionality of the notion of *Erasmianism* was seriously and reasonably questioned by the aforementioned Bataillon³, and also by other distinguished scholars, namely C. Thompson, C. Augustijn, S. Seidel Menchi, and E. Rummel⁴. Considerable incoherencies in comprehending Erasmus' contribution to early modern Europe turn out to be a conclusive reason for removing this notion from the dictionary of the humanities. Instead of the actually disembodied substance of *Erasmianism*, Augustijn proposed the impartial, and, as such, factual term of the "influence of Erasmus" (*Einfluß des Erasmus*)⁵. Nevertheless, the plurality of readings of Erasmus' works, occurring frequently on the principles of mutually exclusive confrontation (e.g. Erasmus as a Catholic or as a heretic), needs further, hermeneutical insight.

First of all, the universal fore-structure (*Vorstruktur*) of the act of understanding needs to be taken into account⁶. This fundamental problem explains that even the opposite contents provided by the different fore-structures of understanding of Erasmus' ideas are only the beginning of interpretation (*Auslegung*), and are subsequently replaced by more suitable readings⁷. Consequently the opposite readings of Erasmus' works are irreducible, and above all cognitively positive elements of the act of understanding, where judgments about one and the same object (e.g. the meaning of *bonae litterae*) are constantly and naturally modified. Even the most radical dismantling of Erasmus' concepts on the part of his enthusiasts should not mean a negation of a commonly pursued movement. Quite the reverse – it indicated precisely a positive appropriation, that is a versatile efficiency of Erasmus' thought⁸. This constant process of freshly projecting Erasmus' arbitrarily selected ideas constitutes the movement of understanding, and purposeful interpretation, that is Erasmianism.

The difficulty in pinpointing the problematic essence of *Erasmianism* was furthermore reinforced by Erasmus himself. By deliberately resorting to rhetorical dissimulation, in crucial places Erasmus' writings became inconsistent, ambiguous, and widely open even to opposite interpretations⁹. As a result, the meaning of Erasmus' word, and its rhetorical shape could have been completely altered by his readers. Seidel Menchi was right in indicating substantial diversity in mutually exclusive opinions attributed to Erasmus' work. On the other hand, she incorrectly estimated the cognitive value of these contradictory interpretations¹⁰. Although Erasmianism was essentially far removed from its patron, it was not an act of betrayal, but rather an attempt to apply his ideas to the developmental tendencies of early modern Europe. If we wish to reconsider the proper designatum of

³ Bataillon 1991b.

⁴ Thompson 1971; Augustijn 1997; Seidel Menchi 1997; Rummel 2001.

⁵ Augustijn 1997: 13.

⁶ See Heidegger 1977: 197-204; Bultmann 1960: 142-150; Gadamer 1990: 270-276.

⁷ Cf. Heidegger 1977: 203-204.

⁸ Cf. Heidegger 1989: 31.

⁹ On Erasmus' *dissimulatio* see Bietenholz 1990; Tracy 1995: 2-19; Trapman 2002.

¹⁰ Seidel Menchi 1997: 57.

Erasmianism, attention must be paid not only to the relation between Erasmus and Erasmianism, as Seidel Menchi suggested¹¹, but also to the modes of thinking that determine particular motivations and purposes in choosing Erasmus as a central figure for a specific group of his readers. Hence, Erasmianism should be understood as a conversation between Erasmus' self-fashioning, suppositious statements, and his particular readers-interpreters, who try to apply e.g. *bonae litterae* or *philosophia Christi* to their own specific capabilities of understanding, and for their own purposes¹².

The hermeneutical perspective, inaccurately evaluated by Seidel Menchi as "inflexible"¹³, matches the critique of the functionality of *Erasmianism*, and does not entirely disavow the reasons for its negative diagnosis. For in its colloquial form this notion obscures our understanding rather than clarifying it. The critical but constructive approach to the substance of *Erasmianism* eventually enables us to systematize the proper meaning of this term, rejecting everything that was added to it without appropriate reflection. In its credulous usage this notion stands, in fact, as an instrument of modern ideology that conveniently allows scholars to appreciate certain facts from their own history. *Erasmianism* in Poland was just such an ideological distortion, as C. Backvis observed¹⁴. His excellent paper *La Fortune d'Erasmus en Pologne* remains the most valuable contribution available on Erasmus' reception in Poland.

Erasmianism as a phenomenon of understanding and purposeful interpretation becomes an object of intellectual history. Thereafter it is concerned only with what Heidegger called *die Sache des Denkens*, although *die Sache* expressed in different forms (literature, painting, sculpture etc.), in different times and places, and founded upon different experiences and expectations, most often far from those which were typical of Erasmus himself. Heidegger's "matter of thinking" (*die Sache des Denkens*) has at least two crucial benefits for the study of Erasmianism: one descriptive, dealing with the early modern sources, and the other systematic, which helps us to understand historical data¹⁵. The matter of thinking consists of a tangle of relevant issues that match the expectations and purposes of Erasmus' readers. It also reveals the strategic contrivances which lay behind the purposeful application of Erasmus' ideas to early modern European intellectual, religious and political tendencies. Such specificity of the "matter of thinking" leads us to conclude that *Erasmianism* cannot be reduced to a historical record of names or titles, but must be complemented by our reconsideration of early modern modes of thinking, namely experiences, and most of all the strategic purposes that lay behind the various motivations of Erasmianism. The

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Cf. Gadamer 1990: 312-313.

¹³ Seidel Menchi 1997: 57.

¹⁴ Backvis 1968. It is significant that Backvis did not use the notion *Erasmianism*.

¹⁵ "Das Gespräch mit einem Denker kann nur von der Sache des Denkens handeln. [...] Die Sache des Denkens ist das in sich Strittige eines Streitens. [...] Die Sache des Denkens bedrängt das Denken in der Weise, daß sie das Denken erst zu seiner Sache und von dieser her zu ihm selbst bringt" (Heidegger 2006: 53).

study devoted to this kind of purposefully mediated reception of Erasmus' ideas should concern itself with the wealth of facts supplemented by the wealth of thoughts. Consequently, and after Thompson's remark¹⁶, the future study of Erasmianism ought to use all available bibliographical (as well as biographical) information, but obviously cannot be merely, or mainly, a publishing record. In other words, *Erasmianism* ought to lead us to historical data, and from there to modes of thinking itself (*Denken zu ihm selbst bringt*).

Diversified thinking as a matter of Erasmianism cannot be described by an hypostasis or notion created *a priori* and raised to the level of substance. Such a hypostasis nullifies the inner differences in the history of thought and reduces the dynamics of intellectual processes to clichés. But if we carefully examine the empirical basis of Erasmianism, that is thought exemplified in literature, painting or sculpture devoted to Erasmus, we are eventually able to coin a model category to understand the historical data. That model category will not cover all signs of reception (such as correspondence, book collections, academic lectures, or simply readership), but will be limited to precisely defined phenomena influenced by Erasmus. Quantitatively narrowed with respect to the empirical basis, *Erasmianism* will be focused not only on Erasmus himself, but first of all on the particular users of his work.

According to the empirical basis (written texts, paintings, sculptures), by about 1514 *Erasmianism* had become the first fully expressed form of the spatial and intellectual identity of the German humanists. *Erasmianism* exemplified itself in the polemical or apologetic writings that targeted the scholastic theologians who were challenging the methodological restitution of biblical studies proposed by Erasmus. As such, Erasmianism was also a major factor in the intellectual and cultural consolidation of the German humanists who, mainly in Basle, were forming the *Sodalitium Erasmianum*, a key phrase coined in 1516 by J. Sapidus, one of its leading spokesmen¹⁷. These two complementary meanings of *Erasmianism*, regarding the expression of identity, and the distinctive set of beliefs, ought to be classified as the cultural and the doxographical facets of *Erasmianism*¹⁸.

From a cultural point of view, Erasmianism propagated the particular reservoir of aesthetic and moral values embodied by the German Erasmians on the basis of Erasmus' works and his reputation. *Erasmiani*, as German followers of Erasmus used to call themselves, unanimously acknowledged his decisive role in the renaissance of the North European cultural space (*Germania*). Erasmus' image, however, was created through a purposeful interpretation of his *δόξα*, and was thus significantly removed from its actual figure. Being an image of Erasmus, *Erasmianism* stands as nothing but a myth, namely a verbalized set of beliefs common for a certain community. As composed of values typical of Erasmians rather than of Erasmus himself, Erasmianism consequently provided the basis on which the iden-

¹⁶ Thompson 1971: 68.

¹⁷ Sapidus 1518.

¹⁸ I owe that crucial division for pinpointing the essence of *Erasmianism* into its cultural and doxographical facets to Juliusz Domański, the outstanding scholar and my master in Erasmus studies. See Domański 2002: 208.

tity of his German followers was defined. The verbalization of the myth of *Erasmianism* was accompanied by the Latin neologisms (e.g. *Erasmianus*¹⁹), and by certain *topoi*, multiplied in texts collectively labeled by C. Reedijk as *literatura encomiastica Erasmiana*²⁰.

Taken together, these pieces *in laudem Erasmi*, perhaps forgotten today, reveal all the cultural and doxographical modifications in the roles attributed to Erasmus by his contemporaries. *Literatura encomiastica Erasmiana* also reveals the substantive content of Erasmianism, which was an artificial construct indeed, as Augustijn noted, but was not devoid of any basis in reality²¹. Different kinds of verbalization of Erasmian mythology actually justified grounding Erasmianism in reality. Nevertheless, if we consider the cognitive status of this myth, we should pay attention to the fact that, as a standpoint, *Erasmianism* lay not within the rules of logic, that is truth or falsehood, but within the rules of the pragmatic category of efficiency. Thus specified by pragmatic efficiency instead of the logical opposition of truth and falsehood, the epistemic recognition of *Erasmianism* eventually devalues the distance, problematic for Seidel Menchi, between Erasmus' thought and its different, even self-contradictory interpretations. Above all, the category of myth explains why Erasmus judged such readings to be incompatible with his own beliefs. So *Erasmianism* ought to be examined not only in a cognitive perspective, but most of all as a persuasive phenomenon, namely designed for promoting certain values and beliefs.

From the doxographical point of view, Erasmianism means a set of beliefs that were aimed at reforming those aspects of early modern intellectual and religious life that failed to match the normative values of Northern humanism selectively taken from the works of Erasmus. Doxographically comprehended Erasmianism was a distinctive, recognized, and widely discussed model of Christianity, critically contrasted with the other models, in particular with the scholastic heritage. Having both intellectual and religious ambitions, Erasmianism played a decisive role in changing the principles of education. While Mediterranean theorists of *studia humanitatis* placed before them only literary and moral goals²², Northern humanists, since Agricola's letter *De formando studio*, took one, distinctive step further. By turning their attention to reading the Bible and relegating classical erudition

¹⁹ In collections of correspondence written by Erasmus, the Amerbach brothers, Reuchlin, Rhenanus, Pirckheimer, Wimpfeling, von Hutten and Luther we also find analogical terms such as *Erasmicus*, *Erasmeus*, *Erasmista* and *Erasmiacus*. We also have the agonistic term *Erasmomastix* (mostly in the plural form *Erasmomastiga* or *Erasmomastiges*) meaning not a follower of Erasmus, but an enemy who scourges (μαστιξ) him.

²⁰ Reedijk 1956: 85. The label proposed by Reedijk, as "suitable subject for a separate study", covers merely the poems published in the preliminary part of the first volume of Erasmus' *Opera omnia* by Jean Leclerc in 1703. However *literatura encomiastica Erasmiana* included in the Leyden edition can be quantitatively tripled, hereby significantly expanding its subject matter and the variety of species.

²¹ Augustijn 1997: 5.

²² See Kallendorf 2002: 6, 28, 92, 128, 260.

to mere propaedeutics, German Erasmians found the benchmark which, doxographically speaking, distinguished their movement from the literary rather than the religious aspirations of Mediterranean humanism²³. Consequently, the notion of *bonae litterae*, common for all early modern intellectuals, covering mainly classical, Greek and Latin literature and being an object of *studia humanitatis*, altered its meaning to *litterae non alienae a Christo*, as noted by Erasmus already in 1515²⁴. Moreover, precisely specified educational aims, depicted in the hierarchy of piety, liberal arts, sense of duty and decency²⁵, have become a constitutive paradigm that described the distinctiveness of German Erasmianism compared to the other intellectual currents of early modern intellectual history.

It was no coincidence that most of the German Erasmians, namely the Amerbach brothers, G. Lyster, B. Rhenanus, W. Nesen, H. Glareanus, J. Oecolampadius, N. Gerbel, J. Froben, H. Artolf, and K. Brunner, as listed by Sapidus, followed by W. Capito, K. Pellikan, N. Basell, J. Wimpfeling, W. Pirckheimer, P. Mosellanus, U. Zasius, or M. van Dorp, were either fellow-workers of Erasmus working alongside him in the Basle printing house on the edition of *Novum instrumentum*, or polemicists who were defending his biblical enterprise against the accusations of *theologastri*, and *mateologi*, as both Erasmus and his German followers used to call their common scholastic adversaries. Parallel to this kind of positive labor or apologetic arguments, most of the above listed authors and several others acknowledged Erasmus as e.g. *Germaniae Phoenix*, or *laus*. The purposefully verbalized and maintained myth of Erasmus served men of letters to epitomize the intellectual ambitions of *Germania*, and revalue the cultural backwardness of Northern *barbaricum* against the Mediterranean model of culture.

In the 1520s and 1530s Erasmianism finally became a common, pan-European element of the political and religious agenda pursued by Catholics and Protestants. The new public image, or rather the renewed content of Erasmus' myth, was modified under the influence of political motivations as well as of social and religious beliefs. The politically motivated question of whether Erasmus' vision of Christianity was Catholic or Lutheran has become a new challenge.

As a result, two opposite confessional images of Erasmus were created – the first as a truly orthodox Catholic, and the second as favoring German and Swiss reformers. The former was maintained by the officials at the imperial court of Charles V, together with his political and religious allies in Poland and Hungary, while the latter was promoted mostly by Basle theologians. Whether presented as the guarantor of religious harmony, favouring the imperial idea of *monarchia universalis*, or the legislator of religious reform,

²³ The exceptions are two laconic remarks that can be found in treatises by Bruni and Piccolomini about *religio* and *sacri sermones* as the most important goals of education. See Kallendorf 2002: 106, 164.

²⁴ *Enarratio allegorica in primum Psalmum Beatus vir*, édité par A. Godin, in: ASD, V, 2, p. 48, l. 453-454.

²⁵ *De civilitate morum puerilium*, in: LB, I, 1033B-C.

who favoured the Protestant striving for *vera religio*, both images of Erasmus were driving factors created in order to achieve certain political goals. Primarily, if not exclusively, different parties shared the desire that Erasmus would take up his pen as an intellectual weapon against the enemies of Catholicism, or against the enemies of different denominations of Protestantism. Both parties were using their images of Erasmus as a sounding board for their own beliefs²⁶.

It is hard to give the precise date when German Erasmianism was replaced by its pan-European form. If the edition of *Novum instrumentum*, its preparations, and first discussions undertaken just after the publication were the crucial circumstances that consolidated a group of German humanists against the scholastic theologians, it will be enough to say that in its primal shape Erasmianism was rather a short-lived, but important phenomenon. I agree with J. Trapman that “perhaps not an age, but the years around 1516 might in a way be characterized as Erasmian”²⁷. Nevertheless Erasmianism did not come to an end but took on a new form, since the impact of Erasmus’ biblical studies and the confessional transformations inspired by Luther and the Swiss theologians required fresh forms of discourse, suitable for the contemporary religious and political conditions.

This religious shift was determined by changes described today in terms of confessionalization. But as a phenomenon that was originally a component of Northern humanism, and as such devoid of political or even social significance, Erasmianism had substantially nothing to do with the signs of confessionalization discussed by H. Schilling or W. Reinhard, namely social and political changes that did not develop until the second half of the 16th century²⁸. Although these processes began and progressed long after Erasmus’ death, the transformation of his myth started much earlier. Hence, the onset of the religious reconditioning of Erasmianism into its confessionalized form should be postponed to the beginning of the 1520s, when the confessionally impartial character of humanism came to a close²⁹. The renewed myth of Erasmus around the 1520s lost its cultural and spatial mediation, while its doxographical contents were altered into the doctrinal reform of Christianity together with the new strategies aimed for political domination.

Erasmianism, like many polemically mediated intellectual beliefs and political interests, was a contingent phenomenon. After Erasmus’ death, it had already lost its *raison d’être* by about 1536. Although his writings were read throughout the 16th century and later, such a reception was completely devoid of the previous cultural or doxographical significance. Having turned into a common element of intellectual legacy, the reception of Erasmus’ works became faintly recognizable as a separate phenomenon, and was frequently blended with the analogous efforts in using an intellectual heritage. After Erasmus’ death, his influence tended to be increasingly blurred and heterogeneous at a confessional level,

²⁶ See Koryl 2012; Schilling 2006.

²⁷ Trapman 1997: 169.

²⁸ See Schilling 1995b: 31-35; Schilling 1995a: 641.

²⁹ Cf. Rummel 2000: 4.

and became difficult to identify. Some aspects of his thought became anachronistic while others remained valid and operative, but this does not mean that they were always identified directly with Erasmus³⁰.

At an analytical level, the neutral notion of the *influence of Erasmus*, unlike *Erasmianism*, “keeps an open space for other influences, and steers clear of any claim to monocausality”, as Augustijn noticed³¹. The further development of an ecclesiastical and political reality made the already functionally restricted category of *Erasmianism* obsolete and eventually unsuitable for the comprehensive understanding of confessional Europe. Thereby, these divisions of Christianity also made any scholarly quest which, in terms of *Erasmianism*, aimed to assess Erasmus’ influence in a long-term perspective³², cognitively unproductive. Unlike the *influence of Erasmus* stressed by Augustijn, *Erasmianism* indicates an exceptional set of values that validated the current state of affairs. It does not mean that the *reception of Erasmus* should be regarded as something different from *Erasmianism*. As a matter of fact, Erasmianism was a highly specific, above-average form of reception, namely a genuine contribution to intellectual, ecclesiastical and political history. The *reception of Erasmus*, however, was devoid of specific cultural and religio-political significance, and as a consequence was nothing but a culturally, politically and religiously impartial mode of usage. Obviously every intellectual legacy is used for a certain purpose, but the purposefulness of Erasmianism had its own distinctive features and recognizable symptoms.

Except for isolated cases, Erasmus’ *Nachwelt* does not allow us to claim that after 1536 his authority, previously verbalized in spatial or political myths, was still identified as a distinct and decisive force, as it was during Erasmus’ lifetime. Only this period of intellectual history, that is between the years 1514 and 1536, may be considered in terms of Erasmianism.

Erasmus at the University of Cracow: the paradigm of understanding

Compared to the arrangement of operative notions discussed above, the traditionally and exclusively used criteria of direct or epistolary contacts and the readership of Erasmus’ works turn out to be a highly inefficient guide³³. As a result, a number of phenomena identified with Erasmian myths, and therefore with Erasmianism itself, should be discussed in terms of *reception of Erasmus*. Long-established and constantly repeated clichés include the statement about the University of Cracow as a center for the promotion of Polish Erasmianism.

³⁰ Cf. Rummel 2001: 64.

³¹ Augustijn 1997: 13.

³² See Seidel Menchi 1993: 8.

³³ “Erasmianism in Poland can, in part, be assessed in terms of the visits made to him by Poles, of the number of letters exchanged between him and Poles – ninety-five of the collected 3141 epistles – and in the end the number of works of Erasmus dedicated to Poles, sent to Poles, bought by Poles, or printed or reprinted in Poland, of pictures of Erasmus reported hanging in the homes of Poles, and especially of the traces of the distinctive Erasmian views in Polish thought and behavior”, Williams 1977: 8. Similar proposals were introduced by M. Cytowska. See Cytowska 1962.

anism³⁴, and in general – the one regarding Poland as “a kingdom of Erasmus”³⁵. This term coined by A. Jobert (*un royaume Érasmien*) nearly forty years ago, still specifies the tendency of historiography devoted to Erasmus’ influence upon Polish intellectuals. As things stand, we have no strong evidence to support the above-mentioned statements. Except for a few cross-sectional articles, neither do we have any modern monograph on the Polish reception of Erasmus that could reassess these well-established clichés³⁶.

This is not the place for a detailed examination of all the traces indicating Erasmus’ reception at Cracow University. Although numerous German intellectuals, mostly from Silesia, studied or lived in Cracow around the second decade of the 16th century³⁷, we have almost no signs of the diffusion or favoring of culturally understood Erasmianism in Poland³⁸. For obvious reasons, Poles were not interested in the spatial facet of Erasmianism, since the pivotal conviction that Erasmus had embodied the intellectual aspirations of *Germania* sounded simply strange to non-Germans. Some of these Silesians, such as K. U. Velius, the future author of several poems devoted to Erasmus, did not join the Erasmian camp until after they left Cracow. F. Faber and A. Niger who studied in Cracow as well, took part in the encounter with scholastic opponents of Erasmus. But the controversy against E. Lee arose in Leipzig and Erfurt respectively, and had nothing to do with their rather trivial Polish connections.

The polemical facet of German Erasmianism that consisted mainly in defending the biblical scholarship developed by Erasmus, did not meet with any response at the University of Cracow. It is even reasonable to claim that the University harboured none of the so-called *obtrectatores Erasmi*, since the only available records about them are ambiguous and as such hardly justifiable. In its entirety these rare mentions scattered in *Acta Tomiciana* concern just a few persons of secondary importance at the royal court, where after all more than the positive image of Erasmus, albeit a confessional one, was used as part of a political agenda.

The doxography essential for Erasmianism was basically alien to the scholars who lectured on Erasmus’ textbooks at the University of Cracow or in any other way promoted his educational ideas there. If we were to examine the example of Leonard Cox, the peregrine scholar regarded as a major spokesman of Erasmianism at the University, we would eventually see that such a label is a misleading cliché. According to the conclusion introduced almost eighty years ago by H. Barycz³⁹, and shared by historians to this day, Cox was believed

³⁴ See Williams 1977: 10-26; Zins 1973; Glomski 1997.

³⁵ Jobert 1974: 43.

³⁶ Backvis 1968; Domański 1987; Bietenholz 2001; Koryl 2012, and works quoted in the two preceding footnotes. The list is longer, but I only quote those written in congressional languages.

³⁷ On biographical data see Bauch 1901. Cf. also bibliographical record in Glombiowski 1960.

³⁸ The only extant example are prefatory verses for the Cracow edition of *Querela pacis* (1518) written by Rudolf Agricola junior. This Silesian humanist praised Erasmus in a way typical of the other Germans, namely as “decus Germaniae”.

³⁹ Barycz 1935: 47-48.

to be the founder of an informal circle in Cracow, where Erasmus' *Copia* was supposedly enthusiastically read and discussed⁴⁰. As a matter of fact, this commonly accepted belief is presumably nothing but a giant with feet of clay, since, except for the letter written by Cox himself to Erasmus, there is no other proof that could confirm Cox's words⁴¹, while their evidential value ought to be questioned by the rhetorical phraseology based on the practice of *imitatio*. For having almost identical precedents in Erasmus' correspondence⁴², and being more garrulous than meticulous, Cox's report was filled only with the conventional commonplace *libri nobiscum colloquuntur*. All these doubts were hitherto completely neutralized by a superficial reading as well as by the underestimation of the other, actually decisive tendencies in Erasmus' reception in Poland.

Statements pertaining to Erasmus' intellectual profile, that can be found in Cox's *De laudibus Celeberrimae Academiae Cracoviensis* (1518), and *De erudienda iuventute* (1526), will turn out to be equally unobvious if only compared with the other textbooks available at that time. Any detailed analysis that might compare Cox's educational treatise with the authors he mentioned, would demonstrate that highly distinctive aspects of Erasmus' theory and aims of education were either trivialized or simply passed over. It is significant that although Cox frequently appealed to Erasmus' works on education, he basically relied on Italian theorists⁴³. Their program filled up the content of the studies promoted by the English humanist, since he was interested only in "litterae humaniores cum moribus humanioribus"⁴⁴, reflecting thereby the Ciceronian, and Mediterranean idea of *studia humanitatis*⁴⁵. Except for Bruni's *De studiis et litteris*, little known to Cox, other Italian theorists that he mentioned excluded Scripture from the reading list of *studia humanitatis*, and thus failed to indicate the benefits of literary studies for the intellectual or moral purposes of a Christian.

Certainly Cox failed to grasp the conclusive hierarchy of Christian piety and liberal arts that distinguished Mediterranean theories from their Northern modification, and defined the doxographical aspect of Erasmianism. It is true that he used the concept *bonae litterae* to describe his own work in Cracow ("bonarum litterarum professor"⁴⁶), but he took it in a traditional sense, which did not match its Northern reevaluation. In his usage of Erasmus' works, devoid of the distinctive features of Erasmianism, it is hard to find anything that could place Cox above the ordinary readings of Erasmus. Cox's frequent and flattering

⁴⁰ See Żantuan 1977: 14; Zins 1973: 176; Williams 1977: 11; Breeze, Glomski 1991: 115; Dickens, Jones 1994: 259; Glomski 1997: 7. Nevertheless Glomski slightly distanced herself from such a firm conviction in saying only "it seems that Cox served as a catalyst for this group of Erasmusians".

⁴¹ A 1803, l. 61-71, l. 83-86.

⁴² Cf. A 61, l. 1-12; A 125, l. 11-12, l. 16-19, l. 28-35; A 396, l. 33-43; A 757, l. 15-17; A 1297, l. 55-63; A 1662, l. 4-7.

⁴³ See Glomski 1998: 290-291.

⁴⁴ Breeze, Glomski 1991: 132.

⁴⁵ See footnotes 22, and 23.

⁴⁶ A 1803, l. 12-13.

references to Erasmus should not obscure the fact that he had actually more in common with the Mediterranean rather than the Erasmian model of culture. His contribution in *De erudienda iuventute*, as J. Glomski observed, “was a continuation of the traditions established in fifteenth-century Italy by Vergerio, Battista Guarini, Aeneas Silvius, and Maffeo Vegio”⁴⁷. Therefore it is no coincidence that Cox praised Erasmus merely as a man of letters for whom literary proficiency was a chief quality, namely “politiorum litterarum decus”⁴⁸.

Erasmus at the University of Cracow: the case of Jerzy Liban of Legnica

Cox’s work was actually paradigmatic for Erasmus’ reception at the University of Cracow. The decisive differences between Erasmian and Mediterranean models were not acknowledged at all. *Erasmiana* were blended therefore with the ideas introduced in Italy, and as such were not perceived as a separate phenomenon. Another prominent figure, namely Jerzy Liban of Legnica (Georgius Libanus Legnicensis, or Georg Weihr-auch, born 1464, died after 1546) can prove this hypothesis correct. To this day, this famous musician and Greek philologist remains a completely unknown figure in Erasmus’ *Wirkungsgeschichte*⁴⁹.

One of his most acclaimed works is *De laudibus philosophiae*, the keynote address Libanus delivered before his lecture on Pseudo-Aristotle’s *Economics* at the University of Cracow in 1537. That short piece, resembling an Italian *disputa delle arti* of the previous century, was nothing more than a catalogue of *artes liberales* supplemented with a concise description of philosophy and theology. Libanus mentioned numerous ancient, early Christian authors, as well as several modern ones, namely M. Ficino, A. Poliziano and Erasmus. The epithets assigned to Erasmus were either taken from the common Erasmian vocabulary or unusual ones, hardly ever found in it. Let us examine them.

As “the leader of all good literature” (*omnis bonae litteraturae Antistes*) Erasmus was placed among the grammarians, that is the editors of Christian literature⁵⁰. Taken as a whole, the designation and qualification given by Libanus are mosaic as well as conventional. Already in the year 1523, Erasmus himself had observed that the label *antistes*, together with several analogous flatteries assigned to him by his correspondents, had become a nagging standard⁵¹, most commonly practiced by German enthusiasts, as he added two years later⁵². Erasmus was right indeed. In his correspondence alone, covering the years 1515-1535,

⁴⁷ Glomski 1998: 287.

⁴⁸ Cox 1518: b 2.

⁴⁹ Bio- and bibliographical data concerning Libanus can be found in Witkowska-Zaremba 1984; Voisé 1966. His contribution to Greek philology in Poland was generally discussed in Czer-niatowicz 1959: 34-40.

⁵⁰ Liban 1537: A, IV verso.

⁵¹ A 1352, l. 30-37.

⁵² A 1581, l. 60-63.

we find more than twenty letters where he was acclaimed as *antistites*⁵³. This term, however, was not only used by Erasmus' followers. He himself was keen to use it in the letters sent to his distinguished friends, especially to G. Budé⁵⁴.

The term had at least two slightly different meanings: for Erasmus *antistites* meant a common appreciation, even though reserved for the most remarkable intellectuals, with no far-reaching implications, at least none of those which were essential for his German correspondents; for the latter, however, it became one of the *loci communes de Erasmo*, indicating his decisive role in revaluing the cultural backwardness of the Northern *barbaricum*. For the Germans, therefore, Erasmus as *antistites* referred to his literary studies, and most of all to his great contribution to biblical scholarship and theology. Although the phrase "the leader of *bonae litterae*" could already signify a wide range and hierarchy of disciplines, Erasmus' image was sometimes further clarified: as *antistes of theologiae maxime* and *verae theologiae*, or by the figure of hendiadys – *theologie et omnium bonarum literarum*.

All these precedents do not allow us to regard Libanus' phrase "omnis bonae litteraturae Antistes: D[ominus] Eras[mus] Ro[terodamus]" as their close resumption. In this case the paradigm of Mediterranean *studia humanitatis* was still in force at Cracow University, and was casting a shadow over Erasmus' *bonae litterae*. The distinguishing feature of Erasmus' authority as a grammarian applied only to his editorial work on the Church Fathers, and in no way did it go beyond the Italian understanding of humanities, and the study of grammar in particular. It should be emphasized that the Mediterranean humanists were those who provided their fellow-workers in Cracow with the topics for discussion with their scholastic competitors. Even in the 1530s, grammar lectures were delivered altogether differently, but in parallel, by humanists and scholastics. A year after the publication of Libanus' *De laudibus philosophiae* in 1538, lectures on *modi significandi* were officially banned in Cracow, and replaced by N. Perotti's textbook *Rudimenta grammatices*⁵⁵.

A chapter from Libanus' keynote speech devoted to grammar clearly reflects this academic competition and its remote, but real protagonists. Although Erasmus was chosen as an authority, it was actually not his own works on *bonae litterae* that defined the line of reasoning or an overview of the subject of grammar. Except for the paraphrases excerpted from Cicero and Quintilian, more than half of this section is nothing but a comprehensive quotation taken from Poliziano's *Lamia*⁵⁶. As a result, Libanus understood grammar as an examination and detailed explanation of every category of writers. He also required grammarians to remove any book that appeared to be a forgery as non-canonical. Textual criti-

⁵³ A 355, l. 47; A 386, l. 27-28; A 464, l. 22; A 569, l. 127-130; A 674, l. 3; A 852, l. 2; A 1105, l. 56; A 1551, l. 22; A 1766, l. 122; A 1787, l. 52-53; A 1851, l. 43-44; A 1947, l. 13; A 1951, l. 36; A 2012, l. 35; A 2120, l. 123; A 2135, l. 3; A 2333, l. 51; A 2408, l. 33; A 2714, l. 25; A 2893, l. 33; A 2894, l. 43-44, 70; A 2990, l. 31; A 3037, l. 121.

⁵⁴ A 441, l. 27; A 531, l. 161; A 1619, l. 13; A 305, l. 8; A 384, l. 79; A 396, l. 2; A 457, l. 2.

⁵⁵ Muczowski 1849: LVII-LVIII. See also Barycz 1935: 17-19, 283.

⁵⁶ Celenza 2010: 244-245; Liban 1537: A, IV *verso*.

cism, in its entirety built upon Poliziano's reconsideration as the most challenging aspect of grammar, was attributed to Erasmus as a branch of knowledge suitable for him.

This image, however, can be even more surprising. Erasmus was not regarded as the editor of the New Testament as we might expect, but merely of the Church Fathers. The preeminence of the Italian paradigm of humanities went further. Libanus' praise of Erasmus was based on a common phrase, but the meaning of *bonae litterae* was defined within the interest of *grammaticus*, a notion reintroduced by Poliziano⁵⁷. According to Italian humanists, a grammarian worked on *bonae litterae* and was contrasted with unproductive methods of scholasticism, or in general – with every kind of ignorance regarding the humanities.

Libanus' appreciation of Erasmus' philological proficiency matched reality, and had a direct correlation with his own equally proficient work devoted to the Greek language. In his dissertation *De accentuum ecclesiasticorum exquisita ratione* (1539) Libanus discussed the proper pronunciation of the prayer *κύριε ἐλέησον*⁵⁸. In support of his explanation Libanus quoted corresponding passages from *De recte latini graecique sermonis pronuntiatione*, where Erasmus was the first in Latin-speaking reality to reveal the incorrectness of the pronunciation of *κύριε ἐλέησον* with less than seven syllables, and without a diphthong⁵⁹. It should be underlined that Libanus' contribution to the reception of Erasmus' works in Cracow stood out against the established practice. Unlike the other philological works of Erasmus used at the University (*De conscribendis epistolis*, and *Copia*) *De recte pronuntiatione* was not included in the academic curriculum. Instead of Erasmus' dialogue, scholars used Perotti's *De generibus metrorum*. Moreover Libanus' treatise on ecclesiastical accentuation provides us with the only evidence for a productive use of *De recte pronuntiatione*⁶⁰.

It was not the only outstanding feature of Libanus' part in Erasmus' *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Whereas the phrase *omnis bonae litteraturae Antistes* had numerous semantically and functionally differentiated precedents, in Libanus' writings we also find the expression that was by no means a common label. On account of Erasmus' significant contribution to the revival of grammatical proficiency, as Libanus briefly recounts in *De laudibus philosophiae*, the Dutch humanist was under attack from the conservative theologians. Eventually these "defenders of bygone ignorance" (*veteris inscitiae defensores*) would call Erasmus a "falsifier and corrupter of the Sacred Scriptures" (*falsarius corruptorque sanctarum literarum*)⁶¹. Although neither *veteris inscitiae defensores*, nor *falsarius corruptorque sanctarum literarum*

⁵⁷ See Scaglione 1961.

⁵⁸ Liban 1984: 105-106.

⁵⁹ ASD, I, 4, p. 100, l. 908-913; *ibidem*, p. 47, l. 114-119. Cf. also Erasmus' *Apologia contra Latomi dialogum* in: LB, IX, 84F.

⁶⁰ See Szelińska 1990: 50-52. This fully annotated catalogue of Erasmus' books preserved or used in the Cracow milieu in the 16th century lists only five copies of *De recte latini graecique sermonis pronuntiatione*, but actually does not mention Libanus as a reader of Erasmus' dialogue.

⁶¹ "omnis bonae litteraturae Antistes D.[ominus] Eras.[mus] Ro.[terodamus] quare idem sibi contigit, a quibusdam veteris inscitiae defensoribus, quod diuus Hieronymus, cum multis in locis,

were coined by Libanus himself, these two invectives can guide us into the deeper meaning of his opinion about the Dutch humanist. Both require further explanation.

The terms *studiorum veterum proceres, veteris inscitiae propugnatores* or *veteris inscitiae patroni* were used by Erasmus to contrast the model of Christianity which he promoted with the one practiced by scholasticism, namely the new and old scholarship respectively⁶². These epithets referred also to their bearers' study of grammar, since it was a matter of an exact opposite scholarly opinion, namely against the philological tools suitable for the renewal of Christianity. Nevertheless Erasmus, and Libanus as well, regarded the opposition of *nova* vs. *vetera* as an evaluative hierarchy, rather than a chronological description⁶³. Libanus' philological evaluation of scholastics, derived from Erasmus' dictionary, was complemented by a quotation taken almost directly from the preface to the Catholic Epistles, up to the end of the 17th century attributed to Jerome – "falsarius corruptorque sanctorum literarum"⁶⁴. By his ignorant enemies, as Libanus notes, Erasmus was accused of being a "falsifier and a corrupter of the Sacred Scriptures", nevertheless by means of such comparison with Jerome, Erasmus drew level with the authority of the famous Church Father. For similar reasons Jerome was accused of the same. This particular analogy between Erasmus and Jerome indicated that, for Libanus, the scholarly activities of the former consisted of a struggle for learning ancient languages. The thirteenth-century testimony of Roger Bacon can prove that Libanus' hypothesis might be correct. In *De utilitate grammaticae*, the third part of his *Opus maius*, Bacon took Jerome's phrase as a shield against the unlettered adversaries of language cognition⁶⁵. The old Augustinian category of *linguarum cognitio*, however, had a double layer structure. According to Bacon, the study of Greek or Hebrew grammar was necessary in order to comprehend the divine wisdom of the Scriptures. On the other hand, language cognition was helpful in human matters, which basically involve a reading comprehension⁶⁶.

It is hard to believe that Erasmus was actually called a falsifier and a corrupter. I have not yet found any confirmation of it in the writings of his Catholic critics. Nevertheless Erasmus himself used it twice, in his famous discussion on *Johannine comma* with Lee⁶⁷,

tum in prologo, in epistolas Canonicas conqueritur, quem falsarium, corruptoremque sanctorum pronunciarunt literarum" (Liban 1537: A, IV verso).

⁶² A 1062, l. 58; A 1167, l. 13-16; A 1237, l. 16-18; A 1238, l. 40-42; LB, IX, 279F; ASD, VII, 6, p. 40, l. 29-31; ASD, IX, 2, p. 178, l. 279-281.

⁶³ See Domański 1974.

⁶⁴ "Sed tu, virgo Christi Eustochium, dum a me impensius Scripturae veritatem inquiris, meam quodammodo senectutem invidorum dentibus corrodendam exponsis, qui me falsarium corruptoremque sacrarum pronunciant Scripturarum" (Jerome 1865: 873-874).

⁶⁵ Bacon 1900: 69.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*: 66.

⁶⁷ ASD, IX, 4, p. 324, l. 192-198.

and Diego de Zuñiga⁶⁸. In both cases he quoted this fragment from Jerome to justify his own textological decisions concerning the Greek version of the First Epistle of John. Lee⁶⁹ and Zuñiga⁷⁰ quoted Jerome's preface as well, but both of them chose a fragment, which only speaks of numerous defects in Greek codices, and consequently states the primacy of the Latin ones. The first two editions of Erasmus' New Testament, where *comma* was omitted, provided Lee and Zuñiga with sufficient reasons for accusations similar to the one we find in Jerome's preface⁷¹. They did not, however, call Erasmus a falsifier and a corrupter. Ironically enough, it was Martin Luther who in the 1530s, according to Erasmus' own report, used to call him *corruptor scripturarum*⁷².

Libanus' laudatory statement on Erasmus and Jerome lacked any doctrinal or confessional implications, and was aimed merely at emphasizing Erasmus' philological proficiency, or in general – the necessity of learning ancient languages, Greek in particular. To a certain degree such a combination of Erasmus-Jerome was a standard. In the year 1523 Erasmus' textbook *De conscribendis epistolis* was published in Cracow, with a foreword written presumably by Libanus⁷³, who had recently been forced to give up his lecture on Greek grammar. In that preface Jerome's authority was used as a sounding board for arguments in favor of philological studies, and against those who saw heretical implications in them⁷⁴. In fact it was only an academic dispute between the followers of scholasticism and humanists, who were interested in verbal trickery (*argutiae*), or in linguistic elegance (*cultum elegansque*) respectively. For the scholastics it was Duns Scotus who embodied their intellectual ambitions, while the humanists were using Erasmus' works in order to promote the new standards of learning⁷⁵. Needless to say, in Libanus' preface (assuming that he was the author) only the philological achievements of Erasmus were indicated, as the most

⁶⁸ ASD, IX, 2, p. 256, l. 492-501.

⁶⁹ Lee 1520: 200, 203.

⁷⁰ Stunica 1520: K, II *recto*.

⁷¹ See Rummel 1989: 95-120, 145-178; Asso 1993.

⁷² ASD, IX, 1, p. 482, l. 75-78.

⁷³ Although the preface, addressed to Jodocus Ludovicus Decius, was signed by the editors, namely by Wietor and Scharffenberg, Barycz suggested that it was most likely written by Libanus. See Barycz 1935: 53.

⁷⁴ "Sed non alia fortasse de causa linguarum studia conuiciis incessunt, nisi, quod illhinc uelut ex fontibus haeresium riuos profluere suspicantur, quo argumento cogentur diuum quoque Hieronymum haereticum et quidem maximum appellare, qui adolescens primum Latinas Graecaeque literas feliciter hauserat" (Erasmus 1523: A, II *verso*).

⁷⁵ "hoc opus [*De conscribendis epistolis*] in publicum exiturum, tutiusque futurum a uirulentis osorum quorundam, obtrectatorumque, te defensore, morsibus, quibus, quicquid cultum elegansque est, putet penitus atque displicet, nec quicquam probatur, nisi, quod aut Scoticas argutias sapiat, aut crassissimam barbariem oleat, et, quod longe absurdus, non Latinorum solum ornatioribus tersioribusque literis inimicos sese praestant acerrimos, sed etiam in Hebraicas atque Graecas, quarum ne rudimenta quidem unquam norint" (*ibidem*).

eloquent scholar of his age⁷⁶. In a similar manner, but without referring to Erasmus, three years later Cox rebutted accusations brought by scholastics against the Greek studies in his *De erudienda iuventute* – Greek literature not only remains a major source of knowledge, and is necessary for the proper understanding of literature written in Latin, but most of all has nothing to do with heresy, since it was justified by Jerome himself⁷⁷.

For Libanus all these arguments, either using the name of Erasmus as a shield for protection against the foes of humane education, or coined by the phraseology taken from Erasmus' writings, were only a part of the humanist-scholastic debate on the benefits of learning Greek. Being both the victim of *graecomastigas*, as Libanus used to call his enemies⁷⁸, and the protagonist of Greek philology at the University of Cracow in the 1520s and 1530s, he was obviously well aware of all the suspicions towards the Greek studies shared by the Catholics. Nevertheless, like Erasmus after the publication of *Novum instrumentum*, Libanus tended to underestimate all the confessional implications attributed to his work carried out as a lecturer in Greek language. After all, it was actually his *raison d'être* at the University. In *Paraclesis id est adhortatio ad graecarum literarum studiosos* (1535) Libanus dejectedly gave an account of the hostile atmosphere in Cracow, where those who studied Greek were consequently accused of being heretics, Lutherans, or schismatics⁷⁹. It is difficult to imagine that Libanus was not mindful of the fact that after the decisive impact of Erasmus' biblical philology, Greek studies could no longer be a task reserved exclusively for grammar or for propaedeutic purposes. On the other hand Libanus was not a theologian.

For Erasmus the opposition between *scholasticae argutiae* and *bonae litterae* did not come down to the particular differences in scholastic and humanistic curriculum. He used, however, such Ciceronian metaphors as fount (*fons*), pools (*lacunae*), or brooks (*rivuli*), but in order to indicate the gap between the true, renewed Christianity, namely *philosophia Christi*, and its degenerated form typical of the theology taught at the medieval universities. Erasmus was quoting Jerome as well in order to defend himself against the accusations of groundlessly bringing philological tools to the Scriptures. Jerome's comment on *vates* and *interpretes* turned out to be a crucial distinction justifying the grammarians' right to work on the Scriptures. It has become clear that linguistic proficiency ought to precede biblical examination. Hence, it was sacred philology that determined the ultimate concern of grammarians⁸⁰.

⁷⁶ "Nunc uero cum in manus uenisset Erasmi Roterodami, uiri omnium, quos haec aetas tulit, eloquentissimi, facileque literarum hac tempestate principis, de scribendarum epistolarum ratione liber" (*ibidem*: A, II).

⁷⁷ Breeze, Glomski 1991: 134 and 136.

⁷⁸ Liban 1535: N, IV.

⁷⁹ "Scio ego plerosque, qui hanc linguam [Graecam], latinis literis necessariam esse negant, qui in computationibus, & lautis conuiuibus, cum accrescit zelus domus dei, omnes graecitatis studiosos, aut hereticos, aut luteranos appellant, aut schismaticos" (Liban 1535: N, III – N, III *verso*); "crimen immo haeresis erat quicque in graecis attigisse" (Liban 1535: L).

⁸⁰ See Pabel 2008; Rice Jr. 1985: 116-136; Rummel 2004: 73-89; Asso 1993: 59-98.

Libanus was well versed in the arguments in favor of applying philological tools to the Bible. Although in his *Paraclesis ad graecarum literarum studiosos* we may find many of them, mostly taken from Jerome and Augustine, the exact aim of *Paraclesis* was modest. Libanus merely intended to justify his work against those who believed that it is possible to learn Latin efficiently, and understand it properly without any knowledge of Greek. It was learning grammar that would eventually allow students to read the ancient classics without any further assistance. It is no coincidence that he paid much more attention to the secular writers than to the Scriptures, which were simply beyond the scope of Libanus' pedagogical objectives. As a result, his ignorant enemies, *graecomastigas*, were twice wrong. First of all, the Greek language does not necessarily have to deal only with the sacred, since it is equally concerned with secular sources⁸¹. The same argument was made by Cox, who stated that Latin translations of Aristotle were a pile of garbage covering up his genuine thought⁸².

Libanus was not trespassing on the territory of theology, but remained within the scholarly goals summed up by Poliziano, that is to examine, to explain, and to discern between genuine and non-canonical texts of classical literature. Libanus, however, quoted at length a passage from Erasmus' *Methodus* regarding the three biblical languages, but his aim was different from pointing at a philological reading of the Scriptures. Since the ancient languages, as Libanus argues after Erasmus, may seem difficult to those who just started learning, the latter should not lose heart, but pick out a good teacher, whose assistance would make learning them easier⁸³. The numerous biblical and patristic implications in *Paraclesis* were aimed only at indicating certain precedents that justified the study of Greek grammar.

For Libanus it was not a matter of biblical philology that draws from the fountains of Christianity, as it was for Erasmus, but a matter of an initial education that can provide the grammatical rudiments necessary for the unassisted reading of the ancient classics. At least sacred philology in Poland was at that time still in its infancy⁸⁴. Libanus therefore had a well-founded right to shut himself off from the separatist motivations attributed to his grammatical work. After Erasmus' *Methodus*, but in a slightly different context, Libanus argued that the benefit of learning ancient languages was grammatical, that is reading comprehension⁸⁵.

⁸¹ "Et suis id honoris ostendere, maxime sit literas & diuinas & humanas, nunc tandem etiam e suis fontibus haurire coeperint" (Liban 1535: M, I verso – M, II).

⁸² Breeze, Glomski 1991: 136.

⁸³ "tribus his linguis strenue nauarent operamque constat omnem scripturam mysticam hisce, perditam esse. Neque vero mihi protinus hic resiliis (quodam in loco dicit Erasmus) Negotii difficultate ceu claua repulsus, si non desit p̄ceptor, si non desit animus, minore pene negotio hae tres linguae discuntur, quam hodie discitur vnus semi linguae miseranda balbuties, nimirum ob p̄ceptorum incitiam" (Liban 1535: L, IV verso. Quoted fragment from Erasmus can be found in Erasmus 1933: 151, l. 27-33).

⁸⁴ See Frick 1989: 7 and *passim*.

⁸⁵ "Neque flagitamus (inquit [Erasmus]) vt in his vsque ad eloquentiae miraculum proueharis, satis est si ad mundiciam & elegantiam, hoc est, mediocritatem aliquam progrediare, quod

This argument had been discussed sixteen years earlier by Mosellanus, Erasmus, and J. Latomus. Erasmus' opinion that "cleanness and proficiency, that is a modicum of Greek will suffice to give a judgment" was rebutted by Latomus, who in 1519 strived to divorce grammar from theology⁸⁶. Nevertheless Erasmus' sentence, afterwards contextually modified, could still support Libanus' reasoning. On the basic grammatical level he was able to ignore the charges drawn up by Latomus, since for Libanus, Erasmus' opinion was concerned with the grammatical understanding of a text, and could be easily separated from the theological inquiry. Libanus' argument was aimed not at defending Erasmus himself against his opponents, but at legitimizing his own scholarly initiative. By narrowing the scope of Greek studies down to literacy, he eventually gained the crowning argument against those who were accusing his disciples, and himself of being a heretic, Lutheran, or schismatic.

In its polemical aspect *Paraclesis* was wholly composed of different quotations and statements starting from those derived from Cicero and Horace, through the Church Fathers, Vergerio, Agricola to Erasmus. Some of these citations were given by Libanus without any attribution to the appropriate names or titles. Except for the passages from Erasmus' *Methodus* discussed here, Libanus cited that work at least twice more⁸⁷. These dependencies should not mislead us. Libanus' arguments favoring the usefulness of the Greek language for learning Latin were by no means uncommon. Their direct precedents can be easily found in the educational treatises written by Vergerio, Piccolomini, Guarino, Erasmus, Mosellanus, Cox, Vives or Melanchthon, not to mention the first book of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*. Most, if not all of them were known to Libanus. As a mosaic woven by quotations it is difficult to indicate a particular source of inspiration for *Paraclesis ad graecarum literarum studiosos*, whether it was Erasmus, or anyone else. It goes without saying that the opposition between humanistic curriculum and scholastic program was nothing but a commonplace.

When it came, however, to discussing the methods for learning the Greek language, Libanus relied only on Italian theorists – *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus studiis* by Vergerio⁸⁸, and on Guarino's precepts from *De ordine docendi et studendi*⁸⁹. That methodical section of *Paraclesis*, considerably shorter than its polemical part, provided some practical

sufficit ad iudicandum" (Liban 1535: L, IV verso. Quoted fragment in Erasmus 1933: 151, l. 33-36. Cf. *ibidem*: 182, l. 12-14).

⁸⁶ Latomus 1905: 50; Erasmus 1933: 182, l. 12-14. See also Rummel 1989: 72-73.

⁸⁷ "si semel sufficiebat Hieronymiana translatio, quorsum tandem attinebat cauere pontificum decretis vt veteris instrumenti veritas ab haebreorum voluminibus, noui fides a graecorum fontibus peteretur?" (Liban 1535: M, IV - M, IV verso. Quoted fragment on *Hieronymiana translatio* in Erasmus 1933: 152, l. 16-22).

⁸⁸ "Paranda sunt igitur (inquit Petrus Paulus Vergerius) In iuuentute solatia, quę decrepitam possint oblectare senectutem, nam quae sunt ad adolescentiae laboriosa studia, eadem erunt iocunda otia senectuti" (Liban 1535: M, II verso. Cf. quoted fragment in: Kallendorf 2002: 38).

⁸⁹ Liban 1535: N, V verso - N, VI.

guidance. Obviously these tips, or training methods had already been established by Horace in his *Letter to the Pisones*, reinforced by the authority of Quintilian, and then repeated by the early modern theorists, but it was only Guarino's work that Libanus used in his earlier didactic work, and in *Paraclesis* called as a witness⁹⁰.

Conclusion

It is hard to keep up the uncritically repeated cliché that the University of Cracow was the center for promotion of Polish Erasmianism, or at least the center of Erasmus studies. On the cultural level *Erasmianus* as a form of spatial identity of German humanists, for obvious reasons was an empty word for Polish scholars, who, if interested, had their own ethnogenetic myths⁹¹. Even Libanus, who was a Silesian most likely of German descent (family name Weihrauch), ignored that aspect of Erasmus' fame, since being culturally assimilated he regarded Poland as his own fatherland, that is *natio* and *patria nostra*, and called Polish language "the tongue of our fathers"⁹². Furthermore, in his quotation of a fragment of Erasmus' *Methodus*, again without any explicit attribution given to the author, Libanus perhaps intentionally modified Erasmus' praise of Agricola as *Germaniae nostrae lumen*⁹³, to the phrase deprived of any sign of spatial affection, namely *Germaniae lumen*⁹⁴.

From a doxographical perspective, the reception of Erasmus' ideas and writings at the University of Cracow, as compared to his German public, was also considerably restricted. It covered only two philological works – *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum*, and *De conscribendis epistolis*. While their readings, according to the only extant testimonies of Cox and Libanus, trivialized or passed over the specificity of learned piety developed by Erasmus and promoted by Erasmians. The Erasmians' comprehensive project of reinter-

⁹⁰ Already in the year 1514 Libanus published in Cracow *De liberis educandis*, that is Guarino's Latin translation of Περὶ παιδῶν ἀγωγῆς by Pseudo-Plutarch. Unfortunately that edition is non extant.

⁹¹ Cf. Kot 1955, 1957, 1958; Bömelburg 2006: 42-94; Borowski 2007: 32-38.

⁹² "Saepe nimirum id vitii clamorem inquam et accentum ineptum, [accentum inquam ineptum], prae ceteris nationibus nobis exprobrari indolui. Sed ut causam nostram nonnihilo et quoad licet adiuvem ad excusandas excusationes in peccatis, nesciunt plerique hunc patrium sermonem nostrum, id est Polonum, magna ex parte non a Latinis modo, verum etiam a Graecis derivatum [...] Quod nobis in hac patria naturale est, quomodoque fit, ut multa verborum portenta monstraque horrenda latine loquentes admittimus" (Liban 1984: 110); "sermo noster polonus" (Liban 1535: N, VI verso. See also Witkowska-Zaremba 1984: 16).

⁹³ "Rodolphus Agricola, unicum Germaniae nostrae lumen et ornamentum, annum egressus quadragesimum Hebraeas litteras discere non erubuit, vir in re literaria tantus, nec desperavit tam grandis natu. Nam Graecas adolescens imbiberat" (Erasmus 1933: 153, l. 3-7).

⁹⁴ "Rodolphus Agricola phrisius ille, vnicum aetate sua Germaniae lumen Hebraeas literas discere non erubuit vir in re literaria tantus, nec desperavit iam senex. Nam graecas puer olim imbiberat" (Liban 1535: L, IV).

preting *bonae litterae*, and thus their culturally significant revaluation of Mediterranean *studia humanitatis*, were unnoticed by Cracow scholars. As a result, at the University of Cracow these Erasmian features were reduced back to literary proficiency and moral improvement. Of course Cox, Libanus, and undoubtedly other scholars appealed to Erasmus' textbooks, if only they discovered in his works ideas that they found useful for their own purposes. In fact it was the Italian paradigm of humanistic education that had a considerable advantage over the one pursued by the Northern humanists. Erasmus' *Copia*, and *De conscribendis epistolis* had to acknowledge the superiority of the handbooks written by F. Niger, F. Filelfo, and Perotti. Only after the publication of *De conscribendis epistolis*, and before the year 1538 when exclusively the letters of Cicero were prescribed for academic lectures on epistolography⁹⁵, were Italian letter-writing manuals lectured in Cracow almost forty times, while Erasmus' work only seven times⁹⁶. This gap speaks for itself.

Assuming that readership of a particular author, or even a particular subject matter of a lecture allows us to coin the *-isms*, we could reconsider our tools designed for a description of the intellectual history of Erasmianism. Consequently, the notion of *Erasmianism* regarding the activities undertaken at the University of Cracow needs to be abandoned, and instead we should start using the terms *Nigerianism* or *Perottianism*, since it was Niger and Perotti, not Erasmus, who were the predominant authorities in the humanistic curriculum. Such reasoning becomes even more striking if we apply it to contemporary education, and the importance of textbook authorities. For instance, present students of classical philology can be equally well called Ciceronians, or the followers of the particular author who wrote their textbook, since they learn Latin from Cicero and from the particular grammar books. After all nothing has changed at this level of reflection, and despite the methodological differences, an element of tradition (both recent and distant) still plays an assistant part in humanities. Obviously all these *-isms* in this paragraph, introduced rather by a market of public opinion than a matter of thinking, are nothing but nonsense. The fact remains, however, that this kind of grotesque categories can easily be coined.

The mosaic shape of Erasmus' reception at the University of Cracow can be considered as an inevitable consequence of the disproportion between the popularity of Italian scholars and Erasmus. Even if Erasmus' words occasionally took the floor in the lecture halls, or in any other form, they were thoroughly filtered by Mediterranean theories. It is hard to distinguish the ideas or concepts explicitly taken from Erasmus from those used by the Italian humanists. Thus doxographically understood Erasmianism as a distinctive intellectual attitude toward other discursive models was alien to Cracow academics. We should therefore substitute the empty cliché *Erasmianism* by the *reception of Erasmus*, which is mosaic, and substantially limited, but well attested in the sources. The episode of Erasmus' *Wirkungsgeschichte* presented here, unknown so far, but ultimately instructive, confirms in a measure the criticism of Augustijn, albeit in the realm unnoticed by this excellent scholar.

⁹⁵ See Muczkowski 1849: LVII-LVIII.

⁹⁶ See Winniczuk 1953: 27-29 and Table no. 1 with a list of lectures; Wisłocki 1886: 198, 200, 206, 208, 214, 223, 229, 266.

Abbreviations

- A: *Opus epistolarvm Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. P.S. Allen, H.M. Allen, H.G. Garrod, I-XII, Oxford 1906-1958 [With Arabic numbers of the letter and verse within it].
- ASD: *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami recognita et adnotatione critica instructa notisque illustrata*, Amsterdam 1969- [With Roman number of series, Arabic number of volume within, together with page, and line numbers].
- LB: *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami Opera omnia emendatiora et auctiora*, ed. J. Le Clerc, I-X, Leiden 1703-1706 [With Roman number of volume, Arabic number of page, and letter indicating the section of the column].

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Abstract

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Erasmianism, Mediterranean Humanism, and Reception History. The Case of Jerzy Liban of Legnica at the University of Cracow (1518-1539)

The article discusses the problem of understanding Erasmus, and assigning him his place in intellectual history. The analytical section includes a concise analysis of the notion of *Erasmianism*. The author introduces the cultural and doxographical systematization of Erasmianism, and thereby, provides a cognitive diagnosis and a definition of Erasmianism. Erasmianism stands as a myth of Erasmus designed by his German followers to promote particular values and beliefs that together defined their intellectual, as well as spatial identity in the second decade of the 16th century. Over the last decade of Erasmus' life, Erasmianism turned into a common, pan-European, and thus spatially indifferent element of confessional and political agenda in the age of confessionalization. In its new form, Erasmianism retained the mythical character, since the purposefully renewed image of Erasmus was still used as a sounding board for the arguments in a discussion between Catholics and Protestants.

The descriptive part reconstructs the way Erasmus' works were understood by leading scholars at the University of Cracow, such as Leonard Cox and mainly by Jerzy Liban of Legnica. Their works re-open the issue of what had so far readily been identified as Erasmianism at the University of Cracow. Both scholars were concerned exclusively with the philological side of Erasmus' work. Their readings reveal that, within their philological enterprise, the Mediterranean paradigm of *studia humanitatis* still had an advantage over the model pursued by the German followers of Erasmus. That predominance of Italian theorists, and the trivialization of distinctive attributes of German *bonae litterae* turned out to be the decisive features of Erasmus' reception in the Cracow lecture halls. Cox and Libanus provide us with the only extant evidence that can give us a closer insight into the modes of interpretation of Erasmus' work at the University of Cracow. The remaining sources, such as inventories of books or lists of lectures, confirm the relevance of the image reconstructed here. For these reasons, Cracow's reception of Erasmus, devoid of cultural (typical for German *Erasmiani*), or religio-political significance (typical for royal and church policy) can no longer be identified in terms of Erasmianism. Hence, the chapter of Erasmus' *Wirkungsgeschichte* at the University of Cracow argues that the actual subject matter and the efficiency of *Erasmianism* are restricted, and thus, if used recklessly, this notion obscures rather than clarifies.

Keywords

Erasmianism; Mediterranean Humanism; Humanism in Cracow.