

RUDOLPH AGRICOLA:  
SIX LIVES AND ERASMUS'S  
TESTIMONIES

EDITED

BY

FOKKE AKKERMAN

RUDOLPH AGRICOLA:  
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SIX LIVES AND ERASMUS'S  
TESTIMONIES

EDITED, TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED

BY

FOKKE AKKERMAN

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

BY

RUDY BREMER AND CORRIE OOMS BECK

ROYAL VAN GORCUM

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## PREFACE

My involvement with the *vitae* of Rudolph Agricola dates from the early 1980s, when preparations were made in Groningen to honor its son, the humanist Agricola, with a conference in memory of the 500th anniversary of his death on October 28, 1485. At that time I first translated the texts of the *vitae* into Dutch; then, still before our conference (October 28–30, 1985), I had them translated into English by Dr. Rudy Bremer. He and I discussed the various difficulties that arose in that process; the greatest problem was the fact that critical editions, translations, bibliographies, and detailed studies of Agricola and his texts were practically non-existent. This formed a sharp contrast with the great fame Agricola enjoyed among his contemporaries and the generations of humanists after him – and even during all the years up to our own time: when Arjo Vanderjagt and I announced the conference in a few scholarly journals, we received 170 enthusiastic reactions from all over the world!

During the conference it became evident that the lack of primary material was a source of regret to the participants as well, and together we discussed possible ways of improving the situation. The imperfect transmission of the texts also caused great problems in editing the conference proceedings because no consistent reference methods had been used; therefore we added two extensive lists of primary and secondary literature to our *Acta* (*RAP* 1988), adhering to consistent guidelines. Earlier, in 1985, a scholarly bibliography of the old sources of Agricola's texts had already been published by Gerda Huisman.

Now, 26 years later, we are happy to say that the situation has greatly improved. For recent editions of the texts written by Agricola, see the Bibliography under *Agricola*. Of the *vitae*, the one by Johann von Plieningen (edited by Werner Straube with a German translation and commentary) was published in the Kühlman collection of 1994. Today, in 2011, this book offers the texts (with an English translation and notes) of all of the six *vitae*, written by Agricola's contemporaries or by humanists of the next generation who were still in close contact with Agricola's contemporaries. Not only are these *vitae* of great importance to our knowledge of Agricola's life, but they also offer us some fine examples of early humanist writing and composition technique along with a colorful selection of facts and fiction; these in themselves make the *vitae* a delight to read.

These *vitae* are, of course, no biographies in a modern sense; rather, they give the impression of secularized hagiographies. Similarly, Agricola did not write his letters with the intention of offering future readers a connected account of his life. As a source of knowledge for Agricola's life the *vitae* are a counterpart to the

## PREFACE

letters, and this book should therefore be read accordingly. For this reason I have not repeated all the notes and literature already given in our edition of Agricola's letters; often a reference to those comments may suffice.

The "modern" biographies of Agricola – I am thinking of Van der Velden's book of 1911 in the first place – have become antiquated in some respects and/or are not easily accessible because they were written in Dutch. Therefore I have taken it upon myself to bring the records up to date and, by way of an Introduction, give a brief chronology of the facts of Agricola's life based on his letters, the *vitae*, and the archives.

As for my motives in putting together a detailed collection of Erasmus's *testimonia* on Agricola, I have stated them at the beginning of that section of the book.

Naturally, I couldn't have done this work without the information and help provided by my colleagues and by specialists in the field. I am especially grateful to Dr. Wiebe Bergsma, Dr. Thomas van Bochove, Professor Annette Harder, Professor Onno Kneepkens, Professor Alasdair Macdonald, Dr. Zweder von Martels, Professor Kees Meerhoff, Professor H.W.N. Niebaum, Professor Stephan Radt, Dr. Victor Schmidt, Professor Piet Steenbakkens, Professor Arjo Vanderjagt and Drs. Bert Wedema. I thank Dr. Adrie van der Laan, who critically reviewed the Introduction and helped me in many ways.

Without the English translations of the Lives by Dr. Rudy Bremer and of the Introduction, Notes and Commentary by Dr. Corrie Ooms Beck, this book would never have been published. The technical assistance of Mrs. Drs. Marjolijn Palma has been indispensable, as has the helpfulness of the staff members of the University Library of Groningen. To all of them I extend my heartfelt thanks. Finally, but not in the last place, I express my thanks to the editors of *Bibliotheca Latinitatis Novae* for their help and encouragement; especially to Dr. Jan Waszink, who also suggested adding a summary of Agricola's life and significance to the Introduction (pp. 3–7) and wrote a first draft of it, partly on the basis of the introduction in *Rudolph Agricola, Letters*, BLN 2002, eds. Van der Laan and Akkerman. I am proud to be part of this precious series once again.

Fokke Akkerman  
Groningen, March 2011

INTRODUCTION

THE LIFE OF RUDOLPH AGRICOLA



Portrait of Rudolph Agricola. Oil Painting. Groningen, Groningen Museum. Photograph: John Stoel, Groningen.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE LIFE OF RUDOLPH AGRICOLA

#### SUMMARY

Rodolphus Agricola (Roelof Huisman)<sup>1</sup> was born ca. August 28, 1443, in the small town of Baflo, some twelve miles to the north of the city of Groningen, the Netherlands. From his own lifetime onwards, he was regarded as the first to bring the innovations of the Italian Renaissance, especially those concerning the study and composition of classical Latin, to the North. The six *vitae* in this volume testify to the esteem in which he was held by his own and the following century, and indeed to his importance to the culture of Renaissance Europe in general.

Agricola's father, Hendrik Vries, belonged to the leading clergy of the region. He had studied theology at Cologne, where he may have obtained the degree of *licentiatus*. In the North he first became a parish priest in Baflo, one of the leading parishes in the province of Groningen; he bore titles such as *curatus* or *parochus* (parish priest), but also that of *persona* (*personatus*), which comprised the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, on behalf of the Bishop, over 35 parishes. In 1444, Vries was elected abbot of the Benedictine convent of Selwerd (Siloë), which was located just outside the city walls of Groningen. Rudolph's mother, Zycka Huisman, probably came from a wealthy peasant background. Although he did not belong to the elite of the landed gentry which in his time was growing rapidly in social standing and political influence, nor to the leading families in the city of Groningen, Rudolph was nevertheless socially and financially independent enough to be sent to universities abroad. After his first education in one of the two town schools in Groningen, he went to Erfurt where he became a Bachelor of Arts in 1458. He subsequently visited the universities of Louvain (*magister artium* in 1465), Pavia (1468?-1475, studying civil law), and Ferrara (1475-1479, studying humanities, especially Greek). In Ferrara, Agricola, who was also a talented musician, entered the service of the court of Ercole I d'Este as an organ player. After his return to the North in 1479, Rudolph was appointed secretary of the city of Groningen.

Before and after (and even during) his lengthy stay in Italy, Agricola belonged to a group of highly educated men, several of whom were enthusiastic pioneers of "Italianized" humanism. A greater political independence and economic prosperity made the more populous towns of the northern and eastern parts of the Low Countries – compared to Holland proper, that is – receptive to new

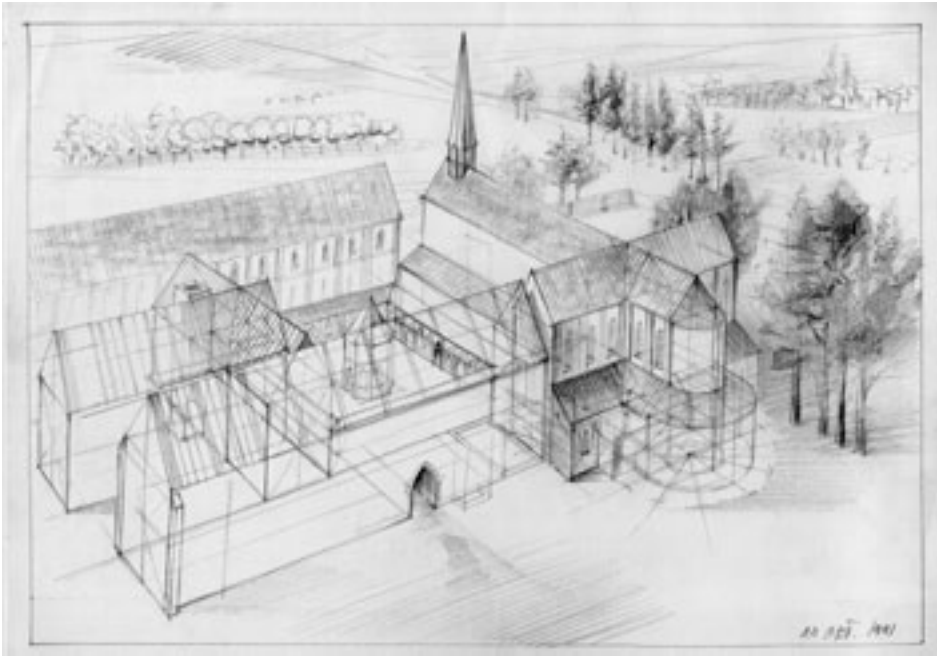
<sup>1</sup> The name is alternatively spelled 'Huesman' or 'Huysman'.

forms of education and culture. The economic and cultural outlook of these towns was directed towards the East: to Westphalia, the Rhineland, the towns of the Hanseatic League, and the Baltic. Dozens of young men from “Frisia” studied at the recently founded universities of the North (Louvain, Rostock, Cologne, Heidelberg, Erfurt) or at those of Italy (Pavia, Padua, Bologna, Ferrara).

Rudolph and others were caught by the culture of humanism in Italy. From Pavia and Ferrara, and after his return to his native soil, Rudolph Agricola communicated his enthusiasm for the revival of classical culture, especially the recovery of classical Latin language and style, to like-minded men in the regions of the North. In the 1470s and 1480s, the development of an entirely new Latin prose style can be seen in the letters of Agricola, Antonius Liber (Anton Vrye) and Rudolphus Langius (Rudolph von Langen). Liber also composed a large folio edition of ancient, medieval and humanist Latin letters for use in the Latin school of Groningen. Several poets of a renewed classical character can be mentioned as well: Agricola, Friedrich Mormann, Liber, Langius, Alexander Hegius, Bartholomaeus Coloniensis; these poems too, printed or not, were mostly intended for use in schools. The first printing presses in the Low Countries arrived in towns along the river IJssel: Deventer and Zwolle (1477), Nijmegen (1479) and Hasselt (near Zwolle, 1480). The large production of manuscript books at Zwolle and elsewhere (e.g. the convent at Selwerd) also testifies to a zeal for education and learning.

Several centers of the new intellectual fashion can be discerned: the old and famous schools of Zwolle and Deventer, the local printing houses, the town schools of Groningen, and the abbey at Aduard near Groningen. The latter subsequently achieved a reputation as the epitome of Northern humanism as a result of its designation as an “academy” by Goswinus van Halen (ca. 1468–1530, one of Agricola’s biographers presented in this book), in a letter of 1528.<sup>2</sup> The Cistercian monastery at Aduard, or better, the abbey of Sanctus Bernardus (founded 1193), was by far the largest and richest monastic institution in the province of Groningen. During Agricola’s lifetime, from 1449/50 until 1485, its abbot was Hendrik van Rees, who readily received well-educated laymen from outside the abbey. Together with the learned inhabitants of the monastery, Goswinus van Halen (in his letters of 1528) mentions the names of 27 men, who can for the greater part be styled as “members” of the “Adwert Academy”. Some more from before Goswinus’s time can be added. From thirteen of these men written or even printed texts have been preserved. Goswinus uses the word “academy” in a loose sense, and certainly not to indicate an organization of scholars with a fixed program or purpose. The Aduard circle should be seen as a loosely connected group of very diverse personalities who lived in the monastery, or were invited to come to Aduard and, as Goswinus puts it, “stay there for whole weeks, not to say months on end, in order to listen and to speak, and so day by day

<sup>2</sup> P.S. Allen, *The Age of Erasmus*, 1914 pp. 7–32.



Aduard, reconstruction drawing of the Cistercian Abbey Sanctus Bernardus, founded in 1193. Drawing: Richard Schwartzenberg, Geleen. See Introduction, pp. 5 and 27.

become more learned and better men.”<sup>3</sup> “Aduard” held several students of Greek within its ranks; not just Agricola, but also Adolph Occo, Alexander Hegius, and Wessel Gansfort. Gansfort and Hegius also knew Hebrew and infected Agricola with a desire to acquire that language as well.

Agricola belonged to this group and attended its meetings. He inspired the others by his talents. It was not in a practical way, though, as a schoolteacher like his friends Liber and Hegius, that he furthered the cause of humanism. Agricola was always on the move, socially, intellectually and geographically, shuttling up and down the Rhine as a negotiator for the city of Groningen, to the Burgundian court at Brussels, and to many other places. He gathered a host of friends and acquaintances and kindled the sparks of the new learning wherever he could. Teaching he did all the same: first at the universities of Pavia and Ferrara, where his fellow-students called him *praeceptor noster*, then through his correspondence (for instance his letters to Hegius, Antonius Liber, Rudolphus Langius, Barbireau and his half-brother Johannes), later at Heidelberg, where he lectured on Pliny

<sup>3</sup> The text of the manuscript (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, *Cod. Lat. Mon.* 10351) has: *ut vel audirent vel discerent*, but since *discerent* merely repeats *audirent*, I prefer reading *dicerent*; the mistake can easily have been caused by dictation of the text.



the Younger. Having served the city of Groningen for four years as secretary and traveling ambassador, he came to Heidelberg in 1484, at the invitation of Johann von Dalberg, newly elected bishop of Worms, to support the latter's studies. Agricola also hoped for an opportunity to master Hebrew, as he had previously learned Greek. Sadly, however, traveling back from Rome (where he had gone with Dalberg to congratulate Pope Innocentius VIII on his election), Agricola fell ill; he died, just after his return to Heidelberg, on October 27 or 28, 1485.

Agricola and his fellows from the North learned many of the new skills and interests in Italy and subsequently introduced them directly to the Low Countries. This holds true for the study of Greek and Hebrew, the knowledge of many ancient authors and epideictic rhetoric, as well as the mastery of the new Latin style. However, they were not absolute pioneers; Jozef IJsewijn<sup>4</sup> has pointed at a few predecessors, and many libraries in the North contained works by Petrarch and other Italian humanists. Likewise, in the case of Agricola and other "Aduard" men, their enthusiasm for classical models seems to be the cause rather than the result of their travels to Italy. In 1467, before he went to Italy, Agricola probably wrote the epitaph in six Latin distichs for Eelste Meyma, a prominent countrywoman from Baflo, which is the earliest surviving Neo-Latin poem from the North and an impeccable imitation of classical models:<sup>5</sup>

Quisquis opem celo ueniens huc poscis ab alto,  
 siste gradum, queso, uerbaque pauca lege.  
 Siste, licet properes: homines humanaque cuncta  
 accipe, quid sint aut quo rapienda modo.  
 En tegit hic Eelstam tumulus, quam misit ad umbras  
 mors fera, cui generis Maiama origo fuit.  
 Illa, uides, qua nec tulerat uirtute priorem  
 Frisia, nec fuerat nobilis ulla magis,  
 diues opum multarum et cui domus alta superbis  
 menibus et lati iugera multa soli,  
 Illa, uides, iacet hic, mortalia pectora duro  
 que docet exemplo, quam cito cuncta cadant.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In: IJsewijn 1975, 193–301.

<sup>5</sup> The verse appears as a hand-written addition in a copy of the 1511 *Nonnulla opuscula* by Agricola, edited by Pieter Gilles and Dirk Martens. This addition was edited by A. van der Laan in: E. Knol, M. Hermans, M. Driebergen (eds.), *Hel en Hemel. De Middeleeuwen in het Noorden*, Groningen, Groninger Museum 2001, p. 181.

<sup>6</sup> All you arriving here to implore high Heaven's assistance,  
 Hold your step, I pray, and look at this handful of words.  
 Hold your step, though in haste, and of all things human, learn  
 what kind they're of and in which way time will have them swept away.  
 See, this tomb covers Eelste, sent to the shadows by cruel death;

Even before Agricola left for Italy in 1468, Friedrich Mormann praised him to the skies as *uatem nouellum*, and put his praise in fluent Latin verses full of echoes from ancient literature.<sup>7</sup>

While many others stayed in the North, Agricola traveled to Italy and communicated his experience of the new learning to them, securing for himself a reputation as the original intermediary between Italy and the North who sparked off what was to become the Northern Renaissance. Most literary products of Northern authors bear a stamp in style and subject matter that is distinctly different from the writings of Italian authors. Thus, Agricola was greatly admired by all those inspired by the new learning. The six biographies in this book testify to his fame in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They were written by Johannes Trithemius (1462–1516), in his catalog of famous authors; by (Dietrich (1453–1520) and) Johann von Plieningen (1454–1506), his friends, fellow-students and pupils in Pavia and Ferrara; by Goswinus van Halen (1468/9–1530), the rector of the Clerics' House of the Brethren of the Common Life in Groningen; by Gerard Geldenhouwer from Nijmegen (1482–1542), who for his knowledge of Agricola drew on his own student days at Deventer and Louvain; and, in two texts, by Philippus Melanchthon (1497–1560), the famous reformer. The fact that in the next century, Desiderius Erasmus, formerly a pupil of Hegius at Deventer, pointed to Agricola as the founder of Northern humanism, and presented himself as Agricola's intellectual grandson, has definitively established Agricola's reputation as such. Therefore, Erasmus's utterances on Agricola have been collected in a separate discussion at the end of this book as a parallel to the six *vitae* on the founding father of Northern humanism.

The arrangement of this introduction is as follows. First the available genealogical information on Agricola and his parents is presented; then the available information on his education, life and travels is presented and analyzed in order to provide one consistent account of Agricola's life.

She rose from the house of Meyma. Friesland, you see,  
brought forward none more virtuous than she,  
and none more noble. She was rich by many possessions, had a house  
proud with towering walls and a great many acres of wide soil;  
Now here, you see, she lies, to show us, mortal bodies,  
by her harsh example the speed at which things fall.

(transl. J. Waszink)

<sup>7</sup> See the edition by Schoonbeeg in *Wessel Gansfort* 1993, 332 ff. and commentary 349–351.

## INTRODUCTION

### A CHRONOLOGICAL DISCUSSION OF THE INFORMATION FOUND IN THE LETTERS, THE *VITAE* AND THE ARCHIVES

#### *Parents*

In his letters Agricola mentions his parents only once, and briefly at that: in *Ep.* 22, 20 of October 19, 1480, he tells his friend Adolph Occo that both his parents died, his father on October 1, his mother on April 7 of that year. The *vitae* give more information, but the sketchy characterizations of the parents by Von Plieningen (*Comm.* 2, 1), Geldenhouwer (2, 1) and Melanchthon (*Oratio* 3, 1) have a rhetorical or pedagogical function rather than a historical value. Only Goswinus's information on Agricola's family is more detailed, although not without errors and, of course, not complete either; see Goswinus 3–5. Fortunately, this information can be supplemented from various archives, as has already been done by several historians.<sup>8</sup>

Thus we may accept for a fact that Agricola's father was named Hendrik Vries and his mother Zycka Huisman. They were not married. His father had studied in Cologne; Goswinus calls him *licentiatus theologiae*, a title that cannot be found for him in the records of the University of Cologne. However, the records do mention a "Hendrik de Baflo", who was enrolled as a student at the university in 1427, became a *magister artium* in 1431, and in that same year was a professor in the faculty of the *artes*. There is a fair chance that this refers to Rudolph's father,<sup>9</sup> so it is quite certain that he had a university degree.

Between 1430 and 1443 the archives of Groningen refer to Hendrik Vries as *persona*, as *hoefprieester*, and as *cureyt* (i.e. priest: *curatus*) of Baflo, an important parish. The duties of a *persona* were purely administrative: Hendrik Vries managed the bishop's property in the 35 parishes belonging to the personate of Baflo. The *persona* was appointed by the bishop (of Münster) and swore an oath to him; he administered canon law in the entire personate on behalf of the bishop's *officialis*. Using a classical term, Goswinus calls Hendrik Vries *parochus* of Baflo and mentions his *cura pastoralis*; still, whether he was a fully ordained priest is debatable.<sup>10</sup>

From 1444 to 1480 Hendrik Vries was abbot of the Benedictine convent at Selwerd (at that time inhabited by nuns only). This convent, close to the city of Groningen, was the third largest of the 25 monastic institutions that were situated in what is now the province of Groningen and together owned about 25% of all agricultural land. The Selwerd convent owned almost 1,600 hectares of land, which was worked by tenants. During the abbacy of Hendrik Vries, its estate greatly increased through as many as 154 endowments. The convent definitely flourished

<sup>8</sup> Van der Velden 1911, 30–46; Bakker in *RAP* 1988, 100–103.

<sup>9</sup> See the previous note.

<sup>10</sup> Bakker confirms that he was a priest, but see Goswinus 3, 1 with note.

under his administration; Selwerd had an important scriptorium in those days.<sup>11</sup> Under the abbot's leadership, this convent was the first in the Low Countries to join the Bursfeld Union, a congregation of about a hundred Benedictine convents, in 1469. Hendrik Vries was active in this congregation: four times he was elected president of the provincial chapters in Cologne. He inspected other monasteries and was inspected in his turn, with no evidence of anything ever being amiss under his management.<sup>12</sup>

It was a matter of enormous importance to Rudolph that in 1454, when he was still a *scolaris*, one of the bishop's domains, a farmstead in Baflo, was allocated to him for half of its proceeds (the other half went to the *persona* of Baflo, Hendrik Vries's successor). This arrangement held for the duration of Rudolph's life. In 1458, the bishop transferred the ownership of the entire farmstead to Siloë (i.e. Shiloh), as the Selwerd convent was called.

Rudolph's father emerges from the documents as a cold and calculating businessman with a high-handed attitude based on his landownership and political influence. This is also the way Damen sees him.<sup>13</sup> Vries was involved in various provincial concerns pertaining to church administration and polder management; there are documents he signed alongside the city council.

We know less about Rudolph's mother. If her family name was, indeed, Huisman (we assume it was, since Rudolph bore that name), she may have belonged to an important family, for there have been several prominent people in Baflo with the name of Huisman.<sup>14</sup> Agricola, *Ep.* 31, 5 (now to be dated 1482: see p. 28 below) mentions a *haeriditatem maternam*, which is managed by Rudolph's stepfather Sicko Schreuder (Sartor). This second partner or husband of Zycka Huisman was a man of distinction too; according to the archival documents he had the position of *wedman*, a sort of legal arbitrator.<sup>15</sup> Agricola mentions him in *Ep.* 25, 4 (see our note there); 31, 1 and 5; and 34, 4. He was the father of Agricola's half-brothers, Johannes and Hendrik, and of a half-sister whose name is never mentioned. Goswinus tells us that Rudolph latinized his name of Huisman – his mother's name, as we think – to *Agricola* (Goswinus 9, 3). Technically, a *huisman* is a farmer who owns a house situated on land on which he has a permanent lease.

This shows that Rudolph Agricola had parents of prestige and means, who, however, did not belong to the landed gentry (the so-called *hoofdelingen* or *hetmans*), nor to the prominent families of the city of Groningen.<sup>16</sup> There was no nobility in the province.

<sup>11</sup> See Hermans in *RAP*, 1988, 123–135, esp. 133–135; *id.* 1991, 347–357.

<sup>12</sup> Damen 1964, esp. 28–48; 1972 *passim* on the Selwerd convent; Nip 1989, 7–34.

<sup>13</sup> Damen 1972, 79.

<sup>14</sup> Bakker in *RAP* 1988, 103. See also Geldenhouwer 2.

<sup>15</sup> Bakker, *ibid.* 102–103.

<sup>16</sup> In my contribution to *RAP* 1988, 6 I mistakenly had Agricola's words in *Ep.* 8, 7 ... *hominibus infime classis, inter quos me numero* ... relate to the low social class to which Agricola considered himself

That Agricola's parents were not married must have been an important factor in his life, but we have no direct evidence of this. Why his two half-brothers also used the name Agricola is not clear. Could it be because of their brother's fame, or the fact that their mother's family was held in higher esteem than their father's? Goswinus tells us that Schreuder married Zycka (3,1), but no document of this marriage has been preserved.

### *Date of birth*

As to Rudolph's date of birth and that of his death, we get different statements from the *vitae*. Apart from the obvious errors – Goswinus writes that Agricola was born in 1436, Geldenhower that he died in 1490, and Von Plieningen that he lived 46 years – we are left with two statements that are quite believable in themselves: the explicit information by Von Plieningen (*Comm.* 2, 1) that he was born February 17, 1444, and the no less precise statement by Adolph Occo that he lived for 42 years and 2 months.<sup>17</sup> The Von Plieningens and Occo were Agricola's best friends, who kept in contact with him for a very long time, but their testimonies cannot both be correct. Since the date of his death is quite certain – either October 27, 1485 (Von Plieningen) or October 28, 1485 (Occo) – Agricola must have been born on August 28, 1443, if we follow Occo. This date is supported by Goswinus (and possibly by his source, Frederici), who states that Agricola was 42 when he died, or even somewhat older, *ut plerique existimant* (2, 1). Sigismundus Fulginas, secretary of Innocentius VIII (pope from 1484–1492), also states: *uixit annos 42*.<sup>18</sup>

Elsewhere in their *vita* the Von Plieningens write that Agricola lived for 46 years (*Comm.* 9, 12). This is inconsistent with their precise dates of birth and death, for these yield 41 years and 7 months. This means that a mistake has been made either by Johann von Plieningen or by the copyist Johann Pfeutzer (who was wont to make errors; see my note on Von Plieningen *Ep.* 2, 1). If Pfeutzer, while copying Von Plieningen's written text, had read the number 42 in Roman numbers XLII, with the last two vertical lines connected by a diagonal ligature, he could easily have mistaken II for VI; this would mean that Von Plieningen, too, would have allowed Agricola 42 years of life. Unfortunately, there is no proof for this. At any rate, be it 46 or 42, Von Plieningen did not do his arithmetic right, for neither number is consistent with a birth date of February 17, 1444.

This brings us to a piquant anecdote told by Goswinus, that Rudolph was born on the very same day that his father was elected abbot of the Selwerd convent. When notified of the birth of his son, Hendrik Vries is said to have exclaimed: "Bene habet, ... Hodie bis pater effectus sum" (Goswinus 5,2). This fits in well

to belong. Actually he uses these words to describe – in an even more self-deprecatory way – his Latin style.

<sup>17</sup> Alardus II (*Lucubrationes*) fol.★2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* fol. ★2<sup>v</sup>.

with Agricola's birth date as given by Von Plieningen, namely February 17, 1444, for Goswinus also mentions that Hendrik Vries led the cloister for 36 years, and we know that he died October 1, 1480. Agricola's birth date furnished by Occo, that of August 28, 1443, does not tally with Hendrik Vries's election, for in that case he would have led the convent for 37 years.

Van der Velden, in his biography of Agricola, devotes seven pages to this problem and ultimately comes to the seemingly painful conclusion that the facts given by Occo and others have to be wrong. His only explanation is that Occo's information, which was carved on Agricola's tombstone (in the Franciscan church in Heidelberg), had become less legible over time and was restored and re-installed on a new monument by Viglius ab Aytta, probably in 1536, the year the monument was erected. In that form the text ended up, hand-written, in a copy of the edition by Alardus. Another possibility, according to Van der Velden, is that Viglius had the text inscribed "according to the information of that time." Neither explanation seems very persuasive to me; there is no proof whatsoever of any tombstone with an engraved or painted inscription on Agricola's grave previous to the monument erected by Viglius ab Aytta. On this monument and its text, see p. 36 below.

There may be a better solution to the problem, namely to refrain from taking Goswinus's naughty *bis pater* anecdote in its literal sense ("at the very same hour"!) and instead ascribe it to legend. It does not seem likely for a serious man like Hendrik Vries to make such a ribald and almost cynical joke at a solemn moment. It is quite possible that Hendrik Vries, when he was elected abbot of the Selwerd convent, made an agreement with the bishop that he, Hendrik Vries, would be enabled to provide for the education of his illegitimate son. In 1454, when the son was eleven years old and thus ready for higher education, and later in 1458 the bishop generously fulfilled his word; see p. 9 above. Thus, the abbot would have formally acknowledged Rudolph as his son, and Agricola himself would have kept February 17, 1444 as his official birthday; to some extent, this would have obscured the illegitimate birth of late August 1443. Be this as it may, the fact remains that two sources from Agricola's own northern environment independently declare that Agricola lived for 42 years and 2 months (thus Adolph Occo, his life-long and closest friend) or that he "reached or even passed his jubilee" (Goswinus 2, 1); for this reason I prefer the earlier date for his birth. Although legend has merged the two dates, it still contains the element of truth that Hendrik Vries was formally "made father twice" on February 17, 1444 (Goswinus 5, 2).

His illegitimate birth must always have been a painfully hushed-up fact both to Rudolph himself and his family. In one of the Selwerd charters, Abbot Hendrik refers to Rudolph as *iuvene suo*. Bakker wonders if that might mean "his son".<sup>19</sup> I suspect that the abbot deliberately avoids the term *filio suo*, just as Rudolph later avoids the term *pater meus* when in 1480 he reports his father's death – he prefers *dominus meus* (*Ep.* 22, 20) – while in the same passage he refers to his mother as

<sup>19</sup> See Bakker in *RAP* 1988, 102.

*matrem*. Hendrik Vries's clerical and unmarried state made a direct reference to this kinship impossible.

We shouldn't be surprised if the Von Plieningen brothers had heard the anecdote too: they were students in Ferrara at the same time as Rudolph Agricola, Adolph Occo, and a number of other "Frisians". That way they must have heard of the circumstances of Rudolph's birth and, via this anecdote, have merged his date of birth with the date of Hendrik Vries's election as abbot.

This would account for the discrepancy in the transmission of the two dates mentioned for Rudolph's birth. Hence I assume that Rudolph was born on or about August 28, 1443, and that his father was elected abbot of the Selwerd convent on February 17, 1444.

### *Childhood and education*

About Rudolph's early youth, his fondness of sports and his passion for music, painting and drawing, we find charming passages in Goswinus (6) and Von Plieningen (*Comm.* 9 and 10). His early education probably took place in Groningen, in the more important of the two city schools, the one connected with St. Martin's church. There is no report of any connection with the Brethren of the Common Life. The Brethren settled in Groningen between 1432 and 1436; their residence, the so-called Friars' or Clerics' House, existed until 1568/69. The fraternity had its heyday in the period 1509–1530 under the rectorship of Goswinus van Halen; not until ca. 1511 did the Brethren provide a regular education with a complete teaching program, which they kept up until ca. 1566.<sup>20</sup>

### *Erfurt and Louvain: 1456–1465*

As to Rudolph's studies from age 12 to 22, only two pieces of information from the university records are precise and reliable: he was enrolled at the University of Erfurt during the summer semester of 1456, and received his degree of *magister artium* at Louvain in 1465.<sup>21</sup> From this period before his stay in Pavia no letters have been preserved, and the *vitae* either are silent or give information that makes no sense.

It should not surprise us that Agricola went to Erfurt for his studies: there were other students from Groningen there in the second half of the 15th century, and a combination with one or two other universities (like Cologne, Heidelberg, Louvain, Rostock or Greifswald) in a *peregrinatio* was rather common. According to Zijlstra, this applied to forty students from Groningen in the period 1451–1500.<sup>22</sup> Erich Kleineidam, who writes extensively on the flourishing of Erfurt in the

<sup>20</sup> For these dates see Weiler 1997 and 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Van der Velden 1911, 48 and 50, and n. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Zijlstra 1996, 24.

period 1450–1460, gives a precise report of the great numbers of students in the *artes*. A quote: “Erfurt war in diesem Jahrzehnt die angesehenste Universität Deutschlands.”<sup>23</sup> Of the contemporaries, only Von Plieningen mentions Agricola’s studies at Erfurt (*Comm.* 2, 3–4). Agricola himself praises Erfurt in his oration for Johann von Dalberg of September 1474;<sup>24</sup> he says there that Johann’s father “inter primos statim adolescentie annos Erfordiam ipsum [scil. his son] misit, quod opidum in germania et sua praestantia et studiorum magnitudine vel imprimis clarum ...”<sup>25</sup>

According to Von Plieningen, Agricola took his baccalaureate in the year following his matriculation at Erfurt (*Comm.* 2, 4), although this is not confirmed by the university records. Von Plieningen also writes that Agricola left for Louvain immediately afterwards, where he obtained the title of *magister* in his sixteenth year, i.e. at the age of fifteen. This, however, cannot be true: in order to receive a doctoral degree in the *artes* in Louvain one had to be at least twenty years old.<sup>26</sup> Next, Von Plieningen has him travel to Cologne in order to study theology; so he should have been there in 1459 or 1460 (Von Plieningen is our only source for this). The registers of the University of Cologne state that on May 20, 1462 “Rod. de Groningen ad artes iuravit, pauper,”<sup>27</sup> but it is highly improbable that this could refer to Rudolph Agricola. At Erfurt the records of 1456 have “Rodolfus Husman, totum” (which means he had paid the full enrolment fee), and in Louvain he was described in 1465 as “Rodolphus Agricola ex Baflo prope Groeningen”. As to the man who was registered in Cologne on May 20, 1462, it is very well possible that there was more than one Rodolphus among the great many students from Groningen who studied *artes* in Cologne at that time.<sup>28</sup>

Actually, it would not be surprising if Agricola between 1456 (Erfurt) and 1468 (Pavia) had studied for some time in Cologne as well as in Louvain, but what subject and at what time remains entirely unclear. In his letters, Agricola himself describes several sojourns in Cologne – he mentions the city nineteen times in fourteen different letters – but it is never about the university there. Von Plieningen is the only one of the *vita* authors who writes about Agricola’s studies at Cologne; Goswinus does mention some people from Groningen studying at Cologne, but not Rudolph; the others never mention Cologne at all. It is possible that Rudolph’s father, attentive as he was to his son’s studies, preferred to send him to Erfurt, which was much frequented in the fifties, and to Louvain, which had an excellent reputation as well, rather than to Cologne, where he had studied himself. Geldenhouwer, too, (3, 1–2) mentions Louvain’s desirability over other universities at this time.

<sup>23</sup> Kleineidam 1964, 154 ff.

<sup>24</sup> For the circumstances of this oration see Sottili in *RAP* 1988, 86.

<sup>25</sup> Ms. Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, cod. 4° 37, fol. 33<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Van der Essen 1945, 238.

<sup>27</sup> Van der Velden 1911, 52 and n. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Before 1558, more than 500 students from Groningen were matriculated in Cologne. See Meuthen 1988, 214; Zijlstra 1996, *passim*.



We are better informed about Agricola's studies in Louvain. Apart from his receiving the highest degree in the *artes* in 1465, his name is not found in the university registers. In his own letters, all of which date from 1469 and later, Agricola mentions Louvain a few times. In *Ep.* 22, 24 he tells Adolph Occo that in 1480 he was twice at Duke Maximilian's court as an ambassador, and stayed in Brussels for 21 days. He adds: "Lovanii non fui", which may well indicate that he and Occo had studied in Louvain together (see our note at *Ep.* 18). In *Ep.* 28, 10 (October 24, 1482), addressed to Dietrich von Plieningen, he writes that he had been offered a position at Louvain (a professorship in *poetica*, in 1477), which he had declined because he wanted to study Greek. In *Ep.* 31, 3 (January 21, 1482) Agricola tells his half-brother Johannes that he had intended to send his other half-brother, Hendrik, to Louvain for his studies and to pay the expenses himself. Other letters that show his involvement with Louvain are *Epp.* 38, 65 and 47, 6. He also refers to Louvain in an intellectual context, e.g. the speculations and discussions at Louvain in 1465–1475 about the so-called future contingents; see *Ep.* 36, 6–14 and the notes.<sup>29</sup>

Friedrich Mormann's first poem in Pieter Schoonbeeg's edition in all likelihood dates from the period 1465–1468, and is probably directed to Rudolph Agricola.<sup>30</sup> It mentions Agricola's being formed into a *vatem novellum* at Louvain. In fact, a poem by (almost certainly) Rudolph Agricola has been preserved – an *epitaphium* for a distinguished lady of Rasquert near Baflo, dating from 1467 – which testifies to his competence as a poet.<sup>31</sup> Louvain and the northern Low Countries received and cultivated Italian humanism (giving it a content and form all of their own) earlier than has often been supposed.

Another testimony regarding Agricola's student days in Louvain can be found in his rectoral oration at Pavia for Paulus de Baenst of Bruges. He tells his audience the following: "Praeteriti autem et incipientis aevi ego illi, posterioris vos mihi estis locupletissimi testes." Agricola and De Baenst were students in Louvain together.<sup>32</sup>

Of the *vitae*, only that by Geldenhouwer contains a charming and credible story about Agricola's stay in Louvain (Geldenhouwer 3–4). The author of this *vita* had studied in Louvain himself in the years around 1500 and often stayed there for his work later in life. From Geldenhouwer 4, 1 we might conclude that Agricola stayed on in Louvain after obtaining his degree of *magister artium*.

In 5, 1, Geldenhouwer tells us that from Louvain, Agricola went to France for his further studies. Nothing more is known about a French period in his *peregrinatio*, except that his lavish praise of the University of Paris has suggested to some that he based this on his personal experience.<sup>33</sup> A factor pleading against a stay in Paris is the war between Louis XI and Charles the Bold in that period.

<sup>29</sup> De Vocht devotes ten pages to Agricola's stay in Louvain: I (1951), 1976, 148–158.

<sup>30</sup> Schoonbeeg 1993, 332.

<sup>31</sup> First printed by E. Kochs, 1937; recently by Van der Laan 2001, 181; see p. 6 in the Summary.

<sup>32</sup> See Sottili 1997, 95 and 128.

<sup>33</sup> Agricola, *Vita Petrarcae*, ed. Bertalot 1928, 389 (cf. Bertalot on p. 402).

I quote a sentence from Astrik L. Gabriel: “In this atmosphere of war it is no wonder that we find no Louvain graduates registered in Paris between 1461 and 1468.”<sup>34</sup> Geldenhouwer does not mention Paris. There is, however, a note from the brothers Ludolph and Adam van den Bergh to their father (Willem, who lived in the castle Huis Bergh in the village of ’s-Heerenberg), in which they tell him that they are sending “heer Roloff” to him (with this letter), to notify him about their forthcoming journey to Italy. This note is dated August 3, 1464 at Cambray in France.<sup>35</sup> That is where Agricola must have been at the time if, indeed, “heer Roloff” refers to Rudolph Agricola – which is not at all unlikely in view of his friendship with the family; see *Epp.* 26, 8; 30, 1–4n.; 32, 3; 40, 7n.

*Pavia: 1468–1475*

The year of Agricola’s departure for Italy is not quite certain. Von Plieningen (*Comm.* 3, 1) says he leaves for Pavia “quartum et vigesimum annum agens”. Both Van der Velden and Sottili assume that this took place in 1468.<sup>36</sup> Of Agricola’s surviving letters, the first five were written in the period 1468–1475 (in 1475 he moved to Ferrara): the first letter, dated July 18, 1469, was written to Albert Goyer from Pavia. Goyer had studied in Rostock, where he was elected rector twice (1466 and 1471) and where he is referred to as *artium et medicinae doctor* (see *Agr. Ep.* 1n.); he came from Hasselt, probably the town in the northern Low Countries. The second letter is to Rudolph’s “dear friend” Johannes Vredewolt, from a well-known Groningen family; he had notified Agricola of his wish to get a degree in theology in Pavia, where his father had received a degree in canon law in 1440. The letter is from 1472; the degree was taken January 26, 1473.<sup>37</sup>

Letters 3 and 4 are addressed to two other members of the early circle of humanists in the northern Low Countries, Rudolphus Langius and Antonius Liber. Interestingly, both letters were written not in Pavia but in Selwerd, in the convent where Agricola’s father lived. Evidently, Agricola spent the winter of 1470–1471 (the letters are dated October 26 and February 5) in the North. Another interesting aspect of these letters is that they have a markedly programmatic character and that both of them are included in the great *Familiarium epistolarum compendium* collected by Liber and printed in Cologne ca. 1475. It is conceivable that the two letters were especially written for this book so that, in combination with Langius’s six letters and the six written by Liber, they would form a kind of humanist teaching program. The book was composed at the request of, and dedicated to, the rector of the more important of the two Latin schools at Groningen, Arnold von Bevelen of Hildesheim.<sup>38</sup> Just as Agricola’s two letters

<sup>34</sup> Gabriel 1978, 106.

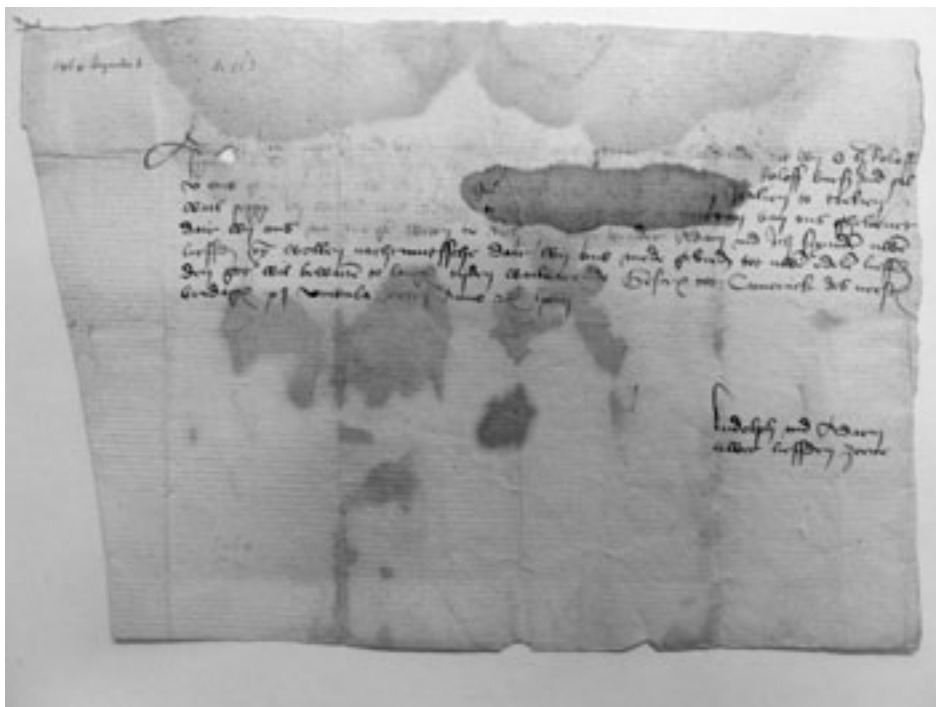
<sup>35</sup> See the photograph on p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> Van der Velden 1911, 65; Sottili 1999, 206.

<sup>37</sup> On Vredewolt see Agricola, *Ep.* 2n.; Sottili 1987, 136; also in *RAP* 1988, 80–81.

<sup>38</sup> On the book, the people and the letters, see the dissertation of Van der Laan, 1998.

## INTRODUCTION



Letter from Ludolph and Adam van den Bergh to their father Willem, who lived in the castle Huis Bergh, dated August 3, 1464 in Cambrai. Inventory/Cartulary of Letters, part 1, inv. no. 133. On the facing page a transcription by A. van Schilfgaarde and a translation by J. Waszink. See Introduction, pp. 15 and 17.

were written at the Selwerd convent with its famous scriptorium,<sup>39</sup> so were the six letters by Langius written in the monastery of Aduard, in the period of February 22 through March 26, 1469. All but one of Langius's letters are addressed to Liber, Agricola's letters are addressed to Langius and Liber, and Liber's are addressed to various recipients. It might well be that Liber, who had taken it upon himself to edit the entire collection of 348 letters, had asked Langius and Agricola to contribute a few pieces. In those days, Liber taught at St. Martin's school in Groningen and was also *notarius* of that city. The Aduard monastery had paid for his studies abroad.<sup>40</sup> Pavia was one of the universities he attended, possibly in 1468, perhaps together with Agricola.<sup>41</sup> The two letters Agricola wrote to him (*Epp.* 4 and 37) show the close humanist friendship between the two men.

<sup>39</sup> See note 11.

<sup>40</sup> See the letters written by Goswinus van Halen to Albert Hardenberg in 1528, printed in Wessel Gansfort, *Opera* 1614 and translated by Akkerman and Santing 1987, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Thus Worstbrock 1985, 748.

Edele lieve joncker ind vader. Uwen brieff ons gesonden inhalden de dat wij U heer Roloff seynden willen yrst dages hebn wy ontfangen. Soe seynden wi heer Roloff vursz. ind sal U ons gelegenheit als wy sün ind oick wes mede in Italien to treken wail seggen by welke ons weder te laiten weten wes U voirtaen van ons ghelievt dair wy ons na moigen weten to richten. Mün brueder Adam und ick seynden Uwen lieffden eyn wollen nachtmutssche dair wy ons mede gebieden tot Uwen edelen lieffden den Got wil bewairen to langen tyden wailvarende. Gescreven tot Camerick des naysten Vridages post Vincula Petri anno etc. LXIII

Ludolph ind Adam Uwer lieffden zoene.

Noble dear squire and father. We have received Your letter sent to us containing [the request] to send sir Rudolph to You within soon. So we send off sir Rudolph aforementioned and [he] will inform You about how we are doing and the manner in which we are planning to travel to Italy; let us know in turn through him whatever you require us to do, so that we can direct ourselves to it. My brother Adam and myself send You a woollen nightcap, by which we also recommend ourselves to Your love, that God may preserve You in prosperity for many years to come. Written at Cambray, the first Friday after St. Peter-in-Chains in the year etc. 64.

Ludolph and Adam Your loving sons.

Liber's book gives us a picture of a group activity of humanists, which took place at a school in the city of Groningen and in two nearby monastic institutions, both led by abbots who were interested in modern culture and science, Hendrik van Rees and Hendrik Vries. It is reasonably certain that this humanist movement began before 1469 (when Langius wrote his letters in Aduard) and that it was still in existence a hundred years later: we think of the rector of St. Martin's in particular, Regnerus Praedinius, who in the middle of the sixteenth century attracted students to Groningen from far and wide.<sup>42</sup> We also know for a fact that, during all his years of activity in Italy and later at Heidelberg, Agricola kept in touch with these Northern humanists.

<sup>42</sup> Several aspects of humanist culture in and around Groningen are treated, in addition to the dissertation by Van der Laan (1998), in the three collections of conference papers in *RAP* 1988, *Wessel Gansfort* 1993, and *Northern Humanism* 1999; also in *Rudolf Agricola 1444-1485*, ed. Wilhelm Kühlmann, 1994. On Praedinius see now Postma 1993, 291-324; Akkerman 1999, 23-42; id. 2005, 4-5 and 18-21; *id.*, 'De Aduarder academie', forthcoming in Von Martels, *Tegen barbarij*.

Agricola had come to Pavia to study Civil Law (*ius civile*), and he definitely adhered to this plan. Von Plieningen explicitly mentions it in *Com.* 3, 1–3, but is full of disdain for these *levia illa exiguaque rerum momenta*, (quoting Agricola's own words; see my note on *Comm.* 3, 2); and so, according to Von Plieningen, the study of Law was abandoned after a few years in favor of the *litterae politiores* and the *artes humanitatis*. Choosing another discipline, as well as the father's plans being thwarted by the son, are fixed *topoi* both in classical and contemporary literature; Agricola uses them elaborately in his *Vita Petrarcae*.<sup>43</sup> Still, it is unlikely that Agricola paid as little attention to the study of law, and for as short a time, as Von Plieningen suggests: in a letter from Ferrara, a year after his departure from Pavia, Agricola is still able to tell Von Plieningen in detail which parts of the Codex will be discussed in the mornings and afternoons of the next year (*Ep.* 12, 7). In addition there is Agricola's poem *In laudem Papiae panegyricon* (Alardus II, 309), which gives evidence of his admiration for some famous professors of Civil Law such as Lucas and Johannes de Grassis, Johannes de Puteo, and Cato Saccus. No wonder that Sottili, thanks to whom these scholars are now better known, concludes that Agricola had been a student of Roman law for many years.<sup>44</sup> Of these scholars, Agricola was most familiar with Lucas de Grassis, a prominent and highly salaried jurist in Pavia during Agricola's years there. It is to him that Agricola devotes his poem *Ad Lucam Crassum iuris utriusque doctorem* (Alardus II, 310), in which he in the classical style offers his revered master – whom he ventures to call his friend! – a modest gift of some fruits from his garden. Surely this means that the jurist Crassus would appreciate a poem in the humanist style. That Agricola was well integrated into the jurists' community appears even more clearly from the fact that he was invited to deliver the oration both at the inauguration of Paulus de Baenst (August 10, 1473) and that of Johann von Dalberg (September 1474), both jurists and *rectores* of the Faculty of Law.

Another indication that Agricola took his study of *ius civile* seriously is his use of legal terms<sup>45</sup> and, of course, the fact that he was secretary of the city of Groningen for four years, something which would have been impossible without a legal training.

Much more evident, however, are Agricola's activities as a humanist (if one wants to differentiate between *studium iuris* and *studium humanitatis*). First, there is a third poem by his hand, *Carmen ad Cribellium Mediolanensem* (Alardus II, 293–294), which has been transmitted three times.<sup>46</sup> The Crivellis were a prominent family in Milan; the friend to whom Agricola addressed this poem was probably Girolamo (Hieronymus) Crivelli.<sup>47</sup> It is an elegantly phrased request in 56

<sup>43</sup> To illustrate the philosophical concept of *finis*, Agricola uses the example of *studia* for which the student, his father and a friend may all have different *finis*: DID I, 15.

<sup>44</sup> Sottili 1999, 209–214.

<sup>45</sup> See my notes on Melanchthon, *Oratio* II, 1 and *Epistola* 3.

<sup>46</sup> See RAP 1988, 319.

<sup>47</sup> Sottili 1999, 217–219.

hendecasyllabi, in which Agricola requests that Pliny the Younger's letters and *Panegyricus* be sent to him.<sup>48</sup> Later, in 1478, Agricola copied a codex of Pliny's letters himself.<sup>49</sup>

The fifth letter from this period was written in Pavia, presumably in 1474. It is addressed to Antonio Scrovegni and accompanies a Latin translation of a letter in French from Arnold de Lalaing to Paulus de Baenst, rector of the university in the years 1473–1474. Lalaing's letter contains an account of the conference of Emperor Frederick III and Charles the Bold in Trier, in October – November 1473. Both this report and Agricola's comments (*Ep.* 5, 6–10) were relevant to the relations between Burgundy and Milan.<sup>50</sup>

Of great importance in the history of Northern humanism is Agricola's *Vita Petrarcae*, dedicated to the above-mentioned Antonio Scrovegni, whom Sottili views as a friend and perhaps protector or patron of Agricola. Sottili expresses this opinion in an article in which he presents all the existing information on the origin and the importance of the Scrovegni family.<sup>51</sup> Agricola's *Vita Petrarcae* is a rhetorical *laudatio*, written in 1473 but dated 1477 in the manuscripts.<sup>52</sup> That he wrote this in Pavia may be due to the fact that so many Petrarca manuscripts were kept there.<sup>53</sup> Only Trithemius and Von Plieningen mention this splendid *oratio* or *declamatio* among Agricola's works.

Summing up, we have (apart from the five letters) eight texts that Agricola wrote in Pavia: three poems, three orations delivered to the university community (for the third see below), one translation (from French into Latin), and one *vita* of the “father of humanism”.

As we said before, Agricola seriously studied law in Pavia, but other subjects were offered there as well, albeit to a small degree: there were professors of medicine, of rhetoric (one of whom taught Greek), and even of theology. This last scholar was the advisor of Johannes Vredewolt (see *Ep.* 2), at whose doctoral promotion Agricola acted as a witness, the only time Rudolph is mentioned by name in the university archives of Pavia. Agricola undoubtedly took the Greek classes of Giorgio Valla. On June 7, 1472, he delivered the inaugural oration in honor of rector Matthias Richilus, a “medico-artista” (in Pavia these two subjects were combined in one faculty). As appears from the letters, he was close friends with quite a number of fellow-students: Sottili mentions about fifteen, some of whom Agricola tutored;<sup>54</sup> see also Von Plieningen (*Comm.* 3, 7), who in his *vita* refers fourteen times to Agricola as *praeceptor noster*. It goes without saying that Agricola, who had received his degree of *magister artium* as *primus* in Louvain,

<sup>48</sup> See “Erasmus on Agricola” in this volume, pp. 211–212.

<sup>49</sup> *RAP* 1988, 319; *ibid.* 126 (Hermans).

<sup>50</sup> See Sottili in *RAP* 1988, 88–95.

<sup>51</sup> Sottili 2002b.

<sup>52</sup> See my note on Goswinus I, 3.

<sup>53</sup> See Billanovich 1947, esp. 327–335; De la Mare 1973, I, 5–6.

<sup>54</sup> See Sottili in *RAP* 1988, 81–83.

had much to offer his younger fellow-students. Agricola was well integrated into the university community of Pavia and especially successful as a humanist, at a university with an excellent reputation all over Europe.<sup>55</sup>

A final remark: Von Plieningen is the only one to tell us in detail about the seven years in Pavia. The other *vitae* do not mention Pavia at all.

*Ferrara: 1475–1479*

Agricola stayed in Ferrara from the middle of September 1475<sup>56</sup> until sometime after March 17, 1479 (see p. 53), when he set out on his return journey to Groningen. During the journey he spent a few months (“aliquot menses”, according to Von Plieningen, *Comm.* 5) in Dillingen at the house of the bishop of Augsburg, where he still was on August 24, 1479, shortly before his departure (*Ep.* 18,8 and 17). That means he must have left Ferrara in the spring or early summer of that year. From this period in Ferrara (about three and a half years) we have ten letters by his hand (*Epp.* 6–15). There is information in the *vitae* as well (Von Plieningen, *Comm.* 4–5; 9; 12; Goswinus I, 3; II, 2; Geldenhouwer 5 (twice); 6; 7; 10 (quoting Erasmus); Melanchthon, *Epistola* 2; 8; Melanchthon *Oratio* 6; 7). Finally, there are some official records attesting to his presence there.

It must have been Agricola’s lifelong passion for classical literature that drew him to Ferrara. According to *Epp.* 6, 5; 10, 8; and 13, 7, Greek had become part of this interest. But it was not exclusively his interest in Greek that motivated his departure from Pavia, as Von Plieningen thought (*Comm.* 4, 1). A political motive may have played a part as well: the rectorate of the Spaniard Ludovicus de Alis, who was an enemy of Von Dalberg and succeeded him as rector in Pavia for the academic year 1475–1476.<sup>57</sup>

At any rate, Agricola must have learned Greek in Ferrara, probably under the guidance of Battista Guarini, a son of Guarino da Verona. Greek quotations occur for the first time in the above-mentioned letter 18 of August 24, 1479 to his friend Adolph Occo, who, like Agricola, had received a thorough grounding in Greek at Ferrara. It is quite certain that Agricola did most of his translations from Greek at Ferrara: the pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus* and Ps.-Isocrates’s *Paraenesis ad Demonicum*, both of which he dedicated to Northern humanists, namely Langius and his half-brother Johannes in 1477 and 1478 respectively (see *Epp.* 14 and 15). Johannes was also studying at Ferrara at the time (see *Ep.* 9, 1); as to Langius, he and Agricola apparently were still close (see *Ep.* 3). Of two other translations from the Greek (Isocrates’ *Ad Nicoclem* and Aphthonius’s *Progymnasmata*) Von Plieningen says in *Comm.* 4, 8 that the latter was written at Ferrara, and according to Van der

<sup>55</sup> On the importance of Pavia see Sottili 1982.

<sup>56</sup> See Sottili in *RAP* 1988, 81–83.

<sup>57</sup> See Sottili, *ibid.*

Velden, so perhaps was the former.<sup>58</sup> Van der Velden's hypothesis that *Ad Nicoclem*, a "mirror for princes", was dedicated to Ercole d'Este is not confirmed in any document; these two works bear no dedication. As to a fifth translation, *Gallus sive Micyllus*, we do not know whether it was written in 1479 at Ferrara and dedicated to Dietrich von Plieningen (thus Von Plieningen, *Comm.* 4, 9; see my note) or in 1484 (Agricola, *Epp.* 40, 10; 42, 4; 43, 3). The two translations mentioned first show the lasting connection with Northern humanism; Agricola wrote them with a mostly Northern audience in mind.<sup>59</sup>

The presence of so many students from Groningen in Ferrara (see Goswinus II, 2 and my note) inspired Sottili to write his article 'Ferrara culla dell'Umanesimo in Frisia' (2003). Agricola cut a brilliant figure among his fellow-countrymen.

In the fall of 1476 he was invited (or permitted)<sup>60</sup> to deliver the inaugural oration for the opening of the academic year of the Faculty of Arts and Medicine: the fine *Oratio in laudem philosophiae et reliquarum artium*. (It is not quite clear whether Greek was taught within or outside the university.)<sup>61</sup> In addition to this *oratio*, Goswinus mentions a special *declamatio* that Frederici "at some point in time" (*aliquando*) heard Agricola give at Ferrara (I, 3); in my note I suggested that this could have been the *Vita Petrarchae*. Geldenhouwer (5, 2), Erasmus (see Geldenhouwer 10, 4) and Melanchthon (*Oratio* 6, 5–6) also mention Agricola's activities in Ferrara as an orator and teacher. Indeed, there is no doubt that Agricola taught in Ferrara as well as earlier in Pavia and later in Heidelberg, although he never held an academic position. Agricola's only position in Ferrara was that of a *familiaris illustrissimi nostri ducis*, as an official document of 1478 puts it.<sup>62</sup> Besides, he would not have been invited in 1476 to give the *oratio* if he had not already given evidence of his erudition and ability as a speaker.

Another activity of Agricola during these years was playing the organ in the duke's chapel on *festis sacris ac statis*, i.e. Sundays and holidays (Von Plieningen, *Comm.* 4, 3). Agricola himself refers to his service to the duke in *Ep.* 10, 6. Characteristically, he mentions it with a show of modesty: "alitque me uetus hec nostra canendi in organis ineptia." However, we know that from the very beginning of his rule (1471) Ercole d'Este had always attached great importance to the musical aspect of these religious ceremonies.<sup>63</sup> A preserved list of paid singers and musicians indicates that Agricola earned 11.40 LM (*lire Marchesane*) in January of 1476. He himself writes in April of the same year that he received a stipend of 5 *aurei* a month, and that he was expecting a sixth any day (*Ep.*

<sup>58</sup> Van der Velden 1911, 106–107.

<sup>59</sup> IJsewijn gives a survey of Agricola's Greek oeuvre in *RAP* 1988.

<sup>60</sup> See Sottili 2002a, 110.

<sup>61</sup> Van der Velden 1911, 89; Gundersheimer 1973, 223; Sottili 2003, 1276: "Agricola è a Ferrara organista del duca, non studente."

<sup>62</sup> See Sottili 2002a, 116–117.

<sup>63</sup> On this subject see Lockwood 1984, ch. 15.



10, 9). Sottili calculates that 5 *aurei* equal 14 LM.<sup>64</sup> Gundersheimer gives a clear account of the financial records of the Este family, listing the groups of employees and the amounts of the various grants as they have been transmitted in great detail in the manuscript of the chronicler Ugo Caleffini for that very same year 1476. Gundersheimer concludes that it was possible to get by on less than 2 LM a month, and that a stipend of 25 LM a month “was sufficient to keep an independent gentleman in good style.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, the words “alit me” of *Ep.* 10, 6 are quite appropriate. Keeping in mind that Agricola also had an income from the domain in Bafflo, we may safely conclude that he wanted for nothing and must have had sufficient means to “buy Greek books and live in a decent manner”, as Von Plieningen tells us in *Comm.* 4, 3. We may equally assume that he was selected as the best from the candidates for the position of organist of the *Cappella dei Cantori*, so that Von Plieningen’s qualification in *Comm.* 10, 2 “that he might have challenged any of his contemporaries to a contest” is not just hollow praise. Agricola’s plan to write a book on music is also indicative of this. Caleffini’s lists show that he was organist in Ercole’s chapel during the years 1476 and 1477.

In *Ep.* 11, 2, Agricola reports that as a member of the duke’s retinue he paid a visit to Modena, an important town in the duchy, presumably in June of 1476. We don’t know if he made any appearance there as a musician or orator. In Von Plieningen, *Comm.* 4, 10, we read that in Ferrara he wrote the hymn to St. Jodocus after his friend the physician Adolph Occo had cured him of an illness.<sup>66</sup>

In the *vitae* other than Von Plieningen’s, Ferrara does not play an important part. Goswinus mentions the town twice (1, 3 and 11, 1). Geldenhouwer is quite brief but to the point (5, 3). Melanchthon tells us a lot (*Epistola* 2, 2; *Oratio* 6), but this information is not very reliable. However, when he says that Agricola “... interdum cithara luderet in conviviis eruditorum” (*Oratio* 6, 7) he may well be right: it agrees with Von Plieningen, *Comm.* 10, 1–3, where the secular aspect of Agricola’s musical activity is described.

Of the ten letters written in Ferrara, the town is not mentioned at all in the two dedications of *Epp.* 14 and 15. In *Epp.* 6, 7, 8, and 9 he mainly writes about missing Pavia and his friends there (not surprisingly, these letters are written to one of them). Only in *Epp.* 10, 6–9 and 11, 2–4 do we find actual information about his life in Ferrara: first about his position of organist, then about his visit to Modena (both in close connection with the duke) and the death of his landlord. His study of Greek, on the other hand, is mentioned right away in *Epp.* 6, 5 and 10, 8. It is not until late December 1476, in the letter to Johann von

<sup>64</sup> See Sottili 2002a, 119.

<sup>65</sup> Gundersheimer 1973, Appendix I, 285–296.

<sup>66</sup> On this poem see Van der Velden 1911, 92–93. In *RAP* 1988 see Bakker 109; Santing 173–178; Schoonbeeg 196f.

Dalberg, that he dares praise the charms of Ferrara (*Ep.* 13, 3–6), although even there he contrasts the discipline and multitude of the courses offered in Pavia (*studiorum ... diligentia et magnitudo*) favorably with the *humanores litteras* of Ferrara.

Undoubtedly Agricola spent three wonderful, rich years in Ferrara. He was thought of highly by the rulers (see Von Plieningen, *Comm.* 4, 4), his fellow-countrymen from the North, the intellectual elite, and the young ladies. Ferrara was to him the home of the Muses and Venus (*Ep.* 13, 6). In the *Oratio* of 1476 he added to this *Musarum ... domicilium et Veneris* the following qualification of Venus: "... venustatis, otii, pacis omniumque rerum ubertatis," and of the Muses: "... ob id praesidibus humanitatis atque eruditionis, quae otio gaudent, quiete aluntur."<sup>67</sup> But besides this "celestial Venus" there was also the "terrestrial Venus", to whose domain the *Felicias et Magdalenas* of *Ep.* 13, 4 belonged. (Both goddesses are well represented in the art of Ferrara and Mantua.)<sup>68</sup> In the *Oratio*, Agricola paid a splendid tribute to Ferrara and to everything he felt the city stood for, but as far as the letters are concerned, that topic was beyond their scope. Von Plieningen is the only one of the *vita* authors who adequately attests to what Ferrara meant to Agricola. About his personal association with lettered men like Battista Guarini, Lodovico Carbone, and Tito Strozzi we find nothing in the letters. The only thing we are told about Guarini (*Ep.* 27, 18) is that he was on familiar terms with Johann von Plieningen – had Agricola enjoyed Guarini's confidence too? Again, Agricola's letters say nothing, or practically nothing, about Ferrara's art, politics, and people. They never contain any broad, objective descriptions of what he hears, sees, experiences, or reads. Filled with moral lessons, admonitions, praise, requests, and personal experiences, they are always addressed to one specific person.

The last thing we learn about Agricola's stay in Ferrara is that he has started on his *De inventione dialectica*. Agricola himself and Von Plieningen comment on this in a similar way, in *Ep.* 17, 1 and *Comm.* 5, 1 respectively. Although it was undoubtedly the rhetorical and philosophical climate of Ferrara that inspired Agricola to write this work, he nevertheless dedicates it to one of his Northern companions.

Neither the *vitae* nor the letters mention the large project on which Agricola worked in Pavia and Ferrara, namely copying and emending the texts of Tacitus and Pliny the Younger (including the two autographs now kept in Leiden). The above-mentioned poem *Ad Cribellium Mediolanensem* is the only work from the period 1468–1479 in which Agricola explicitly, outside of the codices and *editiones principes* themselves, mentions one of these texts (Pliny).<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *Oratio in laudem philosophiae et reliquarum artium*, ed. Rupprich 1964, 180.

<sup>68</sup> See Fenlon 1990, 221–223.

<sup>69</sup> See the contributions of Hermans and Römer in *RAP* 1988.

*From Ferrara to Groningen: 1479–1480*

The journey from Ferrara back to Groningen is reasonably well-documented in the letters and the *vitae*. As mentioned before, Agricola must have started out from Ferrara in the spring or early summer of 1479 and arrived in Groningen in late fall, or else quite early in 1480. The first stopping place was Dillingen on the Danube, where, at Dietrich von Plieningen's intercession, Agricola stayed a few months at the summer palace of the bishop of Augsburg, Count Johann von Werdenberg. There Agricola completed first his *De inventione dialectica* (the letter of dedication to Dietrich von Plieningen is dated August 15, i.e. *Ep.* 17); next, by way of thanks for his accommodation, he wrote a Latin translation of a work by Lucian, *De non facile credendis delationibus*, which he dedicated to the bishop (*Ep.* 16). The stay in Dillingen and the two texts are recorded in detail by Johann von Plieningen (*Comm.* 5, 1–3). Agricola's letter 18 of August 24, 1479 was also written in Dillingen. In that letter we read Greek quotations for the first time, and we also hear that Agricola wants to learn Hebrew; moreover, we learn that Dietrich is in the process of copying "the remaining two books" of *De inventione dialectica* – apparently the first book had already been copied.<sup>70</sup>

Agricola must have left Dillingen in early September. His next letter, dated September 15, 1479, is written in Cologne and addressed to Dietrich von Plieningen. Written in telegram style (*vides festinationem meam*), it describes a visit to Johann von Dalberg in Speyer. The library they visited together was not Von Dalberg's large book collection (which is of a later date),<sup>71</sup> but a library in the town of Speyer.

How long Agricola stayed in Cologne we do not know, but it was long enough for his presence there to become known in the North. This can be concluded from Friedrich Mormann's *Carmen xvii*, which deals with Agricola's return to Groningen and is addressed to Wessel Gansfort: *Si nescis, tenet hunc* (sc. *Agricolam pulchra Colonia*).<sup>72</sup>

Agricola's next letter is dated April 3, 1480 and written from the convent at Selwerd. On the intervening period the reports are scanty but of the utmost importance. From Goswinus's *vita* 2 we learn that Agricola stayed in 's-Heerenberg in the province of Gelderland at the house of Adam van den Bergh; from there he visited nearby Emmerich, where he taught Alexander Hegius, the principal of the important Latin school, "pure Latin and Greek".<sup>73</sup> The significance of this *translatio Musarum* can hardly be overestimated; both Hegius himself (see Geldenhower 9, 2) and later Erasmus (see Geldenhower 10, 7) were fully aware of that. It has been generally agreed upon that the stay in 's-Heerenberg took place in

<sup>70</sup> On the transmission of the DID text, see my note on Geldenhower 12, 1–2.

<sup>71</sup> See Morneweg 1887, 232–239.

<sup>72</sup> *Carmen xvii* in ed. Schoonbeeg, 1993, 346f.

<sup>73</sup> On this visit see my notes on Goswinus 2. On the school in Emmerich see Edith Ennen, 1985.



Castle “Huis Bergh”, 's-Heerenberg, rebuilt from 1912 onwards by Jan van Heek. Photograph Michiel Pothoff. See Introduction, pp. 24–26; Goswinus, par. 2.

1479 during the journey from Ferrara to Groningen, but it is uncertain how long the visit lasted. Reichling estimates it at half a year; according to Bedaux, it lasted from October to December 1479, for which he refers to Hövelmann.<sup>74</sup> Goswinus connects 's-Heerenberg with Count Moritz von Spiegelberg (1406/7–1483) in a curious way, but it is a fact that this distinguished canon of the cathedral of Cologne, who maintained strong ties with Agricola (see the beautiful passage of *Ep.* 40, 7–9), was also closely connected with the lords of the castle Huis Bergh and

<sup>74</sup> Reichling 1911, 458; Bedaux 1998, 19–20; Hövelmann 1987, 94.

with Emmerich, where he was provost. We see here a fine example of a symbiosis between noble and ecclesiastical patronage on one hand and city and school (of Emmerich) on the other.

The friendship between Von Spiegelberg and Agricola – 37 years younger and from a totally different social and geographical background – was undoubtedly based on a shared passion for classical literature (especially poetry) and for Italy. Von Spiegelberg had been in Florence in 1441, where he had copied the complete text of Vergil's *Georgics* with his own hand; Agricola had done the same with Tacitus and the letters of Pliny in Pavia and Ferrara in the 1470s.<sup>75</sup>

#### *Groningen: 1480–1484*

From the four years Agricola spent in the service of the city of Groningen, eighteen letters have been preserved of a most heterogeneous nature – humanist contacts, scholarly lessons, personal dilemmas and choices, family affairs, and official travels form a delightful collage of early humanist life.

From 1480 we have three letters: one addressed to Friedrich Mormann (*Ep.* 20), written from Selwerd on April 3; one to Alexander Hegius (*Ep.* 21) from Groningen on September 20; and the third (*Ep.* 22) to Adolph Occo from Cologne on October 19. The first letter immediately takes us back to the world of early Northern humanism: it gives thanks and praise to Mormann for the two poems he wrote on the occasion of Agricola's return from Italy (*Carmina* xvii and xviii in Schoonbeeg 1993, 346–348). (The same Mormann had also written a farewell poem for Rudolph at his departure (*Carmen* 1, *ibid.* 332).) The letter also mentions Wessel Gansfort, Rudolph's half-brother Hendrik, Adolph Occo, Liber and Langius. Thus, if we include both writer and addressee, we have on one single page the names of seven men who are all involved in education, scholarship, and its reform, and who are all more or less acquainted with each other. Clearly Agricola's ties with the North were never severed.

It looks as if Agricola had already been home for some time when he wrote this letter, for one of the things he mentions is that the last few days (“*proximis diebus*”) he had been staying with Liber, who apparently no longer lived in Groningen at that time.<sup>76</sup>

The two other letters are also distinctly humanistic in character; both convey the pangs of loss Agricola is suffering, bereaved as he is of intellectual contact since his departure from Italy (*Epp.* 21, 1–9; 22, 7–18). He even tells Occo that he does not intend to stay in Groningen long (*Ep.* 22, 33). On his own work he comments only negatively: he is hardly getting anything done, and what does get done is no good (but the three splendid letters which he writes belie his words). In *Ep.*

<sup>75</sup> On the connection between Agricola and Von Spiegelberg see Hövelmann 1987; Sottili 1988b; Akkerman 2009.

<sup>76</sup> Liber was *notarius* in Groningen in 1477 and in Kampen in 1482. See Van der Laan 1998, 15.

21 he energetically continues the lessons in “pure Greek and Latin” to Alexander Hegius that were started in ’s-Heerenberg.

It is hard to trace his steps during this year. During the summer, Mormann visited him in Groningen, as he had promised (*Epp.* 20, 10; 22, 26). Assuming that Agricola was already secretary of Groningen in June 1480, he must have been in Deventer at least twice: Bakker points out that a record of that town mentions a visit of the *secretarius* of Groningen between June 15 and 30; and in *Ep.* 22, written from Cologne on October 19, Agricola mentions having visited Deventer on the way from Groningen to Cologne.<sup>77</sup>

At any rate, his “traveling ambassadorship” for the city of Groningen started in 1480. As a representative of that city he was at Maximilian’s court twice (in the position of *orator*) and he tells Occo explicitly that he is now also *scriba* of Groningen – apparently the city government immediately invested him with several offices. His brother Johannes accompanied him as a *cyrographus*, to draw up and write out documents (on these functions see *Ep.* 23, 18 and Goswinus 3, 2 with notes), while Occo’s brother, also named Johannes, was appointed for the actual clerical work in the town hall (see *Ep.* 22, 23). In that same year Agricola also spent some time in Nijmegen, as we learn from Geldenhouwer 5, 4; from *Ep.* 35, 4 we know that his brother was with him. Since in 1481 Johannes was already secretary at the court of Countess Theda in Aurich, we may safely conclude that this visit to Nijmegen indeed took place in 1480. The contacts between Groningen and Nijmegen must have been close at that time, including politically: because of the war between Gelderland and Burgundy much was at stake during the years 1480–1481, for Groningen as well.<sup>78</sup> 1480 was probably also the year of Agricola’s visit to Roermond, from where he brought Goswinus van Halen back with him as a *famulus* for Wessel Gansfort, along with a manuscript of bishop Eucherius for Wandelvaert, a nun in Selwerd (originally from Nijmegen!); see Goswinus 10, 1–3 with notes.

We may wonder at Agricola’s immense mobility, but the same can be said about Wessel Gansfort, Alexander Hegius and many others. Traveling comes naturally to these scholars and is regarded by them as something positive.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, Agricola does not neglect his relationships at home, as we learn from *Ep.* 20 and the following letters. There are, for example, visits to the monastery at Aduard, of which he tells Occo in *Ep.* 26, 27, dated October 11, 1482, two years after the previous letter (*Ep.* 22) of October 19, 1480; it shows that he is still on quite familiar terms with the abbot. He never mentions the religious establishments of Aduard, Selwerd and Norden (see *Ep.* 22) as centers of culture and learning, but that fits entirely into the humanist ideology.

<sup>77</sup> In our note on *Ep.* 22, 3 we committed the error of merging the two journeys into one.

<sup>78</sup> See Jappe Alberts 1956, 80–81.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Vita Petrarcae: egregia industriae magistra peregrinatio* (ed. Bertalot 1928, p. 383, 11; see also pp. 389, 16–18; 390, 18 to 391, 27).

In these three letters, Agricola presents a negative view of his work as a humanist insofar as it concerns the environment in which this activity had to be conducted: “in medio stridore rudis huius horridaeque barbariae” (*Ep.* 20, 3). Nevertheless, *Epp.* 20 and 21 are all about education, poetry, prose style, and learned derivations and meanings of words. He brings up *De inventione dialectica*, of which he would like Occo to make a clean copy (*Ep.* 22, 29). There are various scattered remarks about wars (*Ep.* 22, 34–35), people, travels and places.

Not one letter from the year 1481 has been preserved, but we do have one from the beginning of 1482 (*Ep.* 23), which contains a description of a half-year visit in 1481 at the court of the Burgundian duke, Maximilian. It is a brief but vivid account of the conflicts and triumphs which Agricola experienced in that period. Although he is flattered by the attempts of high officials to attach him permanently to the court as a learned humanist, he does not consider the offer: he is too much attached to his “present tranquility and freedom” (*Ep.* 23, 16). The letter is addressed to his brother Johannes, who now has a function at the court of Countess Theda in Aurich, in the recently established county of East Frisia. The letter starts with a cryptic reference to political and diplomatic contacts between Maximilian, the court at Aurich, and Groningen. Agricola is never explicit on such matters, and so he uses his partial and temporary success in politics at the court in Brussels mainly as a preamble to an outburst of displeasure at the city council of Groningen – he is planning to find a refuge somewhere else, no later than next summer. Finally, the letter includes a reminiscence of delightful, companionable, and also creative days he spent during the same trip, first in Aachen and later in Antwerp with Judocus Besselius, a poet, scholar, and advisor to Maximilian.

A remark about the sequence of the letters is in order here. In our edition we hesitated about the year of *Ep.* 31 – January 1482 or 1483. I have now come to the conclusion that it should be placed before letter 24 and must have been written in 1482. My reason for this is the following. In *Ep.* 31, Agricola mentions the fact that his half-brother Hendrik has stolen money from a church fund managed by his father and left town, giving as his reason that he needs the money to study in Saxony. It so happens that the records of the University of Rostock (in Mecklenburg) show that on March 3, 1482, one “Hinricus Agricola de Groningen” was enrolled; we may conclude that this is our Hendrik. Thus *Ep.* 31 should be dated January 21, 1482.

The next letter in our edition (*Ep.* 24) was written two months later, on March 27, 1482. It is addressed to one of the friends Agricola had met in Antwerp in December, Jacob Barbireau (Jacobus Barbirianus), a prominent musician and *magister choralium* of Our Lady’s church in Antwerp. Now it becomes clear what Agricola was looking forward to when he wrote to his brother Johannes about moving to another location. Barbireau had promised to look into the possibility of a salaried position for Agricola in Antwerp, but to his disappointment and frustration Agricola still has received no word from him. He would happily have

traded Groningen (whose people he finds coarse and rude; see *Epp.* 23, 8–9; 26, 14–15) for Antwerp, a place filled with *humanitas, cultus, gratia, sanitas, and benevolentia*.

The next letter (*Ep.* 25) can be dated after May 26, 1482 and is addressed to his brother Johannes once more. It is about an acquaintance who is looking for work as a barber at the court in Aurich; about Agricola's half-sister, who has been apprenticed to a furrier in Groningen; and about their brother Hendrik, who has written his two brothers from Rostock, where he is studying now – apparently he has gotten himself into trouble again. These sparse remarks on family members and casual acquaintances, couched in exquisitely simple Latin, show Agricola as a realistic and practical man, who has both feet firmly on the ground.

Now we come to a series of five letters (*Epp.* 26–30) dealing with the most crucial episode in Agricola's life after his return from Italy. While he is in Kampen (he had left Groningen on August 28, 1482) both on business for the city and for his own pleasure, he receives a letter from Dietrich von Plieningen in Koblenz with an invitation to come to Heidelberg in order to take up residence at the court of Johann von Dalberg, chancellor of the Elector and recently chosen bishop of Worms. While still in Kampen, he also gets an offer from a friend in Italy to come and live with him. Then, while he is visiting his old university friend Adam van den Berg in 's-Heerenberg, he is invited by Adam to stay there on a permanent basis. And to top it all off, on the way home after a glorious reception in Heidelberg he receives a letter from Barbireau in Antwerp with (at last!) a definitive offer to assume the function of rector of a school in Antwerp.

The letters in which he mentions these developments reflect his exultation, wishes, hesitations, and doubts. The first letter is to Occo, written from Heidelberg on October 11, 1482 (*Ep.* 26); the next is from Germersheim to Johann von Plieningen on October 22 (*Ep.* 27); then, from Koblenz, to Dietrich von Plieningen on October 25 (*Ep.* 28); to Jacob Barbireau from Cologne on November 1 (*Ep.* 29); and finally, when he is home again, to his brother Johannes on December 20 (*Ep.* 30). Each letter strikes a different note, and his considerations likewise differ from one letter to the other. The modern, urban, civil atmosphere of Antwerp, the improvement of the education in its schools, plus the financial advantages of a position there are set against the academic atmosphere of the University of Heidelberg and the patronage of both church and nobility. Agricola is torn between these two options. After careful consideration and long deliberation with old friends in Cologne, he finally opts for Heidelberg. The deciding factor is the contact with his old university friends in Italy and the freedom to study. Letter 28 to Dietrich von Plieningen could replace an entire handbook on the social and intellectual position of the early humanist. The long letter 29 to Barbireau, in which he declines the post at Antwerp, gives the essence of his decision.

Still, some other interesting topics come up in these five letters, although briefly and off-hand. In the letter to Occo, Agricola touches upon the beginning of his friendship with Von Dalberg (*Ep.* 26, 6–7); he mentions the fact that Occo has



written a clean copy of *De inventione dialectica* (*Ep.* 26, 10–11); he harshly condemns the Groningen milieu in which he has to do his work (*Ep.* 26, 14–15) but also comments on the emotional ties with his native country and the fact that he is getting older (*Ep.* 26, 16–17); he mentions his stay at Maximilian’s court (*Ep.* 26, 21–25); his valued friendship with Wessel Gansfort in Groningen and the abbot of Aduard (*Ep.* 26, 27); and finally the war in Brabant (*Ep.* 26, 28). In *Ep.* 27, written to Johann von Plieningen, who is making a career for himself in Rome, Agricola offers him a realistic opinion on how to go about this (*Ep.* 27, 9–12) and asks him to look for a few books (still somewhat problematic) of Seneca, Ps.-Quintilian, Columella, and Aristotle (in Greek). He praises Johann for the progress he has made in Ferrara under the guidance of Battista Guarini after Agricola’s departure. In *Ep.* 28 we read that some years earlier, in 1477, he had declined a position to teach *poetica* at the University of Louvain. In *Ep.* 29 he mentions a rumor that Charles the Bold, who had died at the battle of Nancy in 1477, had been seen alive in a small town in Suebia. Finally, in *Ep.* 30 he expresses his concern about his half-sister and scolds his brother Johannes on her behalf.

From the year 1483 five letters have been preserved (32 through 36), the first of which is addressed to Dietrich von Plieningen, the last to Alexander Hegius, and the other three to his half-brother Johannes. Apart from a two-week trip on behalf of the city in October (*Ep.* 36, 1), no mention is made of any absence from Groningen. 1483 is also the year of the plague, which is coming closer and closer. Agricola mentions the plague in *Epp.* 32, 6 and 35, 2; and *Ep.* 36 to Hegius is devoted to it almost entirely, in the form of a treatise on the chances of escaping the disease (probably to poke fun at a current heated debate on free will and the laws of probability; see our note on *Ep.* 36, 6–14).

His forthcoming departure for Heidelberg is mentioned in four letters. In *Ep.* 32, 3–4 (February 16, 1483) he tells Dietrich von Plieningen about his firm resolve to leave as soon as possible and about his awkward relationship with the citizens of Groningen. The only thing keeping him is the problem of how to transport his books. But in *Ep.* 34, 6–9 (May 11, 1483) to his brother Johannes he is wavering; one of the reasons is that in the meantime Hendrik has arrived in Heidelberg (see below). He also seems to have lost interest in moving away, as appears from his words “abeo sane invitus”; on the other hand, the fear of missing so many opportunities (financially as well) by staying in Groningen induces him to leave. In the next letter, *Ep.* 35, 2–3 of October 6, again written to Johannes, he has decided to do the city of Groningen, at its urgent request, one last favor by accompanying one of the burgomasters to the province of Holland; but immediately after that journey, if the good weather keeps up, he wants to leave for Germany. Finally, in *Ep.* 36, 15–16 (after October 20, 1483), he writes to Hegius that the problem of the transportation of his books has been solved; however, this time he cannot leave because of the plague, which is now raging in the northern Netherlands as well.

Apart from the trip to Holland with Burgomaster Everard Hubbelding for a consultation on a legal matter (see *Ep.* 35), we get one last glimpse into Agricola's official activities: in *Ep.* 34 he conveys to Johannes the request of a local hospital to obtain a permit from the authorities in Aurich to collect money in East Frisia for the poor in Groningen. Earlier we saw that he was active at the Burgundian court and in Deventer, Kampen, Nijmegen, Cologne, and Roermond; however, the official character of these visits remains vague or entirely obscure. The *vitae*, too, keep completely silent on this aspect of Agricola's life; Goswinus van Halen is the only one who tells us exactly what Agricola's position is, but he doesn't say what this position involves. We never hear, for example, about the organ of St. Martin's, which Agricola built together with the organ builder Johan ten Damme, perhaps in the years 1481–1482.<sup>80</sup> He must also have been involved in the extension of an important treaty between the city and the surrounding districts known as the Ommelanden.<sup>81</sup>

These five letters equally give us more information about his family. He writes again, cryptically, about his nameless half-sister (see above, *Ep.* 25, 4–5 and *Ep.* 30, 5); her father had promised to send her to Rudolph, but she never showed up (*Ep.* 33). As to his half-brother Hendrik, Agricola refers to him in a long passage in *Ep.* 34, written to Johannes on May 31, 1483. Again, Hendrik has written to both of his brothers (cf. *Ep.* 25, 6 mentioned above) and to his father. It appears he has gone to Heidelberg on his own initiative and there forced himself upon bishop Von Dalberg with lies; apparently he wanted to profit from the patronage Von Dalberg had offered his brother. Rudolph is furious; he calls Hendrik deceitful, unreliable, and impudent. He fears that his own prospective position at the bishop's court in Heidelberg has been jeopardized by Hendrik's irresponsible behavior and is now quite hesitant about going there at all. On the other hand, it might be better to go anyway because in Heidelberg he will be able to keep an eye on Hendrik and make him toe the line, since the young man is actually easily intimidated; and if that does not work he can always have him thrown out of the Palatinate. Is there a direct account of family problems to be found anywhere in the fifteenth century, comparable to this? Incidentally, Agricola's frank discussion of Hendrik's shortcomings offers an interesting contrast with his reluctance to elaborate on the problems surrounding his sister.

In addition, these letters mention some people either because they have died (*Epp.* 34, 11; 35, 4–5) or because Agricola wants to be remembered to them; or they mention current political or military events elsewhere. The last of these letters, *Ep.* 36, deals, in addition to the plague and Hegius's teaching career, once more with Hendrik, who (as we hear now) has been in Groningen, sent by Von Dalberg to collect Agricola's books. Agricola has easily agreed to this, but is eager to know what Hegius thinks of Hendrik, if the latter indeed stopped over in Deventer.

<sup>80</sup> See Edskes in *RAP* 1988, 112–117.

<sup>81</sup> On this treaty see *Historie van Groningen* 1976, 102–103 and Van den Broek 2007, 61.

*Heidelberg: 1484–1485*

The last part of our collection of Agricola's letters dates from his departure from Groningen in early April 1484 until his death on October 27 or 28, 1485, and consists of nineteen letters. If we exclude *Ep.* 51 (a letter to Adolph Occo, which is regarded as part of a *praefatio* to *De inventione dialectica* and may have been written in August 1479) and the two letters to Von Dalberg written by Agricola from his sickbed in Trento, we have sixteen letters left from the last nineteen months of Agricola's life. These can be divided in two equal groups: eight epistolary contacts with his correspondents from the North, and eight with new friends and admirers from Strasbourg and southern Germany. The first group contains *Ep.* 37 to Liber; *Ep.* 38 to Barbireau; *Epp.* 39 and 48 to his half-brother Johannes; *Epp.* 42 and 43 from and to Hegius; *Ep.* 53 to Adolph Occo; and *Ep.* 55 to his younger half-brother Hendrik. The second group consists of *Epp.* 40, 46, and 47 to Adolph Rusch; *Epp.* 45 and 54 from Peter Schott; and *Epp.* 41, 44, and 52 to and from Johann Reuchlin.

Starting with the latter group: it is evident from the first sentences in their letters (*Epp.* 40, 41, and 45) that Rusch, Reuchlin, and Schott initiated the correspondence with Agricola, and that there was a close contact with Thomas Wolf as well. The Strasbourg humanists Rusch, Schott, and Wolf were close friends; see *Ep.* 45, 4 and the last words of *Ep.* 54. Rusch was older than Agricola; Schott, Wolf, and Reuchlin were younger.<sup>82</sup> Jakob Wimpfeling (1456–1528) is another member of the Alsatian group of humanists, but he is not mentioned in these letters.<sup>83</sup> The letters show that the new friendships Agricola established while living in Heidelberg were strong and quite productive. Agricola was always the “giver” in these friendships,<sup>84</sup> except in the case of the bookseller Rusch, who supplied Agricola with the books he ordered but refused to accept any payment. When Agricola came to Heidelberg he was already a celebrity, and his arrival created a sensation.

About Agricola's activities in 1484 and 1485 we learn a variety of things from the letters to and from the Strasbourg humanists: on October 1, Agricola writes that he would like to come to Basel to meet with Rusch and see the Greek library there, but Von Dalberg disapproves; besides, it is too far and winter is close at hand (*Ep.* 40, 1–4). Meanwhile, Agricola has recently delivered a speech to the clergy of Worms, which he will send to Thomas Wolf as soon as he has corrected it.<sup>85</sup> (Perhaps Wolf had been present at the oration.) Agricola also tells Rusch that “this summer” (1484) he has translated Lucian's *Gallus sive Micyllus* (cf. *Ep.* 43, 4

<sup>82</sup> Rusch was born ca. 1435, Wolf ca. 1450, Reuchlin in 1454, and Schott in 1458.

<sup>83</sup> Herding (1965, 66–70) sketches the great differences between Agricola and Wimpfeling.

<sup>84</sup> See “Erasmus on Agricola” in this volume, pp. 212–215.

<sup>85</sup> Recently edited, with an introduction of 26 pages, by Van der Laan in 2003 (see Bibliography under Agricola); earlier by Spitz-Benjamin in 1963.

and the *vita* by Von Plieningen, *Comm.* 4, 9). From *Ep.* 46 (by now it is March 27, 1485) we learn that Agricola has responded to the letters from Schott and Rusch and will leave with his master for Worms the next day, where they will stay for ten days over Easter.

Another accomplishment from Agricola's last year is the most carefully composed *Oratio de nativitate Christi*, which he had delivered in Heidelberg at Christmas. This oration is never mentioned in either the letters or the *vitae*, but has been preserved in the Stuttgart codex.<sup>86</sup>

Then there are his duties as a teacher, both to the bishop and at the university, about which he writes to Hegius in *Ep.* 43, 5–6. To this we can add his study of Hebrew, which he took up in the last year of his life, after May 2, 1484 and before his journey to Rome with the bishop (the departure took place between April 13 and May 30, 1485); after all, the study of Hebrew was the main reason why he had come to Heidelberg, and he put great effort into it (see *Ep.* 43, 7–12). It is almost inconceivable that in addition to all these activities he also managed to write an *eruditissimam epitomen* of the biblical, Greek and Roman historians of such magnitude as described by Melanchthon in *Oratio* 13 and *Epistola* 17.<sup>87</sup>

Finally there are the eight letters exchanged with the correspondents in the Low Countries during the last nineteen months of Agricola's life. Again we see how important these contacts with his fellow-humanists and family in the North were to him. Whereas the seven letters written from Groningen (*Epp.* 30–36) offered no opportunity to write about literature or other intellectual pursuits (except the one ironical passage on a philosophical theme in *Ep.* 36), the first letter Agricola writes after leaving Groningen (*Ep.* 37, dated April 7, 1484, from Deventer) is entirely devoted to literature: first he writes about his own poem *Anna mater*, which is being printed; then about a commentary on Vergil; and finally about a newly published book on rhetoric. This makes this letter a worthy preliminary farewell to the Northern circle of humanists; it is written to Antonius Liber.<sup>88</sup> In the early letters to Langius and Liber (*Epp.* 3 and 4) poetry was never mentioned; the topics were the new scholarship of humanism and letter writing, the models of which were Cicero, Quintilian, and Pliny. These were programmatic letters, written for Liber's *Compendium*. But now Agricola writes about his own production of poetry, about Vergil, and about rhetoric. Liber was one of the most intimate literary friends Agricola ever had. From *Ep.* 37, 3 we know that in April 1484, on his way to Deventer, Agricola made quite a detour

<sup>86</sup> Peter Mack (2000) gives a fine ten-page analysis of this oration. The bishop is obviously trying to improve Christian life through the new learning.

<sup>87</sup> On this problem see my introduction to the *vita* by Melanchthon.

<sup>88</sup> On Liber see Agr. *Ep.* 4, n. on pp. 274f.; Worstbrock 1985 (*Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters* Bd. 5, 747–751); Van der Laan 1998, 14ff.; Santing 1992, *passim*; *ead.* 1993, 328; Schoonbeeg 1993, *Carmen* x (pp. 340 and 367–370).

in order to visit Liber in Kampen, who was *notarius* there. In earlier letters too (*Epp.* 26, 4 and 29, 2) we read that Agricola stayed a few days in Kampen not only on official business but also for his own pleasure, so Agricola must have visited Liber there in October 1482. Also in 1480, on April 3, Agricola wrote that the past few days (“proximis diebus”) he had stayed with Liber (*Ep.* 20, 11).

Liber wrote poetry himself and perhaps collected other people’s poems. It is possible that he owned poems by Mormann and others, which Theodericus Ulsenius later took to Nuremberg, where they ended up in Hartmann Schedel’s *codex* 528.<sup>89</sup> Of Liber’s own poems only five have been preserved.<sup>90</sup>

Agricola mentions his own poetry and that of his fellows eight times, in *Epp.* 20, 1–6; 21,6; 23, 18; 24, 13; 37, 1–5; 38, 64–65; 40, 4–9; 47, 10. Goswinus is the only one of the *vita* authors who explicitly devotes a small section (12) to Agricola’s poetry – an indication that in the opinion of the humanists of the far North especially, poetry was an essential part of the new learning.

Agricola went to Heidelberg between April 7 and May 2, 1484 (*Ep.* 38, 59). Again, the first letter he writes from there is addressed to one of his northern friends, in whom he has placed his hope for the development of humanism. It is the famous letter 38 to Jacob Barbireau, later known under the title *De formando studio* and printed 45 times in the sixteenth century. The letter is dated May 26 or June 7.

On July 23 he writes a letter (*Ep.* 39) to his brother Johannes in which he mentions their sister’s death. He has sent his brother Hendrik (who is now mentioned without any animosity) back to Groningen – apparently because Hendrik felt a need to be there after his sister’s death. In addition, Agricola draws a disconcerting picture of his feelings of displeasure and almost regret about having entered this state of *servitus* (he uses this word three times!) in Heidelberg. Then he mentions Hendrik again, for whose sake he is willing to put up with everything. Nowhere could we get a clearer picture of the feelings of a “free Frisian” in this fifteenth-century milieu of high and low nobility than from this letter.

Neither could we get a better idea of how much Northern humanism had matured and developed its individuality than in the two letters (42 and 43) from and to Alexander Hegius, written on December 17, 1484 and in January 1485, from Deventer to Heidelberg and from Worms to Deventer respectively. There is no text by Hegius that gives so much evidence of his participation in the new learning and of his modern use of Latin as *Ep.* 42. In Agricola’s reply we again detect (cf. earlier in *Ep.* 29, 44: *canis in balneo*) his distaste for scholastic theology.

During the journey to Rome in the summer of 1485, Agricola writes only one letter: on May 30, 1485, he informs Johannes in Aurich that he has traveled to

<sup>89</sup> See Santing 1993, 325–328.

<sup>90</sup> See Van der Laan 1998, 16.

the City in the retinue of his *dominus*, Bishop Johann von Dalberg, who as the ambassador of Count Philip of the Palatinate was to congratulate the new pope, Innocentius VIII, on his election (*Ep.* 48). Rudolph describes the devastation he has seen in Ferrara on his way to Rome, as a consequence of the war between Venice and Ferrara in the years 1482–1484. At the end he expresses his hope to be back in his native country around the time of the Groningen fair, i.e. about September 10. We do not know what his motives were – he had no close relatives there anymore.

But not a word on his experiences in Rome (perhaps he had just arrived?), not even that he had written, or was going to write, the oration the bishop was to deliver on July 6. Agricola's rather cynical view on how to make a career for oneself in Rome had already been given in a letter he wrote three years previously to Johann von Plieningen (*Ep.* 27, 9–12). The same Von Plieningen, who was living in Rome during those years, was the only one to write a fine section on Agricola's stay in Rome in his *vita* (*Comm.* 7), but even he fails to mention the oration for the pope.<sup>91</sup>

The two moving letters to Von Dalberg written from Trento on August 4 and September 1, 1485, describe his illness and temporary recovery. Of the two remaining letters (to Adolph Occo), *Ep.* 51 has to be of an earlier date (August 1479?) and *Ep.* 53 must have been written after October 10, 1484. The very last letter in our collection was written in Heidelberg to Hendrik, whom Rudolph had sent to his friend Occo in Augsburg. It contains a series of admonitions and advice, showing that Rudolph fulfilled his duty as a mentor to his much younger half-brother to the end.

About Agricola dying in the bishop's arms, and his friend and physician, Adolph Occo, arriving in Heidelberg one day too late to be of any help anymore, we can read in Von Plieningen (*Comm.* 8).

Finally, the reports on the date of Agricola's death differ by one day. Von Plieningen gives October 27; Occo has October 28.<sup>92</sup>

### *Epilogue*

Agricola's burial in the Franciscan church has been recorded by Trithemius (22) and Von Plieningen (*Comm.* 8, 7). Occo collected a number of epitaphs, which were printed in Alardus's edition.<sup>93</sup> A monument in the church bore Ermolao Barbaro's epitaph in the Erasmian version (see notes to Trithemius, 14). I here copy the epitaph as it appears at the end of the *vita* of Agricola in the *Effigies et vitae Professorum Academiae Groningae & Omlandiae* of 1654:

<sup>91</sup> A second edition of this oration by Van der Laan in 2009 (see Bibliography under Agricola).

<sup>92</sup> Von Plieningen, *Comm.* 8, 4; Alardus II, facsimile ed. Nieuwkoop 1967, opp. p. 1<sup>r</sup>; ★2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> Alardus, *ibid.* pp. 2<sup>r</sup>–3<sup>r</sup>.

INTRODUCTION

EPITAPHIUM HERMOLAI BARBARI VENETI,  
PATRIARCHAE AQUILEGIENSIS IN OBITUM  
RODOLPHI AGRICOLAE FRISIJ.

*Invida clausurunt hoc marmore fata RODOLPHUM  
AGRICOLAM, Frisij spemque decusque soli.  
Scilicet hoc vivo meruit Germania, laudis  
Quicquid habet Latium, Graecia quicquid habet.*

RODOLPHI AGRICOLAE PHRYSII

MEMORIAE POSUIT VIGLIUS

ZUICHEMUS

OBIIT ANNO M. CCCC. LXXXV.

DIE XXVIII. OCTOBR.

VIXIT ANNOS XLII. MENSES II.

On the left side has been added: *Tollenti anathema;*  
on the right side: *Relinquenti benedictio.*<sup>94</sup>

Viglius ab Aytta of Swichum (1507–1577) was a Frisian humanist and diplomat, who made a brilliant career for himself during the reign of Emperor Charles v. He was an ardent admirer of Erasmus, whose admiration for Agricola he shared. He even intended to edit Agricola's works, but Alardus forestalled Viglius in 1539 with an edition of his own. According to E.H. Waterbolck, Viglius did not renovate an existing monument but erected a new one.<sup>95</sup> Folkert Postma, in his dissertation on Viglius, supposes that Viglius's act of piety was carried out at the time of Erasmus's death in 1536, and also remarks that Philip II took the trouble to visit the monument in 1549.<sup>96</sup>

In all likelihood the monument was removed in 1565, when a *paedagogium* (preparatory school) was set up in the Franciscan church. A few years later, when Petrus Ramus visited Heidelberg in 1570, he found Agricola's ashes, along with Ermolao's noble epitaph, lying in the *cella lignaria* (woodshed). Ramus illustrates his own (failed) attempt to restore the teaching of dialectics in Heidelberg with a nonsensical simile: Odysseus (Ramus) had brought Penelope (Agricola) back to Ithaca (Heidelberg), but she was rejected by the suitors (the university professors); even the old dog did not recognize her.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> See *Effigies et vitae*, p. 35.

<sup>95</sup> See Waterbolck 1969, 137f. On Viglius ab Aytta, see pp. 234–236 in this book.

<sup>96</sup> See Postma 1983, 60 and n. 93 on p. 183.

<sup>97</sup> See Meerhoff 2004, 108f. (French translation); Waddington 1855, 206f. and 424f. (Latin text and French translation).

It seems that thirty years later the monument was rehabilitated, when Bartholomaeus Keckermann wrote in Heidelberg: “Eodem seculo, Anno nimirum Christi 1450, floruit illud utriusque Germaniae immortale decus *Rodolphus Agricola*, vetustissimae huius Academiae professor, cuius fama aeternitati consecrata aetatem feret longiorem, quam eius honori erectum monumentum, quod Heidelbergae quotidie intuemur.”<sup>98</sup>

It is unlikely that the monument survived the destruction of the city of Heidelberg, including its *Paedagogium*, in 1693.

<sup>98</sup> Keckermannus 1606 (first edition 1599), 108.





## SOME REMARKS ABOUT THIS EDITION

In editing the Latin texts I have followed the same principles and methods that Adrie van der Laan and I adopted in our edition of Rudolph Agricola, *Letters*, in *Bibliotheca Latinitatis Novae* in 2002. Thus I have used my own punctuation and capitalization, omitted the accents but retained the historical and often fluctuating orthography, and more than once left grammatical blunders in the text uncorrected, indicating them in the notes only. In short, my goal has been to reach a compromise between readability and historical authenticity. The numbered paragraphs and sections are introduced in order to facilitate references to the texts. In the texts and translations of Erasmus I have adhered to the texts of existing editions.

An *apparatus criticus* has only been made for the texts by Von Plieningen and Goswinus, which are based on manuscript sources. For the texts of Trithemius, Geldenhouwer, and Melanchthon there are no significant variants that would justify the preparation of an *apparatus*.

The notes are provided in order to facilitate reading of the Latin and to discuss various problems in the texts. As to the translations, I hope that they will prove pleasant to read and may facilitate a quick survey of the contents.



## SOURCES AND SIGLA OF THE TEXTS

- Trith I Johannes Trithemius, *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, Basel, Johannes Amerbach 1494, 2<sup>o</sup>, fols. 125<sup>v</sup>.–126<sup>r</sup>., with a letter by Johannes a Lapide to the printer. For my edition I used a copy of the Royal Library at The Hague, shelf mark 171 C 11.  
The other editions of the text I consulted are the following: Paris 1512 (Bertholdus Remboldt et Johannes Parvus), Cologne 1539 (Ioannes Gymnicus, by Alardus of Amsterdam), and Cologne 1546 (Petrus Quentell). They do not show any textual variants from the first edition.  
On a modern edition see Arnold 1971, 124.
- Trith II Johannes Trithemius, *Catalogus illustrium uirorum Germaniam suis ingenii et lucubrationibus omnifariam exornantium*, Mainz, Peter Friedberg 1495, 2<sup>o</sup>, fols. 53<sup>v</sup>.–54<sup>r</sup>.  
I consulted a copy in the University Library of Amsterdam, shelf mark Inc. 108.  
The other title of this work, *De luminaribus Germaniae*, is actually the incipit of the text.
- S Johann von Plieningen, *Commentarii seu index uite Rhodolphi Agricole Frisi uiri clarissimi per doctorem Iohannem de Pleningen, canonicum Wormatiensem, ad nobilem uirum doctorem Theodoricum itidem de Pleningen fratrem suum conscriptus*.  
For this text, which is preceded by a letter from Dietrich von Plieningen to his brother Johann (*Ep.* 1) and two letters by Johann to Dietrich (*Epp.* 2 and 3), the only source is Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart, *Codex Poeticus et Philologicus* 4<sup>o</sup> 36, fols. 11<sup>r</sup>–x<sup>v</sup>. A description of the ms. has been given by Irtenkauf *et al.*, 1981 (see *RAP* 1988, 314) and by the editors in Agricola, *Letters*, 2002, 37–38.  
There are two modern editions, by F. Pfeifer 1849 and W. Straube (with translation) 1994 respectively.
- ÖNB Goswinus van Halen, *Vita*, in the form of a letter to Philip Melanchthon. The only source is Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. 9058, fols. 3<sup>r</sup>.–6<sup>v</sup>.  
There is a modern edition and a translation by J.B. Kan (1894 and 1898 respectively).

- G Gerard Geldenhouwer, *Agricolae uita*, in Johannes Fichardus, *Virorum qui superiori nostroque seculo eruditione et doctrina illustres atque memorabiles fuerunt Vitae*, Frankfurt 1536, fols. 83<sup>r</sup>.–87<sup>r</sup>., with a letter of dedication to Fichardus.

This text occurs again, with some alterations and additions, in Adam, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1653–1663, pp. 13–21, and in *Effigies et Vitae* 1654, pp. 28–35. The additions in particular are borrowed from the (printed) *Vitae* by Menander.

There has not been a modern edition or translation before those presented in this volume.

- Mel. Ep. Philip Melanchthon, *Vita* (in the form of a letter to Alardus of Amsterdam) in Alardus, *Rodolphi Agricolaе Phrisii Lucubrationes aliquot ... per Alardum Aemstelredanum ...*, Cologne, Ioannes Gymnicus 1539, fols. 3<sup>r</sup>.–4<sup>r</sup>. The same text occurs in CR III No. 1789, col. 673–676, which is a repetition of an edition in the *Declamationes Melanchthonis* (Tomus II, p. 201), which in its turn is a reprint from Alardus. There are a few insignificant variants.

- Mel. Or. Philip Melanchthon, *Vita*, in the form of an oration: *Oratio de uita Rodolphi Agricolaе, Frisii, mense Iulio habita a Ioanne Saxone Holsatiensi ...* (1539).

One of my sources is *Liber selectarum declamationum Philippi Melanchthonis, quas conscripsit, & partim ipse in schola Vitebergensi recitauit, partim aliis recitandas exhibuit*, Strasbourg, Crato Mylius 1541. Collected by Iacobus Milichius, pp. 306–316. My other source is Bretschneider, *Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. XI, 1843, col. 438–446. Bretschneider mentions four editions of the sixteenth century: 1541, 1544, 1570, and 1587.

- ★ Emendation by the present editor.

THE *VITAE*

INTRODUCTIONS, TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS



## JOHANNES TRITHEMIUS

Johannes Trithemius (1462–1516) was born of relatively poor parents in Tritenheim on the Moselle River. His family name is Heidenberg or Zeller. As a young man he spent some time in Heidelberg for his studies; there he became acquainted with the humanists surrounding Johann von Dalberg, bishop of Worms, who later presided over the *sodalitas literaria Rhenana*, founded (in 1495) by Conrad Celtis.<sup>1</sup> Many of these scholars remained his life-long friends and correspondents: in addition to Celtis himself, we can mention Johann von Dalberg, Jacob Wimpheling, and Johann Reuchlin.

In 1482 Trithemius entered the Benedictine monastery of St. Martin's at Sponheim near Bad Kreuznach, where he was elected abbot at the age of 21. During his abbacy at Sponheim (1483–1506) he built a large book collection “of about two thousand volumes, both handwritten and printed, on every subject and science held of utility among Christians”, as he writes in 1507 in his autobiography *Nepiachus*. This library enticed many scholars of that time to pay a visit to Sponheim. Trithemius was well versed in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

Among Trithemius's many writings are two catalogs of famous authors after the example of Jerome's *De viris illustribus* of 392 AD (based on Suetonius's work of the same name). Jerome had many followers during the Middle Ages. Trithemius's first catalog, on which he worked for seven years, is entitled *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*; it contains the names of 963 authors and was published in 1494 by Johannes Amerbach in Basel. The book counts 147 folios. In addition to the text of the articles it contains the following items: a letter by the Carthusian monk Johannes Heynl de Lapide to Amerbach, advising Trithemius to publish this book; a letter of dedication written by Trithemius to Von Dalberg; and (after the main text) a letter written by Trithemius to Albert Morderer, a Franciscan of Kreuznach, “rationem reddens, cur inter ecclesiasticos scriptores multos saecularium litterarum professores posuerit.” This is especially interesting because Agricola, who has an entry in the list, belongs primarily to the category of the *saeculares*, not of the *ecclesiastici*. Trithemius is convinced that the knowledge of secular literature is indispensable to anyone who wants to be well versed in the Holy Scriptures; still, this firm conviction never caused him to waver in his loyalty to his monastic

<sup>1</sup> Most of this introduction has been borrowed from the excellent books by Klaus Arnold (1971, 21991) and Noel Brann (1981) respectively.



vocation. His belief that true Christian erudition is to be found within the monastery walls (“scientia latet in cucullis”) even led to a quarrel with his friend Wimpheling.

Because of Trithemius’s close connection with the Heidelberg circle it is not surprising that he was well acquainted with Agricola’s works, even before they appeared in print.

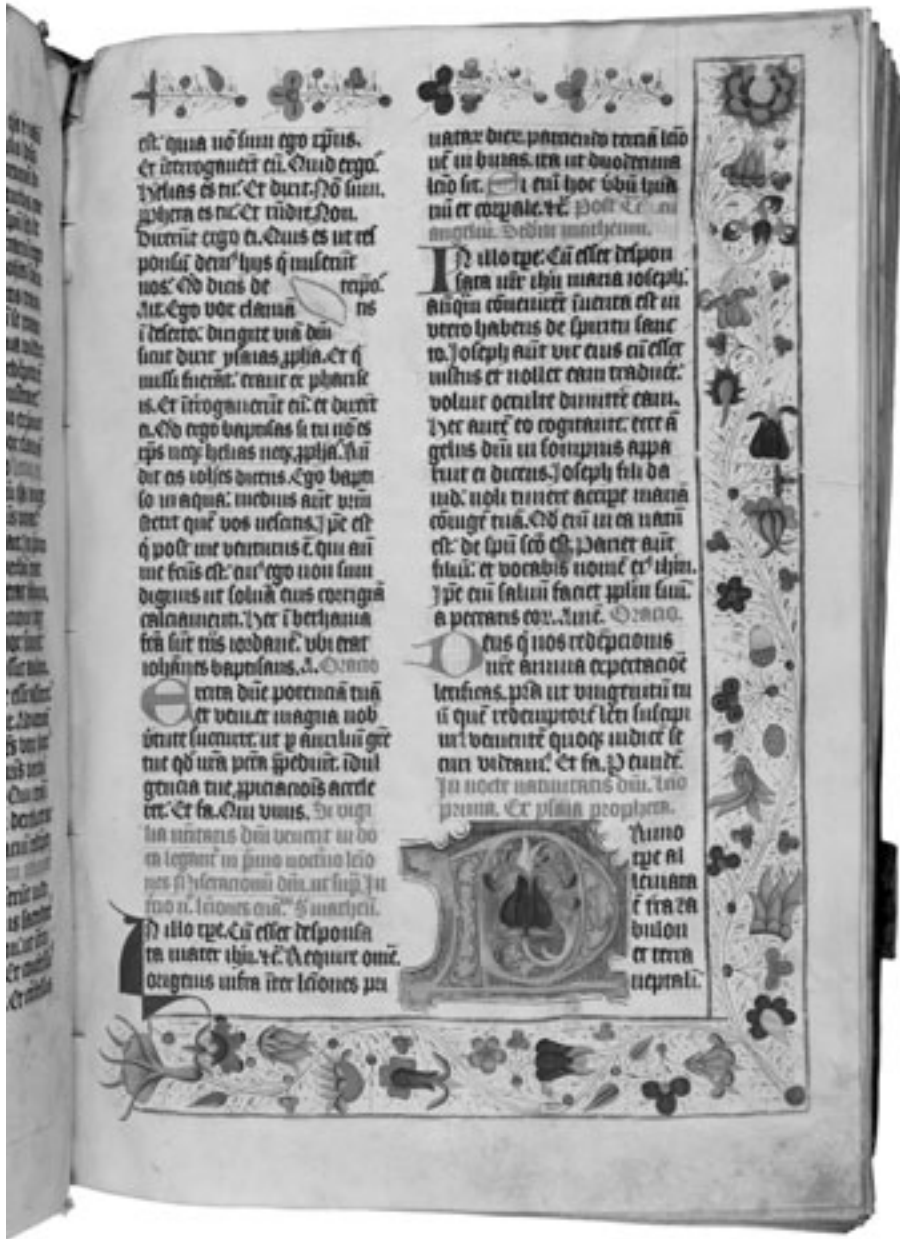
*De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* went through three versions, the second of which (1492) has been preserved in two manuscripts, which are now kept at Yale University Library and in the Staatsbibliothek der Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz respectively. The third, printed, version (1494) shows many additions to the second version. As far as Agricola is concerned, Arnold informs us that the first two entries of Agricola’s works in this printed version, the *Vita Petrarcae* and *Anna carmen*, are additions.<sup>2</sup> Arnold also shows the similarity in wording and structure of the various articles;<sup>3</sup> he writes: “die vermeintlichen “Aussagen” haben formelhaften Charakter und sind topisch zu bewerten.”

The second volume is a catalog of 304 German writers, put together by Trithemius at the instigation and with the support of his friend Jacob Wimpheling, who himself added sixteen more authors. The book was printed in 1495 by Peter Friedberg in Mainz under the title *Catalogus illustrium virorum Germaniae*, also known as *De luminaribus Germaniae* (the *incipit*). Patriotic feelings and, again, admiration for the Christian past determined the subject, but the selection of the authors and composition of the articles are largely derived from Trithemius’s earlier book on the Christian authors. (One difference is the omission of the *incipits* in the later work.) But in the two entries on Agricola we note quite a few variations in the wording, which seem to be due to a conscious emendation of the earlier book in the later work. (Wimpheling’s later criticism of the “innumerable errors” in the earlier book may have played a role in the rephrasing.)<sup>4</sup> Both versions are printed here.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold 1971, 122.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.



A sample of writing and illumination from the convent of Selwerd, ca. 1470. Groningen, University of Groningen Library, ms 26, fol. 7r. Photograph: Centrale Fotodienst, University of Groningen. See Introduction, pp. 8–9; Goswinus, par.6; Geldenhouwer, par. 4.

*Vita Agricolae. De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis, 1494*

- 1 Rudolphus Agricola de Gruningen, natione Friso, uir in saecularibus litteris  
eruditissimus et diuinarum non ignarus, philosophus, rhetor et poeta omnium  
sui temporis celeberrimus, Graeci et Latini sermonis peritus et Hebraicae linguae  
non ignarus, ingenio excellens, sermone disertus, Iohannis Camerarii de Dalburg 5  
Wormaciensis episcopi uiri aequae doctissimi quondam praeceptor, in gymnasio  
Heydelbergensi docendo et scribendo principatum facile obtinuit inter omnes  
etiam cuiuscunque facultatis doctores.
- 2 Scripsit quaedam ingenii sui excellentissima opuscula, quibus nomen suum  
immortalitati consecrauit et posteris reliquit, de quibus extant subiecta: 10
- 3 – Vita Francisci Petrarcae, liber unus  
4 – Carmen de sancta Anna, liber unus: Anna parens, summae geni.  
5 – Dialectica subtilissima, libri tres  
6 – Epistolae et orationes uariae, liber unus
- 7 Varia insuper et elegantissima carmina edidit, quibus ingenium suum prope 15  
diuinum ostendit.
- 8 Transtulit ex Hebraico psalterium;  
9 ex Graeco quaedam opera Platonis.
- 10 Dionysii Ariopagitae uolumina traducere incipiens morte immatura praeuen-  
tus imperfecta reliquit. 20
- 11 Scripsit etiam alia.
- 12 Moritur Heydelbergae mente in Deum porrectissima sub Frederico Impe-  
ratore tertio et Innocentio papa octauo Anno Domini Mill. cccc.lxxxv.,  
Indictione tertia.
- 13 Cui Hermolaus Barbarus patriarcha Aquilegiensis hoc epitaphium scripsit: 25
- 14 Inuida clauserunt hoc marmore fata Rudolphum  
Agricolam, Frisii spemque decusque soli.  
Scilicet hoc uiuo meruit Germania quicquid  
Laudis habet Latium, Graecia quicquid habet.
- 15 Sepultus est Heydelbergae apud fratres Minores, non sine iactura Latinarum 30  
litterarum.

*The Life of Rudolph Agricola (from De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis, 1494)*

Rudolph Agricola of Groningen, sprung from the Frisian nation, a man highly learned in profane literature and well-acquainted with Holy Scripture, the most famous philosopher, rhetorician and poet of his time, well versed in Latin and Greek and well-acquainted with Hebrew, gifted with a keen mind and with great eloquence, at one time the preceptor of Johann Kämmerer von Dalberg, bishop of Worms, a man also highly learned. By teaching and writing he easily attained first place among all those who taught at the Heidelberg academy in no matter which faculty. He wrote some very excellent short works, the products of his brain, thus consecrating his name to immortality and passing it on to posterity. Of these, the following are still extant: a Life of Francesco Petrarch, one book; a poem about St. Anne, one book: Mother Anne, of the very highest mother ...; a very subtle Dialectics, three books; various epistles and orations, one volume.

Furthermore, he published various very elegant poems demonstrating his almost divine mental gifts. He translated the book of Psalms from the Hebrew and some works by Plato from the Greek. The works of Dionysius the Areopagite, which he had commenced translating when a premature death overtook him, he left unfinished. And he has written yet other things. He died at Heidelberg, his soul longingly reaching out to God, in the reign of the Emperor Frederick III and Pope Innocentius VIII, in the year of our Lord 1485, in the third indiction. Ermolao Barbaro, Patriarch of Venice, wrote the following epitaph for him:

An envious fate locked Rudolph in this marble tomb,  
 Agricola, hope and glory of the Frisian region;  
 Through him did Germany gather, ere he met his doom,  
 Praise matching that of Greece, and Rome's laudations legion.

He lies buried at Heidelberg, with the Friars Minor, not without loss to Latin letters.

*Vita Agricolae. De luminaribus Germaniae, 1495.*

- 1 Rudolphus Agricola de Grunynge, patria Frisius, uir in secularibus litteris  
omnium suo tempore doctissimus et diuinarum scripturarum non ignarus,  
philosophus, rhetor et poeta celeberrimus, trium linguarum principalium,  
Hebraice, Grece et Latine peritus, ingenio subtilis, eloquio disertus, Iohannis 5  
Dalburgii episcopi Wormaciensis uiri aequae doctissimi quondam preceptor, in  
gymnasio Heydelbergensi docendo et scribendo tum Grece tum Latine facile  
obtenuit principatum.
- 2 Scripsit quedam preclara opuscula, quibus memoriam sui posteris commen-  
dauit. E quibus reperi subiecta: 10
- 3 – Carmen herocium de sancta Anna, librum unum  
4 – Vitam Francisci Petrarche, librum unum  
5 – Dialecticam quoque subtilissimam, libros tres  
6 – Epistolas quoque multas ad diuersos  
7 – Carmina et epigrammata plura et uarios tractatus 15  
8 – Transtulit ex Hebreo psalterium, quod tum distractum nusquam simul  
inuenitur  
9 – Ex Greco traduxit quedam opuscula Platonis et precepta Isocratis  
10 – Dionysii Ariopagite uolumina traducere incipiens morte preuentus imper-  
fecta reliquit. 20
- 11 Moritur Heydelberge mente in Deum porrectissima sub Frederico imperatore  
tercio, et
- 12 Innocencio papa octauo, Anno Domini Mill. cccc.lxxxv., Indictione. iii.  
Cui Hermolaus Barbarus patriarcha Venetus epitaphium tale cecinit:
- 13 Inuida clauserunt hoc marmore fata Rudolphum 25  
Agricolam, Frisii spemque decusque soli.  
Scilicet hoc uno meruit Germania quicquid  
Laudis habet Latium, Grecia quicquid habet.
- 14 Sepultus autem est Heydelberge in conuentu minorum.

*The Life of Rudolph Agricola (from De luminaribus Germaniae, 1495)*

Rudolph Agricola of Groningen, a Frisian through his native land, in profane letters the most learned man of his time, and well-acquainted with Holy Scripture, as a philosopher, rhetorician and poet highly famous, an expert in the three principal languages, Hebrew, Greek and Latin, gifted with a subtle mind, skilful in speech, at one time the preceptor of Johann von Dalberg, bishop of Worms, a man also highly learned. By teaching and writing, in Greek as well as in Latin, he easily obtained the first place at the Heidelberg academy. He wrote some brilliant short works, thus recommending his memory to posterity. Of these, I have found the following:

- A poem in heroic verse on St. Anne, one book
- A Life of Francesco Petrarch, one book
- Also a very subtle Dialectics, three books
- Also many epistles to different people
- A great many poems and epigrams and various treatises
- He translated the book of Psalms from the Hebrew, which then was dispersed, so that it is nowhere to be found as a whole
- From the Greek he translated some smaller works by Plato and the precepts of Isocrates
- The books of Dionysius the Areopagite, which he had commenced translating when death overtook him, he left unfinished.

He died at Heidelberg, his soul longingly reaching out to God, in the reign of the Emperor Frederick III and Pope Innocentius VIII, in the year of our Lord 1485, in the third indiction. Ermolao Barbaro, Patriarch of Venice, sang for him an epitaph as follows:

Envious fate locked Rudolph in this marble tomb,  
Agricola, hope and glory of the Frisian region;  
Through him did Germany gather, and through him alone,  
Praise matching that of Greece, and Rome's laudations legion.

He lies buried at Heidelberg in the monastery of the Friars Minor.



## JOHANN VON PLIENINGEN

Of the six *vitae*, the one by the Von Plieningen brothers gives us the most varied and well-organized information on Agricola's life. The Von Plieningens had known Agricola well through their personal association of many years; their abilities and interests enabled them, more than anyone else, to appreciate the essence of Agricola's humanist thinking. Moreover, they had the disposal of most of Agricola's written legacy, which they collected in one codex with their *vita* as the introduction.

Dietrich and Johann Von Plieningen, born in 1453 and 1454 respectively, were of low Southern German nobility. For two years (1471–1473) they studied at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. In 1473 they went to Pavia, where they probably studied Roman law.<sup>1</sup> In Pavia they became friends with Rudolph Agricola, who, about ten years their senior, became their great model and teacher owing to his university education at Louvain and his personal passion and erudition.<sup>2</sup>

In the middle of September 1475 Agricola left for Ferrara, where the Von Plieningens joined him at the end of 1476. Thus, in Ferrara too they lived and worked in the company of Agricola and many other students from *Frisia*.<sup>3</sup> In 1479 Agricola returned to the North together with Dietrich von Plieningen, after Dietrich had received his degree in Roman law in Ferrara on March 17 of that year. Johann probably stayed on for a while;<sup>4</sup> his promotion in Canon Law on March 5, 1488, is attested in the Ferrara archives.

Both brothers had brilliant careers. Dietrich started out in Heidelberg, where he became counselor to the Count Palatine in 1482. From 1492 to 1499 he was an assessor of the *Reichskammergericht* in Frankfurt am Main, and from 1499 until his death in 1520 he was counselor to Duke Albrecht IV of Bavaria. Johann had an ecclesiastical career. From 1480 to 1485 he lived in Rome at the court of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere (where he met with Agricola on his journey to Rome in 1485). In 1489 he was a canon at Worms and provost of a diocese in Mosbach. He died in 1506.

<sup>1</sup> An excellent monograph on the Von Plieningen brothers can be found in Adelman 1981. For a brief summary, see our introductory notes on *Agr. Epp.* 6 and 11.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Introduction, pp. 19–20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21; Sottili 2003, 'Ferrara culla dell'Umanesimo in Frisia'.

<sup>4</sup> See *Agr. Ep.* 27, 18.



What the Von Plieningens owed Agricola for their lives and careers, they requited by compiling a splendid codex containing his works and also the *vita*; the codex is now kept in Stuttgart. The *vita* must have been written between 1495 and 1499;<sup>5</sup> composed meticulously and deliberately, it has more than once been an object of study.<sup>6</sup> The letters written by Dietrich and Johann, describing the reason for this undertaking (*Epp.* 1–3), are followed by the *vita*. Written by Johann and always characterized as a mere *index* (summary) or *commentarii* (notes), it is intended to be a basis for a worthy proclamation of Agricola's fame by others (*Comm.* 13). In succession, the following topics are treated: Agricola's birth and origin in distant Groningen, his study in seven cities, his journey to Rome, his illness on the way home, and his death in Heidelberg. Included in this *curriculum vitae* is a *curriculum disciplinarum*: from the study of grammar in Groningen to rhetoric and dialectics in Erfurt, physics, ethics, and mathematics in Louvain, theology in Cologne, Roman law in Pavia, Greek in Ferrara, and Hebrew in Heidelberg. Throughout this narrative we also find an account of Agricola's written and spoken texts as the products of his productive energy (*felix industria*, *Comm.* 12, 2), with as his main achievement *De inventione dialectica*, which is mentioned three times (*Ep.* 2,2; *Comm.* 5,1 and 12, 2). All of this takes up 227 lines. The following 94 lines give a *descriptio personae*: in succession, we find a discussion of Agricola's physique, appearance, strength and agility (*corpus*, *Comm.* 9); his mind (*animus*, *Comm.* 10); his character (*mens*, *Comm.* 11); and his talent (*ingenium*, *Comm.* 12). A conclusion of 16 lines is formed by *Comm.* 13.

The technical skill displayed in this literary edifice was undoubtedly due to the splendid education Johann von Plieningen had received from Agricola himself, from Battista Guarini (with whom he was in close contact in Ferrara),<sup>7</sup> and perhaps also from Lodovico Carbone (a celebrated eulogist especially at funerals). Evidently, Von Plieningen had also read the ancient *vita* author Suetonius, whose words he borrows a number of times for his *descriptio personae*. Even more frequently – at least twenty times – Von Plieningen uses phrases from Agricola's *Vita Petrarchae*, which he must have had in front of him constantly as he wrote. His sympathy and admiration for these great preceptors made him fully aware of the shortcomings of his own imperfect Latin (*Ep.* 2, 5–6; *Ep.* 3, 2–6; *Comm.* 13, 3–4). This shows that Agricola was right in praising Johann for his *vera aestimatio* of the *studia politiora*.<sup>8</sup> Von Plieningen spends no less than 53 lines on the traditional *Unfähigkeitsbetuerung*.

In their handling of the biographical facts the Von Plieningen brothers practiced a selectivity based on literary and rhetorical motives. This results in the omission

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Ep.* 2 superscription and *Comm.* 7, 2 with notes.

<sup>6</sup> Special studies of the *vitae* have been made by Weiss 1981; Akkerman 1983 and 1998; Von Albrecht 1993; Straube 1994.

<sup>7</sup> See Agr. *Ep.* 27, 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

of several aspects that, according to our standards, are extremely important to our understanding of Agricola's development and activity as a humanist. (The brothers also manipulated the dates of certain events, with the result that these sometimes disagree with the historical facts.) Too little – in fact, practically nothing – is said about the first beginnings of humanism in the North and about the learned circle at Aduard, and no mention is made of his position as secretary of the town of Groningen or his contacts with the city of Antwerp and his hopes of getting a position there. Yet, the brothers must have heard about these facts from Agricola himself either through direct conversation or through their correspondence, which the brothers include in their codex. Neither do they give us any information on Agricola's presence at the University of Heidelberg, the lectures he gave there, or the disputations he participated in, although, again, the Von Plieningens must have been well acquainted with all of these activities.

*Ep. 1*

*Theodericus de Pleningen legum professor Iohanni de  
Pleningen canonum professori canonico Wormatiensi  
et preposito oppidi Moszbach fratri suo amantissimo.*

1 Quum assidua negotia reipublice me impediunt, frater mi, ne uitam Rhodolphi 5  
Agricole preceptoris nostri (quemadmodum cupio) describere possim, nihil est  
quod malim rerum omnium abs te fieri, quam ut communi nomine tu id agas,  
locos insuper dialecticos et reliqua sua opuscula excribi unumque in uolumen  
2 redigi facias. Teque libentissime mihi obtemperaturum certo scio. Debes namque  
hoc primum memorie preceptoris nostri, qui nos amauit adeo, ut Pliniorum 10  
nomen, qui doctissimorum numero, nobis indiderit, qua quidem re indicauit  
sese maxime et optare et cupere, ut Plinius illos litteratissimos laudatissimosque  
3 eruditione doctrinaque aliquando representarem. Deinde hoc debes, frater mi,  
existimationi nostre, ne in preceptorem nostrum amantissimum eumque, qui  
nobis princeps ad suscipiendam et ad ingrediendam rationem horum studiorum 15  
4 humanitatis extitit, ingrati esse censeamur. Quod quidem uitium euitabimus,  
si hominis uitam illustraueris et ab interitu pro uiribus uindicaueris. Debes  
5 preterea hoc uniuerse reipublicę litterarię; quod cui satisfacies, si curaueris omnia  
monumenta sua unum in uolumen scribantur, quo tandem, quemadmodum  
cupio, imprimi in uulgusque edi emittique possint. Vale, frater mi. 20

*Ep. 2*

*Johannes de Pleningen canonum professor canonicus  
Wormatiensis Theoderico de Pleningen legum professori et  
iudicii camere regalis assessori fratri suo amantissimo s.p.d.*

1 Satisfecit desiderio tuo, frater amantissime, Iohannes meus Pfeutzer adolescens 25  
2 optimus. Locos namque dialecticos Rhodolphi Agricole preceptoris nostri uiri  
doctissimi et reliqua sua opuscula, quę aut noua fecit aut e Greco in Latinum  
conuertit, excripsit unumque in uolumen, quemadmodum uoluisti, perdili-  
3 genter emendateque rededit. Omnia namque cum exemplaribus ipse contuli.  
4 Reliquum foret, frater amantissime, uitam preceptoris nostri uiri clarissimi 30  
totiens abs te efflagitatum describerem. Durum est, frater mi, tibi, cui omnia  
debeo, non gerere morem, longe autem durius conari quod consequi nequeas,

*Ep. 1*

*Dietrich von Plieningen, professor of Roman law, to his highly beloved brother Johann von Plieningen, professor of canon law, canon of Worms and provost of the town of Mosbach*

Since the incessant pressure of affairs of state prevents me, brother mine, from writing the life of Rudolph Agricola, our preceptor (as is my wish), there is, of all things that you might do, nothing whatsoever that I should like better than for you to write it on behalf of both of us, and also to have the dialectical places and his other, shorter works copied out and brought together in a single volume. And I am sure you will comply with my wishes with the greatest pleasure. For in the first place you owe this to the memory of our preceptor, who loved us so much that he gave us the name of *Plinii*, who are among the most learned – by which he indicated that he most fervently wished and desired that we should, through our learning and erudition, one day bring those famous and highly lauded men of letters, the Plinies, back to life again in our own persons. Secondly you owe this, brother mine, to our own good reputation, in order that we shall not be considered ungrateful towards our dearly beloved preceptor, and the man who became our guide in undertaking and entering upon the programme of these humanist studies. But we shall escape such blame if you would be willing to shed lustre on the man's life and would do your utmost to rescue it from oblivion. Furthermore, you owe this to the entire republic of letters; you will give it satisfaction on this score by making sure that all his literary achievements are written out in a single volume, so that they may finally – as is my wish – be printed and be published and disseminated among the people. Farewell, brother mine.

*Ep. 2*

*Johann von Plieningen, professor of canon law, canon of Worms, cordially salutes his dearly beloved brother Dietrich von Plieningen, professor of Roman law and assessor to the Royal Judicial Chamber*

Your wish has been fulfilled, dearly beloved brother, by my faithful Johann Pfeutzer, a first-rate young man. He has indeed copied the dialectical places of our exceedingly learned preceptor Rudolph Agricola, as well as his other, shorter works, whether his own original creations or translations from Greek into Latin, into a single volume, as you desired, and he has done so in the most meticulous manner and without mistakes – for I collated everything myself with his exemplars. The only remaining thing, dearly beloved brother, would be that I should describe the life of our very famous preceptor, as you have so often urged. It is hard, brother mine, not to comply with what you want, you to whom I owe everything, but much harder to attempt what one will not be able

5 adeo ut, quid in hac animi mei contentione agam, non satis uideam. Vereor nam-  
 que, si tibi obtemperauero, hominis clarissimi uitam ne mea ieiuna atque indocta  
 dictione contaminem, sin minus, necessitudini nostre maxime nil prestare  
 uelle uidear, nisi uolueris id agam, frater optime, uite suę solos commenta-  
 6 rios indicemue et incompte quidem contexam, neque dum deerunt qui hoc 5  
 haud immerito reprehendent. Facile tamen ab ipso preceptore nostro ueniam  
 impetrabo, optime noui. Habet namque uir summus Frisios suos et reuerendum  
 presulem Vangium, uiros doctissimos laudatissimosque, quibus indicem meum,  
 quem ex te habui, tanquam telam texenti ministrare poteris, quo innumeras  
 laudes suas ac pene diuinas tandem per otium celebrent. Vale. 10

*Ep. 3*

*Iohannes de Pleningen canonicus Wormatiensis Theoderico de Pleningen  
 legum professori fratri suo amantissimo salutem plurimam dicit.*

1  
 2 Subsatisfeci iussioni tue, frater mi, desiderioque tuo maximo. Enimuero non  
 uitam, uerum commentarios indicemue uite preceptoris nostri (ut uides) in- 15  
 3 compte pro ingenio mei tenuitate scripsi. Vellem autem preceptoris nostri  
 gratia, frater carissime, ut, quemadmodum optare uidebatur (Plinius namque  
 nos appellare solebat), Pliniorum eruditio mihi contigisset, quo tibi morem  
 potuissem gessisse, ut hominis doctissimi uitam pro meritis doctrinaque ornare  
 4 et describere potuissem. Verum quid agam? (non omnia possumus omnes.) Ego 20  
 quoniam quod iussisti uniuersum facere nequii, quod potui tibi ac preceptoris  
 5 lubens praestiti. Tu uideris (mihi namque obtemperandum fuit) si quod praestare  
 6 non potui a me exegisti. Ut tamen res sese habeat, si preceptoris minus feci satis,  
 haud impie tamen fecisse atque hoc saltem consecutus esse dicar, indice meo aliis  
 argumentum meme dedisse, ut nomen preceptoris nostri illustrare celebrareque 25  
 potuerint. Vale.

*Commentarii seu index uite Rhodolphi Agricolaе Frisi uiri clarissimi per  
 doctorem Iohannem de Pleningen canonicum Wormatiensem ad nobilem uirum  
 doctorem Theodericum itidem de Pleningen fratrem suum conscriptus.*

1, 1 Non sum equidem nescius, Theoderice frater mi, esse perdifficile, nedum mihi 30  
 sed quantumuis docto, ut parem commendationem uirtuti multiplicique scientię  
 2 Rodolphi Agricolaę preceptoris nostri afferre possit. Veruntamen tum hortatu

17 carissime in margine scriptum pro mi quod erasum est

to achieve, so that I am in a mental quandary in which I do not see quite clearly what I should do. For I fear, should I obey you, that I might sully the life of that very famous man with my jejune and untutored style, but should I not, that I might seem not to want to do anything for the sake of those very close ties between us – unless you should agree, dearest brother, to my doing my best to put together no more than notes of his life or a summary of it, and an uncouth one at that, although there will be those who will disapprove, and not unjustly so. Yet I shall easily obtain the forgiveness of our preceptor himself, as I very well know, for this excellent man has his own Frisians and the reverend bishop of Worms, most learned and esteemed people, whom you will be able to offer my summary – which I have got from you – like a warp to the weaver, so that they may finally at their ease recite his countless and almost divine merits to the world. Farewell.

*Ep. 3*

*Johann von Plieningen, canon of Worms, cordially salutes his dearly beloved brother Dietrich von Plieningen, professor of Roman law*

To a certain extent, dear brother, I have satisfied your request and your most fervent wish, for I have not written a Life, to be sure, but notes of or a summary of the life of our preceptor, uncouth (as you can see) in accord with the poorness of my limited talents. For our preceptor's sake I should have liked it, dearly beloved brother, if, as he seemed to desire (for he used to call us *Plinii*), the erudition of the Plinies had fallen to my share, so that I should have been able to accede to your wish that I describe the very learned man's life with the elegance proper to his merits and knowledge. But what can I do? We cannot all do everything. Since I lacked the ability to comply with the whole of your request, I have with pleasure done for you and our preceptor what I could. You will have to decide (for I had but to obey) if you have not demanded something of me that was beyond me. However it may be, if I have done less than enough for our preceptor, it will in any case be said of me that I have done it faithfully, and that I have at least achieved this, that with my summary I have provided others with the material from which they will be able to broadcast and extol our preceptor's name. Farewell.

*Notes or summary of the life of the very famous Frisian Rudolph Agricola by Doctor Johann von Plieningen, canon of Worms, intended for his brother, the noble Doctor of the same surname, Dietrich von Plieningen*

I am very well aware, dear brother Dietrich, that it is extremely difficult for 1  
any scholar whatsoever, and the more so for me, to do justice to the merit and the wide knowledge of our preceptor Rudolph Agricola. Yet I have, because of

(tuo) tum pro necessitudine maxima, quę nobis secum fuit, non potui facere, quin communi nomine (tibi namque non tantum est otii) uel uite commentarios uiri clarissimi contexerem, qui aliis sint argumento ut hominis uitam aliquando possint describere meritamque laudem uir doctissimus hac mea opella consequi ualeat.

5

- 2, 1 Natus est itaque Rhodolphus Agricola uir excellens in Frisia anno salutis millesimo quadringentesimo quadragesimo quarto, decimo tertio Kalendas Martias, in uico Hagus ab oppido Graningo miliaribus duodecim sito, parentibus quidem ac maioribus modicis, ut sua virtute atque industria aliquando redderetur insignior. Et ut primum per etatem discendi capax fuit, Graningi scholis traditus et
- 2 grammaticen fundamentum artium omnium celerrime ibi adeptus est. Gymnasium deinde Erfordiam se contulit et illic tanto ingenio industriaque in dialecticis 10
- 3 ac rethoricis est uersatus, ut uel teneris unguiculis ille animi mentisque uigor se proferret, qui aliquando in tantum fulgorem tantamque lucem esset prorupturus. Anno etenim postea etatis suę quarto et decimo in artibus liberalibus 15
- 4 prima laurea magna omnium admiratione est initiatus indolisque suę egregię spem admirabilem tum cunctis iniiciebat. Cui ne deesset, Louanium ad litteratorum conuentum laudatissimum profectus est atque illic utriusque philosophię studiis, quibus secunde res ornantur, adiuuantur aduersę, mathematice quoque, incubuit, ut succrescentis etatis fructus tam claris initiis abunde responderet. 20
- 6 Anno namque decimo sexto laurea magisterii omnium stupore est insignitus. Paulo post sacrarum litterarum percipiendarum cupiditatem ingressus Coloniam gymnasium praeclarum petiit ibique huic studio fructu tam ubere aliquot annos incubuit, ut ingenitam animi sui equitatem mentisque bonitatem confirmarit, adeo ut ad ultimum fati diem usque ab hiis nunquam auelli potuerit. 25
- 3, 1 Procedente deinceps tempore quartum et uigesimum annum agens studiorum fama locique claritate permotus ad Italiam oppidum Ticinum litteratorum
- 2 emporium clarissimum profectus est. Ac primis annis iuris ciuilis auditor fuit magisque id agebat, ut suorum obsequeretur uoluntati quam quod eo
- 3 delectaretur studio. Fuit namque in homine animus excelsior atque generosior 30
- 4 quam ut ad leuia illa exiguaque rerum momenta, quibus magna ex parte (ut ipsius uerbis utar) ius ciuile constat, abiici posset, neque passus est se ad idipsum alligari, precipue cum putaret uix constanti fide ac integritate a quoquam posse tractari. Relicto itaque iuris studio ad maiora eluctans litteris pollitioribus et artibus, quas humanitatis uocant, et Ciceronis Quintilianique lectioni precipue, 35

1 (tuo) *suppleui\**; *uide notam* 14–15 *prorupturus\**: *prorepturus* S; *u. notam*

your prompting as well as for the sake of the very close ties that we had with him, felt it incumbent upon me at least to put together, on behalf of both of us, (since you do not have so much leisure time), some notes of the life of that very famous man, which may furnish others with the materials that will enable them to write his Life one day, so that the very learned man may, through this little effort of mine, obtain the praise that he deserves.

This excellent man Rudolph Agricola, then, was born in Friesland in the year 2 of grace 1444, on the thirteenth day before the *Kalendae* of March, in the hamlet of Hagae, situated at a distance of twelve miles from the town of Groningen. He came from humble parents and forebears, in fact, in order that he should one day acquire more renown by his own merit and diligence. And as soon as he was old enough to be susceptible to teaching, he was sent to school at Groningen and there very rapidly mastered grammar, the foundation of all learning. Then he went to the Erfurt grammar school and there applied himself to dialectics and rhetoric with so much talent and diligence that even at that tender age the same strength of character and mind already manifested itself, that was destined one day to flower into such radiant brightness. For one year later, when he was in his fourteenth year, he won everyone's admiration by earning his first distinction: the degree of Bachelor in the liberal arts, and at that time he inspired all with prodigious expectations of his eminent gifts. In order not to disappoint these, he departed for Louvain, highly praised centre of the learned, and there devoted himself to the study of both kinds of philosophy, the one that adorns in prosperity and the one that aids in adversity, as well as to mathematics. Thus the harvest of his growing years amply conformed to such splendid beginnings, for in his sixteenth year he was, to everyone's utter amazement, awarded the dignified title of Master of Arts. Shortly afterwards, taken by a desire to study divinity, he went to the very famous grammar school of Cologne, and there devoted himself for a number of years to this discipline with such abundant success that he strengthened his inborn righteousness of mind and goodness of character to such a degree that to his dying day nothing was able to deflect him from those.

Later, as time passed and he was in his twenty-fourth year, he left for the Italian 3 town of Pavia, that highly celebrated staple town of men of letters, attracted as he was by the fame of the courses taught there and by the renown of the place. For the first few years he read Roman law, and did so more to please his family than because that study pleased him. For in this man there lived a spirit too lofty and exalted to allow itself to be humbled to those matters of little weight and minor importance of which (to use his own words) Roman law for the greater part consists. Nor did he tolerate his being shackled to this discipline, especially since he held that it could hardly be practised by anyone with unbroken honesty and integrity. Having therefore relinquished the study of law in order to strike out for higher things, he applied his mind to the more polished literature and arts termed the humanities and in particular to the reading of Cicero and Quintilian,



- quem quidem dictione sua fere effingit atque exprimit, animum applicuit.
- 5 Quicquid preterea in historia et poetria preclare scriptum extitit, quicquid ex  
oratoribus denique tanta temporum iniuria nobis fecit reliqui, studiosissime  
non solum attigit sed totum eis se ingressit, neque labor hominis doctissimi  
6 superuacaneus inanisue de eo spes fuit. Maximam namque sibi hoc bene 5  
ornateque dicendi studio uel doctissimorum iudicio existimationem laudemque  
7 peperit. Hac namque fama doctrine sue, ingenii morumque suauitate precipua,  
Iohannis et Friderici fratrum ex preclara familia comitum de Ottingin tantam  
sibi conciliauit beneuolentiam, ut eum caperent preceptorem et aliorum instar  
8 (omnibus namque prodesse cupiebat) ipsum parentem appellarent. Id quoque 10  
temporis precibus ac suasu Anthonii Scrophini uiri haud illitterati permotus  
uitam Petrarchę, uiri prestantissimi et quem cunctis ingeniis seculi sui haud  
cunctanter pretulit, cuique sua sententia omnis eruditio seculi nostri plurimum  
honoris debet, doctissime descripsit.
- 4, 1 Cum autem uir linguę Latine doctissimus uideret quantum momenti litterę 15  
Grece afferrent, uenit ei in mentem ut ipse quoque Latinis Grecas iungeret  
2 litteras. Deerant autem qui eas Papie publice profiterentur. Iccirco Ferrariam  
3 (ut uerbis suis utar) Musarum domum se contulit et diui Herculis ducis et  
principis optimi, subtili quidem hominum estimatori uirtutisque fautori optimo,  
ministerio ut festis sacris ac statis organa pulsaret, uti libros Grecos coemere 20  
4 honestiusque uiuere posset, sese inseruit. Cui carus, acceptus et iocundus fuit,  
et intra annos sex septemue, quibus illic fuit, tanta cura Grece lingue notitiam  
animo comprehendit, ut eam in quinque diuisam genera per omnes partes et  
numeros penitus cognosceret, attentique et anxii nunquamque cessantis studii  
premium, id est gloriam eruditionis et facundie utriusque lingue, est assecutus. 25  
5 Et protreptico, quem in diui principis sui Herculis studiorumque laudem magna  
doctissimorum et Latine et Grece frequentia maximo omnium plausu publice  
6 dixit, ex umbra emersit in lucemque prorupit. Atque post paulo illic quoque  
e Greco in Latinum Axiochum uel de morte contemnenda Platonis philosophi  
7 traduxit, quem Rhodolpho Langio dedicauit. Traduxit itidem illic paretisim 30  
Ysocratis ad Demoniacum rogatu Iohannis Agricole fratris sui anno millesimo  
quadragintesimo octauo et septuagesimo pridie Kalendas decembris, cui et  
8 dedicauit. Similiter et preexercitamenta quedam utilissima, quorum auctorem  
9 nescio, e Greco in Latinum perquam eleganter conuertit. Traduxit preterea  
Gallum Luciani Samosatensis, quem tibi, frater mi Theoderice, dedicauit. 35

13–14 plurimum honoris *in margine additum cum signis ad hunc locum revocantibus* 17–21 Iccirco  
... inseruit S; u. *notam* 26 magna Straube: magno S

the latter of whom he did indeed almost impersonate and bring to life again in his style. Everything else that stood out in history and poetry as beautifully written, yes, all from the pen of the orators that the great envy of time has left to us, he did not just take up with the utmost diligence, but totally dedicated himself to. Nor did the very learned man's labour prove fruitless or people's expectations of him empty, for by this science of how to speak gracefully and well he won for himself the greatest esteem and praise, even in the eyes of the most learned. Indeed, it was through this reputation for knowledge, and through his exceptional amiability of character and manners that he gained the affection of the brothers Johann and Friedrich, scions of the very distinguished family of the Counts von Öttingen; they became so fond of him that they took him as their preceptor and, after the example of others (for he desired to be useful to all), called him father. At the same time, persuaded by the entreaties and advice of the very learned Antonio Scrovegni, he wrote a very scholarly Life of Petrarch, a man of the highest excellence, whom he had no hesitation in putting above all the great men of his time and to whom, in his opinion, the entire scholarship of our century owes a great debt of homage.

But when this man, so well versed in the Latin tongue, realized of how 4  
 much importance was the literature of Greece, the idea occurred to him that he himself might also join Greek literature to that in Latin. But in Pavia there were no lecturers teaching Greek. Hence he betook himself to Ferrara, the home of the Muses (to use his own words), and entered the service of Ercole d'Este, the divine duke and illustrious monarch – truly a subtle judge of people as well as a most egregious patron of the talented. This service consisted in having to play the organ on fixed and holy feast-days, in order to be able to buy Greek books and live in a decent manner. He was loved, cherished and held dear by the duke, and within the six or seven years that he stayed there he took great care to attain such a mental grasp of the Greek language that he knew it thoroughly in all the parts and classes of the five categories into which it is divided, and won the prize attendant upon careful and conscientious and never-ceasing study, i.e. a reputation for erudition and for eloquence in both languages. Greatly acclaimed by all he stepped out of the shadow of obscurity and broke through into the light of fame, when he publicly delivered to a large audience of people extremely well versed in Latin as well as Greek, a hortatory address in praise of his divine sovereign Ercole and of scholarship. And it was also there that, soon afterwards, he translated the philosopher Plato's *Axiochus* or *On the Contempt of Death* from Greek into Latin, a translation which he dedicated to Rudolphus Langius. It was there again that, on the day preceding the kalendae of December of the year 1478, he translated Isocrates' *Paraenesis ad Demonicum* [*Exhortation to Demonicus*] at the request of his brother Johannes Agricola, to whom he also dedicated it. Similarly, he also turned certain exceedingly useful preliminary exercises, whose author I do not know, very felicitously from Greek into Latin. Furthermore, he translated Lucian of Samosate's *Gallus* [*The Cock*], which he dedicated to you,

- 10 Scripsit et uersus quosdam id temporis in laudem diui Iodoci; ipsius namque beneficio, et curatione Adolphi Occi medici conterranei sui, uiri et Latine et Grece doctissimi, a dissenteria et feбри quartana sese liberatum esse confidebat.
- 5, 1 Ultimis diebus, dum iter ac reditum pararet in patriam, rogatu tuo, Theoderice frater mi amantissime, cepit scribere tres illos libros suos de locis dialecticis, 5  
 2 accuratissime subtilitatis uolumen, quod tibi quoque dedicauit. Inter eundem autem in patriam cum per te, frater mi, tum uirtute sua maxima, que hoc boni preter cetera habet, ut non solum possessorem suum oblectet, sed alienorum quoque admirationem in se gratiamque conuertat, uirtute sua dico, Iohannis comitis Werdenbergii, reuerendi presulis Augustensis, beneuolentiam maximam 10  
 3 sibi conciliauit. Ab eo namque in oppido Dillingen ad ripam Danubii sito benignissime acceptus hospitio, et aliquot menses, donec libellum Luciani non esse credendum delationibus e Greco in Latinum doctissime conuerteret, illic egre tamen retentus est, ipsumque libellum dignationi sue reuerende dedicauit.  
 4 Institerat namque uir doctissimus, antea quam exiret Ytaliam, undique collecta 15  
 5 tantarum artium ac doctrinarum studia perinde ac mercator copiosus in patriam reportare, ut rursus Frisis suis liberaliter impartiretur disseminaretque. Et hac de causa uidende patrie suorumque miro tenebatur desiderio, quod presul reuerendus nec prohibere aut uoluit aut potuit, sed honestis auctum muneribus  
 6 in patriam redire tandem inuitus permisit. Transegit autem in patria annos tres 20  
 summo studiorum fructu et gloria maxime litteratorum (quorum in Frisia magnus est numerus) admiratione.
- 6, 1 Interea autem crebris litteris tum tuis, frater mi, tum reuerendi presulis Vangii, cuius humanitate maxima praecipuoque gaudebat ingenio, euocabatur e patria, quibus scriptis litterisue uir perquam humanus tandem permotus ex 25  
 Frisia discessit, non suorum patrie affectus tedio, uerum quod optime callebat familiaritatem et amicitiam solido iudicio contractam semelque apprehensam  
 2 recte non conuenire sperni. Neque sane opinio spesque ingens, quam de reuerendo presule iam pridem animo conceperat, eum fefellit. Postea enim quam  
 3 Heidelbergam applicuit et presul reuerendus hominem Hebrearum litterarum 30  
 perdiscendarum cupiditate flagrare uideret, tum ut solita munificentia atque humanitate in eum uteretur, tum ut uir doctus gloriae mensuram implere et maximo desiderio suo satis posset facere, preceptorem Hebreae linguae admodum doctum homini conduxit librorumque itidem Hebreorum copiam maxima et

brother Dietrich. At the same time he also wrote some verses in praise of St. Judoc; for he believed that thanks to the latter's favor and to treatment by the physician Adolph Occo, a fellow-countryman of his and a man highly learned both in Latin and Greek, he had been cured of dysentery and quartan fever.

In his last days [at Ferrara], as he was preparing for the return journey to his native country, he started writing – at your request, my most dearly beloved brother Dietrich – those three books of his on the dialectical places, a work of the most meticulous subtlety, which he dedicated to you as well. Then, on his journey home, both by your doing and by his own exceptional merit – which possesses this virtue above all that it does not only please the meritorious person himself, but also draws towards him the admiration and favour of others – by his own merit, I say, he gained the greatest affection of the reverend Bishop of Augsburg, Johann Count von Werdenberg. In fact, the latter received him with the utmost hospitality in the town of Dillingen on the bank of the Danube, and for some months, until he had finished translating Lucian's little book *That allegations should be disbelieved* most learnedly from Greek into Latin, he was kept there, albeit with difficulty, and he dedicated that little book to his reverend patron. Actually, before he left Italy the very learned man had decided that he would, like a wealthy merchant, take the knowledge of so many arts and sciences, gathered from the four corners of the earth, back to his native land, in order to impart it in his turn to his Frisians and disseminate it among them. And hence he was possessed with an immense desire to see his homeland and his relatives again, something which the reverend bishop either would not or could not frustrate; on the contrary, albeit reluctantly, his Reverence finally allowed him to return home, laden with the presents given to him in homage. Agricola then spent three years in his motherland, to the enormous profit of scholarship there, and with the greatest renown and admiration from men of letters (of whom there are many in Friesland). 5

In the meantime, however, he was exhorted to leave his native land in numerous letters, some of them yours, brother mine, some from the reverend Bishop of Worms, in whose great kindness and eminent intellect he took delight. Finally, persuaded by these writings or letters, the very kind man left Friesland, not motivated by dislike of his intimates or of his native land, but because he realized full well that it is not right and proper to spurn a familiarity and friendship entered upon and already accepted on the basis of sound judgement. Nor was he at all disappointed in the expectations and high hopes he had since long cherished of the reverend bishop. Indeed, after he had arrived at Heidelberg and the reverend bishop perceived that this man was burning with desire to acquire a sound knowledge of Hebrew literature, the bishop hired a very learned teacher of the Hebrew language for him, and also scraped together, with the greatest care and at very high expense, a collection of Hebrew books – partly just to act with his customary generosity and kindness towards him, partly in order that the learned man would have the facilities to achieve the full measure 6

- 4 cura et impensa corrasit. Et intra paucos annos uir summe industrię ingenii-  
 que, quemadmodum mirum in modum eas cupiebat scire, ita in eis mirum  
 5 in modum profecit. Et has litteras Hebreas sibi se uelle discere, cum reliquas  
 facultates aliis didicerit, quadam in epistola doctori Iohanni Reuchlin Germano  
 uiro etate nostra Latine, Grece, Hebraice facile doctissimo, dum eas discere inci- 5  
 peret, pluribus significauit. Statuerat enim etate sua ingrauescente in sacrarum  
 litterarum perquisitione conquiescere, neque id commodius alia uia maioreque  
 fructu ac laude putabat posse consequi quam quod una eademque opera Hebrei  
 sermonis antea ignoti proprietatem misteriumque didicit et sacrarum litterarum  
 6 lectioni summa laude, quemadmodum instituerat, totus incubuit. Hac quoque 10  
 de causa litteras Hebreas tantopere discere uel scire potius cupiebat: predica-  
 bat namque uir doctissimus ex doctis lingue Hebrę sese aliquotiens audiuisse  
 7 dure et non satis fide bibliam nostram latinam interpretatam esse. Id uerum  
 esset necne ipse uidere atque adeo pernoscere posset summo curauit studio, et  
 nisi morte immatura fuisset raptus, Latinam cum Hebraea contulisset et forsitan 15  
 (tantum rei publice litterarie fauebat) eam aliquando denuo Latinius et plus ad  
 uerbum transtulisset.
- 7, 1 Interea autem dum esset Heidelberge apud reuerendum presulem Vangium ex  
 nobili familia Dalburgia, anno salutis millesimo quadringentesimo octuagesimo  
 quinto accidit ut illustrissimus princeps et elector imperii Philippus comes 20  
 Palatinus Innocentio octauo pontifici maximo oboedientię praestande gratia  
 \*\* et eius rei causa reuerendum presulem Vangium, decus et ornamentum  
 omnium studiorum, legatum mitteret, cui Rhodolphus uir doctus, cum ut esset  
 apud presulem, cui omnia debebat, tum quod Rome uidende uel reliquiarum  
 uidendarum potius urbis uetustę et uictricis gentium summa cupiditas a puero 25  
 ipsum inceserat, comitem se prebuit. Interea dum huius rei efficiendę gratia  
 reuerendus presul illic moraretur, dixit mihi uir doctissimus aliquotiens (fui  
 namque id temporis beneficio illustris comitis Eberhardi Wirtenbergii illius  
 dico, qui summa sua uirtute ac prudentia paucos post annos in ducem creatus  
 est, in seruitio reuerendissimi cardinalis Iuliani tituli Sancti Petri ad uincula, 30  
 episcopi Ostiensis et summi penitentiarii, cuius quidem munificentia habeo  
 pene quicquid fortunarum adeptus sum) dixit mihi, dico, aliquotiens preceptor  
 noster, frater mi, nisi timeret presulem suum reuerendum iniquo laturum animo,  
 3 aliquot annos sese illic mecum moraturum. Incertum autem habeo num animus  
 hominis doctissimi quid de sese futurum esset tum presagiret, num propter 35  
 doctissimorum uirorum omnis generis copiam quae illic est quauē alia de causa  
 4 illic morari tantopere cuperet. Quam cupio mens hominum non esset ignara

2 in modum *Straube*: immodum S 18 Vangium S: in margine eadem manu, ut uidetur, additur Quem hodie Wormaciensem appellant 21–22 gratia\*\*: aliquid deesse uidetur; u. notam 29–30 creatus est *Straube*: creatus est) S

of his glory and satisfy his most ardent wish. And as remarkably fervently as this man (marked by the highest diligence and talent) desired to know Hebrew literature, so remarkably quickly did he make progress in it within a few years' time. And this he wanted to learn for himself, whereas he had acquired his other skills for others, as he explained in detail in a letter to Dr. Johann Reuchlin – easily the most learned German of our day in the field of Latin, Greek and Hebrew – when he commenced learning it. In fact, as his years advanced he had resolved to find peace in a careful study of Holy Scripture, and he deemed that he could not achieve this more easily in another way or with greater profit and commendation than if he should, in one and the same effort, learn the proper idiom and secrets of the Hebrew tongue, previously unknown to him; so he applied himself completely and in the most praiseworthy manner to the reading of Holy Scripture, as he had planned. And for the following reason too did he want so much to learn or rather know Hebrew literature: the very learned man maintained that he had several times heard from persons well versed in Hebrew that the Latin rendering of our Bible was awkward and not faithful enough. To be able to see for himself and even to know exactly whether this was true or not was the aim that he was striving for with the utmost industry. Had he not been cut off by an untimely death, he would have collated the Latin Bible with the Hebrew version and might (so great was his devotion to the Republic of Letters) one day have translated it afresh, more literally and in better Latin.

In the meantime, however, while he was living at Heidelberg with the reverend Bishop of Worms, of the noble von Dalberg family, it befell in the year of grace 1485 that the most illustrious prince and elector of the Empire, Philip Count Palatine, [desired to wait] upon Pope Innocentius VIII in order to offer the latter his obedience, and therefore sent the reverend Bishop of Worms, the jewel and ornament of all scholarship [to Rome] as his envoy; the learned Rudolph offered to accompany him, partly in order to be near the bishop, to whom he owed everything, and partly because he had since childhood been possessed by a longing to see Rome, or rather, to see the remains of the ancient city that had conquered the world. And while the reverend Bishop was staying there in order to fulfill his task, the great scholar repeatedly told me (for through the favour of count Eberhard Wirtenberg – of him, that is, who was made a duke only a few years later because of his eminent ability and wisdom – I was at the time [in Rome] in the service of the most reverend cardinal Juliano of the titular church of St. Peter-in-Chains, Bishop of Ostia and high penitentiary, to whose munificence I do indeed owe almost all of whatever wealth I have acquired), our preceptor, I say, several times told me, dear brother, that, were it not for fear that it would displease his reverend bishop, he would have stayed there with me for a few years. But I am not sure whether the great scholar's heart already had a premonition of what was to happen to him, or if he so much wanted to stay there because of the great concourse of highly learned people of every provenance that one finds there, or for some other reason. How fervently

- 5 futuri! Enimuero si reuerendo presuli Vangio concessum foret nosse hac uia,  
 quod Rome mansisset, mortem hominis precauere auertique potuisse (ut ab eo  
 discedam quod hominem doctissimum et magni faciebat et amabat plurimum)  
 ne tantam iacturam omnis generis littere eius morte fecissent, ut mecum licuisset  
 morari, facile dedisset ueniam ac coegisset potius. 5
- 8, 1 Inter redeundum namque in patriam cum presule uir doctissimus, a puero  
 otio deditus litterario, itineris nescio molestia, estatis solisue calore, in febrem  
 quartanam tam accutam incidit, ut una cum generoso comite Bernhardo ex  
 Eberstein et Iodoco Bock decano uallis Wumpinae (eodem namque laborabant  
 2 morbo) presulem relinquere Tridentique remanere cogereetur. Illinc autem simul 10  
 ac morbus remitti (altius namque radices egerat quam ut funditus depelli posset)  
 3 ac gradi posse cepit, cupidus uidendi presulis Heidelbergam accurrit. Denuoque  
 ex itineris credo longinquitate ac molestia in febrem quartanam re incidit, cui  
 morbus epaticus perquam grauis accessit, et quoniam antea quoque Ferrarie per  
 Adolphum Occum Frisum arte sua medicine et ingenio mirabili curatus fue- 15  
 rat, aliis medicis haud indoctis inexpertisque, qui tum erant Heidelberge, non  
 confidebat, uerum in Adolphum ipsum, cui presul reuerendus litteris hominis  
 4 egritudinem significauerat, omnem spem salutis sue fixit et collocauit. Atque  
 adeo inter expectandum amicum et medicum uir doctissimus anno salutis mille-  
 simo quadringentesimo octuagesimo quinto, sexto Kalendas nouembris, morbi 20  
 magnitudine et acerbitate superatus in presulis reuerendi lacrimantis sinu ac  
 manibus (ne cui omnia uiuo prestiterat, deesset morienti) summa religione uite  
 5 debitum persoluit. Quanto autem animi dolore uel merore potius recenti adhuc  
 uulnere reuerendus presul sit affectus, cum hominis perquam docti et amici  
 consuetudine sese priuari omnisque generis litteras eius morte intollerandam 25  
 6 iacturam facere uideret, uerbis satis dignis consequi nequeo. Postea autem quam  
 presul doctissimus hominem et amicum ea lege ut aliquando moreretur natum  
 esse meminit, sese collegit et ipsa ratione molestias omnes cepit depellere dolo-  
 7 rique maximo restitit, et ut funus pro copia qua potuit maxima faciendum  
 curaret, totus cogitauit. Delegerat autem Heidelberge locum sepulture in ede 30  
 diui Francisci, in qua magna litteratorum et omnium ciuium pompa et frequentia  
 8 parique luctu ac planctu sepultus est. Adolphus autem Occo medicus, siue quod

19–20 anno ... quinto S: M CCCIXXXXV *in margine* 29 pro copia qua potuit maxima S: pro copia  
 quam potuit maximum *Straube; u. notam* 30 Heidelberge: *in dextro margine ascriptum* 31 *inter qua*  
*et magna 3<sup>1/2</sup> versus illegibiliter erasi sunt* 31 magna *Straube*: magno S

do I wish that the human mind was not ignorant of the future! For indeed if it had been given to the reverend Bishop of Worms to know that in this way, i.e. if Agricola had stayed in Rome, the man's death could have been prevented, and that so heavy a loss to the entire realm of literature as was caused by his death might have been averted (not to mention the fact that the bishop thought highly of him and was deeply attached to him), his reverence would easily have given permission for Agricola to stay with me, nay, would even have forced him to do so.

For due to some misery or other consequence of travelling – what with the summer heat or that of the sun – while going back home with the bishop the highly learned man, dedicated to literary studies from boyhood onwards, suffered such a fierce attack of quartan fever that he was forced to let the bishop go on and remain behind in Trento, together with the noble Count Bernhard von Eberstein and Jodocus Bock, deacon at Wimpfen im Thal (for they suffered from the same illness). But as soon as the disease began to diminish (for it was too deeply rooted to be completely banished) and he could walk again, he dashed off to Heidelberg, longing to see the bishop again. And again, due to the length and discomfort of the journey, I believe, he suffered an attack of the quartan fever, and a very serious disease of the liver in addition, and since on a previous occasion at Ferrara he had also been cured by the medical skill and miraculous talent of the Frisian Adolph Occo, he did not trust the other physicians who were then practising at Heidelberg – although they were by no means deficient in learning or skill – but placed and pinned all hopes of his recovery on that same Adolph, whom the reverend bishop had notified by letter of our man's illness. And thus, in the year of grace 1485, on the sixth day before the *Kalendae* of November, overcome by the severity and ferocity of the disease while waiting for his friend and physician, this very learned man most religiously paid his debt to life at the bosom and in the arms of the weeping reverend bishop (for he, having done everything for Agricola when he was alive, would not desert him when he was dying). However I cannot depict in suitable words how great the affliction was, or rather the sorrow, that the reverend bishop suffered in his heart, while the wound was still fresh, when he saw himself deprived of the companionship of his very learned friend, and saw the entire realm of literature suffer an unbearable loss through this man's death. Once however the very learned bishop had reminded himself that his friend had been born under the condition that he should die one day, he pulled himself together and with an appeal to reason began to banish all vexations and contended against his great sorrow, and centered all his thoughts on how he could arrange the funeral to take place in as splendid a manner as lay in his power. At Heidelberg he had already chosen a spot for a tomb in the church of St. Francis, and it was there that, accompanied by a great funeral procession made up of a crowd of men of letters and all citizens, and with equally great condolence and lamentation, Agricola was interred. But with respect to the physician Adolph Occo, who had



reuerendi presulis littere, quae amici egritudinem nuntiauerant, tardiuscule ad eum perlate essent, siue itineris longitudine impeditus, qui eo consilio exierat ut ipsum denuo liberaret, postridie eius diei qua decesserat conclamatoque funere  
 9 plenus spei maxime alacris accurrit. Quid autem cogitarit, dixerit quantoque dolore fuerit affectus, simulac conterraneum, equalem, studiorum socium eundemque quem alterum se putaret, inter expectandum ut eius beneficio et cura liberaretur, mortem cum uita commutasse atque spe sua maxima sese frustratum esse uideret, (absque quod dicam) quisque uel imprudens facile coniiicere potest.  
 10 Facile tamen crediderim uirum et medicum doctissimum nil rerum omnium tum maluisse quam ut saluti amici precipui deque se bene meriti adesse et omnis generis litteris, que ingentem iacturam huius hominis morte fecerunt, in  
 11 tempore (quemadmodum confidebat) succurrere potuisset. Enimuero abunde sciebat (intus namque ipsum et in cute nouerat), si rerum natura hominem, qui multis et diuersis rebus aptus esset, uoluisset effinxisse, eque idoneum et qui ad singula atque Rhodolphus natus esse uideretur, non facile produxisset. 15

9, 1 Ab ipsius autem corpore ordiar, licet quale id sit in homine haud magni  
 2 momenti esse putetur. Fuit corpore amplo atque robusto staturamque iustam excedebat, ab humeris et pectore latus ceterisque membris adimos pedes usque  
 3 equalis et congruens totoque corpore conspicuus. Dum corpus exerceret, dexteritatis non postreme fuit, et quoniam rerum natura continui laboris patientem  
 4 esse non sinit, animum suum studio fatigatum ad hec diuerticula transferre solebat: uoluebat lapidem, optime ludebat pila, manibus et omnis generis armis  
 5 luctabatur egregie. Facie fuit lata, qua miram honestatem modestiamque pre se ferebat, eaque dignitas homini inerat, ut omnes eum uenerarentur plurimum,  
 6 eiusque amicitiam et uite consuetudinem omnes ultro expeterent. Frontem itidem habuit latam et in sincipio capillum rariorem, barbam multam haud sane  
 7 illiberalem, pilum utrimque coloris nucis castanee permature, cetera fuit hirsutus. Nasum habuit eminentem, manus pulcherrimas, quarum quidem ungues, cum quid accuratius, limatius cogitaret, diceret ageretue, dentibus rodere solebat.  
 8 Vestitu ac corporis habitu utebatur mediocri. Cibi quoque et potus fuit minimi  
 9 et facillime parabilis ac fere uulgaris. In sermone fuit humanus, lenis, minime  
 10 pertinax. Ob pectus substrictum uocem habuit admodum raucam et tussi torquebatur arida, precipue cum contentione in disputationibus, congressionibus  
 11 familiarium sibi utendum esset. Valitudine fuit pro frugalitate sua comoda et  
 12

11 que\*: quem S; quae *Straube, Pfeifer, qui legunt* quam in S 23 honestatem *Straube, Pfeifer*: honestam S 31 parabilis *Straube, Pfeifer*: parabili S; u. notam

set out with the aim of saving Agricola once again: whether the letter from the reverend bishop that had warned him of his friend's illness had been delivered to him just too late, or that he had been delayed by the length of the journey, he came hurrying along, full of the most cheerful hope, the day after Agricola had died and when the funeral was over. But what he thought and said, and with how great a grief he was afflicted, as soon as he found that, while waiting to be saved by his ministrations and treatment, his fellow-countryman, of the same age as he, who had shared his scholarly interests and whose second self he considered himself to be, had exchanged life for death and that his own high hopes had been frustrated, everyone, however obtuse, can readily deduce without my telling him. I can easily believe, however, that this man, this very learned physician of all things wished nothing more than as that he would have been in time (as he had trusted to be) to save his eminent friend, who had rendered him many a service, and thus to succour the entire field of literature, to which the death of this man was a tremendous loss. Indeed, he knew very well (for he had known him through and through) that if Nature should ever have wanted to fit a man with as many talents for many different things, and equally born to every single one of them as Rudolph, she would have been hard put to it to create one.

But let me start with his body, even though in the case of a man it is held 9 to be of no great importance what his body is like. His frame was big and strong and he was taller than most, with wide shoulders and chest, to which the other parts of his body from head to foot harmoniously corresponded, so that as regards his whole body, he was striking to behold. When he was exercising his body, he was of no little dexterity, and since Nature will not allow anyone to be proof against continuous exertion, he used to turn his mind, tired with study, to the following little amusements: he put the shot, was very good at ball games, and was an excellent fighter both with his hands and with any kind of weapon. He had a broad face, radiating a wondrous virtuousness and modesty, and there was such a dignity in him that everyone venerated him greatly and all sought his friendship and companionship of their own accord. He had a wide brow as well, and although at the back of his head his hair was rather thin, his full beard was really by no means contemptible, both his hair and his beard being of a deep chestnut brown; for the rest he was hirsute. He had a prominent nose and exceedingly beautiful hands, even though he used to gnaw his nails with his teeth when he pondered, said or did something with greater than usual care and precision. He was moderate in the attention he paid to his clothes and to his external appearance. Food and drink too he took in very small amounts, and then what was most easily obtainable, almost always staple commodities. In conversation he was considerate, soft-spoken, and in no way obstinate. Because of his constricted chest his voice was quite hoarse, and he was tormented by a dry cough, especially when he had to speak with emphasis in argumentations or gatherings of his friends. Thanks to his frugal habits his health was good and

- prospera tresque tantum ancipites infirmitates annis sex et quadraginta quibus uixit, primam Papie, alteram Ferrarie, tertiam inter exeundum Romam et quidem tam grauem expertus est, ut pre morbi magnitudine, ut antea dixi, 5  
 13 Tridenti maneret necesse foret. Et quoniam illinc nondum confirmatus abiit, in febrim Heidelberge reincidit morbumque epatiarium ex longa egritudine  
 14 contraxit. Et si hominis uitam ac mores estimo, ausim contendere studio nimio, 5  
 15 multis uigiliis omnes infirmitates hominem doctissimum contraxisse. Somni etenim fuit breuissimi et tanta doctrinae cupiditate flagrabat, ut noctu ne in lectulo quidem temperaret sibi, quominus mane et uesperis sedens lectitaret.  
 16 Interdiu quoque (temporis namque iacturam pessimam esse dicebat) nullum 10  
 tempus intermittebat, quin aut studiis aut aliis honestis artibus impenderet.
- 10, 1 Et cum animum suum lectione fatigatum relaxare uellet, ad hec quoque diuerticula sese transferre solebat, quo tempestiua intermissione esset ad studia  
 2 uegetior: aliquando namque fidibus citharae (canebat) et inter cantandum  
 3 pulsabat; interdum sonabat tibiis; organa denique tam pulsabat egregie, ut 15  
 4 omnes seculi sui potuisset ad certamen prouocasse. Cantor quoque fuit eximius et non indulcis, precipue cum uoce cantaret media. Et nisi morte immatura raptus fuisset, librum de musica, quemadmodum instituerat, scripsisset; nullum  
 5 enim genus nullae ratio musices homini doctissimo fuit incognita. Pictura preterea mirum in modum delectabatur, atque haec res sola abunde argumento est 20  
 6 hominem ingenii fuisse prestantissimi et memorie admirabilis: in eum namque hominem quem cupiebat pingere, clanculum et in sacellis, quo homine ipso tanquam inscio uteretur quietiore oculoque certiore ipsum intueri posset, spatio profecto haud longiore quam missa peragi potest, oculos et cogitationis impetus figebat, atque domi postea uniuersa hominis liniamenta tam mirabiliter et 25  
 ad unguem (ut dici solet) carbone exprimebat, ut in illis mutis membrorum liniamentis uiuum ac spirans corpus te cernere putares.
- 11, 1 Mentis fuit generose, simplex, apertus; nihil ex occulto, nihil ex insidiis agendum putabat; nulli molestus, ueritatis cultor, fraudis inimicus; turbam fugiebat  
 2 amicis uno alteroue contentus, quos profecto non ex obuiio sed ex moribus 30  
 3 querebat. Tanta fuit in eo humanitas tantisque preditus uirtutibus, ut omnes eum admirarentur ac plurimum colerent et plerumque uel omnes potius mulierculae usque uirtutis parentem appellarent. Diuitiarum contemptor fuit mirificus; ultro namque petitus ab illustrissimo principe Karolo duce Burgundie hominis fama permoto, ut in cancelariam suam sese insereret, refutabat, ubi amplissime 35

4 maneret S: manere *Straube* 14 (canebat) *suppleui\**; u. *notam* 30 obuiio\*: obulo S; u. *notam*

propitious, and he was dangerously ill only three times in the 46 years of his life: the first time at Pavia, the second time at Ferrara, the third time while he was traveling from Rome and then he was so seriously affected that, due to the severity of his illness, as I have told before, it was even necessary that he should remain behind at Trento. And since he left there before he had got better, he was again attacked by fever at Heidelberg and contracted a liver complaint in consequence of his long illness. And judging by the man's habits and way of life, I might venture to assert that the great scholar contracted all his complaints by too much study and too much burning of the midnight oil. He took very little sleep, as a matter of fact, and so ardent was his desire for knowledge that even in bed at night he could not stop himself from sitting up early and late in order to read. And by day as well not a moment would pass (for loss of time is the worst loss, he used to say) which he did not devote to studying or other worthy pursuits.

And when he wanted to relax his mind, tired with reading, he also used 10 to address himself to the following amusements, so as to be fresher for his studies thanks to a timely break: that is, sometimes he played the strings of the cittern, and plucked them as he sang; at other times he played the flute; finally he was such an excellent organ-player that he might have challenged any of his contemporaries to a contest. And he was an exceptional and positively mellifluous singer too, particularly when singing in the middle register of the voice. Yes, had he not been cut off by an untimely death, he would have written a book on music, as he had planned, for no kind of music or musical theory was unknown to this very learned man. Furthermore he took an amazing delight in painting, and the following fact alone is abundant proof that he was a man of exceptional gifts and possessed an admirable memory: if he wanted to paint a man, he would focus his eyes and the full force of his thought on him, covertly, in fact, in a chapel, so that he had him at his disposal without the man himself being aware of it, so to speak, and was able to contemplate him in greater peace and tranquility, be it of course no longer than mass would take, and he would afterwards, at home, faithfully render the man's entire figure in charcoal so marvelously and to a T (as the expression goes) that in those lifeless lines of his limbs you would believe that you discerned a living, breathing body.

He had a noble, frank and candid character; he held that one should do 11 nothing secretly, nothing underhand; he was a burden to nobody, cherished truth and hated deceit, kept aloof from the crowd, and was content with one or two friends, whom he certainly did not choose because he happened to meet them, but on the grounds of their personal style. His kindness was so great, and he possessed such exceptional qualities, that everyone admired and greatly revered him and most women, or rather all, went so far as to call him the father of virtue. He had an enormous contempt for riches, for when the very illustrious monarch Charles, Duke of Burgundy, impressed by the man's fame, spontaneously offered him a position in his chancellery (where he could

fortune mensuram facile implere potuisset, non immemor uir doctissimus gerentes republicas subire oportere formidines, inuidiam, odia, calumnias, simultates, contentiones, certamina. Libertatis ac suę potissimum amator fuit. Vitam amabat priuatam ac solitariam, que deditis studio solet esse gratissima.

4 Nullis humanarum mentium irritamentis, quæ ab amore discederes (absit sinister 5  
 interpret), obnoxius; matronarum namque familiaritate et earum precipue que sciebant scribere, quo eis scriberet et ipse uicissim homini rescriberent, mirum in modum gaudebat honestumque huiusmodi amorem industriam strenueque agendi stimulos nobis subicere predicabat.

12, 1 Ingenii maximi fuit et apti ad quascunque res nouas subito perdiscendas; 10  
 linguam namque suam Frisonum uernaculam, Gallorum, Germanorum utro-  
 rumque, et superiorum et inferiorum, Italicam itidem uernaculam tenebat, non  
 quemadmodum uulgo sciri teneriue solent, quo uite necessaria coemere posset,  
 2 uerum ut et uersu et oratione soluta in singulis concinne apteque diceret. De  
 studiorum uero effectu hominis doctissimi, quando felicis industrie suę multa 15  
 munimenta quasi in unum acruum ac uolumen redegi, pluribus loqui superua-  
 caneum foret, eumque non nisi prestantissimi ingenii fuisse tres illi libri sui, quos  
 de locis dialecticis fecit, maxime indicant, qui acute inuenti, apte, ornate, splen-  
 dide conscripti sunt posteritatemque ad spem fructus maximi excitant pariterque  
 quantam eius morte litterę iacturam fecerint, indicant. 20

13, 1 Et ut finem huic indici meo imponam, quicquid de homine doctissimo  
 sentiam paucis dicam: migrasset profecto ex hominibus inertia, si eo animo  
 2 reliqui uitam ingrederentur quo eam ipse est egressus. Enimuero ne extrema  
 3 quidem eius hora agitatione studii fuit uacua. Pretextum autem satis honestum  
 atque adeo perquam necessarium, frater mi, huius culpe subeunde, quod 25  
 indicem scripsi, me habuisse animum induxi meum, adeo ut, nisi hunc indicem,  
 quem ex te habui (nemini eque notum atque tibi quid in uniuersa uita  
 cogitarit, dixerit aut fecerit) quantumuis indoctum exarasset, unde Frisii  
 sui et inprimis reuerendus presul noster Vangius, uiri doctissimi, cepissent  
 argumentum, ut uitam, studiorum gloriam, ingenii prestantiam preceptoris 30  
 4 nostri hominis doctissimi pro meritis aliquando celebrare possent? Efficiet itaque  
 uel erit potius occasio hec opella mea, frater mi, ne uir tantus illaudatus humi  
 iaceat.

4 esse *Straube*: esset *S* 27–28 (nemini ... fecerit) *transposui et parentheses addidi\**: animum induxi meum nemini eque notum ... fecerit *S*

easily have amassed quite a sizeable fortune), the great scholar refused, being acutely aware that those who run the affairs of state must needs suffer terror, envy, hatred, calumny, feuds, quarrels and rivalry. He loved freedom, and most of all his own freedom. He was fond of a secluded life as a private citizen, such as is generally most agreeable to those who have dedicated themselves to scholarship. He was susceptible to none of the titillations of human nature, apart from love (let no-one think evil of this), for in friendship with ladies, especially with those who knew how to write, so that he could write to them and they in turn could write him back, he took great delight and he maintained that that kind of virtuous love stimulates our diligence and gives us an incentive to act with vigor.

His gifts were very great, and peculiarly adapted to rapidly acquiring a thorough knowledge of anything new; as a matter of fact, he spoke his mother tongue, viz. that of the Frisians, the vernacular of the French, that of the two sorts of Germans, i.e. both those of Upper and those of Lower Germany, and the vernacular of the Italians, and not just so that his use of them was commonly recognized and understood, so that one is able to buy the necessities of life, but in such a way that he could express himself elegantly and to the point both in verse and prose in any of these languages. It would be superfluous to expatiate on the true result of this learned man's studies, since I have gathered many proofs of his fertile industry into a single sheaf and tome, so to speak. That his gifts were no less than exceptional is most clearly attested by those three books on the dialectical places that he put together: well thought out and appositely, elegantly, brilliantly written, they arouse in posterity the expectation of a very rich harvest, and similarly make it clear what enormous loss literature suffered by this man's death.

And to bring this summary to an end, I shall briefly sum up my opinion of this very learned man: laziness would truly have departed from mankind if all others were to take up life with the attitude with which he left it. In fact not even his last hour was devoid of scholarly activity. In any case, dear brother, I have persuaded myself, that I had a sufficiently respectable and even very pressing reason to take upon me the blame of having written a summary, namely that, however deficient in learning it may be, if I had not jotted down this summary, which I have got from you (nobody knows as well as you what Agricola thought, said and did all his life), where would his Frisians, and in the first place our reverend Bishop of Worms, where would these very learned men have found the material needed in order one day to make known, in a manner suited to his merits, the life, the reputation for erudition, the excellence of mind of that most learned man who was our preceptor? And thus, dear brother, this little effort of mine will bring about, or rather will be the occasion for not leaving such a great man to lie in his grave unlauded.



## GOSWINUS VAN HALEN

Goswinus is named Van Halen because he was born in Ha(e)len, a town on the Meuse River in what is now the Dutch province of Limburg. His parents were simple peasants, which was the reason that his education in nearby Roermond did not amount to much (see section 10). It is quite probable that Agricola visited Roermond in 1480 and took Goswinus with him to Groningen when he was eleven or twelve years old.<sup>1</sup> In that case Goswinus would have been born in 1469 or 1468. In the North he became a *famulus*, a sort of servant or assistant, to Wessel Gansfort. In the eighties he also attended the school of St. Lebuin's at Deventer for a while, where, as he mentions a few times, his teachers were Alexander Hegius and Johannes Oostendorp (see sections 2 and 7).<sup>2</sup>

Shortly before his master's death (October 4, 1489) Goswinus entered the Clerics' House of the Brethren of the Common Life in Groningen, where he became rector in 1507; he retained that position until his death in 1530.<sup>3</sup> Ca. 1511 a school was attached to the Clerics' House.<sup>4</sup> Goswinus had a most successful teaching career there; some of his later students, like Albert Hardenberg and Regnerus Praedinius, became quite famous. He was highly praised by Nicolaus Lesdorpheus, headmaster of the Latin school of St. Martin's church in Groningen; apparently the two of them had an excellent working relationship.<sup>5</sup> Modern scholars, too, regard the period 1509–1530, when Goswinus was rector of the Clerics' House, as the absolute heyday of its entire existence (ca. 1435–1569).<sup>6</sup>

Van Rhijn writes that Van Halen “was an able man, who led an industrious life”, and who “had managed to acquire a reasonably broad education.”<sup>7</sup> This is evident from his works mentioned by Hardenberg,<sup>8</sup> and from the few items left

<sup>1</sup> Agricola left Italy in 1479 and arrived in Groningen in 1479 or 1480. Since he stayed initially at his father's convent at Selwerd (see the date of his *Ep.* 20), it was in all probability then and there he tutored the nun Wandelvaert (see 10, 1).

<sup>2</sup> Also in the letter quoted by Hardenberg in his *Vita Wesseli Groningensis*, in *M. Wesseli Gansfortii ... Opera* 1614, \*\*4<sup>v</sup>. A translation of this letter can be found in Akkerman and Santing 1987.

<sup>3</sup> See Weiler 1997, 130. A recent essay (2009) by L.J. van der Ploeg gives a detailed description of Goswinus's life and works.

<sup>4</sup> See Weiler 1997, *s.v.* Groningen, 3–5 (pp. 124–128; *id.* 2004, 231).

<sup>5</sup> See Akkerman 1999, 12–13.

<sup>6</sup> See n. 3; also Weiler 2004, 237.

<sup>7</sup> Van Rijn (1925), 1933, 158.

<sup>8</sup> Hardenberg (see n. 2) \*\*5<sup>v</sup>: ... & ipsius [i.e. Goswini] *monimenta varia adhuc in lucem tandem venient. Multa enim scripta sua ad posteros reliquit, & aliquot dialogos, plenos pietatis & doctrinae, ad me.*



to us: the letter to Melanchthon about Agricola's life, the short fragment *De vita Wesseli*,<sup>9</sup> and the three letters to Hardenberg.<sup>10</sup> Goswinus seems to have learned some Greek as well (cf. the genitive *Theseos* in par. 5, 3), but it is doubtful whether his erudition included everything he suggests (in his second letter) Hardenberg should read.<sup>11</sup> In the first letter and in the *vita* of Agricola, Goswinus calls himself an *alphabetic(i)us*, a beginner.

Although he writes Latin in an easy, flowing style, it is not of the same caliber as that of a Geldenhouwer or a Listrius: Goswinus had no university education.<sup>12</sup> The manuscript in which our *vita* has been preserved is not flawless. Of the nine times a number or date is mentioned, it is wrong four times.

Goswinus knew many people in and around Groningen: in his letters to Hardenberg twenty-nine persons occur, twenty-seven of whom are mentioned by name, and practically all of whom can be associated with scholarship and education. Of thirteen of these persons some works have been preserved. In addition, Goswinus entertained contacts with Erasmus, Martinus Dorpius, Gerard Listrius, Ferrarius and Melanchthon.<sup>13</sup>

The letter to Melanchthon does not have the characteristics of a formal *vita* (such as that by Von Plieningen); this may well have been intentional on Goswinus's part. At any rate, to this informal character we owe a series of details about Agricola's youth, family, and activities in his native country that we otherwise would have lacked; they make this letter a pleasure to read. Goswinus owes most of this information to Wilhelmus Frederici, pastor of St. Martin's church in Groningen, as he himself tells us in 1,3.

It is curious that in Melanchthon's works on Agricola in which Goswinus is mentioned as one of the sources, we find no quotations from this text. This may be due to the fact that Goswinus wrote several letters to Wittenberg, or perhaps our text has not been transmitted in full.

The text of this letter has been preserved, anonymous and undated, in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. 9058, fols. 3<sup>r</sup>.–6<sup>v</sup>.; it was first published and translated by Kan.<sup>14</sup> Goswinus was identified as its author by Van der Velden.<sup>15</sup> As to its date of origin, Van der Velden estimates it at not long before 1530 (the year Goswinus died);<sup>16</sup> Van Rhijn puts it between 1514 (see 3, 3) and August 3,

<sup>9</sup> Published by Kan 1893, 4–5. Its authenticity as a text written by Goswinus is cautiously accepted by Van Rhijn 1917, Bijlage A (1b).

<sup>10</sup> Hardenberg (see n. 2), \*\*4<sup>r</sup>–\*\*5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hardenberg (see n. 2), \*\*5<sup>r</sup>, where Goswinus mentions more than twenty famous authors from Antiquity and later.

<sup>12</sup> On Goswinus's Latin see Akkerman 1997, 135–137.

<sup>13</sup> Van Rhijn 1933, 149–154.

<sup>14</sup> Kan 1894, 5–9; *id.* 1899, 63–83.

<sup>15</sup> Van der Velden 1911, 13–15.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

1527 (the day Frederici died, Goswinus's main source for this letter).<sup>17</sup> From par. 5, 2 we learn that Goswinus *heard* Martinus Dorpius tell something; this must have been in 1518 or 1521 (7, 2). The letter was probably written shortly before or after 1527.

<sup>17</sup> Van Rhijn 1933, 153.

*De Rodolpho Agricola*  
*Gratiam et pacem cum salute*

- 1, 1 Salue, mi undecumque doctissime Philippe Melanchthon. Narrauit mihi Iodocus Bernardus Ferreus artium liberalium magister, tuarum laudum sane ingens praedicator (non enim est omnium aliquis qui inter familiares sermones ei crebrior in ore sit quam Philippus Melanchthon), te primum, deinde quosdam alios uiros doctos uehementer scire optantes uitam et mores Rodolphi Agricolae Groningensis; qua de caussa te ei negotium dedisse ad me, si mihi aliquid de Rodolpho compertum esset, non grauarer hoc ad te scribere. Mihi certe, Melanchthon amice unice, nihil potest esse graue in quo tibi gratificari quiuero. Vtinam uel isto tibi gratificatus fuero. Rodolphi nostri uita longe alium postulareret scriptorem. Verum cum hac tempestate nemo (quod scio) superest qui eius uitam ac mores nouit aut nouisse curet, ego ut tuae petitioni parerem, conatus sum certior fieri ex iis qui Agricolae familiares fuerunt et cum eo diuersati sunt. Plaeraque tamen omnia ipse sciui ex pastore Groningensi Wilhelmo Frederico Pistorio, homine in omni uero genere eruditionis non parum perito. Hic cum Agricola multis annis egit in Italia, hic nouit patrem Agricolae et totam illam familiam et gentiles Agricolae, hic audiuit eum Ferrariae aliquando declamantem, aliquando orantem diserte illam orationem quae est de laudibus disciplinarum.
- 2, 1 Rodolphus igitur Agricola natus est anno salutis 1436 in pago Baffeltlo, qui situs est ad aquilonem oppidi Groningae distans a Groninga itinere fere 4 horarum, cum moderato gressu graditur quispiam. Mortem suam obiuit in fine sexti septenarii. Iubileum attingit aut maior iubileo fuit, ut plerique existimant. Memini, cum Alexandrum Hegium Dauentriae audirem anno salutis 86, uenire ad hunc literas de morte Rodolphi Agricolae Dauentriam, quas non sine lachrymis auditoribus in ludo legit, nec mirandum sane si ei Agricola charus fuit. Huic enim debuit quicquid pure Latine ac Grece calluit.
- 3 Didicit enim haec ex Agricola Embricae, cum istius ludo literario praeesset Hegius, priusquam praeficeretur scholis Dauentriensibus, (et) Agricola apud dominum de Spiegelberg ageret; oppidulum est cum arce quod haud longe distat ab Embrica. Erat uterque Embricae in domo ut uocant fratrum, cum Rodolpho abesse licuit a comite; uili admodum dormiebant in uno cubiculo, quod non ambitiosius erat quam domus Philemonis et Baucidis ut illa ab

29 haec\*: hanc ONB 30 (et)\*: *suppleui*

*About Rudolph Agricola*  
*Mercy and peace with this greeting*

Greetings, my dear universally learned Philip Melanchthon. Jodocus Bernardus 1  
 Ferreus, Master of the Liberal Arts, a truly mighty proclaimer of your merits  
 (for there is no name in the world that is more often on his lips in friendly  
 conversation than that of Philip Melanchthon) told me that you, first and  
 foremost, and some other learned men as well, have an ardent desire to be  
 made acquainted with the life and style of Rudolph Agricola of Groningen, and  
 that you had therefore given him the message for me that I should not object,  
 if anything about Rudolph should have reached my ears, to reporting it to you.  
 Surely to me nothing, my particular friend Melanchthon, can be objectionable  
 in which I am able to be of service to you. I wish that I might have been of  
 service to you in this as well! A Life of our Rudolph however would require  
 a writer of quite a different kind. Yet, because at this juncture there is nobody  
 left (as far as I know) who knows his life and habits or would want to know  
 them, I have, to be able to comply with your request, tried to get information  
 from those who were intimate with Agricola and lived with him. Now I have  
 obtained almost everything from the Groningen pastor Wilhelmus Frederici  
 Pistorius, a man of no mean accomplishments in all manner of true learning.  
 He spent many years in Italy in Agricola's company, he knew Agricola's father  
 and his entire household and Agricola's relatives too, he heard him deliver a  
 declamation one day in Ferrara, and at another time he heard him eloquently  
 deliver that address in praise of learning.

Rudolph Agricola, then, was born in the year of grace 1436 in the village 2  
 of Baflo, which lies north of the town of Groningen and about four hours  
 away from it on foot, walking at a moderate pace. He died at the end of his  
 sixth septenary. This jubilee he reached, or in the opinion of the majority  
 even passed. I remember that, when I was studying under Alexander Hegius  
 at Deventer in the year of grace '86, a letter reached him at Deventer telling  
 him of the death of Rudolph Agricola, which letter he read out, not without  
 weeping, to his pupils in the school – small wonder, since Agricola was dear to  
 him. For it was to Agricola that he owed whatever he knew of pure Latin and  
 Greek. Actually, he learned this from Agricola at Emmerich, when Hegius was  
 headmaster of the primary school there before being appointed principal of the  
 Deventer grammar school, and when Agricola was staying with the castellan of  
 Spiegelberg; this is a small township with a stronghold, not far from Emmerich.  
 Whenever Rudolph had the count's permission to absent himself, the two of  
 them would stay at Emmerich at what is known as the house of the Brethren;  
 they slept in a single, exceedingly little room with no more pretensions than the  
 home of Philemon and Baucis as described by Ovid. In the year of grace 1483

Ouidio describitur. Anno salutis 1483 factus est Alexander Hegius Dauentriensis gymnasiarcha. Sed redeo ad Agricolam.

- 3, 1 In pago praenominato Baffeltlo erat quidam licentiatus ut uocant theologiae, parochus sed nondum in sacerdotem unctus, Henricus Huysman ex sua familia dictus. Hic ex quadam puella filium sustulit quem Rodolphum appellauit. Puella autem Zycka nominabatur, quae postea nupsit cuidam sarcinatori Zico nomine, qui ex ea genuit duos filios et unam filiam, quorum alter nomen patris Rodolphi habuit, alter Ioannes est appellatus. Ii duo fratres sequebantur Rodolphum in Italiam, cuius praesidio uterque utcunque docti euasere. Verum Ioannes longe doctior fuit germano suo Henrico et ad extremam usque aetatem uehementer coluit bonas literas. Hic Rodolphi fratris sui aliquanto tempore typographus fuit, cum Italia rediissent et Rodolphus esset scriba et orator Groningensis.
- 3 Postea Ioannes factus est scriba comitis Edzardi trans Amasum, Cauciae minoris domini, qui cum principibus aliquot Saxoniae bella aduersus Groningenses gessit. Deinde fortuna mutata comes Edzardus cum Groningensibus aduersus principem Georgium Alberti filium et aliquot alios Saxoniae principes bellum gesserunt. Anno salutis 1514 Carolus princeps Georgium e Frisia decedere compulit
- 4, 1 Parochus Henricus Fredericus Huusman licentiatus fuit ut appellant sacrae theologiae, euectus in id nominis Coloniae Agrippinae, ubi ea tempestate Frisio quidam erat noster dictus magister, cui Bernardo a Reida nomen. Erat hic ueluti oraculum totius Coloniae Agrippinae cum quodam alio ex nostra Groninga magistro Bartoldo Bluninga pastore diui Martini in Groninga et item alio Groningensi magistro nostro Laurentio, qui statuit collegium illud Agrippinae quod Laurentianum hodie nominatur. Hic Bernardus a Reida in concilio Constantiensi fuit et is qui Hieronimum a Praga, ut sui gentiles adhuc gloriantur, in rogum sua manu pertrusit. Quod quo zelo pietatis fiebat locuples est testis Poggius Florentinus qui scribit sese astitisse. De re plura tacere tutius hoc tempore est quam Constantius Poggius tum, qui fuit a secretis 4 aut 5 pontificibus maximis, de innocentia Hieronymi insinuat quam scribit. Bertoldus parochus cum in Frisia tum in multis aliis (locis) summo conatu sua tempestate curauit reformare ut uocant monasteria et monachos perpetuo incarcerare, qui carceres adhuc perseuerant.
- 5, 1 Henricus Fredericus cum aliquot annos in Baffeltlo curam pastorem obiuisset, electus est in abbatem in monasterio cui Zelwaer nomen est haud procul a menibus oppidi Groningae ad aquilonem sito. Eadem hora qua electus est in abbatem, uenit ad se quidam ex Baffeltlo euangelium postulans: natus est tibi, noue abbas, ex tua Zycka filius. Cui respondit: bene habet; felici, inquit, auspicio hic dies mihi illuxit. Hodie bis pater effectus sum; Deus bene uertat. Porrexit euangelium inquires: curetis ne quid desit puerperae neque infanti.

9 utcunque ONB: utrimque Kan 14 domini Kan: dominum ONB 17 Carolus princeps Kan: Geldriae alia manu in margine ascriptum ONB 31 (locis)\*: suppleui 36 sito Kan: situm ONB

Alexander Hegius was appointed head of the Deventer grammar school. But I return to Agricola.

In the above-mentioned village of Baflo there was a certain licentiate, as they say, of theology, a parish priest, though not yet ordained, called Hendrik Huisman, after his family. He fathered a child on a certain girl, a son whom he named Rudolph. The girl was called Zycka; she later married a certain tailor, Zico by name, who gave her two sons and one daughter. One of the sons had the same name as Rudolph's father, while the other was called Johannes. These two brothers followed Rudolph to Italy, and under his guidance both developed into scholars of sorts. But in fact Johannes possessed much more learning than his brother Hendrik and to his dying day the former was a fervent cultivator of good literature. For some time he was his brother Rudolph's printer, when they had returned from Italy and Rudolph held the office of town secretary of Groningen and negotiator. Later Johannes was appointed secretary to Count Edzard across the Ems, the lord of East Friesland, who, together with a number of Saxon princes, was waging war on the citizens of Groningen. Next, when the tide of war had turned, Count Edzard joined the people of Groningen in their war against Prince George, the son of Albert, and some other Saxon princes. In the year of grace 1514 Prince Charles forced George to leave Friesland. 3

The parish priest Hendrik Frederik Huusman was a licentiate, as they call it, of holy Theology, elevated to that title at Cologne, where in those days there was a certain Frisian, Bernard van Reida by name, styled "our master". He was so to speak the oracle of all Cologne, together with someone else from this Groningen of ours, master Bartold Buning, the pastor of St. Martin's at Groningen, and with yet another Groningen "our master", Laurence, who founded that well-known college at Cologne that is now known as the Laurentianum. This Bernard van Reida was present at the Council of Constance and it was he who, as his relatives still boast today, with his own two hands pushed Jerome of Prague to the stake. With what religious zeal this was done has been credibly attested to by the Florentine Poggio, who writes that he was present. In our days it is safer not to speak further of what Poggio, who had been secretary to 4 or 5 popes, being at Constance at the time, implies rather than writes about Jerome's innocence. As a parish priest Bartold tried his utmost in his days, both in Friesland and in many other places, to reform, as they say, the monasteries and to incarcerate the monks forever in cells which still exist today. 4

When Hendrik Frederik had for some years attended to the pastoral care of Baflo, he was elected abbot in the monastery called Zelwaer, which is not far north of the town walls of Groningen. In the same hour in which he was chosen abbot, a person from Baflo came to him to demand a reward for good news: "Newly made abbot, your Zycka has borne you a son." He replied: "That is good," and said: "This day has dawned with good portents for me. Today I have been made father twice; may God arrange it for the best." While paying out the reward he said: "Make sure that neither the mother nor the new-born 5

- 3 In hoc monasterio Rodolphi Agricolae pater delectus in abbatem in Domini Benedicti regulam iuravit, uestituque monachus factus est iam maturae aetatis, praefuitque huic monasterio annis 36, cumque uita defungeretur accidit Rodolphum filium coram adesse scribamque Groeningae esse, cuius Ioannes frater typographus et Theseus a manu erat. 5
- 6, 1 Cum Rodolphus a lacte amotus gestireque inciperet paribus colludere, harmoniam sonorum prae omnibus cepit admirari et amare quicquid ad musicam pertinebat, quo fiebat ut pulsum tintinnabulorum auide audiret et fistulas, nec ullum donum puero fistula gratius dari potuit. Sequebatur puer cecos domatim stipes colligentes, ut lyras eorum audiret, apud gregum pastores utricularios aut cornuum aut fistularum inflatores in campos sequi solitus nec ab iis diuellebatur, nisi uel metus uirgarum aut extrema fames compelleret domum repetere, 10  
 2 tanto amore ferebatur ad musicam. In aedibus sacris sola illa organa quae folli- bus inflantur et picturas mirabatur. Abusque infantia pingere et sculperere solet. Picturam eius saepenumero uidi. Vidi aliquando Hyginum in quo imagines celi 15  
 3 pinxerat cum scholas uisitaret. Nihil non sine labore didicit, nihil penetrabat acumine ingenii. Cum id esset aetatis, uimina saligna excoriari solet uerno tempore, et aliis temporibus, cum libros a ligno detrahere nequiret, ea in calida aqua macerabat atque ita detraxit et ex eis fistulas fabricabatur easque ad harmoniam aptabat, ut aliquando uno spiritu octo aut nouem inflaret, et collusores pueros 20  
 4 alios ut illi canerent ad illos sonos inuitabat. Equitare puer didicit ut Frisiis mos est ut a puero discant in equis sedentes transilient latas fossas; ut neque equum onus insidentis impediatur, longa pila secum habent quae in fossas mittunt, ut inter transiliendum se eleuent et equum onere exonerent.
- 7, 1 Deinde maiusculus aut uero adolescens missus est Louanium ut disceret artes liberales, ut tum mos erat, aut potius nodos sophismatum soluere aut nectere, quos ne Gorgias quidem aut Oedipus solueret. Et pridie quam apicem magisterii acciperet, uesperis uirgis caesus est. Habuit enim nescio quid labeculae quod 25  
 2? pridie oportuit dilui, ut postridie magistralem apicem purificatus acciperet. Ibi tum iacturam fecit et temporis et operae. Crebro dicere solet, ut ex Martino Dorpio audiui, ipse ego audiui: De nulla re tantum doleo quantum de ea quod totos septem annos in illis nugis perdiidi cum ingenti dispendio rei atque aetatis. Et tamen hic idem Dorpius aliquot annis Lillii paedagogio moderator fuit. 30  
 3 Praeceptor olim meus magister Ioannes Ostendorpius multis coram astantibus

12 metus *Kan*: metu *ONB* 26 nodos *Kan*: modos *ONB* 29 ut *Kan*: et *ONB*

child lack anything.” In this monastery Rudolph Agricola’s father, having been chosen abbot, took his vow on the rule of Saint Benedict and even at a ripe age adopted the monk’s habit, and he led this monastery for 36 years, and when he died it so happened that his son Rudolph was present in person, being secretary to the town of Groningen [at the time], with his brother Johannes as his printer and right-hand man.

When Rudolph had been weaned and started to want to play with other children, he developed the greatest admiration for the harmony of sounds and a love of anything having to do with music. Thus it came about that he eagerly listened to the ringing of bells and to flutes, and that one could not give the boy a more welcome present than a flute. As a boy he followed the blind as they went from door to door collecting alms, in order to listen to their hurdy-gurdies; among the shepherds he used to follow bagpipers, hornblowers or shepherd’s pipe players into the field, nor could he be forced to leave them until either fear of the birch or pinching hunger would drive him back home, so much did he love music. In churches he admired only the organs and the paintings. From childhood onwards he used to paint and carve. I have often seen paintings of his. I once saw a Hyginus in which he had painted pictures of heaven when he was going to school. There was nothing that he did not learn without trouble, nothing that he did not penetrate with his keen mind. When he was old enough for it, he used to peel willow branches in spring, and at other times, when he could not pull the bark free from the wood, he would soak them in warm water and so pull it off; and from the bark he made panpipes, which he voiced for harmony, so that he sometimes blew eight or nine of them with a single breath, and he would invite other boys, his playmates, to sing to those sounds. He learned to ride as a boy, as it is the custom among the Frisians that from childhood onwards they learn to jump wide ditches on horseback; and in order that the weight of the rider should not hamper the horse, they carry long poles which they thrust into the ditches, so that they can lift themselves while jumping and relieve the horse from their weight.

When next he had grown somewhat older, or had become a young man, to be precise, he was sent to Louvain to study the liberal arts, as was customary then, or rather to unravel or tie sophistic knots that not even a Gorgias or an Oedipus could undo. And on the evening of the day before he was to receive the magisterial headgear, he was caned, for there was some tiny taint or other attaching to him which it was meet to purge the day before, so that he might next day receive the magisterial headgear in a state of purity. At that place in those years he wasted much time and energy. Often would he say, as Martinus Dorpius told me, and as I heard with my own two ears as well: “I regret nothing so much as that I wasted seven whole years on those trivialities at an immense loss of money and time taken out of my life.” And yet for several years the same Dorpius was head of the college called the Lily [at Louvain]. In the presence of many bystanders my former teacher, master Johannes Oostendorp, swore a



persancte iuravit: indoctor, inquit, multo a Colonia Agrippina artium liberalium magister creatus redii in patriam quam profectus fui Coloniam.

- 8, 1 Ad Iubileum, qui fuit tempore Nicolai quinti pontificis maximi anno salutis 1450, profectus est Rodolphus Agricola in Italiam, et ut narrauerunt mansisse in Italia ad 16 annos, non perpetuo, sed semel atque iterum in illis annis patriam reuisisse. Multos claros uiros se audiuisse referre solet qui e Graecia in Italiam superuenerant, posteaquam Constantinopolis ab Otthomanno Mahumeto expugnata fuerat. Ex illis multa didicisse. 5
- 9, 1 Postremo cum Italiam reliquisset, mansit aliquot annos apud Vangionum episcopum Dominum Ioannem a Dalburg, quem et in Graecis literis instituit, quem Mecēnatem appellare solet. Is episcopus undecunque doctissimus fuisse narratur ut ea ferebat aetas. Fuit et omnium doctorum hominum patronus. Eidelbergae tum quidam agebat qui Plinius appellabatur, uir insignis eruditionis. Hoc Agricola utebatur admodum familiariter. Ad hunc inscripti sunt illi docti tres libri de Inuentione et multae epistolae. Scripsit praeterea multa quae pleraque omnia perierunt. Appellauit se Agricolam quia familia eius dicebatur familia Huusmannorum ut adhuc hodie appellatur. Transtulit e Graeco Latinum Isocratē Rhetorem ad Nicoclea de administratione regni et item Isocratē ad Daemonium in quo paraeneses traduntur sanctissimae, quin et Axiochum Platonis siue Zenocratis (auctores enim uariant) de morte, et aliquot epigrammata. 10
- 10, 1 Superest adhuc monacha quaedam a Nouiomago in Ziloe Wandeluaert nomine, quae dicit se Rodolpho fuisse admodum familiarem et ex eo multa didicisse, ut adhuc liquet. Fueritne etiam familiarior quam par erat mihi non est confessa, quam et multa docuit, ad quam abusque Ruremunda misit librum Eucherium episcopum Lugdunensem a se Latinum factum. Hunc autem librum Graecum dixit se Agricola Ruremundae in quadam bibliotheca inuenisse, cum isthic a Groeninga orator missus est. Eadem tempestate Ruremundae ludo praefuit Ioannes Grouius, cui adiutor in eodem ludo Ioannes Kerckhof erat, uir uterque Westphalus ex Monasterio ciuitate Westphaliae; ediderunt carmen ut moris est, cuius initium erat: Iam nos Pieridum cedite numina, quod Agricolam composuisse multi arbitrabantur. Ego eram tum in eodem ludo alphabeticus. Erat tum annus salutis 1489. Agebam meae aetatis annum 12; seriuscule enim sum ad scholas missus intermissionesque inter scholas uisitandas mihi multae fuere, in quibus rei rusticae operam meam accommodaui, deinde praemature magis a scholis abstractus. Quum eas reliqui, dominus semper pro me sollicitus fuit: inter omnia beneficia quae in me contulit, quae certe multa sunt, sed nullum est maius quam quod me iam in aetate affecta uocauit ad aliquantam cognitionem filii sui, hoc est ad Euangelium, quod ante promiserat per prophetas in scripturis sanctis de filio suo, de quo multos audio deo gratias agentes, atque adeo eos qui 20 25 30 35

1 indoctor *ONB in margine alia manu*: doctor *ONB in textu* 3 Iubileum *Kan*: Iuboleum *ONB*  
 7 superuenerant\*: supererant *ONB* 25 Eucherium *ONB*: alia manu in margine ascriptum Irenaeum  
 haud dubiè *Kan*; u. notam

solemn oath, asserting: “I went back home from Cologne, having been created master of the liberal arts, with much less learning than when I left for Cologne.”

Towards the jubilee, which fell in the year of grace 1450, when Nicholas v 8 was pope, Rudolph Agricola left for Italy, where he is said to have stayed for some 16 years, be it not without interruption, for they say that once or twice in those years he revisited his native country. He was wont to tell that he had attended the lectures of many famous men who were then living in Italy, having come there from Greece after Constantinople had been taken by the Ottoman Mahomet, and that he had learned much from them.

When he had finally left Italy, he stayed for some years with the Bishop of 9 Worms, Lord Johann von Dalberg, whom he also taught Greek literature and whom he used to call Maecenas. This bishop is said to have been highly learned in all disciplines, as far as his times would permit. He was also a patron to all scholars. At the time, there was someone living at Heidelberg who was called Plinius, a man of outstanding erudition. With him Agricola was very closely acquainted. To this man are addressed those three learned books on Invention, as well as many letters. He also wrote many other things, almost all of which have perished. He called himself Agricola because his family was known as the Huisman family, as it is still called today. He translated the orator Isocrates’ *To Nicocles on the Administration of the Realm* from Greek into Latin, as well as Isocrates’ *To Demonicus*, in which very moral exhortations are presented, and indeed also the *Axiochus* by Plato or Xenocrates (for the authorities differ on this score) “on death”, and a number of epigrams.

There is still a certain nun from Nijmegen living at Siloë, Wandelvaert by 10 name, who maintains that she was closely acquainted with Rudolph and that she learned much from him, as is clear even today. Whether she was closer to him than was proper she did not confess to me, but he taught her much and from Roermond he sent her a book by Eucherius, Bishop of Lyon, which he had put into Latin. This Greek book Agricola actually said he had come across in some library at Roermond when he had been sent there as spokesman for Groningen. At that time the Roermond school was run by Johannes Grovius, whose right-hand man in the school was Johann Kerckhof; both men were Westphalians from the town of Münster in Westphalia; according to custom they brought out a poem, which begins: “Iam nos Pieridum cedite numina,” which many thought had been written by Agricola. I was then learning to read and write at that very school. This was in the year of grace 1489. I was in my twelfth year of life; for I was sent to school somewhat late and my school attendance suffered many interruptions, in which I had to bend my efforts to farm work, and then I was taken from school at much too early an age. Since I left school, the Lord has always taken care of me: among all the blessings he has showered on me, and they are certainly many, none is greater than that he has called me, already well on in years, to a modicum of knowledge of his Son, i.e. to the Gospel, which he had earlier promised about his Son through the prophets in the sacred writings.

- 5 prius Euangelii osores fuere; maxime huiusmodi generis homines in omnium  
 hominum genere reperio, ut ad oculum uidere liceat quod non est acceptio  
 personarum apud Deum, atque hominum iudicium de hominibus uanum nisi  
 forte excipere uelis quae ad mores hominum attinent; in iis hominum iudicium  
 uerum iudicare potest, cum nihil affectui nihilque stomacho concedit. 5
- 11, 1 Scripsit praeterea aliquot orationes, quarum una est de laude bonarum  
 literarum, quam habuit Ferrariae priusquam lectiones auspicaretur; quam cum  
 dixisset, prae admiratione attoniti stabant Itali contrahentes humeros, ut eorum  
 mos est, sciscitantibus quisnam ille homo esset aut unde. Alii responderunt: Phryx  
 2 est, alii: Frisius ab extremo angulo terrae, ab Aquilonari littore Oceani. Quod 10  
 audientes Itali aliqui coeperunt seipsos execrari dicentes: hic uir barbarus in illa  
 barbarie natus et educatus nullum Italum natum in puritate Latini sermonis non  
 uincit. Quem ex omnibus Italis habemus qui si cum isto barbaro conferatur non  
 sit infantissimus? Multi per id temporis Groningenses erant Ferrariae ex quorum  
 3 uoce audiui: ut est oratio scripta, pene ad uerbum dixit. Id accidit anno salutis 15  
 1476. Audiui Erasmum fateri Agricolam se longe cum in eloquentia tum in  
 omni genere eruditionis praecire, quod ueriusne an modestius dixerit aliorum  
 relinquo iudicio.
- 12, 1 Scripsit elegiam longam in laudem Annae matris, cum defunctus fuisset  
 longo morbo, (et aliam) quae an epitaphiumne an encomium domini Comitis 20  
 de Spiegelberg, quam uernaculo sermone nominamus des Heeren berg, (et  
 2 quae) non longe ab Embrica distat, nondum statui. Scripsit praeterea multa  
 epigrammata, quorum adhuc aliqua habentur, pleraque perierunt. Scripsit  
 uersibus orationes ad D. Antonium et aliam ad S. Iodocum. Amavit quandam  
 uirginem Anam, quam appellauit suas furias, ex cuius nominis literis auspicatus 25  
 singulos uersus Ane numero germanico primus uersus incipit: Als ic ghedenck.

13–14 non sit *Kan*: non sit non *ONB* 14 Multi *Kan*: multa *ONB* 20 (et aliam)\*: *suppleui*; *u. notam*  
 21–22 (et quae)\*: *suppleui*; *u. notam*

For these I hear many people bring thanks to God, and even precisely those who hated the Gospel before; of all kinds of people I find them most among this kind, so that it may jump to the eye that God is no respecter of persons and that man's judgment of men is vain, with the possible exception of those things appertaining to human morals. On those matters the human mind may pronounce a true judgment, provided it does not yield an inch either to passion or resentment.

Moreover, Agricola wrote some orations, one of them being in praise of good literature; this was the one which he delivered ad Ferrara before he inaugurated the lectures. When he had delivered it, the Italians stood dumbfounded with admiration, hunching their shoulders, as is their wont, asking who was that man and from where. Some replied: he is a Phrygian, others: he is a Frisian from a far corner of the earth, from the northern shore of the Ocean. When they heard this, some Italians started cursing themselves, saying: "This foreigner, born and bred in that uncivilized country, surpasses any native Italian as regards the purity of his Latin speech. Whom do we have among all the Italians who would, if he is compared to this barbarian, not be tongue-tied?" There were many people from Groningen at Ferrara at the time, from whose lips I heard that he delivered the oration almost word for word as it stands in writing. This took place in the year of grace 1476. I have heard Erasmus admit that Agricola greatly surpassed him in eloquence as well as in all kinds of learning, but whether he was speaking in truth or in modesty I leave for others to judge. 11

He wrote a long elegy in praise of mother Anne, when he had undergone a long illness, [and another] of which I have not yet been able to determine whether it is a eulogy or a dirge on the lord Count of Spiegelberg, which in vernacular we call 's-Heerenberg and which is not far from Emmerich. He also wrote many epigrams, of which some are still extant, though most of them have perished. He wrote prayers in verse, one to St. Anthony and another to St. Judoc. He loved a certain girl by the name of Ana, whom he called his fury, beginning each line [of a poem to her] in accentual verse with the letters of her name Ana; the first line begins: "Als ic ghedenck" ["As I summon up remembrance"]. 12



## GERARD GELDENHOUWER

Gerard Geldenhouwer (Gerardus Geldenauer Noviomagus), son and grandson of chamberlains of the dukes of Gelderland, was born in 1482 in the city of Nijmegen, the seat of this duchy.<sup>1</sup> He died in 1542 in Marburg in Hessen, where in 1532 he was appointed professor at the first Protestant university in Europe (founded in 1527). Until 1534 he taught history; then, from 1534 until his death, he was a professor of theology. Geldenhouwer was a modest man, who produced solid work in philology, historiography, biography, and pedagogy. Only once in his life he published something that truly attracted public attention.

From 1517 to 1524 he was a “court humanist” of Philip of Burgundy, bishop of Utrecht, whose biography he published in 1529.<sup>2</sup> In 1525, at the behest of some notables, he traveled from the Netherlands to Wittenberg to observe at first hand what was happening in the field of theology. He returned a convinced supporter of the Reformation of Luther and his followers; actually, he had displayed an inclination toward this movement earlier.<sup>3</sup> By testifying spectacularly to his new faith in a number of open letters to the highest authorities, such as Charles v and the German princes, he suddenly found himself in the limelight. In 1529 these texts were reprinted as a collection, preceded by a few fragments of Erasmus’s work that were supposed to agree with Geldenhouwer’s views.<sup>4</sup> Erasmus, however, furiously distanced himself from this because he felt he was being included in a radical doctrine he did not support.<sup>5</sup>

Geldenhouwer’s *vita* of Agricola was published at the request of Johannes Fichardus (1512–1581), a jurist at Frankfurt, who included it in his collection of *vitae* of famous men (1536).<sup>6</sup> (It is possible that the *vita* had been published earlier in a collection of Geldenhouwer himself, but that book has not been recovered as yet.)<sup>7</sup> Agricola’s *vita* is written in a fine, clear Latin. It is obvious that

<sup>1</sup> The most complete life of Geldenhouwer was written by Jacob Prinsen, 1898. In addition we have the work by O. Hendriks, 1956 and the short article by G. Tournoy in CE II, 82–84.

<sup>2</sup> *Vita clarissimi principis Philippi a Burgundia* in Prinsen, *Collectanea* 1901, 223–250.

<sup>3</sup> See Prinsen 1898, 60–63 and C. Augustijn (1978); 1996, 114–116.

<sup>4</sup> Texts in Prinsen, *Collectanea* 1901, 177–201; *id.* 1898, 73–84 (a summary of the letters).

<sup>5</sup> The conflict between Erasmus and Geldenhouwer is fully treated by Augustijn (1978, 132–156); ASD IX–I, 1982, 265–278; 1996, 112–137.

<sup>6</sup> Joh. Fichardus, *Vironum qui superiori nostroque seculo eruditione et doctrina illustres atque memorabiles fuerunt Vitae*, Frankfurt 1536, 83<sup>r</sup>–87<sup>r</sup>. On this collection of *vitae*, see James Weis 1980.

<sup>7</sup> The title of this book is quoted as *De viris illustribus inferioris Germaniae*; see Prinsen 1898, 118–121; Hendriks 1956, 192–193.

the sources Geldenhouwer draws on are connected with the history of his own life. For example, Geldenhouwer went to school in Deventer, where he undoubtedly heard much about Agricola. He mentions Deventer in section 9, where he quotes Alexander Hegius, who was his teacher there (that must have been before 1498, the year Hegius died). In the same passage he sums up the names of several other Northern humanists; these he may well have heard in Deventer as well.

Geldenhouwer's years in Louvain – we lack precise details of his studies there – provided him with most of the material for his *vita*; see sections 3 and 4, and later 6 and 12. In section 12 Geldenhouwer mentions a number of scholars of modern humanism who were his friends and associates.<sup>8</sup>

Because Nijmegen is his home town, Geldenhouwer knows that Agricola spent some time there and could even have been appointed to an administrative position, had he wanted to (section 5). In that context, Geldenhouwer cannot resist stating again that Nijmegen had once been the *civitas Batavorum*. He had already put forward this claim in one of his best-known publications,<sup>9</sup> and had thus entered into a fierce controversy with some historians who had assigned the Batavians a dwelling-place much farther to the west.<sup>10</sup>

Geldenhouwer's evangelical piety is reflected in his account of Agricola's death in section 8. His own involvement in the publication of Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* in 1515 is mentioned in section 12.

The men with whom he feels most closely connected, Erasmus of Rotterdam and Petrus Montanus, are quoted explicitly: Erasmus from his *Adagium* "*Quid cani et balneo?*" in section 10 and from his *Ecclesiastes* in section 13; Petrus Montanus in section 11.

This *vita* provides us with some valuable facts and adds the right touches to Agricola's life in an elegant manner; Geldenhouwer and his friends regarded Agricola as a genius and pioneer of Northern humanism. However, the *vita* is not a detailed account of facts. We learn nothing, or practically nothing, about Agricola's background and his administrative career in Groningen, or about his study in Erfurt and his seven and a half years of studying and flourishing in Pavia. A single, but elegant phrase must suffice to describe Agricola's three years in Ferrara.

This *vita* was reprinted later (with many adaptations) in the *Effigies & vitae professorum Academiae Groningae & Omlandiae* of 1654, in Groningen.

<sup>8</sup> Not mentioned in the *vita* are Thomas More, Franciscus Cranevelt, Rutger Rescius, and Joannis Campensis, who also belonged to Geldenhouwer's circle of friends in Louvain (see Prinsen 1898, 17).

<sup>9</sup> In his *Lucubratiuncula Gerardi Noviomagi de Batavorum Insula*, Antwerpen 1520.

<sup>10</sup> On his disagreement with Cornelius Aurelius and Renatus Snoy, see Karin Tilmans 1988, esp. 149–154.



Musician with trumpet in s-shape. Fresco on a vault of the St. Martin's in Groningen, ca. 1480. Photograph: Regnerus Steensma. See Goswinus, par. 6.



*Sequitur Agricolae uita*

Gerardus Geldenhaurius Nouiomagus Ioanni Fichardo v.i. Doctori et ciuitatis Francofordiae Aduocato S.P.

- 1, 1 En habes Rodolphi Agricolae Frisii uitam, non tam eleganter et copiose  
 quam simpliciter ac uere scriptam. Huiusmodi enim scripti genus, quod ad 5  
 morum institutionem pertinet, magis simplicem ueritatem quam phaleratam  
 2 illam facundiam requirere non ignoras. Nihilominus ego Aesopicae corniculae  
 exemplo alienis plumis (ut cernis) tanti uiri uitam exornare conatus sum.  
 Quare si mihi contigerit quod Corniculae, nullum uideo iustae quaereleꝯ locum.  
 Vnum saltem me consolabitur, quod tui, hoc est, immortalis amici causa 10  
 uel deplumationis periculum non subterfugerim. Bene uale. Datae Marpurgi  
 Cal.Ian.An. 1536.

*Vita Rodolphi Agricolae Frisii, autore  
 Gerardo Geldenhaurio Nouiomago.*

- 2, 1 Agricolarum familia apud Frisios inter honoratiores semper habita est. Ex 15  
 hac incomparabilis heros Rodolphus Agricola originem duxit. Gronyngae,  
 nobili illa Frisiorum metropoli, natus et educatus, haud obscura ingenii ac  
 2? memoriae specimina, in ipsa infantia, aedidit. Libellis enim et chartis unice  
 delectabatur. Nutricularum quoque blandimenta balbutiens lingua foelici conatu  
 exprimebat. Puer admodum in ludum literarium missus non solum coetaneos, 20  
 uerum etiam multos natu maiores, discendo pꝛecurrit, ita ut ludi magister,  
 si quis ignauie tarditatisue arguendus esset, Rodolphi alacritatem, studium,  
 diligentiam illi ob oculos poneret. Breui in grammatices rudimentis tantum  
 promouit, ut praeceptoris sententia aptus iudicaretur, qui ad Academiam aliquam  
 nominatiorem mitteretur. 25
- 3, 1 Eo tempore Louanii, quae est Brabantiae primaria ciuitas, bonae artes, uocatis  
 ad hoc amplis stipendiis doctissimis quibusque omnimodae Philosophiae profes-  
 2 soribus, miro studio docebantur. Praeterea adulescentulorum mores ingenti cura  
 formabantur, ea ratione ut propius ad seueritatem quam indulgentiam accederet-  
 tur. Quare factum est, ut tota fere secunda Germania, una cum bona Galliae Bel- 30  
 gicae parte, quum adulescentes Lutetiae Parrhisiorum et Coloniae Agrippinae

*Here follows the Life of Agricola*

Gerard Geldenhouwer of Nijmegen cordially salutes Johannes Fichardus, Doctor of Laws and attorney to the city of Frankfurt.

Here, then, you will find the Life of the Frisian Rudolph Agricola, not so 1  
much couched in well-chosen words and an opulent style as written in a  
straightforward manner and in accordance with the truth. Indeed, the nature  
of this kind of writing, which is intended to inculcate proper morals, demands  
simple truthfulness rather than such speciously sparkling eloquence, as you are  
well aware. Nevertheless I have followed the example of Aesop's crow and tried  
to plume this description of the great man's life with other men's feathers, as  
you can see. Therefore, if I should fare as did the crow, I see no just cause  
for complaint. One thing at least will console me, that for your sake, that is,  
for the sake of an immortal friend, I have not even dodged the danger of  
being plucked. Fare thee well. Marburg, on the *Kalendae* of January of the year  
1536.

*Life of the Frisian Rudolph Agricola, by Gerard Geldenhouwer of Nijmegen*

According to the Frisians, the Agricola family has always been reckoned among 2  
the more honored ones. From this family the incomparable hero Rudolph  
Agricola derived his origin. Born and bred at Groningen, that noble metropolis  
of the Frisians, in his earliest infancy he already gave very clear indications of  
his intellect and his memory, for he took particular delight in books and papers.  
He also managed to imitate his nurses' blandishments haltingly but successfully.  
When still a little boy, once he was sent to primary school he did not only outstrip  
those of his own age in learning, but even many that were older than he, so that,  
when someone was to be chided for being lazy or slow, the schoolmaster would  
hold up to him Rudolph's enthusiasm, diligence and assiduity. Soon he made  
such progress in the basic elements of grammar, that his teacher considered him  
ready to be sent to one of the better known academies.

In those days it was at Louvain, the foremost city of Brabant, that the 3  
good subjects were taught with admirable zeal, for which in every branch  
of philosophy the most learned professors had been attracted by means of ample  
salaries. Moreover, young people's morals were moulded with very great care  
there, in such a manner that there existed a tendency towards severity rather  
than indulgence. This was the reason for the fact that almost the whole of Lower  
Germany, as well as the major part of Belgian Gaul, having called their young  
ones back from Paris and Cologne, because they had been acquiring somewhat

- licentius lasciuusque uiuere didicissent, hinc auocatos, Louanium, tanquam ad  
 quoddam bonorum morum solidaeque eruditionis emporium, statim mittendos  
 3 censeret. Venit ergo et Agricola Louanium, nomenque dedit inter eos, qui in  
 paedagogio (usu hoc uocabulum iam receptum erat) quod tum cacabi, nunc  
 falconis (insigne est quod prae foribus dependet) uocatur, (instituebantur). Hic 5  
 uix dialectices elementa degustarat, et mox commilitones, stupentibus praecep-  
 toribus, praeuertere coepit. Quae a magistris audiebat, non tantum memoriae,  
 sed literis etiam commendabat. Puer enim didicerat illud Ciceronis: stilum esse  
 4 optimum dicendi magistrum. Erant tum Louanii nonnulli qui latinae dictionis  
 puritatem amare coeperant; his se Rodolphus fato quodam familiariter adiunge- 10  
 bat, suffurabaturque nonnihil tempusculi quo, ab Aristotelicis laboribus uacans,  
 5 Ciceronem Quintilianumque legendo percurreret. In scholasticis disputationi-  
 bus, sedato animo, ore uerecundo, aduersariorum argumenta semel atque iterum  
 repetebat, singulas partes accurate introspeciens, summa arte, si quid refellendum  
 esset, refellebat. Sua uero, neruose, acriter, magna certae uictoriae spe, et pro- 15  
 6 ponebat et defendebat. Praeceptores quoque quaestionibus quibusdam, contra  
 receptum Aristotelice docendi ordinem, interdum sollicitos reddere illi moris  
 erat. Meditabatur enim adulescens, ex obseruatione Ciceronis et Quintiliani,  
 7 ea quae hodie, magna eruditorum admiratione, leguntur. In examinatione et  
 censura eruditionis publica, inter multos competitores, modestia ac liberalium 20  
 artium cognitione praeualuit, primasque Magisterii, id summi honoris est Loua-  
 nii, artium obtinuit.
- 4, 1 Mox coepit Rodolphi Frisii nomen per totam Academiam finitimasque ciui-  
 tates, illas quidem celeberrimas, diulgari. Potuisset docendi conditiones adipisci  
 honestissimas, si non diuinus tanti adulescentis animus ad altiora anhelasset. 25  
 2 Quod dicturus sum, non mediocre admirationem, non infimam meretur lau-  
 dem: Quum in ipso paedagogio, inter Belgas, qui Gallica lingua utebantur,  
 et ad Musicen natura propensiores sunt, habitaret, Gallicam linguam ita didi-  
 cit, ut Hannoniorum simplicem rusticitatem deuitaret aulicamque eius linguae  
 elegantiam feliciter imitaretur. Mirabantur Galli Frisium intra paucissimos men- 30  
 3 ses, absque praeceptore, et id Louanii, Gallice perorantem. Musices uero ea  
 fundamenta eiisdem annis iecit, quibus absolutam eius artis peritiam postea  
 superstruxit. Canebat enim uoce, flatu, pulsu. Literas pingebat elegantissime, a  
 quarum pictura ad ipsam pictoriam artem, non sine maxima laude sibi aditum  
 4 praeparauit. Louanii uixit honestissime, et ab omni computatione commessa- 35  
 tionisque, contra gentis suae morem, tam alienus quam qui in media Italia,

too frivolous and extravagant a style of life there, felt that they should forthwith send them to Louvain, this place being considered a storehouse of good morals and solid learning. And so Agricola too came to Louvain, and was enrolled among those studying at the college (for which the term *paedagogium* was already in general use) then called the Cooking-pot and now the Falcon, that being the sign hanging out in front of the doorway. Here he had hardly sampled the basic elements of dialectics when, to the astonishment of his preceptors, he began to leave his fellow-students behind. What he heard from his teachers he did not only commit to memory, but also to paper, for already as a boy he had learned Cicero's dictum that the pen is the best teacher of eloquence. There were some at Louvain at the time who had begun to love purity of Latin diction; by some coincidence being well-acquainted with them, Rudolph joined their company, and he stole many a moment, freeing himself from toiling on Aristotle, in order to spend them reading Cicero and Quintilian. In academic disputes he repeated time and again, calm of manner and with great respect, his opponents' arguments, meticulously examining their separate elements, and refuted whatever there might be to refute with the greatest adroitness. Yet he proposed as well as defended his own point of view vigorously and passionately, with great confidence in a sure victory. He also used to embarrass his teachers from time to time with certain questions running counter to the accepted Aristotelian order of teaching. For as a youth already, on the basis of his study of Cicero and Quintilian, he contemplated those things that, to the great admiration of the learned, may be read today. In the public examination and assessment of their learning he excelled among many competitors in modesty as well as knowledge of the liberal arts, and obtained a first-class honors degree of Master of Arts, that being the highest honor at Louvain.

Soon the fame of "Rudolph the Frisian" began to spread throughout the 4  
academy and the neighbouring towns, and very famous towns at that. He might have obtained a teaching post on the most honorable conditions, had not the divine mind of the eminent young man aspired after higher aims. What I am about to tell deserves no common admiration, nor the smallest praise: when he was living at that college, among Belgians who spoke French, and by nature have a greater propensity for music, he learned the French language so well that he avoided the artless rusticity of those of Hainaut and elegantly reproduced the courtly refinement of that tongue. The French were amazed that a Frisian should, within very few months, without a teacher, and at Louvain at that, deliver a speech in French. In music too it was in those same years that he laid the foundation on which he later built up his complete command of that art – for he sang, and played both wind and string instruments. He was a most sophisticated illuminator, and from this preparatory painting of letters he entered the art of painting proper, not without earning himself the greatest praise. At Louvain he lived most decorously, and contrary to the custom of his own people, kept as much aloof from all revels and carousals as someone brought up among

inter optimos quosque educatus esset. Tantus erat bonarum literarum amor, tam indefessum studium, ut turpis Veneris fornices et lustra ne nouerit quidem.

- 5, 1 Quum autem aliud nihil aut loqueretur aut ageret, quam quod ad ueram  
absolutę eruditionis gloriam spectaret, relicto Louanio Gallias adiit, ut uel ibi  
2 disceret, quod sibi deesse sentiebat. Hinc in Italiam profectus, et Graece et 5  
latine discendo pariter atque docendo, tantum nominis adeptus, ut Itali nonnulli  
inuiderent simulque deflerent Latii gloriam in penitioem Germaniam, hoc est  
3 Frisiam, iam mox demigraturam. Rediit tandem in patriam, ibique honestissimo  
officio Rodolphum suum honorare ac detinere prudentissimus senatus annis  
est. Verum cui omnia, præter literas, sordebant, persuaderi nulla ratione poterat, 10  
4 ut a semel adamata sapientia uel pilum latum discederet. Versatus est aliquandiu  
Nouiomagi, Batauorum ciuitate, quae mihi patria est, in qua, praeter summos  
honores, amplissimum quoque stipendium facile assequutus fuisset, si reipublicae  
5 sese addicere in animum inducere unquam potuisset. Crebro loca mutabat, quod  
non leuitatis, non inconstantię, sed iudicii erat. Altius namque menti infixerat 15  
Horatianum illud: Dic mihi Musa uirum captae post tempora Troiae, Qui mores  
6 hominum multorum uidit et urbes. Ferrariae uno ac altero anno loci amoenitate,  
studiosorum ac nobilium quorundam Musicorum frequentia, ipsius quoque  
Principis liberalitate detentus est.
- 6, 1 Vnum saltem famulum peregrinationum suarum comitem habebat. Non 20  
uestiebatur splendide, sed honeste et munde. Plinii naturalem historiam nun-  
quam e sinu deponebat. Iunioris Plinii epistolas, Quintiliani de Oratoria institu-  
tione libros, sibi descripserat, quibus Platonis Ciceronisque nonnulla selectissima  
addiderat. Hanc bibliothecam semper circumferre, caeteros libros apud amicos  
2 relinquere, amicorum libris bona fide uti, charus omnibus, grauis nemini. Natura 25  
negligentior, ut solet fere hoc genus hominum, ac paulo inciuilior, in conuiuuiis  
3 praecipue, citra tamen cuiusquam offensam, habitus est. Cogitabundus enim  
mensae innitens unguis demordebat. Nemo unquam illum adiit, qui non eru-  
ditior abierit. Puellas (ut hoc quoque addam) amare se nonnunquam simulabat,  
uerum nunquam deperiit. In harum gratiam, patria lingua, amatoriam quaedam 30  
carmina scripsit elegantissime, quę puellis praesentibus primariisque amicis, uoce  
et testudine modulatissime canebat. Huiusmodi cantionibus animum intentiore  
studio grauatum, interdum remittebat.

the upper ten in the heart of Italy. So great was his love of good literature, so indefatigable his diligence, that he did not even know the dens and bagnios of venal love.

But since he neither said nor did anything but what was conducive to the true glory of perfect knowledge, he left Louvain to go to France, so that he might perhaps learn there what he felt was still wanting in him. From there he went to Italy, and, both learning and teaching Greek as well as Latin, attained to such fame that some Italians became envious and at the same time deplored the idea that soon the glory of Italy would change its domicile to the remotest regions of Germany, that is to say Friesland. At last he returned to his home town, where the very wise city fathers did their best to honor their Rudolph, and at the same time to keep him from going away, by offering him an exceedingly honorable post. But he, to whom all things outside literature were devoid of value, could not be persuaded by any argument to budge even a hair's breadth from that learning to which he had, once and for all, given his heart. He stayed for some time at Nijmegen, city of the Batavians, which is my home town, where, besides the highest posts of honor, he could also easily have obtained a very ample salary, if he could ever have made up his mind to devote himself to public administration. He often changed his place of residence, which was neither out of restlessness nor out of fickleness, but done with deliberation, for he had stamped firmly on his memory that Horatian dictum: "Speak to me, Muse, of the man who, after the taking of Troy, beheld the customs of many, and of many people the cities." For a number of years he was kept from leaving Ferrara by the charm of the place, the presence of scholars and some famous musicians, and also the generosity of the sovereign himself.

Only a single servant accompanied him on his travels abroad. He did not dress ostentatiously, but neatly and decently. He always carried Pliny's *Naturalis historia* [*Natural History*] on him. The letters of Pliny the Younger and Quintilian's books on the *Institutio oratoria* [*The Teaching of Oratory*] he had copied for himself, to which he had added some most carefully selected writings by Plato and Cicero. This library he always carried around with him, his other books he left with friends, using his friends' books in good faith, beloved by all, troublesome to none. He was held to be rather untidy by nature, as this type of person is almost always wont to be, and a little bad-mannered, particularly at dinner-parties (but short of offending anyone), for when he was pondering something, he would sit leaning with his elbows on the table, biting his nails. Nobody ever went up to him without leaving wiser than he had come. Girls (to mention that point as well) he sometimes pretended to be in love with, but he was never truly distracted. For their sake he wrote certain love songs in his mother tongue, very skilfully, which he then executed, well modulated with voice and lute, in the presence of the girls and of his closest friends. With this kind of song he would now and then relax his mind, weighed down by intense studying.

- 7, 1 Ne perpetuo peregrinaretur, doctissimus princeps Ioannes Camerarius Dal-  
burgius Vangionum Antistes, quem in Graecis literis discipulum habuerat, sua  
liberali humanitate, solus impetrare tandem potuit; cum hoc et Vormaciae  
2 et Heidelbergae, ad ultimum usque uitae actum uixit coniunctissime. Multas  
preclaras orationes et in Academiis frequentibus, et coram maximis Christiani 5  
orbis Monarchis, non minore prudentia quam facundia habuit. Erat enim uir  
ualde prudens, liberae ueracissimaeque linguae. Iocis eruditus gaudebat pluri-  
mum, scurrantem nemo audiuit unquam.
- 8, 1 Quum iam in ipso uigore aetatis, non procul a quadragesimo anno abesset, et  
eruditionis eloquentiae gloria per Germanias, Gallias et Italiam ab optimis 10  
quibusque celebraretur, non ignorans uir uere pius, uere Christianus, illud  
Platonis, Omnem scientiam magis obesse quam prodesse, si desit scientia  
optimi, magno animi ardore sese sacris literis addixit. Has nocturna, has diurna  
uersare manu, delicias suas ducebat, in solis his uenam scientiae et intellectus,  
imo fontem aquae uiuae salientis in uitam aeternam, se reperisse gloriabatur. 15  
2 Verum, ut erat iudicii exactissimi, ad sacras literas penitius intelligendas sanctae  
Hebraeae linguae cognitionem necessariam esse facile intellexit. Quare nactus  
Iudaeum huius linguae utcunque peritum, paucis mensibus tantum promouit, ut  
3 aliquot psalmos Dauidicos in Latinam linguam, citra culpam, uerterit. Iam totus  
uidebatur alius factus. Immutauerat enim cor eius uerbum Dei uiuum et efficax. 20  
Iam Christum IESVM spirabat animus, loquebatur lingua, manus scribebat,  
et ecce addest ipse Christus, qui consecratum sibi pectus, ex hoc errorum  
pelago in uerae sapientiae portum et primae ueritatis arcem, transuecturus erat.
- 4 Correptus itaque febribus, etiam priusquam medicorum auxilia aduocarentur, se  
totum Christo seruatori commendauerat, superanteque ui morbi, animam suam, 25  
Christiana alacritate, uitae datori Christo reddidit, nondum quadragesimum  
aetatis excedens annum. An. Do. Millesimo, Quadringentesimo, nonagesimo,  
ingenti studiosorum omnium moerore Heidelbergae in Franciscanorum templo  
sepultus est.
- 9, 1 Omnes studiosos et doctos colebat et honore prosequabatur, imprimis autem 30  
ornatissimum uirum Adolphum Occonem Frisium, ciuitatis Augustanae medi-  
cum, quem et bibliothecae suae haeredem scripserat, Wesselum Gansfortium,  
qui lux mundi dictus, conterraneum suum, Rodolphum Langium, nobilem  
illum canonicum Monasteriensem, Iacobum Barbirianum Musicum nobilissi-  
mum, Alexandrum Hegium, preceptorem meum, quem graecas literas docuerat. 35  
2 Memini me audire ab Hegio, quum quosdam natu grandiores ad literarum stu-  
dia hortaretur, et ne desperarent admoneret, Ego (inquit) liberalium artium  
magister, et quadragenarius, tum quoque barbarus, perueni ad Agricolam

The very learned dignitary Johann Kämmerer von Dalberg, Bishop of Worms, 7 who had been his pupil for Greek, was the only one who finally, thanks to his open-handed kindness, managed to prevail on him not to go on traveling forever; with him Agricola lived together, at Worms as well as at Heidelberg, in the closest possible familiarity till the end of his life. Many splendid addresses did he deliver both in busy academies and to audiences composed of the mightiest monarchs of the Christian world, and with no less wisdom than eloquence. He was indeed a very wise man who spoke frankly and with the utmost sincerity. He took the greatest delight in clever witticisms, but nobody ever heard him indulge in improper jokes.

When he was already in the prime of life, almost forty, and the fame of his 8 knowledge and eloquence was being proclaimed throughout the provinces of Germany and Gaul and all through Italy by the most eminent in particular, he started devoting himself with great mental ardour to Holy Scripture, since this truly pious, truly Christian man was not unaware of Plato's dictum that all knowledge is prejudicial rather than beneficial if the knowledge of the highest is lacking. Reading the Bible by night and by day he considered his greatest joy; he rejoiced that there alone he had found the fountain of knowledge and understanding, yes a spring of living water gushing into the life eternal. Yet with his exacting discernment he soon realized that for a deeper understanding of Holy Scripture some acquaintance with the sacred Hebrew tongue was necessary. Having therefore engaged a Jew who had some knowledge of this language, within a few months he made such progress in it that he turned a number of the psalms of King David into Latin without making a mistake. Already he seemed a totally different person, for the living and active word of God had changed his heart. Already his spirit breathed, his tongue spoke, his hand wrote Christ Jesus, and behold, there came Christ himself, about to transport this soul, devoted to him, out of this ocean of errors to the port of true wisdom and the stronghold of original truth. Thus, when stricken with fevers, he had, even before physicians were sent for to help him, committed himself wholly to Christ the Saviour, and when the severity of his illness gained the upper hand he gave back his soul with Christian cheerfulness to Christ, the giver of life, not yet forty years old. In the year of our Lord 1490 he was interred, to the tremendous sorrow of all scholars, in the church of the Franciscans at Heidelberg.

He cherished and honored all the scholarly and the learned, above all the 9 very distinguished Frisian Adolph Occo, physician to the city of Augsburg, whom he had also appointed heir to his library in his testament, his fellow-countryman Wessel Gansfort, called "light of the world", Rudolphus Langius, that distinguished canon of Münster, the very distinguished musician Jacob Barbireau, and Alexander Hegius, my preceptor, whom he had taught Greek. I remember hearing Hegius say, when he was urging certain grown-ups to study literature and encouraging them not to give up hope: "I myself was Master in the Liberal Arts, and forty years old, yet still a barbarian, when I approached the



adolescentem praeceptorem meum, a quo quicquid in latinis et graecis literis  
 3 scio, aut alii me scire credunt, didici. Libet hic adscribere clarissimum encomion,  
 quo Agricola noster a nunquam satis laudato uiro D. Erasmo Rot. posteritati  
 commendatus est, ut habeat delicatus lector, quo palatum, meae dictionis  
 humilitate nauseans, tanti oratoris ac theologi grandiloquentia reficiat. 5

10, 1 Quid commune, inquit, cani cum balneo? Hoc equidem adagium eo luben-  
 tius refero, quod mihi refricat renouatque memoriam pariter ac desyderium  
 Rodolphi Agricole, quem ego uirum totius tum Germaniæ tum Italiae publico  
 summoque honore nomino, illius, quae genuerit, huius, quae literis optimis 10  
 instituerit. Nihil enim unquam hoc cisalpinus orbis produxit omnibus literariis  
 2 dotibus absolutius, absit inuidia dicto. Nulla erat honesta disciplina, in qua uir  
 ille non poterat cum summis artificibus contendere. Inter Graecos graecissimus,  
 inter Latinos latinissimus, in carmine Maronem alterum dixisses, in oratione  
 Politianum quendam lepore referebat, maiestate superabat. Oratio uel extemporalis,  
 3 adeo pura, adeo germana, ut non Frisium quempiam, sed urbis Romanae 15  
 4 uernaculum loqui contenderes. Eloquentiae tam absolutę parem adiunxerat eru-  
 ditionem. Philosophiae mysteria omnia penetrauerat. Nulla pars Musices quam  
 non exactissime calleret. Extremo uite tempore ad literas Hebraicas ac scripturam  
 diuinam totum animun appulerat. Atque haec conantem, fatorum inuidia uirum  
 terris eripuit, nondum annos natum quadraginta. Extant paucula quaedam illius 20  
 monimenta: Epistolae quaedam, carmina item uarii generis, Axiochus Plato-  
 nis latinus factus, Isocrates ad Demonicum uersus, tum una atque altera oratio  
 habita in publico scholasticorum Ferrariensium coetu. Nam illic et didicit et  
 publice docuit. Latitant apud nescio quos commentarii Dialectices. Verterat et  
 5 Luciani dialogos aliquot, sed ut ipse erat gloriae negligens et plerique mortales 25  
 rem alienam sane quam indiligenter curare solent, nondum in lucem emerse-  
 runt. Quanquam haec ipsa, quae extant, tametsi ne aedita quidem ab ipso, plane  
 diuinitatem quandam hominis præ se ferunt. Verum ne uidear homo Germanus,  
 immodico patriae studio coecutire, Hermolai Barbari Veneti, de eo epitaphium  
 subscribam, elegantissimum profecto et de quo dubites, utro sit dignius, ipso ne 30  
 qui scripsit, an hoc quem eo exornauit. Est autem huiusmodi:

young Agricola to be my preceptor, from whom I have learned whatever I know, or others think I know, of Latin and Greek.” I should like to add the famous eulogy in which our Agricola has been commended to posterity by that man who can never be praised enough, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, so that the fastidious reader may have the opportunity to refresh his palate, sickened by the meanness of my style, with the lofty diction of that great orator and theologian.

“What,” he says, “has a dog to do with a bath?” Personally, I quote this adage 10 with the greater pleasure, because it refreshes and renews in me the memory of, and at the same time the longing for Rudolph Agricola, a man in whom I honor all Germany and Italy publicly and with the highest praise – the former because it brought him forth, the latter because it taught him the most excellent literature. Indeed, never did the world north of the Alps produce anyone more perfect than this man, fully endowed with all literary gifts, although nobody should take offense at my saying so. There was no respectable branch of learning in which that man could not vie with the greatest experts. The most Greek among Greeks, the most Latin among Latins, in poetry one might have called him another Vergil, in prose he reminded one of Poliziano by his charm, but surpassed him in grandeur. Even his extempore speech was so pure, so natural, that you would swear that it was not some Frisian, but someone born and bred in the city of Rome that was speaking. To such perfect eloquence he united an equally great erudition. He had fathomed all the mysteries of philosophy. There was no branch of music that he had not most scrupulously mastered. Towards the end of his life he had turned his whole mind to Hebrew literature, to Holy Scripture. And while he was thus exerting himself, the envy of fate snatched this man, not yet forty, out of the world. Of his literary estate, little is left: some letters, likewise some poems of various kinds, Plato’s *Axiochus* turned into Latin, a translation of Isocrates’ address to Demonicus, and then a few addresses delivered in public gatherings of scholars at Ferrara – for that is where he studied and also gave lectures open to the public. There are some notes on dialectics, but I do not know in whose possession they are lying hidden. He had also translated some of Lucian’s dialogues, but because he was indifferent to fame and most people are wont to be extremely negligent when they have to act in someone else’s interest, these have not yet seen the light. Yet even the works that have survived, though not edited by himself, plainly display the somehow divine excellence of the man. But in order not to make it seem that I, a German, am blinded by immoderate patriotism, I shall below copy the epitaph written on him by the Venetian Ermolao Barbaro, exceedingly well-put indeed and which may make one wonder which of the two gains the greater credit by it, the one who wrote it or the one who is honored by it. It runs as follows:

Inuida clausurunt hoc marmore fata Rodolphum,  
 Agricolam Frisii spemque decusque soli,  
 Scilicet hoc uiuo meruit Germania, laudis  
 Quicquid habet Latium, Graecia quicquid habet.

- 6 Quaesio quid nostro Rodolpho potuit amplius aut omnino magnificentius 5  
 contingere, quam testimonium tam splendidum tam plenum? Idque redditum  
 non uiuo sed iam uita defuncto, ne quis ab amore magis quam a iudicio  
 profectum causari possit. Deinde ab eo uiro, qui non solum Italiam suam,  
 uerum etiam omne saeculum hoc nostrum illustrarit, cuius tanta est apud 10  
 omnes eruditos autoritas, ut impudentissimum sit ab eo dissentire, tam insignis  
 in restituendis literis utilitas, ut aut a literis omnibus alienissimus, aut certe  
 7 ingrattissimus habeatur, apud quem Hermolai memoria non sit sacrosancta. His  
 itaque tam plenis tamque absolutis uiri laudibus, equidem fateor, me peculiarius  
 etiam atque impensius fauere, quod mihi, admodum adhuc puero, contigit uti  
 praeceptore huius discipulo, Alexandro Hegio Westfalo, qui ludum aliquando 15  
 celebrem oppidi Dauentriensis moderabatur, in quo nos olim, admodum pueri,  
 utriusque linguae prima didicimus elementa, uir (ut paucis dicam) praeceptoris  
 sui similimus, tam inculpatae uitae, quam doctrinae non triuialis, in quo unum  
 illud uel Momus ipse calumniari fortasse potuisset, quod fame plus equo  
 negligens, nullam posteritatis haberet rationem. Proinde si quae scripsit, ita 20  
 scripsit, ut rem ludicram, haud seriam egisse uideatur. Quanquam uel sic scripta  
 sunt eiusmodi, ut eruditorum calculis immortalitatem promereantur. Itaque in  
 hanc digressionem non temere sum expaciatus, non ut gloriose Germaniae  
 laudes iactarem, sed ut grati discipuli uicibus fungerer et utriusque memoriae  
 debitum officium utcunque persoluerem, propterea quod alteri ueluti filii 25  
 debeam pietatem, alteri tanquam nepotis charitatem.
- 11, 1 Hactenus D. Erasmus, cuius sententiae Petrus Montanus, Philosophus Platoni-  
 cus et Poeta Satyricus, his uerbis subscripsit: Agricola, quem solum ex Germanis  
 scriptoribus insolenti Graeciae aut procaci Italiae obiicere possumus. In oratione  
 enim pedestri mihi effinxisse uidetur sonum Lactantii, lenitatem et rotunditatem 30  
 Plinii, lumen Senecae; Tullianam quoque redolet ubertatem et acumen ostentat  
 Quintiliani uehementiamque et obliquitatem Cypriani referre uidetur.
- 12, 1 Indicem librorum eius non opus est ut subtexam, quum in omnium eru-  
 ditorum manibus uersentur. Vnum non possum non addere: Diuinum illud  
 opus de inuentione Dialectica, laudabili quodam astu eruditissimi uiri Alhardi 35

An envious fate locked Rudolph in this marble tomb,  
 Agricola, hope and glory of the Frisian region;  
 Through him did Germany gather, ere he met his doom,  
 Praise matching that of Greece, and Rome's laudations legion.

What greater and in all respects more splendid thing, I wonder, could have fallen to our Rudolph's lot than testimony so dazzling, so abundant? Rendered, moreover, not in his lifetime but when he had already passed away, so that nobody can object that it sprang from personal affection rather than sound judgment. And then from that man who shed lustre not just on his own Italy, but actually on this entire world of ours, whose authority is so great with all scholars that it would be utterly insolent to disagree with him, whose importance for the restoration of literature is so manifest that he must be considered either completely devoid of all education or surely most ungrateful to whom the memory of Ermolao is not sacrosanct. This praise of our man then, so abundant and so complete, I personally approve of even more strongly, I gladly admit, because it fell to my lot, when still no more than a child, to have as my teacher a pupil of his, the Westphalian Alexander Hegius, headmaster of a once well-attended school in the town of Deventer, in which we, still children, long ago learned the elements of the two languages. Hegius was a man, to put it briefly, very much like his preceptor, as blameless of conduct as he was out of the common as regards what he taught, a person with whom even Momus himself could perhaps only have found this single fault that, since he cared less for fame than was proper, he would not take posterity into account at all. Hence when he wrote things, he wrote them in such a way that he would seem to have been playing a game, not doing something serious. Yet even so his writings are such that in the opinion of the erudite they merit immortality. So I did not enter upon this digression without good reason: not in order boastfully to shower praise on Germany, but to perform my duty as a grateful pupil, and to the best of my ability to pay the respect due to the memory of both these men, because the one I owe a son's love, the other a grandson's affection.

Thus far Desiderius Erasmus, whose opinion is supported by Petrus Montanus, Platonist philosopher and satirical poet, in the following words: "Agricola, the only one among the German writers that we can put up to match arrogant Greece or impudent Italy. For in his prose he has, it seems to me, brought to life again Lactantius's lofty tone, Pliny's sweetness and smoothness, Seneca's brilliance; he also reminds one strongly of Cicero's richness, he displays Quintilian's incisiveness and seems to conjure up Cyprianus's intensity as well as his suggestiveness." 11

It is not necessary to list his books here, because they are constantly in the hands of all learned people. But there is one thing that I cannot avoid adding. Thanks to the laudable ingenuity, so to speak, of the very learned Alardus of Amsterdam, that divine work *De inventione dialectica* [*On Dialectical Invention*] had 12

Amsterodami e tenebris et caeco carcere, cui Dauentriae a Iacobo Fabro  
 2 inclusum erat, ereptum ac Louanii aeditum. Primus liber ipsius Agricolae  
 manu scriptus in marginibus multa addita habebat, quae in operis contextum  
 transferenda erant, in ipso uero contextu multa inducta, multa deleta, quaedam  
 minutissimis lituris potius quam literis annotata, coniecturis ac diuinatione 5  
 assequi oportebat. Quare ego precibus doctissimorum uirorum Martini Dorpii,  
 Iohannis Neuii, Iohannis Paludani, Hadriani Barlandi, in studiosorum omnium  
 gratiam eum laborem subii, ut primum librum, ordine quo nunc legitur,  
 descripserim, Anno Domini Millesimo, Quingentesimo decimo quarto, additis  
 duobus ad lectorem uersiculis 10

Te docet atque alios per saecula multa docebit,  
 Viuit an oppetiit, Frisius Agricola.

Posteriores duo libri, alterius cuiuspiam manu descripti, castigatore Dorpio  
 excussi sunt.

13, 1 Immortales huius operis Rodolphique laudes non aliis quam D. Erasmi Rote- 15  
 rodami uerbis finiam. De locis (inquit) accuratissime nostro saeculo scripsit, uir  
 immortalis gloria dignus Rodolphus Agricola. Scripsit autem exactissima cura,  
 phrasi uero, qua nihil esse posset expolitius, sed acumina quaedam affectata,  
 ueluti de prima materia, ac digressiones, quibus nunc a Boeotio, nunc ab Ari-  
 stotele, nunc ab aliis, magna quidem subtilitate dissentit, satis declarant illum 20  
 hoc opus non cudisce pueris ediscendum, sed eruditis uiris admirandum.

been rescued from the darkness and the windowless dungeon in which it had been locked up by Jacobus Faber at Deventer, and has been published at Louvain. The first book, written by the hand of Agricola himself, had many additions in the margin which had to be moved to the body of the work; at the same time in the running text itself much that had been blotted, much that had been deleted, and certain things that had been jotted down in the minutest scribble rather than script had to be interpreted by means of inference and intuition. Therefore, at the request of the very learned gentlemen Martinus Dorpius, Johannes Neuius, Johannes Paludanus, and Hadrianus Barlandus I took upon me, for the sake of all scholars, the task of writing out the first book in the order in which it can now be read, in the year of our Lord 1514, with the addition of two lines of verse addressed to the reader:

Thee now, and down the ages others will he teach,  
Whether alive or dead, Agricola the Frisian.

The other two books were printed as written out by some other hand, Dorpius having corrected them.

I shall end the immortal praise of this work as well as of Rudolph with the words of none other than Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam. "About the places," he says, "the most meticulous writing in our age is by a man worthy of immortal fame, Rudolph Agricola. He wrote with the most punctilious care, and indeed with the most polished possible diction, but certain elaborate ingenuities, viz. when dealing with fundamental matters, and digressions in which he disagrees now with Boethius, then with Aristotle, and then with others again, and that with great precision of argument indeed, make it sufficiently clear that he did not arduously forge this work for children to learn it by heart, but for the learned to admire it." 13



## PHILIPPUS MELANCHTHON

On the famous humanist and reformer Philippus Melanchthon (1497–1560) we have much more literature than on Agricola's other *vita*-writers.<sup>1</sup> His activities take place in the wake of the achievements of the humanists surrounding Johann von Dalberg (1455–1503). This circle was located in Heidelberg at the court of the Elector, Philip “der Aufrichtige” (Count Palatine 1476–1508); Agricola was also part of the group for a short time (May 2, 1484 – October 27, 1485).

As his main sources for Agricola's life Melanchthon mentions Johann Reuchlin and Pallas Spangel, whom he regards as the heroes who, with Agricola, formed the core of this circle (*Epistola* 1, 1 and 8, 1). In the *Oratio* he is less personal as to the source of his facts (*Or.* 2, 3 and 9, 1). Melanchthon may have heard about Agricola from Reuchlin during his three school years in Pforzheim (1507–1509), where he lived in the house of a sister of Reuchlin's. (It was there that Reuchlin recognized Melanchthon's talent and invented the name *Melanchthon* for him – the German family name was *Schwarzerd*). Reuchlin participated in the activities of Von Dalberg's circle in Heidelberg for only two years (1496–1498); although he did correspond with Agricola (see *Agr. Epp.* 41 and 44), there is no record of them having met. In Heidelberg, where Melanchthon studied *artes* during the years 1509–1512, he lived in the house of Pallas Spangel, professor of theology and dean of the faculty, who had actually been part of Von Dalberg's “Musenhof”.

In the years 1512–1518 Melanchthon studied and taught at the University of Tübingen, where he was in frequent contact with Reuchlin, who lived in Stuttgart at the time. He often visited Reuchlin's library and supported him in his controversy with the theologians of Cologne about the suppression of Jewish books. From the summer of 1518 onward Melanchthon was a professor at the University of Wittenberg next to Martin Luther, whose theology he embraced immediately.

Apart from the two sources mentioned above, Melanchthon also mentions Goswinus van Halen, who had written letters to him from Groningen (*Ep.* 5, 4; *Or.* 12, 3). Besides, we cannot exclude the possibility that Melanchthon had read the *vita* written by Geldenhouwer, which had been printed in 1536: in some passages he seems either to follow that work or deliberately contradict it (see *Ep.* 8,

<sup>1</sup> For the literature on Melanchthon, Reuchlin, Von Dalberg, Spangel, and the Musenhof at Heidelberg, see the notes on *Epistola* 1, 1; 1, 2; and *passim*. See also the study by Quirinus Breen of 1961.



3 compared to Geldenhouwer 2, 1–2; *Or.* 2, 4 compared to Geldenhouwer 2, 102; *Or.* 5, 1–2 compared to Geldenhouwer 4, 2; *Or.* 6,7 compared to Geldenhouwer 6).

The two *vitae* by Melanchthon are academic exercises of the kind the author has written by the dozen.<sup>2</sup> The *Epistola* was written in 1539 at the request of Alardus of Amsterdam, as a *praefatio* to Alardus's edition of Agricola's *Lucubrationes* in 1539, published in Cologne. The *oratio* is a *declamatio*, given in July 1539 by Johannes Saxo, dean of the *Artes* faculty. The main purpose of these works is *adhortatio*, i.e. encouragement: propaganda for, and defense of, humanist studies for the benefit of the school, the church and society. The same purpose is pointed out by Ralph Keen in his article "Melanchthon's two lives of Aristotle" (1984). Historical precision is not a matter of major concern in this genre: great names are easily linked, chronological order sometimes neglected. See the notes on *Ep.* 2, 2 and *Or.* 6, 3.

One of the most doubtful items mentioned by Melanchthon (twice: in *Ep.* 7 and *Or.* 13) is an *epitome* (written in the vernacular!) of a world history that Agricola allegedly wrote at the elector's request. This account is also found elsewhere in Melanchthon's work, though every time in a different form.<sup>3</sup> The most detailed version, in a letter of 1558, has it that Reuchlin, Von Dalberg, and Agricola had composed such a world chronicle together.<sup>4</sup> That in itself is altogether impossible because Reuchlin and Agricola never worked together in Heidelberg – there is a period of more than ten years between their respective stays there. But the story is improbable also in the form in which it occurs in our *Epistola* and *Oratio*, and that for the following reasons:

1. There is no trace of a *scriptum* of this kind.
2. During the time which Agricola spent in Heidelberg (May 2, 1484 – ca. May 1, 1485) he can hardly have had the time to write a work of this magnitude, in addition to all the other things he did or had to do.<sup>5</sup>
3. While Agricola usually gives an explicit account of his activities in his letters, he mentions not a single word on the subject in the letters he writes after his arrival in Heidelberg. The *vitae* of Trithemius and Von Plieningen keep silent about it as well.
4. Even for a natural linguist as Agricola was, translating a work of that size from Greek, Latin, and Hebrew into High German seems too onerous a task: the languages he grew up with were Frisian and Dutch.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> On the genre of these works by Melanchthon, see Scheible 1993c.

<sup>3</sup> See Scheible 1993a, 146–147, esp. n. 155; idem 1966, 26–28, esp. n. 43.

<sup>4</sup> The text of this passage is quoted in full by Scheible 1966, 27–28. The letter can be found in CR 9, 531–538.

<sup>5</sup> See my Introduction, pp. 32–35.

<sup>6</sup> On Agricola's mother tongue see Von Plieningen, *comm.* 12, 1 and note.

5. Translating classical texts into the vernacular was something that South German humanists frequently did, often at the behest of a prince;<sup>7</sup> but this custom was never practiced by Agricola or, for that matter, Erasmus.
6. Reuchlin and Melanchthon share a passion for history and especially for the medieval form of historiography, the world chronicle. The interests of Agricola and Erasmus, however, lie elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

For these reasons I believe it is highly improbable that Agricola ever composed an *epitome* of this kind. It is possible that he participated in conversations about such a project, but we have no records of that.

Nevertheless, this does not detract from the value of these two *vitae*, which in a splendid way pay attention to a great variety of Agricola's activities in Groningen, Louvain, Ferrara, and Heidelberg. The main source for both works is Agricola's own oeuvre; as early as 1515 or 1516 Melanchthon became acquainted with *De inventione dialectica*, a book which he found extremely useful for his own studies in *dialectica* and *rhetorica*.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Melanchthon was sufficiently aware of the value of Agricola's language, philology, educational methodology and biblical studies to regard him forever as an icon of northern European humanism. Melanchthon's own language is characterized by a great didactic clarity and simplicity.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> On the translation into the vernacular by Reuchlin and many others, see Hartfelder (1883/84), 1993, 291–341; Rupprich 1955, 22–23; Worstbrock 1970, 45–81; Backes 1992, 153 ff.

<sup>8</sup> See the section "Geschichte" in Scheible 1993a, 145–147. Kessler in *RAP* 1988, 60–63 argues that the addition of the name of Gemistus Plethon to the triad of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon in Melanchthon's text (*Epistola* 7) is a strong indication of the credibility of the story. But since the work of Gemistus Plethon is added to Xenophon's text in the Aldine edition of 1503 of Xenophon's *Hellenica* (see Kessler p. 61), this printed book could well have been in the university library of Wittenberg (see Eisenstein 1979, 221), since it was also in Reuchlin's library (see Preisendanz 1955, 81, nr. 39). Therefore, Melanchthon's addition of Gemistus to the triad does not necessarily have to be drawn from a *scriptum* by Agricola.

<sup>9</sup> See *Epistola* 8, 4; *Oratio* 5, 2; 8, 4. Scheible 1993b, 229–230. Apart from the six publications by C. Vasoli in the years 1957–1980 (see Bibliography in *RAP* 1988, 343), see now also Muller in *RAP* 1988, 286–292; Prins, *ibid.* 293–301; Mundt 1992, XIII–XX; idem 1994, 83–146; Meerhoff 1997, *Agricola Letters* 2002, 7, n. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Melanchthon's Latin shows a consciously pursued simplicity. His models were Terence, Cicero, Caesar and Livy (see Scheible 1993a, 140).

*Letter to Alardus of Amsterdam*

Eximia uirtute et doctrina praedito Domino Alardo  
Aemstelredamo Philippus Melanthon salutem dicit.

- 1, 1 Habeo tibi gratiam, doctissime Alarde, quod occasionem mihi offers de Rodol-  
pho Agricola ea mandandi literis, quae mihi adolescenti et quadam puerili 5  
cupiditate saepe interroganti duo grauissimi uiri narrarunt, quibus cum Rodol-  
pho non modo familiaritas, sed etiam quaedam studiorum societas fuit, Capnio  
et Pallas Heidelbergensis, qui (ut eius quaedam scripta testantur) diligentius ac  
purius loqui solebat et de artibus multo grauius iudicabat quam caeteri ipsius col-  
legae, qui tunc sacras literas enarrabant. Erat enim me puero recens Heidelbergae 10  
2 memoria Rodolphi. Nam Dalburgius Vangionum episcopus, apud quem uixit  
Rodolphus, proximo anno ante bellum Bauaricum florenti adhuc aetate e uita  
decessit usus perpetua quadam felicitate, qua etiam euocatum puto, ne spectator  
3 esset illarum calamitatum, quae postea secutae sunt. Porro non modo Dalburgii  
autoritas, sed (ut animaduerti) etiam Plinii amicitia Rodolphum Heidelbergam 15  
pertraxit, quo cum Ferrariae coniunctissime uixerat. Sic autem uocabat ipse Ple-  
4 ningerum uirum equestri natum loco et praestanti ingenio praeditum. Vix enim  
ullae sunt dulciores amicitiae quam hae scholasticae societate studiorum con-  
tractae, quae etiam postea allatae ad rempublicam nonnihil momenti adferunt  
in multis grauissimis negotiis, ut Solonis et Pisistrati amicitiam puerilem pro- 20  
fuisse tranquillitati Atticae ciuitatis arbitrantur, et Eudemum cum Dione schola  
Platonis coniunxit. Sed omitto exempla.
- 2, 1 Memini autem me audire ex Pallante fuisse mores Rodolphi castissimos et  
omnibus bonis uiris probatos, adeo ut non modo propter famam doctrinae,  
sed multo magis propter uitae et morum grauitatem et (ut ipse referebat) sin- 25  
gularem prudentiam et moderationem omnium actionum consuetudo eius a  
2 praestantissimis uiris expeteretur. Consulebatur ab omnium artium professori-  
bus, si quis inciderit nodus, ad cuius explicationem opus erat aut historiarum aut  
Latinae linguae aut Graecorum autorum cognitione. Itaque ingeniosi ab ipso  
admoniti multa in Aristotele dexterius ac simplicius tractabant. Audierat enim 30  
3 Ferrariae Theodorum Gazam, qui in Aristotelis doctrina excelluit. Cumque  
Heidelbergae consuetudo fuerit (ut mihi uidetur plena humanitatis) ut in publicis

*Letter to Alardus of Amsterdam*

Philip Melanchthon greets *Alardus of Amsterdam*,  
a gentleman of eminent virtue and erudition

I am grateful to you, most learned Alardus, that you should offer me the 1  
opportunity of putting in black and white those things about Rudolph Agricola  
that were told me as a young man – when I would, from a certain childish  
curiosity, frequently quiz them – by two venerable men, whose bond with  
Rudolph was not only that of close friendship, but also the joint pursuit of  
certain studies: Reuchlin and Pallas of Heidelberg, the latter of whom (as  
certain writings of his testify) used to express himself more carefully and in purer  
language, and had a much profounder insight into the arts, than the others, his  
colleagues, at the University who were expounding the sacred texts. For when  
I was a boy, the memory of Rudolph was still fresh at Heidelberg. After all,  
Von Dalberg, the Bishop of Worms, with whom Rudolph lived, only died in  
the year preceding the Bavarian war, still in the prime of his life, having really  
enjoyed constant good fortune, and I believe it was this good fortune, too, that  
called him away, so that he would not have to witness those calamities that would  
follow later. Anyhow, it was not only Dalberg's authority that drew Rudolph to  
Heidelberg, but also (as I have been told) his friendship with Plinius, with whom  
he had lived most closely together at Ferrara. For thus it was that he himself  
called Von Plienigen, a man of noble birth and endowed with eminent talent.  
Indeed, there are hardly any friendships sweeter than these college bonds, tied by  
common scholarly interests, which later, carried over into public administration,  
are of no mean importance in many weighty matters, as the friendship between  
Solon and Pisistratus from childhood onwards is thought to have benefited the  
peacefulness of the Athenian state, and as it was Plato's school that brought  
Eudemus and Dio together. But I shall refrain from giving examples.

I remember hearing from Pallas that Rudolph's morals were of the purest, 2  
and esteemed by all good men; so much so that it was not only the fame of his  
erudition, but even much more the dignity of his life style and morals, and (as  
the same Pallas related) equally much the exceptional sagacity and moderation  
of all his actions, that caused the most eminent men to seek his acquaintance.  
He was consulted by professors from all disciplines whenever some problem  
presented itself that could only be solved with the aid of knowledge either of  
history, or of Latin, or of the Greek writers. In this way, having been put on the  
right track by him, keen minds discussed many things in Aristotle more skilfully  
and with less hair-splitting. After all, at Ferrara he had attended the lectures of  
Theodorus Gaza, who was an expert in the teachings of Aristotle. And since  
at Heidelberg it was the custom (and a very humane one in my opinion) that

disputationibus professores, si quando haerebat disputator, interfarentur, audio saepe difficiles nodos publice a Rodolpho de fato, de causis, de endelechia et similes explicatos esse. Quare et disputationum coetus propter ipsum erant frequentiores, et ad eos confluebant non tantum scholastici, sed multo etiam studiosius grandiores natu, qui Academiae praeerant.

- 3, 1 Nec defuit eius officium iurisconsultis; amabat enim leges et propter ipsarum dignitatem et quia continere eas doctrinam, historias et bonam philosophiae partem affirmabat; denique mores et humanitatem utriusque ciuitatis, uidelicet Atticae et Romanae, conspici magna ex parte in legibus dicebat; quare plerasque sine notitia antiquitatis intelligi posse negabat.
- 4, 1 Ostendebat et in canonibus germanum sensum saepe ex historiis et Ecclesiae moribus petendum esse. Nam quum ortum esset certamen de hoc dicto: “Frustra seruat Euangelium, qui non seruat canones”, et imperiti quidam disputarent, quam dura uox esset, si ad omnes ritus Ecclesiasticos transferatur, admonuit Rodolphus canones initio uocatos esse sententias synodorum de dogmatibus, ut in synodo Nicaena damnati sunt errores Samosateni, Catharorum et Arii. De talibus decretis recte et proprie dici affirmabat frustra seruari Euangelium, si illi canones non seruentur, qui ueram et firmam sententiam Scripturae explicant de illis controuersiis. Hanc se interpretationem a Rodolpho accepisse Pallas saepe praedicabat, nunquam non adiiciens honorificam commemorationem de moribus et eruditione Rodolphi.
- 5, 1 De theologia uero solitus est accuratius disputare, ut satis adpareret eum tota mente totoque animo amplecti et uenerari Christianam religionem et abhorrere ab impietate. Fuerat enim aliquandiu familiaris ciui suo Basilio Groningo theologo Parisiensi, quem reuersum ex Gallia Basileae Capnio etiam se audisse dicebat, qui quidem Basiliam narrabat Graecam et Hebraicam linguam mediocriter calluisse, in theologia uero et medicina ac reliqua philosophia facile omnibus illius aetatis professoribus antecelluisse. Accensus igitur Rodolphus Basilius doctrina, cumque etiam in Italia theologos audisset, et ipse scriptores Ecclesiasticos Graecos et Latinos excuteret, etsi probabat uoluntatem in recentioribus, qui summas rerum uidissent in unum corpus ac methodum contrahendas esse (hanc enim docendi rationem necessariam esse in omni genere fatebatur), tamen iudicium, modum et puritatem non obscure desiderabat, ostendebatque

whenever a disputant got stuck in the public disputations the professors would interpose, I hear that difficult problems concerning fate, causes, entelechy and the like were often publicly explained by Rudolph. Hence it was thanks to him that the academic debate meetings drew a larger attendance, and that not only students and masters flocked to them, but also, and even with much greater eagerness, the older academic authorities.

He was also glad to be of service to the jurists of the university, for he loved 3  
the law both for its dignity and because he held that it comprised knowledge, history and a good part of philosophy, and even used to say that the refined civilization of both states, viz. Athens and Rome, might for the greater part be perceived in their laws – for which reason he maintained that it was impossible to understand most of them without a knowledge of antiquity.

He demonstrated that for canon law too the true meaning must often be 4  
sought in the history and usage of the Church, for when a dispute had arisen concerning the following adage: “In vain does anyone abide by the Gospel who does not abide by the rules of the Church,” and certain untutored persons pointed out how harsh a statement this would be if it were applied to al ecclesiastical ritual, Rudolph reminded them of the fact that originally “rules” signified the verdicts of Church councils on matters of dogma, like when at the council of Nicaea the heresies of Paul of Samosate, of the Cathars, and of Arius were condemned. Of such decrees he maintained that it could truly and properly be said that the Gospel would be abided by in vain if one did not abide by these rules that explain the true and immutable doctrine of Holy Writ on these issues. Pallas often declared that he had himself heard this interpretation from Rudolph, never omitting to add a respectful reminiscence of his character and learning.

On theology Rudolph was indeed wont to debate with great precision, so 5  
that it became sufficiently clear that he embraced and venerated the Christian faith with all his mind and all his soul and abhorred impiety – for had he not for some time been an intimate friend of that fellow-townsmen of his, the Parisian theologian Basilius [i.e. Wessel Gansfort] of Groningen, of whom Reuchlin used to recount that he [Reuchlin] too had attended his [i.e. Wessel’s] lectures at Basel after he [Wessel] had returned from France. He would then say that this Basilius had possessed no more than middling knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, but had indeed far outshone all the professors of those days in theology and medicine and further philosophy. When having had his interest kindled in this way by Basilius’s teaching, and also having studied with theologians in Italy, he himself came to grips with Greek and Latin ecclesiastical authors; although Rudolph approved of the good intentions of the more modern authors, who had realized that all the fields of this discipline should be brought together into a single body and method – for Rudolph emphasized that this system of teaching is necessary in every discipline – but he made it quite clear that in his opinion, judgment, due measure and purity were lacking, and he demonstrated which customs,

- qui mores, quae opiniones recentium temporum conueniant cum ueteri Ecclesia, quae non conueniant. Nihil fingo; nam mihi sermones quidam ipsius recitati sunt a uiro optimo καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα ἀξιόπιστοι.
- 6, 1 Saepe etiam adiuuabat theologos in reddendis Graecis sententiis sacrorum librorum, ut in hoc dicto: “Et Deus erat uerbum” monebat λόγον subiectum esse, ut uocant dialectici, propter articulum iuxta Graeci sermonis consuetudinem. 5
- 2 Et huiusmodi alia multa. Haec, ut studiosos iuuaret, comiter inter eruditos et graues uiros disputabat; non rixabatur cum indoctis.
- 7, 1 Cum igitur proceres aliquoties eius doctrinam et mores Philippo principi Palatino praedicassent, princeps cupiens eum audire (magnopere enim delectabatur eruditis sermonibus) complecti eum familiariter coepit. Cumque primum de Graecis, Latinis et Ecclesiasticis historiis multa sciscitatus esset, petiuit epitomen historiarum sibi componi. In hac audiui Rodolphum complexum esse ordine seriem imperiorum, initia, incrementa et inclinationes, religionum et morum mutationes, collata etiam esse tempora Graeciae historiae cum sacra. In id compendium contraxit electas materias maxime utiles cum ex poetis tum ex historicis Graecis Herodoto, Thucydide, Xenophonte, Gemisto. Aspersit et inter narrandum sententias ad admonendum principem de multis partibus reipublicae. Id scriptum ualde auxit principis et procerum studia erga ipsum, cum non modo eruditionem ipsius, sed etiam singularem prudentiam, quae lucebat in illis narrationibus de causis mutationum, quae in imperiis accidunt, admirarentur. Quare postea saepe in consilium de republica adhibitus est. 10
- 8, 1 Haec memini non raro praedicare Capnionem et Pallantem, quae multis de causis libenter recensui. Etsi enim eruditionem Rodolphi indicari ex scriptis ipsius potest, tamen mores et uitae consuetudinem et testimonia magnorum uirorum de ipso nosse adolescentibus prodest. Saepe enim eruditorum exempla aliquid de studiis monent, ut quo dirigenda sit manus (ut ita dicam) rectius prospiciant. Fortassis etiam magis admirabuntur et amabunt Rodolphum, si cogitabunt Gazae et aliorum doctorum uirorum consuetudine usum esse. Cum autem eius monumenta plurimum conducant adolescentiae studiis, praeclare te de studiis mereri iudico, mi Alarde, quod sumptu et labore tuo aedi curas cum caetera Rodolphi scripta tum libros eius Dialecticos integros, qui hactenus mutili circumferuntur. Porro cum Aristoteles uocet Dialecticos libros ὄργανον, 15
- 2 3 4 satis admonet hanc artem maxime necessariam esse. Lumen est enim omnium non modo artium, sed etiam disputationum ciuiliu[m] et Ecclesiasticarum. Quare 20 25 30 35

which opinions of modern times tally with those of the ancient Church and which do not. I am not making anything up, for certain of his conversations have been related to me by an excellent man, who was absolutely trustworthy.

He also often aided the theologians in interpreting Greek utterances from the holy books, as in the case of the phrase: "And the word was God." He pointed out that *logos* is the subject, as the dialecticians call it, because of the article used according to the rules of the Greek language. And so many similar things more. In order to help the studious, he debated these matters courteously amidst learned and grave men; he did not dispute things with the untutored. 6

When prominent persons had consequently praised his knowledge and his lifestyle more than once to Philip, the ruler of the Palatinate, this sovereign, desirous of hearing him (for he greatly delighted in learned discussions), began to draw him into his circle of intimate friends. And after he had first asked him many things about Greek, Latin and ecclesiastical history, he requested that Rudolph should put together a survey of history for him. I am told that in this survey Rudolph included the succession of world empires in chronological order, their beginnings, growth and decline, the changes in religions and customs, and that he also compared the dates of Greek history with Biblical history. In this compendium he collected a selection of very useful matters, from the poets as well as the Greek historiographers Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon and Gemistus. And he sprinkled his narration with maxims instructing the sovereign on many aspects of state affairs. This piece of writing made the prince and the most prominent people still more favourably disposed towards him, because they did not only admire his erudition, but also the exceptional sagacity shining forth from those disquisitions on the causes of the changes taking place in world empires. Consequently he was often consulted on state affairs afterwards. 7

This I remember that Reuchlin and Pallas related quite often, and for a number of reasons I have gladly recounted it, for although one can estimate Rudolph's erudition from his own writings, yet it will benefit young people good to be made acquainted with his morals and manner of life and great men's testimonies about him. For often the example of the learned can teach you something about your own studies, so that it is easier to see what the hand should be set to, if I may put it like that. Perhaps they will also admire and love Rudolph the more when they consider that he enjoyed the intimate acquaintanceship of Gaza and other learned men. But since it is his works that aid young people most in their studies, I hold that you are doing those studies a signal service, my dear Alardus, by devoting your own money and toil to having those works published, Rudolph's other writings as well as the complete version of his books on dialectics, which have until now circulated in mutilated form only. Besides, when Aristotle calls his books on dialectics *organon*, [i.e. an implement,] this makes it sufficiently clear that this art is absolutely indispensable. Indeed, it is the guiding light not only in all branches of learning, but also in all legal or ecclesiastical debates, for which reason it is of the utmost importance that young 8



plurimum refert adolescentiam in ea recte et prudenter institui. Nec uero ulla extant recentia scripta de locis et usu Dialectices meliora et locupletiora Rodolphi libris. Proinde optime te mereri de republica iudico quod integros et emendatos aedi curas, quos quidem uelim omnes adolescentes, qui solidam 5 eruditionem expetunt, assidue et (ut Horatii uerbis utar) “nocturna uersare manu, uersare diurna”. Bene uale. Francoforti 28. die Martii, anno M.D.XXXIX.

people should be properly and wisely instructed in it. Yet there are no recent writings about the dialectical places and the usefulness of dialectics better and richer than Rudolph's books. Hence I hold that you are doing the public weal a very great service by having them published in complete and corrected form. I should in fact like to see all young people who want sound knowledge read them incessantly and (if I may use the words of Horace) "by night and by day". Fare thee well. Frankfurt, March 28, 1539.

*Academic oration*  
*The Life of Rudolph Agricola*

Oratio de uita Rodolphi Agricolę Frisii mense Iulio habita a  
Ioanne Saxone Holsatiensi, cum decerneret titulum magisterii  
quibusdam honestis et eruditis iuuenibus in Academia Vitebergensi. 5

- 1, 1 Plurimum refert nos ipsos recte intelligere genus uitae in quo uersamur et  
hoc munus, quod diuinitus nobis attributum est, uidelicet conseruationem ac  
propagationem rectę doctrinę de religione et de aliis rebus honestis. Etsi enim  
splendoris plus habent alii uitae gradus atque ordines, tamen, si uere uolumus  
aestimare, summa dignitas est scholarum. His praecipue seruire imperia et omnes 10  
2 politię debebant. Cum enim ad hunc finem homines conditi sint, ut luceat  
in hoc mundo noticia Dei, et propter hanc causam societas ciuilis diuinitus  
instituta sit, ut coetus sint docentium ac discentium, ut accendi et late spargi  
noticia Dei possit, satis apparet summum esse officium omnium gubernatorum  
3 ecclesias ac scholas tueri. Cogitate quęso quam augusti et uenerandi coetus sint 15  
angelici. Horum imagines in terris scholastici conuentus esse debent, munus  
certe idem est et officium. Profitentur idem quod canunt angeli: Gloria in  
excelsis Deo et in terra pax et hominibus laetitia. Sic scholae celebrare Deum,  
doctrinam paci et concordiae ecclesiarum utilem et quae coelestem laeticiam  
pariat hominibus, propagare debent. Hanc tantam dignitatem nostri muneris, 20  
si cogitabimus et animo metiemur, et studia et scholas magis amabimus et his  
4? ritibus et congressibus scholasticis magnopere delectabimur. Si quis est autem,  
qui tam graui causa non mouetur ad amandas scholas, hunc uere

genuit duris e cautibus horrens  
Caucasus, Hyrcanaeque admorunt ubera tygres. 25

Decet igitur nos hunc promotionum morem, quem prodesse ad ordinem  
discendi comperimus, conseruare.

- 2, 1 Cum autem hic de studiis oratio haberi soleat, et alii, in quibus plus est autorita-  
tis, saepe uel monstrent quod iter ingrediendum sit uel uos ad expetendam  
optimarum artium doctrinam adhortentur, ego uitam Rodolphi Agricolae, 30  
quantum explorare eam potui, recitare decreui. Exemplorum enim magna uis  
est, et bonę naturae cogitatione atque admiratione uirtutis in uiris praestantibus  
maxime exuscitantur ac incenduntur. Deinde historię eruditorum de multis

*Academic oration*  
*The Life of Rudolph Agricola*

Address on the life of Rudolph Agricola the Frisian, delivered in the month of July [of the year 1539] by Johannes Saxo from Holstein, when he awarded the title of master of Arts to certain distinguished and learned young men at the Wittenberg Academy

It is of the utmost importance that we should ourselves have a proper insight into 1  
the kind of life we are leading, and into that task set us by the deity, that is, the  
preservation and propagation of true knowledge regarding religion and other  
estimable matters. For although other ranks and walks of life have more glory,  
yet if we want to judge truly, the highest excellence falls to the share of schools.  
Empires and all bodies politic should serve them above all. For since mankind  
has been created with the purpose of making the awareness of God shine forth  
in this world, and civic society divinely instituted in order to bring those who  
teach together with those who are learning, so that the knowledge of God may  
be kindled and disseminated far and wide, it should be sufficiently clear that it  
is the highest duty of all government officials to protect the churches and the  
schools. Consider, please, how august and venerable are the angelic hosts. Their  
counterparts on earth ought to be the gatherings of scholars, for their task is  
surely the same, as well as their duty. They profess the same as the angels sing:  
glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth and joy among men. Thus the  
schools should glorify God and propagate teachings that are conducive to peace  
and concord among the churches and may bring mankind heavenly joy. When  
we ponder and measure in our minds the great dignity of this task of ours, we  
shall love our studies the more as well as the schools, and take great delight  
in such scholarly customs and gatherings as these. Should there be anybody,  
however, who is not moved by such weighty reasons to love the schools, then  
him truly

the bristling Caucasus begat on stony  
Cliffs, Hyrcanean tigresses suckled at their teats.

Consequently it is meet for us to keep up the tradition of this graduation  
ceremony, which we find beneficial to the due progression of studies.

Since it is the custom on this occasion, however, to deliver an address on 2  
learning, and since others, of greater authority than I, frequently either show  
you the road to be taken or exhort you to seek knowledge of the best subjects,  
I have decided that I would relate to the life of Rudolph Agricola, insofar as  
I have been able to establish it. For great is the power of examples, and good  
characters are strongly stimulated and spurred on by pondering and admiring  
merit in eminent men. Furthermore in many matters the life-stories of the

- 2 rebus iudicia iuuentutis formant. Cumque Rodolphus primum in Germania emendauerit genus sermonis et dialecticam, ac meliorem discendi rationem monstrauerit, consentaneum est plerisque eius dictis ac disputationibus utiliter commonefieri studiosos. Etsi enim nemo non amat Rodolphi nomen propter eius eruditionem ac merita, tamen priuata me quaedam officii ratio inuitauit, 5  
 ut de eo dicere maluerim. Nam cum mea patria non solum Frisiis uicina sit, sed etiam Frisiorum colonia, quae etiam hodie nomen retinet Frisię minoris in Holsatia, et in gubernatione reipublicae uetustam iuris aequabilitatem non sine laude tuetur, iudico Rodolphi laudes aliqua ex parte ad meos etiam ciues  
 3 pertinere. Quod cum ita sit, spero uos meum consilium de recitanda historia Rodolphi probaturos esse. Tametsi et ipse optarim colligi eam uberius ab aliis, 10  
 qui apud eos uixerunt, qui Rodolphi uitam et studia melius norunt, nos pauca collegimus, sumpta partim ex ipsius scriptis, partim ab iis, qui meminerunt sermones senum, quibus in Academia Heydelbergensi cum Rodolpho familiaritas  
 4 fuit. Nec institui encomium; nam cum ingentem gloriam eloquentia sua consecutus sit, quae ex scriptis eius iudicari potest, nil ei opus est laudatione, praesertim hominis indiserti. Tantum historicam narrationem texo, in qua ea, quae sciscitatus sum de uita, moribus et opinionibus eius, uere recenseo, et testes grauissimos citabo. Porro haec commemoratio studiorum atque opinionum non minus con- 15  
 ducit studiosis quam bellatoribus stratagemata et consilia ueterum ducum nosse. Accedo igitur ad historiam.
- 3, 1 Natus est Rodolphus Agricola in Frisia, in rure quodam non procul ab urbe Groninga, honestis parentibus, quorum facultates, ut sunt ibi, mediocres  
 2 fuerunt et unde liberis ad studia sumptus liberaliter suppeditare poterant. De primae pueritię studiis cum nihil audierim, non putauit aliquid fingendum esse. 25  
 Nemo autem excellentem uirtutem consequi potest sine magna ui ingenii et sine entusiasmo aliquo, qui cum sit acerrimus stimulus in bonis naturis, haud dubie Rodolphus celeriter primas artes arripuit, ut ille inquit de heroica natura:

Ante annos animumque gerens curamque uirilem.

Nam et ex scriptis ipsius et consiliis apparet ingenii uis et impetus. 30

- 4, 1 Cum Germania corruptissimo genere sermonis uteretur tantaque literarum inscitia esset, ut quid esset recte loqui ne quidem suspicari nostri homines possent, imo etiam insulitas admirationem haberet, unus Rodolphus primum auribus atque animo sentire illa uitia et desiderare meliorem orationis formam coepit. Haec fuit singularis prudentiae significatio, illa uirium ingenii et 35

learned shape the judgment of youth. Now since in the German lands Rudolph was the first to purify linguistic usage and dialectics, and to point out a better method of studying, it is proper that the studious should be reminded of the general thrust of his statements and expositions. And although there is nobody who does not esteem Rudolph's name, for the sake of his knowledge and merit, yet what might be called a personal motivation of duty has made me desire all the more to speak about him. For since my native soil is not just close to the Frisians, but is even a settlement of Frisians, which even today retains the name of Little Friesland in Holstein and is renowned for upholding the ancient equality before the law in running public affairs, I hold that praising Rudolph is to a certain extent precisely the business of the citizens of that region of mine – and such being the case, I hope that you will approve of my decision to speak to you on the subject of Rudolph's life-story. Although I share the wish that it were more copiously collected by others, who lived together with those who knew Rudolph's life and studies better, we have collected the little we have, partly taken from his own writings, partly from those who remembered the conversations of old people who had been intimate with Rudolph at the University of Heidelberg. And I have not composed a eulogy; for since he acquired great fame with his eloquence, which may be judged from his own writings, he stands in no need of praise, least of all from a man who lacks all command of language. I am putting together a purely historical narrative, in which I give a true account of what I have learned regarding his life, character and ideas, and in which I shall quote absolutely trustworthy witnesses. Yet such a reminder of his studies and ideas is no less profitable to the studious than is knowing the tactics and strategy of the ancient commanders to military men. Hence I now turn to the story of his life.

Rudolph Agricola was born in Friesland, somewhere in the country not far 3  
from the town of Groningen, from respectable parents, whose resources were middling, as they usually are there, and out of which they could easily supply their children with the money needed for their studies. Because I have not heard anything about his studies in early childhood, I have not deemed it necessary to make anything up about them. Yet nobody can achieve eminent merit without great mental power and without a certain enthusiasm, and since this latter forms a very keen stimulus in good characters, Rudolph will soon have absorbed the elementary arts, as the poet says of a heroic nature: "Ahead of his years he possessed the mind and concerns of a man." For both from his writings and his judgments the power and thrust of his mind are clear.

At a time when a very corrupt type of speech was current in the German 4  
lands, and when there existed such ignorance of literary matters that our fellow-countrymen could not even have an inkling of what it was to speak correctly, when, in fact, even utter insipidity was admired, Rudolph was the first and only one whose ear and mind were sensitive to these shortcomings, and the first to begin requiring a better style of speech. This was proof of his extraordinary

- 2 doctrinae, quod genus orationis effinxit purum, splendidum, sonans, sine ineptiis, rerum etiam pondere et grauitate probandum. Nec tantum prudentia fuit, sed etiam quaedam animi celsitudo et mira discendi auuiditas, quod in Italiam, 5
- 3 cum patrimonium haberet mediocre, profectus est, ut melius doctrinae genus quereeret. Ac si de ingenii laudibus multa dicturus essem, amplificare eas etiam patriae praedicatione possem. Nam Frisia, ut olim magnitudine rerum gestarum floruit, ita nunc quoque gignit ingenia nequaquam uulgaria, sed cum ad literas tum ad gubernationem magnarum rerum idonea, et ut mihi uidetur, non solum sagacia et sana, sed etiam ingenuitate et celsitudine singulari praedita. Sed, ut dixi, Rodolphi ingenium ex scriptis aestimari potest. 10
- 5, 1 Louanii audio eum tyrocinium primum deposuisse, ubi cum Gallorum appeteret familiaritatem, seu uitans nostrorum commessiones, seu quod illi 2 essent eruditiores, statim inter illos simul Gallicam linguam didicit. In dialecticis et philosophia cum percepisset celeriter illa, quae in scholis tradebantur, ipse animo meliora requirere solebat, seque in bibliothecas abdens suo consilio bonos 15 scriptores legebat, multa interim cum prudentioribus disputans de eruditore philosophia.
- 6, 1 Audierat autem renouari tunc Graecę et Latinae linguae studia in Italia. Nam post captum Byzantium Graeci pulsi patria in Italiam multi uenerunt, qui philosophiam et eloquentiam ibi renouarunt, cuius studia post collapsum imperium prorsus in Italia conticuerant. Intelligebat autem sine Gręcis literis philosophiam percipi non posse. Coepit igitur impetum proficiscendi in Italiam, ut et 2 disertorum consuetudine ac exemplis genus orationis emendaret et philosophiae fontes cognosceret. Venit Ferrariam, ubi tunc quidem magis florebant studia philosophiae ac eloquentiae quam in cęteris Academiis Italicis. Nam Hercules 25 dux Ferrarię sentiebat ad boni principis officium pertinere curam iuuandę rei literarię, ac delectabatur ipse eruditorum scriptis. Erat Ferrarię Theodorus Gaza, qui eruditione et eloquentia facile antecelluit Graecis omnibus, qui tunc in Italia erant. Ibi Guarinus Graece et Latine docebat, uir in primis diligens. Aderant et Strozae poete, cum quibus apparet magnam fuisse familiaritatem Rodolpho. 30 Extant et mathematicorum scripta, qui apud Herculem tunc uixerunt. Denique omnes artes ibi foelicissime tradebantur. Quid potest autem homini ingenioso, incenso uerę doctrine amore, auido discendi, qualis erat Rodolphus, contingere optatius, quam ut in tali coetu doctorum uiuat? Hic soluta oratione certabat cum 4 Guarino, uersu cum Strozis, de philosophia disserebat cum Theodoro Gaza et 35 cęteris summis uiris. Audiebat professores omnium artium. Cumque pariter

intelligence, and it was typical of the vigor of his talent and erudition that he should have shaped a style that was pure, splendid, sonorous, without inappropriate elements, and commendable for the weightiness and seriousness of its content as well. It was not just intelligence, but also a certain high-mindedness and an astonishing hunger for learning, that in spite of the modesty of his estate he left for Italy in order to seek a better kind of knowledge. And if I had planned to go on commending his mental prowess, I could also exalt it by singing the praises of his native region. For as Friesland shone of old in the greatness of its deeds, even so it still breeds talents now that are by no means common, but equally fit for literary matters and for the controlling of great affairs, and in my opinion not only clever and sound, but also endowed with exceptional nobility and loftiness of mind – but as I have said, Rudolph's talents may be judged from his writings.

Louvain, I hear, was where he first shed his inexperience, and where he 5 sought the acquaintance of the French, either in order to avoid the carousals of our fellow-countrymen, or because the French were more knowledgeable; and being amongst them, he learned French at the same time. Although in dialectics and philosophy he rapidly absorbed what was taught in the schools, in his heart he would require better things, and, sequestering himself in libraries, he used to read the good writers on his own initiative; meanwhile, he would have many discussions with intelligent people about more advanced philosophy.

Then he had heard that new life was being put into the study of Greek and 6 Latin in Italy, for after the fall of Byzantium many Greeks, driven from their fatherland, came to Italy and there put new life into philosophy and eloquence, the study of which had completely lapsed in Italy after the fall of the Roman empire. He understood that it was not possible to fathom philosophy without knowledge of Greek, and hence started feeling the urge to leave for Italy, in order to improve his style by consorting with expert orators and following their example, and in order to get to know the fountainhead of philosophy. He went to Ferrara, where indeed the study of philosophy and eloquence then flourished more than at the other Italian universities, because Ercole [d' Este], the Duke of Ferrara, understood that the promotion of literature is part of the duty of a good monarch, and himself took pleasure in the writings of the learned. At Ferrara lived Theodorus Gaza, who in learning and eloquence easily outshone all the other Greeks then living in Italy. And there Guarino, a most meticulous man, taught Latin and Greek. And the Strozzi lived there, poets with whom Rudolph seems to have been close friends. We also have writings by mathematicians then living with Ercole. In short, all arts were most successfully taught there. And what can fall to the share of an intelligent man burning with love of true knowledge, eager to learn, as was Rudolph, that is more desirable than to live among such a gathering of the learned? There he competed with Guarino in prose, with the Strozzi in verse, and discussed philosophy with Theodorus Gaza and other great men. He went to lectures in all the arts. And while he thus cultivated his talent



- excoleret ingenium doctrinę uarietate et in eloquentia elaboraret, totius in se Italię ora oculosque conuertit. Magna cum laude disputauit, enarrauit autores utriusque linguę in illa ipsa Academia, habuit orationes magna cum approbatione eruditorum. Porro magna laus fuit homini Germano, non solum eruditione et genere sermonis, sed etiam uenustate actionis satisfacere Italię morose ac 5  
6 fastidiose iudicanti. Nec opinor ulli Germanorum praeter hunc Italos tribuisse tantum, ut publice docentem cum admiratione audirent, ac pariter eruditionem, genus sermonis et actionem probarent. Audio saepe rogatum esse Erasmus in Italia, ut specimen suae eruditionis ac facundiae publica praelectione praeberet. Sed ut hac in re amicis morem gereret, adduci nunquam potuit, metuens ne ab 10  
7 Italis pronuntiatio hominis Germani derideretur. Ac saepe praedicauit Rodolphi naturam, quem imitari Italicam uenustatem sine ineptiis potuisse ferebat. Verum musicae naturae ad pronuntiationem et actionem aptiores sunt caeteris. Constat autem Rodolphum ita excelluisse in musicis, multas ut cantilenas composuerit, imo ut Italis fuerit iucundior, propterea quod interdum cythara luderet in 15  
conuiuuis eruditorum.
- 7, 1 Quanta fuerit eius sedulitas, inde aestimari potest, quod Quintilianum sua manu integrum descripsit. Ipse significat se in Italia Naturalem Historiam Plinii diligenter legisse, fortassis occasione inuitatus, quod in eo loco facilius inquirere plantas potuit, et haud dubie uidit Aristotelem et Theophrastum conuersos 20  
a Gaza. Quos cum legeret, Plinium adiungendum esse duxit, ut unde Gaza Latinas adpellationes sumpsisset, obseruaret. Hęc collatio plurimum ei profuit ad augendam et rerum cognitionem et uerborum copiam.
- 8, 1 Porro cum se diligenter expoliisset inter doctissimos homines, tandem in patriam rediit, ubi non diu haesit; nam aliquanto post reditum accersitus est 25  
Heydelbergam a Dalburgio episcopo Vangionum et Pleningero, quem ipse Plinium nominat. Cum his enim in Italia Rodolpho familiaritas summa fuerat, qui postea ambo peruenerant in aulam principis Palatini Philippi, qui ut erat splendidus et non rudis literarum et magna comitate praeditus, uolebat aulam habere  
2 ornatam literatis hominibus. Dalburgius cancellarius, deinde factus est Vangio- 30  
num episcopus. Is Heydelbergam uocauit Rodolphum, seu ut eius consuetudine se ipse ad recte scribendum assuefaceret, seu ut iuuentus haberet styli formatorem. Huius Dalburgii contubernio usus est, quoad uixit. Et quanquam licuit  
3

in a variety of disciplines, and at the same time perfected his gift of eloquence, he drew the attention of all Italy. He won great praise for his disputations, for his expounding of Latin and Greek authors at that same University, and for his speeches, much applauded by the learned. Moreover it redounded greatly to the credit of this native of a German land that it should not only be by his erudition and his style of speech, but also by the charm of his delivery that he managed to satisfy Italy, a country so critical and exacting in its judgments. And I believe that to no other son of Germany beside him the Italians have ever paid the high tribute of coming to visiting his public lectures with admiration and of applauding in equal measure his erudition, his choice of words and his delivery. I hear that Erasmus was often bidden in Italy to offer a sample of his erudition and eloquence in a public exposition, but could never be brought to accede to his friends' wishes in this matter, because he feared his German pronunciation would be ridiculed by the Italians. And he often spoke highly of Rudolph's inborn aptitude, which had enabled him, as Erasmus averred, to reproduce the Italian elegance without looking silly. Indeed, to people with a gift for music a good pronunciation and delivery come more easily than to others, and it is a fact that Rudolph excelled in the field of music to such a degree that he composed many songs, and was liked even better by the Italians because he would sometimes play the lute at the dinner parties of the learned.

How great was his diligence may be seen from the fact that with his own 7 hand he copied the complete Quintilian. He himself lets us know that he read Pliny's *Natural History* with great care when in Italy – perhaps induced by the opportunity of being on the spot where he could more easily go and look for the plants mentioned – and no doubt he had a good look at Aristotle and Theophrastus, both translated by Gaza; when he read them, he felt he had to put Pliny side by side with them, in order to see where Gaza had taken his Latin designations from. He profited much from this comparison in increasing his knowledge of things as well as his stock of words.

Then, when he had perfected himself with great care amidst highly learned 8 men, he finally returned to his home country, where he did not stay long, for soon after his return he was invited to come to Heidelberg by Von Dalberg, Bishop of Worms, and Von Plieningen, whom he himself calls Plinius. In Italy already Rudolph had been close friend with these two, who later had both found themselves at the court of count Philip, the Count Palatine, a man who – because he liked splendor, was by no means devoid of learning, and had a very generous disposition – wanted to have his court adorned with men of letters. Von Dalberg was made his chancellor and was afterwards ordained Bishop of Worms. It was he who called Rudolph to Heidelberg, either in order that through intimacy with Rudolph he would himself acquire the habit of writing correctly, or in order that the young should have someone to style their pens to. He lived under the roof of this Von Dalberg for the remainder of his life, and although he was permitted to remain free of official duties, yet in order

esse ocioso, tamen propter utilitatem iuuentutis in Academia publice docuit Graece et Latine. Nec duxit sibi parum honorificum esse, quanquam aulico, scholas habere. Vt scholasticas operas nunc multi leuiter tincti literis fastidiunt, ut est huius peruersissimi seculi superbia. Adiit crebro disputationes omnium disciplinarum. In philosophia emendabat ineptas persuasiones scholae. Ibi etiam scripsit libros dialecticos, ut artem repurgaret eamque e tenebris in lucem et in aciem educeret, usum uidelicet monstrans.

9, 1 Senes Heidelbergae narrant mores eius honestos et castos fuisse et a liuore, maleuolentia ac petulantia alienissimos. Non est solitus irritare morosos intempestiuis reprehensionibus, ne quid sereret certaminum in schola, sepe recitans hospiti multa dissimulanda esse, ut Graecus uersus inquit: 10

ξένον δὲ σιγᾶν κρεῖττον ἢ κεκραγέναι.

2 Consulebatur saepe ab eruditioribus et in philosophia et in aliis artibus. Multa ex Aristotele uertebat et interpretabatur iis, qui eius sententias sciscitabantur. Nemo tunc uiderat libros Aristotelis de animalibus. Itaque pergratum erat eius officium doctioribus, si quando aliquem insignem locum inde proferebat, ut cum de immortalitate humanae animae disputaretur, quid sensisset Aristoteles, magna cum admiratione excepta est illa sententia, prolata ex libro de generatione animalium: mens extrinsecus accedit, non nascitur ex materia corporum. Interdum aliquid ex Arato de syderum positu, ortu et occasu studiosis impertiebat.

10, 1 Nec deerat eius officium professoribus aliarum disciplinarum. Forte inciderebat disputatio inter theologos et iurisconsultos de hoc dicto: Frustra seruat Euangelium, qui non seruat canones synodorum. Hoc cum alii ad confirmandam superstitionem in ceremoniis detorquerent, alii τὸ ἕτηρον esse durius querebantur et mitigandum aliqua interpretatione dicerent, Rodolphus inquit: In uniuersum in iuris interpretatione multum prodesse cognitionem historiarum et antiquitatis; ac praesertim Ecclesiae historias et ueteres contentiones debere nota esse omnibus, ex quibus saepe peti possit interpretatio ueterum dictorum.

2 Synodi ueteres, inquit, uocabant canones tantum articulos doctrinae diiudicatos in Synodis, non traditiones de ceremoniis; nec dubium esse, quin haec primum fuerit sententia huius dicti, sed postea errore deprauatum esse. Verum est Euangelium non seruari ab iis, qui asperrantur decreta contra Samosatenum aut

to be useful to the young he taught public courses of Latin and Greek at the university, nor did he think it below his dignity, although a member of the court, to conduct classes. Nowadays many with no more than a smattering of learning disdain the burdens of scholastic life, so great is the false pride of this much misguided age. He frequently attended disputations in disciplines of all kinds. In philosophy he corrected silly notions held by the schools, and it was there, too, that he wrote his book on dialectics, in order to purify that art, and to bring it out of the dark into the light and onto the battlefield of daily life, that is, by demonstrating its practical value.

Old men in Heidelberg recount that his way of life was honorable and chaste 9 and wholly devoid of envy, malice and effrontery. Difficult characters he used not to irritate with untimely rebukes, in order not to start anything like a quarrel at the academy, for, as he would often repeat, a guest should turn a blind eye to many things, or as the Greek verse says:

“To a stranger silence is more meet than croaking.”

He was often consulted by learned men in matters of philosophy as well as of the other arts. He translated and explained many of Aristotle’s statements for those who asked about them. At the time, nobody had yet read Aristotle’s books on living beings. Hence it was a very welcome service that he performed for the learned, when now and then he brought some important passage from these books forward. Once, when people were debating the immortality of the human soul, for instance, he told them what Aristotle had said on the subject, and it was with great admiration that they greeted the statement, taken from the book *On the Procreation of Living Beings*: “The spirit comes from outside and does not spring from corporeal matter.” Now and then he would also tell the studious something from Aratus on the position, rising and setting of the stars.

He also performed services for professors in other disciplines. It so happened 10 that there was an argument between theologians and jurists about the following statement: “In vain does he abide by the Gospel who does not abide by the rules of the councils.” When some distorted this so that it would strengthen the superstitious awe of ceremonies, while others complained that this dictum was too harsh and said that it should be softened by some construction or other to be put upon it, Rudolph said: “Usually, in the interpretation of law a knowledge of history and of antiquity is very profitable, and above all everybody should know the history and former subjects of dispute of the church, from which it is often possible to derive the correct interpretation of ancient verdicts. The old councils,” he said, “used the term “rules” only for such articles of faith as had been settled at councils, not for traditions regarding ceremonies, nor can it be doubted that this was the original intention of the statement under discussion, but it was afterwards perverted by misapprehension. It is true that they do not abide by the gospel who spurn the decrees delivered against Paul of Samosate,

Arrium aut Macedonium facta, nam uetustissimae Synodi propter controuersias dogmatum conuocabantur, non de ceremoniis cumulandis. Quam indigna uox esset dicere Christi fidem inutilem et inanem esse sine obseruatione rituum humanorum! Lucem et uitam æternam in mentibus inchoatam extingui, si aliqua ridicula ceremonia negligeretur! Addebat tales ritus saepe sine ullo peccato omitti 5 posse. Hac tam dextra interpretatione facile satisfecit omnibus.

11, 1 Sæpe et in iure ciuili ea, quæ ab historiis petenda sunt, explicabat interrogantibus, ut locum de usuris centesimis. Item quid sit ἐροήμη δίκη, denique qui fuissent gradus ueterum Romanorum iudiciorum.

12, 1 In theologia quid desiderauerit, memini huc scribere Iosquinum Groningensem, senem pietate et grauitate excellentem: se adolescentem interfuisse sermonibus Rodolphi et Wesseli, in quibus deplorarint Ecclesiæ tenebras et reprehenderint prophanationem in Missis et coelibatum, item disputauerint de iusticia fidei, quid sit quod Paulus toties inculcat homines fide iustos esse, non 2 operibus. Scribebat Iosquinius aperte reiecissee eos monachorum opinionem, quæ fingit homines operibus iustos esse. Item sensisse eos de humanis traditionibus: errare eos, qui affingunt illis opinionem cultus et non posse uiolari iudicant. 3 Nihil fingo, nam hæc fere ad uerbum huc scripsit Iosquinius. Ac satis credibile est eum diligenter disputasse de doctrina Christiana, præsertim cum esset familiaris Wesselo, cuius fuit summum ingenium, ad quod amplissimam eruditionem 4 in omnibus disciplinis adiunxit et Graecæ et Ebraicae linguæ cognitionem. Ad hæc exercitatus fuit in certaminibus religionis. Lutetia pulsus propter taxatas superstitiones uenit Basileam; ibi pro Wesselo dixerunt Basilium Groningum; narrabatque Capnion eum theologiam, Græcas et Ebraicas literas eodem tem- 5 pore tradidisse studiosis, si qui eum audire cupierant. Inde cum in Belgicum rediisset, saepe adiit senem Rodolphus natu minor, sed in literis Latinis et Græcis eruditior et flagrans studio Christianæ doctrinæ. Idque ipse saepe de se prædicat: se quod reliquum esset ætatis collocaturum esse in sacras literas; qui si uixisset, haud dubie egregiam operam Ecclesiæ nauasset. Quanquam et illa studia Ecclesiæ profuerunt, quod nostros homines ad meliorem discendi rationem reuocauit. Id meritum non est leue ducendum. Sed redeo ad historiam. 30

13, 1 Cum ita uiueret Heydelbergæ, ut eruditus et bonis omnibus charissimus esset, non solum in noticiam uenit ducis Palatini Philippi, sed etiam familiaritate

or Arius, or Macedonius, for the ancient councils were called together because of dogmatic controversies, not in order to augment the number of ceremonies. How scandalous a statement it would be to maintain that faith in Christ is useless and vain without the observance of all human ritual! That the light and life eternal stirring in human minds would be extinguished if some ridiculous ceremony or other should be disregarded! Such rites," he added, "can often be neglected without sinning at all." With this exceedingly skilful explanation he easily satisfied everyone.

In Roman law too he often explained things that must be sought for in history 11 to those who asked him, for instance a passage about one percent interests, and also what a "conviction by default" might be, and furthermore what the relative standing of the old Roman tribunals had been.

As regards what he felt to be lacking in theology I remember that Iosquinus, 12 an old man of eminent piety and dignity from Groningen, once wrote to us here that as a young man he had witnessed conversations between Rudolph and Wessel [Gansfort] in which they deplored the benightedness of the church and spoke with disapproval of the profanation of the Masses and of celibacy. They had also argued about the righteousness of the faith, i.e. what it means that St. Paul so often impresses on us that mankind is righteous through faith, not through works. Iosquinus wrote that they frankly rejected the opinion of the monks that alleges that mankind is righteous through works, and also that with reference to human traditions they were of the opinion that those persons were wrong who added a particular notion of worship to these traditions and then held that it was not permitted to infringe it. I am not making anything up, for this is almost to the letter what Iosquinus wrote to us here. And we can well believe that he assiduously discussed the teachings of Christianity, especially since he was a close friend of Wessel's, a man with a very keen mind, to which he united a n immense erudition in all branches of learning as well as a knowledge of both Greek and Hebrew. Moreover, he was trained in religious disputations. Banished from Paris because of alleged superstitions, he went to Basel, where instead of Wessel they called him Basilius of Groningen; and Reuchlin tells us that he taught theology, Greek and Hebrew at the same time to those students that were eager to hear him. When he had returned from Basel to the Low Countries, the old man was often visited by Rudolph, who was younger, but better versed in Latin and Greek, and burning with enthusiasm for the Christian doctrine: as he often proclaimed about himself, he was planning to devote what might be left of his life to the sacred writings – and had he lived, he would without any doubt have rendered the church an outstanding service. But even as they are his studies have benefited the church, because he has won our people back to a better method of learning. This merit should not be considered insignificant. But I return to the story of his life.

When he lived at Heidelberg in such a manner as to be greatly beloved of 13 all learned and good people, he was not only introduced to Philip, the Count

eius princeps delectatus est, ac saepe eum ad graues deliberationes adhibuit. Cumque, ut fit, mentio interdum incideret ueterum imperiorum, ac Rodolphus commemoraret uel Græcas historias uel Romanas, princeps et uerti sibi multa non solum ex historiis, sed etiam ex poetis iussit, et petiuit sibi contexi integram seriem quatuor monarchiarum, ut ordinem rerum melius uidere et incrementa atque inclinationes et horum causas considerare posset; nam hæc exempla præsertim principes monere de pluribus rebus possunt. Contexuit igitur Rodolphus eruditissimam epitomen ex Bibliis et Herodoto de Assyriorum et Persarum imperio, de ciuilibus discordiis Græcarum ciuitatum ex Thucydide et Xenophonte, de Philippo et Alexandro et successoribus ex Diodoro et Polybio. Deinde lectissima queque excerpsit ex historiis Romanis. Postremo et Germanici regni res præcipuas collegit. Ac in eo scripto non solum laborauit, ut res tantas perspicue narraret, sed etiam ut obiter legentem principem pleraque moneret, qua in re apparuit eum non modo literis, sed etiam ciuili prudentia excellere.

14, 1 Sed cum iam aetas maturuisset, cum iam lucubrationes theologicas inchoasset, non multum supra quadagesimum annum egressus rebus humanis exemptus est. Spero enim immortalis læticia donatum esse, cum legamus eum pie sensisse de Christo ac studia ad gloriam Dei destinasse, et mores fuisse pios et honestos audiamus. Habetis historiam uite Rodolphi.

15, 1 Nunc reliquum est, ut talis uiri memoriam grati conseruetis, cogitetis quantum fuerit ornamentum Germaniæ, quam bene de literis meritis sit. Primus enim in Germania emendare genus sermonis coepit et accendit Latinae et Graecæ linguae studia, quare ei plurimum omnes debemus. Adolescentes etiam eius admoniti tum exemplis tum dictis prudentius de studiis iudicare discant et ipsius imitentur diligentiam et sedulitatem, qua infirmioribus ingenis multo magis opus est quam illis heroicis naturis, quibus, ut ita dicam, multa proueniunt ἀνήγορα. Consilium etiam ipsius in studiis considerate, quod uidelicet non diuulsit artes natura copulatas, rerum doctrinam et eloquentiam, sed in utroque genere summa animi atque ingenii contentione elaborauit, quod ut uos quoque faciatis, quantum possum, omnes adhortor. Et in hoc instituta sunt hæc scholastica exercitia, ut in utroque genere elaboremus, quod quidem eo faciendum est, ut Ecclesiae et Reipublicae usui esse possimus. Nam nec rerum cognitio recte comparari potest sine exercitatione dicendi, nec destituti rebus idonei sunt ad seria negocia explicanda. Porro, si officium nostrum diligenter fecerimus,

Palatine, but this sovereign even took pleasure in his friendship and often invited him to attend weighty deliberations. And when, as will happen, it sometimes befell that the ancient empires were made mention of, and Rudolph would tell either Greek stories or Roman ones, the sovereign told him to translate many passages for him not only from the histories, but also from the poets, and requested Rudolph to put together for him a complete chronological account of the four kingdoms, so that he could better perceive the course of events and could contemplate their rise and decline and the causes thereof – for these examples above all can teach monarchs a great many things. Consequently Rudolph put together from the Bible and Herodotus a very learned survey of the empires of the Assyrians and the Persians, of the civil strife between the Greek city-states from Thucydides and Xenophon, of Philippus and Alexander and their successors from Diodorus and Polybius. Next he selected some of the choicest bits from the Roman histories. Finally he also collected the principal facts about the German kingdom. And in this document he did not only do his best to set forth such wide-ranging matters lucidly, but also incidentally to teach the sovereign many things in the course of his reading, in which Rudolph made it clear that he did not only excel in the field of letters, but also by his acumen as regards affairs of state.

But just as he was growing ripe in years, just as he had started his theological studies, soon after his fortieth birthday he was relieved of human concerns. I trust, however, that he was granted immortal joy, since we read that he had thought piously about Christ, and had dedicated his studies to the glory of God, and hear his conduct to have been pious and respectable. This, then, was the story of Rudolph's life. 14

What remains now is that you should gratefully preserve the memory of such a great man. Think what an ornament of the German lands he was, how much he did for literature. After all, he was the first to start correcting the language used in the German lands, and to kindle enthusiasm for Latin and Greek, for which we all owe him much. May young men, prompted by his examples as well as his words, learn to judge more wisely of their studies, and may they copy his assiduity and application, which weaker talents stand much more in need of than those heroic natures to whom many things come, so to speak, without plodding. And also bear in mind the method he applied to his own studies, that is, that he did not sunder the skills that nature has joined together, i.e. scholarship and eloquence, but exerted himself in both kinds to the limit of his soul and mind. With all that is in me I urge all of you to do the same. And our present-day academic exercises, too, have been instituted precisely with this aim of making us exert ourselves in both types of skill, which we must surely do if we want to be able to be of service to church and state. For one can neither acquire a proper understanding of things without practising elocution, nor are they who are devoid of factual knowledge fit to expound weighty matters. And then, if we have performed our duty with care, God shall honor us with rewards 15



Deus etiam ornabit nos praemiis: ut Ecclesias, ita scholas, quae sunt praecipua  
 pars Ecclesiae, conseruabit, etiamsi negliguntur ab iis, qui praesunt, qui quidem  
 5? longe errant. Propter Ecclesias et scholas ipsi et politię seruantur. Quare uicissim  
 nobis gratiam referre debebant; quod si non facient, Deus illos puniet et tamen  
 aliquem portum Ecclesię, scholis et nostro ordini ostendet, sicut promisit: Se 5  
 non defuturum iis, qui doctrinam Ecclesię utilem propagare et ornare student.  
 Dixi.

too: just as He protects the churches, He will protect the schools, which form the paramount part of the church, even though they are being neglected by those who lead us, who are going grievously astray indeed. It is for the sake of the churches and the schools that these [leaders] and their polities are being maintained in the first place! Therefore they should, on their part, be grateful to us – and if they are not, God will punish them and yet disclose to us some haven for the church, the schools and our order, as he has promised, that is, that he will not cast off those who devote themselves to diffusion and perfection of the teachings useful to the Church. I have done.



## NOTES TO THE TEXTS

### NOTES TO JOHANNES TRITHEMIUS

The texts of *De script. eccl.* (DSE) and *De lum. Germ.* (DLG) show some variations in their wording.

a) The Latin in DLG appears to be simpler, more elegant and restrained, and more classical in the following expressions:

1 *natione Friso* DSE vs. *patria Frisius* DLG  
*ingenio excellens* DSE vs. *ingenio subtilis* DLG  
*sermone disertus* DSE vs. *eloquio disertus* DLG

2 *Scripsit quaedam ingenii sui excellentissima opuscula, quibus nomen suum immortalitati consecrauit et posteris reliquit* DSE vs. *Scripsit quedam preclara opuscula, quibus memoriam sui posteris commendauit* DLG

13 *patriarcha Aquilegiensis* DSE vs. *patriarcha Venetus* DLG

b) Some repetitions and redundancies have been omitted in DLG:

1 *non ignarus* twice in DSE vs. once in DLG  
*inter omnes etiam cuiuscunque facultatis doctores* in DSE: this has been omitted in DLG.

7 *quibus ingenium suum prope diuinum ostendit* DSE: this has been omitted in DLG.

c) Changes in content:

3–4 In DLG the *Anna* poem precedes the *Vita Petrarchae*; moreover, the epithet *heroicum* is added: St. Anne is celebrated as a mythical heroine. See Arnold 1971, 103–113 and Brann 1981, 174–179 on Trithemius's special interest in the cult of St. Anne and on his tract *De laudibus sanctissimae matris Annae* of 1494, in which Trithemius has copied Agricola's poem.

8 *quod tum distractum nusquam simul inuenitur*: the addition of these words in DLG proves that after his earlier edition of Agricola's *vita* Trithemius found some new information on this subject. See also Geldenhouwer 8, 2 and n.

9 *et precepta Isocratis*: added in DLG, absent in DSE. This refers to Ps.-Isocrates' *Paraenesis ad Demonicum*, which is in the Stuttgart ms.; see RAP 1988, p. 317, no. 3. No. 4 of our list in RAP (the *Ad Nicoclem*), which is not mentioned by Trithemius, is found in the Alardus edition only.

14, vs. 3–4 *uiuio* DSE, *uno* DLG. The latter is the correct reading, which is also found in the edition of Ermolao Barbaro's works by Branca 1943, vol. II, p. 124, *Carm.* 5. The incorrect reading *uiuio* is in Erasmus's *Adagiorum Collectanea* no. 25 and all subsequent editions of the *Adagia*. Erasmus owned the DSE (1494) of Trithemius. For this information see ASD II–9, p. 58 and the editors' note on p. 59. The order of the words *laudis/Quicquid* occurs in Erasmus only.

A note on the text itself:

1 *in gymnasio Heydelbergensi*: the term *gymnasium* (or *ac(c)ademia*) for “university” is typical of the humanists. See Anna Esposito and Jaques Vergerin in *Vocabulaire des colleges universitaires* 1993, 86 and 176.

## NOTES TO JOHANN VON PLIENINGEN

*Ep.* 1

**Superscription Theodericus ... amantissimo**: Dietrich von Plieningen (1453–1520) received a degree in Civil Law on March 17, 1479 in Ferrara. It is uncertain whether he or his brother were professors of law in the sense of actually teaching the discipline. For the term *legum professor* see Olga Weijers 1987, 152–155; for the Von Plieningens as bearers of this title, see Adelman 1981, 36; Sottili 1997, 101. Dietrich's younger brother, Johann von Plieningen (1454–1506), received his degree in Canon Law on May 5, 1488. In 1489 he became a canon at Worms and dean of the St. Juliana Convent at Mosbach. On the two brothers see Adelman 1981; Agricola, *Epp.* 6 and 11 with notes; and my Introduction to this *Vita*, p. 53.

1 **locos – dialecticos**: *De inuentione dialectica*, finished August 15, 1479, and first printed January 1515. Agricola gave the work different titles, such as *commentationes perì τῶν τόπων διαλεκτικῶν* (*Ep.* 18,10), *dialectica mea* (*Ep.* 22,29), and *libros de inuentione dialectica* (*Ep.* 17,1 in his letter of dedication. Cf. in the text below *Ep.* 2,2, *Comm.* 5,1–4; *Comm.* 12,2.)

2 **qui doctissimorum numero**: with ellipsis of *in* and *sunt* or *habentur*. For *numero* with or without *in* (both are quite normal), see Krebs and Schmalz s.v. *numerus*.

**Pliniorum – Plinius**: Von Plieningen knows the difference between the two Plinii; so did Agricola, see *Ep.* 4,14. The first scholar after the Middle Ages to

distinguish between the two classical authors was Giovanni Mansionario in the years 1320–1328. See Kemper 2000, 14, who refers to Gamberini 1984, 133–170.

**eruditione doctrinaque:** the first term means something like “culture”; it is associated with *litterae* and *humanitas*. *Doctrina* refers to learning acquired through school- and university training. Cf. Menge 1977, No. 228.

**3 qui nobis ... extitit:** cf. Cic. *Pro Archia* §1 *hunc [Archiam] uideo mihi principem et ad suscipiendam et ad ingrediendam rationem horum studiorum exstitisse*.

**rationem:** program, system, method. Cf. Erasmus *De ratione studii*.

**studiorum humanitatis:** the term *studia humanitatis* has its origin in Cicero and Aulus Gellius. For a recent study on its reception and cultural implications, see Von Martels 2003b, 87–104.

**5 rei publicę litterarię:** the first to use the term *res publica litteraria* was Francesco Barbaro in a letter to Poggio Bracciolini of July 6, 1417. At least, this is the earliest reference found by Elizabeth L. Eisenstein; see her book *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* 1, 137, n. 287.

**quo tandem ... possint:** the Von Plieningen brothers never carried out this intention.

## Ep. 2

**Superscription iudicii ... assessori:** Dietrich was delegated to the Reichskammergericht at the request of Emperor Maximilian I on July 24, 1494; he was an assessor of this High Court in Frankfurt am Main until 1499. This letter could therefore have been written between these two dates. See also below *Comm.* 7,2 n.; Sottili 1997, p. 101.

**1 Iohannes ... optimus:** this young man was clearly hired by Johann von Plieningen as a professional copyist. His skills have often been disputed; see Mundt 1992, 661–662; Agr., *Letters* 2002, p. 31 and *passim*. In these *Commentarii seu index uite Rhodolphi Agricolaе*, too, some 25 serious errors can be found.

**2 perdiligenter ... contuli:** Johann overrates Pfeutzer’s and his own accuracy.

**5 mea ieiuna ... dictione:** the same topos (“Unfähigkeitsbetuerung”) occurs in the *vitae* by Goswinus van Halen (1,2), Geldenhouwer (3,3), and Melanchthon, *Oratio* (2,4). Also in Tac. *Agr.* 3 *Non tamen pigebit, uel incondita ac rudi uoce, memoriam ... composuisse*, and in others. The topos is recommended by the *Auctor ad Herennium* 3,11: “if we speak in praise [of a person], we shall say that we fear our inability to match his deeds with words” (transl. Caplan). Cf. Arbusow, *Colores rhetorici* <sup>2</sup>1963, 105f. and Curtius <sup>7</sup>1969, 93f., 412–415, 445, 504.

**ieiuna:** often used as a qualification of a meager, barren, uninteresting style. The opposite is an *oratio copiosa* (Quint. 8,3,49).

**necessitudini nostre maxime:** i.e. the ties between the Von Plieningen brothers and Agricola; see also above, *Ep.* 1,2.

**solos commentarios:** from the discovery of Cicero's *Brutus* in 1421 onward, the word *commentarii* has been used in the sense of "notes", e.g. by Leonardo Bruni and Piccolomini; see Ullmann 1955, <sup>2</sup>1973, pp. 327–328. Cicero writes in *Brutus* 262: *orationes ... eius [i.e. Caesaris] compluris ... legi atque etiam commentarios, quos idem scripsit rerum suarum: ualde quidem ... probandos; nudi enim sunt, recti et uenusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam ueste detracta. Sed dum uoluit alios habere parata, unde sumerent qui uellent scribere historiam, ineptis gratum fortasse fecit, qui illa uolent calamistris inurere, sanos quidem homines a scribendo deterruit; nihil est enim in historia pura et illustri breuitate dulcius.*

**indicemue:** *index* in the meaning of "summary, résumé, catalog"; cf. Suet. *Aug.* 101,4 ... *altero uolumine indicem rerum a se gestarum complexus est*; Gaius *Inst.* 3,54 *Hactenus omnia iura quasi per indicem tetigisse satis est*; idem 4,15 *solebant breuiter ... et quasi per indicem rem exponere.*

**6 praesulem Vangium:** Johann Kämmerer von Dalberg (1455–1503), Bishop of Worms (1482) and Chancellor of Count Philip of the Palatinate (1481). He was Agricola's friend in Pavia and later his patron in Heidelberg; *Agr. Epp.* 13, 49, and 50 are addressed to him. See on him our note on *Agr. Ep.* 13. The Roman name of Worms was *Augusta Vangionum*. The classic study on Von Dalberg is Morneweg 1887.

**quam ex te habui:** Johann received most of his material from Dietrich, who, as appears from the correspondence, had been closer to Agricola than his brother.

**tanquam telam texenti:** cf. Cic. *De oratore* 3,226 *quamquam ea tela textitur in ciuitate*; Otto, *Sprichwörter*, sub *tela*.

*Ep.* 3

**Superscription Iohannes ... dicit:** the titles of both brothers have been considerably shortened here; see the superscriptions of *Epp.* 1 and 2.

**2 pro ingenioli ... tenuitate:** cf. *Agr. Vita Petrarcae: pro hac ingenii mei tenuitate* (Bertalot 384,12; Lindeboom 94,16–17).

**4 non omnia ... omnes:** a quotation from Verg. *Ecl.* 8,64. See Otto 254.

*Commentarii*

**1,1 nedum:** unclassical for *non solum*; cf. *Agr. Ep.* 6,2 with note.

**1,2 uel:** “even if only”; cf. *Ov. Met.* 4,75 *Aut, hoc si nimium est, uel ad oscula danda pateres?* Also *Comm.* 2,3 *uel teneris unguiculis.*

**(tuo):** dropped between *hortatu* and *tum* through haplography; cf. 5,2 *rogatu tuo.*

**2,1 Frisia:** in the medieval and early modern period, the name “Frisia” was used for the northern region of the present-day Netherlands north of the IJssel River, together with the adjacent parts of Germany. In Agricola’s days, Groningen was a city of some ten or twelve thousand inhabitants, with great political power and ambitions. By comparison: Deventer had some six or seven thousand inhabitants.

**decimo ... Martias:** the intercalary day (1444!) was not counted in determining the date; cf. Grotefend 1922, <sup>13</sup>1991, 16; Strubbe-Voet 1960, <sup>1</sup>1991, 45. For the date of Agricola’s birth, see Introduction, pp. 10–12.

**in uico Hagis ... sito:** Goswinus gives Baflo as Agricola’s birthplace. This village, where Agricola’s father was a parish priest, lies about 12 miles (18 km.) from Groningen. Goswinus calls Baflo a *pagus*, which indicates a higher status – MLL explains it as e.g. *ciuitas* (1) and *parochia* (8) – than *uicus* (MLL “village, settlement”). It is quite possible that Agricola’s mother lived in a small settlement just outside Baflo called *Hagae* (“Hagen”, i.e. “Hedges”), but no such name is currently found in the area.

**miliaribus:** *mil(l)iare* or *mil(l)iarium* is a milestone or the distance of one Roman mile (1,481 meters or 1,620 yards).

**Graningo – Graningi:** this spelling of the name Groningen is due to the “a/o-Wechsel” in Low German; Von Plieningen may well have written the name according to the way he heard it pronounced. Place names like Gruningen or Gröningen are found in many areas in Germany. See Nauta 1910, 178, n. 22; Heeroma and Naarding 1961, 49, 52–53.

**parentibus ... modicis, ut:** the phrasing is clearly based on rhetorical precepts, cf. Quint. 3,7,10 *magis est uaria laus hominum ... ante hominem patria ac parentes maioresque erunt, quorum duplex tractatus est: aut enim respondisse nobilitati pulchrum erit, aut humiliter genus inlustrasse factis.* Cf. also *ad Herennium* 3, 7, 13. Agricola, too, knew the two options for the praise of men; in his *Vita Petrarcae* he writes: *Petrarcharum familia maiorumne titulis et antiqua gentis gloria fuerit insignis, an noua uirtute atque industria sese in lucem protulerit, ut parum compertum haud facile in hanc aut illam partem sententiam flexerim, crediderim tamen ...* (Bertalot 384, 15–18; Lindeboom 94, 20–23). On Agricola’s parents, see Introduction, pp. 7–10.

**2,2 Graningi scholis:** Groningen had two Latin schools in the Middle Ages, one attached to St. Martin’s church, the other to the Der Aa church. Around 1435, the *Devotio Moderna* had founded an institute in Groningen, where from 1511 onward a regular school was held; see Weiler 2004, 12, 221; 231–234; for another view see Postma 1993, 294 n. 13. On the schools in the medieval Netherlands in general, see Post 1954.



**2,3 Gymnasium ... Erfordiam se contulit:** Agricola matriculated at the University of Erfurt (founded in 1392) in the summer semester of 1456, when he was thirteen years old. See Van der Velden 1911, 50 and Introduction, pp. 12–13.

**teneris unguicolis:** cf. Cic. *Fam.* 1,6,2 *Sed praesta te eum, qui mihi "a teneris", ut Graeci dicunt, "unguicolis" es cognitus.*

**prorupturus:** the reflexive use of *proripio* (see *app. crit.*), without *se*, is rare: e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 5,741 *quo deinde ruis? Quo proripis?* Therefore I think that the text is here simply echoing – in the same context – Agricola's *Vita Petrarcae: Proferebat enim se iam a puero feruor ille animi mentisque uigor, qui quandoque in tantum fulgorem tantamque prorumperet lucem.* (Bertalot 385, 12–13; Lindeboom 95, 14–16). See also below ... *in lucemque prorupit* (4, 5).

**2,4 Anno etenim ... initiatus:** it seems that Von Plieningen means to say that Agricola received his baccalaureate – his first degree in the *artes* – at Erfurt at the age of fourteen (i.e. in 1457) and was consequently admitted to the *quadrivium*.

**indolisque ... iniiciebat:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Iniiciebat quam maximam expectationem cunctis tam egregiae indolis specimen* (Bertalot 385, 13–14; Lindeboom 95, 16–17).

**2,4–5 spem – Cui ne deesset – ut succrescentis etatis fructus tam claris initiis abunde responderet:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Parens autem ne tantae spei deesset – ut succrescentis aetatis tam praeclaris initiis responderet fructus* (Bertalot 385, 15–16; Lindeboom 95, 17–19).

**2,5 Louanium ... laudatissimum:** the University of Louvain, founded in 1425, was the only university in the Low Countries until 1575, the year in which the University of Leiden was established. It enjoyed great fame and attracted many students from the North. See Geldenhouwer 3,1–2; Reusens 1867, 148–206; De Vocht 1951, 1976; Zijlstra 1996, *passim*; Van der Essen 1945; several contributions are found in IJsewijn-Paquet, *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages*, 1978, e.g. A. van Belle, 42–48.

**2,5 litteratorum conuentum:** “the community of the learned”, i.e. “the scholarly community”: here a synonym for the *uniuersitas* or *studium generale*. For these terms see Weijers 1987, chs. 1 and 5; Teeuwen 2003, 148.

**utriusque philosophiæ studiis ... adiuuantur aduersę:** this does not refer to the Aristotelian and Platonic philosophies (so Van der Velden 1911, 56), nor to the two dominant schools of the 15th century, nominalism and realism (so Straube 1994, 44, n. 26); instead, this is a reference to physics and ethics, two obligatory disciplines of the *artes* program (the other two disciplines of the *quadrivium*, mathematics and music, are explicitly mentioned as well: here and 10,1–10 respectively). Von Plieningen seems to have borrowed this double-philosophy program from Agr. *Ep.* 38,14–21. The same *philosophia duplex* also in Seneca *Nat. quaest.* (preface). See

Akkerman 1983, 31–32. A survey of the historical meaning of the term *philosophia* is found in Teeuwen 2003, 395–399.

**2,6 Anno namque ... insignitus:** this would mean that Agricola received his master's degree (*laurea magisterii*) in 1459 or 1460 at the age of fifteen; however, the university records at Louvain indicate that this took place in 1465 (Van der Velden 1911, 58, n. 3), when he was twenty or twenty-one, precisely the required age. He received the degree as the *primus* of his year (see Geldenhouwer 3,8).

**2,7 Paulo post ... petiit:** according to Von Plieningen, Agricola went to Cologne in 1459 or 1460. On the alleged study of theology at Cologne, see Introduction, p. 13.

**Colonium gymnasium praeclarum:** the University of Cologne was founded in 1388; for a long time it was the favorite university of students from Groningen; see Zijlstra 1996, 12–13; see also Meuthen 1988,94 and 213–214. On the word *gymnasium*, see *Trithemius* 6 and n. On the fame of the University of Cologne, see Goswinus 4 and nn.; Van Rhijn 1917, *Wessel Gansfort* 47ff.

**3,1 Procedente ... tempore ... profectus est:** here Von Plieningen has his facts straight again: Agricola must have come to Pavia (*oppidum Ticinum*) in 1468 or 1469 (see Van der Velden 1911,52), when he was about twenty-five years old. His first letter from Pavia is dated July 18, 1469.

**studiorum ... permotus ad Italiam oppidum Ticinum – profectus est:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Postea Bononiam fama studiorum claritateque loci permotus se contulit* (Bertalot 385,19–20; Lindeboom 195,24–25).

**3,2 Ac primum ... peperit:** three examples of students of rhetoric or law who gave up the studies to which they had been obliged by their fathers and put their minds to literature instead, were Ovid (cf. *Tr.* 4,10), Ariosto, and Petrarch. About the latter, Agricola wrote a passage in his *Vita Petrarcae* which Von Plieningen has copied literally in some places here: ... *magis ... ut patris uoluntati obsequeretur, quam quod toto in ea animo incumberet, ipsa sectabatur. Animus enim excelsior atque generosior quam ut ad leuia illa exiguaque rerum momenta, quibus magna ex parte ius ciuile constat, abiici posset, haud facile his se passus alligari, uerum ad maiora semper eluctans, quicquid ocii subripere ab aliis studiis poterat, id omne ad has quas humanitatis artes uocant conferebat. ... Relicto igitur studio iuris, cui septem annos operatus fuit, ... toto se animo totis uiribus ad lectionem ueterum applicuit, et priscam illam clarissimorum hominum coniunctam cum eloquentia scientiam studiosissime pertractabat, quicquid in philosophia praeclare scriptum extat, quicquid ex oratoribus tanta temporum iniuria nobis reliqui fecit, non attigit modo, sed totum se eis ingessit. Poetas praeterea, historicos omnes diligentissime perdiscebat, tum praecipue uni bene ornateque dicendi curae intentus erat, nec superuacuuus labor nec inanis spes fuit. Nam et sibi maximam laudem peperit ...* (Bertalot 385,22–386,18; Lindeboom

95,26–96,21). With the words *ut ipsius uerbis utar* Von Plieningen is deliberately referring to Agricola's writing.

**3,4 quem ... dictione sua ... exprimit:** Agricola's style as an "expression of Quintilian" is observed by Erasmus in the *Ciceronianus* (1528, cf. ASD I-2,682–683).

**3,4–5 Relicto ... spes fuit:** Petrarch's devotion to classical philosophy as recorded by Agricola (see above) is left out here by Von Plieningen, because he situates it in Agricola's Louvain period; see 2, 5.

**3,7 Hac namque ... benevolentiam:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Extemplo quoque clarissimorum hominum et praestantia ingenii et singulari morum suavitate benevolentiam sibi conciliauit, in quibus Columnensium familiam uniuersam, ...* (Bertalot 388,37–389,1; Lindeboom 98,35–38).

**fratrum ... de Ottingin:** Johann and Friedrich von Öttingen, sons of Count Wilhelm von Öttingen (d. 1467). Friedrich became a canon in Augsburg and in 1486 Bishop of Passau; Johann served in the army of Emperor Maximilian; cf. *Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste*, 1832, 3. Section, 2. Teil, Leipzig 1832, p. 411. They are not mentioned in the *Letters* of Agricola, nor in the other *Vitae*, but they are present in the archives of Pavia; see Sottili 1978, 359; *idem* 1982, 535; *idem* 1988, 85; *idem* 2002a, 76; IJsewijn 1997, 19–23.

**3,8 Id quoque temporis ... descripsit:** both mss. of this *Vita Petrarcae* are dated 1477. The first draft of this *oratio* or *declamatio* seems to have been written in 1473 in Pavia at the request of Antonio Scrovegni. It is conceivable that Agricola gave a public performance of this *declamatio* later, in Ferrara. For the dating at 1473 see Bertalot 394,33; Lindeboom 104,3. See also Berschin 1993, 24 n. 4. On Scrovegni see Sottili 1988, 90–91. On the *oratio* as a whole, see (in addition to the two editions by Bertalot 1928 and Lindeboom 1923) Mommsen 1925 (1959); Vasoli 2003; Berschin 1993 (Rev. Sottili 1995). It appears from this passage that Von Plieningen had a clear comprehension of the significance of Agricola's *Vita Petrarcae*; see also the Introduction, p. 19.

**Anthonii Scrophini:** Antonio Scrovegni was a citizen of Pavia, who studied law there in the early sixties, graduated before May 26, 1472, and later held an important academic function. See on him also Agr. *Ep.* 5 and Sottili 1988, 90–93; *idem* 2002 b, 597–615.

**precibus ac suasu ... permotus:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Permotus autem precibus suasuque* (Bertalot 389,2; Lindeboom 98,40).

**4,2 Deerant ... profiterentur:** literally taken, this is incorrect: Sottili has convincingly shown that Giorgio Valla, one of the professors of rhetoric in Pavia

during Agricola's stay there, also taught Greek. See Sottili 1978, 360; 1988, 88–90; 1999, 219–221.

**4.3 Iccirco ... inseruit:** the meaning of this long sentence is clear, although the dativus *subtili ... optimo* seems to be in the wrong place. I have resisted the temptation to put the sequence in order.

**Ferrariam ... se contulit:** Agricola's stay at Pavia and Ferrara is treated by Sottili 1988, 1999, 2002a, and 2003 with a wealth of archival data. Agricola left Pavia probably mid-September 1475 (see Sottili 1988, 85). Apart from his desire to devote himself to humanistic studies, Agricola may also have had political motives for leaving (see Sottili 1988, 84, 87ff.; *idem* 2002a, 129).

**Musarum domum:** Von Plieningen is quoting *Agr. Ep.* 13,6 *Musarum ipsam esse domicilium et Veneris*, where Agricola quotes his own *Oratio in laudem philosophiae et reliquarum artium*, 1476; see Rupprich, ed. (1932) 1964, 180, 11–14; cf. Introduction, p. 23.

**diui Herculis ducis:** Duke Ercole I d'Este (1431–1505), Duke of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio (1471–1505), founder of Ferrara's "Musenhof" and its Bibliotheca Estense. Agricola praised him in his *Oratio in laudem philosophiae* etc. On him see Albrecht 1891; Bertoni 1903; Van der Velden 1911; Gundersheimer 1973; Walter Ludwig 1977; L. Byatt in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 43, 1993, 97–107.

*diui:* in the sense of *diuini*.

**ut ... organa pulsaret:** cf. *Agr. Ep.* 10,6 and n.; Lockwood 1984, 49 (n. 15), 149–159, 180.

**4.4 eam in quinque diuisam genera:** the Stoics knew five parts of speech; later grammarians distinguished eight of them.

**per omnes partes et numeros:** a fine classical expression, cf. OLD *pars sub* 14d and *numerus sub* 12a.

**4.5 protreptico:** this *protrepticus* (*logos*) is the inaugural address (the *Oratio in laudem philosophiae et reliquarum artium*) with which, in the fall of 1476, Agricola opened the academic year for the Faculty of Arts and Medicine at the University of Ferrara; see Sottili 2002a, 113–114.

**4.6 Axiochum ... Rhodolpho Langio dedicauit:** the Pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus sive de contemnenda morte* was translated before July 12, 1478; it was printed first by Richard Pafraet in Deventer in 1480 and a second time in 1483 by Jan van Westfalen in Louvain. It was dedicated to the Münster humanist Rudolphus Langius, one of the Aduard *sodales*. See IJsewijn 1988, 25; Tournoy 1988, 211–218; *Agr. Ep.* 14.

**4,7 parenesim Ysocratis ad Demoniacum:** the correct title is *Isocratis ad Demoniacum Paraenesis*. In general, these moralizing sentences (actually a kind of commonplace book) are no longer attributed to Isocrates.

Agricola's translation had ca. 100 later printings, one of them by Erasmus. On this book and its translation, see Agr. *Ep.* 15; Holzberg, *Pirckheimer* 1981, 145–151.

**quadragentesimo:** instead of *quadragesimo*; cf. 2, 1; 7, 1; 8, 4, where it is correct.

**4,8 preexercitamenta quedam:** this refers to the *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius. There is no dedication. This translation “seems to be an independent work” (Ijsewijn 1988, 49 with nn. 45 and 46; Van der Poel 1987, *passim*).

**4,9 Gallum Luciani ... dedicauit:** the dialogue *Gallus siue Micyllus* (*Gallus de somnio* or *Micyllus*) by Lucianus was translated in the summer of 1484 (according to Agr. *Ep.* 40,10 addressed to Adolph Rusch). Cf. also *Epp.* 42, 4 and 43, 3 from and to Alexander Hegius. Maybe Agricola began his translation in 1479 in Ferrara and promised a dedication to Dietrich von Plieningen. Cf. Ijsewijn 1988, 26; Van der Velden 1911, 224–226; our note to *Ep.* 40,10. It is possible that Agricola was the first to translate this text.

**4,10 versus quosdam ... diui Iudoci:** *Carmen heroicum de uita diui Iudoci*; text in Alardus II, 310–313; no. 13 in our Bibliography (*RAP* 1988, 320).

**Adolphi Occi:** Adolph Occo, normal genitive *Oconis*, Agricola's compatriot, physician, and lifelong best friend, Greek scholar, and heir to Agricola's library. On Occo in general see Assion 1987; Agr. *Letters* 2002, 11–12; *Ep.* 18n. On his Greek scholarship see Mondrain 1988 and Van der Laan 2000, 55–65.

**5,1 tres ... dialecticis:** on the title see above *Ep.* 1,1 n.

**5,2 inter eundum:** Von Plieningen is fond of this construction: 8,1,4,9; 9,12. Cf. LHS 233<sup>2</sup>.

**per te:** on behalf of Von Werdenberg, Dietrich von Plieningen had invited Agricola to come to Dillingen; cf. Agr. *Ep.* 26,6.

**5,2–3 Iohannis ... Augustensis ... dedicauit:** Johann Graf von Werdenberg (ca. 1430–1486), Bishop of Augsburg (1469–1486), was favorably disposed towards humanism. In the summer of 1479 he hosted Agricola, who finished his *De inuentione dialectica* in Von Werdenberg's castle at Dillingen and also translated Lucian's *De calumnia* (*Calumniae non temere credendum*) there. On Von Werdenberg see Agr. *Ep.* 16 and n.; Zoepfl 1949.

**uirtute sua maxima, que hoc boni ... conuertat:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Habet hoc boni praeter caetera uirtus, ut non solum possessorem suum oblectet, sed alienissimorum*

*quoque admirationem in se gratiamque conuertat, ...* (Bertalot 389, 10–12; Lindeboom 99, 5–7).

**5,3 benignissime acceptus:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: benigne acceptus* (Bertalot 389,8–9; Lindeboom 99,2).

**libellum Luciani ... non esse credendum delationibus:** Agricola translated Lucian's dialogue at Dillingen before August 24, 1479. See Agr. *Ep.* 16 introduction and IJsewijn 1988, 26.

**5,4 Institerat:** "he was bent on".

**mercator:** the image of a "merchant" of culture who offers science and wisdom for sale to illiterate people is well known since the days of Charlemagne; see Notker Balbulus, *Gesta Karoli* 1,1. Agricola as a *translator Musarum* from the South to the North is also celebrated by Friedrich Mormann in *Carmen* xvii,3–4 (*uates Frisius ex finibus Italis / ducens Aonidum choros*) and xviii,23–28 (*En redis honustus / grandi fasce uoluminum optimorum. / Nec solum Latium uehis, sed ipsa / tecum Graecia tota uadit. Omnis / Musarum chorus et pater Camenae / Homerus pariter feruntur ire*). See Schoonbeeg 1993, 346, 248 and commentary. The idea also dominates in Erasmus's *Adagium* 339: *Quid cani et balneo?*

**5,6 Transegit ... in patria annos tres:** Agricola arrived in Groningen in the winter of 1479–1480. He dated a letter to Mormann from Selwerd as of April 3 and was present at the death of his mother on April 7 (see Agr. *Epp.* 20 and 22,20). He left shortly after March 30 of 1484 (*Ep.* 32,4). Consequently, he must have stayed in the North for more than four years.

**summo studiorum fructu:** "with the highest benefit for the studies" (sc. in Frisia). This passage is wrongly translated by Straube: "Agricola aber lebte drei Jahre in seiner Heimat vom Ertrag und Ruhm seiner wissenschaftlicher Arbeiten." (Straube 1994, 21)

**(quorum in Frisia magnus est numerus):** Von Plieningen mentions the humanists in the distant North explicitly; see also Melanchthon *Or.* 4,3.

**6,1 praesulis Vangii:** see above, *Ep.* 2,6.

**6,3 Hebrearum litterarum perdiscendarum:** on Agricola's Hebrew teacher in Heidelberg, see Agr. *Ep.* 38,59–60.

**6,5 quadam in epistola doctori Iohanni Reuchlin:** viz. in Agr. *Ep.* 41,8ff., in particular the sections 13–15, from which Von Plieningen is quoting almost *verbatim*. For Johann Reuchlin, the famous German Hebraist of Pforzheim (1455–1522), see our note on Agr. *Ep.* 41. See also Melanchthon *Ep.* 1,1 and n., and Stefan Rhein 1993.

**6,6 Statuerat enim ... conquiescere:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: sacrarum litterarum in senecta studiosus in primis fuit* (Bertalot 397,35–36; Lindeboom 106,36). Cf. Petrarca *Epistola posteritati* (ed. Enenkel 1998, 262): *Ingenio fui equo potius quam acuto, ad omne bonum et salubre studium apto, sed ad moralem precipue philosophiam et ad poeticam prono. Quam ipsam processu temporis neglexi, sacris literis delectatus, in quibus sensi dulcedinem abditam, quam aliquando contempseram, poeticis literis non nisi ad ornatum reseruatis.* For the whole “commonplace on a midlife crisis” see Erasmus *Carmen 2* and the introduction by Vredeveld in ASD 1–7; on the treatment of the same topic by Piccolomini, see Von Martels 2006.

**6,8 posset ... curauit:** for *curare* without *ut*, see LHS 530.

**Latinam cum Hebraea contulisset et forsitan ... eam ... denuo ... transtulisset:** this is the only information we have on this topic. Agricola’s own utterance on the status of the Bible text can be found in *Ep.* 43,7–12.

**7,1 ut ... mitteret:** this part of the sentence does not run properly. Straube strikes *et* after *gratia*, but this does not give a satisfying result either. Some words may have been omitted.

**Philippus comes Palatinus:** Count Philip “der Aufrichtige” of the Palatinate 1476–1508. On him see our note on Agr. *Ep.* 26,13; Backes 1992, 136–171.

**Innocentio octauo:** Innocentius VIII was elected pope on August 29, 1484, and reigned until 1492.

**tum quod Rome uidende ... incesserat:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Romae autem cognoscendae et uetustae urbis uictricis gentium reliquias uidendi summus amor a puero ipsum tenuerat* (Bertalot 389,30–31; Lindeboom 99,26–28).

**7,2 illustris comitis ... creatus est:** Count Eberhardus Wirtenbergius (died 1496) founded the “Württembergische Landesuniversität” at Tübingen in 1477. He was made a duke in 1495 by Maximilian at the Reichstag of Worms, so Von Plieningen must have written his *vita* of Agricola after that date.

**reuerendissimi ... penitentiarii:** Giuliano della Rovere, later Pope Julius II (1443–1513, pope from 1503), was grand penitentiary (*poenitentiarius maior* or *summus*), i.e. “the cardinal who presided over a tribunal which dealt with all important matters affecting the Sacrament” (ODCC), attached to the church (*titulus*) of San Pietro in Vincoli.

**8,1 febrem quartanam:** a malaria fever occurring every third day.

**comite ... Wumpinae:** Count Bernhard von Eberstein (1459–1516) and Jodocus Bock, deacon in Wimpfen im Thal on the Neckar, are both mentioned in Agricola’s *Epp.* 49,3 and 50,2–3. See our notes.

**8,4 sexto Kalendas nouembris:** October 27. See also Introduction, p. 35.

8,6 **pro copia qua potuit maxima**: the construction is wrong, but the meaning is clear.

8,7 **in ede diui Francisci**: on Agricola's grave, Viglius ab Aytta set up a monument on which he had Ermolao Barbaro's epitaph engraved. Cf. Postma 1983, 60 and n. 93 on p. 183. See also Introduction, pp. 35–37.

8,8 **conclamatoque funere**: *conclamare* “bewail”; cf. Ter. *Eun.* 348 *iam conclamatumst* (“all is over”).

8,11 **sciebat, – si – voluisset – produxisset**: a loose construction.  
**intus ... nouerat**: cf. Persius 3,30 *ego te intus et in cute noui*.

9,1 **Ab ipsius autem corpore ... putetur**: in the treatment of the *genus demonstrativum* (the *laudatio*), both the *Rhet. Ad Her.* 3,6,10–8,15 and Quint. 3,7,10–18 mention first the body, then the mind. Quintilian states explicitly that the *laus corporis* is of minor importance (*levior*, § 12). Cf. also Agr. *Vita Petrarchae*: *Nam ut ab ipso corpore ordiamur, tametsi sciam a plerisque sapientibus quale id sit haud in magno poni discrimine, ...* (Bertalot 395,14–16; Lindeboom 104,21–22).

9,2 **Fuit corpore amplo ... congruens**: almost literally quoted from Suet. *Vita Tiberi* 68,1 *Corpore fuit amplo atque robusto, statura quae iustam excederet; latus ab umeris et pectore, ceteris quoque membris usque ad imos pedes aequalis et congruens ...* See also Einhard's *vita* of Charlemagne c. 22.

9,2–3 **staturamque – conspicuus – dexteritatis**: cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarchae*: *statura – dexteritate – conspicuus* (Bertalot 395,19–22; Lindeboom 104,27–31).

9,6 **Frontem itidem habuit latam – capillum rariorem – cetera fuit hirsutus**: cf. Suet. *Caligula* 50,1 *fronte lata – capillo – hirsutus cetera*.

9,7 **ungues ... dentibus rodere solebat**: maybe Agricola was making an ironic comment on this bad habit of his when he wrote in a letter to Dietrich von Plieningen: *Ego latro et, ursi ut solent, ungues sugo* (*Ep.* 7,14).

9,9 **Cibi quoque ... minimi et facillime parabilis ac fere uulgaris**: Agr. *Vita Petrarchae*: *Victu mediocri et facillime parabili gaudebat* (Bertalot 396,12; Lindeboom 105,20).

9,12 **Valetudine fuit ... commoda**: cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarchae*: *valetudine propter vitae frugalitatem commoda* (Bertalot 395,24–25; Lindeboom 104,33–34).

**annis ... vixit**: definitely wrong; the copyist may have misread xxxvii for xxxvii. See Introduction, p. 10.



9,16 **temporis namque ... dicebat**: an echo of Sen. *Ep.* 1. There are eight echoes and one direct quotation from Seneca in Agricola's letters; see Agr. *Letters* 2002, 24–25 and 428.

10,1 **diuerticula**: classical *deuerticula*.

10,2 **fidibus citharae ... pulsabat**: cf. Verg. *Aen.* 6,119–120 *Orpheus / Threicia fretus cithara fidibusque canoris*. A hendiadys, here for a cittern or a lute. To play on musical instruments is *canere* (or *sonare*) with abl., or *pulsare* with acc. For that reason, and also because of the otherwise redundant *et*, I have supplied *canebat*. On Agricola and music, see Akkerman/Kooiman 1999, 43–51.

**organa ... prouocasse**: on Agricola as an excellent organ player, cf. his *Ep.* 10,6 and Akkerman/Kooiman 1999, 46. Later he acted as an adviser to the building of organs in two churches in Groningen and Kampen; see Edskes 1988, 212–217.

10,4 **instituerat**: this may well mean that he had already started on such a project.

**nullum genus nullaue ratio musices ... fuit incognita**: cf. Erasmus *Adag.* 339 *nulla pars Musices quam non exactissime calleret*.

10,5–6 **Pictura ... putares**: on Agricola and painting, see Baxandall 1973. On portraits of him, see Ekkart 1988, 118–122, and *Northern Humanism* 1999, 267. Goswinus and Geldenhouwer also wrote about Agricola's gift for painting (Gosw. 6,2; Geldenhouwer 4,3). There are even speculations about some of his portraits deriving from self-portraits. (Cf. Ekkart 1988, 120.)

11,1–2 **Mentis fuit generose – Tanta fuit in eo humanitas – ut omnes eum admirarentur ac plurimum colerent**: cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: generosae mentis – summa humanitas – Praecipui – viri admirabantur uenerabantur colebant eum omnes* (Bertalot 397,1–11; Lindeboom 105,40–43).

11,1 **turbam fugiebat ... querebat**: cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Aeque fugiebat turbam et solitudinem, et socios non ex obuio sed ex moribus eosque quaerebat, qui ...* (Bertalot 396,18–19; Lindeboom 105,26–28).

**ex obuio**: the scribe's error of making the *i* too long leads to the absurd reading *ex obulo*. The expression *ex obuio* occurs in a similar context in Agr. *Vita Petrarcae*, mentioned in the previous note.

11,2 **uirtutis parentem**: cf. Ludovico Carbone about Guarino of Verona: *parentem probitatis* (Prosatori Latini 382,27; cf. also above, 3,7 *parentem*); see also the use of *filius* in Agr. *Ep.* 6,7 n. Agricola's friend Adolph Occo styles himself in one of his Greek manuscripts as Ὡδολφος πρόβος ὁ Φρήσιος (Turicensis c 136; see Salanitro 1987, xi).

**11,3 Diuitiarum contemptor fuit mirificus:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Diuitiarum et omnis superuacui fastus mirificus contemptor* (Bertalot 395,37–38; Lindeboom 105,5).

**Karolo duce Burgundie:** a mistake for *Maximiliano*; on his attempts to get Agricola to join his household, see Agr. *Ep.* 23,13–16.

**ubi amplissime fortune ... implere potuisset:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Quumque amplissimae fortunae mensuram implere potuisset* (Bertalot 397,11–12; Lindeboom 106,7–8).

**Libertatis ... amator fuit:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: Libertatis suae amator* (Bertalot 396,20; Lindeboom 105,29).

**11,4 Nullis humanarum mentium irritamentis – obnoxius:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: non reliquis humanarum mentium irritamentis obnoxius* (Bertalot 396,23–24; Lindeboom 105, 33–34).

**qum ab amore discederes:** cf. Cic. *ad Att.* 1,17,5 ... *cum a fraterno amore ... discessi*; *Fam.* 6,12,2; 1,9,18; *Off.* 1,53. OLD *discedere* 6d “to leave aside”.

**12,1 Ingenii maximi ... diceret:** apart from Latin and Greek, Agricola was fluent in no less than five modern languages.

**Lingua ... suam Frisonum uernaculam:** the Frisian language, now spoken and written only in the north-western province of the Netherlands named “Friesland” (620,000 inhabitants in 1999), was spoken in a far larger area in the Middle Ages; modern research distinguishes between West Frisian (in Friesland proper) and East Frisian (in the modern province of Groningen in the Netherlands and in Ostfriesland (East Frisia) in modern Germany). East Frisian was gradually superseded by a Low German dialect in the course of the later Middle Ages (14th–16th centuries). So it is not quite clear what was exactly Agricola’s mother tongue in Baflo, in the north of Groningen. Judging from the fact that Von Plieningen explicitly mentions Frisian as a language separate from High and Low German, I take it that Agricola called his own vernacular language “Frisian”; he may have been the main source for this statement by the Von Plieningen brothers. On the shift from East Frisian to the Low German dialect, see Huizinga (1914), 1948, I, 464–522; Heeroma and Naarding 1961; Niebaum 2001, 430–442. I thank Prof. Niebaum for his kind information on this subject.

**Gallorum:** see Geldenhouwer 4,2, where he tells at length how quickly and how well Agricola learned French.

**Germanorum ... inferiorum:** High and Low German developed into modern German and Dutch respectively. Agricola composed songs in Dutch (Flemish) in Louvain and Groningen. He must have used it also for his work as a secretary of the city of Groningen. German he used, of course, in Erfurt and Heidelberg and with his German fellow-students in Italy.

**Italorum:** after a ten-year stay in Italy it is no wonder that Agricola’s Italian was excellent. In his *Vita Petrarcae* Agricola praises his hero’s Italian poetry.

**non quemadmodum ... diceret:** only three words of a song in Dutch have been preserved: “Als ic ghedenck” (see Goswinus 12,3).

**12,2 De studiorum uero effecto –, quando:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: De studiis atque eloquentiae suae laudibus, quando ...* (Bertalot 397,15; Lindeboom 106,11–12).

**felicis industrię suę munimenta – prestantissimi ingenii:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: monumenta – Praestantissimi ingenii* (Bertalot 397,22–23; Lindeboom 106,19–21).

**tres illi libri ... fecit:** see above *Ep.* 1,1; *Ep.* 2,2; *Comm.* 5,1. This is the third time Johann von Plieningen mentions *De inventione dialectica*; thus he makes it clear that he was well aware of the fact that this book had the best claim to Agricola’s future fame.

**libri ... acute inuenti, apte, ornate, splendide conscripti:** cf. Agr. *Vita Petrarcae: multa tam acute inuenta, tam aperte dicta, ornate disposita, splendide elocuta* (Bertalot 398, 21–22; Lindeboom 107,22–23) (ms. S reads *apte* instead of *aperte*, and is lacking *disposita*).

## NOTES TO GOSWINUS VAN HALEN

**1,1 Philippe Melanchthon:** On Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) and his interest in Agricola, see the Introduction to Melanchthon.

**Narravit mihi Iodocus Bernardus Ferreus:** his German name was Eisermann; he is also named Johannes Hesus Montanus. Born in 1485 or 1486, he received part of his education at the humanist school of Münster and continued his studies at the University of Wittenberg, where he joined Melanchthon, who had come there in 1518. From 1521 to 1522 Ferreus was rector of the university. Later he went to Marburg, where he made a brilliant career as a jurist at the newly founded (1527) Protestant university. He died in 1558. We don’t know at what occasion he met Goswinus. Goswinus, who held an important position in Groningen, maintained relations with many people; cf. Van Rhijn 1925, 13 ff. On Ferreus see ADB V, 6, 719/720.

**1,2 Vtinam ... scriptorem:** on this topic see Von Plieningen *Ep.* 2,5 and n.

**1,3 Plaeraque ... disciplinarum:** the relevant information on Wilhelmus Frederici has been given in a nutshell in our note on Agr. *Ep.* 22,31. He was a dominant figure in the religious, political and cultural scene of Groningen from 1489 (or earlier) to his death on August 3, 1525. He was born before 1455, was secretary of Groningen in 1477 (in which function he preceded Agricola), and in 1489 became head priest of St. Martin’s church with the title of *persona personatus*. He was well acquainted with Agricola, who had been a witness at his second promotion in Ferrara on October 20, 1475. The *privilegia doctoratus in medicina domini Wilhelmi Frederici de Groningen* were published by Sottili in 2003,

1291–1292. His name Pistori(u)s (Latin for Becker, i.e. “baker”) is found only in the university register of Cologne (Keussen 330, 97) and here. In Groningen Frederici lived on the square called Martinikerkhof, diagonally opposite the House of the Brethren, where Goswinus was rector.

According to Lesdorpius in his *Lamentationes Petri* (1521), the intellectual elite of Groningen at the time consisted of Frederici, his son Hieronymus, Nicolaus Lesdorpius (the rector of the Latin school of St. Martin’s), Gelmarus Canter (the town secretary), and Goswinus van Halen; see Akkerman 1999, 12–14. On Frederici see further Zuidema 1888; Nijhuis 1983; Hermans 1987, 2.1.117; Hermans and Huisman 1996, 26–28; Bakker 1988, 107; Rinzema 1990, 224–227.

**hic audiuit eum ... aliquando declamantem ... orantem:** Goswinus seems to refer to one particular *declamatio* held in Ferrara, just as he mentions the one *oratio* (i.e. *in laudem philosophiae et reliquarum artium* of 1476). Elsewhere I have made the conjecture that the *declamatio* could have been the *Oratio de vita Petrarchae*, which Von Plieningen situated in Pavia (*Comm.* 3,8); however, in both of the mss. in which it is preserved, it bears the date 1477. A *declamatio* is a set speech, an elaborate piece of literature, which is precisely what Agricola’s *Oratio de vita Petrarchae* is; it is hardly probable that such a piece would get lost without leaving a trace. It is possible that this text was written in Pavia in 1473/74 and later recited (again) as a *declamatio* in Ferrara; cf. Akkerman 1983, 38–40. On the *declamatio* as an academic exercise, see Scheible 1993c, 77.

**2,1 anno salutis 1436:** this date is obviously wrong: it should be 1443.

**in pago Baffeltlo:** on the village of Baflo, see Von Plieningen, *Comm.* 2,1 n.

**septenarii. Iubileum:** for the correct biblical meaning of the sabbatical year and the jubilee, see Lev. 25:1–22.

**2,2 anno salutis 86:** we have to allow for the possibility that the message of Agricola’s death (October 27 or 28, 1485) had reached Deventer with some delay; in that case the date mentioned here would be correct.

**huic enim debuit ... calluit:** apparently Goswinus had heard Hegius tell this in class, as had Geldenhouwer, another student. See Geldenhouwer 9,2 *Agricolam ... , a quo quicquid in latinis et graecis literis scio ... didici.*

**2,3 Didicit enim haec:** the ms. has *hanc*, which seems impossible since the preceding *quicquid ... Latine ac Graece ...* is neuter. In view of the two languages involved, *haec* is the required reading.

**Didicit enim haec ... distat ab Embrica:** Alexander Hegius served as rector of the Latin school in Emmerich from March 12, 1474, to October 1483, when he began his rectorship in Deventer. Before 1474 he had been rector in Wesel.

The *oppidulum cum arce* is ’s-Heerenberg, where Adam van den Bergh (*de Monte* or *Montensis*) lived in Huis Bergh on the *arx*; the beautiful castle still exists (see the photo on p. 25). On Adam Montensis see Sottili 1988b, 104–109.

Agricola mentions Adam in *Epp.* 26,8 and 32,2. In the latter he refers to Adam as *veterem hospitem meum*, which may simply mean that he had stayed with him at 's-Heerenberg before (the regular route from Groningen to Cologne was via 's-Heerenberg and Emmerich; see Alberts and Jansen 1964, 220). That he recalls his former *contubernium* with Adam in Pavia (*Ep.* 26,8) does not necessarily mean that Agricola had lived in Pavia at Adam's expense (this was a guess made by Sottili, 1988b, 106).

**dominum de Spiegelberg:** Goswinus mistakes Count Moritz von Spiegelberg (1406/7–1483), canon of Cologne and provost of Emmerich, for Adam Montensis. On Count von Spiegelberg, also a good friend and Maecenas of Agricola, see Agr. *Epp.* 26,8 n. and 40,7 n. For Agricola's commemorative poem for him, see Hermann Wiegand 1994, 275–284 (ed. with transl.). See also Introduction, pp. 24–26.

We now know for a fact that Agricola's stay at Huis Bergh and his contact with Hegius at Emmerich took place in the autumn of 1479, after September 15 (see *Ep.* 19) and before April 3, 1480 (see *Ep.* 20); presumably he was there until December. On these questions see now Bedaux 1998, 18–20 and Hövelmann 1987, 89–97. Some of the older literature has it that Agricola met Hegius for the first time in 1474 (so Allen, *Op. Epp. Des. Erasmi* 1,105–106 and Van der Velden 1911, 79–80; also still Hövelmann 1987, 94–95); but Agricola was in Pavia at that time and was not yet proficient enough in Greek to be able to teach it. Reichling (1911, 457–459) has put the sequence of events in the right order; see also Worstbrock, *Verfasserlexicon* III, 1981, 573. Van der Velden incorrectly translated *Embricae* by “Emden” instead of “Emmerich” (once, on p. 80). The same mistake was made by Wiegand 1994, 270.

**priusquam praeficeretur scholis Dauentriensibus:** Goswinus varies his terminology (*ludus literarius*, *scholis*, *gymnasiarcha*), but in each case he means the same, namely that Hegius was headmaster of the Latin schools at Emmerich and Deventer consecutively.

**Erat uterque ... describitur:** the simple room in the House of the Brethren is compared with the *parva ... sed pia domus* of Philemon and Baucis in Ovid. *Metam.* 8,611–724. Goswinus possessed a copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and recommended the work to his former student Albert Hardenberg, urging him to read it, if only once. (Letters in the Introduction to Wessel Gansfort, *Opera* 1614, \*\* 5<sup>r</sup>) One may assume that Hegius and Agricola slept not only in the same room but also in the same bed. On the more social function of the bed in the past, see Rafaella Sarti 2002, ch. IV, § 13 (pp. 119–123).

**Anno salutis 1483 ... gymnasiarcha:** scholars now agree on the correctness of this year; see Reichling 1911; Worstbrock 1981; Vredeveld 1993; Bedaux 1998. For a quick survey of Hegius's life, see our note on Agr. *Ep.* 21. Worstbrock and Bedaux give now the best stories. Whoever wants to catch a glimpse of Hegius's intellectual physiognomy, may read the letter written by him (Agr. *Ep.* 42) and those written to him (*Epp.* 21, 36, 43), as well as his poems in Bedaux's edition. See also Introduction, p. 34.

**3,1 In pago ... dictus:** this sentence about Agricola's father contains three uncertainties:

- here and below Goswinus states that he became a *licentiatus* in theology in Cologne; but the degree is not attested by the university registers. On the *licentia* (the licence to teach) see below 4, 11n.
- he is called “Henricus Huysman” here, but the archives always refer to the parish priest of Baflo and later abbot of Selwerd as Henric (or Henrick) Vries, never Huysman (Huisman). Since Agricola's half-brother Johannes is also called Huisman or called himself Agricola (a latinization of Huisman), it is almost certain that the name Huisman belonged to the mother, not to the father.
- Goswinus's statement that Hendrik Vries was *parochus* (parish priest) of Baflo but not yet an ordained priest, may be understood in the following way. Baflo was one of the six main parishes of the Groningen countryside; as such, one of its tasks consisted of administering canon law to a large number of smaller parishes. The *parochus* or *curatus* of Baflo is also called *persona* or *persona personatus*. All the other *personae* of Baflo in the fifteenth century were priests; however, since the term *persona* often denotes a more secular function, Goswinus probably means that Hendrik Vries was head of a parish but did not provide spiritual care. Whether Goswinus is right remains a matter of doubt. For the precise details of these problems, see Bakker's contribution in *RAP* 1988, 100–101 and Van der Velden 1911, 42–44. For concise information on Agricola's father, see *Agr. Ep.* 22,20 n. On the importance of Hendrik de Vries and his abbey of Selwerd see Nip 1989, 7–34. There is an abundance of literature on the personate; see e.g. Nolet and Boeren 1951, 198, 314, 326.

**Zycka – Zico:** these Frisian names (Sijke – Sicco) are still in use in the region.

**sarcinatori:** Latin for the profession and name Schreuder (Schroeder), i.e. tailor. Sicco Schroeder, Agricola's “stepfather”, is well attested in the records of Selwerd as an influential and highly esteemed man, bearing the title of *wedman* (a sort of judge or arbiter). On him see Bakker in *RAP* 1988, 102–103 and *Agr. Epp.* 31,1 and 5; 34,4; cf. our n. on *Ep.* 25,4.

**duos filios ... appellatus:** on the two half-brothers (Johannes and Hendrik) and the one half-sister of Agricola, see the *Letters*, especially on *Epp.* 15 and 20,7. Johannes (d. 1507), who studied with Rudolph in Italy and made a career at the court of the East-Frisian countess Theda and her successors, was on close terms with his brother all his life; ten letters of Rudolph addressed to Johannes have been preserved; see our n. on *Ep.* 15. Hendrik was a problematic youngster in Rudolph's time; only one letter written to him (*Ep.* 55) is extant. On him see our n. on *Ep.* 20, 7. Rudolph's half-sister is not known to us by name; she is referred to several times in the letters to Johannes: *Epp.* 25,4–5; 30,5; 33,1–2; 39,1.

**3,2 *Ii duo fratres ... literas***: that Johannes was with his brother Rudolph in Ferrara is evident from *Ep.* 9. He may well have studied in Pavia too, probably also law: later we find him styled *magister* in records of East Frisia, where he held high administrative and judicial positions. We may assume that he had not learned Greek, for there is not one Greek word or quotation in Rudolph's ten letters to him. As to Hendrik, it is most unlikely that he, like his brother, followed Rudolph to Italy: he was still a beginning student in 1480; see *Epp.* 20,7–8; 21,10–16.

**typographus**: the same word is used below in 5,3. This must be a mistake, for there was no printing press in Groningen before the end of the sixteenth century: the first one was set up by Alle Pieters in 1597 (see Belt 2002). Goswinus must have wanted to use a learned word, *cyrographus* (“a writer of records or documents”), which the copyist of his text misread (this suggestion was made to me by the late prof. IJsewijn). On the form and function of the *cyrographum*, see *Lexicon des Mittelalters* II, col. 1844–1845. Cf. *RAP* 1988, 19, n. 46.

**scriba et orator**: a fine classical designation of Agricola's function in Groningen: secretary and plenipotentiary traveling ambassador. In Groningen records he occurs as “meester Roeloff Huusman onssen Secretarium” (acc.). Perhaps his functions included also those of the later *syndicus* or *pensionarius*, a legal counselor of the city. On these functions and titles see *Historie van Groningen* 1976, 186, 280 and Bakker *RAP* 1988, 103–108. In at least one legal conflict of the city was Rudolph's assistance urgently requested, namely in the Dirk van Heukelom case; see *Ep.* 35,1 and n. On the difference between a *scriba* (Dutch “secretaris”) and an *orator* (Dutch “pensionaris”), see Madelon van Luijk 2004, 72–73. The *cyrographus* of Groningen seems to have had the same tasks as the “clerk” in Leiden. A quote from the article by Van Luijk just mentioned: “Around 1450 a division of tasks took place within the office of clerk. The clerk continued to work for the chancellery, while a second official, the pensionary, represented the city to the outside world, especially in matters with legal implications.” For the different tasks in town administration, see also *Agr. Ep.* 22,22–23.

**3,3 *Postea Ioannes factus est ... domini***: in 1464, at Emden, Ulrich I Cirksena received the county East Frisia (Caucia Minor) as a feudal tenure from Emperor Frederick III. Ulrich's widow, Countess Theda, was regent for her son Edzard from 1466 to 1492. It was in her service that Johannes Agricola entered as a secretary in 1483. Edzard the Great reigned over East Frisia from 1492 to 1528. The House of Cirksena ruled East Frisia until 1744. See Lamschus 1984.

**qui cum principibus ... decedere compulit**: at stake in these so-called *Sächsische Fehden* was the possession of Groningen. In 1498 Groningen lost its independent position as a free city-state within the Empire and its great power over a large territory reaching from the Ems River up to the Zuiderzee. A period of war followed, first against the Saxon Duke Albrecht (d. 1500) and then against his son George, who had as his ally Count Edzard of East Frisia. In 1506 a shift of alliances made Edzard the sovereign of the city, and in 1514 Edzard and Groningen

offered the sovereignty to Duke Charles of Gelre (Gelderland or Guelders), who remained lord of the city until 1536. See *Historie van Groningen*, 1976, ch. iv, pp. 173–180.

**4,1 Parochus Henricus Fredericus Huusman:** on Rudolph's father see Agr. Ep. 22,20 n. In the matriculation register of Cologne (1427) he is called *Henr. Frederici de Gronynge*. The name *Fredericus* (-ci) is not used anywhere else to designate him. Goswinus is careful in his use of classical words or terms: Hendrik Huusman is called *parochus* of Baflo – never *curatus* (the usual term in the region for a parish priest), nor *curio* or *plebanus*, nor *persona* (the technical, ecclesiastical title). Twice he refers to a priest of St. Martin's church as *pastor* (1,3; 4,2). Bartold Buning is called *parochus* of several parishes in Frisia, but *pastor* of St. Martin's church in Groningen. Modern titles as *licentiatus* or *magister noster* Goswinus qualifies as unclassical by using an addition like *ut uocant* (3,1), *ut appellant* (4,1), *dictus* (4,1). *Chirographum* (3,2), on the other hand, is a classical term.

**licentiatus:** on the academic degree held by Hendrik Vries cf. 3,1 n.; the *licentia* was the final degree after the *baccalaureate* and before the promotion to *magister* or *doctor*. See Weijers 1987, 1,2 (pp. 53–55) and III,C,1 (pp. 385–390); Van Rhijn 1917, 53–55; Boehm 1959, 164–178; M. Teeuwen 2003, 88–91.

**Frisio quidam ... cui Bernardo a Reida nomen:** Bernard van Reida's academic career in Cologne is given by Van Rhijn 1933, 108–109; see also *idem* 1917, XVI–XVII and n. 1; Meuthen 1988, 163–164 lists some of Reida's writings. He was enrolled as a student of canon law in 1417; by then he was already a *magister artium*. Later he also studied theology (1429 bachelor, 1431 licentiate, 1434–1466 professor). Three times he was dean of the Theological Faculty and three times rector. He died in 1466. Goswinus's report on his pushing Jerome of Prague to the stake (cf. 4,3) (on May 30, 1416) is considered by Van Rhijn as “possibly reliable”.

**4,2 Bartoldo Bluninga:** Bartold Buning (Bluninga is a mistake) was a priest of St. Martin's church in Groningen. He was a brother of Laurentius (Bakker RAP 1988, 108; see also Van Rhijn 1917, 49(esp. n. 2)–52).

**magistro nostro Laurentio ... nominatur:** magister Laurentius Buning enrolled as a student at Cologne in 1424; he became a *magister artium* and *licentiatus theologiae*. In 1442 and 1443 he was rector of the university, where the *bursa Laurentiana*, originally founded by Heymericus de Campo, was named after him. On the history of the *bursae* at Cologne, see Meuthen 1988; Tewes 1993 (on Laurentius see pp. 50–51). The *bursa Laurentiana* paid the study expenses for twelve poor students. For the term *bursa* see Weijers 1987, 93–99; Teeuwen 2003, 42–44. Laurentius died in 1470.

**4,3 Hic Bernardus ... pertrusit:** the Council of Constance (1414–1417) condemned the Hussite heretic Jerome of Prague to death on May 30, 1416.



**Quod quo zelo pietatis ... astitisse:** the letter that Poggio Bracciolini devoted to this *cause célèbre* (ed. Helene Harth 1982–1984, vol. II, pp. 157–163) found an enormous circulation all over Europe, both in its Latin form and in translations. On the impact it made on outstanding figures as Bruni, Piccolomini and others, see Von Martels 2003a, 205–209, where more literature is mentioned.

**De re plura ... scribit:** clearly, the event is still (or again, after the death at the stake of the first two Lutheran martyrs in Brussels on July 1, 1523) a delicate subject, and Goswinus remains on his guard. Still, the sentence is confused.

**Constantius:** “at Constance”; cf. Parisius “to or at Paris” (Langosh 1963, 55).

**Bartoldus (or Bertoldus) parochus ... perseuerant:** on the flourishing of monastic life in 15th-century Frisia, see Damen 1964 and 1972; Mol 2001, 159 ff.; Nip 1989, 7–34.

**5,1 Henricus Fredericus ... sito:** Hendrik Vries was elected abbot of the Benedictine convent (see p. 10) of Selwerd, founded in 1216 or somewhat earlier (see Damen 1964, 20–59; *idem* 1972, 51–53), and dedicated to St. Catherine. He is first mentioned as abbot on October 5, 1444; see n. 5,2.

**cum aliquot annos obiisset:** Hendrik is noted in the archives as *persona* and priest (“cureyt”; see note on 3,1 and 4,1) in Baflo in the years between 1430 and 1443. He is presumably Hendrik Vries (see Bakker *RAP* 1988, 100).

**Zelwaer:** one of the many variants of the name of modern Selwerd, just outside the city walls of Groningen, and now also the name of a town district. The convent itself renamed the site Siloe (Shiloh), the biblical center of worship (Josh. 18:1–10, Judg. 18:31, 1 Sam. 1:3). Agricola dated some of his letters from Ziloe (*Ep.* 3) or Siloë (*Ep.* 20).

**5,2 Eadem hora ... infanti:** if this witticism reflects historical truth, Hendrik Vries must have been elected abbot on February 17, 1444, the day his son was born. But see Introduction, pp. 10–12.

**euangelium:** a Homeric word: a reward for good tidings, given to the messenger (*Odyssey* 14.152, 166).

**Deus bene uertat:** cf. Ter. *Hec.* 196 and *Ad.* 728.

**5,3 delectus in abbatem:** see 3,1 and n.

**uestituque monachus factus est:** through the formal investiture.

**praefuitque huic monasterio annis 36:** from 1444 to 1480. Agricola’s father died on October 1, 1480, as his son tells his friend Occo in *Ep.* 22,20. In the same passage we learn that Agricola was present at his father’s deathbed. This letter was not known to Goswinus. This time Goswinus has exact knowledge of the facts, including the exact number of years.

**typographus:** see 3,2 and n.

**Theseus a manu:** an *a manu* is a secretary, employed to take dictation or to copy manuscripts, an *amanuensis*. This makes IJsewijn’s *cyrographus* for *typographus*

more than probable. *Theseus* is probably meant as a genitive: *Theseos*. Johannes was Rudolph's helper just as Pirithous was Theseus's right-hand man.

**6,1–2 fistula – lyras – utricularios – organa:** all the words for musical instruments in this passage are of classical origin; on the problems of their denoting modern instruments, see our article mentioned in the n. on 6,1.

**6,1 Cum Rodolphus ... mirabatur:** this charming story about Agricola's youthful enthusiasm for music is fully confirmed by other people's reports on his later life as well as by Agricola's own remarks on the subject. See Akkerman and Kooiman 1999; in that survey, however, we overlooked the passages in *De inventione dialectica* I,1,62–63 and III,16,28–35, ed. Mundt 1992, pp. 12 and 554. (I thank Prof. Peter Mack, who pointed out the omission of these passages).

**pulum tintinnabulorum:** on the terms for playing on musical instruments, see Von Plieningen *Comm.* 10,2 and n.

**domatim:** a Neo-Latin word for *ostiatim*, “from door to door”.

**6,2 organa – picturas:** the *organa quae follibus inflantur* are, of course, *organa pneumatica*: organs supplied with wind from bellows. The province of Groningen still harbors a great many of old organs; see Edskes in *RAP* 1988 and also the literature in “Erasmus on Agricola”, n. 54, in this book. Medieval churches in the province were often richly decorated; on these paintings see Van der Ploeg 2002, 55–61 and the literature cited there. See also Von Plieningen *Comm.* 10,5 and n.

**Hyginum:** author of an astronomical-mythological handbook, of which many illustrated mss. from the 9th century onward have been preserved (DTV 2,1263–1264). Agricola (Mel. *Or.* 9,3) is reported to have had knowledge of Aratus. Manilius is mentioned in Agr. *Ep.* 21,46.

**6,3 Nihil non sine labore didicit, nihil penetrabat:** instead of *nihil erat quod non sine ...*, *nihil quod non ...*

**excoriari:** perhaps a mistake for *excoriare* (i.e. *corium seu crustas detrahere*). Making these shepherd's pipes or Panpipes (the Greek *syrix*) from willow bark (instead of the ancient reed) used to be a pastime of many a country boy. In the Dutch province of Drenthe, willow branches used to be called “fluutholt” (pipe- or flute-wood); Dr. Adrie van der Laan informed me of this by letter.

**solet:** the present tense instead of the imperfect is quite usual in Goswinus; other occurrences in 6,2; 7,2; 8,2; 9,1. Hans Trapman noted this use in Erasmus in *Hum. Lov.* 44 (1995), 197–201.

**6,4 Equitare ... exonerent:** horseback riding and jumping over ditches with the help of a long pole are still popular in the Frisian countryside, but I have never seen it done in combination.

**7,1 Deinde maiusculus ... solueret:** the years at the University of Erfurt are omitted here (see Von Plieningen *Comm.* 2,3). On the University of Louvain, see Von Plieningen *Comm.* 2,5. The condemnation of scholastic philosophy is absent in Von Plieningen and Geldenhouwer but is found in Melanchthon, *Or.* 8,4. Agricola himself is critical about the medieval academic education in *Ep.* 38,9–13. The odd combination of the Greek sophist Gorgias, well known from Plato's dialogue, and Oedipus, the mythical hero who solved the riddle of the Sphinx, stands here for the dark riddles of the philosophy of the medieval schools and universities.

**Et pridie ... magistralem apicem ... acciperet:** on the eve of the *actus doctoratus* the student was subjected to a last trial and humiliation, the so-called *Vesperiae*. See on this practice Reusens 1869, 384–385; De Vocht 1951–1955, I, 112–115; Roegiers 1971, 363–394, esp. 377–386; Teeuwen 2003, 315–317. Weijers 1987, 413–416. During these *Vesperi(a)e* (*scil. disputationes*) the candidate played the part of baccalaureus for the last time. Maybe the beadles bearing rods who made their appearance during these sessions, are at the basis of the practice in Louvain here described: “*Intersint eciam virgam deferentes omnibus Vesperis ...*” (*scil. bedelli*). See Weijers 1987, 416.

**7,2 Ibi tum ... iacturam ... Coloniam:** cf. Petrarca, *Sen.* XVI. I (11.69–70): *In eo studio septennium totum perdidit, dicam verius quam exegi*. This statement also in *Agr. Vita Petrarcae: Relicto igitur studio iuris, cui septem annos operatus fuit* (Bertalot 386,10). But in this case the complaint is about having wasted his time on the study of law. Erasmus, too, often complained that the study of the *artes liberales* in their medieval form was a waste of effort.

**Martinus Dorpius:** born in 1485 in Naaldwijk, parish priest in Overschie, professor of theology in Louvain. Goswinus visited Louvain at least twice, in 1518 and 1521, and may have spoken with Dorpius on one or on both occasions. On Dorpius see Allen, *Erasm. Op. Epp.* III,839 (p. 308); Van Rhijn 1933, 150; CE vol. I, 398–404; see also Geldenhouwer 12,1–2.

**Lilii paedagogio:** on this term see Geldenhouwer 3,3 and n.

**7,3 Ioannes Ostendorpius:** teacher in Deventer at the St. Lebuinus school and a canon of the St. Lebuinus church. After the death of Hegius in 1489 he became rector of the school. He had studied at Cologne, where he received the degree of *magister artium*. On him see Van Rhijn 1925, 9–10 (= 1933, 146); *idem* 1917, 127, n. 6; 141f., 257 *et al.*

**8,1 Iubileum ... reuisisse:** here the word *iubileum* is correct, and so are the pope and the year. But the date of Agricola's departure for Italy and the duration of his stay there are wide off the mark.

**ut narrauerunt mansisse ... reuisisse:** a grammatically faulty construction. Perhaps *ut* is superfluous.

**semel atque iterum ... patriam reuisisse:** we know of two letters Agricola wrote from his native country during the years he studied in Pavia: *Ep.* 3, October 26, 1470 and *Ep.* 4, February 5, 1471.

**8,2 Multos claros uiros ... expugnata fuerat:** this is a case of humanist mythology; the only Greek ever mentioned in connection with Agricola, is Theodorus Gaza; but see Melanchthon, *Ep.* 2,2 and n.; *Or.* 6, 1 and n.

**9,1 Postremo ... patronus:** again, the sequence of Agricola's whereabouts is amiss. On Von Dalberg see Von Plieningen *Comm.* 6–8 and *Ep.* 2,6 n.

**9,2 Eidelbergae ... epistolae:** this time Goswinus is better informed. Our edition counts eight letters addressed to Dietrich von Plieningen, all of them in the Stuttgart codex only.

**Scriptis praeterea ... perierunt:** in the 1520s the collection of Agricola's writings begun by the Von Plieningen brothers was unknown in the North, and it was long before the Alardus edition was published; so this is what Goswinus must reasonably have thought.

**9,3 Appellauit se ... appellatur:** a *huusman* was a farmer who owned his own house on land he had on a permanent lease.

**9,4 Isocratem ... Nicoclea ... de administratione regni:** on this translation see no. 4 in our list in *RAP* 1988, 317; it is also mentioned by Hegius in *Agr. Ep.* 42,6. The text is not in ms. S, only in Alardus; it has no dedication; it must have become known through the library of Pompeius Occo. On this Agricola translation see also IJsewijn in *RAP* 1988, 25; fourteen translations from the 15th century survive. One is from the hand of Guarino of Verona; see Marianne Pade in *La Corte di Ferrara* 1990, 74. How Goswinus got to know this title is uncertain.

**Isocratem ad Daemonicum ... sanctissimae:** see *RAP* 1988, 317, no. 3; Von Plieningen *Comm.* 4,7 and n.

**Axiuchum Platonis siue Zenocratis ... de morte:** *Zenocrates* refers to Xenocrates of Chalcedon, the third leader of the Academy of Plato, from 339 to 314 BC. Ficino mentions him as the author of the dialogue on the title page of the *editio princeps* of his translation of 1497 (cf. Tournoy in *RAP* 1988, 214. See also no. 2 in our list in *RAP* 1988, 317; Von Plieningen *Comm.* 4,6 and n.)

**aliquot epigrammata:** of all the *vita* writers it is Goswinus who, here and below, pays the greatest attention to Agricola's verse-writing, because to him and his friends this was an almost independent Northern activity. In the years 1465–1469 Friedrich Mormann sang about Agricola: *Nam te Pierides uatem fecere nouellum* (ed. Schoonbeeg 1993, 332, 1 vs. 8).

**10,1 Fueritne ... confessa:** Goswinus is the only one to tell this naughty story about the nun Wandelvaert. It is of the same light-hearted nature as the “*hodie bis pater*” joke in 5,2.

**librum Eucherium ... librum Graecum:** a peculiar piece of information about a book written by the bishop Eucherius in the 5th century. On the error of ascribing a Latin translation of it to Agricola, see no. 3 in our list in *RAP* 1988, 327, and in this book “Erasmus on Agricola”, pp. 224–225. The Greek author St. Irenaeus (ca. 130 – ca. 200; cf. app. crit.) was bishop of Lyons from 178; Latin translations of several of his writings circulated early (see *ODCC*). This may have caused the confusion.

**10,2 Eadem tempestate ... multi arbitrabantur:** Grovius and Kerckhof came from Münster in Westphalia, where Grovius later was the teacher of Murmellius, who wrote an epitaph on Grovius at his death in 1502. Maybe Agricola helped the two of them in writing a poem in the measure of the *asclepiadeus minor* used by Horace in c. 1,1. On Grovius and Kerckhof see Hamelmann 1902, 64; *idem* 1908, 148, 151, 152; *idem* 1908, 12, 16, 20, and also *ibid.*, 39, 51; Reichling 1880, 52f.; Van Rhijn 1925, 2, n. 2; Allen 1906, 305.

**10,3 alphabeticus:** in the letter to Hardenberg of 1528 Goswinus writes: *satis enim mihi est Alphabeticum manere* (Wessel Gansfort, *Opera* \*\*4<sup>v</sup>).

**annus salutis 1489:** this must be a copyist’s error: Goswinus could not have made such a mistake concerning his own age. 1481 would be more appropriate.

**10,4–5 Quum eas reliqui ... concedit:** this digression reflects the evangelical inclination that prevailed in Groningen at the time. Cf. Van Rhijn 1925, 21–22; Mellink 1984; Van Booma 1990, 132–156; Akkerman 1999, 1–42. The sentence doesn’t run properly.

**10,5 acceptio personarum:** *Chron. (Paralip.)* 2,19,7 *non est enim apud Dominum Deum nostrum iniquitas, nec personarum acceptio ...*

**11,1 aliquot orationes ... de laude bonarum literarum:** eight orations have come down to us (see *RAP* 1988, 316–317); the one mentioned was given in Ferrara in 1476.

**11,1–2 quam cum dixisset ... dixit:** the *alphabeticus* of far-away Groningen takes a childlike pride in the praise expressed by the Italians for his compatriot. The same sentiments were uttered by Peter Schott in *Agr. Ep.* 45,2. Agricola himself, too, was well aware of the cultural distance between his country of origin and the literary and artistic heights of Ferrara; see my contribution in *RAP* 1988, 3–4. Sottili is sceptical: “*Leggenda mi sembra lo stordimento degli italiani*” (Sottili 2003, 1275).

**Aquilonari:** an alternative form of *aquilonalis* and *aquilentus*: see Cic. *N.D.* 2,50 and n. by Pease.

**11,2 Multi per id temporis Groningenses erant Ferrariae:** apart from Rudolph Agricola we know the names of Johannes Agricola, Adolf Occo, Wilhelmus Frederici, Lambertus Frijlinck, Everhard Hubbelding, and Johannes Canter, albeit that the last-mentioned studied in Ferrara much earlier: he received his degree in *artes* on November 28, 1444. See Sottili *Ferrara culla dell'Umanesimo in Frisia*, 2003; *idem* 2002a. Further literature: Nauta 1910, 169–195; Zijlstra 1996, 55 and *passim*; Tervoort 1999, 222–241: “... we might estimate that there may have been as many as 750 students from the northern Netherlands visiting Italian universities in the period under consideration” (i. e. 1425–1575) (p. 227). See also Agr. *Ep.* 32, 7n.

**11,3 Audiui Erasmum fateri ... iudicio:** Goswinus has his doubts as to Erasmus's sincerity. See “Erasmus on Agricola”, p. 210.

**12,1–3 Scripsit elegiam ... ghedenck:** on Goswinus's interest in Agricola's poetry, see above 9,4 n.

**12,1 Scripsit elegiam ... nondum statui:** the text as it stands shows nothing but a heap of nonsense: the poem *Anna mater* (no. 5 in our list in *RAP* 1988, 320) has nothing to do with Agricola's recovering from an illness; for that occasion he wrote the poem on St. Jodocus (no. 13) in Italy (see Von Plieningen *Comm.* 4,10). Neither of these poems has anything to do with Count Moritz von Spiegelberg for whom Agricola wrote the *epicedion* (no. 15 in our list). Moreover, this count did not live in the castle Huis Bergh in 's-Heerenberg. On this question see the note on 2,3 above. The only way to remedy some difficulties in this sentence is to add *et aliam* before *quae* and *et quae* before *non longe*.

**cum defunctus fuisset:** *defungi* in the sense of “to bring to an end”; in this sense three times in Ter.: *Eun.* 15, *Phorm.* 1021, *Ad.* 508.

**quam uernaculo sermone nominamus:** *Spegelberg* is taken here as the name of a town, hence the feminine.

**12,2 Scripsit praeterea multa epigrammata ... perierunt:** see above 9,4 and n. Goswinus could have read the remainder of Agricola's “*epigrammata*” in e.g. Aegidius's edition of 1511; see our bibliography in *RAP* 1988, 315 sub *Martens* and our list on pp. 319–321. Of this list of twenty-eight *Carmina* now known, ten had not appeared in print by 1525.

**Scripsit uersibus ... S. Iodocum:** the prayer (*oratio*) to Antonius is not known to us; on St. Jodocus (*Judoc, Josse*), see above 12,1 with note. D. and S. stand for *Diuum* and *Sanctum* respectively.

**12,3 Amavit quamdam uirginem ... Als ic ghedenck:** from *Ep.* 32,7 (see n.) we know that Agricola had a girlfriend in Groningen, who married another man while Agricola was abroad. This is the only place where she is mentioned by name, if, indeed, she is the same girl, *Ana*. Kan 1898, 83 n. 1 and Bakker *RAP* 1988, 110 conjecture that the name could be read as *Ava* (diminutive *Afke*).

**ex cuius nominis ... ghedenck:** the art of composing an acrostic in the vernacular is something Agricola could have learned in Louvain, where the writing of songs and poems in the mother tongue was much cultivated; cf. Geldenhouwer 6,3 and notes. A collection of 221 of these Flemish (Dutch) *Carmina* from the 15th and early 16th century was published in *Het Antwerps Liedboek* 1544. Modern edition: Dieuwke E. van der Poel, ed., Lannoo, 2004; thirteen of these songs are included in the anthology of Gerrit Komrij 1994. Observe that the words *Als ic ghedenck* are Dutch, not Frisian or Saxonian. A much later author, Cornelius Kempius, tells us in 1588 that some of Agricola's songs were still popular in Groningen in his day; see Schoonbeeg *RAP* 1988, 189. Von Plieningen knows that Agricola wrote poems in other vernaculars as well; see *Comm.* 12,1. In all these respects there is a world of difference between Agricola and Erasmus. On Agricola's appreciation of the vernacular, see his *Ep.* 38,27–29.

## NOTES TO GERARD GELDENHOUWER

**1,2 ego Aesopicae corniculae ... subterfugerim:** cf. Hor. *Ep.* 1,3,18–20 ... *ne, si forte suas repetitum uenerit olim / grex auium plumas, moueat cornicula risum / furtiuus nudata coloribus*. In the fable of Phaedrus (1,3) the bird is called *graculus*. See also Babrius 72; La Fontaine 4,9.

**2,1 incomparabilis heros:** the humanists loved to transfer this qualification of the Greek demigods to their admired examples. Erasmus uses the same words for Reuchlin in the Colloquy *Apotheosis Capnionis*.

**Gronyngae – metropoli:** this lofty designation of Groningen agrees well with the pretensions the town entertained about itself as *caput Frisiae*. But Groningen was never a metropolis in the sense of “archbishop's see”. Its first bishop was enthroned in 1568.

**natus et educatus:** this stock phrase (cf. Liv. 5,54,3) does not apply here literally (cf. Goswinus 2,1), but in view of the central and dominant position of Groningen in the region it is not far from the truth.

**3,1–2 Eo tempore ... censeret:** on the University of Louvain, where Geldenhouwer himself had studied (see Introduction, pp. 14–15), see Von Plieningen *Comm.* 2,5 and n. See also Introduction to Geldenhouwer.

**3,2 secunda Germania – Galliae Belgicae:** the ancient Roman province *Germania inferior* was called *secunda Germania* from the time of Diocletian onward. Its

capital was Cologne. *Gallia Belgica* is the name of one of the three old Roman provinces of *Gallia Comata* (the other two were *Aquitania* and *Lugdunensis*). On the modern confusion of the names for the parts of the Low Countries (Netherlands, Belgium, Holland), see IJsewijn, *Companion* 1, 1990, 148.

**3,3 *paedagogio***: in Louvain, a *paedagogium* was a college where the students lived and received their instruction; see Olga Weijers, *Terminologie* 1987, 93–99 (for *collegium*, *ibid.*, 80–84). The Faculty of Arts in Louvain had four such *paedagogia*, called *Castrum*, *Porcus*, *Lilium*, and *Falco*. For the *bursa* in Cologne, see Goswinus 4,2n. For *paedagogium*, *collegium*, and *bursa* see also Teeuwen 2003.

***instituebantur*** supplied from *Effigies et Vitae*

***Hic uix dialecticis elementa degustarat***: according to Von Plieningen (*Comm.* 2,3), Agricola learned *dialectica* and *rhetorica* in Erfurt.

**3,4 *illud Ciceronis: stilum ... magistrum***: this notion is also voiced by Agricola in *Ep.* 4 *passim*. For the quotations from Cicero, Quintilian, and others, see our notes on *Agr. Ep.* 4,13.

**3,5 *Erant tum Louanii ... coeperant***: one of the best-known scholars is Raimondo de Marliano, an Italian (ca. 1420–1475), who was appointed professor *in legibus* in Louvain on February 1, 1461. IJsewijn 1975, 233 ff. discusses De Marliano and his study of ancient Celtic, Gallic, and Germanic topography, and also the earliest stage of humanism in Louvain in general, centered around such scholars as Robertus a Lacu, Carolus Viruli, and Stephanus Surigonus. On the latter three, see also De Vocht 1951, 1976, part 1.

***suffurabaturque ... percurreret***: this passage contains new information on Agricola's early interest in the "new learning" that is not found anywhere else, but see also Melanchthon *Or.* 5.

**3,6 *In scholasticis disputationibus ... defendebat***: the medieval school practice of the disputation is lively described by Paulsen 1885, 19–22, who writes the following about Duns Scotus's disputation on the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin: "Gross war das Gewicht der Argumente, mit denen er angegriffen wurde, es waren ihrer an Zahl bei 200. Ohne Unterbrechung hörte er dieselben mit ruhigem Gemüt (*sic!* cf. Geldenhouwer: *sedato animo*) aufmerksam an; dann wiederholte er alle mit staunenswertem Gedächtnis in ihrer Ordnung, löste die verwickeltesten Schwierigkeiten und die verknotetsten Syllogismen mit einer Leichtigkeit, wie Samson der Delila Stricke zerriss." On the fictitious nature of the Duns Scotus disputation see Emmen 1946, 92–129. It could be that Geldenhouwer is quoting or echoing one of the versions of that story. See also Melanchthon *Ep.* 2,3 and n. The modern authority on the *disputatio* is Olga Weijers.



**3,7 contra receptum ... ordinem:** Paulsen 1885, 19 lists the usual order of textual interpretation (i.e. in the *lectio* given by the scholastic *magister*):

*Praemitto, scindo, summo, casumque figuro,*

*Perlego, do causas, connoto, objicio.*

**Meditabatur ... leguntur:** this refers, of course, to Agricola's *De inuentione dialectica*, the groundwork for which, according to Geldenhouwer, was laid in Louvain. But see also Von Plieningen *Comm.* 5,1; Melanchthon *Or.* 8,4.

**3,8 primas magisterii ... artium obtinuit:** this means that Agricola was the *primus* of his year when he obtained the degree of master of arts. *Primas* (acc.): "the chief position", "the first place". On the importance attached to this honor and the ceremonies connected with it, see Van der Essen 1945, 210–211. See also Van der Velden 1911, 57–58.

**4,1 Mox coepit ... anhelasset:** from this passage we can conclude that Agricola stayed in Louvain for some time after receiving his master of arts degree, and also that he was offered a position at the university. It was, of course, not at all unusual for a new *magister artium* to lecture at the university; see also Melanchthon *Or.* 6,5–7.

**4,2 Quum in ipso paedagogio ... perorantem:** Louvain is located close to the linguistic border between the Flemish- and French-speaking parts of modern Belgium. The university attracted students from all parts of the Low Countries, even from France. The French spoken by the students from the Belgian province Hainaut (the *Hannonii*) was apparently not much appreciated.

**4,3 Musices uero ... pulsu:** on Agricola's love for and practice of music, see Von Plieningen *Comm.* 10,2–4 and nn.; Goswinus 6,1–2 and nn.; Melanchthon *Or.* 6,7 and n.

**uoce, flatu, pulsu:** a quote from Augustine, *enarr. in ps.* 150,5,6 (SL 40, 2196). See Akkerman-Kooiman 1999, 44, n. 4. Cf. Agr. *Anna Mater* 285–286 *Quantum uoce queam, quantum contendere lingua / Quantum animo, quantum flatibus, ore, cheli* (ed. Dörfler-Dierken/Schibel 1994, 308).

**Literas pingebat ... praeparauit:** on Agricola's passion for painting, see Goswinus 6,1–2 and nn.; Von Plieningen *Comm.* 10,5–6 and n. Hermans in *RAP* 1988b, 133–135 refers to the flourishing scriptorium of the convent of Selwerd during the abbacy of Hendrik Vries, Agricola's father. See also his *Middeleeuwse handschriften uit Groningse kloosters*, 1988a, 70–71 and pictures on pp. 52–53; see also Hermans 1991; *id.* 1992 and *id.* 2001 with fine plates of Selwerd manuscripts on pp. 45, 47, 188, 189 (see the photograph in this book on p. 47). In the Hyginus ms. (see Goswinus 6,2) Agricola may have painted some of the initials.

4,4 **Tantus erat ... ne nouerit quidem**: later, however, in Ferrara, Agricola knew the *Felicinas et Magdalenas* quite well; see Agr. *Ep.* 13,4.

5,1 **Gallias adiit**: there is no written or printed document to confirm that Agricola was in France between 1465 and 1469, but see the Introduction, pp. 14–15.

5,2 **ut Itali nonnulli ... demigraturam**: the rivalry between Italians and scholars from the North is almost proverbial. See also Goswinus 11,1–2 and n. Cf. Agr. *Epp.* 3,5; 41,7; 45,2.

5,3 **Rediit ... discederet**: Geldenhouwer pays even less attention to Agricola's stay in Groningen than Von Plieningen (cf. *Comm.* 5,4–6). Goswinus does better: 3–6. See Akkerman, *RAP* 1988, 3–20 and in this book the Introduction, p. 26ff.

5,4 **Versatus est ... potuisset**: Besides this passage, the only source for a stay of some time in Nijmegen is Agr. *Ep.* 35,4. We also know that Agricola had a friend who was from Nijmegen, namely the nun Wandelvaert in the Selwerd convent (Goswinus 10,1).

5,5 **Crebro loca mutabat ... urbes**: a humanistic topos reflecting the actual way of life of many humanists, mostly in a positive sense; thus three times in Agr. *Vita Petrarcae*: *egregia industriae magistra peregrinatio* (Bertalot 383.11; see also 389.16–30 and 390.18–391.27).

**Horatianum illud ... urbes**: *Ars poetica* 141–142; Hor. *Ep.* 1.2.19–20.

5,6 **Ferrariae detentus est**: Agricola's stay at Ferrara is skipped over lightly, although not without some correct notions. His studies in Pavia are ignored altogether.

6,1 **Plinii naturalem historiam ... deponebat**: cf. Agr. *Ep.* 21,16 *Plinium quem petis a me, quanquam crebro in manibus habeam ...* See Agr., *Letters* 2002, Index nominum, s.v. Pliny the Elder.

**Iunioris Plinii epistolas ... nonnulla ... addiderat**: see *RAP* 1988, 318–319. The copy Agricola made of the manuscript of Pliny the Younger is well known, the others are not. Cf. Hermans in *RAP* 1988, 124ff.

6,2 **ungues demordebat**: cf. Von Plieningen *Comm.* 9,7 and n.

**Nemo unquam ... abierit**: cf. Ter. *Eun.* 791 *Numquam accedo quin abs te abeam doctior.*

6,3 **Puellas ... deperiit**: on the theme “Agricola in love” many text samples can be adduced, e.g. *Epp.* 5; 13,4; 29,39; 32,7; 44,3–5; in the *vitae* cf. Von Plieningen *Comm.* 9,2 and 4; Goswinus 10,1.

**In harum gratiam ... canebat:** besides this testimony, there are two or three more that indicate that Agricola wrote (love) poems in the vernacular: see Goswinus 12,3 and n. Agricola did not write erotic poetry in Latin; in this, he may have modeled himself on Petrarch, whose Italian sonnets he knew and admired (cf. *Vita Petrarcae*, ed. Bertalot p. 388, 11.29–36); a stronger incentive, however, may have been the literary culture of writing songs in the Flemish (Dutch) vernacular.

**testudine:** in antiquity this Latin word (“tortoise”) is used for the lyre, in modern times it refers to the lute; cf. Akkerman-Kooiman 1999, 45, n. 3.

**7,1 Ioannes ... Dalburgius:** see on him Von Plieningen *Ep.* 2,6.

**ad ultimum ... uitae actum:** cf. Cic. *de Senect.* 2.5 *cum ceterae partes aetatis bene discriptae sint, extremum actum ... esse neglectum.*

**7,2 Multas praeclaras orationes:** cf. *RAP* 1988, 316–317; Goswinus 11,1 and n.; Erasmus 10,2 and 4 in this *vita* (see below).

**ualde prudens ... gaudebat plurimum:** this description of Agricola’s intellectual personality is fully borne out by his writings: a man of great intellectual and spiritual gifts, whose keen mind was steeped in classical learning.

**8,1 non procul a quadragesimo anno:** see also 8,4. This certainly incorrect estimate of Agricola’s age at his death was probably taken from Erasmus’s adage *Quid cani et balneo?: nondum annos natum quadraginta* (10,4 in this *vita*). See Introduction, p. 11.

**illud Platonis ... optimi:** Plato, *Politeia* 505A ... ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα μέγιστον μᾶθημα ... etc. I thank prof. S.L. Radt for this reference. On the importance of this statement see the commentary of J. Adams, *The Republic of Plato* II (1965) 50–51.

**sese sacris literis addixit:** see *Agr. Epp.* 18,4–5; 28,10; 41,13–16; 43,7–12; Von Plieningen *Comm.* 6,3–8 and nn.

**Has nocturna ... manu:** cf. Hor. *Ars Poetica* 268–269 *uos exemplaria Graeca / nocturna uersate manu, uersate diurna.*

**fontem aquae uiuae:** *Apocal.* 7.17 *uitae fontes aquarum*; cf. 21.6; 22.1; *Euang. sec. Ioan.* 4.10.

**8,2 nactus Iudaeum:** cf. *Agr. Ep.* 38,59–60; Von Plieningen *Comm.* 6,3.

**aliquot psalmos Daudicos:** Agricola may well have translated some of the Psalms while he was studying Hebrew. See our n. in *RAP* 1988, 326 and Trithemius, *vita* l. 8. Later, in 1512, Reuchlin translated the seven penitential psalms “*ad descendam linguam hebraicam*”.

**8,4 An. Do. Millesimo, quadringentesimo, nonagesimo:** both year and day of Agricola’s death are given correctly in Von Plieningen *Comm.* 8,4, and more

or less correctly in Goswinus 2,1–2, see the nn. Here, however, the date is wrong.

**9,1 Adolphum Occonem ... docuerat:** not only had Geldenhouwer been a pupil of Hegius, he had also written (in 1533, before the *vita* of Agricola) a kind of biographical dictionary, *De uiris illustribus inferioris Germaniae*, that has never been found. So it is not surprising that he knew the names of Agricola's northern *sodales* and Hegius's students. See Introduction to Geldenhouwer. On Occo see Von Plieningen *Comm.* 4,10 and n.; on Wessel Gansfort see Melanchthon, *Ep.* 5,2–3 and n.; on Langius see "Erasmus on Agricola" in this volume pp. 194–197.

**9,2 Memini me audire ... didici:** this famous saying seems to be authentic. It is also in Goswinus (2,2), another pupil of Hegius. On Hegius see *Agr. Ep.* 21n.; Worstbrock, *Verfasserlexicon* 1981, 3, col. 572–577; Bedaux 1998; see also our nn. on Goswinus 2,2–3.

**9,3 Libet hic adscribere ... reficiat:** Geldenhouwer's praise of Erasmus appears not to have suffered from their public disagreement on the subject of the killing of heretics in the years 1529–1530. See on this episode Prinsen 1898, 88–97; Augustijn 1978, 132–156 (= 1996, 112–137).

**10ff Quid commune ... e.q.s.:** this well-known adage on Agricola (No. 339 in ASD II-1, pp. 438–442) is quoted here from edition B (Basel 1515), as can be seen from some textual variants in the textual apparatus in the ASD. Geldenhouwer omitted the Greek words at the beginning, and also the whole section on the application of the adage (ASD II.826–840). In addition, he dropped the adjective *Frisii* of ASD I.771 and left out the phrase *non a Germano, ne quid patriae communis studium eleuet testimonii pondus* (ASD II.805–806; Geldenhouwer 10,6 after *Deinde*), probably because his eye jumped from *deinde* to *denique*.

**10,1 desyderium Rodolphi Agricolae:** Waterbolk (1966, 6; 1981, 31) points out the word-play *desiderium* – *Desiderius*. Erasmus wants his own name to be linked with Agricola's as closely as possible.

**10,2 in carmine Maronem ... in oratione Politianum:** in this *laudatio* Erasmus mentions one classical Roman (Vergil), two Italians (Angelo Poliziano and Ermolao Barbaro), two *Frisii* (Rodolphus Agricola and Alexander Hegius), with himself, the *Batavus* Erasmus, as their heir. I consider this piece a well-balanced cultural manifesto on the *translatio musarum* from Antiquity to modern Italy and from Italy to the North. See my 'Erasmus und die Friesen' 2005, 9–11.

**Oratio uel extemporalis:** Of course Erasmus is thinking of eloquence in Latin, not in any vernacular.

10,4 **Extant paucula ... ferunt**: on the question which *opuscula* of Agricola were published at what time, or were known to Erasmus in what period, see the section “Erasmus on Agricola” in this book.

10,5 **Hermolai Barbari Veneti**: cf. “Erasmus on Agricola”, pp. 203–204, 209 and nn. 86–88. Venice and Deventer are the only place names in the *laudatio*; cf. 10,2n. For the text of the epitaph see Trithemius’s *vita* and note.

10,6 **Deinde ab eo uiro ... promereantur**: in this passage the scholars of Venice and Deventer, i.e. Barbaro and Hegius, are praised in approximately the same number of words; cf. 10,2n.

11 **Petrus Montanus ... uidetur**: Petrus Montanus (1467/8–1507), a native of ’s-Heerenberg (*natus est Herimonte oppido*) was a fellow-student of Geldenhouwer in Deventer, who wrote a *vita* of him as well. Montanus taught at several schools and wrote, according to Geldenhouwer, the following: twelve satires (in most erudite Latin); two books of adages; *De ordine et dispositione libros duos*; *In doctrinam Aristotelicam*; and *Epistolarum et epigrammatum librum unum*. His life and work has been researched by Prinsen 1903 and Tournoy 1994, 100–107. I don’t know from which work of Montanus this statement about Agricola derives.

12,1–2 **Diuinum illud opus ... excussi sunt**: on the complicated history of the transmission and printing of *De inventione dialectica* we have now the complete report in Mundt 1992, 655–691. See also *Agr. Ep.* 18,10 and n. From this passage in Geldenhouwer and from *Agr. Ep.* 18,9–11 we may conclude that the first book of *De inventione dialectica* reached the North (in the person of Hegius) as a first draft in Agricola’s own hand, the other two as fair copies written by someone else. For the slovenliness of Agricola’s draft we have four sources: *Agr.* (1479) *Ep.* 18; Geldenhouwer (1536); Alardus (1539) *Agr.*, *Lucubrationes*, II\* 4<sup>r-v</sup>, pp. 203–204; Phrissemius (1523), fol. 163<sup>r</sup>.

**Martini Dorpii ... Hadriani Barlandi**: Maarten van Dorp (1485–1525; student, later teacher, at the college The Lily at Louvain, doctor of theology 1515, rector of the university 1523) attacked Erasmus (see Allen, *Op. Ep.* II, *Ep.* 347), yet remained on good terms with him; on Van Dorp see also Goswinus 7,2 and n. (CE, vol. 1, 398–404). On Johannes Neuius (Naevius, Nepotis) = Jan de Neve (d. April 25, 1522), Johannes Paludanus = Jean Desmarez (des Marais, d. February 20, 1526, “a fine Latin scholar”), and Adrianus Cornelii Barlandus (1486–1538), all of them Louvain scholars and friends of Erasmus, see CE, vol. 3, 15 (De Neve), vol. 1, 389 (Paludanus), vol. 1, 95–96 (Barlandus).

12,1 **Indicem ... uersentur**: cf. 10,4 n.

13 **De locis ... admirandum**: on this quotation see “Erasmus on Agricola”, pp. 217–218.

**cudisce**: *cudisse*.

## NOTES TO PHILIPPUS MELANCHTHON

*Letter to Alardus of Amsterdam*

1,1 **Habeo tibi gratiam ... Heidelbergensis**: the two men whom Melanchthon (1497–1560) presents here as his sources for the Life of Agricola are the well-known Hebraist of Pforzheim, Johann Reuchlin (*Capnio*, 1455–1522), and Pallas Spangel (c. 1445–1512), who had been a distinguished professor of theology in Heidelberg since 1484. Spangel is mentioned twice in the letters of Agricola to Dietrich von Plieningen (*Epp.* 28,13; 32,7). It was in his house in Heidelberg Melanchthon lived as a student (and pupil of Spangel) in the years 1509–1512, when he was 12–15 years old.

Reuchlin was twelve years younger than Agricola; the two men came into contact with each other through the study of Hebrew, in which both were interested: see the letters they exchanged in 1484–1485 (*Agr. Epp.* 41, 44, 52). Melanchthon cannot have met Reuchlin in Heidelberg (nor could Agricola) because Reuchlin stayed there only from 1496 to 1499. The young Melanchthon may have heard Reuchlin mention Agricola when, as a schoolboy, he lived for a year (1508–1509) in Pforzheim in the house of Reuchlin’s sister, Elisabeth, a relative of Melanchthon’s mother; still, he must have learned much more in later years during his stay in Tübingen (1512–1518).

Brief notes with further literature on both men can be found in *Agr. Epp.* 41n. (on Reuchlin), and 28.13n. (on Spangel). More detailed information in Geiger 1871, 1964; Hartfelder 1889, 1972; Breen 1961; Hartfelder, *Studien* 1992; Scheible 1993b; Rhein 1993.

**caeteri ipsius collegae**: this refers, of course, not to the colleagues of Agricola (so Breen 1961, 54 and n. 11) but to Spangel.

1,2 **Nam Dalburgius ... decessit**: on Johann von Dalberg (1455–1503), who became Bishop of Worms in 1482 and whose “residence was the hearth of the “golden age” of learning at Heidelberg” (Breen 1961, 52, n. 8), see Von Plieningen *Ep.* 2,6; also Backes 1992, 145–153 and *passim*; Hartfelder 1889, 14ff. The classic study on Von Dalberg is Morneweg 1887.

**bellum Bauaricum** (“*der Landshuter Krieg*”): on this war, which lasted from April 17, 1504, to April 1505 and was fought with great devastation and bloodshed between Bavaria and the Palatinate, see a short chapter in Adelman 1981, 55–57; Backes 1992, 15; Schaab, 1988, 213–216.

1,3 **Pleningerum – Plinii**: that Agricola called his friends the Von Plieningen brothers *Plinii* is well attested by the letters of Agricola and by Dietrich’s letter to his

brother (see Von Plieningen *Ep.* 1,2). Apparently the closed -e- of Latin was often pronounced roughly as [i:]. On the name, see Adelman 1981, 1nn. 2 and 3. The latinization of Von Plieningen to Pleninger is also found in the lecture notes of a student of Melanchthon; see Adelman 1981, 31.

On the nobility of the family Von Plieningen and on the importance attached by Melanchthon to their connection with Agricola, see Adelman 1981, chs. II and VI.

**1,4 Vix enim ullae ... coniunxit:** Agricola wrote in the same vein about the lasting bonds of friendship established during one's student days (*Ep.* 4,6).

The story about the friendship of Solon and Pisistratus is told by Plutarch, *Life of Solon*, chs. I and xxxi; Eudemos of Cyprus, a Platonist and friend of Aristotle, fought on the side of Dion of Syracuse, another Platonist, against the tyrant Dionysius II and was killed in that struggle in 353 BC (Plutarch, *Dio* 22; Aristotle wrote his *De anima* in commemoration of his friend).

**2,1 mores Rodolphi castissimos:** Agricola has a "modest", "retiring", "pure" character. Cf. Melanchthon, *Or.* 9,1.

**2,2 Audierat ... Ferrariae Theodorum Gazam:** Melanchthon is the only source (here and in *Or.* 6,3) to inform us that at Ferrara Agricola had studied under Gaza. This report has always been dismissed as wholly anachronistic (Van der Velden 1911, 88–89; IJsewijn, in *Wölf. Ren. Mitt.* III,1,12). Gaza came to Ferrara in 1440, where he became a professor of Greek; in 1451 he left this town for Rome at the invitation of Pope Nicholas V. There is some uncertainty about the year of his death, but the best authorities give 1475 as certain: Legrand 1885, XI; Salanitro 1987, VI, n. 2. Moreover, if Gaza had been present in Ferrara in 1475–1476, Agricola would certainly have praised him among the great scholars of Ferrara in his *Oratio in laudem philosophiae* of 1476. Still, the Greek studies of Agricola and his friend Occo point to a direct or indirect influence by Gaza: Agricola's interest in Aristotle (see the indices of the *Letters* and *De inventione dialectica*); his familiarity with the *Eclogues* of Theocritus (cf. *Ep.* 18,2); and Occo's manuscript of Cicero's *De senectute* in the Greek translation by Gaza. Occo studied from at least April 14, 1474, to June 15, 1478, in Ferrara. I have borrowed these data from the very detailed article by Van der Laan 2000. Literature on Gaza in Ferrara is given by Sottili 2002a, 108, n. 155.

**2,3 Cumque Heidelbergae ... praeerant:** cf. "The medieval debate was practically coextensive with education, for around the successive debate exercises was organised the student's progress through the school system." (Kinneavy 1971, 9) There is much literature on the *disputatio* in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. For a clear technical summary see Olga Weijers 1987, 335–360; also her *La "disputatio"* 2002 and *Queritur utrum* 2009; Teeuwen 2003, 256–259. See also Geldenhouwer 3, 6 and n.

**entelechia:** the same word, meaning “continuity, persistency”, is found in Cic. *Tusc. disp.* 1,10,20; there, as well as here, it is confused with the Aristotelian concept *entelecheia* meaning “full, complete reality”.

**scholastici:** the “scholars”, i.e. masters and students (Breen 1961, 54; Teeuwen 2003, 133).

**3 amabat enim leges ... intelligi posse negabat:** this is the only passage in the *vitae* where Agricola’s high esteem of the law is expressed. Elsewhere the years in which he studied law in Pavia are spoken of disparagingly (Von Plieningen *Comm.* 3,2–3) or simply ignored (Goswinus; Geldenhouwer; Melanchthon *Or.*), presumably because of the humanist bias of the authors. Although Agricola himself once mentions the study disparagingly (*asinaria mola*, *Ep.* 6,5), elsewhere he gives evidence of knowing exactly which parts of the Codex or the Digests are read at what time of the day (*Ep.* 12,5). Likewise, in his *Vita Petrarcae* he is certainly critical of the legal profession and the academic discipline, but nevertheless: *dicere solebat [scil. Petrarch] auctoritatem magnam iuris ciuilibis sibi uideri, multam praeterea rerum in eo dignitatem*; note the same word in Melanchthon (Bertalot 385,27–28; Lindeboom 95,33–35). See also Melanchthon *Or.* 10,1; 11,1. Our passage in Melanchthon’s *Epistola* probably owes its praise of the law to Melanchthon’s source, Johann Reuchlin (a professional lawyer himself), but in Melanchthon’s own philosophy, too, “law is a genuine gift of God” (Meerhoff 2005, 99). For Agricola’s use of legal vocabulary, see Agricola, *Letters* 2002, p. 21 and nn. 90 and 91.

**4,1 in canonibus:** here are meant the church decrees regulating morals and religious practices.

**in synodo Nicaena ... Arii:** the first Council of Nicaea (325) was summoned by the emperor Constantine mainly to deal with the heresy of Arius (ca. 250–336), who denied the true Divinity of Jesus Christ, whereas his opponents coined the phrase that Christ was *homoousios* with the Father, i.e. of one substance. Paul of Samosate was an earlier (third century) heretical bishop, who held that Christ was human. Because his followers were still active in 325, one canon of the Council dealt with them. The Cathars (i.e. the “Pure”), too, were considered schismatic at the Nicaea Council. Under their leader Novatian (d. 257/8) they formed a rigorist party, which was excommunicated. See *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte* 11/1 1973, 18–30. See also *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexicon*, VII Band, cols. 66–89 (on Paulus of Samosate).

**5,2–3 fuerat enim ... Basiliï doctrina:** on Wessel Gansfort see our n. on Agr. *Ep.* 20,15. Agricola mentions Gansfort three times in his letters: 20,5; 26,27; 41,15–16. The first passage refers to the poem by Friedrich Mormann addressed to Wessel on the occasion of Agricola’s return to the North, in which the festive strophe:



*Hic, Wessele, petet te duce Apolline  
optans ante tuo colloquio frui  
quam sese patriis moenibus inferat  
laetus de reditu suo.*

(in Schoonbeeg 1993, 347). The friendship between Agricola and Gansfort is also evident in a note by Regnerus Praedinius, later rector of the Latin school in Groningen: see *RAP* 1988, 327 and in the fragment *De Wesselo* by Goswinus van Halen; see Kan 1894, 4. Van Rhijn (1917, 107–108) assumes on the authority of Reuchlin that Wessel was indeed in Basel, that he may have taught there *privatim*, but that this must have taken place after his return from Italy, in or shortly after 1474. The only direct information on Reuchlin's contact with Wessel Gansfort is to be found in *Agr. Ep.* 41,15. On Gansfort's knowledge of Greek and Hebrew see Oberman 1993, 114–115 and recently Vanderjagt 2005; *idem* 2008. On Wessel in general see the classic book by Van Rhijn 1917 and our *Wessel Gansfort (1419–1485) and Northern Humanism*, 1993. A recent article: Van Moolenbroek 2004.

**5,3 Accensus igitur ... non conueniant:** that Agricola really was stimulated by Gansfort to pursue theological studies, need not to be doubted: see *e.g.* the passages in *Epp.* 38,16–17; 41,14–16; 43,10–12, nor that he heard in Italy also theologians. In Agricola's time there were two professors of theology in Pavia; see Sottili 1982, 544. Agricola's Groningen friend Johannes Vredewolt graduated in theology in Pavia in 1471.

That Agricola knew the Greek and Latin Church Fathers through his own reading is shown by Van der Laan 2003, 146, 149–151; see also Agricola, *Letters* 2002, 21–22. For his knowledge of the Bible, see Mack 2000.

**summas rerum ... in unum corpus ac methodum:** Agricola's successors in the 16th century saw him as the northern originator of “method”, a systematization of the humanist studies. See Jardine, in *RAP* 1988, 38–57; Grafton and Jardine 1986.

**5,4 Nihil fingo ... ἀξιολίστω:** the person in question is Goswinus van Halen; see also Melanchthon *Or.* 12,3, with the same words *Nihil fingo*; cf. note there.

**6,1 Et Deus erat uerbum:** John 1:1.

**6,2 Haec ... comiter ... non rixabatur:** cf. Melanchthon *Or.* 9,1.

**7,1 Philippo principi Palatino:** Philip “der Aufrichtige”, Count of the Palatinate 1476–1508. See *Agr. Ep.* 26,13n.; Von Plieningen *Comm.* 7,1 and n.; Backes 1992, 136–171.

**petiuit epitomen historiarum ... componi:** here and in the *Or.* 13 Melanchthon is very explicit about this Summary of History. I have set forth my doubts about its authenticity in the Introduction to Melanchthon's *vitae*; see pp. 110–111.

**8,1 Capnionem et Pallantem:** Melanchthon seems to think that not only Pallas but also Reuchlin witnessed Agricola's activities in Heidelberg. See Scheible 1993b, 225.

**ex scriptis ipsius:** Melanchthon realizes that his letter to Alardus was going to function as a preface to the collected works of Agricola.

**8,2 ut quo dirigenda sit manus (ut ita dicam):** "a metaphor taken from an art like painting, a favourite of humanist educators" (Breen 1961, 57, n. 18).

**8,3 qui hactenus mutili circumferuntur:** *De inuentione dialectica* had appeared in print first in Louvain in 1515 (Huisman, No. 11), then in a number of editions, based on the same imperfect manuscript (Huisman, Nos. 12–41). Alardus was the first to edit the work in 1539 from a better manuscript, which he had obtained from Pompeius Occo, the nephew of Adolph Occo, who in his turn had inherited the papers from his friend Agricola. See *Agr. Ep.* 17 i; Mundt 1992, 655–691; see also Geldenhouwer 12,1–2 and n.

**8,4 Lumen est enim omnium ... artium ... disputationum ciuiliū et ecclesiasticarum:** this is a brief formulation of what Agricola himself had described in the prologue as the essence of his book; cf. Mundt's edition, p. 10, 45–57.

**republica:** "public life".

**nocturna ... diurna:** Hor. *Ars poetica* 268–269 *uos exemplaria Graeca / nocturna uersate diu, uersate diurna.*

#### *Academic Oration*

**1,3 Gloria in excelsis ... hominibus laetitia:** Melanchthon is quoting Luke 2:14 with two variant readings as compared to the now accepted text: *et (καί)* added before *hominibus*, and the last word (εὐδοκία) in the nominative. For these variants there are old sources, but not for Melanchthon's translation *laetitia*. (Prof. H.J. de Jonge was so kind as to do the necessary expert research for me on this point.) Melanchthon apparently transferred the χαρὰν μεγάλην (*gaudium magnum*) of the annunciation of vs. 10 to the laudation of vs. 14.

**1,4 genuit ... tygres:** Verg. *Aen.* 4,366–367.

**2,2 cumque Rodolphus ... monstrauerit:** the three principal aspects of Agricola's significance that Melanchthon wants to point out to his students are his brilliant Latin style, his *De inuentione dialectica*, and his *De formando studio*, i.e. command of language, theory of argumentation, and method of education and study.

**nam cum mea patria ... tuetur:** a coastal area in the state of Schleswig-Holstein is called Nordfriesland, where even today a Frisian dialect is spoken and where in

the early sixteenth century the Old Frisian law was still valid. For its history see *Geschiede Nordfrieslands* <sup>2</sup>1996. I thank Dr. Wiebe Bergsma for the information.

**2,3 ab iis ... fuit:** here Melanchthon states that his source is not even secondary, but tertiary. Cf. Melanchthon *Ep.* 1,1, where, however, he is speaking in his own name.

**2,4 Nec institui encomium:** it could be that Melanchthon alludes here – disapprovingly – to the beginning of Geldenhouwer’s *vita*.

**hominis indiserti:** Melanchthon shows the same modesty as the authors of the other *vitae*: see Von Plieningen *Ep.* 2,5 and n.

**3,1 in rure quodam ... Groninga:** in Baflo, 18 km. from Groningen. Here Melanchthon did not copy Geldenhouwer. He must have heard of Baflo from Goswinus; see Goswinus 2,1; Von Plieningen *Comm.* 2,1n.

**honestis parentibus ... poterant:** Melanchthon knows next to nothing about the financial resources of Agricola’s parents; see the Introduction. He is merely imparting the lesson to his audience that even parents of modest means should spend their money on the study of their children.

**3,2 De primae pueritiae ... fingendum esse:** Goswinus’s letter to Melanchthon contains interesting information on Agricola’s early youth (see Goswinus 6), but Melanchthon probably takes *studiis* to mean formal education only. See also above 2,4 and n.

**Ante annos ... curamque uirilem:** Verg. *Aen.* 9,311.

**4,1 Cum Germania ... probandum:** Melanchthon fully recognized the significance of form and content of Agricola’s work. Cf. Hartfelder <sup>2</sup>1972, 155–156.

**4,3 patriae praedicatione:** Melanchthon is aware of the cultural importance of early *Frisia*. For a concrete, recent indication of its intellectual achievement, see Sottili 2003. Cf. Introduction and pp. 186–197.

**5,1–2 Louanii ... philosophia:** it is quite possible that Melanchthon borrowed here from Geldenhouwer 3 and 4.

**5,1 tyrocinium ... deposuisse:** Liv. 45,37,3 *si in L. Paulo accusando tirocinium ponere et documentum eloquentiae dare uoluit*.

**5,2 In dialecticis et philosophia:** *dialectice* (logic and rhetoric) belongs to the *trivium*; *philosophia*, of which *ethica* and *physica* are the essential parts, belongs to the *quadriuium*. That is the way Melanchthon, just like Lorenzo Valla in his *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*, classifies the *artes* program at the university.

Agricola divided *philosophia* in three parts, for which he used the Greek words *logice*, *ethice*, and *physice*. See Vanderjagt in *RAP* 1988, 220–221 and the relevant quotation from *In laud. phil.* In *Ep.* 38,13 ff. Agricola classes under the heading *philosophia* the right knowledge, or right thinking, of things (i.e. ethics and physics) and the right speaking (i.e. dialectics and rhetoric). See also Peter Mack 1993, chs. 1 and 2. On Melanchthon's own modernized study program, see Scheible 1993c, 77; Meerhoff 1997, 539 ff.

6,1–2 **philosophia** (*passim*): see 5,2n.  
**coepit**: *cepit*.

6,1 **Nam post captum ... conticuerat**: the renewal of Latin and Greek studies had begun long before the fall of Constantinople in 1453. On the self-confidence of Renaissance scholars in this respect, see Herbert Weisinger 1948; on the influence of Byzantine scholars, see Kenneth M. Setton 1956; Gilmore (1962, 183) pinpoints the relative insignificance of “1453” for the cultural changes in the West.

6,2 **Venit Ferrariam**: Agricola's stay of six or seven years (1468/9–1475) at Pavia and his study of law there is simply ignored here as well as in Melanchthon *Ep.* But his love and knowledge of the law is expressly stated in Melanchthon *Ep.* 3; see my note there.

**Hercules dux Ferrariae**: cf. Von Plieningen *Comm.* 4,3 and n.

6,3 **Theodorus Gaza**: cf. Melanchthon *Ep.* 2,2 and n.

**Guarinus**: Battista Guarini (1434–1513), one of Agricola's teachers in Ferrara, where he taught from 1460 onward. Agricola mentions him in *Ep.* 27,18 and in the *Or. in laud. phil.* (Alardus II, 158; Rupprich 1964, 182). See also *Agr. Epp.* 18,2n. and 38,28n. If Melanchthon means the father Guarinus of Verona (1347–1460), he is wrong, just as in the case of Gaza and Ercole Strozzi.

**Aderant et Strozae poetae ... Rodolpho**: the only “*Stroza poeta*” Agricola knew, is Tito (Vespasiano) Strozzi (1425–1505), confidant and official of the d'Estes, whom Agricola praised in his *Or. in laud. phil.* as *decus illud et deliciae Musarum Titus Stroza* (Alardus II, 158; Rupprich 1964, 182). On him see now the edition of his *Borsias* by Ludwig (1977). The other “*Stroza poeta*” was his son Ercole (1471 or 1473–1508), whom Agricola could not have known as a poet. Melanchthon's error may have been caused by the Aldus Manutius edition of 1514, which contained the poetry of both father and son: *Strozzi poetae pater et filius*. See also Sottili 2002a, 116.

**Extant et mathematicorum scripta**: on the many important mathematical writings of the Renaissance that did not reach the printing press, see Cynthia Hay 1988 (however, in this book Ferrara is not mentioned). Agricola paid due respect to mathematics in *Or. in laud. phil.* (Alardus II, 154; ed. Rupprich 1964, 176–177). See also *De inventione dialectica* II,1,47–54. On mathematics in Ferrara

cf. P.L. Rose 1975; on the Ferrarese astronomer Giovanni Bianchini and his friendship with Guarino and Regiomontanus, and on Copernicus's links with Ferrara and Regiomontanus, see Rose p. 14 and the chapters IV and V *passim*. On Melanchthon's own interest in mathematics, see Scheible 1993, 234f.

**6,5–7 Cumque pariter excoleret ... in conuiuuiis eruditorum:** this passage may show some rhetorical exaggeration, but in general it mirrors the admiration with which Agricola was accepted in the brilliant humanist milieu of Ferrara. Although he held no professorial chair, it is certainly possible that he gave (*extra ordinem*) lectures, disputations, and orations at special occasions, as his *Or. in laud. phil.* shows. These activities are also recorded by Goswinus (1), Von Plieningen (*Comm.* 3,4), Geldenhouwer (5) and Erasmus (Geldenhouwer 10). They are of the same kind as his teaching activities at Heidelberg. See also Van der Velden 1911, 81–103. On his musicality see Akkerman and Kooiman 1999, 43–51; also Von Plieningen (*Comm.* 10), Goswinus (6), Geldenhouwer (4) and Erasmus (Geldenhouwer 10).

**6,6 Audio ... deridetur:** this is the only source for Erasmus's remark.

**7 Quanta fuerit eius sedulitas ... et uerborum copiam:** on Agricola's allegedly autographing a copy of the complete Quintilian (Geldenhouwer 6 tells us the same) "no further sources or references are available" (Hermans, *RAP* 1988, 126; on Pliny the Elder see *id. ibid.* 124–128). Theophrastus and Aristotle are mentioned in the context of the same subject (plants) by Agricola himself in *Ep.* 38,23. Gaza translated the *Historia plantarum* by Theophrastus and *De animalibus* by Aristotle. See Legrand 1885, XLII–XLIII.

**in eo loco:** *scil.* in Italy (not: in Pliny, as Breen (1961, 60, n. 34) has it).

**8,1 Porro cum se ... non diu haesit:** despite Melanchthon's assertion in 15,3 as to academic studies being useful to church and state, Agricola's four years of service to the city of Groningen as a *scriba et orator*, in the words of Goswinus (3), are here passed over in silence. This kind of service is quite customary for a humanist and jurist; see Kessler 1983, 34–39; 85–92.

**nam aliquanto post ... nominat:** about the invitation to come to Heidelberg, read *Agr. Epp.* 26–30.

**Cum his enim ... factus est Vangionum episcopus:** Agricola arrived in Pavia in 1468 and stayed there until 1475. Dietrich von Plieningen and his brother Johannes studied law in Pavia from 1473 to 1476. Von Dalberg studied in Pavia from 1472 to 1475. Agricola was in Ferrara from 1475 to 1479, the Von Plieningen brothers from 1476 onward. Dietrich was appointed counsellor of Count Philip of the Palatinate in 1482. In 1481 Von Dalberg was appointed chancellor of Count Philip in Heidelberg and in 1482 he was elected Bishop of Worms.

8,2–3 **Is Heydelbergam uocauit ... superbia**: Von Dalberg was Chancellor of the University of Heidelberg since 1480. On Agricola teaching him and the students, see Agr. *Epp.* 43,4–6; 53,6.

8,3 **Ut scholasticas ... ut est**: the first *ut* means “how” (exclamatory adverb), the second *ut* means “such as” (relative adverb).

8,4 **Ibi etiam scripsit ... monstrans**: although it is not true that Agricola wrote his DID in Heidelberg, he cannot but have taught some dialectics there. Much later, Ramus also considered Heidelberg as the place of origin of Agricola’s masterpiece. (See Introduction, p. 36.) On the practical use (“into the light and the battlefield”) of his DID, see Agr. DID 1,1 (Mundt 1992, 10, 52–57).

9,1 **Senes Heydelbergae narrant**: Melanchthon studied there 1509–1512; see Melanchthon *Ep.* 1 and n.

**ξένον δὲ σιγᾶν ... κερροαγέναι**: this verse is taken from the *Sententiae Menandri*, no. 555. Jaekel (ed. 1964) reads ξένω with one group of mss., called χ (see p. xx), but gives ξένον as the variant reading of the other mss.; this is also the form in the collection of Apostolius 12,21 D (*Paroemiogr.*, Schneidewin II, 233), but there δὲ is omitted. It is very probable that Agricola had had access to one of the many mss. of the *Sent. Men.*, maybe in Ferrara. (This Greek text is not mentioned by IJsewijn in his contribution “Agricola as a Greek scholar” to *RAP* 1988.) The first printed edition is by Lascaris in Florence, 1494, which was repeated by Aldus Manutius. I thank Prof. M.A. Harder for her help in finding the verse.

The Greek quotation may well characterize Agricola’s social behavior in Heidelberg and elsewhere, thus in sharp contrast to the conduct of the older Groningen scholar Wessel Gansfort, who wrote about himself in a letter: *Circuivi multas universitates, et certamina quaerens multos reperi contradictores* (*Ep.* 5, to Iacobus Hoeck, in *Opera*, 865, quoted in Van Moolenbroek, ‘Wessel Gansfort as a teacher’, 2004, 113).

9,2 **philosophia**: cf. 5,2n.

**libros Aristotelis de animalibus**: Aristotle’s *Historia animalium* was also translated by Gaza (Legrand 1885, XLII–XLIII).

**mens extrinsecus accedit ... ex materia corporum**: cf. Aristotle *De generatione animalium* 736<sup>b</sup>27–29 λείπεται δὴ τὸν νοῦν μόνον θύραθεν ἐπεισιέναι καὶ θεῖον εἶναι μόνον. Cf. Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle* <sup>2</sup>1948, 49ff. *et al.*

9,3 **aliquid ex Arato**: Aratus’s didactic poem *Phaenomena* was translated by Cicero. Reuchlin possessed a manuscript of Aratus’s *Phaenomena*, see Preisendanz 1955, p. 81, no. 20. Aratus is found in an Aldine edition of 1499. “Aldus Manutius ... helped to fill the shelves of the Wittenberg University Library” (Eisenstein 1979, 221, 596n.). On the acquisition of Aldine editions for the Wittenberg library, see

Grossmann 1975, ch. 7, esp. pp. 105–110. A Latin translation of Aratus was made by Melanchthon himself, a few verses of which have been preserved; see Hartfelder 1889, 37–38. On the interest in astronomy and astrology in Heidelberg, see Backes 1992, 156–158; on the same in Tübingen, where Melanchthon was a grateful student of the astronomer and astrologer Johannes Stöffler, see Hartfelder *ibid.* and Scheible 1993b, 234–235. The name of Aratus does not occur in Agricola's *DD* nor in his letters. Nor is astronomy included in the summary of natural sciences of *Ep.* 38,22–24. But Manilius is recorded in *Ep.* 21,46; Hyginus is mentioned by Goswinus 6; and in an *elogium Rodolphi Agricolae* (an epitaph) it is said:

*Scrutatus penitus naturae arcana potentis  
Astrorum cursus, consiliumque poli.*

(Alardus II,2<sup>v</sup>). For astronomy and astrology in Ferrara, see Kristin Lippincott in *La corte di Ferrara*, 1990, 96–97, especially on illustrations in astronomical and astrological manuscripts and on large-scale decorations based on the *Astronomica* of Manilius. Agricola did by no means avoid the subject in his Ferrarese *Or. in laud. phil.*, Ruppich 1964, 165,33; 166,16; 169,18; 177,9–17, so there is not much reason to doubt Melanchthon's words.

10 **Nec deerat ... satisfecit omnibus**: the same “proto-Protestant” subject as in Melanchthon *Ep.* 4, but treated in more detail here; cf. Breen 1961, 56–57 (and n. 14).

10,1 **iurisconsultos**: cf. the passage in Melanchthon *Ep.* 3 and n.; Melanchthon *Or.* 6,2n. and 11 below.

10,2 **Samosatenum aut Arrium aut Macedonium**: on Paul of Samosate and Arius, see Melanchthon *Ep.* 4,1 and n. Macedonius had been Bishop of Constantinople since about 342, but was deposed in 360; the controversies of which he was a victim were about the true nature of Christ. Macedonius died ca. 362. See *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte* II, 1 col. 22. See on him also *Biograph.-Bibliograph. Kirchenlexicon* 1993, v, cols. 597–599.

**facile satisfecit omnibus**: it is doubtful whether he convinced everyone so easily.

11,1 **locum de usuris centesimis**: *i.e.* one percent interest per month; cf. e.g. *Digests* 17,1,12,9 and 22,2,4,1; *Codex* 4,32 and 4,33; see Heumanns *Handlexicon* <sup>9</sup>1914, *s.v.* *usura centesima*.

**ἐρημῆ δίκη**: “an undefended action, in which one party does not appear, and judgement goes against him by default”; *LS s.v.* ἐρημος. E.g. in Thucydides 6,61,7, also *Adag.* 480 in Erasmus, *ASD* II-1, 551: *Deserta causa*.

**gradus ueterum Romanorum iudiciorum**: cf. *Codex* III,8 *De ordine iudiciorum*.

12,1 **In theologia ... ad historiam**: on Wessel Gansfort cf. Melanchthon *Ep.* 5 and n. This time Melanchthon mentions his informant by name: Goswinus, mangled into Iosquinus. The (again) detailed treatment of the “proto-Protestant” topics of those conversations was presumably inspired by the nature of the audience at the Wittenberg University, as contrasted with the recipient of the letter, the Roman Catholic Alardus.

12,3 **Nihil fingo ... Iosquinus**: there is no reason to doubt the truth of this information. Either Goswinus must have written more letters to Melanchthon than the one we have, or else his *vita* must have been longer than we have it, for in the text transmitted to us Goswinus does not tell this story, nor does he mention Gansfort.

12,5 **cum in Belgicum redisset**: here Melanchthon specifically means Groningen. The town was brought under the sway of Charles v in 1536, and could from then on be regarded as being situated in “*Belgium*” – the whole of the Low Countries.

**Idque ipse ... in sacras literas**: in *Epp.* 41,14 and 43,10 Agricola had informed Reuchlin and Hegius of this intention.

13,1 **ducis ... Palatini**: a mistake for *comitis*.

**integram seriem**: on a world chronicle supposedly written by Agricola, see Melanchthon *Ep.* 7,1 and n.

14,1 **non multum ... egressus**: on Agricola’s age at his death, see also Geldenhouwer 8,1 and Introduction, pp. 10–12.

15,1 **ἄνηθοτα**: cf. Quintilian 12,10,79 *inde fructus inlaborati offerunt sese et omnia sponte proueniunt*.





## ERASMUS ON AGRICOLA

Rodolpho Agricolae et Alexandro Hegio,  
quibus ego sane minimum debebam  
non plenam laudem tribuo ...?<sup>1</sup>

(Erasmus, *Spongia* 1523)

Years ago, puzzled by the persistent misunderstanding of the words printed above by way of a motto, I decided to scrutinize the works of Erasmus and the letters of his correspondents for passages referring to Agricola. My objective was to get a clearer picture of Erasmus's opinion of the great Frisian than I could find in the existing literature. I started this in 1986 while working on the edition of the *Proceedings* of the Agricola conference in 1985 in Groningen.<sup>2</sup> At that time I had access to two essays dealing explicitly with this subject, namely Edzo Waterbolk's inaugural oration of 1966<sup>3</sup> and Richard Schoeck's contribution to the *Proceedings* of our conference.<sup>4</sup> Later I could add a chapter by Lisa Jardine entitled "Inventing Agricola" and published in 1990,<sup>5</sup> and after that, in 1993, her own well-known and much-discussed book *Erasmus, Man of Letters*,<sup>6</sup> which includes not only that same chapter in a slightly modified version but also two more chapters on Erasmus and Agricola. In addition to these publications dealing specifically with our topic, Agricola's name is found in practically every monograph on Erasmus and in almost every edition of Erasmus's works, but usually only as a short reference and often in connection with Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* or with the school at Deventer.

In this chapter I intend to point out all the passages in Erasmus that mention or quote Agricola, and provide them with some commentary. It is only partly my objective to achieve a new interpretation of any of Erasmus's works or of his intellectual personality in general; I will try to show how deeply Erasmus's mindset is rooted in the early humanism of Agricola and contemporaries in the northern and eastern parts of the present-day Netherlands and adjacent regions in Germany. My reason for writing this chapter is that the existing discussions of the Agricola theme in Erasmus's works offer the material in an incomplete

<sup>1</sup> ASD IX-I, 196-197.

<sup>2</sup> RAP, Leiden 1988.

<sup>3</sup> E.H. Waterbolk, *Een hond in het bad* (1966), 1981, 17-44.

<sup>4</sup> R.J. Schoeck, 'Agricola and Erasmus' in RAP 1988, 181-188.

<sup>5</sup> Lisa Jardine, 'Inventing Rudolph Agricola' 1990, 39-86.

<sup>6</sup> Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters* 1993, 83-146.

form. In my view, the textual material that is available on a given subject should be examined in its entirety and as objectively as possible. Each single text should be scrutinized in the light of its context and of the literary and rhetorical style and fashion of its time. To state the main conclusion of this chapter right at the beginning: in the roughly fifty references to Agricola in Erasmus's works, which extend chronologically from 1489 to 1535 and are distributed rather evenly over the years, we meet nothing but praise, respect, and admiration for Agricola on Erasmus's part. I assume that these feelings are sincere and that Erasmus had sufficient material – printed, handwritten, and oral – at his disposal on which to base his judgment.

To begin with, I would like to correct the misinterpretation of the *Spongia* fragment of 1523. We know that Erasmus responds here to the accusation by Ulrich von Hutten, expressed in the latter's *Expostulatio*, that Erasmus does not give others the respect they are due.<sup>7</sup> The full passage in Erasmus runs as follows:

Quis plus tribuit Laurentio, Hermolao, Politiano, quos aetas proxima proceres in literis habuit? Rodolpho Agricolae et Alexandro Hegio, quibus ego sane minimum debebam, non plenam laudem tribuo in opere quod omnes existimant victurum?

My translation will follow presently. The first scholar to give this text the incorrect explanation that has now become standard was P.S. Allen. In a note to the *Compendium vitae Erasmi* he writes: "In *Adag.* 339 [i.e. in 1508] Erasmus speaks of Hegius as his teacher, and states that he learnt the elements of Latin and Greek at Deventer. In the *Spongia* written at approximately the same time [i.e. in 1523] he says, however, "Alexandro Hegio ... ego sane minimum debebam"."<sup>8</sup> Here we observe three things:

1. In *Adag.* 339 *Quid cani et balneo?* Erasmus says only that he has learned the principles of Latin and Greek in the school of Deventer, not that he has learned them from or under Hegius. This means that the passage in this adage and the one in the *Spongia* are not necessarily in contradiction to each other, a contradiction Allen expresses with "however".
2. Allen's note refers to the passage in the *Compendium vitae* which says that Erasmus "post [sc. after Zinthus's progressive teaching] aliquoties audiuit Hegium, sed non nisi diebus festis quibus legebat omnibus," to which Allen remarks: "In his [sc. Erasmus's] last year at Deventer 1483–1484; ... In later years Hegius taught in the lower classes also ..." This means that in Allen's view Erasmus's remark in the *Spongia* merely relates to the short duration and

<sup>7</sup> ASD IX–I, 196–197. For the context I refer to the introduction to the *Spongia* edition by C. Augustijn.

<sup>8</sup> Allen, *Ep.* II, 39 (1,48). The omission in the quotation is Allen's.

- the low intensity of Hegius's teaching of Erasmus. To those who adopt Allen's misinterpretation of the *Spongia* fragment, however, the primary implication of the remark is that Erasmus underrates the importance of Hegius's teaching.
3. In his quotation of the *Spongia* Allen omits Agricola's name; this actually weakens his explanation of the perceived contradiction between *Adag.* 339 and the *Spongia* on this point. For if Erasmus's undervaluation of Hegius's teaching was based on its short duration (only during Erasmus's last year) and its rare occurrences (only on holidays), why would Erasmus mention Hegius and Agricola in the same breath in the *Spongia*? Agricola had never been his teacher at all.

This somewhat careless annotation of Allen's has in more recent publications coarsened into an absolute contradiction between our two Erasmus texts. Reedijk, for example, writes much later: "Unfortunately his eulogy [sc. in the adage] loses somewhat of its value through a later utterance in the *Spongia*."<sup>9</sup> This view is also found in Vredeveld's recent edition of Erasmus's poetry.<sup>10</sup> The same opinion we find in Van Poll-Van de Lisdonk,<sup>11</sup> in Tracy,<sup>12</sup> in Nauwelaerts,<sup>13</sup> in Mack,<sup>14</sup> and in Schoeck.<sup>15</sup> The latter approvingly refers to Waterbolk, who offers a long and intricate interpretation in order to remove what he calls an annoying twist in the seemingly strong bond that ties Erasmus to Agricola.<sup>16</sup> Waterbolk concludes that in his reaction to Von Hutten Erasmus wants to emphasize his modesty ("to whom I owed a very small debt of gratitude" in the sense of "who were my betters by far") while at the same time he sings his own praises in the words "in opere quod omnes existimant victurum". Lisa Jardine, finally, offers the harsh interpretation that Erasmus has no further need for Agricola: after having used him in order to boost his reputation, Erasmus now shakes him off and retracts his former praise; Jardine uses the word "recantation".<sup>17</sup> But this is highly improbable. In 1523 Erasmus had been at the pinnacle of his fame for at least eight years; why would he still have found it necessary at that time to shake off Agricola? And if he did, why does he resume his praises to an even higher degree in the *Ciceronianus* (1528) and in other passages?<sup>18</sup> But apart from all that, would it not be quite absurd

<sup>9</sup> C. Reedijk, *The poems of Desiderius Erasmus* 1956, 42. Reedijk, by the way, does not refer to Allen. The same view had already been expressed by Reichling 1911, 455.

<sup>10</sup> ASD I-7, 31, n. 71.

<sup>11</sup> ASD II-1, 441, n. at l. 813.

<sup>12</sup> James D. Tracy, *Erasmus, the growth of a mind* 1972, 26, n. 30.

<sup>13</sup> M.A. Nauwelaerts, *Rodolphus Agricola* 1963, 155.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Mack, *Renaissance Argument* 1993, 313.

<sup>15</sup> R.J. Schoeck (n. 4), 182, n. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Literally: '[een] hinderlijke kronkel in de ogenschijnlijk zo stevige band, die Erasmus aan Agricola bindt.' E.H. Waterbolk (n. 3), especially 29-34.

<sup>17</sup> Jardine (n. 6), 98; 245, n. 87.

<sup>18</sup> See below, p. 227ff.

if Erasmus should speak so highly of Hegius, his teacher, and of Agricola, his teacher's teacher, while announcing in the same breath that he does not owe them any thanks?

But there is actually no contradiction at all between the two texts. If there were one, Erasmus would have sensed that himself, since in one text (the *Spongia*) he refers to the other (*Adage* 339). Instead, we need to understand that these two texts have been written in entirely different registers. In the adage, Erasmus sings the praises of Northern European humanism and of its founding fathers, Agricola and Hegius, whose grateful *discipulus* (his own word; see p. 104) and heir he considers himself to be; the adage can be regarded as a cultural manifesto on the *translatio musarum* from the South to the North, in which Erasmus writes as a "German" humanist. In the *Spongia*, on the other hand, he writes as the author of the adage *Quid cani et balneo?*, who personally (*ego*) had very few obligations to Agricola and Hegius when he praised them. In other words, there is no question of a *quid pro quo*, a common feature of humanist eulogies. This sufficiently explains the apparent contradiction between the adage and the *Spongia*. It is therefore unnecessary to argue, as Mestwerdt does, that Erasmus played down the influence that Agricola and Hegius had on him.<sup>19</sup>

This is my translation of the *Spongia* passage quoted above:

Who has paid more tribute to Lorenzo, to Ermolao, to Poliziano, all of whom the previous generation knew as the most prominent in the liberal arts? Do I not give generous praise to Rodolphus Agricola and Alexander Hegius, to whom I personally had very few obligations, in a work that all consider to be of lasting value?

#### THE FIRST REFERENCE TO AGRICOLA: 1489

Having eliminated this one *skandalon* from the secondary literature on Erasmus, we will move on to the earliest reference to Agricola in Erasmus's works, found in a letter dated by Allen to 1489 and addressed to Cornelius Gerard (Cornelius Gaudanus, i.e. Aurelius):<sup>20</sup>

Miror autem maiorem in modum cum hunc solum [sc. Hieronymum Balbum, ca. 1460–1535] dixeris qui veterum vestigia seruet. Nam, ut te praeteream, innumeros videre mihi videor nostra hac tempestate literatissimos, qui ad veterum eloquentiam non parum accedunt. Ecce occurrit imprimis Alexandri mei praeceptoris quondam praeceptor, Rodolphus

<sup>19</sup> Mestwerdt 1917, 149, n. 1. See also Akkerman 2005, 11–12.

<sup>20</sup> The passage can be found in Allen, *Ep.* 23, 56–60 (1, 105–106).

Agricola, vir cum omnium liberalium artium egregie eruditus, tum oratoriae atque poeticae peritissimus. Denique et Graecam linguam non minus quam Latinam calluit. Accedit huic Alexander ipse, tanti magistri non degener discipulus, qui tanta elegantia veterum exprimit dicendi stylum, vt si desit carmini titulus, in autore facile erraueris; sed ne hic quidem Graecarum literarum omnino ignarus est. Denique Antonius Gang cum suo Frederico Morman quid Westphaliae singulari sua peritia contulerint dignitatis, haud facile quis dixerit; dignus plane pro mea sententia vterque, quorum perpetuo meminerit posteritas. Praeterea Bartholomaeum Coloniensem a literatorum numero secludendum censuerim minime. Nostrum quoque Gulielmum Gaudanum, consanguineum tuum, minime silentio praeterirem, nisi mihi et familiaritate et studio esset coniunctissimus. ... Hos omnes et nostra viderunt videntque saecula, et nostra edidit Germania; ...

Before translating this fragment of *Ep.* 23, I would like to discuss a textual problem. It involves the name Antonius Gang, which does not occur elsewhere. Allen, in his otherwise excellent notes on the Northern humanists, supposes that Erasmus confused the names of Antonius Liber and Rudolphus Langius and corrupted them to “Antonius Gang”. To me, this seems most improbable. Both men were still alive then, and fully active. Along with Friedrich Mormann and Rudolph Agricola they formed the core of humanism in the Northeastern part of the Netherlands and in Westphalia. Erasmus must have known them through their work, perhaps also personally; he even wrote a letter to Langius<sup>21</sup> and later mentions him occasionally.<sup>22</sup>

Our only source for *Ep.* 23 is the edition by Paulus Merula of 1607, who had received Erasmus’s early letters from several friends and colleagues. There was a great interest in Erasmus not only at the University of Leiden, where Merula was a professor, but also outside the academic world. Hugo Grotius and Gerardus Joannes Vossius, too, definitely were Erasmians.<sup>23</sup> It is by no means certain that these letters were autographs; Merula does not say that they are. It is highly probable that this milieu of copyists and scholars was entirely unfamiliar with the names of the early humanists from the distant Northern and Eastern parts of the country; even Mormann’s name was corrupted to Norman. And when Allen says that the use of the pronoun *vterque* (l. 11 of our fragment) makes the conjectural reading “Antonius (Liber, Rudolphus) Lang” impossible, he is wrong. On the contrary, a reading *Antonius Liber et Rodolphus Langius cum suo Frederico Morman*

<sup>21</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 70,45 (1,197): ‘Rodolpho Langio scripsi.’

<sup>22</sup> See below, pp. 225, 228 and 229.

<sup>23</sup> Paulus G.F.P.N. Merula, *Vita Des. Erasmi Roterodami* 1607. For Grotius, see his praise of Erasmus in *Parallelon rerum-publicarum liber tertius*, caput xxiv (text of 1802); for Vossius, see C.S.M. Rademaker, *Leven en werk van ... Vossius* 1999 (see index).

makes perfect sense in this context: these three men form a triumvirate, as appears from the poems found in the manuscript of Hartmann Schedel.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the pronoun *uterque* refers only to Liber and Langius, for those two were from Westphalia (from Soest and Münster respectively); Mormann, on the other hand, was from Emden, and therefore a *Frisius*. True, he worked in Westphalia, but that was not enough to keep his memory eternally alive there; it is the country of birth that counts in this respect. And finally: if “Antonius Gang” had related to only one person, a singular predicate would have been more natural than the plural *contulerint*.

Here follows the translation of the text quoted from *Ep.* 23 with my conjecture inserted into it:

And I am most surprised that you describe him as the only writer who follows the tracks of antiquity; for, not to mention yourself, it seems to me that I see countless well-schooled writers of the present day who approach quite closely the ancient ideal of eloquence. I think immediately of Rodolphus Agricola, the former teacher of my own teacher Alexander. He was a man not only exceptionally highly educated in all the liberal arts, but extremely proficient in oratory and poetic theory, and moreover as well acquainted with Greek as with Latin. To him may be added Alexander himself, a worthy pupil of so great a master; so elegantly did he reproduce the style of the ancients that one might easily mistake the authorship of a poem by him if the book's title page were missing; and he, too, is not quite devoid of Greek. Then again, it would be difficult to express how much Westphalia owes to the masterly skill of Antonius (Liber and Rudolph Langius) with their friend Friedrich Morman, both of whom, in my opinion, deserve the eternal remembrance of posterity. Also, there is Bartholomaeus of Cologne, who I think should by no means be denied his place among men of letters. And I should certainly not leave unmentioned the name of our own Willem of Gouda, your kinsman, were he not so closely bound to me by friendship and literary studies. ... Everyone has been, and is, a child of the present generation, and of our own Germany too. (CWE I, 38–39)

Here, as in the *Spongia* of 34 years later, Erasmus wants to honor explicitly (besides the great Italians) the humanists of his own country and time. To them he owes his education, and theirs is the tradition he wants to be part of. At the time Erasmus wrote this letter, he was twenty-two years old and lived in the monastery of Steyn; he had spent two or two-and-a-half years at the house of the Brethren of the

<sup>24</sup> In 1985, Dr. Catrien Santing found this collection of poems by Northern humanists in the codex of Hartmann Schedel in Munich: Clm 528. They were edited by Pieter Schoonbeeg: see *Wessel Gansfort* 1993, 325–386.

Common Life at Bois-le-Duc, and before that, from age eleven to seventeen, he had attended the school of St. Lebuin's in Deventer.<sup>25</sup> There, perhaps in 1480, he had seen Agricola once, when the latter stopped over on his way from Groningen to Cologne.<sup>26</sup> The famous rector Alexander Hegius may have taught him regularly for one year, in the school year 1483–1484.

#### THE INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE AT DEVENTER

Much later, Erasmus expressed his unfavorable opinion of the education offered in his childhood in e.g. *De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis*:

Sed infelicioer erat aetas, quae me puero modis significandi et quaestiunculis ex qua vi pueros excarnificabat nec aliud interim docens quam perperam loqui. Nimirum praeceptores illi, ne puerilia docere viderentur, grammaticen dialectices ac metaphysices difficultatibus obscurabant, nimirum vt prae-postere iam prouectiores post maiores disciplinas grammaticen discerent. ... Deum immortalem, quale seculum erat hoc, quum magno apparatu disticha Ioannis Garlandini adolescentibus operosis ac prolixis commentariis enarrabantur!<sup>27</sup>

An even more wretched state of affairs prevailed when I was a boy: students were cruelly tormented with “modes of meaning” and petty enquiries into the “virtue” of a word, and in the mean time acquired nothing but poor speaking habits. Indeed, the teachers of that time, afraid to teach anything that might seem fit only for boys, would obscure grammar with the complexities of logic and metaphysics, no doubt for the absurd purpose of making them learn their grammar when they were already advanced, after the more difficult subjects ... Good heavens, what a time that was when, with much elaborate ado, the couplets of John of Garland, accompanied with laborious and prolix commentaries, were expounded to young students! (CWE 26, 345)

The entire passage is three times the size of my quotation. Similar passages are found in the letter to Botzheim,<sup>28</sup> in the *Antibarbari* (very extensively), and in the *Compendium Vitae*.<sup>29</sup> Granted, this is humanist rhetoric – propaganda for an

<sup>25</sup> For Erasmus's year of birth (1466) and the chronology of his youth I rely primarily on Harry Vredeveld, 'The Ages of Erasmus', 1993.

<sup>26</sup> See below, pp. 192 and 226.

<sup>27</sup> ASD 1–2, 77, l. 3–13.

<sup>28</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 1,20–34 (1,2).

<sup>29</sup> ASD 1–1, passim; Allen, *Ep.* 11,34–36 (1,48). The *Compendium vitae*, although not written by Erasmus, contains authentic material; see Roland Crahay, 'Recherches sur le *Compendium vitae*' 1939. Recent scholars like Vredeveld (1993, 787, n. 67 with further literature pro and contra its authenticity) and Jardine (1993, 57) regard it as authentic; Augustijn (1986, 22) is a convinced opponent.



educational revolution that was needed and did indeed take place; this propaganda also occurs in Valla,<sup>30</sup> in Agricola,<sup>31</sup> and in many others. But it stands out that Erasmus never directly attacks the Deventer school; the only school he criticizes – and that only once – is the school in Zwolle, which may have lagged behind in its reformations.<sup>32</sup> Erasmus never says that he has suffered personally under the scholastic language education. Without a trace of criticism he mentions in *Adag.* 339 that he learned the basics of Latin and Greek at Deventer. Actually he learned much more there than just the fundamentals of these languages; in the letter to Ioannes Sapidus, which serves as the *praefatio* to the *Antibarbarorum liber* and dates from 1520, he writes:

Miram quamdam esse naturae vim atque ἐνέργειαν vel hinc colligo, Sapide charissime, quod cum me puero prorsus exularent ludis literariis bonae literae, cum deessent librorum ac praeceptorum subsidia, cum nullus honos adderet ingenio calcar, imo cum passim omnes ab his studiis deterrerent et ad alia compellerent, me tamen non iudicium, quod mihi tum per aetatem esse non poterat, sed naturae sensus quidam ad Musarum sacra velut afflatus rapiebat. Inuisos habebam quoscumque noueram humanioribus studiis infensos. Adamabam quos eadem delectabant; qui in his aliquid opinionis sibi parassent, eos ceu numina quaedam venerabar ac suspiciebam.<sup>33</sup>

There is a strange power and active force, as it were, in nature, my dear Sapidus, which I infer from this fact among others that, though in my boyhood the humanities were banished from our schools and there was no supply of books and teachers, and they had no prestige to spur on a gifted student – quite the reverse: discouragement of them was universal, and drove one into other subjects – in spite of this, a sort of inspiration fired me with devotion to the Muses, sprung not from judgment (for I was then too young to judge) but from a kind of natural feeling. I developed a hatred for anyone I knew to be an enemy of humane studies and a love for those who delighted in them: and those who had acquired any reputation in that field I looked up to and admired as more than human. (CWE 7, 305)

In the letter to Botzheim he writes, also in the context of his school days at St. Lebuin's:

<sup>30</sup> Valla, e.g. in *Praefatio* II of the *Elegantiarum Linguae Latinae libri sex*.

<sup>31</sup> Agricola, *Letters* 2002, e.g. in *Epp.* 3, 4, 29, 38.

<sup>32</sup> Erasmus in *Conflictus Thaliae et Barbariei*, see Erasmus, *Carmina*, ed. Harry Vredeveld; see ASD I–7, 432–437; on the authenticity of this *colloquium*, see Vredeveld. The full text of the *colloquium* in LB I, 889–894.

<sup>33</sup> ASD I–I, 35, l. 1–10.

... velut occulta naturae vi rapiebar ad bonas literas, ac interminantibus etiam magistris furtim e libris, si quid forte nactus fuisset, hausi quod potui; calamum exercui, prouocatis sodalibus quibuscum decertarem ...<sup>34</sup>

... and yet a kind of secret natural force swept me into liberal studies. My teachers might forbid it; even so, I furtively drank in what I could from such books as I had managed to acquire; I practiced my pen, I used to challenge my companions to compete with me ... (CWE 9, 294)

The *Compendium* has the following:

Ea schola tunc adhuc erat barbara ... nisi quod Alexander Hegius et Zinthius coeperant aliquid melioris litteraturae inuehere. Tandem ex pueris collusoribus, qui grandiores natu audiebant Zinthium, primum cepit odorem melioris doctrinae; ...<sup>35</sup>

The school at that time was still in a state of barbarism ..., except that Alexander Hegius and Synthen had begun to introduce something of a higher standard as literature. At length his playmates, of whom the older ones were in Synthen's class, gave him the first taste of better teaching; ... (CWE 4, 404-405)

Another passage in which Erasmus draws a less bleak picture than that of a featureless, almost abstract gloom, is the following memory of his school days at Deventer:

Memini quum ipse puer annos natus quatuordecim, scripsissem tutori cuidam meo, quem magis etiam puer habueram institutorem, et ex lectione librorum, qui tum suppetebant, admiscuissem nonnihil, rescripsit homo, non minus superciliosus quam indoctus, vt si posthac esset animus tales epistolas mittere, eadem opera commentarium adiungerem: sibi semper hunc fuisse morem, clare et punctuatim scribere (nam his flosculis sibi placebat).<sup>36</sup>

I remember that when as a boy of fourteen I wrote to one of my tutors, who had taught me when I was even younger, and included some quotations from books that I had read, the impudent rogue, whose arrogance matched his ignorance, wrote in reply that if I intended to send such letters in the

<sup>34</sup> Allen, *Ep.* I, 30-34 (1,2).

<sup>35</sup> Allen, *Ep.* II, 34-39 (1,48). An excellent article on Johannes Synthen by C.H. Kneepkens appeared in 2009.

<sup>36</sup> *Opus de conscribendis epistolis*, ASD I-2, 217, 10-15. Erasmus tells the same story in the letter to Grunnius, Allen, *Ep.* 447, 87-91 (II, 295). The letter to Peter Winckel to which Erasmus refers here could be the preserved letter Allen, no. 1.

future, I should include a commentary. He said that it had always been his habit to write clearly and “punctiliously.” (He was fond of such “choice expressions.”) (CWE 25, 16)

If Erasmus was really fourteen years old when he wrote the letter to (probably) Peter Winckel, and if he was really born in 1466, this correspondence must have occurred in 1480–1481.<sup>37</sup> In the same year, another event occurred in Deventer that sheds some light on the cultural situation in this town. I am referring to a visit by Rudolph Agricola to the scholars of Deventer while he was passing through on his way to Cologne. Between Zwolle and Deventer he had been handed a letter, which he did not open at once:

Eas, ut ueni Dauentriam, aperui et legi coram tribus quatuorve doctis, ut apud nos, uno tamen doctiore quam nostri solent, in quibus erat magister Egbertus Campensis, ὁμότεχνος tuus, quem ex communibus studiis Bononie nouisti. Sustulerunt cuncti manus miratique uim ingenii tui, qui preter ceteram eruditionem tuam, quam in te esse nostra predicatione didicerunt, hac quoque in parte litterarum tantum prestares, quantum facile erat perspicere ex litteris tuis ...<sup>38</sup>

On my arrival in Deventer, I immediately opened and read it out in front of three or four learned men (learned by our standards, that is; one of them is even rather more learned than is usual here). Among them was master Egbertus Campensis, a colleague of yours whom you know from your joint studies in Bologna. They all raised their hands in admiration of your great talent: besides your erudition in other fields, about which they have learned from my comments, you excel in the field of letters too! And how much so was easy to see from your letter ... (Agr. *Ep.* 22, 3–4)

The date of this letter, to his friend and compatriot Adolph Occo, is October 19, 1480. Agricola’s stay at Deventer took place earlier, in the second half of June (see our note on Agr. *Ep.* 22,3) or later, shortly after 1 October, if he visited Deventer twice in the same year (see Introduction, p. 27). Erasmus was almost fourteen years old then. The event must have occurred at approximately the same time when Erasmus wrote his letter to Peter Winckel. Who knows – perhaps Erasmus was present at the solemn opening of the letter as one of the *docti* mentioned by Agricola; his age did not necessarily present a problem. When we see that in 1521 the rector of the Latin school at Groningen, Nicolaus Lesdorpis, refers

<sup>37</sup> The problem is, however, that in 1480–1481 Peter Winckel was not Erasmus’s guardian yet, although he is mentioned as such in both passages. Perhaps Erasmus combines several memories here.

<sup>38</sup> Agricola, *Letters* 2002, *Ep.* 22,3–6.

to the eleven- or twelve-year-old Regnerus Praedinius as “the future Jerome of Groningen” because of his linguistic knowledge,<sup>39</sup> we should not be surprised that Erasmus, when he was “ferme duodecim annos natus” (about twelve years old), was present at Agricola’s reception in June or October 1480.<sup>40</sup> This date, at any rate, fits Erasmus’s age better than if the encounter had taken place when he was seventeen, as Vredeveld thinks.<sup>41</sup> We may assume that Erasmus remembered his age at that time correctly.

Erasmus’s parents had not sent their son all the way from Rotterdam to Deventer to receive some backward kind of education. On the contrary, St. Lebuin’s had the reputation of being a first-rate school; at times it had as many as eight grades. A great part of the trivium and parts of the quadrivium were taught.<sup>42</sup> Hegius must have made a deep impression on Erasmus, not only in what was Erasmus’s last and Hegius’s first year at Deventer (1483–1484) but afterwards as well. However, the study of classics and Neo-Latin was being cultivated even before Hegius’s arrival: stimulated by some teachers and using any books that were on hand, a number of students studied these subjects with enthusiasm, perhaps outside the regular class periods. The quotations above may illustrate this. Obviously, the school’s spirit was more progressive than its traditional educational methods. This may well apply to all times: a school’s program is often more conservative than its teachers and students. Perhaps humanism was born not *in* the classrooms of schools and universities but *around* them. We can make the same statement regarding the lives of e.g. Petrarca and Agricola.

The Deventer region became aware of Italian humanism earlier than the other parts of the Low Countries. The region is roughly circumscribed by Deventer, Zwolle, Kampen (the region of the river IJssel), Groningen, Aduard, Emden, Aurich, Norden, Münster, Nijmegen, Roermond, and Soest (in Westphalia, Northern Germany). During the second half of the fifteenth century a quite multifaceted and refined culture existed here of which Erasmus scholars have been insufficiently aware in the past. Only during the last twenty years have

<sup>39</sup> On Lesdorp and Praedinius, see Akkerman 1999, 13–14; for the expression ‘ferme duodecim annos’ see the quotation from Allen, *Ep.* 1, 20–27, given on p. 226.

<sup>40</sup> For the meeting between Agricola and Erasmus, see pp. 192 and 226. Here is another example of how difficult it is for us, with our norms of age and intellectual maturity, to understand the circumstances of those times: in 1523, when he was thirteen years old, Albert Hardenberg in Groningen bought an octavo edition of Valla’s *Elegantiarum linguae Latinae libri sex* of 1522. See *Hel en Hemel* 2001, pp. 84–85.

<sup>41</sup> Vredeveld (n. 25), 792. The years 1466, given for Erasmus’s birth, and 1480, given for Erasmus’s encounter with Agricola, are written in the margin of David Chytraeus’s *Saxonia*, third edition 1611, p. 131; here the romantic story of this encounter, told by Melanchthon in his *Declamatio de Erasmo* (1557; Corp. Ref. XII, 266), is repeated.

<sup>42</sup> On the Deventer school, see R.R. Post, *Scholen en onderwijs in Nederland 1954, passim*; Albert Hyma, *The Youth of Erasmus* 1930, pp. 81–104; J.C. Bedaux, *Hegius Poeta* 1998, pp. 23–40 and *passim*; Wendy Moes-Jonasse, *Non scholae, sed vitae discimus* 1998; *Met Erasmus naar school* 1998.

we gradually become more familiar with this culture. I point out Jan Bedaux's doctoral dissertation on Hegius's poetry with a complete edition of all poems;<sup>43</sup> Pieter Schoonbeeg's publication of the poems of Friedrich Mormann and others;<sup>44</sup> Adrie van der Laan's doctoral dissertation on the letters and prose written by Liber, Langius and Agricola, with an edition of the texts;<sup>45</sup> Lothar Mundt's edition of Agricola's *De inventione dialectica*;<sup>46</sup> the four volumes of studies on the intellectual culture of this region, compiled at Groningen and Heidelberg;<sup>47</sup> the edition (with English translation and commentary) of Agricola's letters;<sup>48</sup> and Jos Hermans's publications on book culture, active scriptoria, and early printers.<sup>49</sup> In all these works (and the list is not complete) we see that from 1467 onward,<sup>50</sup> most poets from this period and region are developing a perfect poetic technique (Mormann, Agricola, Liber, Langius, Hegius, Bartholomaeus Coloniensis, Ulsenius, Pelantinus), an extraordinarily pure Neo-Latin prose style with hardly a trace of medievalism (Agricola, Liber, Langius, Occo), and a thorough knowledge of both classical and Italian humanist authors. At least four of these Northern humanists knew Greek (Agricola, Adolph Occo, Hegius, Wessel Gansfort),<sup>51</sup> and two of them had taken up the study of Hebrew (Gansfort and Agricola).<sup>52</sup> There were theology and philosophy, dialectics and rhetoric at a high level, an interesting fictional dialogue by Jacob Canter, and the beginning of a humanist historiography.<sup>53</sup> There was a somewhat worldly urban and monastic

<sup>43</sup> J.C. Bedaux (n. 42).

<sup>44</sup> P. Schoonbeeg, 'Friderici Mauri carmina' 1993.

<sup>45</sup> A.H. van der Laan, *Anatomie van een Taal* 1998.

<sup>46</sup> Lothar Mundt, Rudolf Agricola, *De inventione dialectica* 1992.

<sup>47</sup> RAP 1988; Wessel Gansfort 1993; *Northern Humanism in European Context* 1999; *Rudolf Agricola. Protagonist des nordeuropäischen Humanismus* 1994.

<sup>48</sup> Agricola, *Letters* 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Jos M.M. Hermans, 'Schrijven doet blijven' 2001; *Id. Het middeleeuwse boek in Groningen* 1981; *Id. Boeken in Groningen voor 1600* 1987; see also L.S. Wierda, *Book production in Zwolle* 1997; *Middeleeuwse handschriften en oude drukken* 1989.

<sup>50</sup> The oldest northern European, purely humanist text is an epitaph for Eelste Meyma from Rasquert near Baflø. It was in all probability written by Agricola. See Adrie van der Laan in *Hel en Hemel* 2001, 181. For the text see the Introduction, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> On Agricola's knowledge of Greek: see J. IJsewijn in RAP 1988, 21–37; on Occo's: Van der Laan in *Hel en Hemel* 2001, 183; *idem in Limae labor et mora* 2000, 55–65; Brigitte Mondrain, 'La collection de manuscrits grecs d'Adolphe Occo' 1988; on Hegius's: see J.C. Bedaux, *Hegius Poeta* 1998, 33–35 ('quite decent'); on Wessel Gansfort's: H.A. Oberman in *Wessel Gansfort* 1993, 114 ('he knew key Greek words').

<sup>52</sup> On Agricola's knowledge of Hebrew, see Agricola, *Letters* 2002, Epp. 38, 59–60; 41, 8–16; 43, 7–12; 52, 1–2; on Gansfort's: H.A. Oberman in *Wessel Gansfort* 1993, 114–116; and now, especially, Vanderjagt 2005 and 2008. Hegius, too, had some knowledge of Hebrew and showed interest in it: see J.C. Bedaux, *Hegius Poeta* 1998, 32.

<sup>53</sup> Jacob Canter, *De solitudine*, two editions: Bunna Ebels-Hoving 1981 and Karl A.E. Enenkel 1995. Historiography: on the chronicle of Wilhelmus Frederici see F. Akkerman 1997, 131–135 and Adrie van der Laan in *Hel en Hemel* 2001, 179–180 and notes. 6–10.

culture; the art of organ building and organ playing flourished,<sup>54</sup> and last but not least there were the schools of Zwolle, Deventer, Groningen, and Münster.

The *Familiarium epistolarum compendium* by Antonius Liber contains a total of 348 letters by twenty different authors: five from Antiquity, two from the Middle Ages, while thirteen authors are modern humanists. To the last group belong Agricola (two letters), six letters are by Langius, and seven by Liber himself (see Introduction, p. 15 ff.). Among the Italian humanists are Salutati, Bruni, Beccadelli, Poggio, Piccolomini, and Filelfo. The fifteen letters of the Northern humanists passionately cultivate the newer forms of Latin. This *Compendium* was meant for the students of the Latin school at Groningen, where Liber taught and Arnold van Bevelen of Hildesheim, to whom Liber dedicated the book, was rector; both were friends of Rudolph Agricola. The book was printed in 1475/6, two or three years before Erasmus came to Deventer; this means that humanism had made its entry at the Groningen school seven or eight years before Hegius began teaching at Deventer. The importance of Liber's *Compendium* was never realized until quite recently: Adrie van der Laan, in his doctoral dissertation of 1998, was the first to make this book truly known. I cannot imagine that Liber's monumental work would have escaped Erasmus's attention during his years at Deventer, also given the close relations between the humanists and teachers at Groningen and Deventer, who met each other regularly in the monastery at Aduard, in the schools, and at the shops of the early printers in Zwolle and Deventer. Allen, too, assumed that Erasmus knew Liber's book.<sup>55</sup> Through this book and through his contacts in Deventer, Erasmus must have been able to make the acquaintance of some well-known Italian humanists and get practice in writing the newer Latin. Lorenzo Valla, too, is praised to the skies in the *Compendium*, in a letter by Langius.<sup>56</sup>

Curiously, this early phase of humanism has either been utterly neglected in the literature on Erasmus, or treated with a one-sided emphasis on the Modern Devotion.<sup>57</sup> Jardine never mentions the names of Liber, Mormann, Canter, and Bartholomaeus Coloniensis, while Langius's name occurs only in a quotation from Phrissemius. In Hyma's classic study we find only the name of Bartholomaeus, who is mentioned twice, both times in quotations from Butzbach and Erasmus respectively.<sup>58</sup> We cannot but conclude that both authors are entirely unfamiliar with the works and the importance of these early Northern European humanists.

<sup>54</sup> On organ building in Groningen see C.H. Edskes in *RAP* 1988, 112–117 and J. Brouwer et al., *Het Groninger Orgelbezit*, 1994–1998. On the early developments in organ building in general, see the publications of M.A. Vente: *Bouwstoffen* 1942 (on the organ of the St. Martin's church in Groningen: p. 15); *Die Brabanter Orgel* 1963; *Vijf eeuwen Zwolse orgels* 1971.

<sup>55</sup> Allen 1,106, n. 63 (on Liber's book see n. 42).

<sup>56</sup> Van der Laan, *Anatomie van een taal* 1998; Langius *Ep.* 3, 8–9 (p. 85).

<sup>57</sup> This one-sided interest in the religious aspects of Erasmus's works, rather than the intellectual and humanistic elements, is noticeable in many standard works on Erasmus or Agricola, e.g. in Lindeboom, Mestwerdt, Hyma, Spitz, and Tracy.

<sup>58</sup> Jardine 1993, 123–125; Hyma 1930, 107 and 112, n. 25.

Paul Mestwerdt (1917) was better informed: he had actually read their works. While modern biographies of contemporaries like Machiavelli and Luther<sup>59</sup> begin with extensive outlines of the cultural and scientific context in which these men grew up – their education, their teachers, the texts they read – two famous Dutch biographies of Erasmus, those by Huizinga (1924) and by Augustijn (1986), simply begin after that period, when Erasmus was twenty years old.<sup>60</sup>

What are the causes of this omission? I see a few. First, the documents from this region and period that have been preserved are few in comparison with Erasmus's era: the magnitude and variety of Erasmus's oeuvre around 1515 is so overwhelming that scholars, dazzled by its light, fail to see the earlier and more subtle phase of the culture from which it arose. Moreover, the documents in question have been insufficiently researched. Secondly, the printing press, although a prominent part of this culture, was still in an early stage of its development.<sup>61</sup> Thirdly, due to the absence in the Netherlands of a discipline of "Renaissance Studies" encompassing all aspects of the Renaissance within its scope, the treatment of Renaissance topics is usually defined by a particular approach from a related field of study. Lastly, historiography in the Netherlands is very Hollandocentric, that is, has a focus on what is now the dominant part of the country. These are the reasons why the literature on Erasmus in the Netherlands usually limits itself to just mentioning the names of Hegius and Agricola.

Erasmus was a man of language and letters. He was primarily a *grammaticus*, i.e. a philologist; that stamp was set on him in Deventer. His first interest is the text itself. The Dutch theologian Maarten Dorpius sneered that Erasmus's way of thinking and working on theological themes originated from the schools of Zwolle and Deventer.<sup>62</sup> It might not be too far-fetched to argue that his humanism developed in a political context in which great leaders, both ecclesiastic and secular, were absent. The intellectual climate of the northeastern part of the Low Countries was determined by townspeople, schools, and one or two religious houses.

<sup>59</sup> On Luther see Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther* 1981; on Machiavelli see Roberto Ridolfi, *Vita di Niccolò Machiavelli* 1978.

<sup>60</sup> J. Huizinga, *Erasmus* 1924; Cornelis Augustijn, *Erasmus* 1986. Only the latter calls his book a biography, pp. 11–12.

<sup>61</sup> The oldest printing presses in the region appeared in Deventer (ca. 1477), Zwolle (1477), Nijmegen (1479), Hasselt (1480); see A.C.F. Koch 1977; W. and L. Hellinga 1966. A very early eulogy of the inventor of the printing press is a poem by Friedrich Mormann: P. Schoonbeeg in *Wessel Gansfort* 1993, 339 (*Carmen* IX). Langius wrote laudatory poems to the printer Adolph Rusch (*Carmen* V, pp. 187–188) and to an anonymous printer (*Carmen* XIII, p. 192); see ed. Parmet 1869. In addition Langius honors the printer of his poems, Johannes Limburgus, with two distichs on p. 213. See also Schoonbeeg 1993, 365.

<sup>62</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 347,150–168 (II,130–131), quoted by Augustijn, *Erasmus* 1986, 162.

Thus, in this letter of 1489 (Allen, *Ep.* 23) we see the whole panorama of early northeastern humanism displayed. The mentioning or not mentioning of names always plays an important, strategic part in humanist texts.<sup>63</sup> In the context of this letter, the term “humanism” refers to literary prose (*ars oratoria*, i.e. Neo-Latin) and poetry (*ars poetica*). All those mentioned in this letter wrote poetry, and since poetry was the passion of the young Erasmus, too, it is unthinkable that he did not know their work, either now or later.<sup>64</sup> Harry Vredeveld points out in his magnificent edition (ASD 1–7) that Erasmus’s *Carmina* contain a number of borrowings from, or parallels with, the poetic works of the Northern humanists: eight passages from Agricola (plus a quotation from *De contemptu mundi*, see below p. 200), eight passages from Hegius, and two passages from Bartholomaeus Zehender Coloniensis. Vredeveld never mentions Langius, who had a collection of his own poems printed at a very early date (1486, ed. A. Parmet 1869), nor Mormann (ed. P. Schoonbeeg 1993) or Liber; was he influenced by the defective text of Erasmus’s letter in Allen’s edition? The praise that Erasmus heaps on Hegius in this letter may seem exaggerated to modern readers, but there is no doubt that Erasmus, in the seventies and eighties of the fifteenth century, regarded Hegius’s poems, along with those by Bartholomaeus Coloniensis, Agricola, Mormann, Langius, and Liber, as a true breakthrough toward a new poetic technique, vocabulary, and idiom.

#### WHICH WORKS BY AGRICOLA DID ERASMUS KNOW IN 1489?

In 1489 Agricola had been dead only four years. Of his works the following had appeared in print: two letters in Liber’s *Compendium* (ca. 1475/76); the poem *Anna mater*, printed in 1484 by Richard Pafraet in Deventer; and, by the same printer,

<sup>63</sup> An example is Agricola’s *Ep.* 20, in which he casually mentions the names of six well-known Northern humanists.

<sup>64</sup> From Allen, *Ep.* 28, 18–23 (1,118, a letter to Cornelius Gerard, dated by Allen to 1489), it appears that Erasmus still kept in close touch with Hegius and Bartholomaeus at that time. He sent them his own poems. Referring to Bartholomaeus, whom he praises highly (*virum eruditione singulari ac poesis amantissimum*) he says that his poems are in his, Erasmus’s, possession: ‘cuius carmina penes nos sunt’. (For praise of Bartholomaeus by Iohannes Butzbach see Sottili 2001, 525.) If the year 1489 (indicated with a question mark by Allen) is indeed correct, Erasmus could not yet have owned the first printed version of Bartholomaeus’s *Silva carminum* of 1491, but he could have had the *Ecloga bucolici carminis*, which was printed ca. 1485 or between 1485 and 1487 by Jakob van Breda in Deventer, an incunable containing four poems (see the edition of *Ecloga bucolici carminis* and *Silva carminum* by Christina Meckelnborg and Bernd Schneider of 1995). But the odds are that Erasmus in *Ep.* 28 refers not to printed poems but to manuscripts; he himself had sent handwritten poems to Bartholomaeus, and his *cuius carmina penes nos sunt* does not seem to refer to printed books available in bookstores. Erasmus’s expression is of the same order as the remark in *Ep.* 23 that I quote p. 204 below; Erasmus owns manuscripts (copies) of the poets he mentions in *Ep.* 23. See, however, also Vredeveld in ASD 1–7, 191, who prefers to date *Ep.* 28 after February 16, 1491, the publishing date of *Silva carminum*; still, he emphatically leaves the possibility open that Erasmus owned handwritten poems by Bartholomaeus.



the translation from Greek of the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus* (ca. 1480). In addition, there is the oration written by Agricola and delivered in 1485 in Rome by bishop Johann von Dalberg for Pope Innocentius VIII; but even though it was printed in Rome in the same year, it is uncertain whether this small incunable had already reached the North in 1489.

Even more important is the first collection of Agricola's works, published in 1483 by Jan van Westfalen. It is an exquisite little book with a beautiful font, a consistent spelling, and practically no mistakes. From a philological point of view it is still the best of the early sources of Agricola's works; probably the author himself had supervised its printing. The precise philology of printed books is another aspect of Northern European culture that begins at this time and in this entourage.<sup>65</sup> The booklet contains two translations into Latin (one from Greek, the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus*, and one from French, Arnold de Lalaing's letter), twelve poems (see our list in *RAP* 1988, 319–321), and two more letters, the nos. 14 to Langius and 29 to Barbireau: a total of 39 pages of prose and almost 300 lines of verse. At the time, these texts must have made a deep impression in Northern Europe. Take, for example, the long letter to Barbireau of November 1, 1482.<sup>66</sup> Agricola writes his friend Jacob Barbireau, *magister choralium* of Our Lady's church at Antwerp, about his journey to Heidelberg and about his dilemma and eventual change of mind: he has decided not to come to Antwerp to become headmaster of the Latin school, as had been more or less agreed upon. The prose in which Agricola describes his personal feelings and experiences is truly sublime. This humanism is entirely different from that of the Italians: it is livelier and deliberately elegant. The likes of this had not been seen before in the world, let alone in Northern Europe. It was printed less than a year after it was written: this shows how great an impression it had made. Erasmus, who must have owned this edition by Jan van Westfalen, quotes from it in his adage *Canis in balneo* of 1500, as he had done earlier in *De contemptu mundi*<sup>67</sup> and, perhaps later, in his *Declamatio de pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis* of 1509/29:

Dicas non esse scholam, sed carnificinam, praeter crepitum ferularum, praeter virgarum strepitum, praeter eiulatus ac singultus, praeter atroces minas nihil illic auditur.<sup>68</sup>

So schools have become torture-chambers; you hear nothing but the thudding of the stick, the swishing of the rod, howling and moaning, and shouts of brutal abuse. (CWE 26, 325)

<sup>65</sup> The book is described by Gerda C. Huisman in her *Rudolphus Agricola, a Bibliography* 1985, under no. 2.

<sup>66</sup> Agricola, *Ep.* 29.

<sup>67</sup> See below, p. 200.

<sup>68</sup> ASD I-2, 54, 24–26.

This can be compared with the following passage from Agricola's *Ep.* 29:

Datur schola, res acerba, difficilis, morosa, aspectu ipso accessuque tristis et dura, ut que flagris, lacrimis, eiulatu perpetuam carceris faciem pre se ferat.<sup>69</sup>

What is on offer is a school, something that is harsh, difficult, exacting. Its very appearance and entrance are depressing and austere; the flogging, crying and wailing continuously remind one of a prison. (Agr. *Ep.* 29, 27)

Even if this is not a quotation, it certainly stems from the same inspiration.

Thus we see that in 1489 Erasmus had access to the following works by Agricola (counting only the printed texts): five letters (nos. 3, 4, 5, 14, and 29), every single one of them a gem of humanist prose and ideology; more than 600 lines of Neo-Latin poetry; and two translations, one from Greek (Ps.-Plato) and one from French on a current political topic. This was enough to justify Erasmus's high opinion of Agricola's prose as well as his poetry. For his skill in the *artes liberales* (i.e. *grammatica*, *retorica*, *dialectica*, and *musica*, which he had studied in Groningen, Erfurt, Louvain, and Italy) Agricola is described in Erasmus's letter (*Ep.* 23 of 1489) as "omnium liberalium artium egregie eruditus". We may assume that at that time Erasmus already knew of the existence of *De inventione dialectica*, a copy of which was owned by Hegius, who mentions it in his letters.<sup>70</sup>

Erasmus was also aware of Agricola's influence on Hegius; the latter never made a secret of it. Jardine is incorrect in assuming that before 1500 there was hardly any work of Agricola that Erasmus could build on, and that Erasmus had to "invent" Agricola, as it were.<sup>71</sup> To the contrary, the oral transmission, the circulating manuscripts, and the printed booklets amply suffice to explain and understand the rich humanist education received by the young Erasmus and the stimulation and inspiration emanating from Agricola and others. In a footnote, Jardine quotes a long passage from Nauwelaerts that displays the same lack of historical perspective.<sup>72</sup> We must remember that, before Agricola and his colleagues appeared on the scene, there was practically no humanism at all to be found in *Frisia*. The first traceable Neo-Latin voice in this region is the epitaph written by Agricola for Eelste Meyma in Rasquert, a village close to Baflo in the province of Groningen; Meyma died February 21, 1467.<sup>73</sup> And the innovation that appealed to the young Erasmus is the new Latin in prose and poetry that was introduced by Agricola and his peers.

<sup>69</sup> Agricola, *Ep.* 29, 27 (*Letters*, p. 174).

<sup>70</sup> Agricola, *Epp.* 21,45; 42,5 (*Letters* pp. 132 and 232).

<sup>71</sup> 'There is no reason to doubt that Agricola had been a charismatic and inspiring figure. But at his death he left few, and relatively inconsequential, published works, and little (as it emerged) suitable for publication by those concerned to convince an international readership of the eminence and stature of their greatest homegrown humanist.' (Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters* 1993, 129).

<sup>72</sup> M.A. Nauwelaerts, *Rodolphus Agricola* 1963, 157.

<sup>73</sup> See Adrie van der Laan in *Hel en Hemel* 2001, 181. See Introduction, p. 6.

We now know the following works of Agricola: 29 Latin poems; 51 Latin letters; 7 translations from Greek and French; 7 orations (in Latin, as are the translations); a handbook on dialectics that carried much weight; some codices of texts of Pliny and Tacitus; notes, emendations, and commentaries on Boethius and Seneca; scholia on Cicero's *Pro lege Manilia*; annotations to Pliny the Elder; and a few more texts now lost.<sup>74</sup> Agricola kindled the interest in these and related subjects north of the Alps.

It is interesting to observe that at the end of the quoted fragment of *Ep.* 23, Erasmus mentions the name of Gulielmus Goudanus (Willem Hermans), and that at the beginning he had included the addressee Cornelius Gerard (Aurelius) with the modern humanists. The former had certainly studied with him at Deventer; the latter went to school in Deventer as well.<sup>75</sup> Mentioning "innumeros" others, Erasmus summarizes the recent past and the present under "nostra viderunt videntque saecula". From then on, the humanism of the Northern Netherlands is continued without an interruption both in the north (*Frisia*), the east, the south, and in the west (Holland proper).<sup>76</sup> The next generation of humanists from the Low Countries includes Erasmus (Rotterdam, Steyn), Jacob Faber (Deventer), Maarten Dorpius (Louvain), Gerard Geldenhouwer (Nijmegen), Petrus Aegidius (Antwerp), Petrus Montanus (Nijmegen), Wilhelmus Frederici, Nicolaus Lesdorpheus and Regnerus Praedinius (Groningen).

#### FROM 1489 TO 1500

The next text in which Erasmus mentions Agricola by name is *De contemptu mundi*. Published as late as 1521, it was written in essence during his stay in the monastery at Steyn, i.e. in the years 1487–1492/3.<sup>77</sup> Erasmus speaks of the suddenness with which death overtakes us and then quotes (l. 439–441):

Omnia mors sternit, quod natum est occidit. Vna  
fine caret virtus et benefacta manent.

Death scatters all; what is born must die again. Only  
Virtue knows no death, and good deeds abide. (CWE 66, 149)

<sup>74</sup> See our list in *RAP*, 313–327. For the commentary on Boethius, see M. Goris and L.W. Nauta in *Northern Humanism* 1999, 109–130; for the scholia on Cicero's *Pro lege Manilia*, see M. van der Poel in the same book, 242–266. The notes on Seneca in the Treviso edition of 1478, which Erasmus used, have not yet turned up again; see below, p. 230ff. For Agricola's notes to Pliny the Elder, see below, p. 203f.

<sup>75</sup> See Karin Tilmans, *Aurelius en de Divisiechroniek* 1988, 15–19.

<sup>76</sup> For the whole early phase see the excellent book *Education and Learning in the Netherlands 1400–1600*, 2004.

<sup>77</sup> See Harry Vredeveld 1993, 803–804. S. Dresden, in the Introduction to his edition, *ASD V-I*, 34–35, dates it 1488–1489; the quotation from Agricola is on p. 56. Vredeveld dates the text to the spring of 1491.

The quotation is preceded by the words: “Nec minus igitur vere quam erudite Rodolphus Agricola noster scripsit,” in which the qualification *erudite* probably refers to Agricola’s familiarity with literature and its *topoi* that inspired these verses. One is reminded of Sallustius, *Bell. Iug.* 2,3: “omniaque orta occidunt et aucta senescunt.” Petrarca, *Africa* 2, 344, offers the same piece of wisdom: “omnia nata quidem pereunt et adulta fatiscunt.” The *topos* is frequent in Petrarch and medieval literature.<sup>78</sup> Erasmus here quotes from Agricola’s poem *Ad Casparem Abbatem*, which contains many commonplaces and was printed in the collection of Jan van Westfalen mentioned above.

There are two more letters from the early period in which Agricola is mentioned. One is dated November 7, 1496, and addressed to Hendrik van Bergen;<sup>79</sup> Erasmus writes that Agricola used to call Lactantius “a Christian Cicero”: “Firmianum Lactantium Agricola Christianum Ciceronem solebat appellare.” This statement, known to have been made by Jerome, is not found in the preserved works of Agricola.

The other letter is dated January 27, 1501, and addressed to Anna van Borssele. Here Erasmus gives evidence of knowing Agricola’s poem *Anna mater* from the old edition by Pafraet 1484:

Tertiam [Annam] Christiana pietas adorat, Rodolphi Agricolae Baptistaeque Mantuani facundissimis literis celebratam.<sup>80</sup>

The third is an object of adoration to pious Christians, celebrated in the elegant works of Rodolphus Agricola and Baptista Mantuanus.

(CWE 2, 144–145)

From the same early period we know the adage *Canis in balneo*, included in the *Adagiorum collectanea* of 1500:

*Canis in balneo*

Citatur pro Graeco vetustoque prouerbio a Rodolpho Agricola in epistola quadam. Quem ego virum totius Germaniae publico honore nomino, nominoque hoc libentius, quod puellus huius discipulo sum vsus praeceptore, nempe Alexandro Vuesphalo, vt huic filii pietatem, illi tanquam nepotis debeam charitatem. Verum ne Rodolphi nostri gloriam Germanus praeco faciam inuidiosam, Hermolai Barbari, quem nemo (vt opinor) negat

<sup>78</sup> L.G.J. ter Haar, *Petrarca’s ‘Africa’* 1999, 387. Ter Haar refers to P. von Moos, *Consolatio: Studien zur mittellateinischen Trostliteratur* 1971–1972.

<sup>79</sup> Allen I. *Ep.* 49 (I, 163, 100–101).

<sup>80</sup> The St. Jerome passages are: *De vir. ill.* 80; *Ep.* 84,7; 13 fin. For the edition of *Anna mater*, see Gerda C. Huisman 1985, 141; Agricola, *Letters* 37,1 and note. The passage in Erasmus is Allen, *Ep.* 145,10–11 (I, 342).

inter Italos praeter summam morum innocentiam et eruditionis arcem tenuisse, epitaphium de eo subscribam:

*Inuida clauserunt hoc marmore fata Rodolphum  
Agricolam, Phrysii spesque decusque soli.  
Scilicet hoc viuo meruit Germania laudis  
Quicquid habet Latium, Graecia quicquid habet.*

Is igitur Rodolphus in ea, quam dixi, epistola senatui Hantvuerpiensi summa et facundia et fide suadere conatur, vt ludo litterario praeficiant aliquem qui litteras didicerit, nec infanti physico aut theologo hoc muneris committant, qui, quum se quacumque de re dicere posse confidat, ipsum dicere, quid sit, ignoret. *Quid enim, inquit, faciet theologus aut physicus in ludo litterario? Nempe, vt Graeci dicunt, id quod canis in balneo.* In balneis nullus est canum vsus. Nec admodum dissimile illud: *Musica in luctu*, de ioco intempestiuo.<sup>81</sup>

*A dog in the bath*

is quoted as an old Greek proverb by Rodolphus Agricola in a letter. I mention this man here in order to publicly honor all Germany in his person, and I mention him with the more pleasure because as a young boy I had his student Alexander from Westphalia as a teacher, so that I owe the latter as it were the love of a son and the former the esteem of a grandson. But in order not to compromise our Rodolphus's glory by having it proclaimed by someone from Germany like myself, I shall add below the epitaph on him by Ermolao Barbaro, who, as all (I think) agree, embodied among the Italians the highest integrity as well as the pinnacle of learning.

An envious fate locked Rudolph in this tomb,  
Agricola, hope and glory of the Frisian region;  
Through him did Germany gather, ere he met his doom,  
Praise matching that of Greece, and Rome's laudations legion.<sup>82</sup>

This Rodolphus, then, seeks in the letter I mentioned, with the greatest eloquence and the strongest arguments, to persuade the senate of Antwerp to put in charge of the school someone who has studied language and literature, and not to entrust this task to an inarticulate physicist or theologian, the kind of person who is confident that he can speak on any topic whatsoever but does not know what the notion of speaking implies. For what business, he says, does a theologian or a physicist have in a school? Why, the same as a

<sup>81</sup> *Adagiorum collectanea*, Paris 1500, fol. a4<sup>r-v</sup>. Here I follow the text of ASD II-9, 57-58.

<sup>82</sup> Transl. Rudy Bremer. See *Vita* by Geldenhouwer, in this book p. 104.

dog has in a bath, as the Greeks say. There is no use for dogs in bathtubs. Not so very different is the proverb “music at a time of mourning”, about a joke at the wrong moment.

This text makes it quite clear that Erasmus had access to Jan van Westfalen’s edition, for it contained not only the poem for Abbot Caspar but also *Ep.* 29 to Barbireau, from which this proverb is borrowed.<sup>83</sup> Erasmus must have found this adage as *erudite* as the commonplace he quotes in *De contemptu mundi*.

The motif of *mei praeceptoris quondam praeceptor* of *Ep.* 23 is repeated here and rhetorically transformed into the *filius-nepos* metaphor, so that the genealogical connection Agricola–Hegius–Erasmus is established even more firmly than in the letter. Jardine is quite right in pointing this out.<sup>84</sup>

The fine rhetorical text of the adage contains a message similar to the quoted passage from *Ep.* 23, but from an entirely different perspective. In *Ep.* 23, Erasmus wanted to remind a Dutch friend that humanist culture came from Italy neither exclusively nor directly: Germany contributed to it as well. To Erasmus, his and his contemporaries’ knowledge and enthusiasm were rooted in this Northern variant of humanism. In the adage, on the other hand, Erasmus wants to proclaim this German fame to the world – *publico honore* – and demonstrate his own gratitude and love.

The list of many names in *Ep.* 23 is limited to two here: Rudolph Agricola and Alexander Hegius. Agricola is now regarded as the epitome of the entire Northern European culture (*totius Germanie*), just as, many years later, Erasmus writes in the *Ciceronianus*: “Langios igitur et Canterios omittam, Rodolphus Agricola sufficit unus pro multis”.<sup>85</sup> This classical, rhetorical style is characteristic of Erasmus’s complete oeuvre. German fame, embodied in these two monumental figures, asks in this adage to be recognized by Italy, and sees its request granted in Ermolao Barbaro’s epitaph.

This is not the first time that the epigram by Ermolao Barbaro (1454–1493) was published in the North: it was also included in the two editions of Trithemius’s collections of *vitae*, of 1494 and 1495.<sup>86</sup> Ermolao’s admiration for Agricola may well have been inspired by Agricola’s work on Pliny the Elder;<sup>87</sup> a copy of the Pliny edition (Basel 1554) contains many written annotations, some of which are

<sup>83</sup> Agricola, *Letters* 29,45. The proverb is found in Lucianus, *De parasito*, 51.

<sup>84</sup> Jardine, 1993, 85 ff.

<sup>85</sup> See below, p. 228.

<sup>86</sup> See the bibliography in *RAP* 1988, 315–316 and 326. On his literary work, see Vittore Branca, *Epistolae, Orationes, Carmina*, 1943 and ‘Ermolao Barbaro “Poeta”’ 1964. See now Trithemius’s *vita* and notes in this volume, pp. 48 ff., 137 f.

<sup>87</sup> Ermolao Barbaro’s studies of Pliny the Elder are recorded in his *Castigationes Pliniana* of 1492 and 1493 (repr. 1973–1974).

ascribed to Agricola in a note written by a different hand on the title page.<sup>88</sup> Erasmus read the epigram in Trithemius, so he must also have known, as early as 1500, of Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* in three books (which is quite obvious anyway; see above, p. 199) and the other works listed by Trithemius.

While in *Ep.* 23 the emphasis was on poetry, in the adage it is on educational ideology, as it is in the *Antibarbari*. All three aspects of Erasmus's humanism in these years – poetry, education, and pride of German humanism – are directly derived from his Deventer background. They are found abundantly in the literary products of this Northern humanism that Erasmus had access to, i.e. not only the printed texts of Agricola and his fellow-humanists, but the circulating manuscripts as well. In the passage of *Ep.* 23 quoted above, I omitted one essential sentence: “Hos omnes et nostra viderunt videntque saecula, et nostra edidit Germania; quorum si curiosus es poematum, curabimus vt quamprimum aduolent [... if you are curious about their poems, I will see to it that they will fly to you as soon as possible].”<sup>89</sup> This refers to the poems of Agricola and the other humanists that were available to Erasmus at Steyn; it is difficult for us, focused as we are on printed, “published” texts, to realize that most of what was written at that time was available only in the form of manuscripts, which went from hand to hand and were copied over and over again. We may assume that Erasmus in 1489 had access to volumes of the poetic works of Hegius, Agricola, Antonius Liber, Rodolphus Langius, Friedrich Mormann, and Bartholomaeus Coloniensis. Of some we know this for a fact;<sup>90</sup> however, there is a need for more intensive research on this subject. Another Northern humanist, with whom Erasmus established contact some time after *Ep.* 23 (as appears from *Ep.* 32), is Jacob Canter from a prominent Groningen family, whom he still remembers in the *Ciceronianus* of 1528. We do not know how intensive those contacts with Canter were after that one letter (no. 32) of 1489. Curiously, in the nineties both Erasmus and Canter wrote a fictional dialogue in a rustic, pastoral setting, although on quite different subjects. It is not impossible that they encouraged each other in this area.<sup>91</sup> This is the first time this genre is found in Erasmus.

#### FURTHER PUBLICATION OF AGRICOLA'S WORKS FROM 1500 TO 1515

During these fifteen years, Jacob Faber, Petrus Aegidius, Alardus of Amsterdam, Gerard Geldenhouwer and Maarten Dorpius published much of Agricola's unprinted works, or initiated these publications in any case.

<sup>88</sup> In the University Library of Basel under the signature C.EI 36; see Kristeller, *Iter* v 61a. I owe this information to Dr. Adrie van der Laan.

<sup>89</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 23,71–73 (1,107).

<sup>90</sup> For Bartholomaeus, see above n. 63; for Hegius, see H. Vredevelde in ASD 1–7, 321 and n., 318, 282 n., 103n., 53, 31 and n. 71, 31,12; for Agricola see above p. 197f.

<sup>91</sup> I am referring here to Erasmus's dialogue *Antibarbarorum liber* and Canter's *Dyalogus de solitudine*, in ASD 1–1 and in Bunna Ebels 1981 and Karl Enenkel 1995 respectively.

Faber was a teacher in Deventer and, like Erasmus, had been a student of Hegius's at St. Lebuin's. He disposed of Hegius's literary legacy, including some of Agricola's works. Faber published part of Agricola's writings in three volumes:

- I. In 1503 (July 29) in Hegius's *Carmina*;
- II. Also in 1503 (December 31) in Hegius's *Dialogi*;
- III. In 1508 (October 28) under the title of *Rhodolphi Agricolae paraenesis*.

In these editions, Faber published the following texts written by and to Agricola:

- In I: *Ep.* 43 from Agricola to Hegius (ca. January 1485);  
 In II: *Ep.* 42 from Hegius to Agricola (December 17, [1484]);  
 In III: *Ep.* 38 from Agricola to Barbireau (*De formando studio*), June 7, 1484;  
*Ep.* 21 from Agricola to Hegius, September 20, 1480;  
*Ep.* 15 from Agricola to his half-brother Johannes, dated November 30, 1478, which is the dedicatory letter to the translation of Ps.-Isocrates, *Paraenesis ad Demonicum*.  
 This translation itself.

Thus Faber enriched the file on Agricola with six new documents after Jan van Westfalen's booklet of 1483, which brings the total number of printed letters to ten. These letters demonstrate the crucial contribution by Agricola and Hegius to the development of Northern humanism with respect to its philosophy of education, the fascination for language, and study of the classics. A more telling selection could hardly be made. In his work of 1508 Faber also mentions *De inventione dialectica* (in six books, he says), which was in his possession in manuscript form.<sup>92</sup> The few pages of the *Paraenesis ad Demonicum* of Ps.-Isocrates may no longer stir the interest of classical scholars today, but at the time it certainly filled a great educational need: this small document, which can be used as a commonplace book, went through some hundred reprints!<sup>93</sup> In this case Faber's publication was not the first; earlier editions had appeared in print in Heidelberg, Magdeburg, and Nuremberg. Perhaps Erasmus owned one of these, for in *Ep.* 158 of July 14, 1501, he mentions to Nicolaas Bensrott that he has sent him a Euripides and an Isocrates: "Euripidem et Isocratem ad te mittimus; parantur alia quae posthac ad te ibunt." The verb *parantur* suggests texts prepared by Erasmus himself. In 1506 he did indeed publish two translations of Euripides, and in 1514, in his *Disticha Catonis*, the *Paraenesis* in Agricola's translation. It is possible that Erasmus was already preparing these publications in 1501. If indeed Agricola's translation of

<sup>92</sup> See Agricola, *Letters*, pp. 42–48, sub B, M and Ep, and Lothar Mundt, 1992, 666–671.

<sup>93</sup> See Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books* 1996, who does not mention the booklet; for the edition of the booklet itself see Gerda C. Huisman, 1985, nos. 256–351.



the *Paraenesis* is involved here, it is not clear which text Erasmus used. However, we may safely assume that Faber took the document from Hegius's legacy.<sup>94</sup> It appears from the enumerated texts that Agricola wrote almost all his works for the classroom: that was why he sent these texts to Hegius, either directly or transcribed. He took his friend most seriously both as a student and as a means for his works to reach the schools. Hegius assumed that *De inventione dialectica*, too, was meant for his school, but since he found the book too difficult for discussion in the classroom he asked Agricola for a *breviarium*.<sup>95</sup> Agricola's translation of Isocrates' *Ad Nicoclem* is another text he wished to use in class.<sup>96</sup>

The question arises if Erasmus was involved in Faber's editions of Agricola's works. The only direct link between Faber and Erasmus is a remark at the end of Faber's dedicatory letter to Hegius's *Carmina* (1503), which was addressed to Erasmus. This letter is a *laudatio* of Hegius, and towards the end Faber ties in with Erasmus's adage *Canis in balneo* of 1500: in this way Agricola shares in the praise of Faber's and Erasmus's teacher Hegius. Faber writes:

Dabo tandem operam, quicquid de Rodolphi Agricolae operibus ad manus hic veniet, preter ea que superioribus annis edita apud bibliopolas exponuntur, te adeant.<sup>97</sup>

Finally I shall see to it that any of Rodolphus Agricola's works that come to hand here are sent on to you, except those that have been published in previous years and are now in the booksellers' shops. (CWE 2, 69)

Since Erasmus was well aware of the close ties between Agricola and Hegius, he could know or at least suspect that some of Agricola's works were to be found among Hegius's posthumous papers in Deventer. It is therefore plausible that he requested Faber to send him such texts; it does not seem very probable that Faber made him that promise spontaneously; maybe he did so only reluctantly. The promise itself is rather cryptic, for that matter: Faber does not mention the treasures he has in trust; he refers only to what will "come to hand here" yet. Besides, it seems that the promise came to naught in any case; there is no indication that Faber ever sent Erasmus any of Agricola's writings. From the revised adage *Quid cani et balneo?*, which was written and printed in September 1508 (i.e. earlier than the publication date of Faber's edition of that year), it becomes clear that Erasmus had never seen *De inventione dialectica*, which Faber had in his possession. Neither is there any evidence that Erasmus is familiar with *De formando studio* or with the other letters in Faber's collection of 1508 (see n. 197). That Faber's promise

<sup>94</sup> Faber's promise to send Erasmus Agricola's works dates from July 29, 1503.

<sup>95</sup> Agricola, *Letters*, Ep. 42,5.

<sup>96</sup> Agricola, *Letters*, Ep. 42,6.

<sup>97</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 174, 96–98 (I, 387).

might contain an announcement of a publication cannot be deduced from his words. However, Jardine writes: “It ... responds, apparently, to Erasmus’s tribute to Agricola (in the “Canis in Balneo” adage of 1500), by indicating that some collection of unpublished Agricola works is also “forthcoming”.”<sup>98</sup> It seems more probable that Faber jealously guarded his precious texts and kept them away from Erasmus – exactly in the same way as he later kept the manuscript of *De inventione dialectica* away from Alardus – until he had published them himself in 1508. And in that edition Erasmus is not mentioned. The book is dedicated with a letter to Guillelmus Modicus, Faber’s fellow-townsmen and colleague at St. Lebuin’s. The contents of this book are meant for the same school. If it makes any propaganda at all, it is for the school, for Deventer, for Agricola, and of course for Faber himself and for Modicus, who did the work.<sup>99</sup> Jardine’s theory that Faber’s publication is the redemption of a promise made to Erasmus is unfounded.<sup>100</sup> In 1508 Erasmus was in Italy.

Approximately the same story can be told about the activities of Petrus Aegidius (Pieter Gilles). This time we do have Erasmus’s explicit request to send him work by Agricola, preserved in a letter written in 1505 (ca. March) from Paris to Aegidius in Antwerp:

Vale et vndecunque potes collige Rodolphi Agricolae opuscula tecumque deporta.<sup>101</sup>

Farewell: get together (from any source you can) the minor works of Rodolphus Agricola, and bring them with you. (CWE 2, 98)

It is the only testimony on Agricola in the work of Erasmus between the adage of 1500 and the adage of 1508, apart from a corrected and augmented printing of the *Adagiorum collectanea* in 1506.<sup>102</sup> As with Faber, Erasmus could know or assume that works by Agricola were being kept in Antwerp through his close contacts there with Barbireau, Besselius, and others. As in Faber’s promise of 1503, publication is not at issue here. “To collect for publication” (Jardine, p. 90) goes a step too far both as a translation and as an interpretation. Again, there is no evidence that Aegidius fulfilled Erasmus’s request. When in 1511 Aegidius has a third collection of Agricola’s writings, entitled *Rodolphi Agricole Phrysii ... nonnulla opuscula*, published by Dirk Martens (then still in Antwerp), there is no evidence of any involvement on Erasmus’s part. This is not even probable, since at that time Erasmus was in England again. This book, dedicated to Martinus Dorpius,

<sup>98</sup> Jardine 1993, 85.

<sup>99</sup> On Guillelmus Modicus, see Agricola, *Letters*, p. 200.

<sup>100</sup> Jardine 1993, 88.

<sup>101</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 184, 14–15 (1, 414).

<sup>102</sup> Paris, Joh. Philippi Alemannus 1500; *ibid.* 1506.

contains seven texts that had already been printed earlier by Jan van Westfalen or Jacob Faber,<sup>103</sup> but also the following texts, which appeared for the first time (at least in the North):

- *Ep.* 24 to Barbireau, dated March 27, 1482;<sup>104</sup>
- *Oratio in laudem philosophiae et reliquarum artium*;
- *Oratio ad Innocentium VIII pro Ioanne Camerario Dalburgio*;
- sixteen poems, four of which had not been printed before (the nos. 8, 9, 15 and 16 of our list in *RAP*).

Thus, the collection of *Agricolana* has again been significantly expanded. Moreover, this edition of 1511 by Martens and Aegidius is more beautiful and more carefully prepared than that by Jacob Faber in 1508.

The next text, *De inventione dialectica*, was long in coming because it was very difficult to publish; it was finally printed in 1515 by Dirk Martens at Louvain. Again, Erasmus's involvement with this edition cannot be established. Agricola gave the manuscript to Hegius, from whom Faber inherited it. Faber reluctantly sold it to Alardus (he would rather have published it himself, but this apparently was beyond his power). Alardus passed it on to Geldenhouwer and Dorpius, who edited the manuscript and had it printed by Martens. It goes without saying that Erasmus was interested in this publication and welcomed it, but nothing indicates that he was the inspiration for it or for previous publications, or that he "orchestrated" all the people involved. The central thesis of Jardine's chapter is that for many years Erasmus was busy "selling" Agricola by means of letters and prefaces, in printed books and booklets, for which he put to work a small army of *castigatores*, *emendatores*, and *editores*, namely his friends and fellow-humanists: "Erasmus masterminded the recovery, editing, commentary and circulating of the works of Rudolph Agricola."<sup>105</sup> This in itself is improbable because in this entire period, from 1495 to 1515, Erasmus was constantly at a different place from where this editing had to be done; it was only during the years 1501–1504 that he stayed in the Low Countries without interruption. Meanwhile, during the entire period he published one voluminous opus after the other: the *Enchiridion*, translations of Lucian and Euripides, the *Adagia*, the *Laus stultitiae*, *De copia*, and the editions of St. Jerome and of the New Testament (1516).

What is especially improbable is the idea that Erasmus needed Agricola for building up his own name or that Faber, Aegidius, Dorpius, Geldenhouwer, or

<sup>103</sup> These are the *Axiochos*, the *Paraenesis ad Demonium*, the French epistle on the encounter between Emperor Frederick and Charles the Bold, and *Epp.* 21, 29, 38 and 43.

<sup>104</sup> Agricola, *Letters*, pp. 146–150. On the letters to Barbireau, see P. Kooiman in *RAP* 1988, 136–140 and in *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 38 (1988) 36–58.

<sup>105</sup> Jardine 1993, 129.

Alardus needed Erasmus in order to do their work on Agricola – they were not in Erasmus’s employment or under his patronage. On the contrary, we get the impression that what these scholars wanted above all was to establish their own names by publishing Agricola’s works. In these first fifteen years of the sixteenth century, they did not show the respect for Erasmus that he received later. Their attitude was not much different from that of modern scholars among each other. This also applies to Dietrich von Plieningen, who had the famous Stuttgart codex made with the intention of publishing a printed edition at some later time. In his codex he did copy some of Agricola’s work from Aegidius’s edition of 1511. This shows that this booklet had reached him, but from his part we receive no information as to whether what he owned ever reached the Low Countries. The edition was not realized: Dietrich was satisfied with his splendid codex.

ADAGIUM 339: QUID CANI ET BALNEO?<sup>106</sup>

This text from the *Adagiorum chiliades tres* of 1508 was written while Erasmus was staying in Venice at the house of the printer Aldus Manutius, who published the book. In comparison to the letter of 1489 (*Ep.* 23) and the adage of 1500, this well-known piece contains a much more extensive rhetorical *laudatio* of Agricola, and not of Agricola alone: “Deventer” is connected with “Venice”, “Germany” with “Italy”, Agricola and Hegius with Ermolao Barbaro – in short, Erasmus links the awakening Northern European humanism with its origins in Italy, and sees himself as the continuator of this Northern revival – a son of Deventer and a grandson of Venice, as it were. As he demands from Italy the recognition of Agricola, of himself, and of the humanism practiced in the North, so he insists that his native country too should recognize the “national” origin of this humanism. Erasmus fought against the misunderstanding of the mixed Italian/Northern origin and character of Northern humanism all his life; evidence of this is already found in his *Ep.* 23 to Aurelius of (probably) 1489.

The text contains a number of facts and notions about which Erasmus had not written before, but there is no evidence that he had already had access to the texts first published by Faber in 1508 and Aegidius in 1511. His only sources at the time were Jan van Westfalen’s collection from 1483 and the letters published by Faber in 1503, with the addition of the *Paraenesis ad Demonicum*, which he probably owned in one of the German editions.<sup>107</sup> To this we can add everything that was known about Agricola through oral tradition. We should remember that Erasmus received his early education while Agricola was still alive and held in high regard at Deventer. Before 1508, Erasmus had not written explicitly about Agricola’s

<sup>106</sup> For the Latin text and the English translation I refer to the conclusion of Goldenhouwer’s *Vita*.

<sup>107</sup> See above, p. 205.

musicality, his ability to give an extemporaneous speech in perfect Latin, or his knowledge of philosophy; but these facts were well known in the areas where Erasmus studied.

A rhetorical epitome, as it were, is his praise of some qualities of Agricola that Erasmus did not possess himself (Waterbolk rightly points this out):<sup>108</sup> his *lepus* in oratory, his ability to improvise in excellent Latin, his philosophical profundity, his theoretical and practical musical abilities,<sup>109</sup> his serious study of Hebrew. There is no doubt about it: in some areas Erasmus saw in Agricola not only his predecessor, but his superior. That is what he confides to Goswinus van Halen, who says: “Audiui Erasmum fateri Agricolam se longe cum in eloquentia tum in omni genere eruditionis praeire.”<sup>110</sup>

In addition, *Adagium* 339 contains some interesting information: Erasmus tells us that he learned (*didicisse*) the adage as a little boy (*puellus*). This can only mean that he learned it at school in Deventer. Agricola’s letter from which the adage was taken is dated November 1, 1482; the booklet that includes the letter was printed by Jan van Westfalen in 1483; and Erasmus’s last year at the Deventer school was 1483–1484. Consequently, the booklet (or a manuscript version) was presented by Hegius as study material in his school immediately after it had been published. Evidence of this rapid introduction of humanism at the schools can be found in Hegius’s *Ep.* 42 to Agricola.

Erasmus never played a major role in the publication of Agricola’s works. When finally, in 1514, he himself publishes one of Agricola’s texts, namely the *Isocratis paraenesis ad Demonicum*, he does not do so for purely scholarly reasons; rather, the texts in that booklet are meant to be used in the classroom. The maxims of the *Paraenesis* have the same function as the *Disticha moralia* by Cato, which are part of the book as well:<sup>111</sup> they are meant to provide young students with texts that would teach them good morals as well as good Latin. The title-page reads as follows:

Opuscula ... quibus primae aetati nihil prelegi potest neque utilius neque elegantius.<sup>112</sup>

Minor works ... which are the most useful and meticulous material that can be taught children at an early age.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Waterbolk, *Verspreide Opstellen*, 34–35.

<sup>109</sup> See Akkerman and Kooiman, ‘Agricola musicae studiosus’ in *Northern Humanism* 1999, 43–51; Edskes in *RAP* 1988, 112–117. The subject *musica* in the *artes* program involved also the more technical aspects of the instruments.

<sup>110</sup> *Vita* of Agricola by Goswinus, 11, 3; see p. 88.

<sup>111</sup> Huisman, no. 266. See also n. 93 above.

<sup>112</sup> *primae aetati* – the same words occur in *De ratione studii* (ASD 1–2, 116, 16–17); however, there they refer to the higher classes of the Latin school, not to the elementary education treated in *De pueris*.

<sup>113</sup> For the booklet see Huisman, nos. 256–261.

THE AGRICOLANA COLLECTION OF  
BEATUS RHENANUS AND MATTHIAS SCHÜRER

Six testimonies on this collection of Agricola papers have reached us. Although their story has already summarily been told by Allen and Jardine, it seems useful to quote these fragments in full here. The first is a preface by Beatus Rhenanus (1485–1547) – the well-known humanist from Sélestat, editor of classical texts, friend of Amerbach and Froben in Basel – to his edition of Pliny’s letters in February 1514. In this preface he quotes some verses by Agricola and informs us that he has some unpublished work by Agricola in his possession:

Tu vero, mi Ioannes, quod Pliniarum epistolarum lectioni tam deditus sis, ut ab illis te nullus avulserit, quodque illas in manibus semper gestes, quo menti tenacius inhaereant, non meo solum, sed etiam Rhodolphi Agricolae, polyhistoris illius, iudicio rectissime facis. Qui cum in Heidelbergensi academia studia humanitatis profiteri vellet, Plinii epistolas primo interpretari coepit, quod crederet Plinium succi plenum, brevem, sententiis densum, nitidum, accuratum et cum meditatione scribentem, eloquentiae studiosis tam utilem quam qui maxime. Hunc legendum suadebat, si quispiam se rogasset, quem pro adipiscenda eloquentia ducem sequeretur. Hunc denique tanto studio perlegerat Rhodolphus, ut suum vocaret, velut ex eo carmine evadit, quod ego nuper inter varias eius viri lucubrationes vulgo adhuc invisas reperi et hic tui gratia ad epistolae calcem adscripsi. Neque tibi tantum illud perplaciturum scio, sed et studiosis omnibus, non modo quum Plinianos *Panegyricos* extollat, sed vel ob solam Rhodolphi auctoritatem, et quum sit elegantissimum neque minus festivum. Bene vale et Plinium lege, lege et Rhodolphi hendecasyllabum carmen, quod proxime sequitur.<sup>114</sup>

As to the fact that you, my dear Johannes, are so devoted to the reading of Pliny’s letters that no one can tear you away from them and that you never put them down, so that they will stick the more firmly in your mind – you are doing the very right thing, not only in my opinion but also in that of Rodolphus Agricola, that famous many-sided scholar. When he wanted to teach humanist studies at the University of Heidelberg, he first started to interpret Pliny’s letters because he believed that Pliny, full of vigor, pithy, concise in his phrasing, elegant, precise, and thoughtful in his writing, was pre-eminently suitable for students of eloquence. He was the one he advised to be read if someone asked him whom he should follow as a guide in order to acquire a good style. He, after all, was the one whom Rodolphus had so diligently and thoroughly read that he called him “his own” [Secundus,

<sup>114</sup> *Briefwechsel des Beatus Rhenanus*, eds. Horawitz and Hartfelder 1886, no. 36.

i.e. Plinius], as appears from the poem that I recently found among various works of his, as yet unpublished, and that I have written down for you at the end of this letter. I know that it will greatly please not only you, but all those interested in scholarly pursuits, not just because he extols Pliny's *Panegyrics* but also because of Rodolphus's authority itself, and because it is most elegant and no less festive. Be well, read Pliny, and also read Rodolphus's hendecasyllabic poem, which follows now. Sélestat, February 18, 1514

The addressee, Johannes Ruser, belonged to the humanist circles of Sélestat and Strasbourg. The beginning of this letter (seven lines that are omitted here) sings the praises of Matthias Schürer, the printer at Strasbourg who was publishing Rhenanus's edition of Pliny's letters. The rest of the letter is entirely devoted to Rudolph Agricola, who thirty years earlier had been in contact with the Strasbourg humanists, printers and booksellers Adolph Rusch, Thomas Wolf, and Peter Schott. In the letters exchanged between Agricola and these men, there are many references to letters, poems, orations and translations sent by Agricola.<sup>115</sup> Among these must have been the poem Rhenanus refers to, *Ad Cribellium Mediolanensem* in 56 hendecasyllabi, the manuscript of which has been lost;<sup>116</sup> in this poem Agricola asks Crivelli for a copy of Pliny's *Panegyricus*. It is indeed a very fine and festive poem, in which Agricola says that "my Pliny" ("meus Secundus") has earned two people a good reputation by his *laudatio*: Emperor Trajan and Pliny himself. That is why Rhenanus refers to "Plinianos *Panegyricos*" in the plural.<sup>117</sup>

A small number of *Agricolana* which were unpublished at the time had been preserved in Rhenanus's library in Sélestat: two poems by Friedrich Mormann, a letter from Agricola to Mormann, and a letter from Reuchlin to Agricola.<sup>118</sup> It is no longer possible to find out what else might have been among these papers. At any rate it must have contained information about Agricola's teaching at Heidelberg; that he lectured on Pliny's *Epistulae* there cannot be found in any other source but this dedicatory letter by Rhenanus. From Agricola's own letters we know that he chose Pliny's style as an example for himself and recommended it to others as well.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup> See letters 40, 45, 46, 47 en 54 in Agricola, *Letters*.

<sup>116</sup> On this poem (*RAP*, no. 2 on p. 319) and the Crivelli family, see Schoonbeeg in *RAP* 1988, 191–192 and Sottili in *RAP* 90, and especially Sottili in *Northern Humanism* 1999, 217–219 and 221; see also Introduction, pp. 18–19.

<sup>117</sup> The *Panegyricus Traiani* is often published together with Pliny's letters.

<sup>118</sup> Poems xvii and xviii in Schoonbeeg's edition in *Wessel Gansfort* 1993 and *Epp.* 20 and 52 in Agricola, *Letters*; for the possible origin of these documents see Catrien Santing in *Wessel Gansfort* 1993, 326. Her assumption implies that these documents entered into Rhenanus's possession much later.

<sup>119</sup> Agricola, *Letters*, *Ep.* 22, 5–6. It is possible, of course, that Rhenanus received his information orally. Unpublished works by Agricola were also kept elsewhere, e.g. in the library of Bishop Johann von Dalberg; see the note on *Ep.* 19, 2 in Agricola, *Letters* (see also *ibid.* p. 49).

The second fragment is Erasmus's response of October 15, 1514 to Beatus Rhenanus's remarks in a sentence in a prefatory letter to his second edition of *De copia*. Meanwhile Erasmus must have learned that Schürer intended to edit these texts by Agricola. The letter is addressed to Matthias Schürer and is dated Basel, October 15, 1514.<sup>120</sup> Erasmus's remark is the last sentence in the letter and at first sight has no connection with what precedes it, e.g. the praise of Schürer's activities as a publisher. It is obviously meant as an exhortation to Schürer to get on with the planned edition of Agricola's works:

Lucubrationes Rodolphi Agricolae, hominis uere diuini, iamdudum expectamus, cuius ego scripta quoties lego, toties pectus illud sacrum ac coeleste mecum adoro atque exosculator. Vale.<sup>121</sup>

The works of Rodolphus Agricola, a man of more than human stature, we await with impatience; for whenever I read anything he wrote, I feel fresh admiration and affection for that inspired and soaring mind. Farewell.

(CWE 3, 43)

The third fragment is found in a letter written from Strasbourg by Nicolaus Gerbell to Erasmus at the beginning of July 1515. It is intended to excuse Schürer – for whom Gerbell worked as a corrector – to Erasmus for the delay in the publication of the planned Agricola edition. The blame is put on Beatus Rhenanus, who was supposed to prepare the texts for publication but as yet has failed to do so. Rhenanus had worked for Schürer but was now working for Amerbach-Froben in Basel.<sup>122</sup>

Salutat te ... simul et Matthias Schurerius, qui plurimum rogat B. Rhenanum ut aliquando manus Rodolpho adhibeat; nam si castigatus esset, non diutius editionem eius moraretur.<sup>123</sup>

... sends you a thousand greetings and so does Matthius Schürer, who begs Beatus Rhenatus to take Rodolphus in hand some time; for if Rodolphus were once corrected, he would publish him without further delay.

(CWE 3, 149)

The fourth testimony is a letter written almost two years later by Erasmus from Louvain to Johannes Ruser in Strasbourg. Ruser, too, worked for Schürer as a

<sup>120</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 311,25–27 (II, 32) = ASD 1–6, 24.

<sup>121</sup> According to Allen, 'The Letters of Rudolph Agricola' 1906, 305, Erasmus can have seen these papers when he was passing through Strasbourg in August 1514. Couldn't he have seen them in Basel at Beatus Rhenanus's house?

<sup>122</sup> For this information see Jardine 1993, 89 and n. 33 op p. 237 and Allen, introduction to *Ep.* 327 (II, 60).

<sup>123</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 342,41–44 (II, 121).



corrector. Once more Erasmus asks – and truly impatient this time – why the Agricola edition is so long in coming:

Demiror cur tam diu prorogetur Rodolphi Agricolae lucubrationum aeditio. Quis est, quaeso, genius malus, qui gloriam hanc nostrae inuidet Germaniae?<sup>124</sup>

I wonder very much why the publication of Rodolphus Agricola's papers is so long postponed. Who pray is this evil genius who grudges our beloved Germany the reputation he will bring her? (CWE 5, 30)

Now Matthias Schürer answers Erasmus personally, and very promptly (fragment 5):

Exinde dedissem opus Rudolphi Agricolae hoc nuncio, nisi unam partem in domicilio meo mutando sic seposuissem ut ubi acquiram incertus sim; totas quippe aedes inuestigandi eius gratia perlustravi: acutioribus oculis in posterum, si aliubi possim reperire ac olim ad te fido tabellione reddere, rimaturus. Est, crede mihi, opus plerisque in locis adeo mendosum ut Aedippo nonnunquam opus esse uideatur: tuo tamen labore atque ingenio emaculari, quem nihil unquam fugiat, ac tandem in lucem castigato castigatius emergi facile omnium assensu literatorum mihi persuasi.<sup>125</sup>

I would have dispatched Rodolphus Agricola's work forthwith by this courier if I had not put aside one piece of it so carefully when I was moving house that I am not sure where to find it; I have been through the whole house in search of it. I shall look for it in future with sharper eyes, in hope of finding it somewhere and sending it to you one day by a safe hand. Take my word for it, it is so corrupt in some places that it often seems to need an Oedipus; but your efforts, your intelligence can clear it up, for nothing ever escapes you, and at length it will see the light well and truly corrected – of this I am quite confident, and all educated people agree with me. (CWE 5, 45)

Let us observe that, while the previous letters spoke of *lucubrationes* by Agricola (which is an appropriate term for the various small works that Agricola sent to Strasbourg from Heidelberg), Schürer now uses the term *opus*, which rather suggests one coherent work. One also wonders what Schürer means with *unam partem*: does it refer to a part of Agricola's works, or of Schürer's files in general? Moreover, if this text is so rough and defective, it could not contain copies of poems, translations, orations, or original letters. Most probably it consists of

<sup>124</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 606,18–20 (III,19). Letter of July 1517.

<sup>125</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 612,24–32 (III,30). Letter from Matthias Schürer.

rough drafts by Agricola, which, as we know, were notorious for their sloppiness. Geldenhouwer refers in such terms to the first book of *De inventione dialectica* that he prepared for printing; the other two books had apparently reached the North in much neater copies. It is tempting to think that Agricola sent this entire work to Strasbourg, the first book in a clean copy, the second and third in his own draft, but not before clean copies had been made in Heidelberg, of course. Furthermore, the phrasing of the letter suggests that Schürer had asked Erasmus to undertake the correction and had received a more or less affirmative answer. But these are nothing but speculations.

The sixth and last testimony is a letter written well over a month later, from Erasmus to Ruser:

Si mittat [sc. Schürer] opera Rodolphi, fungar amici officio, licet alias sim occupatissimus; aut si quid aliud in mentem venerit, impertiam.<sup>126</sup>

If he likes to send me Agricola's works, I will do what a friend should, though very busy with other things. Or if anything else occurs to me, I will let him know. (CWE 5, 81)

Erasmus, who may have seen Agricola's papers (see note 121), uses the plural *opera*. The somewhat chilly wording suggests that Erasmus is not overly eager to take on this laborious task. He has great admiration for Agricola's achievements – again, Agricola is seen as a “national” offset to the Italian movement (see the fourth testimony) – but at the moment he is too busy with other things.

What can we conclude from all this? It seems certain that Rhenanus and Schürer possessed unedited works by Agricola. But whether these works consisted of translations, orations, and poems that have not reached us through other sources (the Stuttgart codex, Alardus) is a question better considered sceptically. Agricola or his friends would not have sent such texts to Strasbourg without retaining a copy for safekeeping. It seems likelier that among the papers that were misplaced and irretrievably lost during Schürer's move were private letters.<sup>127</sup>

#### ERASMUS'S REACTION TO AGRICOLA'S *DE INVENTIONE DIALECTICA*

I do not intend to describe the influence that Agricola's famous book had on Erasmus's work, or to compare the significance of both humanists in the areas of rhetoric and dialectic. I will limit myself to the specific passages where Erasmus gives evidence of knowing Agricola's book. Having found five such passages, I will quote them here in a roughly chronological order.

<sup>126</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 633,6–8 (III,55). Letter of August 24, 1517.

<sup>127</sup> At least we know that Agricola's answer to Peter Schott's letter (*Ep.* 45) was received in Strasbourg (see *Ep.* 54) although it has not been preserved.

Soon after the printed publication of *De inventione dialectica* by Martens in 1515, Erasmus sent his reaction in a letter to Guilelmus Budaeus on October 28, 1516:

Post editum opus [sc. *De copia*] comperi apud Rodolphum Agricola non-nihil; quem virum si fatorum invidia superesse voluisset, haberet Germania quem Italis opponeret qualem nunc Gallia Budaeum, sed unum. Equidem videbam exemplis ex optimis autoribus allegandis permultum maiestatis accessurum operi, verum partim horrebam voluminum magnitudinem, partim perisset utilitas iis quibus labor ille peculiariter desudabat, quando nunc quoque passim queruntur literatores argutius esse opus quam ut a mediocriter doctis possit intelligi.<sup>128</sup>

After my work was published I discovered a certain amount in Rodolphus Agricola, a man, who, had the envious Fates allowed him to live longer, would have given Germany someone to match against the Italians, just as France now has Budé, though no one else. For my own part, I perceived that the addition of examples from the best authors would add greatly to the dignity of the work; but in part I was fearful of making the volumes too big, and in part it would have lost its value for the particular class of readers to whose benefit all my labours were directed. Even now teachers in many places complain that the work is too clever to be understood by readers of moderate attainments (CWE 4, 105)

Alexander Hegius wished or hoped that Agricola would rewrite his *De inventione dialectica* as a small, manageable textbook for the students of his school (see above, p. 206), but Erasmus, who was working for a new generation of teachers and students, knew that this greatness (*maiestas*) was no longer practical. Nevertheless, he recognizes that by quoting examples from the best authors Agricola had given his theory of argumentation the allure of a masterpiece, even from a literary point of view.<sup>129</sup> *De copia* is a textbook to be used by teachers in Latin classes, while *De inventione dialectica* is a scholarly and philosophical instrument to find the right arguments and the right interpretation of texts. To Erasmus, the latter book was entirely beyond the scope of his practical, pedagogical strategy. We may observe that he refers to the teachers (*literatores*) of his time not without a certain disdain – *De copia* is already too subtle for them. Agricola would never have treated Hegius or Liber and others so superciliously. Nevertheless, Agricola, too, is quite concerned about the accessibility of his book; already in *Ep.* 51,1 he writes to Occo:

<sup>128</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 480,99–107 (II,36). On the importance of Agricola's *magnum opus* for Erasmus, see the following recent works: Jardine 1993, ch. 5; Mack, *Renaissance Argument* 1993, ch. xv; Van der Poel, 'Die loci argumentorum im Ecclesiastes' 2000. See also Ann Moss, *Commonplace-Books* 1996, *passim* (see index).

<sup>129</sup> P. Mack, *Renaissance Argument* 1993, *passim*; *idem*, 'Rudolph Agricola's Reading of Literature' 1985.

Caeterum in hoc opere, praeterquam quod stilum exercui, plane uideor mihi operam perdidisse. Nam nisi quis meliores literas attigerit, non uideo, magnopere quid possit prodesse ei, propter multitudinem exemplorum, quae ab eruditioribus scriptoribus erant eruenda; et idcirco negligetur ab eis, ut qui balbi praeter balba nihil intelligant.<sup>130</sup>

But with this work I would clearly seem to have wasted my efforts, except for the exercise of my pen: unless someone had looked into the better literature, I cannot see how it could be of much use to him, because of the multitude of examples that I have had to dig out of the more learned authors. And therefore it will be ignored by those who understand nothing but stammering, being stammerers themselves. (Agr. Ep. 51,1)

The second passage dates from much later; yet, like the first, it shows how wide was the gulf that Erasmus perceived between his own practical works written for school and pulpit, and the philosophical allure of Agricola's dialectics. In *Ecclesiastes* II, he speaks about the *loci communes* of the *dialectici* and the *rhetores*.<sup>131</sup> He divides the *loci* in four kinds, the fourth of which are the *loci generales*, “qui declarant quid omnino cuique rei accidat” – “which indicate what, in general, each thing has in the way of a non-essential quality (*accidens*).” Then he says:

De his [locis generalibus] accuratissime nostro saeculo scripsit vir immortalis gloria dignus Rodolphus Agricola. Scripsit autem exactissima cura, phrasi vero qua nihil esse potest expolitius, sed acumina quaedam affectata, veluti de prima materia, ac digressiones, quibus nunc a Boetio, nunc ab Aristotele, nunc ab aliis magna quidem subtilitate dissentit, satis declarant illum hoc opus non cudisse pueris ediscendum, sed eruditis viris admirandum.<sup>132</sup>

These [commonplaces] have been most precisely written about in our time by a man who deserves immortal glory, Rodolphus Agricola. To be sure, he has written with the most meticulous care and in an eminently polished style, but certain subtleties that have been deliberately designed because they deal with fundamentals, and digressions in which he, with great intelligence, sometimes disagrees with Boethius, sometimes with Aristotle or others, make it quite clear that he has hammered out this work not as a learning tool for children, but to be admired by highly educated men.

<sup>130</sup> Agricola, *Letters*, p. 254 (Ep. 51). Erasmus expresses a similar opinion in *De copia* (see Ann Moss 1996, 84 and quotation no. 81 on p. 294). This letter was printed as a kind of preface in the Martens edition of *De Inventionis Dialectica* of 1515; there Erasmus might well have read it.

<sup>131</sup> ASD v-4, 400, 851 ff. The *Ecclesiastes* was completed in 1535.

<sup>132</sup> ASD v-4, 402, 876–882.

These two fragments show clearly that Erasmus perceives himself as writing for practical purposes, whereas he sees Agricola as a theoretician.<sup>133</sup> Yet this does not in any way detract from Erasmus's admiration for Agricola or his book; in both texts he expresses it unambiguously. Thus, the word "argutius" in the first fragment and the words "acumina affectata" in the second do not reflect a negative judgment on Erasmus's part. The translations of the latter two words offered by Mack ("a rather pretentious ingenuity") and Van der Poel ("gesuchte Spitzfindigkeiten") make an unfavorable impression which is not supported by the context.<sup>134</sup> *Acumina* are "subtleties" (translated by Chomarat as "finesses", "subtilités")<sup>135</sup> and not "sophistries" in the sense of scholastic nitpicking (*cavillationes*). Further, *affectata* is not "contrived" in a critical or disapproving sense but rather "striven for", "intended", "deliberate"; and *velut* here does not mean "as if" (Mack) or "zum Beispiel" (Van der Poel) but, by way of justification, "as being".<sup>136</sup> Finally, I doubt whether *prima materia* here means "prime matter" (πρώτη ὕλη) in a philosophical sense, about which Agricola writes in *De inventione dialectica* I, §9 – it is interpreted as such by Chomarat – or if the term here can simply be translated as "metaphysics" (Mack, Van der Poel); I prefer the translation "subject matter of chief importance", "fundamental matter". In my opinion the entire passage expresses great admiration for Agricola, but at the same time Erasmus makes it clear that *De inventione dialectica* is unsuitable for his own practical purpose, i.e. classroom teaching. If the first part of the sentence starting with "Scripsit" was meant disapprovingly, then the words "eruditus viris admirandum" would be inappropriate: the term *eruditi viri* usually refers not to the scholastic philosophers but to the highly educated humanists – to whom Erasmus himself belongs.

Therefore there is no doubt that Erasmus himself had read the *De inventione dialectica*. In *Adag.* 3430 he quotes a proverb borrowed from Agricola's book:

*Mira de lente*

Rodolphus Agricola, vir immortalitate dignus, libro *Dialectices* tertio testatur apud Graecos prouerbio dici solere egregia de lente, quoties res humilis et pusilla magnificis laudibus attolleretur.<sup>137</sup>

*Wondrous words about a lentil*

In book three of his *On Dialectic* Rodolphus Agricola, a man worthy of immortal memory, attests that the Greeks often used the proverb "Outstand-

<sup>133</sup> See Van der Poel, the article mentioned in n. 128; J.H. Waszink, 'Erasmus and his influence on Anglo-Dutch Philology,' 1976.

<sup>134</sup> Mack 1993, 311; Van der Poel 2000, 210.

<sup>135</sup> Jacques Chomarat in ASD v-4, 403, on 879.

<sup>136</sup> See OLD, s.v. *uelut*, 6.

<sup>137</sup> ASD II-7, 260 (*Adag.* 3430). The adage is borrowed from *De inventione dialectica* III,14 (ed. Mundt 1992, p. 538, l. 68).

ing things about a lentil” whenever something insignificant and trivial was extolled with magnificent praise. (CWE 36, 162)

Earlier, Erasmus had discussed this proverb in a different form (*in lente unguentum*, i.e., perfume on lentils) in *Adag.* 623, but at that time he did not yet know Agricola’s book: *Adag.* 623 occurred not only in the edition of 1508, but also in *Collectanea* 367 of 1500, while *Adag.* 3430 first appeared in the edition of 1520.<sup>138</sup>

That Erasmus valued Agricola’s *De inventione dialectica* highly is also obvious from *Ep.* 1978 written March 20, 1528, to Haio Hermannus Phrysius:

Dialogis meis de *Pronunciatione* et *Ciceroniano* adieci orationem Rodolphi Agricolae, Mediolani, sic uti videtur, habitam. Nihil ab illo viro proficiscitur quod non diuinitatem quandam spiret. Itaque nolim quicquam illius intercidere. Hoc studii, mi Hermanne, debes vel patriae vel affinitati. Quare te rogo ut in hoc incumbas. Nulli magis congruit hoc munus quam tibi. Opus de *Inuentione Rhetorica* quidam oneravit commentariis, iuuenis, ut apparet, nec indoctus nec infacundus; sed insunt multa πάρεργα, quaedam etiam odiosiora iuueniliterque destomachata. Malim scholia docta et ad rem facientia. Ni tot oneribus essem oppressus, non grauarer hanc suscipere prouinciam; adeo faueo Rodolphi memoriae. Hanc operam si sumpseris, simul et tuum nomen reddes illustrius. Feret haec aliquam tibi fama commoditatem. Socerum tuum Pompeium Occonem saluta meis verbis diligenter. Tu vale quam optime.<sup>139</sup>

To my dialogues *On Pronunciation* and *Ciceronianus* I have added an oration by Rodolphus Agricola, which apparently he held in Milan, as it seems. Nothing originates from that man that doesn’t breathe a certain divine genius. And so I do not want anything by him to be lost. This pursuit, my dear Herman, you owe either to your native country or to your kinship. That is why I ask you to apply yourself to this. No one is better suited for this task than you. Someone has provided the work *On Rhetorical Invention* with a load of annotations, a young man who is clearly neither ignorant nor inarticulate. But it contains much that is insignificant, and some of it is downright boring and digested in an immature way. I would prefer learned and pertinent notes. If I were not weighed down with so many other burdensome tasks, I would gladly take this assignment upon me; so eager am I to preserve Rodolphus’s memory. If you are willing to undertake this effort, you will at the same time lend more lustre to your own name. This fame can only be to your advantage. Be sure to greet your father-in-law, Pompeius Occo, from me. Be as well as possible.

<sup>138</sup> *Adag.* 623 occurs in ASD II-2 (1998), 148–150; *Adag.* 3430 is found in ASD II-7 (1999), 260. At the Agricola passage, Mundt (p. 652) refers to Ad. 623 only.

<sup>139</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 1978, 2–16 (vii, 368).

Again we see that Erasmus, while expressing his great and sincere admiration for Agricola, cannot find the time to make a contribution by personally writing a commentary on *De inventione dialectica*. He wants to delegate that task to Haio Hermannus, the son-in-law of Pompeius Occo, who was the nephew of Agricola's friend Adolph Occo. During this very time Pompeius Occo produced the manuscript of *De inventione dialectica*, which had been presumed lost.<sup>140</sup> The commentator whom Erasmus criticizes here is Ioannes Matthaëus Phrissemius, who had written annotations (*scholia*) to his first edition of Agricola's book (1523).<sup>141</sup> From his criticism it appears that Erasmus had gone through the book more than superficially and found that a truly competent commentary was still needed.

Alardus took Erasmus's high praise of Agricola ("nihil ab illo viro ... spiret. Ita que ... intercidere") so seriously when editing Agricola's works that he decided to include Agricola's letters to his half-brother Johannes, which he otherwise thought more damaging than beneficial to his hero's reputation and therefore had almost thrown out.<sup>142</sup> From the same passage from Alardus we learn that Erasmus had received Agricola's oration for Matthias Richilus from Alardus ("forte nacti", says Erasmus – "obtained by chance"). This proves once more that Erasmus did not search far and wide for a text by Agricola which he could publish. And once more he wants someone else to take on the task of publishing Agricola: this time it is Haio Hermannus, because he is a Frisian (again, the glory of the North versus that of Italy) and because he is the son-in-law of Pompeius Occo, who through his uncle was close to Agricola and (more importantly) very wealthy. It appears from this material that Erasmus read *De Inventione Dialectica* thoroughly, that he held it in high esteem and searched for a competent and trustworthy scholar to edit and annotate it.

#### ERASMUS ON AGRICOLA'S DEATH

Erasmus refers to Agricola's death in two passages of his work. The first is *Adag.* 2262, in which the lines on Agricola were added in the first authorized edition by Froben (1515). The tenor of this adage, "Certamen non accipit excusationes", is that postponement at critical moments is dangerous.

Veluti si quis in morbo capitali medicum operiatur insignem aut procul accersendum. Quae res hominem illum vere diuinum extinxit Rodolphum Agricolam. Etenim dum contatur medicus, mors anteuertit.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>140</sup> See the letter from Alardus to Clenardus, dated May 1, 1528 (Agricola, *Lucubrationes* \*4).

<sup>141</sup> For the title of this book see Mundt 1992, 721. Kölker 1963, 40 asks the question whether the young man in question could be Alardus; however, on p. 79 he suggests Phrissemius as the author.

<sup>142</sup> Alardus, Agricola *Lucubrationes* 221.

<sup>143</sup> ASD II-2, 221.

... like a man in mortal illness who waits for some grand physician or one who must be fetched from afar. It was this that killed that really godlike Rodolphus Agricola; death took him while the doctor was still on his way.

(CWE 34, 303)

This account of Agricola's death and of the physician, Occo, who arrived too late, is found only in the *vita* by the Von Plieningen brothers. However, this *vita* was still in Southern Germany in manuscript form at the time, so Erasmus could not have read it. Of course the story could have reached him by word of mouth, or through letters no longer available to us. Occo lived until 1503.

Erasmus's other story about Agricola's death, namely that he was buried in a Franciscan habit, is found in the colloquy *Exequiae seraphicae* of 1531. No written testimony of this story has been preserved (perhaps it also reached the North via Occo), but Trithemius's *vita* does mention that Agricola was buried in the church of the Franciscans in Heidelberg. In the colloquy one of the characters, Theotimus, says to the other, Philecorus (Erasmus):

*Th.* Ac ne repudies ignotorum hominum exempla, sic [sc. in amictu Franciscano] sepultus est ille, cui tu merito plurimum tribuis, Rodolphus Agricola, sic nuper Christophorus Longolius.

*Ph.* Mea nihil refert quid delirent homines, quum agunt animam; ex te doceri cupio, quid magni boni conferat hominem metu mortis attonitum ac certae vitae desperatione perturbatum profiteri aut vestiri.<sup>144</sup>

*Theotimus:* And – that you may not reject the examples of men unknown to you – Rodolphus Agricola, whom you rightly esteem very highly, was buried in this manner [in the sacred garb]. So, recently, was Christopher Longolius.

*Philecorus:* What men rave about when they're dying makes no difference to me. I want to learn from you what great good it does a man who is overwhelmed by the terror of death and agitated by despair of the certainty of life to make the profession or put on the garb. (CWE 40, 1003)

Erasmus had referred earlier to the Franciscan habit and its reputed beneficial effect on the deceased: "Franciscana tunica etiam mortuo inducta liberat ab inferis" ("the Franciscan tunic even when put on a corpse frees the dead man from hell" (CWE 4, 23)) This is a quotation from his well-known letter to Lambertus Grunnius of August 1516, in which Agricola was not mentioned, however. To sensitive natures in Erasmus's time, remarks like these must have come across as cynical; no wonder they were strongly disapproved of.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>144</sup> ASD I-3, 689, 110-111.

<sup>145</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 447, 508-509 (II, 305). Cf. Nauwelaerts, *Rodolphus Agricola* 1963, 89; 164; and n. 40



## OTHER LETTERS FROM 1515 TO 1523

In a letter to Erasmus dated May 1515 by Allen, John Fisher gives an account of his reading Agricola's *De inventione dialectica*, which had appeared in print January 12, 1515:

Perlegimus, Erasme, his diebus Rodolphi Agricolae *Dialecticam*; venalem enim eam repperimus inter bibliopolas. Fecit autem vt emerem laus tua, qua illum inter *Adagia* tua prosequeris; neque enim persuadere mihi potui quin is lectu dignissimus foret, qui a te simul et Hermolao illo tantopere commendatus fuit. Paucis dicam: nihil vnquam, quantum ad artem illam pertinet, legimus iucundius et eruditius; ita singula quidem puncta expressisse videtur. Vtinam iuuenis praeceptorem illum fuissem nactus! Mallem id profecto, neque sane mentior, quam archiepiscopatum aliquem.<sup>146</sup>

My dear Erasmus, I have been reading in the last few days the dialectic of Rodolphus Agricola, which I found on sale in the bookshops. I was induced to buy it by the praise which you give him in your *Adagia*. For I never could persuade myself that a man could be other than very well worth reading, who was so much praised at the same time by you and Ermolao. To put it briefly, I never read anything, as far as that art is concerned, more enjoyable or better informed; he seems to have put every point so clearly. How I wish I had had him for a teacher! I would rather that – and I am speaking the truth – than be made an archbishop. (CWE 3, 110)

The next letter in which Agricola is mentioned dates from September 29, 1516, and is written by Erasmus to Johann Reuchlin. I quote only the following:

Et infoelicitatem tuam deploras? qui foelicissimo illo seculo videris Italiam, florente Agricola, Politiano, Hermolao, Pico.<sup>147</sup>

And why do you lament your bad luck? You saw Italy in that blessed age when Agricola flourished and Poliziano and Ermolao and Pico. (CWE 4, 85)

Here, Agricola is not seen as merely the pioneer of Northern humanism: he is put on a par with the great Italians of the golden age of humanism – a bygone era that Erasmus greatly admired.

on p. 187. Erasmus himself had already predicted the horror of some readers: 'Hic exhorrescent stolidi qui summam religionis in veste collocent' (*Ep.* 447, 497 (II, 305)). Other passages where Erasmus refers to the Franciscan (or Dominican) habit: ASD I-3, 134, 278-280; *ibid.* 663, 365-370; LB V, 136D; ASD IV-1A, 122, 165-174.

<sup>146</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 336, 1-9 (II, 90).

<sup>147</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 471, 9-11 (II, 350).

Dated well over a month later (November 11, 1516) is a letter written by Alardus of Amsterdam to Erasmus; here we learn for the first time about the Agricola papers in the possession of Pompeius Occo:

Mercatori Pompeio Oconi Phrisio nomen est; mens, vt libros ad vnum omnes in vniuersum distrahat. Index mihi iam non suppetit; certo tamen scio domi suae libris amplius mille delitescere blattisque vndecunque praerodi, libris inquam reconditissimis atque eisdem vetustissimis; in quos si incidas, haud quaquam te reperisse clamabis id quod pueri in faba. Homo qui hanc apparatusissimam Rodolphi Agricolae suppellectilem librariam tam negligenter tamque clam omnibus asseruat, vix dum contriuit Aesopum; satrapam diuitiis, fastu Trasonem modis omnibus adumbrat. Amstelredamis habitat; cuius aedes vulgo Paradisus appellatur. Scripsi cum tabellione nostro vt κατάλογον mihi tuo nomine transmittat; id quod pro veteri inter nos necessitudine haud cunctanter, opinor, faciet. Ad haec,

Quod si fata meis patiantur ducere vitam,  
Auspiciis et sponte mea componere curas,

sub Calendas Ianuarias proximas sacris operaturus Amstelredamos concedam. Quare si ipse fortasse non transmittat, ego quoque tibi fideliter allaturus ad te quicquid indidem postulabis, etiamsi maximo foret redimendum.<sup>148</sup>

There is a merchant called Pompeius Occo, from Friesland, and he intends to sell all his books to the public without exception. I have just now no access to the catalogue, but I know for certain that in his house more than a thousand books are lying hidden and being gnawed by the worms – really rare books, I mean, and really old ones; and if you can lay hands on any of them, you will not cry out that you have found what children find in beans. The man who keeps Rodolphus Agricola’s very rich library so carelessly and in such privacy has barely passed the stage of thumbing his Aesop; he is as rich as a nabob and in his grand way of life a proper Thraso. He lives in Amsterdam, where his house is commonly called the Paradise. I wrote by my courier to ask him to send me a list for your benefit; and as we are old acquaintances, I expect he will do this without delay. Besides which, “if fate would let me live as I would choose, / and lull my cares to rest at my own choosing,” about the first of January next I shall be moving to take up a chaplaincy in Amsterdam. So if by any chance he does not send it, I shall be able to bring you without fail anything you may want from his library, even if the price is very high. (CWE 4, 122)

<sup>148</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 485, 30–47 (II, 376–377); see Allen’s note on l. 30.

This letter indicates that the availability of Agricola's work is entering a new phase, which will eventually lead to the edition of 1539 by Alardus. However, that is still a long way off: for the moment, Alardus only asks for a catalog of Pompeius's library, hoping that he will be able to make some purchases for Erasmus. Although Pompeius Occo is depicted as a rather disagreeable character, Alardus would enter his service in 1523; later again, Alardus praised him to the skies.<sup>149</sup> I conclude from this letter that Alardus had informed Erasmus some time before that he was tracking down a new collection of *Agricolana*.

Well over a month later (March 22, 1517) Beatus Rhenanus writes a letter to Erasmus, in which the name of Agricola occurs as follows:

Quam estis plusquam Cicerones, plusquam Lysiae, plusquam Demosthenes ad hunc comparati tu et Rodolphus Agricola! sed ad quem non?<sup>150</sup>

Really, when compared with this man, you and Rodolphus Agricola are more than Cicero or Lysias or Demosthenes. Compared with anybody, for that matter. (CWE 4, 292)

The man vilified here is a certain Caelius (Ludovicus Caelius Richerius, ca. 1450–1525), who had written a book entitled *Antiquae lectiones*, published first by Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1516, then by Froben in Basel in 1517.<sup>151</sup> Evidently, the *ars oratoria* is the point of comparison for Beatus Rhenanus.

In the same year 1517 Erasmus writes Alardus a letter as a *praefatio* to his edition of Eucherius, which was published that year by Martens in Louvain, where Erasmus was living at that time. Erasmus writes:

Caeterum libellum hunc a Rodolpho Agricola versum non esse vel stilus ipse satis arguit, praesertim cum quaedam sint schemata quae ne possint quidem ad Graecam orationem respondere. Gennadius indicat esse Eucherii Lugdunensis ecclesiae episcopi: moxque huius meminit epistolae quam scripserit ad Valerianum propinquum suum de contemptu mundi deque relinquendo studio prophanae philosophiae.<sup>152</sup>

In any case, that the book could not be a translation made by Rodolphus Agricola is clear enough from the style, especially since it makes use of several forms of expression which could not possibly reproduce a Greek original. Gennadius gives the author's name as Eucherius, bishop of Lyon, and proceeds

<sup>149</sup> E.g. in an epitaph signaled by Kölker 1963, 13, n. 3 (see p. 277); see also Kölker, 55–56; and see Allen, *Ep.* 433 (introduction) (II, 269). Alardus put together a passionary for Occo, which appeared April 2, 1523, in Amsterdam (see Kölker, 55–60; for its title-page see Kölker, 273).

<sup>150</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 556, 34–36 (II, 512).

<sup>151</sup> See Allen's note with *Ep.* 556, 27–34 (II, 348, n. 8).

<sup>152</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 676, 20–26 (III, 99, n.).

to mention the letter which he wrote to his kinsman Valerian, how to despise the world and abandon the study of secular philosophy. (CWE 5, 138)

The false information that Agricola had translated this booklet from the Greek is found in the title of Eucherius's letter as published in Deventer by Jacob van Breda.<sup>153</sup> Erasmus's conclusion that the translation is not by Agricola is based on his thorough insight into Agricola's translating technique, as explicitly formulated by Agricola himself in *Ep.* 15,6–7, the letter of dedication with his translation of Ps.-Isocrates' *Paraenesis ad Demonicum*. Not only did Erasmus know this text well (see above, pp. 205 and 209f.), he also easily recognized which rhetorical figures in Agricola's translation are of Greek origin.

A letter written by Erasmus from Anderlecht on September 24, 1521, is addressed to an important administrator, Bernardus Bucho Phrysius, originally from Zuichem (Swichum) near Leeuwarden. The well-known Viglius ab Aytta (on him, see Introduction, p. 36) was one of his nephews. This letter contains the following passage:

Quod Phrysiorum natio bonas literas amplectitur, sane nouum non est, vt quae nobis iam pridem Rodolphum Agricolam, Langium, et Canterios dederit.<sup>154</sup>

That the Frisian people would welcome the humanities is, to be sure, nothing new, for long ago they gave us Rodolphus Agricola, Langen and the Canters. (CWE 4, 292)

This shows that as late as 1521 an epitome of "Frisian" humanism (Langius came from Münster in Westphalia!) could still be used to flatter a prominent man from Friesland. Mormann († 1482) and Liber († 1507/8) are no longer mentioned; Langius, however, had died only a few years earlier, in 1519, and important members of the Canter family were still alive.<sup>155</sup>

Now we arrive at a passage mentioned earlier in connection with the age at which Erasmus had met Agricola (see above, p. 192): it is found in Erasmus's letter to Johannes Botzheim of January 30, 1523, to which Allen gave its prominent

<sup>153</sup> See Allen, III 98–99; IJsewijn in *RAP* 1988, 26–27; Akkerman in *RAP* 1988, 327. The book by Jacob van Breda dates from ca. 1487 (Huisman 360; Campbell 1699); another edition of the same letter of Eucherius (Peter Os van Breda, ca. 1497, Campbell 709) does not mention Agricola as its translator. See also Goswinus 10, 1 and n.

<sup>154</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 1237, 10–12 (IV, 589).

<sup>155</sup> Jacob Canter (1469–1529) was the author of the *Dyalogus de solitudine*; his father, the lawyer Johannes Canter, was a regular visitor of the Aduard monastery when Hendrik van Rees was abbot (Wessel Gansfort, *Opera* 1614, \*\*4<sup>v</sup>); Ghelmer Canter was still secretary of Groningen after 1520. On these men see Ebels-Hoving 1981, 22 (and n. 22); Akkerman in *Northern Humanism* 1999, 12 and n. 42, with more literature.

place at the beginning of his collection because it contained a retrospective and summary of Erasmus's life as a humanist up to that year: the *Catalogus omnium Erasmi Lucubrationum*. I quote lines 20–27:

Nam me puero reppululascere quidem coeperant apud Italos bonae literae, sed ob typographorum artem aut nondum repertam aut paucissimis cognitam nihil ad nos librorum perferebatur, et altissima quiete regnabant ubique qui literas docebant illiteratissimas. Rodolphus Agricola primus omnium aurulam quandam melioris literaturae nobis inuexit ex Italia; quem mihi puero ferme duodecim annos nato Dauentriae videre contigit, nec aliud contigit.<sup>156</sup>

When I was a boy, the humanities had begun to put forth fresh shoots among the Italians; but because the printer's art was either not yet invented or known to very few, nothing in the way of books came through to us, and unbroken slumber graced the universal reign of those who taught ignorance in place of knowledge. Rodolphus Agricola was the first to bring us a breath of more humane learning out of Italy; in Deventer, as a boy of twelve or so, I was blessed with a sight of him, and that was all. (CWE 9, 293)

This text was written in the same year 1523 as the *Spongia* addressed to Ulrich von Hutten, in which Erasmus reconfirms his praise of Hegius and Agricola, which he had also expressed in the adage written fifteen years earlier. Erasmus is now 56 years of age and is looking back on his time as a student in Deventer, 44 years earlier. Agricola has become a phenomenon of historical significance, the sole founder (in the rhetorical style of the classical historians) of a new culture in the North. Compared to what was created and published later in the way of humanistic and classical literature, this beginning seems no more than a whiff (*aurula*), but in the context of that time it was a rapid fundamental change. The word “whiff” refers especially to the earliest humanists' first contact with the classics and the first letters and poems they created.

In conclusion, a remark on the words “nec aliud contigit”. Reedijk reads these words as an “apparently unpleasant remark”: he takes them to mean that Agricola had actually meant next to nothing to Erasmus. But that is incorrect; what Erasmus means is this: “only once was I lucky enough to see the great Agricola, and unfortunately that was all the personal contact I ever had with him.”<sup>157</sup>

<sup>156</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 1, 20–27 (1, 2).

<sup>157</sup> Reedijk 1956, 42–43.

## AGRICOLA AND REUCHLIN

In his *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum* (the edition of 1516) Erasmus writes the following note to 2 *Cor.* 6, 15, with reference to the name (or the word) “Belial”:

Graeca scholia indicant Belial Hebraeis significare “desertorem”, hoc est “luciferum”. At eximius ille Ioannes Reuchlinus, vir undequaque doctissimus et alterum post Rodolphum Agricolam decus et ornamentum nostrae Germaniae, in suo Lexico docet Belial apud Hebraeos significare malum et iniquum aut etiam noxium daemonem, quod satius quadrat.<sup>158</sup>

The Greek scholia state that to the Hebrews Belial means “deserter”, that is “Lucifer”/ “bringer of light”. But the outstanding Johannes Reuchlin, a man learned in every respect and after Rodolphus Agricola, a second ornament and glory to our Germany, teaches in his Lexicon that among the Hebrews “Belial” means an evil and unjust or even harmful demon, which is more suitable.

What is interesting about this text is that for once Agricola is not mentioned for any rhetorical or pedagogical reason. Erasmus counts Agricola and Reuchlin among the very great because of their knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, and as an editor and commentator of the Bible he means this sincerely. He does not consider Reuchlin Agricola’s inferior; “alterum post” refers to the difference in age. Reuchlin is ten years younger than Agricola and consequently comes *after* him. That Erasmus mentions the two scholars in one breath is undoubtedly due to the fact that he had recently read the *Clarorum virorum epistolae*, published by Reuchlin in 1514, which contain two letters from Agricola to Reuchlin. These letters, the nos. 41 and 44 in our edition, contain many Greek words (no. 41 is even partly written in Greek), and one of their topics is the study of Hebrew. Nor can it be a coincidence that Erasmus devoted a long adage to Agricola and an entire colloquy to Reuchlin.

## AROUND 1528

Of all the texts on Agricola that Erasmus wrote around this year, the most extensive by far is the passage in the *Ciceronianus*. Like the letter to Botzheim (Allen, *Ep.* 1 of 1523; see above, p. 190f.) it is a historical retrospect, although it is written from an entirely different point of view: here Agricola is placed within the great continuity of the Latin style and measured against its highest ideal, Cicero. The passage reads as follows:

<sup>158</sup> ASD VI–8, 394, 148–396, 153.

*Bulephorus*: Hinc igitur si videtur in Phrysiam commigremus. Alit enim ea regio prorsus alba, quod dici solet, ingenia: sed male conuenit Como cum Musis. Langios igitur et Canterios omittam, Rodolphus Agricola sufficit unus pro multis.

*Nosoponus*: Agnosco virum diuini pectoris, eruditionis reconditae, stilo minime volgari, solidum, neruosum, elaboratum, compositum, sed qui nonnihil resipiat et Quintilianum in eloquendo, et Isocratem in orationis structura, vtroque tamen sublimior, Quintiliano etiam fusior ac dilucidior. Quid voluit praestitit, nec dubito quin Ciceronis figuram potuisset effingere, si illuc vertisset animi studium. Et huic tamen ad summam laudem obstitere quaedam, regionis ac temporum infelicitas, quibus vix quicquam honoris litteris politionibus, et nationis parum frugalis vita. In Italia summus esse poterat, nisi Germaniam praetulisset.<sup>159</sup>

*Bulephorus*: Let's move on to Frisia if you're ready. That country really does produce what they call minds of the brightest and best, but Comum doesn't mix well with the Muses. I'll say nothing of the Langens and Canters, since it's enough to cite Rodolphus Agricola to represent the rest.

*Nosoponus*: I acknowledge in him a man of superhuman mentality, of deep learning, with a style far from commonplace, solid, vigorous, polished, controlled, but he has a touch of Quintilian in expression and of Isocrates in word arrangement, though he rises to greater heights than either of them, and is also more expansive and lucid than Quintilian is. He achieved what he aimed at, and I have no doubt that he could have produced a likeness to Cicero if he had bent his enthusiasms in that direction. Yet there were obstacles to bar his way to the highest glory, such as the unpropitious setting of a country and an age in which hardly any respect was shown for politer literature, together with the rather intemperate habits of the whole nation. If he had stayed in Italy, he could have been one of the greatest, but he preferred Germany. (CWE 28, 425–426)

An inspired and creative imitation of classical examples of style is the core of humanism; Agricola has achieved that. Nowhere has Erasmus characterized Agricola better than here, and nowhere has he put his praise into more elegant words. Moreover, Erasmus aptly expresses here (as he does elsewhere) his awareness of the wide gap between the refined urban culture of Italy and the much coarser style of life in the North, which made the transmission of humanism from Southern to Northern Europe all the more difficult.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>159</sup> ASD I–2, 682,6–683,8.

<sup>160</sup> For some other texts with the same tenor, see Agricola, *Ep.* 26,14–15; Erasmus, Allen, *Ep.* 113,54ff. (1,262); Allen, *Ep.* 159,59–64 (1,368). These two letters of Erasmus date from Oct. 18, 1499

In addition to Erasmus's letter to Haio Hermannus of March 20, 1528 (discussed on p. 219), there is a letter to another Frisian, Haio Cammynga, written in Basel and dated November 12, 1528. I quote lines 74–82:

Claruit illa [scil. Phrysia] magnis ingeniis. Vt enim sileam Canterios et Langios, quid Rodolpho Agricola diuinius? in cuius gloriam succedit Haio Hermannus, iuuenis nihil mediocre de se pollicens, qui tibi huius laudis lampadam aliquando traditurus est; nam Viglium, ut scribis, gaudeo in hoc stadio strenue properare. Haec arguunt non omnino vanum esse quod vulgo narrant, Phrysiam esse felicissimam ingeniorum parentem, sed vitae delicias obstare quo minus multa ad summam virtutem elucentur. Vix cum alio vicio peius conuenit Musis et Mineruae quam cum luxu et intemperantia.<sup>161</sup>

She [scil. Frisia] has become famous through great talents. For – not to mention men like the Canters and Langius – what is more divine than Rodolphus Agricola? In the steps of whose glory Haio Hermannus is now treading, a young man who shows great promise and is destined to hand over the torch of this fame to you some day; and therefore I am pleased that Viglius, as you write, is charging ahead energetically on this racecourse. All of this proves that it is not at all vain what is told far and wide, namely that Frisia is a most fruitful mother of talents but that life's pleasures prevent many from struggling their way up to the highest degree of excellence. There is hardly any other vice that agrees less with the Muses and Minerva than overindulgence and intemperance.

Just as Agricola once ranked as a pioneer for all Germany, so is Friesland now an important province in the new cultural landscape. Again, intemperance and lack of self-control in the pleasures of life are said to hamper the development of the talents in the North. To a large extent this text is a repetition of the passage in the *Ciceronianus* quoted above; however, this time it is dominated by rhetorical praise, admonition, and warning directed at prominent, well-educated Frisians. Erasmus does not expand on Agricola's "divinity" (i.e. inspiration, originality), but Agricola for him remains the leading spirit of the humanist movement. In 1528, Haio Cammynga was a young man of eighteen (he lived from ca. 1510 to 1558), and at his own request came to live with Erasmus in Basel from February 1529 to January 1530; after that, the friendship apparently cooled. Cammynga had been a student friend of Viglius.<sup>162</sup>

and July 18, 1501. See also Geldenhouwer, *Vita Agricolae*, 4.4. Liber (*Ep.* 1,3) and Langius (*Epp.* 2,2; 2,6) (ed. Van der Laan 1998) also refer to the Frisians' alcohol abuse; see also Agricola, *Letters* 2002, *Ep.* 22,22n.

<sup>161</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 2073,74–82 (VII,533–534).

<sup>162</sup> For more information on Cammynga see Allen in the introduction to *Ep.* 2073 (VII,532).



At approximately the same time, Joannes Crusius writes to Erasmus about the change in instruction at Louvain:

Vnde factum est, ut sensim renunciatum sit rixosis illis argutiis, quibus nunc succedunt saltem apud Lilianos Rodolphus Agricola et similis castimoniae scriptores, seruata nihilominus Aristoteli sancta sua maiestate.<sup>163</sup>

That is how those quarrelsome, far-fetched arguments were gradually renounced and are now being succeeded, at least among the Lilians, by Rodolphus Agricola and writers of a similar purity, although Aristotle's sacred majesty is still kept intact.

This shows us that in 1527/28 the college of the Lily (where Erasmus lived from 1517 until 1521) had begun to use Agricola in the commentaries on Aristotle, and rather extensively too, as it seems. This is important. Jan Papy elaborates on the introduction of Agricola's works into the instruction of logic at Louvain, but he begins with the first printing of a commentary on Porphyry and Aristotle which dates from 1535.<sup>164</sup> Although Peter Mack considers it likely that Agricola's book was used at Louvain in the late 1520s, he does not mention this passage in Erasmus.<sup>165</sup>

Now we get to the exciting story of the Treviso edition of Seneca by Blasius Romanus, printed in 1478.<sup>166</sup> Agricola had owned a copy, which he had supplied with many annotations. This copy was acquired by Pompeius Occo, undoubtedly from Agricola's estate. Occo gave or lent it to his son-in-law, Haio Hermannus, who in his turn lent it to Erasmus. Erasmus used this copy to emend his own Seneca edition, the second printing of which appeared in March 1529 with Froben in Basel. I quote the three passages relating to this.

The first is from a letter dated October 1, 1528, which Erasmus wrote from Basel to Haio Hermannus:

Senecam exorsi sunt; nam ad libros *De beneficiis* eramus abunde instructi. Interim hunc veredarium emisimus nostro sumptu, non ob aliud nisi vt nobis adferat tuum codicem: cui nihil est quod metuas; praeter vnum me nullus illum continget. Tantum obuoluas illum tunicis chartaceis, ita vt summum operculum sit linteum ceratum; remittetur eadem diligentia. In praefatione dabitur oportunitas honorifice commemorandi tui nominis, si modo id pateris. Quos codices viderit Viues nescio, nisi forte tuum, aut eum qui per amicum quendam collatus aliquamdiu fuit apud Thomam

<sup>163</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 1932,98–102 (VII,295).

<sup>164</sup> *Northern Humanism* 1999, 167–185.

<sup>165</sup> Mack 1993, 269–270 and n. 47.

<sup>166</sup> *Opera philosophica/Epistolae*, ed. Blasius Romanus. Treviso, Bernardus de Colonia 1478.

Morum. Verum mihi tanta sylua annotationum congesta est vt nec illius nec tuum codicem metuam.<sup>167</sup>

They have started on Seneca, for we had already been abundantly provided with information on the books *On Benefits*. Meanwhile I have sent off this courier at my own expense for no other purpose than to deliver your book to us. You do not need to worry; but for me, no one will touch it. You need only wrap it in paper jackets, in such a way that the outermost cover is a linen cloth sealed with wax. It will be returned to you with the same care. In the preface there will be an opportunity for an honorable mention of your name – that is, if you don't mind. Which books Vives has seen I do not know, unless it was yours, or else that book that was collated by a friend and was with Thomas More for a while. But now I have collected so many notes that I need not be afraid either for his book or for yours.

Evidently Erasmus does not find it necessary to read the book Vives had seen; Agricola's annotations, on the other hand, are so important to him that he wants to examine them.

Next, in January 1529, Erasmus writes to Peter Tomiczki. This letter serves as a *praefatio* to the second printing of his Seneca edition mentioned above. The first printing dated from 1525 (see *Ep.* 325), too early for Erasmus to have been able to use Agricola's notes. Erasmus writes:

Profuit et Rodolphi Agricolae codex typis excusus Taruisii, ante annos quinquaginta: quem is vigilantissime videtur euoluisse. Arguebant hoc notulae manus ipsius, quibus innumera loca correxerat, sed in multis, vt apparebat, diuinationem ingenii sequutus magis quam exemplaris vetusti fidem. Incredible vero quam multa diuinarit vir ille plane diuinus; non enim possum Rodolphi dotes et plurimas et eximias complecti breuius. Eius codicis nobis copiam fecit Hayo Hermannus Phrysius, iuuenis tam felici natus indole vt vnus videatur idoneus qui Rodolphicae laudis successionem capessat, tantique viri gloriam sustineat; alioqui et patriam habens cum illo communem et affinitate propinquus.<sup>168</sup>

A book belonging to Rodolphus Agricola, printed fifty years ago in Treviso, has also been useful to me. He appears to have gone through it in a most vigilant manner. This is demonstrated by the notes in his own handwriting, in which he had corrected countless passages; but in many cases he followed the inspiration of his own genius rather than the reliability of an old copy. It is incredible how much this truly brilliant man has thought out himself; I

<sup>167</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 2056, 1–11 (vii, 506).

<sup>168</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 2091, 108–118 (viii, 28).

cannot sum up Rodolphus's many exceptional talents more briefly. That book has been placed at our disposal by the Frisian Haio Hermannus, a young man endowed with such fortunate talents that he seems to be the only one suitable to accept the heritage of Rodolphus's merits and to uphold the great man's glory; besides, he has his native country in common with him and is close to him through kinship as well.

In his praise of Agricola and Haio Hermannus, Erasmus has naturally been inspired by his gratitude for the loan of Agricola's Seneca copy, but he is undoubtedly sincere: if Erasmus had not found the book useful, he would not have written what he did, and he certainly would not have formulated it in such general terms. This admiration for Agricola is shared by the modern philologist Franz Römer, who praises Agricola's *divinatio* in his Tacitus and Pliny texts (Agricola's Seneca copy has not yet re-emerged).<sup>169</sup> True, in the eyes of a modern philologist Agricola's *divinatio* has been applied too broadly; for Erasmus, however, this is another reason for praise. Not only does Erasmus express praise and gratitude in this passage, he also recommends his own edition, enhanced as it is by Agricola's highly-valued genius.

Finally, Erasmus sends Agricola's copy back to Haio Hermannus with a letter containing the following passage:

Remitto codicem tuum – quo nihil, vt scribis, pulchrius – vna cum duobus excusis. Ex pacto mihi debebantur tres; maiorem portionem tibi cedo. Si tuus codex valebat quinquaginta florenis, excusus valet mille: nec tamen inficias eo tuum alicubi profuisse. Non fraudauimus Rodolphum sua laude, vt arbitror. Tui quoque mentionem fecimus in praefatione; et *Ciceroniano* nomen tuum adiecimus. Si nondum videor animo tuo satisfecisse, quod coepimus implebitur de meo. Nam defuncto Ioanne Frobenio tota officinae ratio mutata est.<sup>170</sup>

I return your book – the finest in the world, as you write – along with two printed copies. According to the agreement, I was entitled to three; the larger part of that I give to you. If your book was worth fifty florins, then my printed copy is worth a thousand. Still, I do not deny that your book has occasionally been useful to me. We have not cheated Rodolphus out of the honor that is due to him, I think. We have also mentioned you in the foreword, and in the *Ciceronianus* we have added your name. If I do not yet seem to have satisfied your wishes, I will implement at my own expense what I set out to do. For now that Johannes Froben has died, the entire organization of the printing shop has changed.

<sup>169</sup> *RAP* 1988, 158–169.

<sup>170</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 2108,1–9 (VIII,66). The date is February 25, 1529.

The businesslike tone of this letter puts the rhetorical praise of the previous quotation in the proper perspective without detracting from it.

#### THE FINAL YEARS

In a letter to Conrad Goclenius on December 14, 1531, Erasmus writes about several enmities. In this context we learn something about the rift in his relationship with Alardus of Amsterdam:

Nec alter Hayo Hermannus scribit quicquam, Alardi, ni fallor, opera: qui nuper scripsit Hieronymo Frobenio, se venturum Basileam cum commentariis suis in opera Rodolphi Agricolae, si vellet mittere viaticum, et de caeteris aequa mercede pacisci. In me concepit odium capitale, quod in *Ciceroniano* sit praeteritus. Quae portenta gignit haec aetas?<sup>171</sup>

And the other Haio – Herman, that is – does not write anything either, which, if I am not mistaken, is Alardus's doing. He recently wrote to Hieronymus Froben that he would come to Basel with his commentaries on Rodolphus Agricola's works, if Froben was willing to send him the travel money and, as to the rest, agree on a reasonable royalty. Against me he has conceived a deadly hatred because he has been passed over in the *Ciceronianus*. What monstrosities these times produce!

It is not clear what caused the irritation between Erasmus and Alardus. Mundt suggests that Erasmus could not get over the fact that Alardus was going to publish Agricola's works, a task which Erasmus had intended for Haio Hermannus,<sup>172</sup> and that the reason why Froben did not take on the printing was that Erasmus had persuaded him not to. If Mundt is right, this would mean that the only time Erasmus had been actively involved with the publication of Agricola's works, his actions were counterproductive, and resulted in a delay of ten years!<sup>173</sup> It should not come as a surprise that envy, jealousy, and the granting and withholding of favors played an important part in this enterprise: many wanted to use Agricola's name for their own benefit. We may safely assume that Erasmus was eager to stay close to the wealthy Pompeius Occo through Haio Hermannus. Money always matters.<sup>174</sup>

Let me quote a letter from George Witzel (1501–1573) to Erasmus dated September 8, 1532. Witzel, a former Lutheran, had returned to Catholicism; he had a boundless admiration for Erasmus, whom he praises from line 9 onward. The lines 23–28 read as follows:

<sup>171</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 2587,50–55 (IX,407).

<sup>172</sup> Mundt 1992, 672. See above p. 219.

<sup>173</sup> With the exception of the oration *Pro Matthia Richilo*.

<sup>174</sup> For the falling-out between Erasmus and Alardus, see Kölker 1963, 38–42.

Aufer hinc Hercules, Scipiones, Macchabaeos, Carolos; aufer Plinius, Gellios, Fabios, Vallas, Hermolaos, Rudolphos ad ipsos usque Budaeos et Capniones. Horum enim nullus, Liuore etiam iudice, vel labore vel fortitudine vel rerum honeste actarum claritudine vel excellentia vel dignitate vel fide, vel doctrina te anteit.<sup>175</sup>

Away with heroes like Hercules, the Scipios, the Maccabees, and the Charleses; away with authors like the Plinies, Gellius, Fabius, Valla, Ermolao, Rodolphus, all the way up to Budé and Reuchlin. For none of these surpass you in effort or strength or glory of honorably achieved deeds, in excellence or dignity or faith, not even with Envy in the judge's seat.

Both Witzel and Erasmus take it for granted that Agricola belongs in this illustrious company.

The following three letters acquaint us with Viglius ab Aytta of Zuichem (now Swichum) (1507–1577). There is no need for a detailed description: he was a Frisian nobleman, who had studied law at Louvain and later was to hold central positions in the government of the Netherlands. On Viglius and his connection with Erasmus and Agricola, see Waterbolk's monographs of 1969 and 1980;<sup>176</sup> on his life and work as a statesman and scholar, see the books by Postma.<sup>177</sup> Here we only wish to draw attention to his life-long admiration for and acquaintance with Erasmus's and Agricola's oeuvres. Viglius knew and owned works by Agricola that Alardus had never seen.<sup>178</sup> Probably in 1536, he had a monument erected on Agricola's grave in the Franciscan church at Heidelberg, with Ermolao Barbaro's famous epigram as epitaph.<sup>179</sup> The first public link between Viglius and Agricola was established by Erasmus in a letter of recommendation for Viglius, written to Pietro Bembo on July 5, 1532. At the time of writing of this letter, Erasmus was in Freiburg im Breisgau and Bembo in Padua. Erasmus writes:

Nunc te rogo vt ne graueris propius aliquanto inspicere Vigilium Zuichemum Phrysiū, qui istic absoluit studia iuris, Dolae et apud Bituriges sub eximio viro Andrea Alciato felicissime coepta ac propemodum absoluta; tantum abest κολοφών. In eo me non fallit amor, quandoquidem iuuenem ante haec

<sup>175</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 2715, 23–28 (x,94).

<sup>176</sup> E.H. Waterbolk in *Scrinium Erasmianum* 1969, and in *Rond Viglius van Aytta* 1980.

<sup>177</sup> F. Postma, *Viglius van Aytta* 1983 (1507–1549) and *Viglius van Aytta* 2000 (1549–1565 = volume II). See also Introduction, p. 36.

<sup>178</sup> E.g. the manuscript that Dietrich von Plieningen had ordered to be copied (S) and that later was in the possession of Viglius's friend Oswald von Eck; see Agricola, *Letters*, p. 38 and the note on *Ep.* 22,22 on p. 322. See also Waterbolk 1969, 135–136.

<sup>179</sup> See Waterbolk 1969, 137–138. According to Postma 1983, 60, the year 1536 is plausible because the erection of the monument can then be linked with Erasmus's death, and because Viglius was living in Germany (Spiers) at the time. Cf. Introduction, p. 36.

ignotum non prius amare coepi quam cepi proprius introspicere. Mira ingenii dexteritas, candor incredibilis. Tot animi dotes in vnum conguessit natura, vt interdum metuum apud me ne sit  $\mu\nu\nu\nu\theta\acute{\alpha}\delta\iota\omicron\varsigma$ . Solent enim fata eiusmodi miracula “terris tantum ostendere”.

Patria illius Como dedita est magis quam Minerue. Tamen gignit solida ingenia, quaeque perdurent usque ad maturitatem. Rodolphum Agricolam arbitror vobis non esse ignotum. Ego si quid iudico, suspicor Vigilium, modo viuat, illo non inferiorem euasurum. Quare te rogo, mi Bembe, vt iuuenem propius contemplere et currenti stimulos addas.<sup>180</sup>

Now I ask you if you would be kind enough to acquaint yourself somewhat closer with the Frisian Viglius of Swichum. He is in your town completing his law studies, which were started so auspiciously in Dôle and Bourges under the outstanding Andrea Alciati; now they are just about completed – only the finishing touch is missing. In his case I am not led astray by love, for I began to love this young man only after I got to know him better. Such remarkable dexterity of intellect, such incredible openness! So many gifts of the mind have been brought together by Nature in this one person that I sometimes fear in my heart that he will not live long. For of such miracles the Fates usually “show only a glimpse to the world”.

His country is given more to carousing than to learning. Yet it produces solid talents, which endure all the way to their full development. I take it that Rodolphus Agricola is not unknown in your country. As far as I can judge, I suspect that Viglius, if he lives that long, will be in no way inferior to him. That is why I ask you, my dear Bembo, to give the young man some closer consideration and give him the spurs while he is already running.

The Frisians’ lack of moderation in eating and drinking has been mentioned before (see p. 228f. and n. 160). Nevertheless, their country produces talents that are solid and enduring; this is the base for Erasmus’s recommendation of Viglius ab Aytta.

Bembo’s answer on August 29 of the same year, 1532, reads as follows:

De Rodolpho Agricola quod scribis, notum illum nobis esse te existimare: illius [vero] scripta maxime omnium qui aetate nostra vixerint, mihi quidem probantur. Si Viglius eiusmodi erit scriptor, omne punctum feret. Eum ergo, tametsi in cursu est, tamen ad summam laudem, ut ipse mones, incitare non desinam.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>180</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 2681,5–20 (x,53–54).

<sup>181</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 2708,12–16 (x,88).

As to Rodolphus Agricola, about whom you write that you believe him to be well-known to us: of all our contemporaries his writings are valued the most highly, at least by me. If Viglius turns out to be an author of that caliber, he will get everyone's vote. Even if he is already off and running, I will not, as you urge me yourself, stop inciting him to strive for the highest praise.

Of course these are rhetorical courtesies, but the name of Agricola still carries enough weight for Bembo to recognize Viglius's worth; moreover, Bembo apparently knows Agricola's works, so that Erasmus really scores a point. Agricola's writings remained famous: in 1567, his *De inventione dialectica* was even translated into Italian.<sup>182</sup>

Viglius, who has been informed about Erasmus's recommendation, also takes its praise and exhortation seriously. Ten days after Bembo's letter, he wrote to Erasmus from Padua:

Nam ad Rodolphi famam vereor ne frustra aspirem. Cuius tamen exemplo confirmor, ne patriae genium mihi ad hanc in studiis contentionem obstaturum credam.<sup>183</sup>

For I fear that I would vainly aspire to Rodolphus's reputation. But by his example I am confirmed in my belief that the spirit of my country will not stand in the way of this effort in my studies.

These elegant sentences are not hollow phrases: Viglius remained loyal to Agricola during a lifetime devoted to study and intellectual pursuits, as becomes abundantly clear from the publications by Waterbolk (1969 and 1980) and Postma (1983 and 2000).

The last time we hear Erasmus sing Agricola's praises is in a letter of ca. August 1535, less than a year before Erasmus's death. It is addressed to Joannes Cholerus (Koler) but has become better known as Erasmus's *Responsio ad Petri Cursii defensionem, nullo aduersario bellacem*, the letter in which Erasmus evaluates his lifelong relationship with Italy and the Italians. The letter was first published in Basel in 1535.<sup>184</sup> In this letter Erasmus relates that in 1506, before he left for Italy, he had translated two of Euripides' tragedies, *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Later he was accused of copying these translations from a copy that had belonged to Agricola. Allen supposes that this rumor was caused by the fact that Erasmus, in a letter of 1501 (*Ep.* 158) to Nicholas Bensrott, had written "Euripidem et Isocratem ad te mittimus", where "Isocrates" might refer to Agricola's translation of the *Paraenesis ad Demonicum* (see above, p. 205). Be this as it may, it is out of

<sup>182</sup> Huisman, 76.

<sup>183</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 2716, 116–118 (x,99).

<sup>184</sup> Allen, *Ep.* 3032, 512–526 (xI,184).

the question that the rumor is based on truth: no record is known which refers to Agricola as translator of these tragedies by Euripides. True, in his oration *In laudem philosophiae* Agricola quotes six verses of the *Hecuba* (814–819) in a Latin translation, but these do not resemble Erasmus's translation at all. Nevertheless, this parallelism could have been the cause of the malicious rumor, as IJsewijn suggests.<sup>185</sup> Erasmus writes in l. 512–526 of the letter to Cholerus:

... et duabus Euripidis tragoediis. Quanquam de tragoediis sparserunt rumorem vanissimum, eas esse Rodolphi Agricolae (quem mecum fatentur virum fuisse doctissimum), meque suffuratum exemplar pro meis aedidisse. Quid malitiosius? Quum id temporis de Rodolphi bibliotheca ne somniarim quidem, ac tam multi supersint etiam quibus testibus hoc negocium peregi, ne id quidem iusta cura, sed horis fere pomeridianis inambulans, dum pranderent famuli, interdum in lecto, dum alterum expecto somnum. Nec semel, ubi successit, uno impetu centum versus absolui. Si dicant parum feliciter versas, non admodum refragabor, sed in illis nulla syllaba est alterius quam mea: nec vllius interpretatione, nec vllis commentariis sum adiutus: quod si censent Rodolphi dignas, magnificentius de me sentiunt quam ipse sentio. Sed illic nihil est Rodolphi. Alioqui qui fauent Rodolpho, et omnes illius schedas colligunt, an tam impudens furtum ferrent taciti?<sup>186</sup>

... and two tragedies of Euripides. About the tragedies, though, people spread a completely idle rumor, namely that they are by Rodolphus Agricola (whom they, with me, admit to have been a most learned man), and that I had published a stolen copy as my own work. What could be more malicious? While at that point in time I did not even dream of Rodolphus's library, and while there are still so many people alive who witnessed me performing this task – and that not even with the care it deserved but usually as I paced back and forth in the afternoon hours while the servants were having their meals, or sometimes in bed as I was waiting to fall asleep during my afternoon nap. And more than once, if it went well, I have written down a hundred verses one after the other. If they say they have been poorly translated, I won't oppose that too strongly, but there is no syllable in them by anyone else but me; and I have not been aided by anyone's translation nor by any annotations; but if they think they are worthy of Rodolphus, they judge more generously about me than I do myself. But there is nothing that is Rodolphus's. Besides, would those who admire Rodolphus and collect his papers, tolerate such a shameless theft in silence?

<sup>185</sup> *RAP* 1988, 28. Adolph Occo owned a manuscript (copied in his own hand) of Greek tragedies, including the *Hecuba* and the *Orestes* (see Agricola, *Letters*, Ep. 41,4 and Van der Laan 2000, 61).

<sup>186</sup> See n. 183. Text and translation have been borrowed from the doctoral thesis of Margreeth Kramer: *Vredelievend met vele vijanden* 1994, p. 63.



In this charming, anecdotal piece, which contains some affected modesty and a snide remark directed at Alardus (Erasmus has no doubts that if Alardus had come upon Agricola's translations of Euripides, he would have used this fact against him, Erasmus) we also find, once more, some high praise of Agricola. Erasmus certainly was in a position to rate Agricola's translating skills at their true merit: we know for a fact that he had had Agricola's translations of Ps.-Plato's *Axiochus* and Ps.-Isocrates' *Paraenesis ad Demonicum* in his possession for a long time, and he may also have owned, from a more recent date, Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata*.<sup>187</sup>

## SOME FINAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

## I

In his early years Erasmus mentions all the Northern humanists he knows from his Deventer time; he honors them and presents them as a "German" counterpart of "Italy". Later the group is condensed to just a few names (Agricola, Hegius, the Canters, Langius) or even to one single name, Rudolph Agricola ("vnus sufficit pro multis"). As humanism spreads over a larger part of "Germania", the "Frisians" (in the broadest sense) retain Erasmus's special esteem. Other humanists from the eastern and northern Netherlands, most of them belonging to a younger generation, appear within his scope: he writes a fine letter to Wilhelmus Frederici, the powerful pastor of Groningen; he receives Goswinus van Halen twice;<sup>188</sup> he associates with Haio Hermannus, Haio Cammynga, Gerard Listrius, Gerard Geldenhouwer, Viglius ab Aytta, and Bernardus Bucho; he also knows Pompeius Occo. He took note of Lesdorpheus's satire *Lamentationes Petri*, which had been published anonymously but was ascribed to Erasmus by his enemy Aleander, but he distances himself from what is said about him in the play.<sup>189</sup> In his home he may have received Regnerus Praedinius, Lesdorpheus's successor as rector of the school in Groningen, when Praedinius visited Basel, probably in 1536.<sup>190</sup> These

<sup>187</sup> The translation of the *Progymnasmata* was published by Alardus at the printing house of Johannes Soter in Cologne in 1532. See Huisman 1985, no. 151.

<sup>188</sup> The letter to Frederici is Allen's *Ep.* 1200 (iv,482-485); it is dated April 13, 1521. On the encounter with Goswinus van Halen, see this letter and Allen, *Ep.* 838,2 (iii,308); see also M. van Rhijn, 'Goswinus van Halen' 1925, 13-14.

<sup>189</sup> On Nicolaus Lesdorpheus as the author of the *Lamentationes Petri*, see Akkerman in *Northern Humanism* 1999, 12-14. On Erasmus's reaction to the allegation that he had written this booklet, see Otto Clemen, 'Die Lamentationes Petri' 1899, 431-433. Erasmus's reaction can be found in Allen, *Ep.* 1236,148-154 (iv,586-587).

<sup>190</sup> See Akkerman's article quoted in the previous note, 35-37. Praedinius's text in which he announces his trip dates from ca. 1534. He does not mention Basel, but he does refer to his plan to visit Erasmus. From Crespin's edition of Praedinius's *Commentationes* we know that he did visit that city, probably in 1536. See F. Postma in *Wessel Gansfort* 1993, 300.

names reflect the spreading of humanist scholarship: having begun in the north, the movement grows and expands over the entire Netherlands during the next generation. Still, “Frisia” remained an honored province in the humanist world.

## II

From his youth onward, Erasmus apparently knows and admires Agricola’s works inasmuch as they were, or became, available: his poetry, his translations, his textual criticism, his orations, his style, his humanist ideology, his philosophy. To quote one more example: when in the *Ciceronianus* Erasmus praises Agricola’s style and says it is reminiscent of Quintilian but more elevated and at the same time more ample and clear, he can only have based this very precise judgment on a thorough reading of *De inventione dialectica*. Erasmus would not have had this subtle knowledge of Agricola’s works if he had seen Agricola only as a mentor and leader in a symbolical sense – a mere figurehead. The qualifications Erasmus uses most often are *divinum* or *coeleste ingenium*, *divinitas*, and *divinatio ingenii* (“I cannot summarize his gifts more briefly”; see p. 231 f.), which refer to originality and genius. Erasmus consistently puts Agricola’s talents on a par with those of the truly great Italians.

Erasmus himself was not much involved in the ongoing publication of Agricola’s works, but he encouraged it and followed it full of interest and expectation.

## III

Erasmus calls himself the “son” and “grandson” of Hegius and Agricola not just for the sake of self-advertisement – in many respects his work is, indeed, the continuation of that of the Northern humanists. To begin with, he was a poet like them and wrote in their style;<sup>191</sup> he had learned the technique from them and possessed their works. Then there are his views on education: in his *Antibarbari* Erasmus defends the ideas he found in the works of Hegius and Agricola, such as a distaste for the scholastic language education, the notion that a teacher should be a scholar well-versed in the *litterae saeculares* rather than a theologian or philosopher.<sup>192</sup> Erasmus’s pride of Germany, too, is derived from the *sodales* from Groningen or Deventer.<sup>193</sup> Epistolary style, Latin translations of

<sup>191</sup> In the North, as in Italy, humanism starts with poetry. See Ronald Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients* 2000.

<sup>192</sup> In the earliest version of his *Antibarbarorum liber* (1489–1494), Erasmus speaks of the *litteraturam secularem* (in the title), elsewhere of *litterae seculares*, with the addition: ‘sic enim vos appellare soletis quicquid non didicistis’ (it is therefore a term used by the adversaries, the *barbari*!) or of *secularia studia* or *seculares artes*. In the edition of 1520 he usually replaces this adjective by forms of *bonus*, *politiior*, or *elegantior*. See the edition in ASD I–1.

<sup>193</sup> See e.g. Agricola, *Ep.* 3,5; 6,6; 41,7; 43,1–2; 45,2; 54,6.

minor Greek works, love of proverbs, interest in the original Bible texts and in the undertaking of a new Bible translation – all these topics can already be found in Agricola.<sup>194</sup> Likewise, the philological, textual approach to theology is a legacy from the North: Erasmus had become familiar with it before he became acquainted with Valla.

As a matter of fact, Agricola did receive recognition in the North during his lifetime; it suffices to read Hegius's *Ep.* 42 to Agricola, and Agricola's answer in *Ep.* 43. It is almost too coincidental that in the North Erasmus starts writing in dialogue form at the same time as Jacob Canter.<sup>195</sup> But Erasmus did not share Agricola's passion for the theory of discourse, and he may have found Agricola's theory on education in *De formando studio* too grand and not practical enough; at least, it does not show much affinity to Erasmus's own *De ratione studii*.<sup>196</sup> Erasmus is less of an *orator* than Agricola, even if he had published Agricola's *Oratio pro Matthia Richilo*. The initiatives of the early humanists of the northern and eastern Netherlands (as listed in *Ep.* 23) had a great influence on the young Erasmus and made it possible for his vast oeuvre to fan out in many different directions.

<sup>194</sup> On Agricola's study of Greek and Hebrew, see above nn. 51 and 52. The fact that the idea of a new Bible translation had also come up, is mentioned by Johann von Plieningen in his *Vita* of Agricola, 6,8.

<sup>195</sup> See above, p. 194.

<sup>196</sup> On *De formando studio*, see Ann Moss 1996, 73–82 *et al.* On the relationship with Erasmus, Moss says on p. 101, n. 1: 'I have not so far found any direct reference to it [DFS] or any echo of its wording in Erasmus.'

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