

ERASMUS, MORE, VIVES, AND RENAISSANCE EDUCATION

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Humanism, whether it be Christian, Secular, Civic, or Renaissance, nonetheless consists of certain fundamental attributes: a philological and didactic appreciation for the classical languages and texts, a historical perspective on events, an expectation that truth is multi-faceted, and last, a profound belief in the dignity of human nature and a desire for bettering the human situation. It is the latter attribute which initiated the compelling desire for educational theories and reforms sought by many Renaissance humanists. Sir Thomas More of England, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Juan Luis Vives of Valencia were three of the most famous Renaissance humanists who strove for educational reform. They were contemporaries of the Northern Renaissance in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. (Vives, though Spanish, lived most of his life in either France, England, or the Low Countries.) The three also had ties of friendship, Catholicism, and often overlapping theories concerning education. More maintained a friendship with Vives, whom he met in 1521, and a long-standing brotherly affection for Erasmus, whom he had encountered in 1499. Erasmus and Vives met in 1517, and Vives became a pupil of Erasmus in Paris. During a period when the dissension in Christianity was so pungent and Catholicism the object of so many attacks, the men's loyalty to the Mother Church further served as an especially strong bond.

As humanists these men had a particular interest in education, primarily as founded upon a revival of grammar and rhetorical skills, the two disciplines they considered most crucial to the inheritance of human communication. This would of course have meant Latin grammar and rhetoric, that language being the vehicle of intellectual knowledge. For instruction they would consider the monuments of classical literature the only acceptable models by which proper grammar and refined rhetorical elocution could be learned. Importantly, these models also included those of Greek literature which had been the genesis of so many rhetorical skills and western ideas. Since the reintroduction, in 1398, of the Greek language into the Western European culture, a thorough knowledge of Greek had become the *sine qua non* of a humanistic education. Why put so great an emphasis on language? A humanist did not rest his sole interest in language upon style, wit, and elegance as a

dilettante might. It was rather a desire to aid the dissemination of truth which stirred his dedication to language. Since language is the only means by which knowledge can be conveyed, it was understood that one had to learn to express himself properly before attempting anything else. Philologically, the humanist's ultimate aim in language study was to provide a more accurate understanding of the Holy Scriptures, which they felt were the ultimate repositories of truth.

This new learning of the humanists was in opposition to the medieval dialectic of scholasticism, which had been emphasized to the detriment of the other two disciplines of the medieval trivium, grammar and rhetoric, in the two hundred years prior to 1400. Scholasticism had become the primary mode of education employed by the Church and the great universities of Europe and remained very dominant throughout the lifetimes of Erasmus, More, and Vives. Each of them shared a revulsion for dialectic and issued forth their respective philippics against the tedious, hairsplitting logic employed in scholastic argumentation. Scholastic educators, they thought, taught students the skills of logical argumentation and bade them employ it in acquiring any sort of knowledge. As a result, history, technology, philosophy, poetry, and any other field of study became a mere battleground on which to employ the weapons of logic, no matter if a point of debate was trivial or truth was forgotten in the fray. The quality of Latin grammar in which this scholastic education was communicated served as an additional source of odium for the three, due to its barbarity and the lack of concern displayed by scholastics towards language reforms. Indeed the Establishment was affronted by the mere consideration of altering their Latin. Regarding dialecticism, Vives correctly expressed not only the view of the other two, but all humanists, when he stated in his *de pseudo-dialecticis*:

... he who does not understand the jargon of the dialecticians is deceived in the beginning of his studies, and the further he proceeds the further he goes wrong. It is certain that the pseudo-Latin they employ would not be understood by Cicero if he came to life again. But, not only so, there is none of the pseudo-dialecticians who can possibly speak with circumspection as not to sin constantly against even his own most empty rules and

forms.¹

In discussing each of these men and their contributions to education, they will be presented in chronological order of their ages; Erasmus the eldest, then More, and finally Vives. Erasmus was the foremost intellectual of his day. After all, much as Voltaire would be in the Enlightenment, Erasmus was the center around which all other intellectuals revolved in the universe of the Northern Renaissance, the Age of Erasmus. This is not to say that Thomas More and Juan Luis Vives were less important to history as educationists. Quite the contrary. Each man championed the priorities of a humanistic education, yet each also made a characteristic mark on educational theory.

At various times in his life Erasmus resided in most of the countries of Western Europe, whether he was studying in Paris, teaching at Cambridge or Louvain, visiting publisher Aldus Manutius and his circle of Greek scholars in Venice, or writing in Germany. But not one of the occupations was anything more than temporary. None of them restricted his freedom to travel, teach, and write. In whatever city he happened to be residing, however, usually he would teach or act as interim advisor to a school. For instance, in 1517 he advised upon the organization of the new Collegium Trilingue at Louvain.

What meant the most to Erasmus was the freedom to write and study, the life of the professional scholar. Yet, in a sense virtually everything he ever penned was in some manner didactic, and many of his treatises dealt specifically with education. This is not only true because, as Margaret Mann Phillips says, "his lifelong endeavour was to put his generation in contact with the literature of the past and show its relevance to the teaching of Christ, but because a large number of his best-known works had actually started as aids for the young."² The *Adagia*, of which he produced a number of editions, had as its seminal work the *Collectanea*. These he had written in Paris for the young Lord Mountjoy as lessons in Latin composition, but they also were intended to impart the wisdom handed down from classical literature.

Another of Erasmus' most famous works was the *Colloquia*, which was originally a short compilation of dialogues, the *Colloquiorum formulae*, regarding manners and foibles of society. These were also written in Paris and intended for pupils at the

University as collections of exercises in Latin conversation. In the definitive 1523 Basel edition of the *Colloquia*, an older Erasmus examines many topics ranging from courtship and marriage to religious superstitions. Similarly he produced two works, *De copia verborum et rerum* (1512) and *De ratione studii* (1512), for Colet's School of St. Paul's in addition to *De conscribendis epistolis* (1498) for his English pupil, Robert Fisher.³ In all of these pedagogical works, whether they concern fluency, the best method of study, or letter writing, Erasmus proved himself spiritually concerned with education, whether he was in a classroom or not. For him Europe was, in a sense, his school. These works provide perfect evidence for what William Harrison Woodward called "Erasmus' method of uniting scholarship with didactic purpose: what was begun as an aid to composition 'became' a manual of comment on life and conduct."⁴

Like most humanists Erasmus had an optimistic certainty that human beings could be educated. But this collective optimism went farther to sustain his belief that people would understand goodness and seek it once they had received a proper education. Erasmus believed like More and Vives that the humanists' program of reform was a more efficacious path to truth and thus to Christ. Because of this, and because he believed that the human spirit had the freedom and mobility to choose good once given the opportunity, it is no wonder that Erasmus spent his life educating others. His high regard for the human spirit and love of mankind are themes which constantly recur in a study of his educational recommendations. For example, concerning support for public education he states clearly in *De pueris instituendis*:

Which brings me to claim it as a duty incumbent on statesmen and churchmen alike to provide . . . a due supply of men qualified to educate the youth of the nation. It is a public obligation in no way inferior, say, to the ordering of the army . . . And if the community be backward in this respect, yet should every head of a household do all that he can to provide for the education of his own . . . But the liberality of the rich can be exercised here, in enabling innate powers to attain their due development by removing the hindrance imposed by poverty.⁵

He also proposed many other improvements such as games, devices and exercises to inspire children to an enjoyment of learning, the use of notebooks to aid in language studies, and the employment of kindness and encouragement as a means of instruction rather than verbal and physical punishment.

It is possible to distinguish two different categories of instruction in Erasmus' treatises: one category concerned with language education and the other with a more efficacious method of educating in general. This distinction is more or less arbitrary because interest in both topics is scattered throughout his works. Having made this distinction, however, it is possible to cite examples of both categories. Of the first, appropriate works would include *De conscribendis epistolis*, *De constructione*, *De copia verborum et rerum*, *De recta pronuntiatione*, and *De ratione studii*. A closer inspection of *De ratione studii* provides a better understanding of Erasmus' attitudes towards language education. The work was written in 1511 to be used by an English humanist, John Colet, in his School of St. Paul's, and might have been inspired by Erasmus' own teaching experiences in Paris, Italy, and England.⁶ The theme of the treatise presented humanism's emphasis upon language:

All knowledge falls into one of the two divisions: the knowledge of 'truths' and the knowledge of 'words': and if the former is first in importance, the latter is acquired first in order of time. They are not to be commended who, in their anxiety to increase their store of truths, neglect the necessary art of expressing them. For ideas are only intelligible to us by means of the words which describe them; wherefore defective knowledge of language reacts upon our apprehension of the truths expressed.⁷

Erasmus goes on to encourage the study of Greek and Latin for those wishing to be educated and explains that the best method of acquiring good grammar lies in the reading of classical authors and not by drills of rules and definitions. He gives a long list of classical sources as well as those authors, such as Valla, Donatus, and Diomedes, who could serve as guides in proper grammar and construction.

Of dialectical logic, he says that should it "find a place in the

course proposed I do not seriously demur; but I refuse to go beyond Aristotle and I prohibit the verbiage of the schools."⁸ This displays the usual reserve in which humanists held dialectical logic, again expressing their wish that the subject be relegated back to its proper standing in the trivium. Dialectical methods were no way to acquire style, Erasmus thought. That came with writing, and writing needed to be reinforced by expanding one's memory. The three conditions determining memory capacity were a "thorough understanding of the subject, logical ordering of the contents, repetition to ourselves."⁹ It is of interest to read, however, that he ascribed the "surest method of acquisition" to the practice of teaching others.

Erasmus devotes a great deal of attention, as one would expect, to the art of literary composition. He thought the rudiments of composition should be taught employing games and contests, and literary examples should always be chosen with a desire to impart lessons for practical and moral edification. Next came practice in composing many different forms of rhetorical prose in Latin and Greek with a given argument in the vernacular to which to respond. These forms include the fable, moral commonplace, the short story, dilemma, encomium, denunciation, parallel, simile, and description. The more vigorous exercise, however, would be to respond in Latin to an argument in Greek and vice versa. When the student began his original compositions, the master would lend guidance in developing themes, and an example of each of the significant rhetorical forms would be attempted. In correcting the compositions, the instructor would note the ingenuity shown in selection of material, and in its treatment, and in initiation. He will censure omission, or bad arrangement of matter, exaggerations, carelessness, [and] awkwardness of expression."¹⁰

The concluding pages of his treatise Erasmus devotes to the method of instruction in reading and in literary criticism. When discussing an example of classic literature, he thought the master should

begin by offering an appreciation of the author, and state what is necessary concerning his life and surroundings, his talent, and the characteristics of his style. Speaking generally, it is advisable to introduce every new book read by indicating its chief characteristics, and then

setting out its argument . . . Most important is it that the student be brought to learn for himself the true method of such criticism, that he may distinguish good literature from mediocrity.¹¹

As regards the methods of instruction, Erasmus places great store in the abilities, character, and learning of the master. This enormous responsibility, he says, "involves time and trouble to the teacher, I know well, but it is essential."¹²

Of the other category of Erasmus' educational writings, those generally concerned with a more efficacious method of instruction, there is one surpassing example, his *De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis declamatio*. This declamation, dedicated to the thirteen-year-old Prince William, Duke of Cleves, was written in 1529 as Erasmus was entering very old age. Actually it was a revised edition of what B. C. Veerstraete calls an "illustrative appendix to his [Erasmus'] rhetorical treatise *De copia verborum ac rerum* [intending] to demonstrate one of the main principles of *De copia*, namely how an argument might be expanded from a synoptic outline to a full, rhetorically developed treatment of the subject."¹³ This earlier edition had appeared around 1509, yet Erasmus realized by 1529 that *De pueris* was not just a rhetorical bauble, but a serious statement of his convictions regarding the injustices which marred the aims and methods of children's education in his age. His audience were parents and instructors whom he implored to accept responsibility for children's moral, spiritual, and intellectual advancement. The argument is essentially psychological; throughout the work are woven the implications for a child's character of this reform or that injustice. Since a child's character begins developing from the day of birth, it is essential that his education begin at the same time. New parents, he says, set great store in carefully attending to the child's physical well being. "Why then do men neglect that part of our nature, the nobler part, whereby we are rightly called men; we bestow, justly, our effort upon the mortal body; yet have we slight regard for the immortal spirit."¹⁴ His acute insight into psychology and society are revealed in his recommendations. He rejects learning by strict memorization, insofar as that process denies the student the opportunity to understand and express his own opinions. He strongly urges that education be combined with refreshing activities as means of

inspiration. Since the evolution of a child's character is keenly sensitive to adult models, both at home and school, it is of immeasurable importance that examples of wholesome Christian conduct be set in both places. As evidenced by his suggestions, the pervading mood of *De pueris* is Erasmus' heartfelt compassion for children. Acts of physical punishment to enforce discipline and encourage studies were abhorred by Erasmus, who remembered his days of monastic education. In his picture of an educational atmosphere filled with serenity and encouragement, he no doubt had in mind the family school of his dear friend More. This objective was also in Vives's mind when he described the ideal academy.

Erasmus was also well aware of the need for children to be encouraged in those subjects in which they had a particular aptitude, without being punished for a lack of excellence in those arts in which they had little natural inclination. "It is this consciousness of what it means to be a child," Margaret Phillips imparts, "which gives its modernity to the *De pueris*, written in an age which regarded children as small copies of the adult . . . He [Erasmus] never forgets that a child is an individual, and free."¹⁵

It is often said of Erasmus that he, to a greater extent than most, adhered to a golden mean in forming whatever opinions he ever had. It was in this adherence to the middle way that he was so ironically radical. Whether it was a choice between Mother Church and Protestants, France or the Empire, the Ciceronians or the advocates of vernacular, he could not or would not choose one to the ultimate exclusion of the other. His determination to understand an issue from all points of view set him apart in spirit from most individuals of his day and to a large degree most of modern society. Nor was this innate sense of harmony and balance forgotten when his concerns were educational. Erasmus understood that only by disciplined, yet compassionate, guidance could a pupil most effectively discover his own talents and have the education to make use of them properly. The ancient languages made it possible to bequeath the golden mean to others. Through them the knowledge of Christianity and the ancients was brought into harmony and given proportion. Latin alone was the one international medium by which all people could be united and through which the greatest wealth of knowledge had been bestowed.

Margaret M. Phillips correctly asserts that "Erasmus believed in free will, and in the power of redeemed humanity to receive and act

with the grace of God."¹⁶ By the acquisition of knowledge, he thought, one could learn much from the past about wisdom and virtue, thus drawing one closer to the spirit of God. Sharing these convictions were More and Vives, the spiritual heirs of Erasmus. Each counted their introduction to him as a great moment of inspiration to their careers as humanists. In their dedication to education, each appreciated the debt owed to him.

More's influence as an educationist differed from Erasmus' quantitatively and qualitatively; More's was neither so extensive nor so comprehensive. They both derived benefits from the other's achievements however: More from the inspiration Erasmus provided in humanistic studies, and Erasmus from the shining example of applied humanism which More's life and school exemplified. The friendship between the two leading figures of the Northern Renaissance is one of the most famous in history--almost proverbial. From the time they met in London in 1499, they retained the utmost affection and respect for one another. More figures prominently in Erasmus' voluminous epistles and we in fact know much of More's life from what Erasmus preserved.

As a humanist More served the cause of education quite differently from either Erasmus or Vives. Even after he had become the preeminent humanist of the English Renaissance and was, as John Colet called him, the one genius of England, he never penned a work specifically concerning education. More's influence as an educationist was mainly expressed by references he devoted to education in his works and letters and by the model which his own family school at Chelsea provided for the intellectual community of Northern Europe. In October 1515, he wrote a long letter to Martin van Dorp in reply to Dorp's attacks upon Erasmus' *Encomium moria* and translation of the Greek New Testament. Dorp, a Dutch theologian and president of the College du Saint-Esprit in Louvain, epitomized the Old Guard of medieval scholastics who opposed the New Learning of humanism. He was completely outraged by the *Moria* and utterly misinterpreted Erasmus' irony and sublime calls for reform. He said the frivolous Erasmus would be better to write a "Praise of Wisdom." But he was also a dialectician of the type to which humanists were so opposed. He voiced what most of his fellow dialecticians also voiced: that Erasmus and humanists in general were incapable of successful argumentation as compared with dialecticians. In his reply to these insults, More took the

opportunity to declaim on the current state of dialectic as well as to defend Erasmus' intellectual integrity: "Is it your conviction, Dorp, that everything is thrown into confusion by Erasmus . . . that he is ignorant of the nature of dialectics...and that he cannot comprehend what almost all schoolboys know?"¹⁷ No, said More, if one is so skilled in rhetoric as Erasmus, then he obviously understands dialectics. The two are "no more distinct than one's fist and the palm of his hand, because dialectics binds together more tightly the same thing that rhetoric elucidates."¹⁸ This illustrated that recurring tenet of humanism: that dialectic was not unimportant, but should have complemented rhetoric and grammar and not been emphasized to their detriment. The contemporary state of dialectics according to More was perfectly in keeping with the opinions of Erasmus and Vives: the art was singularly noted by the folly and puerility of its objectives and the utter absurdity by which it was demonstrated" (. . . in these rowdy debates where reason is subordinated to shouting and men reach the point of spitting at one another because their self-control and sense of shame are forgotten.)"¹⁹ As a devout humanist, More took his argument to the ancients and asked if Aristotle, Jerome, or Augustine would have accepted such debates. Such farcical nonsense destroyed the "pure tradition of the ancients." In conjunction with his argument against dialectic, More also took aim at its corruption of grammar. Scholastics, he claimed, whiled away their time dissecting words and creating fantastic rules that they insisted all people must use. Whether advocating the use of Greek, urging a return to a purer grammar, or attacking dialecticism, More was not only rushing to Erasmus' defense, he was attempting to win Dorp over to the humanists. In the context of his letter, his points of contention were really one continuous argument: the humanist was a more qualified theologian than the scholastic. A characteristic of Northern humanists was that they had a tight network of communication and sought a united intellectual community. There is no doubt that by his argument More wanted to convert Dorp, and in this he was successful; the Dutchman eventually lauded Erasmus and his work. To achieve his intentions, More applied the most gentle tone and employed one of the most fundamental humanistic arts: that of subtle persuasion.

If it can be said that his letter to Martin van Dorp had as its primary objective the condemnation of dialecticism, then More's

letter of March 1518 to Oxford University exhorted the foundation of the New Learning. More heard that at Oxford there was a large group of conservatives who not only opposed liberal education, especially Greek, but harassed those who attempted to acquire it. One of the leaders of this group, the Trojans, had the audacity to preach against the New Learning. In the presence of the king, during a Lenten service, he "babbled not only against the elegance of Greek and Roman literature but against the liberal arts themselves."²⁰ Here is the essence of More's appeal:

Now as far as secular learning is concerned, no one denies that salvation can be attained without this or any other kind of education. Yet this education which he calls secular does prepare the soul for virtue . . . Furthermore, there are some who derive from knowledge of natural things a way whereby they ascend to the contemplation of spiritual things. They build a path to theology through that philosophy and those liberal arts which this man condemns as secular . . . How can theology . . . be studied without a knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, or Latin? . . . I will not make mention of the New Testament which was written almost entirely in Greek! Nor need I mention that the most ancient and qualified of the interpreters of the Scriptures were Greeks.²¹

By this eloquent letter, More called upon Oxford to match what Cambridge already had begun: to dedicate a college to the *studia humanitatis*. Most assuredly More's urging and pressure (he was not loath to wield his influence) had some effect, for in that same year of 1518 his friend John Clement was appointed Greek Reader in the new College of Corpus Christi established as an institution of the New Learning.²²

Besides concerning himself with the content and object of studies, More was also interested in the educational system. In 1516 he published his *Utopia*, the definitive socio-political treatise of the sixteenth century, which described the attitude towards education on the island of "Nowhere." For instance, the figure Hythlodæus refers to a group of Utopians "in whom they [the fellow Utopians] have detected from childhood an outstanding personality, a first-rate intelligence, and an inclination of the mind toward learning."²³ This

indicated a psychological approach to understanding children's abilities for future studies much like Vives suggested later. In his description of the island's culture, Hythlodæus goes on to mention that "a large part of the people, too, men and women alike, throughout their lives, devote to learning the hours which . . . are free from manual labor."²⁴ This devotion to the education of women as well as men was quite important to More, and not only because he had three daughters. He insisted that education increased the knowledge and wisdom of women. In a letter to William Gonell, one of his children's tutors, he said that "if a woman to eminent virtue should build an outwork of even moderate skill in letters, I think she will have more real benefit than if she had obtained the riches of Croesus or the beauty of Helen."²⁵

Such a devoted interest to the teaching of girls, as well as boys, was given form in the school which More established in his own home. Often called the Chelsea school, it is more likely that he first initiated his children's education in the family's first home in London, and continued it in Bucklesbury, then in Chelsea.²⁶ Besides More's own four, his school came to include many other children, including step-children, nieces, nephews, and wards. More evidenced a particular concern because he was constantly tending to ministerial duties at Westminster and the Court and consequently could not supervise the children's education more closely. In response to this situation, he maintained a constant correspondence with the school when away. To insure a superlative education, he employed tutors in whose scholarship he was confident. Two of those were John Clement, later appointed a Reader at Oxford, and William Gonell, who had worked with Erasmus when he visited England.²⁷

Doubtless More was, if not demanding, then surely firm in encouraging the pupils to pursue their studies diligently. Their curriculum was quite liberal and included leisure activities as well as more formal classroom subjects. It was More's firm opinion that learning did not stop in the classroom. The most important subject was Latin. Others included Greek, astronomy, theology, philosophy, logic, and mathematics. Although the latter usually took up only geometry, More probably began to include arithmetic when he realized his own deficiency. He was helped in this by his friend, Cuthbert Tunstal, who dedicated to More a Latin textbook on arithmetic.²⁸

Regarding the learning of Latin, More employed the method of double translation, first from Latin into English, and then back again. Elegance was attained in Greek by studying the styles of Lucian, Demosthenes, Herodotus, Aristophanes, Homer, and Euripides, and for Latin, Terence, Plautus, Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Caesar, Sallust, Augustine, and Jerome. He supervised the progress of the children by encouraging them to write him letters in Latin wherever he might be. He replied with loving communications of approval and encouragement and gave them bits of advice for improvement if needed. Some of the leisure activities which More sponsored to encourage talent were music, both vocal and instrumental, and theatre in the form of household plays which he often wrote.

Thomas More's school was the product of his love for his children and for young people in general. His affection was expressed in his desire for them to be contented, pious, serving Christians. He thought the best way to achieve this was through a humanistic education. His hopes were best expressed in one of his letters to a tutor:

... warn my children to avoid the precipices of pride and haughtiness and to walk in the pleasant meadows of modesty; . . . not to lament that they do not possess what they erroneously admire in others; . . . to put virtue in the first place, learning in the second; and in their studies to esteem most whatever may teach them piety towards God, charity to all, and Christian humility in themselves.²⁹

There could be no more fitting tribute to Thomas More's achievement as a humanist than this "prayer" for his children. This letter and the school which it described symbolized the best of Renaissance education and its ideals. Indeed, the Chelsea school was the admiration of humanists throughout Europe. Its fame and success spread throughout the network of scholars, some of whom had visited Chelsea and others who had not. It drew the praise of such learned and diverse men as Guillaume Bude, the Bishop of Exeter, and Reginald Pole. In one of the many tributes he paid to the school, Erasmus proclaimed: "You would say that in More's house Plato's Academy was revived. But I do the house injury in comparing it with Plato's Academy . . . I should rather call it a

school, or university, of Christian religion."³⁰

Neither did Juan Luis Vives, a frequent visitor to More's home, spare his encomia of the school. The two met in 1523 during Vives's first trip to England and very soon after More moved his family into the Chelsea manor. More's warm and

congenial family, his devotion to Erasmus, and, not least, his wonderful school immediately captured Vives's heart. Vives was astounded at the undoubtedly professional instruction and atmosphere conducive to study, and commented often in his letters upon their success. Of More's daughter and most proficient student, Margaret, he was especially impressed and said so in a letter to More published with his [Vives's] *De conscribendis epistolis*.

More first became aware of Vives through correspondence from Erasmus which praised the young man's abilities as a scholar. Erasmus also sent a copy of Vives's diatribe against scholasticism, *Adversus pseudodialecticos*. In a reply, More admitted that he "had never seen anything more elegant or learned."³¹ He asked Erasmus, "How often do you find anyone . . . who at such a young age has so completely mastered the whole orbit of disciplines? . . . it is by far the best to have steeped yourself in the liberal arts by learning them in such a way that you can pass them along to others in turn by teaching them; and who teaches more clearly, more pleasingly . . . than he?"³² This admiration for Vives continued throughout More's life, and his devoted friendship was reciprocated. Vives recommended the *Utopia* in many of his works including *De ratione studii puerilis*, written for Princess Mary, and *De tradendis disciplinis*. He also remembered the family school in the *De disciplinis*, for he surely had the memory of it in mind when he described the ideal Academy. It was at More's home in Chelsea that Vives became acquainted with many of the English humanist avant-garde such as Linacre, Lord Mountjoy, William Latimer, Elyot, Reginald Pole, John Fisher, and Cuthbert Tunstal. This was surely an invaluable gift of patronage on the part of More to a young man just beginning to make a name for himself in the learned circles of northern Europe, a young man who would contribute to education in a manner quite different from either More or Erasmus.

Though Erasmus once wrote of Juan Luis Vives in a letter to More, "he is one of the number of those who will overshadow the name of Erasmus," history has proved just the opposite.³³ The figure of Erasmus has dominated the intellectual history of the

Northern Renaissance. And despite the injury suffered by More throughout England's history of antipapism, he also has been admired for centuries throughout the west for his brilliance and character. Yet Vives, who is just as central a figure in the history of education, has been widely neglected and virtually forgotten by most scholars since the end of the eighteenth century. In brilliance and abilities he was the equal of the other two men, and twentieth-century scholars have readily agreed to his importance in the Northern Renaissance. Perhaps he has failed to fire historical imagination because he was not a Lord Chancellor or a martyr like More, nor did he have a vast correspondence and become embroiled in the Reformation like Erasmus.³⁴

As an educationist, Vives was hailed in his time as a new Quintilian. It was regarding education that Vives produced his most perceptive literary works, *Adversus pseudodialecticos*, *De tradendis disciplinis*, *De institutione feminae christianae*. Many of his aspirations for education were quite novel. His appreciation for children's study of nature and what would later become known as the empirical method of investigation predated the Scientific Revolution and was strange to More and Erasmus. Even his advocacy of vernacular usage, though initiated by Italian civic humanists of the Quattrocento, was not yet widely supported in the transalpine north, least of all by Erasmus. Yet, his most significant achievement, *De tradendis disciplinis*, most closely associated him with Quintilian.

Not since Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* of the first century A.D. had anyone written such a comprehensive work on education.³⁵ In it Vives offers a system which could have served for what he also considered the most important aspirations of a humanistic education: the preparation of the individual to be an active participant in society and a humble servant of God. Neither More or Erasmus ever formulated such a comprehensive system of education. But all of the originality and individual scope of Vives's works have not earned him timeless renown enjoyed by his two famous associates for many reasons. First, he was a Catholic Spaniard writing in the Northern Europe of the Reformation. Second, it was the habit of many authors during the era to borrow ideas from other thinkers without giving them due credit. Later theorists frequently borrowed Vives's ideas and words without crediting the source. Third, Vives was more purely an educationist

than More and Erasmus, and thus did not win the same literary, theological, and political fame as they did. And last were the radical changes made in educational theory as a result of the desire to educate the general population which began in the eighteenth century. Educational theorists since that time have considered not how the few can receive the finest education in the best environment, but how the many can hope to receive a general education in the available environment.

Like Erasmus, Rabelais, Bude, and so many other humanists, Vives became a zealous devotee of humanism out of an equally strong disgust with scholastic education. He was well-armed for the ensuing life-long battle, since he had enjoyed the success of a master dialectician during his five years of study in Paris.

The first strong indication of Vives's new opinions was expressed in a book entitled, *Adversus pseudodialecticos*, published in Louvain five years after his departure from Paris. Into this work he poured forth all of his knowledge and skill in dialectic, creating an eloquent and acerbic diatribe against the dialectic to which he had remained loyal for so long and which he had mastered so fully. His attack certainly delighted his humanist peers. In a letter to Erasmus dated 26 May 1520, More expressed his pleasure over Vives's ability to combat the dialecticians: ". . . what he wrote against the pseudodialecticians fills me with peculiar pleasure . . . because he mocks those silly subtleties with witty banter, opposes them with valid arguments and knocks them off their base with irrefutable reasoning." Erasmus responded with similar admiration for Vives: "We despise courageously that goddess to whom all offer sacrifice though few propitiate her . . . No other is more fitted to utterly overwhelm the battalions of dialecticians in whose camps he served for a long time."³⁶ Throughout his life Vives continued his philippics against scholasticism. He dedicated his *De causis corruptarum artium* to this cause. This book, chiefly critical in aspect, served as the first part of his *De tradendis disciplinis*, published in 1531.

Yet not all of Vives's concerns with education were purely critical. Most of his educationist writings had more positive aspects. From the time of the publication of *Adversus pseudodialecticos* in 1519 until his monumental *De disciplinis*, he produced many short books outlining educational programs for certain groups such as women and the poor. Those works concerning female education,

specifically *De institutione feminae christianae*, *De officio maritali*, and *De ratione studii puerilis*, are the better known. This is so, not because they were original in their aim, but due to Vives's innovative ideas on the subject and the importance accorded them by such figures as More and Catherine of Aragon. It was at the request of the Queen, a fellow Spaniard, that Vives wrote *De ratione studii puerilis* for the Princess Mary Tudor. Her education followed many of Vives's precepts. The tender regard Vives held for his educated mother spurred his devotion to women's education. His deep respect for an educated woman is depicted in his letters, especially his appreciation of the education provided by More for his daughter Margaret. The necessary objective of a woman's education, Vives believed, was to prepare her morally and domestically so that she might be ideally prepared for the role of wife and mother or nun. This educational curriculum included studies in Latin and vernacular tongues, inspirational readings by Christian and pagan writers, as well as those habits to be encouraged in a pious young woman. Despite his admiration for women, Vives was still very much a product of his age. The educational programs he proposed for women were quite distinct and their goals entirely separate from those desired for men. Ladies were still expected to fill their traditional roles. For instance, a thorough training in proper vernacular and Latin grammar prepared a woman to teach her own children, but Vives never expected ladies to teach young men. He thought that if women began training men in higher learning, their natural female cunning would combine with their education to have a deleterious effect upon the males.

The greatest of Vives's constructive works on educational theory was his *De tradendis disciplinis*, completed in 1531 at Bruges. It was this achievement which most earned him fame as the new Quintilian. The ideas which he propounded in *De disciplinis* were not mere echoes of the *Institutio*. It is true that Vives incorporated those ideas of Quintilian which he admired, but he drew upon the educational philosophies of the entire western European tradition including Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Petrarch, Valla, and even Erasmus and More. Like Quintilian, Vives was the representative educationist of his age, the Northern Renaissance. It was his achievement in *De disciplinis* to incorporate his heritage with his own theories and the aspirations of the New Learning into an educational system suited to the needs and situations of his own

time. It is a further indication of his genius that *De disciplinis* not only utilized past and present to the benefit of his own era, but also looked into the future. His proposals for the testing of preschool children in order to determine their educational capacities as well as the direct study of nature to gather information and formulate hypotheses anticipated the more formal investigations in psychology and empirical research of the future. *De disciplinis* was Vives's comprehensive handbook telling us why education is important, what is to be learned, and in what manner it is to be transmitted. Humanism originated and flourished in the Renaissance, and for those whom it influenced, a primary objective was to instill greater piety in a student. Before men of later centuries advocated the use of humanistic skills for secular reasons, Christian piety was a central concern. For Vives, this concern remained as important as it was for More and Erasmus. Piety, he said was a conscious act by men to lead their lives according to their faith. Education did not insure piety, but a learned man could lead a more pious life than an unlearned one. It is important to indicate the distinction made between piety and faith. Education could lead to greater piety, but was not necessary for stronger faith. Though there was no inherently bad knowledge, Vives did believe that a misuse or mistaken appreciation for some knowledge could be detrimental to piety.

The subject of study dwelt upon most in *De disciplinis* is that of languages. Expounding the theme emphasized by Erasmus and More, Vives advocated language as the most important topic because it represented the medium by which knowledge was transmitted. In addition, through the study of pristine ancient Greek and especially Latin, philology was able to discern the truths hidden in ancient secular and sacred manuscripts. Vives suggested several ways of mastering these languages such as using notebooks to store vocabulary and translate and reverse-translate from vernacular to Latin and then back again. He believed rhetorical style and grammar were best learned by the extensive reading of the ancient texts as inspiration, but not as strict guides because individual style and creativity might be stifled. Yet, as pointed out, Vives was quite novel among his peers in recommending the study of vernacular languages because they were beautiful, useful, and facilitated the learning of Latin.

But he said, "let those who study remember, that if nothing is

added to their knowledge by the study of language, they have only arrived at the gates of knowledge."³⁷ These studies "will enable them to penetrate to those facts and ideas, which are contained in these languages, like beautiful and valuable things are locked up in treasures."³⁸ Vives discussed in particular the studies of dialectical logic, nature-study, mathematics and geometry, physics, and metaphysics. Of logic and dialectic he emphasized their importance to clear and rational thinking and as a "means whereby we can test the true and the false by simple well arranged rules."³⁹ He also warned against that which he so often criticized, the glorification of a dialectical victory to the detriment of truth. In the study of natural occurrences, Vives emphasized not only the perusal of the recorded results and speculations of others, but most importantly the actual exploration of nature itself. The student needed to learn to base his assumptions upon actual observed behavior. This foreshadowed Francis Bacon several decades later. Still, Vives warned that nature study was not healthy for those who doubted and suspected everything, especially those weak in religious convictions, or for those only interested in wasting their inquiries upon trivial intellectual diversions.

It was further evidence of Vives's devotion to the education of the whole person that amidst his treatments of different pedagogical subjects, he interjected advice on recreation: physical recreation, "that youth may have more bodily alacrity lest the intellect be weighed down by ill health"⁴⁰ and mental recreation which "will be sought from subjects of the higher studies."⁴¹ Nor was the spirit disregarded, for Vives never forgot that the light by which one studied needed to be the light of Christ.

Much knowledge, professional and practical, remained to be studied when a boy reached manhood and completed his basic education. An aspiring physician required a thorough knowledge of "remedies," or pharmaceuticals, and of anatomy. Vives divided a physician's art into two subjects, Dietetics, what we would call Health, and Medicine proper. "Medicine is peculiar to the particular time of sickness, and to particular people (viz. the sick); whilst Dietetics has reference to all men, and at all times."⁴² It is interesting to note that Vives made an exception for medical studies which he extended to no others. All literature, history, grammar, and philosophy were to be studied before professional work began. To all practices and studies of the literary arts he (the medical

student) will say 'farewell'; his attention will be bent and strained forward to this art alone."⁴³ With regard to practical knowledge, Vives included the study of anything which was useful in the lives of men such as architecture, husbandry, textiles, navigation and many other subjects. Everyone, he said, should attempt curiosity in all practical subjects and supplement this by investigation. This was easily accomplished outside of school and indeed for one's entire life.

Practical knowledge Vives differentiated from practical wisdom. The latter was "the skill of accommodating all things of which we made use in life, to their proper places, times, persons, and functions . . . Practical wisdom is born from its parents, judgment and experience."⁴⁴ In the advancement of practical wisdom, Vives recommended the study of three general topics: history, moral philosophy, and law. History he pictured as a delight, the wine of wisdom handed down from our ancestors in the cup of language. Moral philosophy was associated with practical wisdom because it increased lucid, conscientious, optimistic judgment; "all the precepts of Moral Philosophy have been prepared, like an army to bring support to reason."⁴⁵ He described the diversions of moral philosophy as ethics, economics, politics, and diplomacy. Jurisprudence was seen as critical for the maintenance of peace and justice in society and he assigned a certain responsibility to lawyers. To be mere fonts of uninspired legalism, to support the letter of the law while denigrating the truth, he commented, required "neither understanding nor judgment." On the contrary, "if it is the function of a true and thorough jurisconsult to explain the sense and spirit of laws, as to discover the justice that is present in each law . . . this surely demands philosophical knowledge in a man."⁴⁶ Vives discussed methods of legal education as well as criteria for laws themselves: laws needed to be known by the public and available in the vernacular. Furthermore they were to be accommodated to different men, written in accordance with love and harmony, and approved by the majority of the population.

Besides the broad range of subjects he canvassed from an educational perspective, Vives displayed a keen interest in the teaching environment. Like Erasmus and More, he realized the attention which needed to be afforded the character and qualifications of a teacher and the location and atmosphere of a school. More so than they, he developed these themes, devoting an

entire book of *De tradendis* to them. It is important to remember the debt owed by Vives to Erasmus and especially More upon this subject. As we saw earlier, Vives was greatly inspired by More's application of the ideals of an educational environment in his Chelsea school. Yet in teaching experience, Vives was the most qualified of the three, and this was surely instrumental in his development of the subject. He urged teachers to discourage triumph in disputations between pupils, but instead to promote irenic and pious characters. He emphasized the need for moral development and an interest in learning to begin at home, and gave instruction regarding the disciplining of pupils by teachers. His concern for the individual he also expressed in his discussion of the various abilities, interests, and wits inherent in pupils. Erasmus in *De pueris* also advocated the testing of children to determine their future ability, but his development of the subject was not as extensive.

In their integration of learning with piety, Renaissance humanists raised teaching to a divine mission. This sense of mission was expressed vividly in Vives's aspirations for the teacher, aspirations which just as easily could be attributed to Erasmus and More. In Book II of *De disciplinis* he exhorted:

Let them [professors or masters] pity the human race, blind, and forsaken amidst so many dangers; let them remember that their heavenly Lord and Master is calling them: 'Ye are the light of the earth'; 'Ye are the salt of the world.' And if the light is obscured who will be able to see and if the salt hath lost its savor, wherewithal shall it be salted? Therefore let professors and masters--avoiding disputation and divesting themselves of pride--be good, learned and practical, and spend their lives harmoniously so that they may mutually help each other, knowing that they are doing God's work. For he who helps a brother who is labouring for the truth, not only helps a man but also the truth, and shows himself a servant of God, from whom proceeds all truth and who is indeed the highest truth Himself, pure and perfect.⁴⁷

This sense of divine mission, that they were lights of truth, was a firm bond among Erasmus, More, and Vives. For them education

was a religious crusade at the head of which was Christian doctrine. The greatest educational triumphs of Christian humanism occurred during the last decades of a united Christendom. The next apex of humanism's influence upon education occurred in the nineteenth century with one fundamental difference: education was no longer regarded as a fulfillment of one's duty to God. By this, Erasmus, More, and Vives would have been saddened if not surprised. Their Christocentric understanding of education's role was the keystone around which the humanists built their program. The attributes of humanism, which we have discussed such as its philological and didactic concern for classical language and knowledge, its revival of rhetoric, and the historical perspective which its adherents lent to their observations and studies--all of these were of importance primarily because they imparted wisdom, and thereby, piety.

Beyond their eloquent advocacy of these common characteristics, More, Erasmus, and Vives made their own particular contributions to educational theory. Thomas More's influence lay chiefly in the example he set, not efficacious only because of his internationally renowned school, but also because of his acclaimed reputation as an honest scholar-statesman. These things lent credibility to his school and his writings. Erasmus and Vives were more similar, due to their creation of complete educational treatises. Where they differed, Vives seemed to gain from his broader experience in teaching and appeared to develop certain themes of educational techniques with greater insight. Erasmus' reputation as an educationist is certainly well supported by his writings. If posterity remembered his endowments to education more than those of More and Vives, his reputation is deserved if for nothing else than the influence he exerted upon them and the inspiration he provided. Vives's forgotten fame as the "new" Quintilian is as well deserved, primarily because of his skills in rhetoric, dialectic, and languages, his eloquence, and the breadth of his theories. That he was denied the recognition of past centuries remains the folly of history.

NOTES

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graduate student at the University of Georgia.

¹Juan Luis Vives, *Vives on Education*, translated and edited by Foster Watson, with a Foreword by Francesco Cordasco (Totowa, N. J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1971), lviii.

²M. M. Phillips, *Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1981), 106.

³*Ibid.*, 106-107. Phillips provides a description and background to these two works.

⁴William Harrison Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus concerning the Aim and Method of Education* (New York: Lenon Hill, 1904), 23.

⁵Pearl Hogrefe, *The Sir Thomas More Circle* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1959), 172.

⁶Woodward, 20. Woodward provides background for *De ratione*.

⁷*Ibid.*, 162.

⁸*Ibid.*, 165.

⁹*Ibid.*, 165-66.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 173.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 174, 176-77.

¹²*Ibid.*, 165-66.

¹³Desiderius Erasmus, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, trans. B. C. Verstraete, vol 26: *De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis declamatio* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 292.

¹⁴Woodward, 183.

¹⁵Phillips, 108.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁷Thomas More, *Thomas More--"Utopia" and Other Writings*, translated and edited by John P. Dolan and James J. Green (New York: New American Library, Meridian Classics, 1984), 141.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*, 105.

²¹*Ibid.*, 106-108

²²E. E. Reynolds, *The Field is Won* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1968), 139. Reynolds discusses John Clements and the College of Corpus Christi.

²³Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. Edward Surtz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 89.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 88-89.

²⁵Reynolds, 160.

²⁶Hogrefe, 144. Hogrefe provides a brief history of the school.

²⁷Reynolds, 158-59.

²⁸Ibid., 165-66. Reynolds recounts the story of Tunstal's and More's experience with arithmetic.

²⁹Ibid., 161.

³⁰Vives, *Vives on Education*, cxlviii.

³¹Juan Luis Vives, *Juan Luis Vives Against the Pseudodialecticians*, with a Foreword by Rita Guerlac, translated and edited by Rita Guerlac (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 161.

³²Ibid., 161-62.

³³Vives, *Vives on Education*, xxiii.

³⁴Ibid., xxx.

³⁵Vives, *Vives Against the Pseudodialecticians*, 2.

³⁶Vives, *Vives on Education*, 65.

³⁷Ibid., 163.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 264.

⁴⁰Ibid., 176.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., 216.

⁴³Ibid., 223.

⁴⁴Ibid., 228.

⁴⁵Ibid., 251.

⁴⁶Ibid., 262.

⁴⁷Ibid., 269.