Danilo Facca

Introduction

The topic of this volume is the teaching and learning practices in the major and minor academic centers of Renaissance Europe and their relevance to early modern intellectual history. The interest in this topic derives from considering knowledge, particularly that proper to academic environments, less as a finished product and more as a process, to which a plurality of factors and conditions contribute: the personalities and intellectual profiles of teachers and learners, the dialectic between their respective interests and roles. And then again, the institutional context, from the immediate one given by the particular school or university, with their courses and curricula, to the more remote one given by governing political power or surveilling religious authority, or the interplay between the two. And last but not least, the several impulses of an epoch that seem to impart to the course of history a sudden acceleration, inducing decisive, sometimes disruptive, changes to the development of that phenomenon we call "knowledge": the spread of humanistic culture, the Religious Reformation and its consequences, encounters with new epistemologies, access to education of new social subjects, and—behind all these and as their common catalyst—the progressive establishment of the printing press as a means of learning consolidation and dissemination.

The focus on processuality in the shaping of knowledge, which is characteristic of the last decades of scholarship on the intellectual history of the 1500s and 1600s, could well be qualified by the term "materialist" or "neo-materialist." Perhaps the term raises reservations because it comes to us laden with many epistemological assumptions that recall past and even present ideologies. Nonetheless, there would be no resistance to accepting this term if we were to consider it simply as an expression of the attention that today's scholars—for example, those in this collection—pay to documents, texts, and sources as products of those dynamic factors mentioned above. What matters here is less to isolate the content of an idea than to show its actual genesis in a concrete situation, at the hands of singular agents, moved by determinate ends. But if that is not enough to make this perspective "materialistic," I will add that it has been suggested to the authors to choose or privilege the student's perspective. It is fundamentally the theme of student agency that unites these studies, whether we are talking about little-known or even anonymous students or "peak" figures in the intellectual history of the Renaissance—

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whether this active role is evident, preponderant, or barely visible or even marginal, whether it is expressed within institutional guidelines (expressed in *leges*, *statuta*, or other official documents) or emerges from practices and motivations the contents of which only analysis of the individual document can show.

It is not difficult to justify this choice. In effect, it seems to me that just looking at the literary output of professors, which has dominated so far, can only return a static image of knowledge, especially if one considers that this is delivered as printed text, i. e. a "finished" product, where there is a tendency to minimize if not erase the traces of its real genesis. The consideration of the text itself, as a semantic unit conveying accomplished thought, must therefore be supplemented by book history, where "book" is understood as any document considered in the process of its intellectual and material making. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the perspective adopted here, particular prominence is given to the manuscript that has come out of the student's calamus. It tells us a story, sometimes complex, sometimes unclear, sometimes even contradictory or without definite sense, but for that very reason *magis sapit hominem!* Lecture reports, reworkings of them for personal use, compendia, transcripts with marginal or interlinear annotations, commentaries—a flood of writing activity matched by frantic mental work about which the psychology of learning and memory could tell us much. But the student's "mind" as we understand it here is not, or is not only, a sequence of pure cognitive processes, but is also and above all the sphere of his interests, expectations, pursued ends—in a word, of his life before, during, and after his passage through a school. The individual at the moment he enters higher education is the ultimate recipient, or rather, the principal social user of that massive and extraordinarily complex school machine, the establishment of which marks like a few other factors the beginning of the modern era.

This "student-centered" perspective has several advantages. I do not pretend to list them all, not least because I believe we are just beginning and there are many things we will learn that we cannot yet foresee. So allow me to point out some of them, somewhat rhapsodically. One of these has already been alluded to: escaping the temptation to reconstruct intellectual history as a process in which a few particularly important contributions of a few particularly important thinkers ("great peaks" as one of the contributors calls them) count, instead of focusing on the intellectual and organizational work that took place around educational institutions and was intended to train the political, intellectual, religious elites. No one will deny that the historical importance of the latter is second to nothing else. And it should come as no surprise that in a great many cases, perhaps too many to represent exceptions, the knowledge expressed by these institutions was not, or was not only, a heritage received and to be transmitted as such, but a content subjected to test and stress, open to criticism and innovation. In every era, the youngest gen-

eration knew the allure of passing through the Pillars of Hercules, that is, of the risk associated with challenging old tenets and prospecting new ones. The scholarly youth of the Renaissance was no exception.

By this one can also open a further perspective, suitable for studies of historical sociology, about the relationship between university studies and political, military, religious careers, or so many other directions, whether this concerns figures who became famous or others who remained obscure. And still, it allows us to observe how at the dawn of modernity a phenomenon characteristic of academic life in Europe throughout the ages and that was so decisive for the formation of its elites continued in so many and peculiars forms: the phenomenon of student mobility, the directions of which (east-west/north-south, center-periphery, confessional key) are at the center of current historical research. And again, I would like to touch on the issue of the role of *auctoritates* in curricula, since it is evident from printed books and manuscript sources, and despite certain historiographical vulgate, that authors such as Aristotle or St. Thomas assume a wholly and merely functional role in teaching and learning: their doctrines became pieces of "knowledge," only and exclusively in the work done in and around the classroom in discussing, analyzing, objecting to, and synthesizing that ideal content. It is all work done by students in collaboration and competition with their classmates and professors.

Finally, we cannot fail to mention the long-discussed issue of the impact of the press on the intellectual history of early modernity. Most of the chapters here confront us with practices and processes that are in continuity with those already known in the Middle Ages. Lectures, seminar discussions, public disputations, and so on, if compared with those of the earlier Renaissance forms of teaching and learning do not display major innovations. If anything, the discontinuity is more detectable at the "material" level than at the formal level, and here again, I mean those factors external to the schools that we were mentioning: the rupture of religious unity, the broadening of literary canons, geographical and astronomical discoveries, the social race for education and knowledge, all this seem to be decisive in giving a modern character to the authors and texts that are presented in this volume. But beyond all that there is no doubt that on the production and management of knowledge, the increasing presence of printed texts was destined to profoundly change the habits and expectations of students and professors. Not for the first nor for the last time, a factor belonging neither to the realm of institutional organization nor to that of factual history, but to that of technology, produced or decisively accelerated the most significant changes. This, too, is discussed in the nine chapters of this volume.

In the first of them, Jarrik Van Der Biest offers us a demonstration of the fruitfulness of the "material" approach to intellectual history in the mid-1500s. The

"book" here is ms 434 held at the University Library of Utrecht, which contains notes on a course on the Holy Scriptures compiled by an unknown Johannes Lomelensis, a Flemish Dominican active on the Flanders-France border in the 1670s. Studying the manner in which Lomelensis formed the quires in which he placed the biblical courses attended at the Leuven Faculty of Theology allows us to recognize the layering of distinct text units and, from this layering, the manuscript's function, or rather, functions. A support for collecting scholastic courses, it soon became a preparatory tool for preaching during the liturgy, i. e., the task for which the Order had in all likelihood destined this Dominican (and the brethren who would hold the manuscript after him). The troubled years of the beginning of the Flanders Revolt and the spread of the Reformation in the border area provide the context of this operation of "applying" and "disseminating" biblical theology over decades. Important and surprising for the history of biblical exegesis in the Renaissance, despite a certain historiographical model, is the leading role assigned by a Dominican like Lomelensis to St. Augustine as well as the focus he put on St. Paul and St. James.

The topic of the continuity and discontinuity of modern practices with medieval ones is at the core of Dieter Cammaerts' study, which takes us to the Faculty of Arts in Louvain at the turn of the 400s and 500s. The crucial question is that of the impact of printed book production on the everyday practice of university teaching, particularly that of Aristotelian-Boetian logic, which had been dominant throughout the Middle Ages and continued to be so at this time. In the foreground emerge figures of printers organic to the university, such as Braem, Martens, and van Westflen, with their strategies of adapting to the demands of the "market." What changes did the provision of their "products" induce in the student's *modus operandi?* The texts of the *auctoritates* presented in class became readily available in these printed publications and relieved the student of the need to transcribe a copy *manu propria.* Moreover, the printed page, thanks to layout adaptations and other graphic devices, was prepared for subsequent annotation work. But what is remarkable is that the increasing "hybridization" of the teaching process occurred without upsetting its essentially oral nature, which in the mid-1600s was still based on the medieval practices of *expositio* and *quaestio.*

Crucial questions of method are raised by Clément Poupard. The inspiring principle of the study is in fact Ann Blair's intuition of a "*total histoire*" of a single "book," where the object is not so much and not only the text conveyed by it, but the history of its editing, transmission, and use (or lack thereof, in this case). These principles are employed by Poupard in the case of the *Trattato della memoria locale*, composed by the Milanese Franciscan Francesco Panigarola for teaching within the order in the 1570s. The work had initial circulation through manuscript copies and by 1599 was included in the printed editions of a successful practical

manual for preachers by Panigarola himself. The two phases of the life of this text and the books that transmit it, therefore, require a complex of erudite techniques attentive to all of their material aspects. Ultimately, all of the information provided by each of the copies available to the scholar must be taken into consideration. As far as manuscripts are concerned, the determination of the *stemma codicum* of manual transcriptions leads to merely hypothetical results, where even the very notion of archetype must be reconsidered and integrated with other techniques of analysis. The editorial history of the printed texts must consider the material analysis of the editions, e.g., page layout, relationship to manuscript versions, gaps, misunderstandings, and then the presence of specimens in library and archival collections. In this way, we gain insight into one of the aspects of the education of Franciscan novices, where mnemonics was seen as a practical aid for the future preachers of the Order, within the classical setting of the parts of rhetoric. The important ideological implications it takes on in other contexts of late Renaissance intellectual life are absent.

The relationship between what is decreed in school statutes and actual teaching practices as they emerge from student notebooks is thematized by David McOmish. He studies the evolution of school teaching in Edinburgh in the late 1500s and early 1600s, a turning point for many school centers in Reformed Europe. In this way, it is possible to delineate the organic relationship between three moments of the teaching process: the front lecture, the class discussion of the topics raised in it, and the public dispute for obtaining a title. In Edinburgh, all of these steps proceeded under the control of the "regent," the single professor responsible for all of the disciplines for a given class. One is quite wrong, however, if one thinks that this articulation of learning served the simple and repetitive assimilation of the books of Aristotle, his commentators, or Sacrobosco, as prescribed by the statutes. Rather, the direct influence of a corpus of astronomical-cosmological notes by one of the most celebrated regents, Adam King, on lectures, discussions, and especially disputations reveals that the teaching of Aristotelian doctrines was little more than a pretext (a "skeleton") for discussing post-Copernican cosmological theses and conceptions in full freedom. The probable Parisian-Ramist derivation of this educational strategy motivates us to reflect on the importance of the inter-academic circulation of people and ideas in the genesis of early modern knowledge.

Of the Zamość Academy, another new institution and defiladed from the great European university centers, the ideological profile of the "civil school" and the political reasons that led to its foundation in the early 1600s are well known. But now the study of the manuscript bequest of the school's library allows Luisa Brotto and Danilo Facca to move beyond this "idealistic" perspective and focus instead on teaching practices and the involvement of students and professors in them. The

scrutiny of these texts first allows them to distinguish different degrees of derivation—from the most to the least immediate—from the classroom lecture, their supposed common source: preparatory notes by the professor, direct reports taken by students, copies derived from one and/or the other by selected students or professional scribes, or even texts in which these mostly anonymous contributions are layered. These different stages and activities give us a dynamic and real picture of teaching that must necessarily complement the static and prescriptive one we find in statutes and in other organizational documents. Seen from the perspective of the transmission of knowledge, the Zamość school thus appears as a community endowed with vitality, which contrasts with the image of intellectual conservatism (late humanistic) with which it is usually branded. Given these assumptions, the analysis of a manuscript bearing a course in Aristotelian logic allows one to detect traces of these multiple contributions to the formation and transmission of knowledge. Not surprisingly, this collective work is also an anonymous one, since it is difficult to even trace the author of the course from which it might have been derived.

With Ove Averin's work, we take ourselves to another "peripheral" center where, however, some dynamics of early modernity are clearly visible. The topic of the chapter is the curriculum of the *Academia Gustaviana* of Tartu in Estonia, with particular reference to dialectic and rhetoric, as witness to the virtually unimpeded reception of Ramism in Northern Europe. The printed disputations and orations are a particularly eloquent source, allowing us to highlight the interplay of intellectual trends and teaching methods adopted in these two disciplines. Averin returns to the *vexata quaestio* of the authorship of the disputations and their function in the teaching process, with the probable conclusion that these texts were the result of a negotiation between student and professor, though the weight of each side must be determined by the scholar on a case-by-case basis. Another important point highlighted by Averin is how at the stage, so to speak, of mature Ramism, the textual basis of didactics was provided by both a mix of author texts (Cicero, Virgil, Herennius) and systematic compendia, such as those of Alsted, Dieterich, and Ramus himself. Perhaps even more interesting is the presence—around the mid-17th century—of disputations that, instead of being articulated as usual in simple *theses*, provide punctual analyses (*resolutiones*) of a classical text (Virgil, Cicero) according to the Ramist method, whether it is accomplished by highlighting the argumentative structures of the text itself or breaking it down according to a pre-established network of topoi, or even treating it as an allegory (!) that alludes to the gnoseology underlying Ramist dialectic. The question then is whether we are facing an evolution—already pointed out by scholars of the subject—of the form of *disputatio* from a sequence of microtexts (*theses*) into a long essay, with the possible implications of this evolution in the tasks and functions practices assigned to

students and professors. In any case, the priority given in the curriculum to dialectic and oratorical technique situates Tartu Academy in continuity with the humanistic tradition of the 1500s.

Dennj Solera's study takes us to Padua, another fundamental ganglion of the European academic system of the 1500s, though in a somewhat anomalous situation and at the intersection of public institutions and private circles. The perspective for this research is that provided by the famous Paduan circle of Gian Vincenzo Pinelli and his relationship with the milieu of university students. In various capacities, the latter were admitted, after careful selection, into the ranks of those who had access to the vast and varied library resources acquired by this famous patron of studies. At least for certain periods of Pinelli's activity, one can even speak of a recruitment policy on his part to secure for his circle the most talented youngsters coming out of the University of Padua, and thus of a somehow organic relationship between the celebrated librarian and this *Studio.* The young people thus recruited enjoyed within the circle and the library all the conditions for carrying out research activity free from any restriction, thus exalting the principle of *patavina libertas*, quite exceptional against the background of the time. It is therefore no coincidence that among the beneficiaries of Pinelli's care were names that later became famous and belonged to that pan-European network of intellectual relations that we are wont to call the Republic of Letters.

Pasquale Terracciano's research confronts us with one of those "peaks" of Renaissance thought that is Pico della Mirandola, and in particular his famous *900 Theses*, considering him, however, as one of the many students who populated the European universities of the late 15th century. According to the author, Pico's idea of *concordia philosophorum* arose from an anonymous literature of manuals on disputation that circulated widely in the universities of the late Middle Ages. The comparison of the *viae* through which the Aristotelian intellectual legacy was assimilated by the various schools of interpreters posed the problem of overcoming their differences or of their compatibility. It seems, therefore, that Pico, like any other student of his time who witnessed the debates among the followers of Thomas, Albertus, Scotus, or Occam, referred not only and not so much directly to the texts of these *auctoritates*, but to widely circulated manuals such as the *Promptuarium argumentorum* of Cologne, which in fact offered a synthesis of the different philosophical positions in a form that could immediately be used in disputes. It is thus shown how these "intermediate sources," the importance of which for the education of any university student is easily imaginable, played no less important a role even in the inspiration and composition of works of high scholarly and philosophical level, such as the *900 Theses.*

Closing this volume, a reflection on the general attitude of scholarship in the 16th century is presented by Marco Sgarbi in a study on another peak of post-me-

dieval thought, the Aristotelian professor and thinker Pietro Pomponazzi. In Sgarbi's view, the "contextualist" turn of the last 50 years that has taken place among historians of philosophy has induced them to skip their gaze from the immanent dialectic of philosophical ideas towards the understanding of the latter genesis through academic institutions, their intellectual function, and social diffusion. In other words, historians sought to understand how such philosophical ideas became "knowledge," that is, the tools through which generations of intellectuals have tried to grasp the reality in which they find themselves. It is precisely from the perspective of the history of knowledge that Sgarbi returns to a classic theme of research on early Renaissance thought, namely Pomponazzi's famous university lectures, with their lively pace and frequent interlocutions with the student auditorium. Thus, from the reading of the numerous manuscripts that preserve them, the texture of this professor's relations with his students emerges, but also those with his own masters (Neritone) and even with colleagues with whom he polemicized (Nifo). With his innovative conception that philosophical truth is a process of sifting ideas in the light of experience and not the mere exegesis of a truth consigned to the texts of authorities such as Aristotle and Averroes, Pomponazzi proves that he understands the function of the post-medieval university as a place in which knowledge is "produced" (and as the place *par excellence* of this production): a paradigm shift that would spread from philosophy to all branches of knowledge and would come to its apogee in the next century.