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The scope of education

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1 On the order of learning (1531)

CR XI, 209–14

Oration of Caspar Cruciger on the order of learning, given at the graduation of Masters, in the year 1531[1]

At this point one would often speak of the whole of philosophy and of the excellence of all those arts that are taught in the schools, because they are considered necessary for living well and happily. Nevertheless – having passed over these declarations on the higher disciplines, which I consider to be most commendable for all because of their obvious usefulness – I have (because of the mediocrity of my wit) set about saying a few things about the kind of disciplines in which we lecture, and by which the young are prepared for grasping the greater arts. Although the teachers also repeat their usefulness to you daily in the schools, still something has to be said here of that matter, so that we may serve tradition.

Since the oration is given by me in the name of all, attribute as much authority to it, young men, as you esteem being in this society of the best and most learned men, your teachers, who have conferred this rôle upon me. For the thoughts of all of them are conveyed to you by my voice; as they want the best plan for you, they do not desist from urging you in this place to cherish those studies which they judge becoming and useful to you in private, as well as necessary for the upkeep of the state. If, on the other hand, anyone should spurn the importance of this order and scorn the judgement of men who are not only experts, but also wish the best for the entire state, humanity will be lacking in such a judgement.

I believe, however, that you have to be urged not to neglect the study of the lower arts, which, even if they have little outward appeal for the crowds, nevertheless pave the way for knowing the higher arts, which sustain the administration of the state. And so let us add a few things also about the order of learning, which is very important in all things, as Xenophon has said so delightfully: 'Nothing is as useful and nothing as beautiful for men as order' [*Household Management* VIII.3].

And if I may take my beginning from here, you know that there is a close relationship between the arts. Therefore, even if some of them appear to excel and to be pre-eminent in life, they nevertheless stand in need of the

[1] Caspar Cruciger (1504–48) was the Dean of the arts faculty and presided over the promotion of Masters on 31 January 1531.

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resources of the others. For this reason those act foolishly, who – be it spurred by ambition or by the hope for gain – rush on to the higher arts, the fruits of which are constantly visible even to the inexperienced, and neglect and scorn the remaining disciplines as though useless for life.

But when I think about it, it seems to me that there is a similarity to that relationship in the very elements of the alphabet, where, even if the vowels excel by their dignity, there can be no speech without consonants. And since all arts are brought forth by letters, we are able to notice some traces in the very elements – in the seeds, so to speak – of the differences between the arts. The vowels excel among the others by far, having a life and spirit of their own, because they produce a perfect sound, not helped by the others. The remaining letters receive the sound like pipes blown by these vowels.

Thus the vowels signify the most distinguished of all arts, the doctrine of religion, which is placed high above the other arts and rules all of life's deliberations, business and studies. And, indeed, it is not possible to uphold civil discipline without religion, and the science of law is influenced to the greatest extent by religious doctrine. But just as the semi-vowels – even if they have a somewhat obscure sound – cannot perform their task without the vowels, so in political discipline religion adds its voice to the civil precepts, protects human law by its authority and, when necessary, reforms it.

The silent letters signify more or less the private life, which is indeed mute, i.e. rustic and wild, without religion and civil conventions. Therefore, just as speech is woven together out of dissimilar letters, likewise various kinds of arts and activities are necessary in life.

Although I have been afraid for some time that the learned men in this assembly would not bear these ineptitudes with patience, I nevertheless hope that – because the oration is given for the young – they will bear with me in this game by which we have wanted to depict society as well as the ranking of the arts. And it has been seen in the elements of letters themselves that – given that they are daily present to the eyes – they often come to the scholars' minds, and it seems to us at any rate that by thinking about them the judgement on the usefulness of the arts is sharpened and formed. And I, professor of grammar in this school, have gladly borrowed this oration from this occupation which I practise.

But consider, young men, what would happen if someone, having left out all the consonants, wanted to use only vowels in speaking. Undoubtedly he would be fighting against the entire nature of things. That is to say,

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letters are called elements for the reason that, just as in nature the elements of which bodies consist are necessary, so letters are necessary for composing speech. Therefore, just as that divine order in the totality of things is perturbed if one element is removed, so there can be no articulated sound if the consonants are discarded. And in the same way, just as there is a natural relationship of the various letters with each other, the various arts are associated and yet separated. And those who feel that the lower disciplines are useless for life, because their benefit is not so visible, disturb this chorus of the arts.

If some admirer of the sky and the stars – and what can one think of that is more beautiful than these bodies? – wanted to remove water from the nature of things, because it is no match for the brightness of the stars, would we not say that he is mad? If someone, out of admiration for the teachings of religion, ordered us to remove from our lives all laws and precepts of the state and all links of domestic life, would not all sane men judge it necessary for him to be suppressed by force and by the use of weapons?

And in these recent years we have seen some who were practising theology in an unholy way, madmen with fanatical opinions, punished for their errors. For you will remember Müntzer and the Anabaptists[2] and other monsters of that kind. Consider those mad in the same way, who disturb the chorus and the harmony of the arts by neglect of, and contempt for, the lower arts. Therefore, just as when you think of the elements of writing you believe that the entire alphabet is necessary for discourse, so you will consider all the disciplines that are taught in the schools necessary for life.

For only he can have the right feelings about the arts, who, when he has noticed their order, understands that each art has been devised because of its certain usefulness.

I have said this to remind young men of it, many of whom we see rushing unrestrainedly towards the higher disciplines, not only to their own detriment, but also to that of the state. For your studies do not concern only you, but also the state.

[2] Thomas Müntzer (*c.* 1489–1525), an erstwhile follower of Luther, soon developed his own radical and seditious message, and perished in the Peasants' War in 1525. Those who believed that infant baptism was inefficacious and who thus practised re-baptism of adults were called Anabaptists. Melanchthon associated them with illiteracy, civil unrest and sedition: see J. S. Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists: Luther, Melanchthon and Menius and the Anabaptists of Central Germany* (The Hague, 1964).

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And you ought to keep in view the purpose of your studies, and decide that they are provided for giving of advice for the state, for teaching in the churches and for upholding the doctrine of religion. You will not be able to excel in any of those without perfect doctrine, and perfect doctrine is not granted to anyone without the lower disciplines.

When the mind is shaped by this thought, one needs next to deliberate on the order of learning. And I am not going to say here how great the power of order is in general, as this fact is well known and covers a wider field than can be explained here. If the farmer wants to sow first and to plough later, or if he wants to sow under the Dog Star and plough at the winter solstice, his labour and expenditure will go to waste. In the same way, if the correct order is not preserved in grasping the disciplines in one's mind, one will have to despair of any success.

A good thing brings forth a bad one, they say,[3] if it is not given at the right time. Accordingly even the study of the best and greatest things are harmful if they are not undertaken at the appropriate time. Therefore our ancestors – when they established the sequence of learning – thought out certain steps like grades, by which the young would be led in order from the lower arts to the higher ones. Now, as if these restraints had been broken, the matter is done without order. Suddenly, like mushrooms, theologians, lawyers and doctors are brought forth, without dialectics, without knowledge of speaking, without the cradle-bands of natural and moral philosophy. The knowledge of these was once taught to all alike, before they were admitted to the higher disciplines, not only because this makes for very good education, but also because it sharpens the judgement and prepares one for the acquisition of greater things. However, now it is sufficient to take a large felt cap[4] to these most venerable disciplines, and to show great contempt for all humanities teaching.

If the laws and the magistrates do not restrain this temerity, there will soon be no erudition in the state, no teaching of anything. For these theologians, lawyers and doctors who spring forth suddenly, not endowed with any decent teaching, not only allow the other arts to perish, but they cannot preserve their own professions either. And it is not the case that these concerns for the preservation of scholarship are not the business of the magistrates, for they are called gods by the Holy Spirit, so that they would preserve and

[3] For sources of this saying, see Erasmus, *Adages*, IV.iii.2.

[4] *Pilleus* is a cap of liberty worn by manumitted slaves and it was also worn at the feast of Saturnalia as a licence to do anything; Martial, *Epigrams*, XIV.i.2, cf. Erasmus, *Adages*, II.i.27.

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retain the divine gifts on earth – religion, civil order and all the honourable arts. Because of that responsibility for divine things they bear the solemn title, and the magistrates have no greater and more venerable distinction than that.

Therefore it is appropriate that they keep watch on them, so that the honourable disciplines do not fall into oblivion, the order of learning having been upset. Plato said [*Republic* IV, 424c] that the state changes if it comes about that the music changes; and this is not said uselessly. But it is much truer that the state changes if studies are changed. And indeed, all changes of the state are of concern to the magistrates. An overturned order of studies brings with it the downfall of the greatest and best things; therefore the magistrates need to be more watchful about this than about anything else. And I do not doubt that one day new laws will be established concerning these things, once the current disorder and commotion of the state have calmed down. May an effortless and easy overturning be granted to them by the favour of God!

In the mean time, however, we shall make an effort – as much as we can achieve by authority, enthusiasm and diligence – that the young learn in the correct order.

But in large part this depends on you, too; for we both admonish you diligently on this matter and make available excellent lectures in all disciplines. In the best faith the arts that contain the method of speaking are passed on; the elements of philosophy and mathematics are made clearly available. In which other school is the second book of Pliny[5] expounded as clearly as it is here? And then there remains the fact that you yourself do not wish to be wanting, but you wish to avail yourselves of the present advantages.

Assuredly, to induce you to do so must be the very pleasantness of study, as well as its usefulness. For eloquence procures incredible delight; and the history of past exploits gives pleasure to men in a wonderful way – history itself is taught, as well as its exploits set up as rhetorical exercises. And nothing is sweeter than to understand in one's mind those things that are passed on to us in philosophy – about the size of the heavenly bodies and the Earth, the movements of the various stars, and how the heavenly lights, variously mixed and blended among themselves, create differing effects in

[5] By 1531, the second book of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* had become an elementary textbook on geocentric cosmology and astrology at the University of Wittenberg: see S. Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: the Case of Philip Melanchthon* (Cambridge 1995), pp. 136f.

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this sublunar nature, like voices mingled now in one way, now in another, articulating varied songs. It is also profitable to see the causes of civil duties inscribed in nature by divine agency, and observed by learned men with marvellous sagacity.

Already the usefulness deriving from these studies can be apprehended to a great extent, for they are, as the Greeks say, further on the way [*Iliad* IV.382; *De caelo* 292b9] towards the higher arts, which certainly require knowledge of speaking. For what progress could anyone make, if he were unable to judge the style of a speech? And everywhere many things are taken from natural and moral philosophy, on which those who do not see the origins sometimes hallucinate in an improper manner.

And because it is of importance for the state to preserve the good arts, you should all feel that the state requests this of you that you apply yourselves, so that the arts do not perish through your negligence. Since we all reap greater benefits from the state than from any private persons, be they parents or friends, it is right that we in our turn express our gratitude for this and keep and defend the arts by our toil.

Therefore I admonish you, young men, to convince yourselves that you first need to know the elements of philosophy, before you advance to the higher disciplines, and that you diligently devote zeal and effort to them.

The beginning, they said, is half of the whole.[6] Who makes a good start, has obtained half the result [Horace, *Letters* I.2.40]. Everything will be easier in the other disciplines for those who have started in the right way, who bring to the other arts the knowledge of those arts, without which these can neither be perceived nor considered nor understood.

Think of me as giving this speech by public authority, and if anyone scorns it, may he know that God will be the avenger of this insult. And the state has provided these our studies with privileges and honours, which we now willingly bestow upon these young men, because – in these times and among such wrong-headedness of judgements – those deserve outstanding praise who have engaged in these general studies of philosophy. I have spoken.

[6] For classical sources for this saying, see further Erasmus, *Adages*, I.ii.29.

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2 On the rôle of the schools (1543)

CR XI, 606–18

Oration on the necessity of joining together the schools and the ministry of the Gospel, recited by Doctor Bernhard Ziegler.[1]

At this point custom imposes on me the need to speak of an ecclesiastical topic, and the choice is difficult for many reasons amidst such a multitude of things of the greatest importance; but in the end I have chosen a most ordinary subject-matter, the consideration of which should nevertheless lead to stimulating the study of literature, and confirm us in loving this kind of life more, and in bearing with greater strength the toil of this task. For I wish to speak of the schools of Scriptures, and to show that the schools have always, by God's counsel, been joined to the churches, and that they need to be joined.

Indeed, it is of great delight to me, when I recall to mind all the ages of the Church and the entire chain of history, to see, as if before my eyes, so many luminaries of humankind – Adam, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Joseph, Elias, Elijah and the Apostles. I believe that for you, too, the recalling to mind both of such great men and of the excellent things that they have accomplished is highly enjoyable. And even if, consequently, in the choice of argument I was swayed by the pleasantness of these things, nevertheless the following was the more important reason.

I know that we scholars are not only despised, but also hated. Many believe that our labours are not something necessary for life, but slothful leisure. In fact, they even curse the theologians as 'outcasts' (*katharmata*) and a plague of the state.[2] And I am not as uncouth and inexperienced in human affairs as to believe that by anybody's oration all those who feel that way can be brought to reason. But, nevertheless, that error has to be censured, so that we may understand better the kind of life to which we are called by divine agency, and that we may confirm our minds in this our course, and instil into some good minds, within this gathering of young men listening to us, honourable and, indeed, useful opinions. What more glorious thing can one imagine than that we (although we are by far inferior in teaching, wisdom and virtue) uphold in truth the same duty in the Church of God that those most illustrious men – Noah,

[1] Bernard Ziegler (1496–1556) was then the Professor of Hebrew at the University of Leipzig.
[2] Reading *Rerum* for *Rerem*.

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Shem, Abraham, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist and the Apostles – upheld?

I do not detract anything from the dignity of any hierarchy, but rather I strive to honour them all, and I recall the saying of Aristotle, who said (with the meaning that many classes and arts are necessary for life): a state is not made up from doctors and doctors, but from doctors and farmers,[3] i.e. from a union of all the arts that God has shown us, so that they may be a protection for life. The glory of those who rule the government is great in every aspect, and that of the soldiers who protect the state by their weapons is no less. Then the farmers, the craftsmen and also the merchants have their own place. God wanted men to be united among themselves by this variety of duties.

But what purpose do all these duties serve? Perhaps some pig from the herd of Epicurus [Horace, *Letters* I.4.16] may say: so that, in a quiet life, we may pleasurably enjoy its delights, and decay gradually without the hope of immortality, as the innate heat gradually abates. In truth this utterance is full of indecency and villainy. More correctly, men are formed for fellowship to such a degree that the knowledge of God shines in this gathering, and God is praised and invoked, and one is imbued by the other with that doctrine that opens access to eternal joy and to the presence of God. Consider this fellowship of men similar to a school, in which men have to occupy their minds with God and with virtue more than with anything else. The homes of that assembly are the states. And we hold the view that the government – the leaders, the army, the farmers, the craftsmen, in short all the ranks of life – serves this highest work, that is the propagation of doctrine.

Why did David fight his wars abroad? Not in order to be carried into the town on elephants in triumph, but so that, at home, at the temple and in schools, the boys and girls might study the Scriptures, read Moses and hear those who interpret the law and the promises by which God has made Himself manifest. By the weapons of strong men these assemblies in the temples and in the schools are protected, so that the knowledge of God may not be extinguished utterly among men. And yet, few rulers strive for that aim. Julius Caesar fights so that he be not divested of his dignity by the envious, and Anthony wages war so that he can squander other people's money.

[3] This seems to be a paraphrase of the beginning passages of Aristotle's *Politics*, IV.iii: 'every state contains many elements. . . . of the common people, some are farmers, traders and some artisans'.

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However, in the Church it is proper for all those of good sense to make provision for that most exalted purpose: to establish, to build and to protect states, so that the knowledge of God be spread in them.

Let me add an image, perhaps foolishly taken from a trifling thing – but, on the other hand, there are many small but manifest images of the greatest things. Often when I think about the communal life, when by night the servant goes in front carrying a lantern, it comes to my mind that states are similar to the lantern, and the heavenly teaching to the light. And just as the lantern is of no use in the dark without light, thus the city is a useless mass, if the knowledge of God and the teaching of what is good are destroyed.

Therefore it has to be acknowledged that it is necessary that there be churches and assemblies which praise God and which spread the teaching of His nature and His will far and wide. Only the Cyclopes will dare to deny this. Therefore, even if many – illiterate men – think that, by the guidance of nature, they can comprehend the will of God, nevertheless we in the Church know that God, in His infinite goodness, has disclosed Himself to humankind by certain and manifest evidence, so that He might make plain His hidden will concerning our salvation. He thundered forth the law from heaven, He sent His son and He added evidence – the resurrection of the dead and other acts, of which it is manifest that they are the work of God alone. He also ordered us with a loud voice to listen to His son, saying: 'This is my beloved son, hear him' [Luke 9:35]. Therefore the doctrine necessary for the Church is not a wisdom that is understood by the cunning of human wit, but it is the secret will of God, brought forth by His son from the bosom of the eternal Father. God wanted it to be committed to writing right from the beginning, so that its memory could be preserved for all times.

The creation of things is a great and admirable work. However, it is no smaller favour that He disclosed Himself, made Himself known to men and has spoken to us in friendly terms, so as to show that He is moved by concern for humankind. As far as I am concerned, I am moved to think of the goodness of God when I consider the nature of things, adorned by wonderful variety, and suitable for our enjoyment. I am much more strongly moved, though, every time I think of God's conversations with the Church Fathers and prophets, of the friendly companionship of Christ with the entire people, of the light of the Holy Spirit spread from heaven, and of the conversations of Christ with many after His resurrection. All minds need

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