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Aysha Pollnitz

Excerpt

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In the early twenty-first century, the value of liberal education is publicly doubted by politicians, businesses, many schools, colleges and universities, and parents in liberal-democratic nations. Voices from both ends of the political spectrum question the utility of the skills it generates and they argue that the humanities turn their acolytes into rabid liberals. To some, liberal education is too left wing and secular. To others, it is too western, white, male, privileged and hetero-normative.¹ Its critics rarely acknowledge that they are making use of a discourse that is much older than the liberal-democratic state, or liberalism itself. Indeed, since the trial of Socrates at least, liberal education has been described by its detractors as good for nothing but corrupting the young.² Defences of the honour and utility of the liberal arts and sciences are similarly venerable. Since Aristotle's *Politics* (1337a–1342b) and Plato's *Republic* (377b, 401d–402a, 445d, 473c–d, 531c–d, 540c) and *Apology for Socrates* (38a), champions of liberal education have focused on the way it teaches transferable discursive skills and critical thinking. Some argue, too, that it teaches citizenship and that it morally or even spiritually ameliorates its students to the general benefit of civil society.³

This study examines a high-stakes iteration of this debate, which was played out in the British isle between the accession of Henry VII (1457–1509) in 1485 and the wars of the three kingdoms. It aims to show

¹ K. Anthony Appiah, 'Liberal education: The United States example', in Kevin McDonough and Walter Feinberg (eds.), *Education and citizenship in liberal-democratic societies: Teaching for cosmopolitan values and collective identities* (Oxford, 2002); Janet M. Atwill, *Rhetoric reclaimed: Aristotle and the liberal arts tradition* (Ithaca, 1998); Alan Bloom, *The closing of the American mind: How higher education has failed democracy and impoverished the souls of today's students*, 2nd edn. (New York, 2008), pp. 356–79.

² Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), pp. 1–2, 10, 26–7, 33.

³ Yun Lee Too and Niall Livingstone (eds.), *Pedagogy and power: Rhetorics of classical learning* (Cambridge, 2000).

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that liberal education, the study of classical languages, and literature that Renaissance pedagogues often referred to as the *bonae litterae*, transformed the upbringing of royal children and helped to reshape the political and religious culture of early modern Britain. More particularly, it considers a series of attempts made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to use the liberal arts and sciences to teach Henry VIII (1491–1547), Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond (1519–36), Edward VI (1537–53), Mary I (1516–58), Elizabeth I (1533–1603), Lady Jane Grey (1537–54), Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–87), James VI and I (1566–1625) and his sons Prince Henry (1594–1612) and the future Charles I (1600–49) to espouse certain political and religious ideologies. I will ask whether its methods and curriculum were well suited to the task of indoctrination or whether the discursive skills princes acquired had a greater impact on the government of church and state.

To answer these questions, it is useful to engage with three existing conversations in early modern European history. The first is with intellectual historians and historians of education, who have examined what students learnt from their study of classical languages in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and debated its impact on pupils' identities and on the nature and form of civil and ecclesiastical polities.⁴ I use household accounts, state papers, letters, library records and the comparatively well-preserved archive of royal school exercises to ask when, how and to what extent the Tudor and Stuart princes were educated liberally. Further, I investigate whether, in practice, the humanist iteration of liberal education cultivated a dynamic, even adversarial, outlook in its student princes or whether it encouraged a docile attitude towards authority.

The second discussion, conducted with historians of political and religious thought, explores competing theories of kingship in early modern Europe.⁵ I examine manuscripts and printed treatises, sermons, speeches

⁴ Including: T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's small Latine and lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana, 1944); Robert Black, 'Italian Renaissance education: Changing perspectives and continuing controversies', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52:2 (1991); Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From humanism to the humanities: Education and the liberal arts in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1986); Paul Grendler (ed.), 'Forum: Education in the Renaissance and Reformation', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43:4 (1990); Kenneth Gouwens, 'Perceiving the past: Renaissance humanism after the "cognitive turn"', *American Historical Review*, 103:1 (1998); Peter Mack, *Elizabethan rhetoric: Theory and practice* (Cambridge, 2002); Nicholas Orme, *Medieval schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven, 2006) and *From childhood to chivalry: The education of the English kings and aristocracy, 1066–1530* (London, 1984); Markku Peltonen, *Rhetoric, politics and popularity in pre-revolutionary England* (Cambridge, 2013); Quentin Skinner, *Reason and rhetoric in the philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge, 1996).

⁵ Including Johan Huizinga, *Erasmus and the age of the Reformation*, trans. F. Hopman and B. Flower (New York, 1957); Peter Lake, 'The king (the queen) and the Jesuit: James Stuart's *True*

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and letters to ask how princes learnt to describe the nature and extent of their authority. Finally, this study engages with historians of early modern Britain who have examined the ways that monarchs' personal piety, prejudices and priorities were formed, and how rulers shaped the political and religious culture of their realms in their turn.⁶ I draw on princes' youthful writings and marginal annotations and on contemporaries' letters and accounts to ask how English and Scottish princes responded to the ideologies that their schoolmasters, preachers, governors and fathers, amongst others, tried to inculcate via their liberal educations.

It may be useful, at this point, to pause and explain more precisely what I mean by the phrase 'liberal education' in this monograph. The notion that schoolmasters might use it in a *deliberate* attempt to inculcate confessional or monarchical ideologies flies in the face of dominant modern understandings of this term. Even its toughest modern critics tend to argue that brain-washing is a perversion of the true mission of liberal education, or an unconscious if inevitable by-product of the process. Following John Locke's (1632–1704) *Some thoughts concerning education* (printed 1693), the study of the liberal arts and sciences has been associated increasingly with liberalism.⁷ More specifically, liberal education has been described as the attempt to cultivate rational, free-thinking, even sceptical

law of free monarchies in context/s', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6:14 (2004); Roger A. Mason, *Kingship and the commonweal: Political thought in Renaissance and Reformation Scotland* (East Lothian, 1998); James McConica, *English humanists and Reformation politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford, 1965); Richard Rex, 'The crisis of obedience: God's word and Henry's reformation', *HJ*, 39 (1996); Ethan Shagan, *Popular politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003) and 'Beyond good and evil: Thinking with moderates in early modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, 49:3 (2010); Quentin Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1978); J. P. Sommerville, *Royalists and patriots: Politics and ideology in England, 1603–1640*, 2nd edn. (London, 1999); Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and government, 1572–1651* (Cambridge, 1993); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early modern England* (Oxford, 1999).

⁶ Including Stephen Alford, *Kingship and politics in the reign of Edward VI* (Cambridge, 2002); George Bernard, *The king's Reformation: Henry VIII and the remaking of the English church* (New Haven, 2005); Thomas Cogswell, Richard Cust and Peter Lake (eds.), *Politics, religion and popularity in early Stuart Britain: Essays in honour of Conrad Russell* (Cambridge, 2002); Richard Cust, *Charles I: A political life* (Harlow, 2005); John Guy (ed.), *The Tudor monarchy* (London, 1997); Ralph Houlbrooke (ed.), *James VI and I: Ideas, authority, and government* (Aldershot, 2006); Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor church militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London, 1999); Peter E. McCullough, *Sermons at court: Politics and religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean preaching* (Cambridge, 1998); Anne McLaren, 'Challenging the monarchical republic: James I's articulation of kingship', in John McDiarmid (ed.), *The monarchical republic of early modern England: Essays in response to Patrick Collinson* (Aldershot, 2007); Kevin Sharpe, *Image wars: Promoting kings and commonwealths in England, 1603–1660* (New Haven, 2010) and *The personal rule of Charles I* (New Haven, 1992); David Starkey, *Henry: Virtuous prince* (London, 2008); Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales and England's lost renaissance* (London, 1986).

⁷ Bruce Kimball, *Orators and philosophers: A history of the idea of liberal education*, rev. edn. (New York, 1995), pp. 115–56.

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individuals whose minds are not hampered by desire, custom, authority or prejudice.⁸ In the schoolroom, Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau encouraged play, self-directed learning and personal growth and discouraged corporal discipline.⁹ In the political realm, Locke argued that men who had acquired sufficient reason to govern themselves neither required a state to impose arbitrary or absolute constraints on them nor could they rationally consent to such bondage.¹⁰ With respect to religion, Locke's and David Hume's (1711–76) emphasis on reason and their distrust of custom, authority and even epistemological certainty rendered tolerance a virtue.¹¹ Thus subsequent thinkers who identify with various strands of liberalism have associated children's study of the liberal arts and sciences with citizenship, political rights and freedoms, and the democratic state. Martha Nussbaum has argued that this connection between pedagogy and politics may help explain 'why the idea of liberal arts education has flourished [in the modern United States] as it has not in Europe'.¹²

In this study, however, I hope to excavate a connection between liberal education and the politics of a European culture that preceded liberalism. Eugenio Garin has argued persuasively that there is a straight line between enlightenment thought and the study of the *studia liberalis* in the Renaissance.¹³ When Locke referred to the 'liberal sciences' he meant the same study of classical languages and literature that Elizabeth I's schoolmaster, Roger Ascham (1515–68), had recommended when he, too, encouraged gentlemen to study the 'liberall sciences'.¹⁴ When the Dutch humanist and pedagogue Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) wrote that the purpose of studying classical grammar and rhetoric was to make children (*liberi*) more *liberalis*, he was certainly discussing the need to cultivate reason and self-discipline, and to free students from psychological slavery to their passions and to corrupted customs, a Platonic and Aristotelian theme

⁸ John Locke, *Some thoughts concerning education* (London, 1693), Wing L2762, pp. 39–41, 118–21, 221–3.

⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile; ou de l'éducation*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. iv, eds. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, 5 vols. (Paris, 1959–95), pp. 253–4, 310–12, 586–7; Locke, *Some thoughts*, pp. 66, 71, 83–4, 99–100.

¹⁰ John Locke, *Two treatises of government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 96–7, 323.

¹¹ John Locke, *Locke on toleration*, ed. Richard Vernon (Cambridge, 2010); David Hume, *Inquiry concerning human understanding*, ed. Stephen Buckle (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 8, 96, 106, 112–18.

¹² Martha Nussbaum, *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities* (Princeton, 2010), p. 61.

¹³ Eugenio Garin, *L'educazione in Europa, 1400–1600: Problemi e programmi*, rev. edn. (Rome, 1976), pp. 16–21, 259–81. See, too, Sheldon Rothblatt, *Tradition and change in English liberal education: An essay in history and culture* (London, 1976), pp. 23–31, 40–9.

¹⁴ Locke, *Some thoughts*, pp. 212, 221–4; Roger Ascham, *The scholemaster or plaine and perfitte way of teachyng children, to vnderstand, write, and speake, the Latin tong* (London, 1570), STC 832, sig. Sii^r.

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that Locke would develop in *Some thoughts*.¹⁵ For Erasmus, this freedom had an explicitly Christian dimension, too; God had created men with free will and then Christ had died for all men equally.¹⁶ Locke might have quibbled about free will, but he would have endorsed Erasmus' account of the political consequences of Christian freedom: men could be governed by others only with their consent (*consensus*).¹⁷ The object of a liberal education, then, was to learn to govern one's will and use one's freedom in an honourable manner. These significant discursive continuities in the curriculum and the ethical objectives of the course of studies I consider here make it reasonable, perhaps desirable, to use the phrase 'liberal education' to describe the humanist pedagogy of the fifteenth, sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Nevertheless, Garin failed to note significant distinctions between sixteenth- and eighteenth-century understandings of the purpose and effect of liberal education. When Renaissance pedagogues, including Erasmus, used the word *liberalis* in educational and political contexts, they also intended to evoke a range of meanings that differed from, and sometimes outright contradicted, Locke's liberal discourse.¹⁸ In particular, they were appealing to a Roman tradition of describing the *studia liberalia*, *ars liberalis* and *liberalis disciplinas* as well as the *studia humanitatis* and *bonae litterae* as those 'studies that were suitable to free-born men'.¹⁹ In ancient Rome, neither slaves, beasts nor women were free-born men. This man's positive identity, however, revolved around his status as a person with enough leisure (*otium*, *libertas*) from paid employment to spend time reading and writing, and sufficient income to provide his son with tuition in these arts. The stoic philosopher Seneca was particularly keen to distinguish liberal education from learning how 'to make a living... These arts are our intellectual foundations, not our work'.²⁰ Yet they also provided the 'foundations' for men's future civic responsibilities as officeholders in the republic or empire. Serving as a lawyer, magistrate or military commander involved instructing and persuading others with eloquent speech.²¹ Thus, when the orator Cicero argued that the liberal

¹⁵ Erasmus, *De pueris instituendis*, in *CWE: Literary and educational writings IV*, p. 327.

¹⁶ Erasmus, *EECP*, p. 41; Latin from Erasmus, *Institutio principis Christiani*, in *Opera omnia*, iv.i, p. 166.

¹⁷ Erasmus, *EECP*, pp. 89, 105; Latin from Erasmus, *Institutio principis Christiani*, in *Opera omnia*, iv.i, pp. 203, 216.

¹⁸ Kimball, *Orators and philosophers*, p. 115; Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before liberalism* (Cambridge, 1998).

¹⁹ 'Quare liberalia studia dicta sint vides, quia homine libero digna sunt': Seneca, *Ad lucilium epistulae morales*, 88.2; see Skinner, *Reason and rhetoric*, pp. 22–3.

²⁰ 'Nullum in bonis numero, quod ad aes exit... [ars] si praeparant ingenium, non detinent... rudimenta sunt nostra, non opera': Seneca, *Ad lucilium epistulae morales*, 88.1–2.

²¹ W. Martin Bloomer, *The school of Rome: Latin studies and the origins of liberal education* (Berkeley, 2011), pp. 2, 4.

arts and sciences were the means ‘by which boys are shaped [*informari*] towards humanity [*humanitas*]’, he assumed that being truly ‘human’ meant active participation in this highly verbal political culture.²² After all, speech was the gift by which humans ‘are most distinguished from brute animals’. It was, moreover, the power that ‘assembled mankind’ in cities, that ‘brought them from wild and savage life to the present humane and civilized state of society’ and that provided ‘them [with] laws, judicial institutions, and rights’.²³ Rather than teaching its pupils how they might avoid the constraints of the state, reject traditional authorities and think independently, a Roman liberal education prepared students to take their place in the *res publica*.

In fifteenth-century Italy, strident defences of these Roman authorities on education were mounted by men who called themselves humanists (*humanista*), after Cicero’s use of the phrase. They were similarly eager to equate the study of classical Latin and Greek languages and literature with persuasive speech and virtuous, public office-holding. Humanists argued that pre-professional training in logic at medieval universities should be replaced by the study of neo-classical grammar and rhetoric and of ancient histories, poetry and treatises of moral philosophy.²⁴ Beyond all other skills, humanists taught their students to speak and write eloquently, using the prescriptions and techniques of Isocrates, Demosthenes, Cicero and Quintilian.²⁵ Lucca della Robbia (1399/1400–82) depicted the resulting pedagogical clash between logic and rhetoric on a 1437 relief he chiselled for the Campanile of Florence’s Duomo. Della Robbia fashioned the scholastic logician to show him reasoning calmly, with his finger pointing firmly to the authority of the text. His was contemplative learning by and for the book. The humanist orator, however, was formed to confront his interlocutor with the force of his delivery (*pronunciatio*). His toga flies out from his shoulder with the vigour of his movement and

²² Cicero, *Pro Archia*, 11.3.

²³ ‘Hoc enim uno praestamus vel maxime feris... Ut vero iam ad illa summa veniamus, quae vis alia potuit aut dispersos homines unum in locum congregare aut a fera agrestique vita ad hunc humanum cultum civilemque deducere aut iam constitutis civitatibus leges iudicia iura describere?': Cicero, *De oratore*, 1.8.32–4.

²⁴ John F. D’Amico, *Renaissance humanism in Papal Rome* (Baltimore, 1983), pp. 123–43; Eugenio Garin, *La disputa delle arti nel quattrocento* (Florence, 1947); Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore, 1989), pp. 122–4, 171, 172, 212–29. Robert Black, *Education and society in Florentine Tuscany: Teachers, pupils, and schools, c. 1250–1450* (Leiden, 2007) points to significant continuities with medieval Latin education but underestimates the significance of the revival of Cicero.

²⁵ B. Kohl, ‘The changing concept of the *studia humanitatis* in the early Renaissance’, *Renaissance Studies*, 6 (1992); Robert Proctor, *Defining the humanities: How rediscovering a tradition can improve our schools* (Indiana, 1998), pp. 14–15; Skinner, *Reason and rhetoric*, pp. 5–6, 20–200.

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his beseeching hands stretch out towards his adversary. Rhetoric's business was the affective persuasion of others. It was learning for public life. To this end, humanists argued that their curriculum was particularly well suited to those who were destined to govern the polity.²⁶ By improving the learning, virtue and speech of rulers, humanists claimed that their methods and curriculum would enhance the commonwealth.

This was, undoubtedly, an ideologically driven activity, but fifteenth-century humanists in Italian city-states were deliberately vague as to *how* their plans for the liberal education would ameliorate the polity.²⁷ They did not propose, for instance, that the *studia humanitatis* would prompt any kind of constitutional or political reform, or free them from dependence on the goodwill of a ruler or from the arbitrary or absolute government that later liberals criticised. In fact even so-called 'civic humanists', such as Leonardo Bruni (c. 1370–1444), who claimed to prefer republican to princely government, frequently advertised their willingness to serve a wide range of patrons and regimes.²⁸ Furthermore, Italian humanists in the fifteenth century did not argue that liberal education would reshape the social identity of its students in any way. As the humanist Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529) confirmed in his *Book named the courtier*, 'the first and true profession of the courtier', or the republican aristocrat for that matter, must continue to 'be that of arms'.²⁹ Alongside the vast majority of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanists, Castiglione pointed to the examples of erudite Greek and Roman conquerors, such as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, to reassure aristocrats that a liberal education would not make them effeminate or unwarlike. Rather the *studia humanitatis* would lend a veneer of civility and eloquence to fifteenth-century soldiering. As Lauro Martines has demonstrated, the object of humanist education was not to challenge the political and military culture of the city-state any more than it was to

²⁶ For example Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, 'The education of boys' (1450), in *Humanist educational treatises*, trans. and ed. Craig Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA, 2002), pp. 126–9; Brian Vickers, *In defence of rhetoric*, rev. edn. (Oxford, 1989), pp. 254–93.

²⁷ Grafton and Jardine, *Humanism to the humanities*, pp. 1–28.

²⁸ James Hankins, 'Rhetoric, history, and ideology: The civic panegyrics of Leonardo Bruni', in James Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance civic humanism: Reappraisals and reflections* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 143–78; Nicolai Rubinstein, 'Italian political thought', in J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie (eds.), *Cambridge history of political thought, 1450–1700* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 33. For example, see the rededication of Il Platina to Lorenzo de' Medici, 'On the prince', trans. Nicholas Webb, in Jill Kraye (ed.), *Cambridge translations of Renaissance philosophical texts*, vol. 11: *Political philosophy* (Cambridge, 1997).

²⁹ Baldasar Castiglione, *The book of the courtier*, ed. George Bull (London, 1967), p. 57.

insist on the desirability of a particular type of political constitution.³⁰ It was to teach noblemen to perform their existing political responsibilities well, and to secure patronage for the schoolmasters and men of letters who had educated them.

The self-interest of pedagogues was a constant but the royal school-rooms of early modern Britain differed from their Italian predecessors in one significant way. They were the scenes of some of the first concerted attempts to use liberal education to effect political reform in Europe, albeit of a different tenor from the changes Locke proposed in his *Two treatises* and *Letters concerning toleration*. The critical event in radicalising a (small) circle of northern humanists took place in 1494, when Charles VIII of France invaded Naples. The subsequent fifty-five-year conflict between the Hapsburgs and Valois for control of the Italian peninsula sucked most of the European powers into its bloody vortex, prompted an alliance between the French and the Ottoman Turks and involved extensive use of increasingly powerful firearms. Erasmus of Rotterdam had been studying in Bologna in 1506 when fighting broke out in the ancient university town. The aged pontiff, Julius II (1443–1513), arrived at the head of a conquering army. Erasmus was disgusted that St Peter's successor was 'playing Julius [Caesar] to the life'.³¹ Princes of church and state, he alleged, were putting their customary desire for military glory before their responsibilities to God or their free Christian subjects. Erasmus pointed out to Charles V of Spain and Henry VIII of England that, since they liked to claim that their powers derived from God, they should stop imitating Roman generals and take their pattern from the words and deeds of Christ, instead.³² There was, he claimed, 'far more true glory' in Christ's peace 'than all those wars'.³³ Historians have tended to dismiss Erasmus' political writings as unctuous, unrealistic and even 'extremely primitive', but this study proposes that the northern humanist actually used classical and scriptural studies to make a courageous argument for radical change to the political culture of sixteenth-century Europe.³⁴

Erasmus, moreover, argued that the most effective way to recalibrate royal priorities and rein in monarchical government was the liberal

³⁰ Lauro Martines, *Power and imagination: City-states in Renaissance Italy* (New York, 1979), pp. 191–219; Skinner, *Foundations of modern political thought*, vol. 1, p. 247.

³¹ Erasmus, *CWE: Letters 142 to 297*, no. 205, p. 128.

³² Erasmus, *EECP*, p. 46.

³³ Erasmus, *Dulce bellum inexpertis*, in *CWE: Adages iii iv 1 to iv ii 100*, p. 440.

³⁴ Alistair Fox, 'English humanism and the body politic', in Alistair Fox and John Guy (eds.), *Reassessing the Henrician age: Humanism, politics and reform, 1500–1550* (London, 1986), p. 39; Huizinga, *Erasmus and the age of the Reformation*, p. 153; James D. Tracy, *The politics of Erasmus: A pacifist intellectual and his political milieu* (Toronto, 1978), pp. 33, 126–7.

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education of princes. Not only would the *bonae litterae*, or good letters, teach them to govern their own wills honourably but they could also teach them to govern other free Christian men in an honourable manner. As the humanist explained in the treatise *The education of a Christian prince* (1516), ‘when a prince is born to office, not elected... then the main hope of getting a good ruler hangs on his proper education’, since other mechanisms for checking monarchy had been ‘lost with the right to vote’.³⁵ Chapter two of this monograph argues that Erasmus and his circle made it clear to aristocrats that ‘proper education’ did not involve military training. Unlike the Italian humanists, he argued for letters *instead* of arms. More specifically, Erasmus proposed that the princely study of *bonae litterae* could be used to reform monarchical government. Training in classical Latin and Greek grammar and rhetoric would give students a ‘knowledge of words’, which Erasmus argued was the only working gateway to reason and the proper understanding of public duties.³⁶ Reason alone, though, would not suffice. The most important words that princes would read were contained in scripture. It was the royal schoolmaster’s job, Erasmus argued, to see that Christ’s words and deeds, especially regarding ‘those things which are particularly relevant to the prince’s role’, struck the prince in the heart and transfigured his emotional and spiritual life.³⁷ When managed correctly, Erasmus argued, a liberal education *could* wean student princes off bellicosity and tyranny and refocus their office on Christian charity and the propagation of scripture. Erasmus put his faith in the power of liberal education not merely to teach eloquence and the capacity to discharge a public office but also to inculcate an alternative political and religious ideology in its princely students.

Scholars have shown that Erasmus’ pedagogical prescriptions had a significant impact on early modern European reading practices; the statutes of schools, colleges and universities; discussions about vernacular Bibles; and Protestant and Catholic reform movements.³⁸ This study argues, however, that Erasmus’ methods and curriculum for the liberal arts and sciences had particularly strong traction in English royal schoolrooms after 1499, when

³⁵ Erasmus, *EECP*, p. 5.

³⁶ Erasmus, *De ratione studii*, in *CWE: Literary and educational writings II*, p. 667.

³⁷ Erasmus, *EECP*, p. 61.

³⁸ Baldwin, *William Shakespeare’s smalle Latine*; Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmus et l’Espagne*, eds. Charles Amiel and Daniel Devoto, 3 vols. (Geneva, 1991); Grafton and Jardine, *Humanism to the humanities*, pp. 122–60; Elizabeth Leedham-Green, *Books in Cambridge inventories: Book-lists from vice-chancellor’s court probate inventories in the Tudor and Stuart periods*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1986); Mack, *Elizabethan rhetoric*; John O’Malley, *The first Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), pp. 23–36, 200–42; Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘Desiderius Erasmus’, in *Historical essays* (London, 1957), pp. 35–61.

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the humanist brought himself to the attention of the future Henry VIII. Neither Henry VII nor any other court Maecenas had invited Erasmus and his fellow *Graecistes* into Prince Henry's orbit. Rather, the thrusting, pecking flock of humanists who circled the court, hoping for crumbs, had seized on an opportunity to attach themselves to the king's second son, and they clung on as his dynastic star rose.³⁹ Chapter one examines letters, household orders and accounts, treatises and neglected literary gift manuscripts of poems and classical translations to show how Erasmus' circle shaped Henry's education in ways that broke with Yorkist precedent and ensured that he came to the throne as the most learned monarch to rule England hitherto. Subsequent chapters demonstrate the extent of Erasmus' influence on the schoolrooms of Henry's children and, later, on the curricula studied by Stuart princes. While Erasmus never managed to deter English or Scottish royal boys from military training, he did succeed in tipping the scales in letters' favour: between 1534 in England, 1566 in Scotland and the outbreak of the Bishops' Wars in 1639, princes male and female spent more time learning to wield pens than swords or guns.

Even in an era noted for its enthusiasm for reviving classical literature, British princes were notably bookish. Amongst the Spanish Hapsburgs, for instance, fifteenth-century tradition, which focused on bureaucratic skills, handling weapons and orthodox piety, remained much more significant than humanists' prescriptions in shaping royal education. Charles V and Philip II had high-powered humanists in their schoolrooms at times, but they became bureaucratic wizards rather than perfect orators.⁴⁰ In France, it was only the demands of managing a highly centralised, militarised and absolutist state that drove princes indoors in the middle of the seventeenth century. Even then, it was to study methods of accounting, military logistics and information management rather than to immerse themselves in the liberal arts and sciences.⁴¹ In the chapters that follow, we will see that Edward VI and James VI, in particular, remained engrossed in their study of *bonae litterae* despite rebellions, assaults on their persons and the demands of minority rule. In early modern Britain, getting a liberal education was a serious business for princes.

³⁹ David Carlson, 'Royal tutors in the reign of Henry VII', *SCJ*, 22:2 (1991).

⁴⁰ Martha Hoffman, *Raised to rule: Educating royalty at the court of the Spanish Habsburgs, 1601–1634* (Baton Rouge, 2011), pp. 25–110; Jose Luis Gonzalo Sanchez-Molero, *Felipe II: La educación de un 'felicísimo príncipe' 1527–1545* (Madrid, 2014).

⁴¹ Jean Meyer, *L'Éducation des princes en Europe: du XVe au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2004); Jacob Soll, *The information master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert's secret state intelligence system* (Ann Arbor, 2009), esp. pp. 58–65.