CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45378-4 - The Endeavour of Jean Fernel: With a: List of the Editions of his Writings
Sir Charles Sherrington
Excerpt
More information

Part I

THE STRUGGLE & ITS AIMS

I SUPPOSE that, for our purpose, Galen 'On the Use of the Parts' (περὶ χρείας μορίων) may be taken to be the earliest separate treatise dealing with human physiology. For more than thirteen centuries it found no successor. The attempt to fill such a gap must have required both a conviction and a certain courage. The man who ventured was Jean Fernel. He called his book 'The Natural Part of Medicine', and issued it in Paris in the year 1542. He was already eminent as a physician, and greatly occupied in practice and in teaching. The book was, as was Galen's, a physiology contributory to medicine. It had an immediate vogue. It met a need. Fernel had judged rightly in thinking there was room for it. His treatise was issued again and again, in Venice and Lyons as well as in Paris. He changed its name to 'Physiology'. For more than a century it remained *the* treatise on its subject. Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood in the following century, on becoming generally accepted, at last put Fernel's treatise out of date. But the compendious name, 'physiology', which he had given to the subject, has continued in use ever since.

Who was Jean Fernel? His publishers styled him 'philosopher and physician'. His early years ran briefly thus. Son of a substantial furrier and innkeeper at Montdidier, he was twelve years old when his parents moved to Clermont in Beauvoisis, twenty miles from Paris. Fernel as an author called himself 'of Amiens', *Ambianus*, perhaps because his father's family was originally from Amiens, perhaps because Montdidier was in the diocese of Amiens. But he got his schooling at Clermont, and seems to have shown early an ambition to go on to the University, at Paris. His parents yielded to that wish, though tardily.[1] At the University, the Collège de Ste Barbe, of old and good repute,[2] received him. He followed the

1 Plancy—and on him we have to rely for most of this part of Fernel's story—is at pains to say that to the paternal sympathy, not the maternal, the lad owed the indulgence of being sent to Paris for a university career.

2 Founded in 1460, as an offshoot from the great Collège de Navarre.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45378-4 - The Endeavour of Jean Fernel: With a: List of the Editions of his Writings
Sir Charles Sherrington
Excerpt
More information

course for M.A. Goulin thinks he was probably excused grammar as having already learnt it well at school. The headship of the Collège de Ste Barbe during the second and third decades of the fifteenth century was distinguished and progressive. It was held by the Goveas, Jacques and then his nephew André. Montaigne, who came under André Govea later at Bordeaux, said of him that he was 'the best teacher in all France'.

Fernel did well at College. On taking the M.A. degree he was invited more than once to stay on and teach dialectics. He was then twenty-two only; but Jean Jacques de Mesmes was lecturing publicly on law at Toulouse before he was twenty, and Louis de Bourges is said to have lectured publicly on medicine in Paris when he was twenty-three. Fernel declined the offers. Guillaume Plancy,[1] for ten years Fernel's assistant and living in his house, wrote on his master's death, a short 'Life' which is the chief biography.[2] He enters at some length into Fernel's academic outlook and situation at the time of the taking of his degree. Plancy held it to have been a critical juncture in his master's whole career. He says, Fernel 'desired by private study to acquaint himself better with the writings of Cicero, Aristotle and Plato'. What he would hitherto have had in his hands would have been compendia—'Expositiones' and 'Flores', containing essentials, chiefly in view of disputation for examination. One such was the *Flores* of Peter Mercarius, a physics and cosmology condensed from Aristotle and Ptolemy, published in Paris, in 1517 (1516 o.s.). In Goulin's chronology of Fernel, this would be two years before his taking his M.A. It was issued and sold by Oliver Senant, at the 'sign of Ste Barbe', half-way down the rue St Jacques, just below the Church of St Benoît. It is a folio, of twenty-six leaves, containing sets of numbered propositions, each proposition followed by an 'answer' called a 'correlation'. Mercarius, its author, was, at the time, a tutor at the 'famous' (*praeclarissimum*) Collège de Coqueret. He dedicates it, in sprightly terms of affection, to five *conphilosophantes*, among them John de Celaya, eminent Thomist, a 'Vicar General'. The Collège de Coqueret was one of the sixty-eight Parisian Colleges founded before 1500.[3] It was a little younger than Fernel's own Ste Barbe, and situate next door but one to it. It was in Fernel's

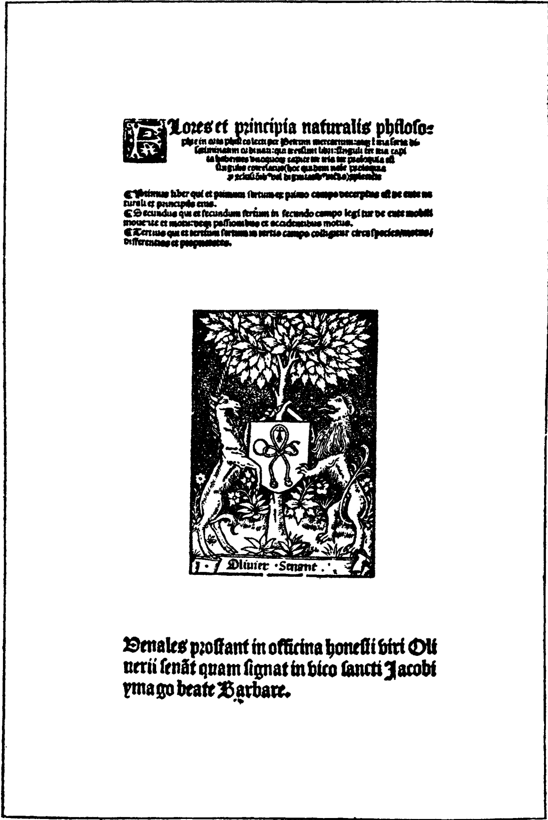
1 Note I, *v. infra*, *Appendix*, p. 147.
2 An extenso translation of it is given in Note II, *Appendix*, p. 150.
3 Geoffroi Tory, the painter and engraver, taught there, 1506.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

Cambridge

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45378-4 - The Endeavour of Jean Fernel: With a: List of the Editions of his Writings
Sir Charles Sherrington
Excerpt
More information

lifetime to be a nurse of that literary child of the French Renaissance, the Pléiade; in 1549 Ronsard produced there his french version of Aristophanes' *Plutus*.



Flores et principia naturalis philoso-

[illegible]

Oliuier ·Senant·

Venales prostant in officina honesti viri Oli uerii senāt quam signat in vico sancti Jacobi ymago beate Barbare.

Fig. 1. Mercarius' *Flores*, 2°. Senant was printing 1505–25. An emblem of his bears:

En ce monde fault bien tirer
Qui en Paradis Veult monter.

Fernel's intention 'by private study to acquaint himself better with the writings of Cicero, Aristotle and Plato' was favoured by the fact that printing had already made books much more available for the individual student[1]; they had become more plentiful and less expensive and unwieldy. Gering, earliest of the Paris printers,

1 Cf. A. Tilley, *Studies in the French Renaissance*, p. 174.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45378-4 - The Endeavour of Jean Fernel: With a: List of the Editions of his Writings
Sir Charles Sherrington
Excerpt
More information

advertised in one of his law books (*Corpus Juris Canonici*, vol. III) in 1500:

Ne fugite ob pretium, dives pauperque venite:
Hoc opus excellens venditur aere brevi.[1]

Aldus Manutius, the enlightened and progressive Venetian printer, had at the very opening of the century moved toward making the printed book less cumbersome. In Paris the Estiennes' press had followed him in this, and when, on the death of Henri Estienne, Simon de Colines, marrying the widow, took over, he too continued to move towards lessening the printed book's size and cost. Among manuals for the courses in Arts, the *Flores* of Mercarius would be exceptional in being of folio size. Other things equal, the smaller the format of a volume the less the cost, and therefore price to the student. Price lists of de Colines are still extant.[2] The 8° volume sold at 3–8 sols, the 4° at 10–12, the 2° at 15–25. The little 16°, developed by de Colines, was priced at only 3–5 sols. The law books were more refractory—they continued for the most part huge, and stuck to gothic type. But de Colines, with his pride in skilled typography, his famous Geoffrey Tory device and initials, and his artistic title-pages and woodcut illustrations, employed, like a good humanist, roman character—the 'humanist type' as it is sometimes called—and eschewed gothic so far as possible. All this was favourable to the needy student. Simon de Colines is thought to have succeeded Henri Estienne as a *messager* in the University; the office of *messager* took responsibility for certain expenses of those students who came from a distance. Such students were grouped for that purpose according to the diocese whence they came. The young Fernel would have been of the diocese of Amiens, and perhaps some relation of that sort between him and de Colines was a factor in the publishing of his earliest book at the famous Colines press, even before he had taken his M.D. degree. Fernel's own folios of 1527 and 1528 were priced at 5 sols, but with two at least of them went a companion volume of plates priced at 10 and 12 sols (Ph. Renouard).[3]

It was only when Fernel actually proceeded to the more advanced stage of scholarship on which he now entered that he realized how sadly his previous studies had gone awry. All he had done so far,

1 'Do not shy at the price: come, rich and poor. This admirable work is cheap.'
2 Bibliothèque Nationale.
3 Ph. Renouard, *Bibliographie des éditions de Simon de Colines*, 1526–46, Paris, 1894.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45378-4 - The Endeavour of Jean Fernel: With a: List of the Editions of his Writings
Sir Charles Sherrington
Excerpt
More information

Plancy tells us, had been to pick up futilities from 'barbarian' tutors. 'He could perhaps take the situation more calmly because it was one which befell his fellow-students and himself alike, and was no fault of his own; it was a feature of the age he lived in. In truth, at that time the University of Paris, once the foremost in all the world since the beginning of things, was, in the matter of the Arts course, backward and "barbarian".'[1]

Plancy's 'Life' tells us how Fernel resolved

that the path he had missed he must now find, and follow with all his strength. To that end he denied himself entertainments, feasts, drinking-bouts, convivialities, and much even of the companionship of comrades and acquaintances. He took small account of food and sleep and proper exercise, of ailments and affairs; he sacrificed everything to making himself proficient in the true knowledge of the liberal arts. He devoted all that in him lay wholly to that one end, all his diligence, thought and toil. His sole satisfaction was letters and learning. He counted every hour lost which was not spent in reading the great authors. He was infatuated with learning. Among his first cares was to amend his latin style, and free it from barbarisms. Such barbarisms were a vice of the age; and he had acquired them from his unscholarly teachers.[2]

This indictment of the progressive Collège de Ste Barbe, and in the second decade of the sixteenth century, is somewhat surprising. Does not Plancy here make a mountain of some molehill? The stress he puts on the whole incident, and the space he devotes to it, within a brief biographical sketch, set us asking: Why should he so stress it? What really was the nature of the importance he attached to it? Its date was 1519. If we adopt Goulin[3] on the date of his birth, Fernel would then be twenty-two. Plancy speaks of his good progress in 'disputation' in the two years leading to his degree. The length of the course for the M.A. was usually four years. Therefore Plancy's charge of linguistic 'barbarism' in the Arts School in Paris applies to the latter half of the second decade of the new sixteenth century. His specific indictment against the University teaching at that time is 'its Grammarians and Rhetoricians had in their hands nothing but rude Alexanders, Theopagituses, *Graecismuses*, Theodoletuses and a ruck of writings of that stamp. Its Dialecticians taught from nothing but the *Termini* of Clichtoveus, the *Summulae* of Peter of

1 *Vita*. *V. infra*, Note II, *Appendix*, p. 150.
2 *Vita*.
3 Goulin. *V. infra*, Note VI, *Appendix*, p. 173.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45378-4 - The Endeavour of Jean Fernel: With a: List of the Editions of his Writings
Sir Charles Sherrington
Excerpt
More information

Spain, the *Logica* of Bricotius, and other like works.'[1] This then was the head and front of the offending. After hearing it we may still feel puzzled at the seriousness it assumes in Plancy's eyes. Further consideration, I think, finds that the circumstance carries with it a broad significance at first not plain to us to-day, but to Plancy too obvious to require explanation.

The great movement, often known as the Renaissance, was already making headway in France at the time to which Plancy's account refers. It was active, not least in Paris. Its spearhead, so to say, was 'humanist scholarship', displacing medieval. But, over and above that, the movement stood for a new culture and outlook upon life. Plancy is saying that the University has not given the young Fernel his rightful entry into this new movement, nor his rightful chance of understanding and sharing the new spirit of the age. The young Fernel was contemporary with the new movement. Paris and the court were already astir with it. But the University? Why had not the University equipped its young scholar to participate in and be a living part of it? Plancy's charge was that the University did not change its 'miserable' type of scholarship, and had left its young M.A. unqualified for recruitment into the ranks of the new Letters. It had bolstered up a superannuated medievalism at the expense of the culture of its young alumnus. In short, the inwardness of the complaint brought by Plancy was that the University had withheld the Renaissance from its young M.A.

Francis I was on the throne, and, at his court, the French Renaissance was already in flower. The new spirit was already alive in letters, fine art, painting and architecture. But the Renaissance was not primarily a University movement. It was of extra-mural origin. Derived in the main from Italy, it centred eminently about certain princes, their entourage and courts. The University of Paris, with its Colleges and its medieval tradition, was slow to welcome change. It was for the most part against innovations. Moreover, the new movement was suspect of the Sorbonne and the strong Collège de Navarre. The Reuchlin controversy had shown that the new scholarship might be a nuisance in the shape of a higher criticism in divinity. The old bottle was unsuited for such new wine. Erasmus, at home in most places, yet was not so in the University of Paris. Nor after all was the University in certain matters undisputed mistress in its own house,

1 *Vita*. *V. infra*, Note II, *Appendix*, p. 151.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45378-4 - The Endeavour of Jean Fernel: With a: List of the Editions of his Writings
Sir Charles Sherrington
Excerpt
More information

even as to letters and scholarship. In comparison with Mother Church the University was still small and relatively upstart. Abbey and priory, at hand and afar, dwarfed it. Moreover, within the University itself the Church had its own fortress, the Sorbonne.

But the University had an asset of value; it possessed the personal patronage of the king. The crown had been becoming stronger, a stronger element in the new nationhood of France. Francis I cultivated his contacts with the University. Guillaume Budé, royal librarian at Fontainebleau, had the king's ear, and Budé was rated the finest humanist scholar of the time. In 1530, at the instance of Budé, Francis I was to found the 'Royal College' in Paris, with its Chairs of Greek and Hebrew, outposts of the new Letters, and of the Renaissance.

There had been an attempt as far back as 1470, abortive though it proved, to implant humanist scholarship into the University of Paris. At the Sorbonne itself, the librarian and the rector of that time, at their own charge, had imported two printers from Basle, and a press, and had set to work printing books for humanism. In a year's time, however, the rector had been called away to accompany a legation returning to Rome. The press, the earliest in France, had then moved from the Sorbonne, and gone to the rue St Jacques nearby. There it had given up printing 'humanism' because printing 'humanism' did not pay. The time to which Plancy's indictment of the University applies came forty-five years later, and by then the humanist movement in France had grown stronger. Further, the University quarter had become a hive of printing, centred on the rue St Jacques itself. In the matter of the printed book, Paris had come to rival Venice.

Plancy was, in his time, qualified to judge of scholarship. At Budé's death he was the pupil entrusted with editing the master's 'Epistles in Greek'. Part of Plancy's fulmination against the Faculty of Arts dealt with the grammars and manuals of rhetoric maintained in authority by the University in 1515–19. The new Scholarship took grammar and rhetoric very seriously. The two subjects were no longer mere lessons in memorizing maxims for divinity. Grammar and rhetoric were become living factors in good scholarship; without them there was no exact interpretation of the classics of literature. They had become elements in humanism—humanism, the fundamental factor in all human progress, if humanism itself was to be believed. As to the alleged superannuation of the books which Plancy pilloried, the 'Alexander' was the *Doctrinale* of Alexander of Villa-

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45378-4 - The Endeavour of Jean Fernel: With a: List of the Editions of his Writings
Sir Charles Sherrington
Excerpt
More information

Dei near Avranches, a latin grammar of the thirteenth century. It was in hexameter verse for ease of memorization. It had been in use already for three hundred years. During most of that period there would have been, in some schools, for a class using it, perhaps only one copy, the teacher's. At school the boys would learn to repeat it aloud. But printing had altered that situation.[1] The *Theodoletus* mentioned by Plancy appears also to have been an antiquated set of hexameters in latin, for the most part rhymed. The *Graecismus* likewise, despite its name, was a latin grammar, but it had a chapter dealing with elementary greek and containing a number of speculative greek etymologies. It too dated from the early thirteenth century; it was the compilation of Eberhard of Béthune. It may have been dictated to Erasmus when he was a schoolboy at Gouda or Deventer.

It would seem too, implementing further Plancy's accusation, that grammar and rhetoric received at this time very stepmotherly treatment from the University. Their teachers were not eligible to be regents. Their lectures were restricted to one hour a day, and that an hour following the midday meal. But in the new Scholarship these subjects had come to occupy key positions. Rhetoric, in the 'revival of letters', chose Cicero, especially the *Orations*, for its model. The Church was beginning to fear that Cicero as a moralist threatened to oust the Fathers.

As to dialectic and logic, Plancy's stricture names Peter of Spain, Bricotius and Clichtoveus. The *Summulae logicales* of Peter of Spain had in medieval times long been a favourite manual. It dated from the thirteenth century. Its authorship was uncertain; it had come to be attributed to the Spanish divine, elected Pope as John XXI. Whoever its author, the humanist movement found its versions of Aristotle very incorrect; and matters had not been improved by successive commentators. Again, Bricot, author of another *Logica*, was a glossarist of Aristotle, more recent than Peter of Spain, but still of medieval type. Rabelais satirized him by including imaginary works by him in the burlesque Library of St Victor. Rabelais bracketed him with Tartaretus, the well-known Aristotelian commentator ridiculed by Pierre Ramus, whose works were nevertheless reissued and reissued in the Paris of Fernel's student-time.

1 Richard Pynson's woodcut of a schoolroom, in the 'Oxford' latin grammar (printed in London, 1500), depicts three books among the eight schoolboys: *Informatio puerorum*, 4°.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45378-4 - The Endeavour of Jean Fernel: With a: List of the Editions of his Writings
Sir Charles Sherrington
Excerpt
More information

That Plancy should condemn, in the same breath with Peter of Spain[1] and Bricot, his own contemporary Clichtoveus is less easily understandable. Jossé Clichtowe[2] was a favourite pupil of, and a collaborator with, Lefèvre d'Étaples, and Lefèvre is reputed one of the progressive influences making for humanism in France. Clichtowe, assisting Lefèvre in lecturing and writing, had contributed to the reaction against scholasticism and to the rise of humanism in France. His *Termini*, which Plancy arraigns, were two manuals, digests of Aristotelian logic, first published in 1505. One of them, *Fundamenta logica*, ran into eleven editions by 1560, nine of them issued in Paris. *Precipue in currentem logicen introductoria*, it claimed to be an up-to-date student manual for dialectic in the University of Paris, and as such it lived on, after the death of its author, actually into the time at which Plancy was writing this condemnation of him, somewhere between 1558 and 1567. The other *Termini* by Clichtowe gained even greater popularity; a larger volume, it went through eighteen editions between 1505 and 1535. As a student Fernel may have used it. Among its publishers was Henri Estienne, the humanist printer. Besides dialectic, it included grammar and rhetoric. It defines rhetoric as 'persuading by words' and logic as 'separating true from false'. Lefèvre, a liberal catholic and a pioneer of French humanism, and Budé, also a liberal catholic and a leader of French humanism on its actual arrival, were friends, as well as humanist allies. Clichtowe, trusted pupil of Lefèvre, and Plancy, trusted pupil of Budé, should, one would have expected, have been allies. One would suppose that as literary contemporaries in Paris they would be personally acquainted and sympathetic with each other. But Plancy's reference to Clichtoveus' popular text-book suggests antagonism. There was considerable difference of age, there may have been religious estrangement. Goulin (1775) refers to Clichtowe as one of the most famous theologians. The point is worth raising if it can throw light on Fernel's own position in religion, in a time and a society torn by growing religious passion. Plancy's Preface in his posthumous edition of Fernel (1567) makes bitter reference to the religious warfare around him. Both the Preface and his 'Life' of Fernel show Plancy to have been a man of strong feeling and temperamental nature. That is a difference between his Preface and any of Fernel's own. Fernel seems

1 André Thevet (1584) similarly brackets together Clichtoveus' *Termini* and Peter's *Summulae* as impeding reform of scholarship in the University.

2 *V. infra*, Note III, *Appendix*, p. 171.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45378-4 - The Endeavour of Jean Fernel: With a: List of the Editions of his Writings
Sir Charles Sherrington
Excerpt
More information

remote from faction, alike in regard to State, Religion and Faculty. The nearest he manifests to dislike in his printed works is perhaps to Avicenna, the nearest to personal regard is to Henri II, both when dauphin and when king. From his association with Simon de Colines and then with Christian Wechel as publishers, it would seem that he was 'liberal' in his religious views. But Luther, as almost an antithesis to Humanism, would not be to his taste. Fernel's appointment to the court—where popular opinion associated him particularly with the cure of Catherine de Medici, and again of Diane de Poitiers, both of them strongly opposed to the 'Reformed Church' party—indicates that he was certainly not openly identified with the reform party. On the other hand, Le Paulmier, an assistant and secretary to him for some time, is said[1] to have suffered imprisonment at one period, as a dissident from the Church. And we cannot suppose Guillaume Plancy, living in his household for ten years, and his personal pupil and intimate assistant, to have held religious views strongly opposed to Fernel's own. Plancy, we have to think, was of 'liberal' view in religion, even as was his master Budé, under whom he had learned to be a scholar—Budé who had not hesitated to emend, in places, the text of the Vulgate itself. Plancy's lament, in the Preface (1567),[2] over the religious violence of the time may well be taken as a plea for tolerance. 'A Frenchman and an Englishman who hold the same religion have more kindness and friendship for one another than two citizens of the same town who differ in this respect', said l'Hôpital, Chancellor of France, in the year 1561. André Wechel, the printer of the *Universa Medicina* containing Plancy's Preface, became himself, shortly afterward, a fugitive from France to escape persecution for

1 Wickersheimer, *Les Médecins en France à l'époque de la Renaissance*, 1906.

2 There is a poem*, published in Lyons in the year of Plancy's Preface, on the state of France:

> ...... urbes orbas generosis civibus, agros
> Destitui cultore, uxorem conjuge, fratrem
> Germano, patrem nato, natum patre, portum
> Merce, vias obsessas furibus, arma vigere,
> Jus vinci, regem subigi, etc....

Cf. Note IV, p. 171. The contemporary engravers Tortorel and Périssin depicted these scenes.

* (Insidiosae Pacis Dissuasio, ad Carolum Nonum Galliarum Regem Christianissimum, Leodegario à Quercu Authore. Lugduni. Apud Benedictum Rigaudum, 1567. cum permissione. Apud viduam P. Attaignant in vico Citharae, prope templum divi Cosmae. 8°.)

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org