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Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's Reader

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Giovanni Pico della Mirandola : Introduction

Of the Italian Humanists victims of their own success – and, in Florence alone, there's been more than a few – Giovanni Pico count of Mirandola (and Concordia) was, already in the eyes of his contemporaries, the most talented one. Whilst he definitely deserved to enter the Renaissance pantheon of thought and learning, Giovanni Pico was just as much, if not more, the latest in a line of mediaeval polymaths of genius. Besides being well acquainted with Aristotelian and Averroist philosophy – which was no less true of a number of contemporary despisers of mediaeval lore and technicalities – Pico was well conversant in scholastic logic and theology, whose « Parisian » Latin (as he refers to it in several occasions, most notably in [T5]) he spoke without accent, having spent some six years studying the likes of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Meyronnes, John Duns Scotus, Henry of Ghent and Giles of Rome first in Padua and then in Paris. It may well not be the most striking feature of Pico's intellectual personality, it is nonetheless what sets him apart from many of his contemporaries and helps explaining the peculiar agenda he relentlessly pursued in his lifetime. Assuming the whole letter – as its occasional reminders in other works are to suggest ([T1], [T2] and [T3] being the most telling ones) – is more than an elaborate in-joke Giovanni shared with Ermolao Barbaro who – presumably – came up with the idea in the first place and Poliziano who advertised it soon afterwards (it would be harder to assume that Leonardo Bruni and those who picked it up later on were privy to it or, catching up quicker than the average reader, did not give the game away), [T4] makes it pretty clear that – to say the very least – Pico didn't care as much as his fellow-humanists for exquisite writing. As a matter of fact, he had no qualms about using the uncouth, graceless jargon of the School, which – as it happens – he considered a language all onto itself : as he explains in [T5], Scholastics talked their own Latin, which had certainly strayed away from its roots, but deserved – as much as any other dialect, Roman Latin (and its Renaissance revival) included – to be taken on its own terms. Scholastic Latin has been philosophers' shoptalk for quite some time and, for all his eagerness to bring about great changes, Pico seemed pretty content with it, as his disparaging gibe at his censors plainly imply, for – as Pico claims in [T6] – he suffered to relinquish Scholastic style only to indulge the latter's inability to cope with its intricacies the way men of philosophical reputation were expected to. Moreover, disputes over eloquence are, in fact, pointless when philosophical matters are at stake : philosophers need neither educated mouths nor educated ears. All they need is an educated mind ([T4]). Accordingly, they will be better off with a decent tool for discerning things through reason rather than with cosmetic enhancement and ornamentation which will make things look better (or worse) than they actually are ([T4]). All of which makes excellent sense, if we are to take Pico at his word [T7] : even if Philosophy is but one thread in a much larger scheme – which embraced more exotic disciplines (like magic and Qabbalah) as well – its path leads man beyond earth and heaven and ultimately beyond himself. Philosophy will teach man how to check his urges and emotions, it will dispel the confusions of his mind and it will show him the truth of all things, human and divine alike; what it will not do is to entertain him. Pico and Pico's man could live with that and their willingness to forego all spiritual comfort in their philosophical quest for knowledge and wisdom stands as a lasting testament to the greatness of the former ([T8]) and to the dignity of the latter ([T7]), for – as Pico reminded his friend Ermolao – « non est humanus qui sit insolens politioris literaturae, non est homo qui sit expers philosophiae ».

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola : Texts

[T1 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola]

Ioannis Pici de Mirandula conclusiones nongentae, S.A. Farmer (ed.), *Tempe, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, 1998, 210 :

« De adscriptis numero noningentis, dialecticis, moralibus, physicis, mathematicis, methaphysicis, theologicis, magicis, cabalisticis, cum suis, turn sapientum Chaldeorum, Arabum, Hebreorum, Graecorum, Aegyptiorum, latinorumque placitis disputabit publice Iohanes Picus Mirandulanus Concordie Comes; in quibus recitandis non Romanae linguae nitorem, sed celebratissimorum Parisiensium disputatorum dicendi genus est imitatus, propterea quod eo nostri temporis philosophi plerique omnes utuntur. Sunt autem disputanda dogmata, quod ad gentes attinet et ipsos heresiarchas seorsum posita, quod ad partes philosophiae promiscue, quasi per satyram, omnia simul mixta ».

S.A. Farmer, *Syncretism in the West. Pico's 900 Theses (1486)*, *Tempe, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, p. 211 :

« The following nine hundred dialectical, moral, physical, mathematical, metaphysical, theological, magical, and cabalistic opinions, including his own and those of the wise Chaldeans, Arabs, Hebrews, Greeks, Egyptians, and Latins,

will be disputed publicly by Giovanni Pico of Mirandola, the Count of Concord. In reciting these opinions, he has not imitated the splendor of the Roman language, but the style of speaking of the most celebrated Parisian disputers, since this is used by almost all philosophers of our time. The doctrines to be debated are proposed separately by nations and their sect leaders, but in common in respect to the parts of philosophy – as though in a medley, everything mixed together ».

[T2 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola]

Ioannis Pici de Mirandula oratio quaedam elegantissima, F. Borghesi, M. Papio and M. Riva (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 186 :

« Ut a nostris, ad quos postremo philosophia pervenit, nunc exordiar, est in Ioanne Scoto vegetum quiddam atque discussum, in Thoma solidum et equabile, in Egidio tersum et exactum, in Francisco acre et acutum, in Alberto priscum, amplum et grande, in Henrico, ut mihi visum est, semper sublime et venerandum ».

F. Borghesi, M. Papio and M. Riva, *Pico della Mirandola. Oration on the Dignity of Man*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 205 :

« To begin with our own, to whom philosophy came last, we find in John [Duns] Scotus something lively and meticulous, in Thomas [Aquinas] a balanced solidity, in Giles [of Rome] a neat precision, in Francis [of Meyronnes] a penetrating acuteness, in Albert [the Great] an ancient and grand breadth, in Henry [of Ghent], as it has seemed to me, a constant and venerable solemnity ».

[T3 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola]

Ioannis Pici de Mirandula de ente et uno, F. Bacchelli and R. Ebgì (éd.), Milano, Bompiani, 2010, 202.10 - 204.4 :

« Quoniam qui Aristotelem dissentire a Platone existimant, a me ipsi dissentiunt, qui concordem utriusque facio philosophiam, rogabas quomodo et defenderetur in ea re Aristoteles et Platoni magistro consentiret. Dixi quae tunc mihi in mentem venerunt, confirmans potius quae tu Laurentio inter disputandum responderas, quam novum aliquid afferens. Sed non tibi hoc satis. Efflagitas enim ut, quamquam de his fusius in ipsa quam adhuc parturio Platonis Aristotelisque Concordia sim scripturus, brevi tamen ad te commentariolo perstringam ea quae tunc tibi coram de hac quaestione sum locutus, [...]. Ego vero negare tibi quid possum ? In re praesertim litteraria, socio paene dixerim individuo ? Liceat autem mihi per te, linguae politioris vindicem, verbis uti quibusdam nondum fortasse Latii iure donatis, quae tamen ipsa rerum novitas et quaedam prope necessitas [204] expressit, nec elegantioris stili lenocinium quaeras. Ut enim Mallius inquit, “ornari res ipsa negat, contenta doceri” »

P.J.W. Miller, *Pico della Mirandola. On Being and the One*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1965, p. 37-38 :

« Since those who think that Aristotle disagrees with Plato disagree with me, who make a concordant philosophy of both, you asked both how Aristotle might be defended in this matter and also how he might agree with his master, Plato. I said what came to my mind at that time, confirming what you answered to Lorenzo <de' Medici> in the discussion rather than bringing in anything new. But this was not enough for you. Although I am to write at greater length on these topics in the *Concord of Plato and Aristotle* which I am now bringing forth, you entreated me to collect in a brief compendium what I said about this question then in your presence. [...]. What can I deny you? May I say that you are an almost inseparable companion, particularly in a literary matter? May I also be allowed, through you who vindicate a more elegant language, to use some words which are not yet perhaps legally given to Latin. Still, the newness of the subject makes such expression almost necessary, and therefore you should not look for the allurements of a more elegant style. As Manilius <*Astronomicum*, III, 39> says, “The subject itself refuses to be ornamented; it is content to be taught” »

[T4 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola]

Ad Hermolaum de genere dicendi philosophorum, F. Bausi (ed.), Napoli, Liguori, 1998, p. 40-42 and 50 :

« Tanta est inter oratoris munus et philosophi pugnancia, ut pugnare magis invicem non possint. Nam quod aliud rhetoris officium, quam mentiri, decipere, circumvenire, praestigiari? Est enim vestrum, ut dicitis, posse pro arbitrio, in

candida nigrum vertere, in nigra candidum; posse, quaecumque vultis, tollere, abiicere, amplificare, extenuare dicendo; demum res ipsas magicis quasi, quod vos iactatis, viribus eloquentiae, in quam libuerit faciem habitumque transformare, ut non qualia sunt suo apte ingenio, sed qualia volueritis, non fiant quidem, sed, cum non sint, esse tamen audientibus appareant. Hoc totum est nequicquam aliud quam merum mendacium, mera impostura, merum praestigium, cum a natura rei semper vel augendo excedat, vel minuendo deficiat et fallacem verborum concentum, veluti larvas et simulacra praetendens, [41] auditorum mentes blandiendo ludificet? Eritne huic cum philosopho affinitas, cuius studium omne in cognoscenda et demonstranda ceteris veritate versatur? [...] nostrum esse componere mentem potius quam dictionem, curare ne quid aberret ratio, non oratio. Attinere ad nos ἐν διαθέσει λόγον, non attinere τὸν ἐν προφορᾷ; laudabile in nobis habere Musas in animo et non in labris »

Q. Breen, « Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola on the Conflict of Philosophy and Rhetoric », *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 13, 1952, p. 395-396 and 398 :

« So great is the conflict between the office of the orator and the philosopher that there can be no conflicting greater than theirs. For what else is the task of the rhetor than to lie, to entrap, to circumvent, to practise sleight-of-hand ? For, as you say, it is your business to be able at will to turn black into white, white into black; to be able to elevate, degrade, enlarge, and reduce, by speaking whatsoever you will; at length you do this to the things themselves by magical arts as it were, for by the powers of eloquence you build them in such a way that they change to whatever face and costume you please; so that they are not what their own nature but what your will made them. of course they may not actually become what you willed, but if they should not it may nevertheless appear so to your audience. All this is nothing at all but sheer mendacity, sheer imposture, sheer trickery; for its nature is either to enlarge by addition or to reduce by subtraction, and putting forth a false harmony of words like so many masks and likenesses it dupes the listeners' minds by insincerities. Will there be any affinity between this and the philosopher, whose entire endeavour is concerned with knowing the truth and demonstrating it to others? [...]. It is our business to set in order our minds rather than our delivery; to be careful lest what strays be reason, not speech; that we attain to the word as thought, not to the word as expression. It is praiseworthy to have the Muses in the soul, and not on the lips ».

[T5 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola]

Ad Hermolaum de genere dicendi philosophorum, p. 56-57 :

« Sed amabo incognoscamus quid istaec sit latinitas, quam solam dicitis debere philosophos et non persolvere. Si dicendo incurrat, exempli causa, a sole hominem "produci", "causari" hominem nostrates dicent. Clamabis actutum : "hoc non est latinum", hucusque vere ; "non est Romane dictum", hoc uero uerius ; "igitur non recte", peccat argumentum. Dicit Arabs eandem rem, dicit Aegyptius; non dicent latine, sed tamen recte. Aut enim nomina rerum arbitrio constant, aut natura, si fortuito positu (ut scilicet communione hominum in eandem sententiam conveniente, quo sanxerit unumquodque nomine appellari, ita apud eos recte appelletur), quid prohibet hosce philosophos, quos nuncupatis barbaros conspirasse in unam dicendi normam apud eos non secus sanctam, ac habeatur apud vos Romana ? Illam cur rectam non appelletis, appelletis vestram nulla est ratio, si haec compositio nominum tota est arbitraria. Quod si dignari illam Romani nominis appellatione non vultis, Gallicam vocetis, Britannicam, Hispanam, vel quod vulgares dicere solent Parisiensem. Cum ad vos loquentur, continget eos pleraque rideri, pleraque non intelligi. Idem accidet vobis apud eos loquentibus: "Ἀνάχαρσις παρ' Ἀθηναίους σολοικίζει, Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ παρὰ Σκύθαις", idest, "Anacharsis apud Athenienses solocismum facit, Athenienses apud Scythas" <*Epistulae*, 1>. Quod si nominum rectitudo pendet ex natura rerum, [57] debemusne Rhetores, an philosophos, qui rerum omnium naturam soli perspectam habent et exploratam, de hac rectitudine consulere? Forte quae aures respuunt utpote asperula, acceptat ratio utpote rebus cognatiora »

Q. Breen, « Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola on the Conflict of Philosophy and Rhetoric », p. 400 :

« Both of us should know what is that good Latin, which you say is the only debt philosophers owe but fail to pay when it comes to using it in speech. For example, instead of "a sole hominem produci" our colleagues will say "causari hominem". Forthwith you shout: That is not Latin; and so far you are right. More right you are when you say: It is not the Roman way of speaking. But you are wrong when you say: An Arabian and an Egyptian will say the same thing, but not in Latin; but still they will speak correctly. For the names of things are established either by arbitrary convention or by nature. It may happen that a society of men agree on a word's meaning; if so, for each thing that word is among them the right one to use for the meaning agreed on. That being the case, what will prohibit those philosophers you call barbarians from agreeing together on a common norm of speaking? And let it enjoy with them the same respect as does Roman among you. There is no sense in saying that the one standard is wrong and yours right, if this business of name-making is altogether arbitrary. What of it, if you do not wish to dignify our standard by calling it Roman? You may call it French,

British, Spanish, or even what the vulgar is accustomed to call Parisian. When they speak to us they will for many things be laughed at and to a great extent will not be understood. The same will happen to you when you speak to them. Remember the saying: “Anacharsis commits a solecism among the Athenians, the Athenians do so among the Scythians”. But if the rightness of names depends on the nature of things, is it the rhetorician we ought to consult about this rightness, or is it the philosopher who alone contemplates and explores the nature of everything? And perhaps while the ears reject the names as harsh, reason accepts them as more cognate to the things ».

[T6 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola]

Ioannis Pici de Mirandula oratio quaedam elegantissima, 89-97 :

« Moralis primum, si noster homo ab hostibus indutias tantum quesierit, multiplicis bruti effrenas excursiones et leonis iurgia, iras animosque contundet; tum si rectius consulentes nobis perpetuae pacis securitatem desideraverimus, aderit illa et vota nostra liberaliter implebit, quippe quae cesa utraque bestia, quasi icta porca, inviolabile inter carnem et spiritum foedus sanctissimae pacis sanciet. [90] Sedabit dialectica rationis turbas, inter orationum pugnantias et syllogismorum captiones anxie tumultuantis. [91] Sedabit naturalis philosophia opinionis lites et dissidia, quae inquietam hinc inde animam vexant, distrahunt et lacerant. [92] Sed ita sedabit, ut meminisse nos iubeat esse naturam, iuxta Heraclitum, ex bello genitam, ob id ab Homero “contentionem” vocitatum; idcirco in ea veram quietem et solidam pacem se nobis prestare non posse, esse hoc dominae suae, idest sanctissimae theologiae, munus et privilegium. [93] Ad illam ipsa et viam monstrabit et comes ducet, quae procul nos videns properantes “Venite,” inquam, “ad me qui laboratis, venite et ego reficiam vos, venite ad me et dabo vobis pacem quam mundus et natura vobis dare non possunt.” [94] Tam blande vocati, tam benigniter invitati, alatis pedibus, quasi terrestres Mercurii, in beatissimae amplexus matris evolantes, optata pace perfruemur: pace sanctissima, individua copula, unianimi amicitia, qua omnes animi in una mente, quae est super omnem mentem, non concordent adeo, sed ineffabili quodammodo unum penitus evadant. [95] Haec est illa amicitia quam totius philosophiae finem esse Pythagorici dicunt; haec illa pax quam facit Deus in excelsis suis, quam angeli in terram descendentes annuntiarunt hominibus bonae voluntatis, ut per eam ipsi homines ascendentes in caelum angeli fierent. [96] Hanc pacem amicis, hanc nostro optemus seculo, optemus unicuique domui quam ingredimur, optemus animae nostrae, ut per eam ipsa Dei domus fiat; ut, postquam per moralem et dialecticam suas sordes excusserit, multiplici philosophia quasi aulico apparatu se exornarit, portarum fastigia theologicis sertis coronarit, descendat Rex gloriae et cum Patre veniens mansionem faciat apud eam. [97] Quo tanto hospite si se dignam praestiterit (qua est illius immensa clementia) deaurato vestitu quasi toga nuptiali, multiplici scientiarum circumdata varietate, speciosum hospitem, non ut hospitem iam, sed ut sponsum excipiet, a quo ne unquam dissolvatur dissolvi cupiet a populo suo, et domum patris sui, immo se ipsam oblita, in se ipsa cupiet mori ut vivat in sponso, in cuius conspectu preciosa profecto mors sanctorum eius: mors – inquam – illa, si dici mors debet plenitudo vitae, cuius meditationem esse studium philosophiae dixerunt sapientes ».

F. Borghesi, M. Papio and M. Riva, *Pico della Mirandola. Oration on the Dignity of Man*, p. 151-157 :

« If our man would just seek a truce from his enemies, moral philosophy will beat down the unbridled stampede of the manifold beast and the aggression, ire, and arrogance of the lion. Then, if we yearn rightmindedly for the safety of perpetual peace for ourselves, it will come and liberally satisfy our desires; indeed, both beasts having been sacrificed like a stuck sow, it will ratify an everlasting pact of the most holy peace between the flesh and the spirit. Dialectics will calm the tumults of reason agitated and tossed about between the contradictions of speech and the captiousness of syllogisms. Natural philosophy will allay the differences of opinion and disagreements that vex, perplex, and afflict our restless soul from all sides. But it will bring harmony in such a way as to remind us that nature is the offspring of war, as Heraclitus said, and is therefore called “strife” by Homer. Thus, it is said that in philosophy true rest and stable peace cannot reveal themselves to us alone, that this is the duty and privilege of its mistress; that is, of the most holy Theology. She will show us the way to this peace and like a companion will lead us. Seeing us hurrying along from afar, she will call out, “Come to me, you who exert yourselves in vain; come and I will restore you; come to me and I will give you that peace which the world and nature cannot give to you.” So gently called, so kindly invited, we will then fly away into the embrace of the most blessed Mother like terrestrial Mercuries with winged feet and will rejoice in the longed-for peace. This is that most holy peace, the indissoluble bond, the harmonious friendship in which all souls, in one mind (a mind that is above all minds) are not only in agreement but, indeed, in a certain ineffable way, inwardly become one. This is the friendship that the Pythagoreans call the end of all philosophy, that peace which God makes in His heavens, which the angels who came down to earth announced to men of good will so that these men would, ascending to heaven, be transformed by it into angels. Let us desire this peace for our friends, for our times; let us desire it for whatever home we enter. Let us desire it for our soul so that in her may be made a house of the Lord, so that, after casting off her impurities through moral philosophy and dialectics, our soul may adorn herself with multifaceted philosophy, as if with royal

magnificence, and so that she may crown the heights of her doors with the garlands of theology. And let us desire this peace for our soul so that the King of Glory may descend at last, together with the Father, to make a home in her. If our soul shows herself to be worthy of such a Guest – for His Clemency is immense – she (clad in gold, as in a wedding toga, and surrounded by a diverse variety of sciences) will receive her handsome Guest not merely as a Guest but as a Bridegroom. So as not to be separated from Him, she will wish to be separated from her people. Having forgotten her own father's home – indeed, having forgotten herself – she will wish to die in herself so that she may live in her Spouse, in Whose sight the death of His saints is truly precious. This is the death, I say (if one must call that plenitude of life death), whose contemplation is, according to the sages, the study of philosophy ».

[T7 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola]

Ioannis Pici de Mirandula oratio quaedam elegantissima, 142-150 :

« Haec sunt, patres colendissimi, quae me ad philosophiae studium non animarunt modo, sed compulerunt. [143] Quae dicturus certe non eram, nisi his responderem qui philosophiae studium in principibus praesertim viris, aut his omnino qui mediocri fortuna vivunt, damnare solent. [144] Est enim iam hoc totum philosophari (quae est nostrae etatis infoelicitas!) in contemptum potius et contumeliam, quam in honorem et gloriam. [145] Ita invasit fere omnium mentes exitialis haec et monstrosa persuasio, aut nihil aut paucis philosophandum: quasi rerum causas, naturae vias, universi rationem, Dei consilia, caelorum terraeque mysteria pre oculis, pre manibus exploratissima habere nihil sit prorsus, nisi vel gratiam inde aucupari aliquam, vel lucrum sibi quis comparare possit. [146] Quin eo deventum est ut iam (proh dolor!) non existimentur sapientes nisi qui mercennarium faciunt studium sapientiae, ut sit videre pudicam Palladem, deorum munere inter homines diversantem, eiici, explodi, exsibilari, non habere qui amet, qui faveat, nisi ipsa, quasi prostans et praefl oratae virginitatis accepta mercedula, male paratum aes in amatoris arculam referat. [147] Quae omnia ego non sine summo dolore et indignatione in huius temporis non principes, sed philosophos dico, qui ideo non esse philosophandum et credunt et praedicant, quod philosophis nulla merces, nulla sint praemia constituta; quasi non ostendant ipsi, hoc uno nomine, se non esse philosophos, quod cum tota eorum vita sit vel in questu, vel in ambitione posita, ipsam per se veritatis cognitionem non amplectuntur. [148] Dabo hoc mihi, et me ipsum hac ex parte laudare nihil erubescam, me nunquam alia de causa philosophatum nisi ut philosopharer, nec ex studiis meis, ex meis lucubrationibus mercedem ullam aut fructum vel sperasse alium vel quesuisse, quam animi cultum et a me semper plurimum desideratae veritatis cognitionem. [149] Cuius ita cupidus semper et amantissimus fui ut, relicta omni privatarum et publicarum rerum cura, contemplandi ocio totum me tradiderim, a quo nullae invidorum obtrectationes, nulla hostium sapientiae maledicta vel potuerunt ante hac, vel in posterum me detertere poterunt. [150] Docuit me ipsa philosophia a propria potius conscientia quam ab externis pendere iuditiis, cogitareque semper non tam ne male audiam, quam ne quid male vel dicam ipse vel agam ».

F. Borghesi, M. Papio and M. Riva, *Pico della Mirandola. Oration on the Dignity of Man*, p. 183-189 :

« These are the reasons, most reverend fathers, that have not only encouraged me but even thrust upon me the duty of studying philosophy. And I would certainly not elaborate on them if I were not compelled to respond to those who are accustomed to condemning the study of philosophy, especially in men of high rank or, even more generally, in those of a middling fortune. For philosophizing as a whole (and this is the misfortune of our age!) is now derided and disparaged, instead of being honoured and glorified. Thus, nearly everyone's mind has been invaded by the ruinous and monstrous conviction that either no one or only a very few may study philosophy, as if having before our eyes and at our fingertips the causes of things, the ways of nature, the logic of the universe, the divine plan, and the mysteries of Heaven and Earth were of no value whatsoever unless accompanied by the possibility of garnering some favour or making a profit. Indeed, it has now reached the point (what sorrow!) that only those who reduce the study of wisdom to a business are considered wise. It is like seeing chaste Pallas, who dwells among men out of the generosity of the gods, rejected, hooted off and hissed at, with no one to love or protect her, lest she, like a prostitute who accepts a pittance for her deflowered virginity, deposit the ill-earned profit into her lover's money chest. And I say all these things (not without the deepest grief and indignation) not against the lords of our times but against the philosophers who believe and openly declare that no one should pursue philosophy if only because there is no market for philosophers, no remuneration given to them, as if they did not reveal in this very word that they are not true philosophers. Hence, insofar as their whole life has been dedicated to moneymaking and ambition, they are incapable of embracing the knowledge of truth for its own sake. This much shall I grant myself (and I shall not blush a bit for self-praise in this regard): that I have never pursued philosophy for any other reason than for the sake of being a philosopher, nor have I ever hoped for or sought from my studies, from my queries, any reward or fruit beyond the nourishment of my mind and the knowledge of the truth, something I have always very greatly desired. And I have always been so avid for it and so enamoured of it that, setting aside all private and public concerns, I devoted my whole self to the leisure of contemplation, from which no calumny of the envious, no slander of

the enemies of wisdom, has thus far managed to distract me, nor will it in the future. Philosophy herself has taught me to rely upon my own conscience rather than upon the opinions of others, and always to be careful, not so much that people do not speak badly of me as, rather, that I not say or do anything that is in itself bad ».