



# Jean Gerson's Early Readers at the University of Vienna in the Time of Plague before Print

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**Biography:** Monica Brînzei is a Research Director (DR2) at the IRHT, CNRS, Paris, specializing in late medieval philosophy and intellectual history. She was the PI of the ERC Starting-grant THESIS (2012-2018) concerning lectures on the *Sentences*, and she is currently working on the *principia* of *Sentences* lectures as the PI of the ERC Consolidator-grant DEBATE and also on the influence of the University of Paris on the Faculty of Theology of Vienna at the beginning of the 15th century. She is co-director of the Brepols collection 'Studia Sententiarum'.

**Summary:** This paper investigates the presence of Gerson's texts in the possession of scholars at Vienna, mostly in the Faculty of Theology, in order to determine how their interest in Gerson contributed to the wide diffusion of his writings in the early fifteenth century.

**Key-words:** medieval university of Vienna, personal libraries, *ars moriendi*, plague.

The great abundance of Jean Gerson manuscripts in Germanic lands is an interesting historical phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> It has been shown that in the mid-fifteenth century the popularity of the Chancellor of Paris's texts in the region expanded rapidly via their circulation in the religious orders, especially in the context of "mystical humanism."<sup>2</sup> The role the medieval University of Vienna played in a slightly earlier phase of this dissemination is still an open question. This paper investigates the presence of Gerson's texts in the possession of scholars at Vienna, mostly in the Faculty of Theology, in order to determine how their interest in Gerson contributed to the wide diffusion of his writings in the early fifteenth century.

A few words about the foundation of the Faculty of Theology at Vienna are pertinent, because the naissance of this new "academic paradise", as it has been depicted in modern historiography, was the responsibility of people who can be linked to Jean Gerson. The year 1382 can be considered an *annus horribilis* for the history of medieval universities, especially for the University of Paris. The community of German scholars was forced to leave Paris because of their allegiance to the Roman Pope Urban VI as opposed to the Avignon Pope Clement VII, who had the support of the king of France and thus of the university. The *Auctarium Chartularii Universitatis Parisiensis* summarizes this major episode in a brief note.<sup>3</sup> The cohort of German students and masters, at least fifteen important academics—among them Henry of Langenstein, former vice-chancellor of the University of Paris; his companion Henry of Totting of Oyta; and Paul of Gelria, proctor of the German Nation of students—returned to their homeland.<sup>4</sup> Many of them soon became founders of the *Collegium*

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<sup>1</sup> Although a total *census* is still lacking, see on this dissemination Carla Bozzolo, "La production manuscrite dans les pays rhénans au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle", p. 223 and more recently Daniel Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity before Print*, p. 194–195, 210.

<sup>2</sup> See the authors discussed by Yelena Mazour-Matusevich in the "Vienna Chapter" of her article, "Jean Gerson and the Formation of German National Identity", p. 967–973.

<sup>3</sup> *ACUP*, p. 659, n. 5.

<sup>4</sup> The list is also indicated by Paul Uiblein, "Ein Niederösterreicher als Magister der Sorbonne Peter Pergöchsel von Arnsdorf (†1414)", p. 179 and Gerhard Ritter, *Romantic and Revolutionary Elements in German*, p. 15–49.

*Ducale* (Duke's College) in Vienna. At the same time, with approval from Pope Urban VI for a faculty of theology and official recognition of the University of Vienna, Langenstein helped to establish the Faculty of Theology and reinvigorate the existing Faculty of Arts. The beginnings of the activities of the new Faculty of Theology are dominated by the towering figures of Langenstein and Oyta. Their legacy was then perpetuated by the following generations of professors, which kept alive the passion for knowledge produced in Paris, as is the case with their interest in Jean Gerson's writings.

In 1381 Jean Gerson was made master at the Parisian Faculty of Arts, just one year before 1382 when the German Nation of scholars left Paris. After that in 1383 he was named proctor of the French Nation.<sup>5</sup> He probably met Langenstein and Oyta in person in Paris, and he certainly became familiar with their texts, for which over time he developed a particular interest, as he witnesses in his writings.<sup>6</sup> When the German community of academics departed from Paris, however, Gerson was not yet an authority in theology, having not yet lectured on the Bible or the *Sentences*. This is the main reason for his invisibility among the first generations of theologians at Vienna, from 1384 until the 1420s, whereas some of Pierre d'Ailly's ideas already inspired discussion,<sup>7</sup> because Paul of Gelria had read the Cardinal in Paris.<sup>8</sup> The first traces of the circulation of Gerson's texts at the University of Vienna show up after 1420 and his works become prominent around the 1430s. This reception was, of course, prepared by the participation of professors from the University of Vienna at the Council of Constance where they had the occasion to meet Gerson and come into contact with his writings. Gerson even visited the university in 1418, when a professorial chair in theology was opened for him.<sup>9</sup>

### Gerson and the Plague

Aside from direct contact at the Council of Constance, another element should be taken into consideration in order to explain the special attraction of Viennese professors to Jean Gerson. A remarkable detail of Gerson's life has not yet received sufficient attention: he was born and lived during a time when everyday life in Europe was regularly and profoundly disturbed by various outbreaks of plague. In 1400 the Chancellor himself was caught in a virulent wave that momentarily put his own life in grave danger, an experience that certainly had an impact on his perspective on life and death.

It should come as no surprise that Jean Gerson wrote *Ars bene moriendi* or *la science de bien mourir* as a meditation on death and on how to prepare for accepting an unpredictable death, since it was penned immediately after he himself fell gravely ill in Bruges for a few

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<sup>5</sup> For his chronology see Christoph Burger, *Aedificatio, fructus, utilitas*, p. 24–26; Louis Pascoe, *Jean Gerson: Principles of Church Reform*, p. 5–6.

<sup>6</sup> In his *Collectorium super Magnificat*, Jean Gerson praises the physical beauty of Mary, but already before Gerson Henry of Langenstein in his *principia* dedicates some space to the both the physical and moral beauty of the Virgin Mary and of Jesus Christ in his theory of the *vultus Christi*. Gerson himself praised Oyta in his treatise *Contra curiositatem studentium* when he names Oyta in this terms: “Venerabilis et venerandus doctor magister Henricus de Hoyta qui pro suo merito veteribus aequari et inter eruditissimos logicos, metaphysicos et theologos numerari potest”. (The venerable and to be venerated doctor, Master Henry of Hoyta, who for his merit can be equated with the ancients and numbered among the most learned logicians, metaphysicians and theologians.) About the relation between Oyta and Gerson, see Martin Dekarli, “Henry Totting of Oyta and the Prague Nominalism”, p. 53–54.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the conception about *lex Christi* treated in depth by Pierre d'Ailly in his *principia*, of which echoes can be traced inside the theological discussion in Vienna in the works of Paul of Gelria and John of Russbach: Monica Brinzei, “Notes on Magister John Russbach (+1417)”, p. 387–388.

<sup>8</sup> See Egbert Bos and Stephen Read, *Concepts. The Treatises of Thomas of Cleves and Paul of Gelria*, p. 18–20, for their connection to Pierre d'Ailly.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Shank, “University and Church in Late Medieval Vienna”, p. 50–51.

months (June–August 1400) during a new and aggressive wave of plague.<sup>10</sup> The treatise, which circulated in French and in Latin,<sup>11</sup> is surprising in its realism and the practical aspects of how to arrange for death's arrival, especially death by sickness. Gerson tries to present a typically Christian view, reassuring the reader that God will take care of one's soul, that death is just a passage to join God, and that it is better in one's last moments not to be disturbed by ideas about this world but to prepare for spiritual union with God.<sup>12</sup> Besides the spiritual preparation that the person facing death should undertake, this responsibility should equally be assumed by surrounding people (*amici carnalis/veraces*,<sup>13</sup> *uxor*, and *liberi*) because, according to Gerson, friendship also entails taking care of the sick person's spiritual life.<sup>14</sup> On the practical side, a dying person should ask for pardon,<sup>15</sup> make a rapid confession of any possible unconfessed mortal sins,<sup>16</sup> forgive all that has been done to him, and make arrangements to give away all his material possessions. Gerson's treatise on the *ars moriendi* presages the practice of Viennese professors, who followed an interesting tradition of preparing their testaments and whose custom of donating items, especially their books, to their host institution was gradually put in place.

*Ars bene moriendi* was probably composed to fulfil this sudden need, and it was perhaps used as a practical guide for dealing with such a traumatic experience. The violence of an unexpected death or the sudden onset of a serious illness became a ubiquitous phenomenon. The plague made a deep impression, making it manifest that death can come at any moment and that all people from kings to paupers are equal when confronted with their ultimate fate.<sup>17</sup> Gerson understood, most likely based on his own experience, that preparation

<sup>10</sup> See a description of the event that occurred in Bruges during the year 1400–1401, when at the age of 37 Gerson even wrote his last will during a period of critical illness: Patrick B. McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the last medieval reformation*, p. 100–101; Gregory Lamb, “Jean Gerson: Peacemaker to His Religious Community”, p. 81–85; James Connolly, *John Gerson: Reformer and Mystic*, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> For a modern edition see Gilbert Ouy, *Gerson bilingue. Les deux rédactions, latine et française*, p. 84–93. See also Combes's edition of the French version of this text in the *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, vol. VII, n° 332, p. 404–407.

<sup>12</sup> Jean Gerson, *La science de bien morir*, ed. G. Ouy, p. 87: « Pense du tout a ton salut a ceste heure, car par aventure jamais tu n'y pues recouvrer, et laisses toutes pensees aux choses de ce monde les queles tu laisses, et qui ne te tireront point hors d'enfer se tu y trebuches. Commandes tout a Dieu, et il est assez puissant et sage et bon pour tout gouverner sans toy. Puis qu'il te veult prendre a soy, si pense du tout a lui, et a toy en priant seulement a ceulz qui demeurent qu'ilz prient pour toy ». For the Latin text, Id., p. 86. Another version of the French text is found in Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, vol. VII, n° 332, p. 405.

<sup>13</sup> On the distinction between *uxor* (wife), *amici carnales* (carnal friends), and *liberi* (children), see Joost Robbe, “The Kingdom of Heaven Cannot Be Denied”, p. 220.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Gerson, *La science de bien morir*, ed. G. Ouy, p. 91: “Item que on mette le moins que on pourra au devant les amis charnelz de celio qui muert, par especial enfants ou femme, ou richesses, fors en tant que requerra nécessité de y pourveoir pour son salut sans ce que par autre <maniere> ce puisse faire.” For the Latin text, see Id., p. 90, and for another version of the French text: Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, vol. VII, n° 332, p. 407.

<sup>15</sup> Jean Gerson, *La science de bien morir*, ed. G. Ouy, p. 89: “Pardonnas tu de bon cuer a tous et a toutes, en l'onneur et pour l'amour d'icelui Seigneur du quel tu atens pardon et au quel tu le demandes. Et aussi tu demandes pardon et cries merci a tous aux quelz tu as fait injure de paroles ou de fait.” For the Latin text, see Id., p. 88, and for another version of the French text: Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, vol. VII, n° 332, p. 406.

<sup>16</sup> Jean Gerson, *La science de bien morir*, ed. G. Ouy, p. 87: “As tu point conscience de pechié mortel du quel tu ne soies confessé? Et tu pries a Dieu qu'il vueille enluminer ton cuer pour veoir et savoir s'il y a riens encore a confesser pour en avoir pardon, et se tu le confesserioies volentiers”. For the Latin text, see Id., p. 86, and for another version of the French text: Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, vol. VII, n° 332, p. 405.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Gerson, *La science de bien morir*, ed. G. Ouy, p. 85: “N'est homme, roy ou prince ou autre, qui ne doie passer par ce pas: car nous n'avons point esté mis au monde pour y demourer, mais pour acquerir le logis et la gloire de paradis pardurablement par bien vivre, et par bien eschever les horribles pains d'enfer”. For the Latin text, see Id., p. 84, and for another version of the French text: Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, vol. VII, n° 332, p. 405.

for one's death should be both material and spiritual, so his practical guide on how to approach the issue was guaranteed wide renown in a world in need of a treatise on the art of preparing for departure from this world.<sup>18</sup>

The recurrence of the pandemic influenced individual life but also communities. The University of Vienna did not escape the drama, which decimated the student population and pronounced a death sentence on many promising young scholars. The plague fractured academic society, pushing its members to look for explanations and seek some sort of comfort in dealing with death.<sup>19</sup> For example, I recently analyzed the sentimental testimony of the young John Grössel of Tittmoning<sup>20</sup>, who lamented the loss of his professors and colleagues in 1436. He is not a unique witness, and the still unedited volumes of the *Acta facultatis artium* for the period after 1416 provide more evidence for how critical the situation became for potential readers of Gerson in the university, especially in 1443<sup>21</sup> but again in 1453 when another major figure among the Viennese theologians, Thomas Ebendorfer corrected a manuscript of Boccaccio during a university lockdown in one outbreak.<sup>22</sup> The topic of plague introduces a new element into our picture of the university: the culture of death. Human beings, whether highly educated or less so, face death and seek salvation, but they also look for guidance to accept the total unpredictability of death.

The same context that inspired Jean Gerson to compose a work in the *ars moriendi* genre<sup>23</sup> thus made his contribution popular among Viennese theologians. In this climate, where the everyday life of the learned community was disturbed in Vienna by recurring outbreaks of plague, Gerson's writings on confession and the *ars moriendi*, which, along with *De decem praeceptis divine legis*<sup>24</sup> and *De examination conscientie*<sup>25</sup> constituted his *Opus tripartitum*, were collected in manuscripts along with other writings connected with the topic of death. Gerson's *Opus tripartitum*, of which 176 copies are presently known,<sup>26</sup> was the most widely transmitted of his writings. The nature of its content was not the only factor, because the small size of the text certainly contributed to the success of its distribution, being more easily copied and diffused, normally as integrated into collective manuscripts. It is interesting to note that the manuscripts containing this treatise of Gerson circulated in collections that included other texts with a preoccupation with the same topic, mirroring the worries about how to deal with death.

Besides Wien, ÖNB, MS 1759, which survives today as a single quire of twelve folios, the other manuscripts transmitting Gerson's *Opus tripartitum* combine it with other texts dealing with penitence, confession, and death. For example, aside from Gerson's texts, Wien,

<sup>18</sup> Gerson emphasizes not only the preparation of the soul, but also of practical arrangements. See Jean Gerson, *La science de bien morir*, ed. G. Ouy, p. 89: "Veulz tu que, se tu as riens de l'autrui, il soit rendu entierement selon ce que tu y peus estre tenu, et en tant que tous tes biens se pourront estendre, se mestier est, ou tu renonces a tout se tu n'y pues satisfaire, et en demandes pardon a Dieus et aux hommes? Respons: oÿ". For the Latin text, see Id., p. 88, and for another version of the French text: Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, vol. VII, n° 332, p. 406.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Achsbach, *Geschichte der Wiener*, p. 334.

<sup>20</sup> M. Brinzei, "A Student's Notes on the Plague", p. 367–377. In a long colophon inserted at the end of his book II of the *Sentences*, Grössel depicts in sad terms how he lost three professors and a few colleagues during a violent new episode of the plague that obliged the university to go into lockdown for a few weeks.

<sup>21</sup> *Acta Facultatis Artium II (Liber secundus Actorum Facultatis Artium, 1416-1447)*, ms. Wien, Universitätsarchiv, AT-UAW/PH 7, ff. 157v, 159r.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. ms. Wien, ÖNB, MS 3369 discussed in M. Brinzei, "A Student's Notes on the Plague", p. 375. On Thomas of Ebendorfer see recently Ioana Curut, "The *Sentences* Commentary of Thomas Ebendorfer".

<sup>23</sup> The genre of *Ars moriendi* was extensively studied for this period. See Giacomo Signore, "Bringing Academic and Monastic Knowledge", p. 172–173, especially n. 38. On Gerson, see also recently the study by J. Robbe, "The Kingdom of Heaven cannot be denied", p. 218–221.

<sup>24</sup> For a modern edition see G. Ouy, *Gerson bilingue*, p. 2–51.

<sup>25</sup> For a modern edition see G. Ouy, *Gerson bilingue*, p. 64–83.

<sup>26</sup> See a list of manuscripts on FAMA: <http://fama.irht.cnrs.fr/oeuvre/268826>.

ÖNB, MS 3640 contains a pseudo-Augustinian treatise entitled *Speculum mortis*; codices 4035 and 4135 preserve a treatise *De arte moriendi* attributed to Dominicus de Capranica<sup>27</sup>, while the latter also contains texts by Peter of Pulkau and fragments of Langenstein's *De mortis memoria*; number 4694 (dated 1433), exhibits a *Speculum mortis* among its texts; number 4748 has *Methodus infirmos ad mortem* (dated 1439); 4948 includes the *Epistula consolatoria de morte fratris ad Eckhardum episcopum Wormatiensem* (addressed by Henry of Langenstein to Eckhard von Ders, Bishop of Worms), together with *Notabilia circa materiam de iudicio finali* and *Instructiones due germanice contra pestem*.

All these specimens are possible evidence that copies of Gerson's *Opus tripartitum* were collected by bachelors and masters at the Faculty of Theology (Peter of Pulkau, Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl, or John Grössel) in order to address a common concern: how to deal with death and how to prepare the souls of *amici* for a spiritual journey to God and separation from mundane life, especially when death terrifies young students. Gerson's text was an important incentive for Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl to develop his own reflection on the art of dying, which incorporates some of Gerson's original.<sup>28</sup> Thus not only did Gerson's own passage through a period of illness probably inspire him to create a practical approach to death, his text was used by other scholars experiencing recurrent waves of the epidemic.

### Individual Cases of Gerson Reception at the University of Vienna

In order to illustrate Gerson's reception among scholars at the University in Vienna, let us look at some case-studies to determine the circle of readers of Gerson inside the Viennese academic milieu. Besides Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl, an evident admirer of the Parisian chancellor, we will look at other important theologians among Gerson's readers, namely Peter Reicher of Pirchenwart, John Grössel of Tittmoning, and Thomas Ebendorfer of Hasselbach. All are major figures of the university of Vienna, although not yet enough studied. They all performed as deans or even rectors at the university, and beside their administrative commitments they also produced considerable works that are still not yet edited.<sup>29</sup>

The connection and the doctrinal affinities between Dinkelsbühl and Gerson are no longer a novelty.<sup>30</sup> The fact that Dinkelsbühl himself is the author of an *Ars moriendi* (*Speculum mortis*) is itself proof of Gerson's doctrinal impact on this Viennese master.<sup>31</sup> Dinkelsbühl himself possessed in his personal library two manuscripts containing Gerson's writings. In Wien, ÖNB, MS 3954, which Dinkelsbühl donated to the library of the Collegium Ducale,<sup>32</sup> he gathered the following titles of Gerson: *De potestate ecclesiastica*, *Contra Iohannis Parvi novem propositiones de tyranicidio* and *Contra haereticos dicentes de necessitate salutis esse recipere sacramentum sub utraque specie*. Besides the works of the Chancellor, the main body of the manuscript is devoted to a work of Zacharias

<sup>27</sup> On this attribution see Alois Madre, *Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl. Leben und Schriften*, p. 293; Franz Falk, *Die deutschen Sterbebüchlein*, p. 24; Id., "Ist der Kardinal Dominikus Capranica wirklich der Verfasser des *Speculum artis bene moriendi*?", p. 132–137.

<sup>28</sup> See Rainer Rudolf, *Ars moriendi*, p. 77–78.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Achsbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität, passim*. See Monica Brinzei, "Rectors and Deans as Scribes at the medieval University from Vienna", p. 659–672.

<sup>30</sup> See M. Brinzei, "La *Lectura Mellicensis* de Nicholas de Dinkelsbühl", p. 317–324.

<sup>31</sup> This treatise is the object of a future investigation, so I will not analyze it further here. See for now the list of manuscripts and the history of the misattribution of this *Ars moriendi* in A. Madre, *Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl. Leben und Schriften*, p. 292–295, and R. Rudolf, *Ars moriendi*, p. 70.

<sup>32</sup> Witness to this donation is on the third *page de garde*: "Item librum legavit ad librariam Collegii Ducalis egredius dominus doctor Magister Nicolaus de Dinkelspuchel pie memorie, cui Dominus Deus det suam pacem. Amen". See P. Uiblein, "Zur Lebensgeschichte einiger Wiener Theologen des Mittelalters", p. 103.

Chrisopolitanus, *Expositio in harmoniam evangelicam* (ff. 1ra-268a), which is interesting in that Dinkelsbühl must have known that Zacharias was a source that Gerson himself used in some of his works.<sup>33</sup>

It seems that Dinkelsbühl paid special attention to these texts in MS 3954, since he intervened by adding comments to the colophon of the text to provide clarification about the dates and the author. While the *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the codex is 1433, the year of Dinkelsbühl's death<sup>34</sup>, we find our *terminus post quem* in a note in Dinkelsbühl's own hand<sup>35</sup> on f. 288ra: "Hic tractatus scriptus est seu compositus in Concilio generali Constantiensi per reverendum magistrum Johannem de Jersano (!) Cancellarium Parysiensem anno Domini M° CCCC° decimo septimo."<sup>36</sup> Then again at the end of the codex on f. 322v Dinkelsbühl supplements the *explicit* of the text with the following (in bold): "Explicit tractatus adversus heresim novam de necessaria communicatione laycorum sub utraque specie raptim editus Constantii anno 1417 die XX<sup>a</sup> Augusti./ **et est Magistri Johannis de Jersonibus Cancellarii Parisiensis.**"<sup>37</sup>

Dinkelsbühl is not simply a collector of Gerson's writings, but also a careful reader. One can recognize his methodology with the insertion of *cedulae* (e.g. on f. 277ra he drew a *manicula* that passes from the *cedula* to the next folio to indicate the insertion) or long passages or comments on the text (e.g. on f. 285r he has a long fragment with the following indication: "illud pertinent ad sequens folium circa talem signum #" and a *manicula* of two crossed parallel lines with a sign of insertion of this text can be found on f. 286r). This recalls the same practice that he used in his autograph manuscript Wien, Schottenstift, MS 269 containing a collection of questions on the *Sentences*.<sup>38</sup> At the end of the treatise *De potestate ecclesiastica*, on ff. 288v-289r there is a tree diagram summarizing Gerson's distinction of *justitia divina* into *jus cuiuslibet creature* and *jus creature rationalis*, which itself is divided into *leges hominum viatorum*, which is further subdivided into *lex proprie divina* (*lex proprie naturalis*) and *lex canonica* (*lex civilis*). In fact, this is what has been published as the *Arbor de potestate Ecclesie*, n° 447 in Glorieux's edition of the *Oeuvres complètes*.<sup>39</sup> Editing this diagram as an independent text, Combes managed to mislead modern readers, neglecting to say that in fact this diagram was an omnipresent feature in Gerson's manuscripts, probably crafted as a sort of mnemotechnic tool that circulated together with Gerson's *De potestate ecclesiastica*. It was used to facilitate the reading but also the assimilation of Gerson's ideas about different types of *lex*.<sup>40</sup> For example, a random check of two other manuscripts that circulated among the Viennese theologians revealed the same diagram: Wien, ÖNB, MS

<sup>33</sup> Combes highlights some verbatim passages that Gerson took from Zacharias in Combes, *Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck*, p. 363–365.

<sup>34</sup> On his death, see the sermon written by his disciple Peter of Pirchenwart, edited in Karl Binder, "Der Nachruf Petrus Reicher von Pirawarth auf Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl", p. 244–252.

<sup>35</sup> For images with his hand, see A. Madre, *Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl. Leben und Schriften*, photo 1, p. 54–55, reproducing the autograph from Melk, Stiftbibliothek, cod. Lat. 504; P. Uiblein, *Mittelalterliches Studium an der Wiener Artistenfakultät*, p. 139; or M. Brinzei, "Rectors and Deans as Scribes at the medieval University from Vienna", p. 665–666 (Wien, ÖNB, MS 3453; Wien, Schottenstift, MS 269; Wien, Universitätsarchiv, MS AT-UAW/Ph6).

<sup>36</sup> Here the translation: This treatise was written or composed at the General Council of Constance by the reverend master John de Jersano (!), Chancellor of Paris, in the year of the Lord 1417.

<sup>37</sup> Here the translation: Here ends the treatise against the new heresy of the necessary communication of laypeople in both kinds, hurriedly written in Constance in the year 1417 on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of August. **And it is of master John de Jersonibus, Chancellor of Paris.**

<sup>38</sup> A similar case study is discussed in M. Brinzei and Ch. Schabel, "Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl and the University of Vienna", p. 365–366.

<sup>39</sup> See Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, vol. IV, n° 447, pp. 175–177.

<sup>40</sup> For the pedagogical use of diagram in academic manuscripts see Ayelet Even-Erza, *Lines of Thought: Branching Diagrams*.

4576, ff. 196r-v, copied and read by John Grössel, and also Wien, ÖNB, MS 4901, ff. 231v-232r and f. 233r, containing another collection of Gerson's writings from the Viennese milieu.<sup>41</sup>

I have also found autograph writings of Dinkelsbühl in another Gerson manuscript from Vienna, Wien, ÖNB, MS 4355, containing the Chancellor's *Tractatus de vita religiosorum*, *De contractibus*, *Tractatus de discretione spirituum*, and *Tractatus de vita anime spiritualis*. Dinkelsbühl eventually donated this manuscript to the library of the *Collegium Ducale*.<sup>42</sup> Dinkelsbühl's possession and use of these codices shows the extent of this Viennese master's interest in Gerson, which reached the level of following some of Gerson's ideas in his own writings.

Our second example of a Gersonian theologian in Vienna is Peter Reicher of Pirchenwart, who himself fell victim to a particularly dramatic visit of the plague and was buried on the same day as 70 other members of the university.<sup>43</sup> A student and close collaborator of the venerable master Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl, Pirchenwart is the author of a sermon on the occasion of Dinkelsbühl's death in 1433, the *Collatio in exequiis Nicolai Dinkelsbühl* (ff. 154r-155r).<sup>44</sup> One of the copies of this text is in Wien, ÖNB, MS 3746, which is also noteworthy for the collection of sermons and treatises that it contains, including one work of Gerson's: *Tractatus de celebratione Misse* (ff. 340va-346rb). This is the last treatise in the codex and opens with a fancy floral decoration, which is also the unique decoration from the manuscript, which indicates the importance of the text in the mind of the owner.

One can hypothesize about the owner of MS 3746: Thomas Ebendorfer of Hasselbach. Ebendorfer's hand can be recognized in the subtitles, which were probably added later. Since the manuscript has a *terminus post quem* of 1433, he cannot have written these subtitles in the period when he was in charge of the library of the Faculty of Arts about a decade and a half later.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, it is more likely that this codex formed part of his large personal library.<sup>46</sup> Ebendorfer's name can be associated with another manuscript containing Gerson's writings, Wien, ÖNB, MS 4901, which preserves another extensive group of Gerson's treatises. Codex 4901 is written by different hands, but anyone familiar with his handwriting<sup>47</sup> can easily discern that the section on ff. 43–69 is the autograph of Thomas Ebendorfer. Although Ebendorfer's impressive library has already been the subject of study, turning up some 64 manuscripts, MS 3746 is not among them and thus constitutes a new addition to the catalogue of Ebendorfer's known collection.

<sup>41</sup> See bibliography on this MS: [https://manuscripta.at/hs\\_detail.php?ID=13217](https://manuscripta.at/hs_detail.php?ID=13217).

<sup>42</sup> See A. Madre, *Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl*, p. 62–64 and P. Uiblein, "Zur Lebensgeschichte einiger Wiener Theologen", p. 101, 103.

<sup>43</sup> A. Fuchs, *Necrologia Germanie* V, 2, p. 301: "Attamen invalescente pestilentia anno predicto, videlicet 36, adeo quod de certo die una sepeliuntur 70 funera ante <festum> Assumptionis Beate Virginis, me tunc Wyenne constituto, pluribusque nobilibus suppositis universitatis protunc et paulo ante defunctis, videlicet professore Sacre pagine Magistro Petro Pirchenbart, in collegio Ducis seniore regente ac lectore in theologia ..." (Nevertheless, the pestilence in the aforesaid year, namely <14>36, grew so strong that for certain on one day 70 corpses were buried before the [feast of the] Assumption of the Blessed Virgin while I was in Vienna, and many notable members of the university died then or a little before, namely the professor of the sacred page Master Peter Pirchenbart, senior regent and lector in theology in the Collegium Ducale...) The information about the 70 victims is confirmed by his student John Grössel of Tittmoning: M. Brinzei, "A Student's Notes on the Plague," p. 369.

<sup>44</sup> The text has been edited by K. Binder, "Der Nachruf Petrus Reichers von Pirawarth auf Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl", but Matteo Esu recently discovered another copy, that he will discuss in a forthcoming paper.

<sup>45</sup> According to the *ACTA* II, Ebendorfer was in charge of books at the Faculty of Arts in 1418: Wien, Universitätsarchiv, MS AT-UAW/PH 7, f. 23r.

<sup>46</sup> On his books see Alphons Lhotsky, *Thomas Ebendorfer*, p. 59–65, updated by P. Uiblein, "Epilegomena zur Neuauflage", p. 461–488.

<sup>47</sup> For a new analysis of his autograph manuscripts stemming from his *Sentences* lectures, see Ioana Curut, "The *Sentences* Commentary of Thomas Ebendorfer", p. 70–83.

Wien, ÖNB, MS 4576 provides an illuminating test-case for how Gerson was read and commented on by another theologian from the University of Vienna.<sup>48</sup> The codex opens with a *tabula* that has not been compiled as a reminder of the contents, but rather as a finding tool to navigate the *materia* of the collection of Gerson's texts, most likely assembled by John Grössel of Tittmoning<sup>49</sup> for his own use. It provides the evidence about the titles under which Gerson's writings were known in Vienna, for example it indicates that *De discretione spirituum* is the second part of the longer treatise *De vita spirituali anime* of Jean Gerson.<sup>50</sup> The *tabula* illustrates how reading Gerson was a work in progress, since not all the treatises are indicated in the beginning, but some additions were made later, completing the *tabula*.<sup>51</sup>

Codex 4576 is largely a notebook or a miscellany, gathering authoritative texts and personal notes, reminding one of a sort of *rapularius*, since this genre was current among Viennese masters.<sup>52</sup> Collections of authoritative texts and personal notes circulated among the students in Vienna under the name *rapularius* long before compiling *rapularia* became a common practice in the *Devotio moderna*.<sup>53</sup> Although the collection in MS 4576 combines different hands, the most frequently encountered is Grössel's, who was thus most likely the owner of the manuscript. One can identify Grössel's autograph via a comparison with Wien, ÖNB, MS 4468, which contains a copy of his *Sentences* commentary. Anyone familiar with Grössel's methodology can also spot other idiosyncratic characteristics in MS 4576, which is furnished with all sorts of *marginalia* containing passages from authoritative texts. Since these marginalia abound on some pages, and in any case Grössel was keen on organizing them, he decided to label them by letters of the alphabet and to index them in his extensive *tabula* (ff. 1-20va), where he lists the contents of the manuscript by titles but also by the subjects discussed.<sup>54</sup> One finds a very similar organization in Wien, ÖNB, MS 3953,

<sup>48</sup> For a bibliography on the MS, see [https://manuscripta.at/lit\\_manu.php?ms=AT8500-4576](https://manuscripta.at/lit_manu.php?ms=AT8500-4576).

<sup>49</sup> J. Achsbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, p. 530–532; M. Brinzei, “A Student's Notes on the Plague”, p. 368.

<sup>50</sup> See Wien, ÖNB, MS 4576, f. 1r: “Tractatus eiusdem <m. Iohannis Gerson Cancellarii Parisiensis> *De vita spirituali anime*. Et dividitur in sex lectiones. Et ille 6 lectiones sunt prima pars tractatus qui dicitur *De vita spirituali anime* et durat a folio 16mo usque ad folium 57mum. Tractatus eiusdem *De discretione spirituum et de modo superandi temptationes*. Et ille tractatus dicitur 2a pars tractatus *De vita spirituali anime* et durat a folio 57 usque ad folium 64tum”. (The treatise of the same man [master Jean Gerson, chancellor of Paris] *On the Spiritual Life of the Soul*. And it is divided into six lectures. And these six lectures are the first part of the treatise that is called *On the Spiritual Life of the Soul* and extends from the 16th folio until the 57th folio. The treatise of the same man *On the Discernment of Spirits and on the Way to Overcome Temptations*. And that treatise is called the second part of the treatise *On the Spiritual Life of the Soul* and extends from folio 57 until the 64th folio).

<sup>51</sup> This *tabula* served to the description of the content of the codex that can be consulted here:

[https://manuscripta.at/hs\\_detail.php?ms\\_code=AT8500-4576&load=4576](https://manuscripta.at/hs_detail.php?ms_code=AT8500-4576&load=4576). (last verification 8 November 2022).

<sup>52</sup> On the *rapularius* in the Faculty of Theology see E. A. Lukacs, “Some further theological Disputations at Vienna in the Fifteenth Century”, p. 349–350. For a larger demonstration on the presence of this literary genre in Vienna, see M. Brinzei, “Introduction”, p. 2–5.

<sup>53</sup> See Nikolaus Staubach, “*Diversa raptim undique collecta*: Das *Rapiarium* im geistlichen Reformprogramm der *Devotio moderna*,” p. 115–147. For a general description of this practice, see Thom Martens, “*Rapiarium*”, col. 114.

<sup>54</sup> On f. 3ra he gives some instructions for this *tabula*: “Pro noticia faciliiori tabule sequentis secundum ordinem alphabeti, notandum quod folia sunt per columnas divisa, et semper 4or columpne se mutuo in diversis foliis respicientes pro eodem folio computentur, ne dum numerus signatus habetur folio iterum revolvi contingat. Et in primo folio prima columpna significatur per litteram A, secunda per B, tertia per C, 4ta per D. Eodem modo in secundo folio et in 3o. Et eodem modo in ceteris sequentibus foliis intelligatur, ubi signatura litterarum non ponitur.” (For easier awareness of the following table according to the order of the alphabet, it should be noted that the folios are divided by columns, and four columns facing each other on [two] different folios are always calculated for the same folio, so that when one has an indicated number one does not turn the page again. And in the first leaf the first column is labelled with the letter A, the second with B, the third with C, the fourth with D. In the same way in the second folio and in the third. And it should be understood in the same way in the other

containing part II of the *Lectura super Psalterium* of Henry Totting of Oyta, which manuscript has been listed as an autograph of Oyta himself.<sup>55</sup> Based on a fresh examination of the hand in MS 3953, I propose to identify the scribe of this codex as Grössel. Beside the specifics of his hand, one can also recognize the same system of lettering the marginal additions.

From a codicological point of view, the organisation of these manuscripts reveals something more about John Grössel. He was a central figure of the University of Vienna, active for 25 years (1426-1451) at the Faculty of Arts where he was dean in 1432, 1438, 1444 and 1447, and Rector of the university in 1436, 1443, 1455, 1465.<sup>56</sup> His collection of Gerson's writings shows his curiosity, interest, and care in reading through the Parisian Chancellor's texts. The manuscripts that belonged to him or that he produced lead us to discover a very interesting reader of Gerson. For example, on f. 37ra of MS 4576, Grössel adds this comment: "estimo quod hoc circumductum alius aposuerit" (I think that someone else inserted this misleading thing), when in the middle of Gerson's treatise *De contractibus* (ff. 27ra-41vb)<sup>57</sup> one indeed encounters an inserted passage that does not belong to the Chancellor's original text<sup>58</sup>:

Quidam doctor in Cathalonia fecit [iter.; con add. sed del.] tractatum qui sic incipit: "Contractus quidam," qui satis reprobatur censuales contractus, et tales contrahentes vocat censualistas. Arguit tamen pro eis. In fine tamen omnia submittit determinationi Sancte Romane Ecclesie et cuiuslibet bone in hac materia sentientis. Iste tractatus fuit presentatus Cancellario. Unde etiam hanc 3am partem predictis addidit.<sup>59</sup>

The marginal comment thus shows that Grössel was attentive when following the Chancellor's text, detecting that this section did not fit smoothly.

It is also notable that John Grössel reads Gerson's treatises using passages from Durand of Saint-Pourçain, which is not totally surprising given the high regard in which Durand was held among the Viennese masters.<sup>60</sup> In the fourth *lectio* of *De vita spirituali anime*, on the bottom margin of ff. 60v-61r of MS 4576, Grössel inserts a long passage from Durand to help interpret Gerson's discussion: "Nota: Durandus super 4tum Sententiarum, in ista questione: Utrum confitentes et non penitentes sive contriti impleant preceptum Ecclesie

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folios that follow, where the signature of the letters is not placed). This tabula seems to be a work in progress that has been updated over time, which explains the chaotic positioning of the notes inserted on different occasions. For example on f. 15v in the margin one reads the following note: "Pulchra fabula de sancto Antonio et Didimo, f. 182, cum signo tali ~~AAA~~". (A beautiful story about St Anthony and Didymus, f. 182, with this sign ~~AAA~~) When we navigate through the text, on the medieval numbered folio 182vb (renumbered as f. 201vb) one can find the sign from the *tabula* and the indicated passage.

<sup>55</sup> See Albert Lang, *Heinrich Totting von Oyta*, p. 82. I am currently preparing a paper about Oyta's autograph writings.

<sup>56</sup> J. Achsbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, p. 530.

<sup>57</sup> The modern edition of this *Tractatus* is in Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, t. IX, n° 452, pp. 384-542.

<sup>58</sup> This passage is missing from the modern edition, see Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, t. IX, n° 452, p. 410.

<sup>59</sup> For the English translation: "A certain doctor in Catalonia made a treatise that begins thus: "Some contracts," which rather disapproves tax contracts, and he calls people making such contracts "censualistae." However, he argues in favor of them. In the end, however, he submits everything to the determination of the Holy Roman Church and of anyone who thinks well in this matter. This treaty was presented to the Chancellor. Whence he also added this third part to the aforesaid parts."

<sup>60</sup> For Durand's reception in Vienna, see the case study on Dinkelsbühl: R. Friedman, M. Brinzei and Ch. Schabel, "The Reception of Durand's *Sentences* Commentary", p. 321-340; or the list of explicit quotations in the *Sentences* of Peter Reicher of Pirchenwart, where Durand is also well represented with 116 explicit references: M. Brinzei, "Stanislaus of Znojmo and the Arrival of Wyclif's Remanence Theory", p. 263.

de semel in (anno) confitendo”<sup>61</sup>. References to the same book IV of Durand’s *Sentences* are introduced in three columns after this colophon on f. 25vb: “Explicit tractatulus De congregationis auctoritate fidelium universalem Ecclesiam representantium sine consensus summi pontificis facte, editus Constantie per Cancellarium Gerson Parisiensem, Deo laus. Amen”<sup>62</sup>. This time a passage is added on f. 25vb immediately after the *explicit* and indexed with the letter A, beginning thus: “Durandus in Scripto quarti in hac questione: Utrum oratio sit in precepto, allegat illud Luce 18 ...”<sup>63</sup>. This long passage continues until the end of f. 26ra, after which on f. 26rb another begins with this remark: “Nota Durandum in Scripto quarti *Sententiarum*, dist. 18” (Note: Durand in the *Script* on the fourth book of the *Sentences*, distinction 18.), which deals with “Quid sint rationes seminales” (What are the seminal reasons). Grössel shows that he is quite familiar with Durand and that these particular passages are good companions when reading Gerson. In support of this hypothesis, in his expanded *tabula* one discerns on f. 3r under the term *Absolutio* the following marginal note: “Durandus in quarto in questione ista: Utrum consecratio debeat integraliter fieri verbum”, while on f. 7ra, one reads: “Dicendum secundum Durandum”, with an insertion sign that sends us to the initial f. 89v of the medieval numbering (f. 114r modern numbering) and Gerson’s *Tractatus de protestatione*.

At this point it is difficult to tell whether Grössel is simply an independent *connoisseur* of Durand<sup>64</sup> or whether Grössel discovered Durand while under the doctrinal influence of Gerson, who was preaching a return to the theologians of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century, among whom the Parisian Chancellor explicitly recommended Durand.<sup>65</sup> Further investigation is required to answer this question, but it is at least remarkable to note that the Viennese could navigate through Gerson’s ideas guided by Durand’s views.

Another element brought to light by Grössel’s notes is the high regard in which readers held Gerson. This is manifest in their efforts to provide as much information as possible concerning the text and the author. Comments on the date and place of composition are particularly useful, because they fill in some gaps in the chronology of the Chancellor’s writings. For example at the beginning of the treatise *De perfectione cordis*<sup>66</sup> in MS 4576, f. 158vb, the following note is added to provide precise information about the context of the composition of the treatise: “Dyalogus de perfectione cordis magistri Johannis Gerson Cancellarii Parisiensis et theologie professoris compilatus Lugduni anno 1423”<sup>67</sup>. The treatise of *De mystica theologia* is completed by a *tabula* in Grössel’s hand, ff. 241va-251ra, further proof of this particular Viennese theologian’s close reading of the text.

<sup>61</sup> English translation: Note: Durand, on the fourth book of the *Sentences*, in this question: Whether those confessing who are not penitent or contrite fulfill the precept of the Church concerning confessing once a year.

<sup>62</sup> English translation: Thus ends the little treatise *On the Authority of the Assembly of the Faithful Representing the Universal Church Formed without the Consent of the Highest Pontiff*, written in Constance by Gerson, Chancellor of Paris, Praise be to God. Amen.

<sup>63</sup> English translation: Durand in the *Scriptum* on the fourth book, in this question: “Whether prayer is in the precept,” cites that passage in Luke 18...

<sup>64</sup> Another relevant example is in Wien, ÖNB, MS 3953, f. 37v: “Nota: Durandus in secundo *Sententiarum*”, where other similar examples can be found.

<sup>65</sup> Gerson’s testimony about returning to Durand’s texts is in Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, vol. II, p. 33: “Ad primum iuvant, exempli gratia, quaestiones super Sententias et praesertim illorum doctorum qui purius ac solidius conscripserunt, inter quales, meo iudicio, dominus Bonaventura et sanctus Thomas et Durandus videntur numerandi”. (For the first, for example, questions on *Sentences* help, and especially of those doctors who wrote more purely and solidly, among whom, in my judgment, master Bonaventure and St. Thomas, and Durand should be numbered.)

<sup>66</sup> P. B. McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, gives no indication for the date and place of composition for this treatise, edited in Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Glorieux, vol. VIII, n° 413, p. 116–133.

<sup>67</sup> The dialogue on the perfection of the heart by master John Gerson, Chancellor of Paris and professor of theology, compiled in Lyon in the year 1423.

## Gerson and Ockham at Vienna

One intriguing aspect of the reception of Gerson's writings as viewed through Grössel's glasses is the relationship between the Chancellor and some texts by Ockham. At f. 106rb of MS 4576, in the middle of a discussion of the rules of faith, an extensive note from Ockham's *Dialogus* is inserted to reinforce Gerson's argument. It is well known that the *Dialogus* was an extremely influential text among Parisian theologians.<sup>68</sup> What is less known is that Gerson himself was a careful reader of Ockham, although this needs further investigation. A possible misattribution in other manuscripts suggests that the *magistri* of Vienna associated Gerson with Ockham.

Wien, ÖNB, MS 4901 contains another pertinent collection of Gerson's treatises that circulated among the university theologians of Vienna, possibly brought from Constance by Peter of Pulkau.<sup>69</sup> Different hands penned the various treatises, among them *De probatione spirituum* on ff. 32r-38r<sup>70</sup>, which is here introduced as a compilation made by the Chancellor extracted from Ockham, but in fact is only a collection of 12 *considerationes* about how souls can be unsettled disturbed by different types of revelation. Gerson was invited to examine the problem of lay piety and to investigate how Bridget of Sweden's doctrine could be defended at the council. Gerson had been asked to perform this investigation at the moment the Swedish delegation requested the canonisation of Bridget and three other candidates.<sup>71</sup>

There is nothing corresponding to this discussion in Ockham, so it is quite likely that the scribe himself linked Gerson and Ockham in the title of the treatise on f. 32r of MS 4901, which reads as follows: "Secuntur duodecim considerationes super spirituum probatione, anno MCCCC°XV° die VIII Augusti in civitate Constantii dum generale Concilium illic esset, extracte ab Okam per Cancellarium Parysiensem Johannem de Gerson".<sup>72</sup>

Unfortunately, I have only been able to check four other copies of this treatise,<sup>73</sup> none of which makes any reference to Ockham, although they provide information about the place and date of composition of the treatise. Combes has discussed the date extensively in a dizzying palaeographic analysis that runs for 30 pages in order to determine if the treatise was completed on 3, 8, or 28 August 1415.<sup>74</sup> To elucidate this enigma, the illustrious historian delivered a rather peculiar study, but quite delightful for the modern reader. Combes declared

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<sup>68</sup> See the case of Etienne Gaudet studied by Zenon Kaluza, "Le brouillon de trois questions d'Etienne Gaudet", especially p. 1120–1121. For the relation between Gerson and Ockham, see John B. Morrall, *Gerson and the Great Schism*, p. 47–50, 114–116. For another example of Gerson's use of Ockham's *Dialogus* see Isabel Iribarren, "La théologie dans l'université médiévale", p. 403–415, n. 30.

<sup>69</sup> This is Michael Denis's hypothesis as presented in his *Codices Manuscripti Bibliothecae Palatinae Vindobonensis*, col. 2215–2223. In fact, f. 25r contains only the following note: "Tradatur Magistro Petrus de Pulkau" ("It is delivered to master Peter of Pulkau"), and it is possible that this made Denis think that the codex belonged to Pulkau, who brought it to Vienna when he returned from Constance. On Pulkau's participation in the Council of Constance, see Dieter Girgensohn, *Peter von Pulkau*, p. 49–66.

<sup>70</sup> Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Glorieux, t. IX, n° 448, p. 177–183. A detailed discussion of this treatise is in Wendy L. Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits*, p. 193–208.

<sup>71</sup> A very detailed analyze of this episode in Isabel Iribarren, "Les stratégies visionnaires de Jean Gerson", p. 313–322.

<sup>72</sup> English translation: "Twelve considerations follow on the proof of spirits, extracted from Ockham by the Chancellor of Paris, John Gerson, in the year 1415 on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of August in 1415, in the city of Constance while the General Council was there".

<sup>73</sup> For example, five more copies circulated in Vienna, MSS 3863 (ff. 149–151); 4455 (ff. 172–176); 4409 (ff. 289–293); 4576 (ff. 82rb–86rb); 4838 (ff. 99–104).

<sup>74</sup> André Combes, *Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck*, p. 297–329.

himself to be the partisan of the most rigorous methodology and announced that he knew of 23 surviving manuscripts of the text, but that, regrettably, he could not check more than the nine he carefully collated to find a solution to the dating problem. Among these nine, Combes lists our witness, Wien, ÖNB, MS 4901,<sup>75</sup> but rather than admit that he did not actually examine the manuscript, nor even Michael Denis's catalogue, published in 1802,<sup>76</sup> Combes found an elegant solution: he declared that among the nine codices that he rigorously investigated, "les uns sont dépurvus de toute date: tel est le cas des manuscrits H, R, T et V", and he added in a footnote, "V, fol. 71vb: Explicit tractatus (...) sub 12 considerationibus comprehensus etc.4",<sup>77</sup> which cannot be found in this manuscript. Further evidence that Combes failed to check this codex thoroughly is that his name is not on the list of people who inspected it, whereas a modern cedula at the beginning of the manuscript contains a note indicating that on 8 August 1939 Combes merely ordered a reproduction of ff. 291a–292b, 296a–297a and 319a, presumably based on a catalogue of Gerson's manuscripts. Therefore, he did not check ff. 32r–38r, which contain *De probatione spirituum*. With limited access to the codex, André Combes failed to take into account the citation of Ockham as a source for the Chancellor in investigating the soul's resistance to various spiritual visions or doctrinal provocations.

This addition connecting Gerson to Ockham could be a scribal fantasy or a personal remark based on some common knowledge about a possible connection between the two authors. Further investigation will hopefully tell us more, but for the moment it should be considered as further evidence of how theologians of Vienna viewed Gerson.

## Conclusion

This investigation is a first attempt to show how the dissemination of Jean Gerson's writings in German language lands has been triggered, at a first stage, by a reading circle formed mainly of university-based theologians. More manuscripts should be scrutinized to identify stronger connections between Gerson and his readership, but so far the results are quite convincing. Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl may already have heard about Gerson from his *magistri* Henry of Langenstein and Henry Totting of Oyta before their deaths in 1397,<sup>78</sup> since both had been in Paris before founding the Faculty of Theology in Vienna in 1384 and they corresponded with Gerson later on. Because of the ecclesio-political situation of Europe at the beginning of the fifteenth century, scholars at the University of Vienna had the opportunity to meet Gerson in person at the Council of Constance, and even during his visits to Vienna and Melk. Direct personal encounters in Constance may also have provided an occasion to read and copy Gerson's small treatises and to bring them to Vienna, as was probably the case with Peter of Pulkau. This would explain why such an abundance of collections of Gerson's writings circulated among these scholars.

Besides the crisis of the papal schism, recurring outbreaks of plague introduced a new topic of reflection: how to deal with sudden and unpredictable death even among the very young, such as students. Gerson's own experience as a survivor of an epidemic inspired him

<sup>75</sup> A. Combes, *Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck*, p. 302.

<sup>76</sup> M. Denis presents the contents of the codex in detail, providing the correct foliation for each treatise, in *Codices Manuscripti Bibliothecae Palatinae Vindobonensis*, col. 2215–2223. In fact, Combes is more honest at the beginning of his *Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck* when he analyses this manuscript for *De mystica theologia*, p. 103, n. 4: "Une étrange infortune m'a empêché de tirer de cette référence le profit qu'elle aurait dû comporter. Les deux exemplaires de M. Denis que possède la Bibliothèque nationale présentent à l'endroit visé, col. 3173-3174, une lacune inexplicable".

<sup>77</sup> A. Combes, *Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck*, p. 303, n. 1.

<sup>78</sup> On Dinkelsbühl's period as a student under Langenstein and Oyta, see Matteo Esu, "Pedagogical Practices at the University in Vienna", p. 426–430.

to write *Ars bene moriendi*, in which he preached the art of the acceptance of death and provided guidance for the preparation of the soul for departure from this world, on both the *moriens* and his loved ones (*amici, uxor, and filii*). Such towering figures of the University of Vienna as Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl, Peter of Pulkau, Peter of Pirchenwart, John Grössel of Tittmoning, and Thomas Ebendorfer collected Gerson's meditation on death for a practical reason: his text provided consolation, encouragement and guidance on the path to salvation.

Other texts among Jean Gerson's writings attracted the interest of Viennese scholars, as is evident from the records of what they had in their own possession. Notes, comments, and marginalia provide us with a window to view the depth of the attention and interpretation of Gerson's texts by these university theologians. This reception is very personal, for the autograph manuscripts suggest an individual motivation to possess and to collect the Chancellor's writings. Gerson's works were disseminated in different stages: once the treatises arrived, they first circulated as fragments of larger collections of texts by various authors, then later they were gathered into manuscripts devoted solely to Gerson. These stages preceded what would become after 1450 a sort of industrial production, when the writings of Gerson were copied inside a monastic milieu and circulated in carefully produced manuscripts that resemble the form of the printed editions that were soon to come. Although Gerson himself was interested to reach a more varied public, including a lay readership, as we can read in the present volume, the university of Vienna should be taken in consideration as an important channel of transmission at least for some of his texts.