

APPENDIX 3

THE MINOR LITERARY DEBATES AMONG
THE EARLY FRENCH HUMANISTS

In addition the two major literary debates engaged in by the humanists who later were involved in the defense of the Roman, surviving texts attest to several shorter ones. Because (so far as we know) only the letters of Jean de Montreuil, among all the Parisian humanists of this period, have survived intact (or nearly so), the Provost of Lille appears as the central figure in these disputes. From references within his letters, however, we can be certain that many others were participants, including Nicolas de Clamanges, Gontier Col, Ambrogio dei Migli, and Laurent de Premierfait. Still others are mentioned as being involved or interested on a conversational or oral level, including Jacques de Nouvion, Jean Gerson, and Jean Courtecuisse. References to plures alii again force us to assume a much broader audience, and a considerable interest in these debates within the chancelries at Paris at least.

Our discussion of these debates will be briefer because the debates themselves are shorter, and also

because there are fewer deductions and implications relevant to the Quarrel of the Roman to be drawn from them. I begin with the longest.

A. Debate #1. Jean de Montreuil, Ambrogio dei Migli, Nicolas de Clamanges, and Others

This debate has been dated between the autumn of 1397 and the spring of 1398 by Ornato.¹ Surviving letters of Jean de Montreuil's permit us to deduce that there were at least five and probably six or more documents exchanged during this debate. In addition, there were obviously conversations among the participants which also involved interested parties who may or may not have also contributed to the debate documents which have been lost. A list follows of the texts which can be identified with certainty as belonging to this debate.

Text #1--Letter of Ambrogio dei Migli, probably to Jean de Montreuil, not extant. Evidence for such a letter having existed occurs in Jean's reply (Text #2 below) where Jean summarizes the major arguments made by Ambrogio, and quotes directed from it (ll. 28-29). Again, Jean states in that text (l. 46) that he does not want his

¹Ornato, Jean Muret, p. 236. This dating is based on the reference to Nicolas de Clamanges' departure from Paris in Text #5 below, ll. 51-52, where it appears to have occurred recently.

own response to be longer than the other's (i.e. Ambrogio's) letter: "At ne littera presens prolixior fiat alieno."

Text #2--Letter of Jean de Montreuil to (most probably) Nicolas de Clamanges. Text: edited Ornato, No. 129, pp. 187-91.

Text #3--Letter of Ambrogio dei Migli, probably to Jean de Montreuil, not extant. Evidence for this letter having existed is in Text #4 below, where Jean de Montreuil summarizes Ambrogio's arguments. He quotes directly from Ambrogio's letter (ll. 17-19). Since he asks his correspondent to reply in writing (rescribito, l. 64), we may assume that Ambrogio broached his arguments in written form also.

Text #4--Letter of Jean de Montreuil, probably to Nicolas de Clamanges. Text: edited by Ornato, No. 130, pp. 191-93.

Text #5--Letter of Jean de Montreuil to an unknown recipient. Text: edited by Ornato, No. 131, p. 194.

Text #6--Letter of Jean de Montreuil to Nicolas de Clamanges. Text: edited by Ornato, No. 132, pp. 194-96.

First of all, we must remember that we are dealing with a literary debate. There are participants: Jean de Montreuil, Ambrogio, the recipient(s) of Texts #2 and #4 (probably, but not certainly, Nicolas de Clamanges); a

judge, whom Jean asks for comments on the debate (the recipient of letter #131, Text #5); Nicolas de Clamanges as participant (Text #6, certainly to him). The exchange is called a debate by Jean in Text #5:

Querimoniarum seu invectiviarum . . . copias tibi . . .
decrevi transmittere, ut tu . . . scriptotenus explices
circa hanc nostram disceptationem quid sentias. . . .
(Text #5, ll. 1-6, emphasis added)

Therefore we must expect to see rhetorical exaggeration and overstatement, as we have in other debates of this kind. Even though Ambrogio's capricious nature can be easily glimpsed through Jean's letters, there seems to be no reason to assume that the Milanese was anything but a solid friend of the other Parisian secretaries at this time.

Text #1 gives us the first hint of the grounds of the debate. Ambrogio has written Jean to make two points. First, the Italian holds that Ovid is of ingenii excellentioris (l. 20) than Vergil. In fact, Ovid is equal to, or greater than Vergil, in all matters save eloquence (ll. 20-22).

Second, Ambrogio attacks the study of poetry as being harmful for prose writers in general. First, he states that Vergil is a poor choice of study for one wishing to perfect prose style:

. . . et ut sue nil deesset presumptioni, subiunxit
noxium esse volenti in prosa proficere, eiusdem summi

vatis Virgilii scriptis insistere et studere. (p. 188, ll. 22-24)

But, as Jean points out, this attack on Vergil merely veils a more far-reaching attack, a rejection of the study of poetry altogether:

Sed quo rationis velamine subnitatur iudex noster, si non tedeat, advertito: 'Si Tullius,' inquit ipse, 'poetis studuisset, illam ad soluti dignitatem sermonis pertigisset minime.' (p. 188, ll. 27-29)

It is important to recall the context of this literary debate before attempting to evaluate Ambrogio's attack on poetry here. Ambrogio himself is a "humanist," a cultivator of classical style and a secretary in the Duc d'Orléans' chancery in Paris. He too is dependent upon the development of classical style for his career. Nicolas de Clamanges will point out, in response to Ambrogio's attack upon Jean (which has, at the time of this debate, not yet taken place), that Ambrogio is probably doing this only to show off his style (ed. Lydius, Ep. VII), and that his friends had to exaggerate his accomplishments in writing in order to help him find a job.

As a cultivator of classical style, then, it is impossible to believe that Ambrogio does not carefully study the classical authors themselves, not only because they are the ultimate source of good Latin style, but, a fortiori, because of the lack of formal instruction

available in Paris (see Clamanges' letter to Cardinal di Pietrama, Ep. II; Jean de Montreuil's letter to the same, No. 96, "Non dici," and the discussion of them in Appendix 1 above). In fact, it will be recalled that Nicolas made a virtue of necessity in holding that practice, rather than formal instruction or study of rhetorical rules, held the key to excellence in eloquence (Ep. II), and that, in fact, the literary debates engaged in by our humanists were principally for the purpose of practice (see Appendix 2 above). Finally, of course, in the one letter which we have of his, Ambrogio gives evidence of cultivating the same Latin excellence as do the other humanists (letter to Gontier Col, "Si alius").

More than this, there is evidence that Ambrogio himself studied poetry. During the later debate, Jean de Montreuil shows that Ambrogio himself wanted to be known as a poet. Jean first refers to this fact in an ironic vein:

Sed temeritati proximum est contra hunc precellentissimum poetam ac oratorem magna sonaturum, ut dicit, balbucire, qui in rethorica et suasionibus altisonis ac gravibus uberibusque sentenciis, Demostenem ac Lucium Crassum, si non tamen pituita molesta est, antecellere fertur, et cum Marone, Aonias deduxit vertice Musas.
(ed. Ornato, No. 106, pp. 154--5, ll. 255-59)

Since the purpose of this passage is to cast ironic aspersions on Ambrogio's pretensions, and since his pretensions in the realm of poetry are mentioned in the same way as

those in the area of prose (which we know to have existed), it seems unlikely that Jean would have been lying here. Ambrogio did practice (and, therefore, study) poetry.

Jean is even more explicit about Ambrogio's poetic aspirations later in the same letter:

Hoc tamen nonnullos in admirationem adducit, quo is rethor famosusque poeta, sed sortis humillime sordideque Castalie, lixa constitui elaborat, et preses demum Eliconii montis cupit dici, cum is tamen in oppositum adulatorie Gnatonis discipline sinoniceque fraudis refragator noscatur sub Sardanapali vilitate.
(p. 156, ll. 312-16)

It must be kept in mind, therefore, that when Ambrogio attacks the study of poetry he is doing so largely or even wholly for the sake of literary debate. True, Ambrogio is a contentious fellow, who as Ornato puts it "comme on voit, avait le goût du paradoxe."² But this attack on poetry emanates from within humanistic circles, not from outside, and is largely for the purpose of debate or practice. Jean's (and, we may be sure, others') replies are a "defense of poetry" of a kind, but not of the kind which a sincere attack by enemies of the study of poetry would call forth. Besides, Ambrogio may be referring, albeit in a one-sided

²Ornato, Jean Muret, p. 84, n. 37.

manner, to the great differences in vocabulary and style between prose and poetic Latin. In this sense, what he says would be correct: To study Latin poetry exclusively would interfere with one's ability to master Latin prose.

Jean de Montreuil replies forcefully to these denigrations of Vergil and poetry and attempts to rally some forces to help him in his defense.³ He does not attack

³Although it is not a crucial point in the argument of this appendix, I want to make clear what the evidence is for attribution of Jean's letters in this debate (Texts #2 and #4) to Nicolas de Clamanges.

Beginning with Text #6, which is definitely to Nicolas (he is addressed as "Nicolae me," l. 45), we immediately see references to earlier letters which Nicolas has seen. Jean begins the letter:

Portentuosum prodigium monstroque simillimum . . .
 iterum tibi, vir egregie, scripturus sum, . . .
 Iterum here could mean "a second time," but does not exclude "once more, anew." From the following lines it is clear that Jean is referring to another of Ambrogio's fantastic assertions. So Jean has definitely written Nicolas at least once before this about Ambrogio's opinions. Excluding Text #5 (which does not discuss the matter of the quarrel), this could only be a reference: (1) to No. 129, Text #2; (2) to No. 130, Text #4; (3) to both; or (4) to some lost letter. This last cannot be excluded, but appears unlikely, since all of Jean's correspondence about this debate occurs together in the manuscript consecutively, and appears to be a result of Jean's original ordering of his Epistolary. Further studies by Enzio Ornato on this matter will eventually have the final say about this.

In ll. 31-32 of this letter, Jean refers to the earlier part of the present debate with Ambrogio, the part concerning Vergil and Ovid:

. . . quin insuper de illa nostri Mantuani et Thomitani ingeniorum comparatione, de qua aliis scriptis patuit tibi meis, agitaret, . . .

Now, this comparison of the poets with respect to "ingenium"

Ovid, but rather concentrates: (1) upon proving that Cicero praised the study of poetry regularly and mightily; and (2) upon showing Vergil's excellence and preeminence in

occurs only in Text #2, No. 129. It is not mentioned in No. 130. This can only mean, therefore, that Nicolas has seen Letter No. 129. It probably means that letter No. 129 was written to Nicolas. This is consistent with the beginning of No. 132, which, as we have seen, indicates that Jean has written Nicolas before. It might indicate only that Nicolas has seen Jean's letter (patuit doesn't necessarily mean that Nicolas was the direct recipient of the letter).

So, there are the following possibilities: (1) Letter No. 129, Text #2, was written to Nicolas; (2) Letter No. 129 was written to someone else, and shown to Nicolas. In this latter case, Letter No. 130 (Text #4) was written to Nicolas (since, as we have seen, Jean has written him before at least once).

Turning to Letter No. 130, Text #4, we find that there is also a reference to Letter No. 129.

Ecce bonus ille vir et gratissimus Maronis alumnus, qui sic inter ingenia discernit et iudicat, nescio unde profundam aliam inventionem excogitavit, nec contentus de ipsius Maronis ac Nasonis ingeniorum comparatione, quemadmodum precedentibus scriptionibus perpendi potest meis, . . . ad Tullium sese converterit. . . . (p. 191, ll. 3-8)

Again, this could be read to mean that the recipient has only seen Letter No. 129, and was not the original recipient of it. In fact, however, by far the most likely possibility is that both Texts #2 and #4, Letters No. 129 and No. 130, were addressed to Nicolas de Clamanges, rather than merely forwarded to him and in some way not referred to (though this latter possibility cannot be completely excluded). This conclusion is supported by other references in the letters. For example, it is consistent with the forms of address used to the recipients of the letters. In Text #2 (No. 129), these are vir eloquentissime (ll. 1-2); frater carissime (l. 9); frater peramantissime (l. 83); dulcissime frater (l. 87); and vir clarissime (l. 97). In Text #4 (No. 130), the forms of address are consistent and similar: dilectissime frater (l. 1); frater mi atque

every field. Jean defends the value of poetical study by prose writers by demonstrating, by citations from his works, that Cicero cited poets frequently, and that he

magister (l. 61). In Text #6 (No. 132), definitely addressed to Nicolas, they are: vir egregie (l. 2); Nicolae mi, . . . dulcissime frater et magister (l. 45); Peroptime frater, . . . colende Nicolae mi (ll. 51-52); and frater quampercare (l. 56).

In each letter it is clear that the recipient: (1) is a friend of Jean's; (2) is eloquent; and (3) is also addressed with great respect. This consistency might be due to the fact that the recipient of each was the same person (although by itself it does not prove it, of course).

Furthermore, the requests Jean de Montreuil makes of each recipient to respond to Ambrogio are consistent with the theory that Nicolas received each one. In Text #2 (Letter No. 129), the recipient is asked to crush Ambrogio with a response (ll. 87-96). In Text #4 (Letter No. 130), the recipient is asked in a much more polite, imploring fashion, as though he has not yet written. This indicates that the recipients are probably the same, the first letter having not succeeded in stimulating an answer. This is made all the more probable, since the recipient of Text #4 is called a follower of both Cicero (the subject of No. 130) and of Vergil (dealt with only in No. 129):

. . . ac Tullium Maronemque, duces tuos, . . .
defenditote . . . (ll. 69-70)

Finally, all this is consistent with the fact that no letter responding to Ambrogio exists in the only published collection of Nicolas' letters, that of Lydius. From Text #6 (Letter No. 132), it seems clear that Nicolas has not written anything yet, since Ambrogio is able still to assert that Nicolas would support his side, yet refers only to conversations:

. . . et suo vellet in errore persistere, sese de te fortissimum faciendo, quod, meam deserendo partem, sue opinioni, cum te alias, sicut dicit, in ista materia audierit, irrefragabiliter adherebis. (p. 195, ll. 32-35)

Ambrogio no doubt felt safe, since, not only had Clamanges clearly not responded yet (this is clear from the even more

praised the study of poetry itself. Finally, Cicero also compared the study of poetry to that of rhetoric and of

plaintive appeal for support from Jean in ll. 56-64), but had also left Paris (l. 52).

In conclusion: The most likely possibility is that Jean addressed Texts #2 and #4 to Nicolas de Clamanges.

This raises, of course, the further question: To whom was Text #5 addressed? It is to the iudex of the debate, a role which Nicolas was to play several years later in the quarrel between Gontier Col and Jean de Montreuil. Clearly, it could not be to Nicolas this time. This seems clear, not only from the confusion of roles (pars and iudex, as Jean makes clear to Gontier in No. 144, as we have seen, had very distinct roles) which would have resulted, but from the text of No. 131 itself. In it, Jean refers to Ambrogio not as a friend (as he is referred to in Text #2, No. 129, ll. 104-06, and obviously considered by Ambrogio according to Text #6), but as exilium . . . ligurem quendam gebelinum (Text #5, l. 2). Nicolas de Clamanges' position as literary mentor is probably referred to when Jean tells the recipient of Text #5 that he is asking him to be judge only because another is absent, amico cuidam meo absenti, quem post te litis huius intercepte puto iudicem potio-rem (ll. 2-3). That is, Nicolas (who, we recall, had not written, as Jean had asked him to, and therefore was not a participant in the debate) possibly not being present (we know he left Paris 16 November 1397), Jean turns to another. Jean would seem to refer to letters by at least one other friend in this debate: (Vale, et quam potens calamus, frater, tuus in amicos dicentibus fuerit, . . ., ll. 12-3) but this could refer to Ambrogio's letters (though the rather distant reference to him as ligurem quendam gebelinum in l. 2 makes this unlikely.)

So there were other texts in this debate, besides those of Ambrogio, Jean, and Nicolas, which we do not now possess!

oratory, showing that they were closely related. Jean compiles an impressive list of evidence to support his contention (pp. 188-89, ll. 27-53).

Jean turns next to the defense of the study of Vergil. Calling Vergil regem nostrum (not only "king" to recipient--probably Nicolas--as well as to Jean, but also no doubt "king" of those who cultivate eloquence, of the humanists of Paris), Jean praises Vergil as the height of rhetoric and eloquence. Vergil is master of all the crafts of oratory and speech (ll. 54-71). In orationibus suis (his poems? or the speeches of his characters?) he shows himself to have been a true orator:

De orationibus suis quid dicam? In quibus omne oratoris officium explicuit, et ad extremum executus est unguem quatuor eloquentie genera, ut ait Macrobius, immo decem rethorum qui apud Athenas floruerunt stilos amplectendo. . . . (p. 189, ll. 71-74)

Thus Jean defends Vergil's preeminence in the area of ingenium, and declares that Cicero would have praised and defended Vergil, had he but known his major works (p. 189, ll. 74-79, 53-63).

Jean ends this letter with an appeal to the recipient (as another admirer of Vergil) to respond to and defeat Ambrogio's arguments (pp. 189-90, ll. 87-96). The matter is so important that Jean says he is unwilling to receive Ambrogio back into friendship until he has

"recanted":

Et ut finem faciam, tametsi extra sacram theologiam errorum revocatio locum non habeat, numquam tamen indulgebo ut in amicitie particulam recipiatur nostre, quousque quantum postulat res et casus exigit celsitudo, revocaverit solemniter adeo impudenter attemptata.
(p. 190, ll. 103-06)

As we shall see, there seems to have been no reply to Jean or rejoinder to Ambrogio forthcoming from the pen of Nicolas (if that is the recipient) in response to Jean's plea.

In Text #3, a reply to Jean, Ambrogio apparently quoted from Cicero's De inventione out of context to try to "prove" that Cicero thought it better not to study rhetoric or eloquence at all:

Ecce bonus ille vir et gratissimus Maronis alumnus . . . ad Tullium sese converterit, et unius ex eiusdem Ciceronis propositione seu oratione, sententiavit, et dixit apparere, et elici posse, ac concludi expedientius, ac utilius fore, rethorica seu eloquentia evo iugi caruisse, quam illa uti et eam praticare. . . .

. . . 'Si quis, obmissis rectissimis atque honestissimis studiis rationis et officii, consumit omnem operam in exercitatione dicendi, is inutilis sibi et perniciosus patrie civis alitur.' Ex quo, ut obstinatus, est, inferre hoc modo nequaquam erubescit: 'Cum plures,' arguit iste, 'mali quam boni sint mortales, et oratores conveniat esse bonos, per predicta ergo,' concludit ille, 'eloquentiam non expedit esse, aut rethores.'
(pp. 191-92, ll. 3-11, 14-19)

Jean's reply (Text #4) points out the real purport of this comment of Ambrogio's. As Jean recognizes, Ambrogio's

remark really challenges the study of eloquence by anyone:

Quo tamen in modo sit aut figura, Aristocles et Aristotiles ignorarent, quoniam de regibus, medicis, iudicibus et presidentibus quibuscumque, quinimmo et sacratissime pagine professoribus, argui posset modo consimili quod est inconveniens, et concludi.
(p. 192, ll. 20-23)

Two things should be noted here. First, Ambrogio's deduction from Cicero's remarks is clearly illogical. Jean's line of defense is therefore twofold. Jean both shows briefly that Ambrogio's statement is illogical (see above), and also that Cicero's other statements reflect this fact, since elsewhere Cicero praises the study of rhetoric very highly (ll. 23-47).

Secondly, we must be reminded here again of the context of the literary debate for practice. There is no chance whatsoever, of course, that Ambrogio honestly held the opinions that are here attributed to him and which (unless Jean de Montreuil is seriously distorting his position, which is also possible) were reflected in Text #3 (now lost). The direct quotation given by Jean clearly states that Ambrogio concludes that according to Cicero and to the fact that "there are more bad men than good," neither eloquence nor orators, rhetoricians, should exist, "eloquentiam non expedit esse, aut rethores" (l. 19, emphasis added). There is no evidence that Ambrogio's

interest in the cultivation of style flagged at all between the time of this debate and the later one already discussed.

Clearly Ambrogio's position is one for purposes of debate only. It does give Jean a good opportunity to "defend" the study of eloquence in the rest of his letter to Nicolas. But, because of the limits of Ambrogio's disagreement (i.e. because the disagreement is put as a question of how to interpret Cicero), Jean is able to establish his point by further appealing to the authority of Cicero himself, by showing that (besides the illogicality of Ambrogio's statement) Cicero elsewhere expresses sharply different opinions about the usefulness of eloquence.

And, of course, it goes without saying that no one who wanted seriously to condemn the cultivation of eloquence would quote Cicero to this effect, or rely upon Cicero as an "authority." The argument as to the "morality" of studying eloquence only touched upon by Ambrogio's remarks, is not really about Christian "morality" in the sense in which those writers who genuinely attacked the cultivation of eloquence or the study of poetry meant, as we shall see. It boils down to a question of how to interpret Cicero:

Et, o Marce Tulli eternum colende, ergo ad contradictionis metam per hunc novicium reduceris? (p. 192, ll. 23-24)

As we shall see, Ambrogio is not a man to shrink from asserting both poles of a contradiction! He appears to have a penchant for contentiousness for its own sake. Nevertheless, the whole context of this literary debate should warn us from taking any assertions of Ambrogio's as representing his real convictions (even if Jean were transcribing these assertions correctly).

Text #4 concludes with another plea by Jean for his recipient (probably Clamanges) to respond to Ambrogio and defeat his presumptuous arguments. This appeal (ll. 60-76) is not only longer than the similar passage in Text #2; it is also in a more imploring tone. Apparently the recipient has not yet responded at all to Jean's first request for aid, contained in Text #2 (if the recipient of both be the same person). Jean asks him to defend not only Cicero (the subject of this letter and of Ambrogio's second missive) but also Vergil, who figured only in Text #2:

. . . ac Tullium Maronemque, duces tuos . . .
defenditote, . . . (p. 193, ll. 69-71)

He requests a literary tour de force, a final crushing blow to Ambrogio's arguments. The recipient's rhetorical skills,

praised in strong terms (though briefly) in Text #2:

Quasobres, dulcissime frater, . . . armis quibus te strenue munivit is qui tot bella, bone Deus, et horrida bella, nunc hos nunc illos victores seu victos, prout libitum fit, faciendo, et

quo non fuit prestantior alter
ere ciere viros et Martem accendere cantu,
serves, protegas, et defenses, et istum procacem
. . . pedagogum invadas, protinus, ac prosternas, et
mittem per omnia reddas, ut ait Comicus, sicut ovem.
(Text #2, pp. 189-90, ll. 87-96)

are exalted even further in this second letter of Jean's:

Sed quoniam eos frustra ab Inferis evoco, ad te venio, ad te recurra, ad te confugio, frater mi atque magister, supplex orans: per se quid ars ista tibi honoris, delectamenti, aut commodi contulerit laturave est, . . . huic laudatissime rethorices tanto spretori . . . rescribito, et ad idem gnaviter agendum, per omnes penes qui te sunt, qui e Castalie fonte biberunt gustaruntque ex aromatico mellitoque rethorice dulcedinis liquore, elabora . . . ac festina. . . (p. 193, ll. 60-68)

Clearly such a request would make no sense unless the recipient of such a response--Ambrogio--would be impressed by an eloquent, Latinate riposte. So, again, we are forced to conclude that Ambrogio's disparagement of rhetoric was for the purposes of debate, and in no sense "serious." It was, that is, clearly within the limits of disagreement which these humanists permitted each other.

As noted at the beginning of this appendix, Text #5 puts the whole quarrel in the context of a literary debate very specifically. In addition it reveals that: (1)

another iudex, clearly not Clamanges, was chosen for the quarrel; and (2) as noted above (n. 4) that at least one other participant, besides Jean and Ambrogio, had written texts in this debate, which are herewith submitted to the "judge" (unless, as seems unlikely, the amicos of l. 12 are Jean and Ambrogio--see n. 4 again).

Text #6, the letter "Portentuosum prodigium" to Nicolas de Clamanges, is significant primarily for the fact that it names other interested parties in this literary "debate": Jacques de Nouvion (l. 8, regio notario, and l. 36, nostrum de Noviano), and Jean Gerson and Jean Courte-cuisse (" . . . quam plures multiscios, duos illos sacris in litteris antistites et eloquentie sydera Ecclesie Parisiensis. videlicet plusquam meritum cancellarium, et alium cui Breviscoxe est nomen, . . ." ll. 36-38). Ambrogio apparently insisted that the "contradition" of which Jean complained in Text #4 (that is, in making Cicero, the master of rhetoric, attack the idea of eloquence, ll. 23-24, quoted above), was in fact Cicero's fault, not his own. However, when pressed by all these listeners to give proof for his view, Ambrogio must have balked, saying only that Clamanges would support his view were he present (Nicolas has already left Paris--conveniently for

Ambrogio, no doubt--l. 52). Pushed to the wall, that is, Ambrogio refused to admit defeat, declaring that even the testimony of Salutati, recognized no doubt by all as the leading humanist of Italy at this time, would not budge him from his convictions (ll. 39-44).

The debate is clearly drawing to its close, though without an admission of defeat from the stubborn Milanese. Jean makes one final plea for a response from Nicolas, which alone might be able to put an end to Ambrogio's pretensions, since the latter's main defense is that the absent Nicolas would support his position according to what he has told Ambrogio in the past (p. 195, ll. 33-35; p. 196, ll. 55-64). Again it appears clear that Nicolas has not yet written in the debate (Jean begins his final plea with demum, l. 58).

Importance for Quarrel of Roman

It is clear from this debate that our French humanists did not shrink from confronting questions in their debates which challenged the very premises of their cultivation of classical literature and eloquence. Ambrogio challenges the appropriateness of the humanist study of poetry, then of the study and pursuit of eloquence itself. However the context of the literary debate, that it was

carried on among the humanists themselves, set definite limits to the disagreement. Again, as we have seen, Ambrogio's positions in this debate could not have been held by him in reality.

The crucial subject matter of this debate raises another question. If our writers wanted literary exercise only, any topic at all could be picked for discussion and dispute, in theory. Now, exercitium was no doubt an important goal of these discussions. But this debate suggests that our humanists showed an eagerness to discuss (among themselves) important and even "live" questions. As Chapter II and the following show, there was genuine disagreement between humanists and others over the appropriateness of the study of classical literature, over whether the study of pagan literature had any place in the activities of a Christian.

The subject matter of the next debate, that between Laurent de Premierfait and Jean de Montreuil of about the year 1405, raises this question even more sharply.

B. Debate #2. Laurent de Premierfait and
Jean de Montreuil

Ornato dates this debate in or about the year 1405, relying upon evidence in the letters surrounding Jean de Montreuil's contributions in his original compilation of

letters.⁴ From the letters extant (both by Jean) it seems clear that the real debate involved two letters only, one each from Laurent de Premierfait and from Jean himself.

A list of the texts follows.

Text #1--Letter of Laurent de Premierfait to Jean de Montreuil. Not extant. This letter is clearly referred to by Jean as being sent to a third party along with his own letter "Is Profecto" (see Text #2 below).

e . . . huius occasione invexit in me Laurntius, prout est exemplum interclusum. Ad quem non distuli responsum remittere, quod sequitur: Is profecto etc. (p. 42, ll. 3-5)

Text #2--Letter of Jean de Montreuil to Laurent de Premierfait. Text: Edited in Ornato ed., No. 30, pp. 43-45.

Text #3--Letter of Jean de Montreuil to an unknown recipient. Text: edited in Ornato, ed., No. 29, pp. 42-43.

I believe this debate should be studied here, even though the date projected for it by Ornato is several years later than that of the Quarrel of the Roman. It might be argued that the positions held by Jean de Montreuil in 1405 could have been very different from those of three or more years earlier, and therefore of doubtful relevance to the study of the Quarrel of the Roman. More importantly, it could be argued that there is a danger of using

⁴Ornato, Jean Muret., p. 238, n. 24.

evidence from later sources to explain earlier ones. The danger is that of circular reasoning. If, for example, his participation in the Quarrel of the Roman of 1400-1401 led Jean to alter his opinions in any way, it would be illogical to use evidence of these altered opinions obtained from a source later than the Quarrel in order to set the context for the Quarrel itself.

Conscious of these dangers, I still believe the examination of this later debate can be justified. First, the conclusions from this debate which are relevant to examination of the Quarrel of the Roman are not fundamentally different from those of earlier debates (where they are different, these differences will be carefully examined). Second, so few literary debates have survived, and so little is known of the literary activities and attitudes of these men who were involved in the Quarrel of the Roman, that we are forced to examine what does remain even if the conclusions we come to must remain somewhat tentative as a result.

Occasion for the debate was Jean de Montreuil's having the ten laws of Lycurgus the Spartan which Justinus preserved in his Epitome Trogi carved over the door of his home. This evidence of Jean's devotion to classical studies roused the doubts of Laurent de Premierfait, who wrote

Text #1 to Jean in protest. As preserved in Jean's response (Text #2), Laurent's main points were (1) that Jean should turn from classical to the study of Christian literature,

Ego . . . de profundis monitionibus necnon consiliis salubribus tuis, ingentes ago gratias, quibus siquidem preceptis a secularibus litteris ad divinas me revocas. . . . (p. 43, ll. 3-6)

and (2) that "Jhesu nichil sit commune Ligurgo" (l. 9), that there is a radical contradiction between the study of pagan and of Christian thought and letters.

In his response Jean is extremely careful to narrowly restrict the area of disagreement between Laurent and himself. He begins with praise and refers to those matters on which he is in agreement with Laurent. He declares himself a grateful pupil (discipulus, l. 1) of Laurent's, and the latter his preceptore (l. 2). He makes it clear that he does not disagree with Laurent's suggestion that he study Christian literature. He calls this advice profundis monitionibus and consiliis salubribus tuis (l. 4). We may suspect Jean of distorting Laurent's meaning somewhat here. What Laurent clearly asks is that he turn from the study of classical literature to Christian studies. The point is, however, that Jean sees no contradiction between them! He even praises Laurent's style by comparison to that of Peter (a Christian) or of Persius

(a pagan):

. . . me revocas non minus vehementi quam altiloquo sermone, ut si Symon Petrus ipse foret aut Persius, nil addere viderentur. (p. 43, ll. 5-7)

The point where Jean disagrees, therefore, is Laurent's radical rejection of Lycurgus. Laurent has called Lycurgus' words "steriles nugas et inania verba" (l. 8).

With this Jean cannot agree:

In quo, si pace magistri mutire audeat scholaris exiguus, non sum tecum, sed permaxime dissentio, . . . (p. 43, ll. 9-11)

Jean's argument relies upon emphasizing the similarities between classical philosophy, in this case, as embodied in the laws of Lycurgus, and Christian morality. Both Old and New Testaments urge one to live "et civiliter et moraliter" (l. 12). But such a life is exactly what the Spartans, influenced by these laws, were famous for:

Sed quod Ligurgus civiliter et moraliter, ut dictum est, immo bene beateque vivere docuerit, Lacedemoniorum mores ac instituta hactenus demonstrarunt, quorum auctoritati pro tempore nullam prepono nationem. (p. 43, ll. 16-19)

Jean therefore criticizes Laurent for condemning thus the Spartans along with their lawgiver:

Et tu eos, Laurenti, cum sui legislatoris damnatione vilissima, erroneos vocitas atque cecos? Pone hanc, Laurenti, pone a tuis sensibus opinionem, et que tottot insignes genuit viros regionem adeo floccipendere noli,

ac tua sententia, quod iustissime idem vetabat Ligurgus, damnare non auditos! Non enim est, crede michi, quod a sque presumptione et insania falsa premissa eructasse potueris, . . . (pp. 43-44, ll. 19-25)

Having thus stated his disagreement strongly, Jean closes the first part of his letter by again stressing how much he agrees with Laurent's praise of Christian literature:

. . . si dempsero tamen que de evangelicis et sacrosanctis sermonibus abunde suggeris; quequidem submissius tota mente ac tota veneratione complector, hereamque usque in consummationem seculi. . . (p. 44, ll. 25-27)

In the second part of his letter Jean quotes at length from Cicero on the virtues of philosophy, on which the Laws of Lycurgus rest (ll. 31-45). These virtues, Jean holds, are also among those demanded by the laws of Christ:

I ergo, et tu, tam canonicus, legem Christi hiis carere predicatis, predica: quod etiam Sophie professori minime sanum esset. (p. 44, ll. 46-47)

In passing, it should be noted that Jean does not feel compelled to justify appealing to the authority of Cicero. This could have easily been done, of course, perhaps most obviously by interpreting Cicero's philosophia allegorically as Boethius' Lady Philosophy. But once again we must be aware of the obvious limits to this debate. Laurent de Premierfait, a noted humanist and secretary himself, is not even bringing the study of classical literature into question as sharply as did Ambrogio dei Migli in

the last debate studied. Certainly he is no Pietro da Siena or Giovanni Domenici. Though his original text is lacking, Laurent (who at this very time was possibly engaged in translating Cicero's de senectute into French)⁵ clearly did not bring into question the study of classical literature itself. Probably his dispute with Jean de Montreuil was limited to his questioning Jean's carving pagan laws, rather than those of Christianity, above his door.

Just as the Quarrel of the Roman reveals a sharp disagreement as to the appropriateness of the study of poetry not Christian on its surface among men who, in other contexts, all cultivate the study of classical language and style, so even within the circle of humanists relative disagreements could arise as to the forms the admiration of the classics should and should not take, without there being a doubt as to the usefulness of pursuing the study of Latin literature in general. Jean was probably well aware of Laurent's special interest in Cicero,

⁵See R. H. Lucas, "Medieval French Translations of the Latin Classics to 1500," Speculum, XLV (1970), p. 226 and esp. n. 102.

and adduced these long citations from him in the knowledge that this was an authority Laurent would be hard pressed not to accept.

The final paragraph of the letter is especially significant. In it, Jean reveals clearly his attitude that, for a man of the active life, religious matters do not and need not occupy more than a certain amount of time. He does not feel compelled in the least to devote all his time and attention to them. In fact, he goes even further and gently mocks Laurent for the conclusions which logically follow from Laurent's thesis, that one should turn away from classical literature to Christian altogether.

Jean reveals that he is quite content to follow his Church ritual--chanting the hours and attending the established ceremonies-- suo tempore, at the time allotted to them. We have already seen how, in Letter No. 161, "Perplexitate nimis," to Gontier Col, Jean reminded Gontier that the duties of an ecclesiastic such as himself were time-consuming enough:

Parumne insuper, vir discrete, iugi aut oneris autumas
revolutione diurna nocturnaue horas psallere can-
onicas? Aut nichil esse ducis obsequiis continuo
divinis insistere? (No. 161, p. 233, ll. 222-24)

In the context of rebuking Gontier for complaining that his job and family responsibilities kept him from study,

Jean reminded him that ecclesiastical duties also take time (see Appendix 2). In almost the same words, Jean tells Laurent here several years later that he feels he does enough in this way, perquamsatis:

Perquamsatis michi fuerit, Laurenti, horas suo tempore psallere canonicas et ecclesiasticis insistere obsequiis institutis. (p. 44, ll. 49-51)

Somewhat sarcastically he says that he--Laurent--is welcome to pray, read sacred literature, even to fast, as much as he wants to:

Tu vero quoad voles, orabis, aut Apocalipsim contem-
plaberis prophetas vitasque patrum vel cantica, agros
tuos et pecudes prorsus negligendo, ac avenarum excus-
sionem tuarum; immo, si libuerit, esum pretermittes
nil impedit prepositus atque potum. (p. 44, ll. 52-
56)

Jean points out that this will involve Laurent in "neglecting your fields and flocks utterly, and the threshing of your grain." Perhaps he means that Laurent will have to leave off the practice of poetry, if he turns totally to religious pursuits (the two activities correspond to Eclogues and Georgics). In this way, of course, Laurent could set up a contradiction between Christian and pagan literature by spending his time exclusively on the former. However, it would be a contradiction only for Laurent; Jean feels no compulsion to follow him in this.

Jean asks Laurent to respond to him as soon as he can:⁶

Vale, et meo consilio satiras age serius, aut tempus
tius et sepius responsionibus replicare curato.
(p. 44, ll. 48-49)

We are once again reminded that this is a literary debate, which Jean will be glad to continue with his friend.

Jean included both of these texts in a letter to another (unnamed) friend. Although Jean is writing this friend in order to try to find another job rather than primarily to discuss literary matters, it is clear that the recipient of these documents is being sent them because of his interest in eloquence. He is a practitioner of the classical style himself, one whom Jean has always found to be a good example,

cui [i.e. to Jean himself] hactenus provocasti salivam
et cotem ad eruditius scribendum prebuiisti quam utiliter
recognoscis. (p. 43, ll. 10-12)

Jean also expects his recipient will also know of Lycurgus' laws and their source, Justinus, 'prout tue sedulitati non ambigo notum esse."

Jean's main concern, however, is to find a more

⁶Satiras age serius is cryptic. Perhaps Jean means that Laurent is in a contradictory position (in ll. 46-47, immediately preceding these words, the lines beginning "I ergo" quoted above). Or perhaps he wants Laurent to write a "satire" (Horatian, a didactic poem) in response?

tranquil situation somewhere, and it is for this reason that he writes his correspondent here:

Vides igitur, quam minime sim quietus scribere, nunc ad te, nunc ad hunc, nunc ad illum, illum et illum, rursus ad illum maxime, ut inter hos turbinum fluctus communis rei huius regni, ubi fas versum atque nefas, portum michi quempiam inveniam, et qui nichil ex ingenio quit, exercitio valeret aliquid prepositus. . . .
(p. 43, ll. 6-10)

Importance for the Quarrel of the Roman

Text #3 illustrates the continuing importance of friendships to the Parisian humanists, and the fact that these friendships ultimately depended upon the careers--the economic activity--of these men. It illustrates the fact that the cultivation and furtherance of classical style, necessary for their careers, prompted the acquisition of friends with similar interests with whom one could practice. These relationships, clearly discernible in other debates, are in evidence here also.

But this late debate also contains some unique elements. In it we see that among these humanists the whole question of the contradiction between the study of pagan literature and Christianity could be the subject for literary discussion.

Several aspects of this interesting fact should be noted especially. First, it appears that this question

was of particular interest to these men. In the first debate discussed in this appendix (that involving Ambrogio dei Migli, Nicolas de Clamanges, Jean, and Laurent) Ambrogio had also "questioned" the study of eloquence in a somewhat different way a full eight years earlier. And the matter of the contradiction between Christian and non-Christian culture is also brought up (together with the question of classical eloquence) in the Quarrel of the Romar. Finally, it is raised in the present debate, about the year 1405. Why the repetition?

One reasonable explanation for the recurrence of the same debate topic among these humanists could be that this was a question which these men had to face in reality. To a greater or lesser extent, there was always a suspicion of humanist literary activity in some quarters. And even men nominally committed to the spread of the new eloquence, men such as Jean Gerson, could be led (under certain conditions) to attack the study of poetry in a manner which could also be interpreted to imply condemnation of classical studies. The position of the French humanists, then, was somewhat unstable, perhaps at times even precarious. At any event they needed to have clearly in their minds convincing justifications and rationalizations fit for any occasion, with which they could fend off attacks

upon their literary and professional activity. Engaging in limited "debates" with one another--an activity they needed in order to make progress in eloquence in any case--could help to arm them against attacks by detractors of poetry or pagan literature.

Second, we ought to recognize the "limits" of the debate. Laurent de Premierfait does not criticize Jean's actions in earnest, as Gerson does in the Quarrel of the Roman. When Laurent advises Jean to turn away from classical to Christian literature, he does so as a man engaging in a debate over a question which no doubt interested him, but who has elected to defend a position he himself does not hold (Laurent himself being involved in translating Cicero about this time). Further, the disagreement between Jean and Laurent is clearly put in the framework of a literary "debate" by Jean's letter to his unnamed friend.

Finally, Jean de Montreuil's response to Laurent is important for what it reveals about Jean's own attitude concerning the relation of classical letters to Christianity. He sees no contradiction between them. Lycurgus' laws do not contradict Moses or Christ. Nor do they replace Christian precepts; they supplement them. Their content is fully compatible with Christian teaching.

Jean does not discuss how one should approach those areas in which contradictions arise between classical pagan and Christian ideas, so he does not develop any philosophy of how (or if) classical philosophy should be subordinated to Christian (as, for example, Petrarch does). This is obviously because Laurent does not raise these matters in the debate. Jean restricts his response to precisely the matter which Laurent has questioned. He cites an authority--Cicero--which (he no doubt feels) will carry weight with his interlocutor, but which would carry little or no weight to someone who really doubted the value of pagan literature.

With regard to the implication in Laurent's arguments, then, that one should replace the study of pagan literature with that of Christian literature, Jean's response is twofold. First, he agrees wholeheartedly with the idea of reading and cultivating the knowledge of Christian literature. Second, he does not feel compelled to spend all his time on religious matters. His job forces him to spend much time in religious ceremonies. Nowhere, he hints, is it commanded that a Christian must spend more time than that necessary for all obligations to be satisfied. This is a matter of personal choice. Laurent can spend all his time thereon if he wishes, but

this does not in the least compel Jean to do likewise. It is especially unnecessary in light of the fact that classical literature teaches precepts which (in the main, at least) are compatible with Christianity and which can offer real benefits (such as those summarized by Cicero). Jean leaves the ultimate judgment of his actions up to God:

Obmissiones suppleat utinam indulgeatque Deus, qui si severius mecum agat, scio confiteorque pessime michi esset. (Text #2, p. 44, ll. 51-52)

But his sarcastic suggestion to Laurent that he become in effect a monk shows that Jean feels no duty to devote more time to religious practices than he does.

C. Debate #3. Jean de Montreuil and Gontier Col

This "debate" really consists of one surviving letter only, from Jean to Gontier, and implies the existence of an earlier letter from Gontier to Jean. It is not a "debate" in the true sense over literary matters, but concerns Gontier's accusation against Jean that he has unduly retained a letter of Cicero's that was lent him. I discuss it briefly here, both for the sake of completeness⁷ and for the one or two conclusions which can be

⁷This is the last debate mentioned in the list published by Ezio Ornato, Jean Muret, p. 233.

drawn from it.

Text #1--Letter from Gontier Col to Jean de Montreuil. Not extant. This letter is referred to explicitly by Jean in Text #2, l. 3; litteras tuas.

Text #2--Letter from Jean de Montreuil to Gontier Col.

Text: edited by Ornato, No. 111, pp. 164-66.

In Text #1 Gontier Col⁸ accuses Jean of having kept a letter of Cicero's (Text #2, ll. 27-28) too long (ll. 32-33), and in addition of having done this furtim and infideliter (ll. 27-28), not accidentally. Jean replies, basically, that he has been most unjustly accused, in an unfriendly fashion; that his reputation is pure and that he never acts in this fashion; and that, finally, it was Nicolas de Clamanges who had the letter of Cicero's, having taken it from Jean's house where he had stopped by by chance upon receiving some letter from Ambrogio dei Migli:⁹

⁸The recipient is here called "Galthere" (ll. 17, 40, 42, etc.). Ornato identifies this "Walter" as Gontier Col. See Ornato ed., p. 369, "Galterus"; Jean Muret, pp. 43, 234.

⁹Though unimportant in the present content, it should be noted that this identification is only tentative; see Ornato ed., p. 365, "Ambrosinus."

. . . noster de Clamengiis, in Ambrosini receptione litterarum casualiter erat mecum, qui predictam, Tullii epistulam . . . asportavit, . . . (p. 166, ll. 48-50)

In addition, Gontier apparently berated Jean for trying to monopolize Nicolas de Clamanges (who lives, Jean admits, only a mile from him " . . . a me pene per unum miliare non distaret," p. 166, ll. 53-54). Jean denies that Nicolas is constantly at his home, not more than three or four times a month at most, though it is true that Jean does try to learn from Nicolas as much as he can.

Importance for Quarrel of the Roman

Two points should be noted in regard to this debate. Each of them really only supplements deductions reached with fuller evidence through examination of lengthier debates, however.

First and most importantly, the letter of Jean's is our clearest indication yet of the rhetorical exaggeration involved in "literary debates." The harsh tone and language used by Jean in his quarrels with Ambrogio dei Migli, as we have seen, raised the question even in Ezio Ornato's mind as to whether the debate were literary or showed real hatred. We deduced, from other internal evidence, that the debate was largely literary, but may have reflected real disagreements. In any case, we

concluded, Ambrogio clearly went beyond the bounds of friendship; just as clearly, Jean received him back in after a fierce attack.

In all other debates, however, the close friendship between Jean and Gontier Col has been emphasized. All the more significant, then is the tone of the present letter. Gontier is addressed as nugifator (l. 3); perniciose et vafre (l. 24); maledice confectator (l.47); terms similar or identical to those Jean will use against Ambrogio a few years later in "De intimatione." It is evident, then, that even in this latter diatribe an element of exaggeration for literary effect cannot be excluded.

In conclusion, the use of such strong language and hostile tone in purely "literary" debates, about matters which did not, to all appearances, harm the relationships among the men involved at all, only confirms the existence of a sense of "solidarity" among humanists.

Second, this letter of Jean's makes clear once again that friendships (in this case, that of Gontier and Jean for Nicolas de Clamanges) had literary relations at their basis; it is a literary jealousy which leads Gontier to complain that Nicolas is spending too much time with Jean. In fact, Nicolas did visit Jean, both to discuss

a letter from Ambrogio, and to pick up a letter of Cicero's. And, of course, the letter from Gontier was prompted by the matter of Cicero's letter in the first place.