CENTRO
PER LA STORIA DELL'UNIVERSITÀ DI PADOVA

EARLY MODERN UNIVERSITIES AND THE SCIENCES

Editor
VITTORIA FEOLA

FrancoAngeli

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Preface

*Filiberto Agostini**

Early Modern Universities and the Sciences is the result of the fruitful collaboration between the University of Padua, its Departmental Center for the History of the University, and Scientiae, a vibrant scholarly community devoted to the study of knowledge production practices in the early modern era. The volume addresses issues of teaching and reforms at a number of early modern European Universities, about some of which not much has been done yet. Thus, our book makes a significant contribution to the history of Universities by beginning to fill those gaps, as well as by exploiting a wealth of primary sources that can rarely be found in traditional histories of the Academe. Indeed, the diversity and richness of its documentary apparatus is such that hard choices were necessary when dealing with their many languages. Readers will necessarily come from the international scholarly community; as such, I hope their attitude will be one of initial surprise and later understanding. Translating too much would have impaired the reading flow and would have caused the loss of meaning in an instance too many.

Early Modern Universities and the Sciences has the ambition to surprise readers for two main reasons.

First, it aims to provide an informative overview of teaching practices across early modern European Universities. In so doing, it challenges several previously accepted analyses, and supplies new perspectives on the increasingly blurred differences between logic teaching in Catholic and Protestant institutions. This should prompt further research about the substance behind confessional wars of words.

Secondly, it shows that reforms were just an important part of academic life in many European universities as teaching was. In other words, it looks as though university teaching and reforms were two sides of the same double-edged sword, that of the penetration of empirically-inclined methods into

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university research. Another way to put this can be that Renaissance scholarship found in University teaching and reforms its avenue of influence on European and other societies. The history of the institutionalisation of knowledge is, therefore, of primary importance as far as the very identity of the West is concerned.

Early Modern Universities and the Sciences is a collection of essays that uses the history of the Universities to contribute to many different fields of learning, in a spirit quite akin to those Scientiae practitioners of the past, albeit it sternly looks to the future.

Early Modern Universities and the Sciences in context

Vittoria Feola

In April 2017 the University of Padua hosted the sixth annual Scientiae conference (scientiae.co.uk). This collection of select, re-worked proceedings stems from that experience. The goals of *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* are, first, to contribute to current historiographical work on the institutionalisation of knowledge in the early modern period. It does so by considering a number of universities, some of which may be regarded as being "from the periphery" of early modern Western Europe, such as Uppsala, Vienna, to an extent Coimbra (due to the very low rate of Coimbra-educated men moving on to more Western universities). Secondly, *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* aims to shed new light onto little-known aspects of early modern university reforms. One cannot tackle university teaching and research without the perennial need for self-reform, on the one hand, and the tensions arising from externally-imposed reforms, on the other hand. Furthermore, *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* considers the relationships between universities and other teaching- and research institutions which made up early modern "higher education systems" without sharing the same legal status as the universities with which they were in contact, such as hospitals (the cases of Paris and Vienna), botanical gardens, museums, observatories, and similar repositories of collections. Thus, *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* seeks to widen our understanding of the dynamics of knowledge production, preservation, transmission, and circulation in early modern Europe.

This book fits with the current literature in our field; in particular, it dovetails neatly with Mordechai Feingold and Navarro Brotons's edited collection, *Universities and science in the early modern period* (Springer 2006). This book refers to that in the title, while deliberately using the Latin word "scientiae" which implies far more layered meanings than just "science". On the other hand, we see it as a step further from their collection of proceedings, not only because we deal with different universities, but because we consider

knowledge as a more complex and multi-layered phenomenon. Moreover, the very word "scientiae" signals that this is a "Scientiae book", that is, a book stemming from and addressing, though not exclusively, our ever growing Scientiae community, scientiae.co.uk. The obvious competitor titles are, first of all, those from the Oxford History of Universities Series edited by Feingold. *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* would provide complementary scholarship to those volumes, by drawing attention to a set of universities which have not yet been considered there, at least not from these angles. Feingold and Navarro Brotons's *Universities and science in the early modern period* has dealt with the sciences in university teaching without, however, covering the same geographical stretch as the one proposed here. Besides, nearly half the contributions in *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* are devoted to university reforms, which sets it apart from the Feingold-Navarro book. Richard Kirwan's *Scholarly self-fashioning and community in the early modern university* (Ashgate 2013) is a recent work in the field, albeit with a special focus on self-fashioning which is not touched on in *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences*. Similar considerations may be made with regard to Sari Kivisto's *The vices of learning: morality and knowledge at early modern universities* (Brill 2014). Last but not least, *Universities in early modern Europe*, edited by H. de Rydder-Simoens is yet another reference in the field which *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* can profitably complement with fresh scholarship.

The wider academic context in which *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* sits, is the field of early modern universities and the institutionalisation of knowledge, though with a different spin thanks to a multidisciplinary approach. It is intellectual history rewound. While most works focus on universities on one hand, and knowledge on the other hand, our book seeks to bring out the manifold nuances of early modern knowledge as a set of intertwined "scientiae" in the process of being taught and experimented with. Instead of talking of a monolithic epistemological and legal phenomenon, our book pays attention to the many components of learning as they were regarded in the early modern period, namely, all-inter-related. Scientiae authors come from a variety of backgrounds. What makes the success of Scientiae as a learned organisation, of our annual Scientiae conference as a forum for truly challenging cross-disciplinary discussions, and of Scientiae authors as differently-engaging writers, is the simple fact that, by coming from backgrounds as far apart, institutionally speaking, as art history, legal history, political history, history of science, etc, we nevertheless manage to paint a consistent intellectual picture of the early modern worlds as they themselves understood them to be like.

The range of topics which *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* covers is thematically divided into two main fields. First, the book discusses

actual teaching practices in relation to university curricula. Secondly, the book focuses on a string of reforms taking place not only at universities but in other university-connected institutions, such as hospitals, botanic gardens, museums, observatories, with the aim of giving a holistic framework in which to consider the broader, inter-related issues of the institutionalisation of knowledge on the one hand, and the perennial needs for reform, on the other hand.

Elena Taddei's *Princely erudition, universities and the Republic of Letters as instruments of networking: the Este, Dukes of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio, and the Holy Roman Empire* allows readers to enlarge their vantage point within the broader Central European Imperial framework. In the author's words: «This paper aims to show how princely erudition, the exchange of knowledge, and especially the support of language-learning stays and university attendance were used by the Este as survival strategies and instruments in the power play at the periphery of the Empire». During the sixteenth century, the members of the well-established Este dynasty in the Po valley in Italy were troubled by different problems, such as the struggle with the Pope at the beginning of the century, the unsolved question of precedence over the Medici family, and the loss of Ferrara due to the devolution of the papal feud. Therefore, it is understandable that the Este needed help and support from all over the Holy Roman Empire to solve these problems, and they earned the former especially due to an extraordinary system of networking and cultural transfer. An important role in these long-lasting relationships with the princes of the North was taken by the princely erudition and the exchange of knowledge at the court. In addition to the standard aspects of princely erudition, such as a large library, an impressive art collection, and patronage for artists and erudites, there were other survival strategies the Este adopted. One was to learn the language of their German friends and supporters, who might advocate and patronize the requests of the Este concerning their fiefs and the precedence, especially at the Diet and at the imperial court. A further strategy was to support the frequent requests for learning-stays for Italian and study-stays at the University in Ferrara, which this dynasty founded and patronized. Employing German academics, taking in German students and graduates, and supporting cultural exchange and transfer with the North were strategies the Este adopted for building a network of supporters on the other side of the Alps in the power play on the Italian peninsula. Taddei's essay shows the political role which the Este family assigned the University of Ferrara in their diplomatic dealings with the Habsburg Empire. Thus, she demonstrates that the history of universities illustrates the so-called politics of knowledge in the early modern period.

Manuela Mayer's *Organizing history: Gottfried Bessel (1672-1749) and his Chronicon Gottwicense* carries on concentrating onto the Empire

by means of a case study. Gottfried Bessel is known for his *Chronicon Gottwicense*, a handbook on historical auxiliary sciences and the first one of its kind in Austria. The preparation and editing of a huge scholarly book usually entails active collaboration among contributors, the failing of which might lead to major nuisances. «In the case of Bessel, he managed to turn a major catastrophe into a chance to create such an environment not only for his own studies but also for others». He facilitated important improvements to the archive, library, and collections in Göttweig Abbey. The abbey school was right there next door. In this way, objects from the abbey collections, as well as medieval manuscripts from the library, or documents from the archive found their way into lectures. Gottfried Bessel aimed to better the educational level of his monks, along with that of the lay people in his abbey's jurisdiction. During his second rectorship at the University of Vienna (1726-1727) the government demanded of Bessel that he formulate suggestions for a reform of studies. He passed the request on to the Faculties and asked for inputs concerning their respective curricula. Moreover, Bessel came up with a plan for a reform of secondary schools. «He had created an environment that not only made research possible, but also actively supported the development of new projects. Like no other, he had understood the interaction between education, culture, literature, and objects of investigation». On the other hand, the *Chronicon Gottwicense* shows that, in dealing with such matters, long-term reform projects depended on much more than just a single man's goodwill and energy. «The availability of a sufficient number of collaborators, adequate partners, money, and time also influence the result and could make a good enterprise fail». Mayer's essay, therefore, tackles the issues of both teaching and reforms, which can rarely be disentangled without some degree of arbitrariness. Its place within the teaching section of this book is due to Bessel's emphasis on lecturing as his main activity, with all reforms being meant as tools for the improvement of learning. Mayer's case study shows the importance of the economics of learning when addressing teaching needs. Rather than winking to the familiar Enlightenment rhetorics of universal reforms, Mayer's essays is a healthy, down-to-earth reminder of smaller, yet pragmatic steps which teachers took to change their immediate environments.

Turning to another Central European university, instead, Svorad Zavarsky has addressed *The idea of encyclopaedia at the University of Trnava around 1700*. This chapter revolves around two works issued from the press of the Jesuit university of Trnava in the period 1689-1709. The first is a voluminous, nine-part collection of dissertations, observations, ephemerides, and chronological synopses put together by the distinguished senior Professor, Martinus Szent-Ivany (1633-1705), over the span of a quarter-century. The second is a small-format book of 143 pages published by the young rhetoric teacher, Franciscus Wagner (1675-1748). When considered jointly, these two

suggest that around 1700 a specific idea of encyclopedia was conceived and brought to expression at the Jesuit college of Trnava. The author considers two particular aspects of Szent-Ivany's thought that may help us identify some essential traits of his notion of scientia, thereby giving us an insight into his concept of the unity of knowledge (encyclopaedia), which represents the implicit background of all his writings. «He believed his book was capable not only of enhancing in a compendious way the knowledge of former university students, but that it was also capable of giving the unschooled reliable orientation in the jungle of scholarly information». Wagner's notion of encyclopedia reflected the ethical issues of his time, namely, the need to fight for pure speculative science over technology, thereby retaining the centrality of the humanities as they used to be prior to the empirical turn. Its goal is to avoid the end of the unity of knowledge. According to Wagner, every poem, oration, philosophical dissertation, or theological treatise will be nothing but a farrago of empty words unless the whole encyclopedia is added to it. Zavarsky's main contributions are twofold. «First, the universal method cannot be reduced only to its rational aspects but it also must be viewed in its spiritual and moral dimensions in accord with the scholastic principle verum et bonum convertuntur». Secondly, «We learn that in the early modern period even such a thing as religious controversy, often associated with emotions and irrational motives, can and should be grasped by means of a "scientific" method». Zavarsky's essay argues that questions of epistemology and method shaped religious controversies to a degree which might seem surprising. As such, it is a reminder of the need to consider as diverse evidence as possible when painting broad pictures, otherwise historians run the risks of oversimplification and distortion. The usefulness of integrating the history of institutions, such as Trnava, in the larger history of early modern Universities, is that it provides a fresh angle from which to look at similar phenomena elsewhere, helping one not to jump to easy conclusions.

In *Some notes on the reception of Frans Titelmans' De consideratione dialectica (1533)*, Christoph Geudens has focussed on what was going on in actual classes at Louvain: «In order to attain an accurate understanding of the evolution of teaching in this period, the study of official regulations always needs to go hand in hand with the analysis of the actual source material related to the classroom practice (dissertations, disputations, textbooks, manuscript testimonies)». Titelmans was born in Hasselt, Flanders, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, possibly in 1502. In 1523 he left academia for the Louvain Franciscan convent, where he became first a student and then a teacher of logic. While there he wrote several commentaries on the Bible and fought many a polemic on biblical humanism, Titelmans also produced two philosophical treatises, one on natural philosophy, *De consideratione rerum naturalium* (DCR), and another on logic, *De consideratione dialectica*

(DCD). Geudens' paper focuses on DCD and, in particular, seeks to shed light on the reception of DCD at Northern European universities during the sixteenth century, especially the Universities of Louvain and Paris. Despite its centrality in Western European University curricula, the teaching of logic in the sixteenth century is an under-studied subject. It forms the main object of Geudens' analysis here. Since its publication in 1533, DCD became one of the most widely adopted manuals in logic teaching at the Louvain Arts Faculty for about thirty years, between 1530 and 1560. It was "made for measure" within the structure of the Arts curriculum in Louvain. «Thanks to Latin's continuing status as the lingua […] his work […] eventually instructed generations of intellectuals across Europe in the art of thinking clearly». Geudens' essay, therefore, while beginning to fill a gap, it reinforces the above observation that the sixteenth-century tradition of logic remains a little-studied field of early modern enquiry. This is a serious problem for scholars working on the history of Universities. Not only was logic a fundamental subject that all graduates came across, it was also a particularly formative subject, in that it shaped ways of thinking which graduates would then apply in their professions. Logic was responsible for attitudes towards dogma and doxa. Geudens' essay will hopefully pave the way for further research about the dark side of early modern education, and its consequences on knowledge practices-scientiae.

We stay in Louvain thanks to Steven Coesemans's *Logic in the web of sciences: a Louvain case study from the seventeenth century.* By focusing onto the notebook of Georgius Jodoigne, a youth studying logic at the University of Louvain in 1677-1678, Coesemans can provide a novel analysis of the practices of logic teaching in Louvain in the seventeenth century. He has shown that « physics and theology, but also metaphysics […] sometimes serve as a subject matter for logical exercises, but sometimes have a deep impact on logical and other doctrines in their own right». Moreover, «In the larger framework of student notebooks, Novilia's personal eclecticism with regard to the different schools of philosophy is relatively exceptional». Further, «Other notebooks of the University of Louvain confirm that other Professors used these disciplines in much the same two ways as we have seen: as a didactical exercise, and in their own rights as doctrines that are indispensable to gain a serious understanding of logic». Coesemans argues strongly for considering lecture notes as logic teaching tools. This is an interesting point. It complements neatly Geudens' call for a better understanding of the teaching of logic at early modern Universities. It also provides fresh evidence of the all-pervasive nature of logic in the curricula studied here. It would not be too bold to envision a comparative study of lecture notes at Universities on the Continent and in Britain (the Great Absent from this book) as well as in the American colonies in order to begin to assess varie-

ties of logic learning practices in the early modern worlds – a study along the lines of the better-known comparative glossing in legal texts.

Mikkel Munthe Jenssen has contributed to the volume's interest in Northern European universities with a contentious subject, namely, *Contesting the universality of European academic degrees. The case of Nordic doctoral degrees during the long eighteenth century.* Ever since the Middle Ages, European universities have shaped the old continent's intellectual, scientific, and educational life. On the other hand, their antiquity had alloed for a stratification of rules and norms of all kinds to sediment and encroach weirdly and illogically one on the others. The confessional divides since the Reformation and the centralization of state power in the late seventeenth century combined to create the perfect storm. Differences in rules and regulations led to an increased mistrust in foreign degrees. «If a scholar was in possession of one of academia's highest degrees, he would still be equally recognized for his honor and dignity, no matter whether the degree had been taken domestically or at a foreign university, however with some adjustments to rank». The main aim of Northern European university medicine regulations was to ensure high medical standards. Consequently, regardless of confessional identity, German-origin quacks roaming the Northern countries were banished. Apart from charlatans, however, a huge number of medical doctors were increasingly knocking on Northern doors. The equivalence of their doctoral studies thus came under scrutiny. Birthplace and nationality criteria became important in the long eighteenth century. This can be seen, according to Jenssen, as «a patriotic disruption of the universal and equal recognition of academic degrees began». In essence, then, this essay is concerned with some of the ways in which questions of nationality impacted onto University structures in the eighteenth century. Munthe Jenssen's essay argues for a reconsideration of the tension between nationalism and universalism with special reference to eighteenth-century doctorates, thereby exposing some of the contradictions of the time. His argument is that such contradictions were one and the same with the culture that produced them. Rather than buying into the Whig narrative of eighteenth-century triumph of progress, the author analyses its Janus-like nature. Munthe Jenssen's work, therefore, confirms current historiographical trends which seek to make sense of nuances and complexities. The history of universities has its important role to play in this respect.

My own essay dovetails neatly with Mayer and Taddei's papers, in that it considers Paduan-inspired reforms in a Central European University in the second half of the seventeenth century. My *Paduan alumni and university reforms in Austria* highlights the relationship between anatomy and philology in the works and practice of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the Rudolfina, Paul de Sorbait (1624-91). Known more as a hero of the

plague than as a student of the University of Padua, Sorbait sponsored empirical innovations in Vienna that can be understood in all their innovative scope only if contextualized within his academic training across the Alps. Given that there is neither an intellectual biography of Paul de Sorbait nor an in-depth study of the Viennese medical environment in the seventeenth century, this short essay aspires to provide an initial case study to fill these gaps. The history of medicine and history of universities would also benefit from further research on alchemical-pharmaceutical practices popular at the same time in Vienna and Padua because of the human ties between the two universities due to the numerous students from Padua who pursued their careers in the Habsburg capital. «This short essay on the reforms Paul de Sorbait introduced into the Viennese medical system has the dual purpose of drawing attention to a leading figure in the history of medicine in the modern age who has not yet received exhaustive treatment, as well as to present a case study of the relationship between philology and empirical observations in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, the history of the book and the mobility of knowledge are two other categories of research through which the themes outlined here should be fully developed. Certainly, Sorbait was a gigantic figure in the history of imperial medicine that we should study better». My case study shows that the history of universities can greatly benefit from empirical approaches to the study of their alumni networks. Sorbait's example is a case in point. His reforms in Vienna can only be fully appreciated when we place them in the larger context of his Paduan experience (he was an alumnus himself) as well as his contacts and collaborations with other fellow alumni. Munthe Jenssen's essay has emphasised the tension between nationalism and the international value of doctorates. My own essay, which covers an earlier time, points towards the other side of the coin, namely, the need for reforms that make domestic patrons and clients proud, while actually finding inspiration and personnel from abroad. The history of universities has only just begun to understand a dramatically multifarious phenomenon – the institutionalisation of knowledge in the early modern worlds. It is still lagging behind other fields of early modern enquiry due to its lateness in mapping out networks of alumni and their interactions among themselves, as well as the reforms and changes those networks gave rise to, both domestically and internationally. While the history of syllabi, curricula, chairs, administration, and so on, is well under way, much remains to be done about alumni as possibly the most influential game changers in the history of universities.

In *The right way to practice natural history. Pehr Kalm: a Linnaean reformer of academic studies in Finland* Cecilia af Forselles discusses some of the ways in which Pehr Kalm (1716-1779) made a significant impact on the history of science, economics, and natural history in Finland in the

eighteenth century. In Forselles's words: «I emphasize in this paper Kalm's influence as a popular university lecturer on how natural philosophy and the utilitarian ideas were brought to Finland and how the basic ideas passed on to the next generations of scholars and more widely in Finnish society». One of the aims in this article is to provide a broader picture of the ideas Kalm promoted as an educator through his work on dissertation supervision. These are interesting sources because they might reveal Kalm's ideas and methods for the promotion of a natural history approach in Finnish academic circles. Furthermore, Kalm's uses of dissertations as marketing tools to promote an interest in natural history and philosophy deserves closer attention. Forselles, has «presented some ways used by Pehr Kalm and his contemporaries to reform academic life, including the transmission of economic thought and moral or philosophical ideas and promotion of studies in natural history, within the Academy of Turku». Forselles' essay sheds new light onto a little-studied university, whose knowledge practices were fully integrated within the wider European University background. Moreover, Kalm's uses of dissertations as marketing tools for new kinds of natural philosophical enquiries should alert scholars about the need for more attention to this kind of evidence. One of the merits of *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* is its pointing to the sometimes unexpected uses of various kinds of historical evidence in the study of both universities and the scientiae they strove to push forward.

Giovanni Silvano's essay on *Philippe Pinel's portrayals according to nineteenth-century French and American pamphlets* begins to draw the book to a close with a wink across the Pond. Philip Pinel is a well-respected figure in the history of medicine, for he was among the first physician to have tried a radically different treatment of mental illnesses. He was «an innovator who offered to all scientists and philosophers a new method to describe nature in all its forms». He went so far as to applying his binomial taxonomy to medicine so that all diseases could be systematized in his *Genera morborum* (1759). Silvano's essay offers a recontextualisation of Pinel's fame by looking at two portrayals, one French, and one American. Pinel was remembered as a doctor who cared for the suffering people of Paris in the years before and after the Revolution. «With an approach that can be defined as pioneering, he was interested in patients suffering from a spectrum of disorders that, in his opinion, deserved not only the consideration of man, but also of the doctor and scientist». Pinel's object of care was the underclass living either on the margins of society or within institutions from which it was virtually impossible to escape from. «Reading critically what two, among the many of his estimators, had to say about Pinel may help to better defining his nosography and what he meant by moral treatment». One of them was that by Francis Tiffany. It presented Pinel as able to achieve such a revolution in medicine

thanks to his reflective ability rather than his mercy. Science above ethics, that is to say. This would explain his preference for nosography, the description of the disease, and his distance from nosology, which might presume a theory of the disease, together with a deeper knowledge of its nature. In this portrayal, Tiffany saw Pinel as the doctor and the scientist who is completely dedicated to questions about pathological taxonomy. «He was first a methodologist, then a clinician». The two portraits that Silvano has analyzed are evidence of the fruitfulness of Pinel's scientific activity and of his work with the inmates at the hospitals of Salpêtrière and Bicêtre. Silvano's life-long interests in the history of medicine and in the United States are the perfect match for this essay. Questions of methodology permeate the whole chapter. Pinel's portrayals in America depended on different approaches to scientific taxonomy. The link between method and classification of knowledge is at the core of university teaching and reforms in all ages. Silvano's essay looks at Franco-American academic ties, and argues that reforms in one context, no matter how admired or loathed in another, always took a life of their own in the minds and hands of the transmitters. In other words, foreign-inspired reforms can never be a copy-paste of their original context, rather, they adapt to the new one. This once again dovetails with similar points which Munthe Jenssen and I have made in our respective works. Pushing scientiae forward was a dialectical process.

Filiberto Agostini's essay deals with *A source for the study of the University of Padua in the early nineteenth century: the Rectors' annual reports*. The establishment of the Veneto-Lombard Kingdom on 7 April 1815 began a new era in Venice and the Venetian terra firma that affected all aspects of public life, including, of course, the University of Padua. In this regard, an interesting source on the organizational structure and academic culture in Padua during the second Habsburg domination of the Veneto (1815-1848) is the Rectors' annual reports. Agostini does not wish to read and interpret the Rectors' reports beyond the revolutionary period of 1848. The twenties and thirties were a time in which the academic structure was firmly restrained by the dense web of Viennese censorship between stubborn rules and exacting instructions. For those years, the Rector's annual reports constitute gift us with «a summarized image of numbers and names, a series of verifications and observations, sometimes with a wealth of information, sometimes with generic notes written in haste.». Agostini points out that «In general, life at the University was always characterized by camaraderie, in good times and especially in bad ones». Furthermore, «Another continuously discussed topic is that of the University's physical offices. Each rector saw a strong contradiction between the prestige achieved by the University – thanks to the work of distinguished luminaries in every discipline over the centuries – and the indecorous environment in which instructors and students

found themselves working». Agostini's essay enriches our collection with yet another welcome reminder of the unexpected uses of various types of evidence for the analysis of the history of Universities, the Rectors' annual reports. He argues that, unexpectedly, they allow one to add a social history dimension to the drier history of University administration. Indeed, the institutionalisation of knowledge is a subject that lends itself to multidisciplinary approches. Social history, however, is not always one of the main ones. On the contrary, Agostini's essay shows all the fruitful potential of peeping through academics' daily camaraderie. The history of moeurs is essential to historians, in that it prevents anachronisms. At a time of cancel culture and rising threats to academic freedoms of expression, with social status being the elephant in the room, Agostini's gentle reminder is subtly powerful.

Early Modern Universities and the Sciences asks many questions about practices of knowledge production in early modern European universities; it provides some challenging answers, paving the way for further such-like studies in the field. What clearly emerges is a sense of growing interest for empirically-verifiable knowledge. The influence of the classics underwent a major transformation, from imitation standards to cornerstones of empirical verification. All the essays in the book share an interest in the changing ways in which European universities adapted the classics to what came to be known as "the New Science". Thus these essays complement the growing body of scholarship about the same transformation which shaped individual early modern scholars. Be it an amateur or a university lecturer, early modern knowledge developed more and more empirically thanks to the fruitful complementary work of philologically checking the classics while verifying their claims on the anatomical table, in the botanic garden, in the alchemical laboratory, and so on. *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences* is there to remind us that the relation of classical philology to experiments gave rise to new modes of knowledge production, and that early modern higher institutions of learning were able to rise to the challenge of self-reform – not without inevitable struggles; yet, they were indeed fundamental means whereby Europe heralded modern science.

Giovanni Silvano's last essays stress this point from two different angles. In *A project for a new global history of the Padua Medical School from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* the author presents his new research project about the role of the Padua Medical School in fostering the transition from early modern Scientiae to modern science. He argues that much more needs to be done about relational synergies among universities and their alumni, while taking a holistic approaches to sources. Images, mathematical objects (as they used to be called then), manuscripts, books, translations, as well as highly mobile graduates should all be studied as bearing traces of relational intellectual interaction. If are to get to grips with the contribu-