DE CONTAGIOSA EPIDEMIA.
Quæ in Patavino Agro, & tota ferè
Veneta Dictione in Boves irrepit,
DISSERTATIO
HABITA IN PATAVINO LYCEO
A' BERNARDINO RAMAZZINI
Præctæ Medicinæ Profectore Primario.
DIE IX. NOVEMBRIS MDCCXI.
SERENISSIMO VENETIARUM DUCI
JOANNI CORNELIO
DICATA.
PATAVII MDCCXII.
Superioribus Amnentibus.
Inaugural Orations

(Orationes)
BERNARDINI
RAMAZZINI,
CARPENSIS PHILOSOPHI, AC MEDICI,
OLIM IN MUTINENSI ACADEMIA
Primi Professoris, postremo in Patavino Lyceo
Practicæ Medicinæ Professoris Primarii

OPERA OMNIA
MEDICA ET PHYSIOLOGICA,
In duos Tomos distributa.
EDITION QUINTA.

ACCESSIT
VITA AUCTORIS A BARTH. RAMAZZINO
CUM FIGURIS, ET INDICIBUS NECESSARIIS.

TOMUS PRIMUS.

LONDINI,
APUD PAULUM ET ISAACUM VAILLANT.
MDCCXLII.

I Oration

In the solemn institution of the Academy of Modena to the most serene Francesco II, tenth duke of Modena, Reggio, and others

It is now indisputable and certain, O most serene highness, that this immortal spirit we live by is much detached from the territory of natural elements, in being "a particle of divine aura", as it was once rather religiously described by the poet Venosa. However, you have been bound to this body, which you enliven and take around, with similar laws by the same divine architect who created it, such that its affections, according to Plato, never shine more clearly than when they are overshadowed by a physical ill. There are two kinds of evil – said the wisest among men – that at times distance human bodies from a better condition of life, that is, illness and degeneracy. And surely even one of stoic mentality cannot deny that diseases, when nothing is more desirable than to have "a healthy mind in a healthy body", fall into the class of evils? Why, however, should the degeneracy of the body not be led back into the same group? Indeed, who would not make sacrifices to the Graces and to Nature for the elegance and beauty of the body? On the basis of Plato's thinking, our spirits may suffer a similar number of ills: dishonesty in the spirit corresponds to illness of the body, ignorance to degeneracy. So, O learned listeners, our spirit is ill every time it is occupied by dishonesty; it is feverish when burnt by lust; jaundiced when pervaded by jealousy; putrid when it decays with gratification; distorted when it deviates from equilibrium; turned upward when assuming airs of ambition; stooped when leaning toward material things; for this the poet Volterra, inspired by satire, exclaimed:
O spirits bent toward earth, unaware of heaven.

But how could anyone say, not impertinently, that the spirit is sick and weak when dishonest, just as I would also say it is deformed if ignorant. Indeed, what could be thought of as more shameful, more disgraceful than if the dignity and embellishment of the liberal disciplines were to leave man, as if in exile? He would be unaware of how many great mysteries of nature have so far been revealed by philosophy (but not the imaginary and mysterious secrets), which the mind dissects with much curiosity and anatomical study, and which the examiner of nature studies as the reasons and causes of things: how awkward, how unpleasant would he be in public? Unaware of how much importance the dignity and power of numbers have, how astronomy plots the courses and returns of the celestial bodies, with how much ease geometry changes any form into another, with how little effort statics raises considerable weights, how many marvels may be observed in optics, catoptrics, hydraulics, pneumatics. How inelegant would he seem to the eyes of the wise, how vulgar? Unaware of how many new phenomena are revealed every day to the scientific community by iatrophysical, hermetic and anatomical studies; unaware of the laws and sanctions with which jurisprudence rules the world; unaware, finally, of the mysteries of religion, which the father of light deigned, by compassion, to reveal to the blind minds of mortals. What disgrace, what horror would be produced? But to what end all this, some will ask, if a treatment suited to eliminating these plagues of the spirit is not applied? Well said. So, medicine was discovered to defeat the diseases, gymnastics was instituted to cultivate the beauty of the body, and, at the expense of the State, men did exercises, washed and anointed themselves in baths. Likewise, in order to drive off the ailments of the spirit and to correct its deformities, our forebears opened public schools, where the noble youth could freely exercise themselves without the fear of excessive scrutiny and, as in the baths, wash themselves of the filth of dishonesty and ignorance. Now you see clearly, illustrious listeners, what I would like, what I have in mind. Certainly nothing other, in this my opening speech, while the doors of this athenaeum are opened with much solemnity, as if the temple of Janus were opened wide, nothing other, I was saying, than to explain in general how much dignity and usefulness
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this academy will be the cause of, and not only for this very noble and fortunate city, but also for the whole region that the Este eagles defend and support in the shadow of their great wings.

The origins of letters, O highly learned gentlemen, are so ancient that at the very beginning of the universe the sun, dispenser of light, had barely completed a single degree or perhaps two along a never before travelled orbit, when the contemplative knowledge of divine and human things shone on earth. And, indeed, the all-wise originator had no sooner moulded the progenitor of the human race with masterly sculptural work than, with the same breath of living air, he infused it with spirit so it could live, and with knowledge so it could contemplate the creator's works. From there, by way of seminal transfer as if along the shoots of a vine, perhaps not such a perfect and distinct knowledge of things, but at least an innate desire for knowledge descended directly to his descendants. So in no age or place have there been any people so barbaric and so uncivilised that they have not cultivated the love of letters, inspired by this natural predisposition, and have not created schools to educate the young. Indeed, the divine architect made us more or less of the same stuff of which the other living beings are made, and distinguished us from them only in giving us reason, so that we would not live in the forests like wild animals but lead a social life in cities. What instrument, tell me, is more suited than the study of liberal arts to creating the desire for socialisation and to more easily soften the hardness of customs?

Certainly having devotedly learnt the noble arts softens customs and does not allow them savagery.

I would stray too far from the subject if I were to leaf through the ancient historical sources to recount the number and types of academy founded by each region, and establish how ancient is the practice of devoting special places to study. May I be permitted only to digress a little and weary you with the memory of some ancient examples of the precursors of our academies. First of all, the oldest academy, founded by the Jews to educate the young, was at the gates of Asia. The Holy Scriptures say it was located in the city of Dabir, originally known as Kirjathsepher, or city of letters. In those ancient times Ephesus, Tarsus and Berytus in Phoenicia also shone
with distinguished fame. The latter was known by the emperors as
the mother of the laws, because Roman civil law was taught there.
And if we want to go further east we will find the renowned gymnas-
iums once directed by the gymnosophists, the so-called Brahmins;
and likewise among the inhabitants of the New World we can also
observe no few examples of schools in imitation of our own.

But what should I say of Africa, which in past centuries gave
birth to so many geniuses? Indeed, how many illustrious cities were
nurtured by Egypt, as fertile in virtue as in grain, which dispensed
the wealth of a solid doctrine to almost the entire world?

First of all I mention Heliopolis, the city of the sun, which was
once the most renowned in Egypt (alas, no more, reduced to a
desert by submission to the Turkish crescent), from which it is
said that Homer, Plato and Solon, stars of the first order that shone
brightly in the heavens of wisdom, stole the first secrets of the most
arcane philosophy. Then there was the great Carthage, rival of the
fame of Rome, venerable master of letters no less than arms, which
was so highly illustrious in the studies of the finest arts that it dared
to contend leadership in arms and eloquence with Lazio itself. But
to contemplate closer examples, offered us from Europe, we need
only recall Greece, and especially Athens, a city that many rightly
defined as the Greece of Greece, from which wisdom flowed into
the Tiber as from a source.

And so the mere mention of the name of Athens is sufficient to
sum up its glory. Not by chance do the academies that excel in our
own times adorn themselves with the name of athenaeums to en-
hance their own reputation. Nevertheless, it was not granted only to
Greece to be the wet-nurse and teacher of every discipline. Indeed,
in Gaul there was no lack of athenaeums and academies, such as
that of Marseilles, which Tacitus defined the master of studies, and
that of Lyon, where Caligula – so it is said – erected an altar at which
contests of eloquence in Latin and Greek are supposed to have been
held annually. The punishment for the loser was to erase his writing
with a sponge or his tongue, unless he preferred being drowned in
the nearby river. So the orator at the altar of Lyon suddenly paled at
the point of speaking, exactly as I paled and trembled at the point of
speaking here to such an erudite assembly. The historic sources also
show that in Spain, in the great city of Osca, the learned Sertorius,
a Roman exile, opened public schools and invited the most erudite
teachers offering high fees, which is why the Spanish youth were so obliged to him. But why linger so long on foreign cases? In those ancient times, did not our own Italy have schools before which those of the provinces bowed down because of their fame and antiquity? It is well known that, before the name of Rome shone in the world, Pythagoras had a following of young people who emulated his studies in Metaponto, Heraclea and Croton. When Rome thought it had obtained sufficient glory with arms, it gave sanctuary to letters. This happened at the time of the second Punic War, when

...the Muse with winged step entered into the bellicose and wild stock of Romulus.

At first Rome supported only public orators and jurisconsults, but soon after also established public salaries for other teachers, which remained in force until the age of Simmacus, when, with the decline of the empire’s majesty, the annual allowances for the teachers of young Romans were stopped. Consequently, various schools arose in Italy shortly after, such as those of Bologna, Padua, Pavia, Perugia, Ferrara, Pisa and Parma. I was about to add the Modena school to all these, O learned listeners. But why should I not include ours in the list? Perhaps because it will seem new to some? But if only newness is considered, this does not pose a problem. Indeed, we have a very generous prince, which means it is not difficult (to use the words Pliny dedicated to Vespasian) “to confer newness on that which is old, light on that which is in darkness, splendour on that which is obsolete, credibility on that which is scorned, and to ensure that everything is treated correctly according to nature and respecting the specific nature of every thing”. Actually, if we consider carefully, the Modena school is not as new as you may think. Indeed, this city of ours, emulating Bologna and wanting to surpass it not in territory but in glory, first laid the foundations of this university by inviting the very famous Pileo and Azone, who handed down jurisprudence in Modena. A salary was established for them and they were granted a public building with an elegant court as a school. Jurisprudence was taught in the same place it was pronounced. On one side sat the magistrate, on the other the teacher, and both pronounced sentences, but with this difference: one person left the former, who condemned and absolved, cheered up and another saddened; but
each person left the latter, who explained the enigmas of the law, happier, because he was better educated. So if we want to call everything by its name, it is not a question here, as some may think, of the institution of a new academy, but rather the reconstruction of an ancient one. It is not a new foundation, but a building raised on a foundation laid much earlier. Certainly, establishing new buildings, new sanctuaries, new theatres and new temples is a mark of splendour and magnificence; but restoring that which has fallen is almost religiousness. In the past, when this city lay almost buried under its own ruins, having been razed to the ground by Gothic savagery, the citizens who survived the slaughter argued bitterly over whether or not to rebuild it elsewhere. But devotion won out and it was agreed to rebuild it in the same place it had risen in the past, at the time of the colony founded by the Romans. So devotion and respect ask us to complete the effort made by our forefathers to found a university in this city, particularly now that the most pious of princes has ascended to the throne. He turns such a benevolent face to this work and much favours it, as he finds it a very pleasing enterprise. Under the rule of such a prince, is it not perhaps legitimate to hope? Can one not suspect that he dearly wants to emulate his own glorious grandfather, who he has chosen as a model? He will certainly emulate his splendid feats in war and peace, and he will not be at all inferior or second, except in name. While Francesco I, that gloriously named prince, was occupied with turbulent wars, he was always concerned with restoring a more solid peace to his people even amid the clamour of armies. In times of peace he then armed so as to repel any enemy attack, and he built the citadel, as splendid as it is fortified, for the embellishment and defence of this city. Francesco II, of no less fame and worthy of everlasting praise and glory, will build an even more beautiful citadel, a sanctuary for letters, “a monument more durable than bronze”. So in future two citadels will rise to defend this city, both founded under the auspicious jurisdiction of a Francesco. The former will thus be the home of warlike Mars, the latter the sanctuary of Minerva; the former the abode of soldiers, the latter of scholars; the former equipped with moat and trenches, the latter defended, like a bulwark, by a temple in which the deity of letters is worshipped; the former positioned along the wall or almost entirely outside the walls, the latter in the middle of the city, being the heart, or rather the spirit of the city itself.
There is another difference. The former is of difficult and dan-
gerous access. No one can set foot in it without revealing his name
and then walking unarmed among armed soldiers. And no one is
allowed to see its innermost parts and armoury unless he enjoys
very special favour. However, in our citadel of the muses, entry is
safe and easy. The doors are open wide. Here there are no night
watchmen or armed guards, because here there is nothing that can
be taken away, if not the treasures of erudition and the jewels of
virtue, which with absolute generosity are also dispensed even to
those who do not deserve them.

And no one will laugh at me, thinking my comparison between
school and citadel unsuitable. Indeed, it is absolutely true that the
public academies are the city's most solid defences, and that one
must not think that the security of a city lies so much in a double or
triple row of walls as in the wisdom and judgement of its citizens.
It is said that the very wise legislator Lycurgus was once questioned
on the walls of Sparta. He replied that a city with a real wall was
one surrounded by a cordon of men rather than one of bricks. It
was for more or less the same reason that the Homeric hero Agam-
emnon did not want more than one Ajax or more than one Achilles,
but rather ten counsellors like Nestor, the wisest of all the Greeks.
Such men are mainly produced by the celebrated academies in
which liberal studies are fostered. These are like warehouses from
which the great princes draw the men they intend promoting to the
highest offices.

I would have numerous examples to confirm the truth of this
claim. But one is enough, taken from the Paris academy. After King
Charles had freed Italy and taken the title of king of the Lombards,
thanks to his successful exploits, and been ennobled as Charle-
magne, he took all the literary and scientific studies to France, thus
inventing a new kind of triumphal parade. That French Hercules
took with him a court made up of the most illustrious scholars of
Rome and all of Italy, linked by a golden chain of talents, to lay the
foundations of the highly acclaimed Paris academy, which was then
to become the mother of all the others. This was the best citadel,
the palladium that a certain king and emperor set up in that great
city as a permanent defence. Indeed, he was well aware that it was
not possible to contrive a better defence to ensure the security of
the city and the growth of the kingdom. And he was certainly not
wrong. From where exactly did the uninterrupted fortune of the kingdom of France come? From where did that constant production of heroes over many centuries come to the kings of France? From where did the current Louis XIV, now preparing the way for immortality, extract so many Ulysses, so many Nestors, if not from that Trojan horse, that panathenaeum of letters, where, no matter how deeply he draws, "the golden harvest never falters?"

Furthermore, I think that the extent to which these sanctuaries dedicated to Pallas contribute to the rebirth of cities put to ruins by the destroyer Mars does not escape anyone; if examples were needed to confirm this, our Italy would give us no few, leaving aside the foreign examples. The city of Pisa was once afflicted by a very long and terrible war to the point that, crumbling and depopulated, it resembled a desert. The terrible state into which the oldest city of Etruria had fallen struck the noble-minded Lorenzo de' Medici profoundly, and he wanted to give it back its splendour. Indeed, in establishing the noble athenaeum, this born again patron, protector of literature, gave Pisa "defence and magnificence", repaying the loss of its ancient freedom with another of a new type. So what had once been a renowned republic that had long enjoyed vast military powers, especially on the sea, became a republic of letters that "could rule over others" under the command of knowledge.

Even though in our case it is not a question, O noble listeners, of restoring our city, given that it did not suffer any damage in the recent wars, thanks to the fact that the Este eagle administers some of the Gaulish Jupiter's thunderbolts, has pushed the storms of war elsewhere. Nevertheless, the fruits of peace and especially the so successfully begun restoration of this athenaeum, add considerable lustre and splendour to Modena, though already endowed with its triumphant planting of palms. Rather, it is right to suspect that this so commendable work enjoys further increase day by day. Its foundations have been laid with religious devotion, and the Este eagles, which rest their talons only on very high and excellent places, extend out from its gates. Indeed, it must not be thought that this athenaeum will long retain the structure we see today. It is as large as a work just begun should be, but this will not be enough for its future greatness, inasmuch as can be foreseen solely of the generosity of the prince. Undoubtedly he will extend its confines, extend its atriums and halls, because the influx of listeners and readers
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will be greater. More departments and more teachers can certainly be counted in the other schools, but numerical inferiority in ours is compensated by the value and excellence of the highly learned men in every sphere of knowledge: in considering that I am also among this rank I cannot but blush. And, anyway, I do not think it necessary to bring teachers from afar every time expansion of the whole is required. In every period this city has always produced excellent minds in great numbers, so it must not be thought that Modena, after having supplied so many first grade teachers to the most important academies, is now forced to beg elsewhere for the knowledge of foreigners.

The city once nourished and then gave to the Bologna school Nicola Mattarelli, tutor to Bartolo, the exceptional physician Pietro Rocca and the expert astronomer Paolo Calora; to the Ferrara athenaeum it gave the grand scholar Carlo Sigonio, and the excellent jurisconsults Bartolomeo Bellincini and Giovanni Sadoleto; to the Pisa athenaeum Gabriele Falloppio, worthy anatomist, and the highly discerning Ludovico Scapinelli; to the Padua athenaeum, along with many others, it gave Geminiano Montanari, the highly celebrated and still living professor of mathematics. So there is an abundance of educated men in our pantry; an abundance of very distinguished young men in our city and our local population, apart from any contribution from outside. But in reality young foreigners also come to our source of knowledge, attracted by the favour of the prince, by the hospitality of the people, the salubrity of the air, the abundance of everything, all kinds of pleasures and above all by a very powerful incentive: the renown of the teachers, whom I would praise with all my energies if I did not think that it would be too much for their modesty.

In celebrating the birth of our academy, I would like to wish for all this and more, especially because it is attended by the Este eagles, who extend their great wings not only to warm us but to invite us to fly. The hope arises that this city may rediscover its ancient splendour and, as the mother city of eloquence once honoured it as the Splendid Colony of the Roman People, may it be called by our descendants a beautiful colony of letters. And no one must think that thousands of years are required for my wishes to come true; if only the stars smile upon our prince and grant him the time he deserves and that we hope for him, my wishes will quickly come true.
Indeed, he knows how to quickly summarise the slow succession of the centuries, he knows how to ripen the harvests of an entire century in the course of a single year. He knows how much the city will benefit from the establishment of this academy, with what saving of money and with what alacrity parents will entrust their sons to the breast of this wet-nurse or rather mother of letters so that they can drink in the more nutritious milk of the virtues. And, undoubtedly, of how much peace of mind those parents will enjoy, what peaceful dreams, knowing that their treasures are under the gaze of he whose ears are touched more softly by the voice of the parent than that of the prince!

But I already see, O devout men who would lay the foundations of this school and give it this form, undoubtedly you expect to hear whether I will call on the benevolence of the prince to entreat the right from the imperial majesty for students who have completed their course of studies in this athenaeum to boast the title of physician. Far be it from me to ask this of such a wise prince, who knows perfectly well what is legitimate and what is not. Indeed, he will certainly not fail to see the incongruity of those who have toiled to be educated under this sky and on this ground having to then beg the fruits of glory elsewhere, and how unseemly it would be for he who has honestly competed in this gymnasium of education to then be rewarded in another. The task of entreating the imperial palace for the title of doctorate is entirely in the hands of he who right at the start of his rule proposed imitating every illustrious example from the history of the Estes. I will relate an outstanding event worth remembering, more to remove your concerns than to subject it to the memory of the prince, who every day reads the splendid exploits of his forebears in their old portraits.

Albert II, the tenth prince of Ferrara, seeing that not only the ducal palace, but also the churches, theatres and military buildings were by now overladen with every splendour, thought it not unseemly to enrich the Este family with the glory of the toga. So he opened the Ferrara school. And to make it a more stable institution, he went with a retinue of 400 noble knights to Pope Boniface VIII in Rome, where he was greeted with all honours and obtained the splendid concession that may still be read, inscribed in gold letters, on the facade of the main church of Ferrara. So it is not the case to fear that the virtue of our prince is not “stirred up by the memory
of his Uncle Hector, so that eagles do not give birth to doves". So he will anticipate your desires, and with rapid generosity accomplish all that will be necessary to adorn and complete this work. Indeed, where word of the public school has reached his ears, he has immediately designated it a nursery from which to extract orators, poets, philosophers, mathematicians, archiaters, jurisconsults, theologians and even military commanders. Indeed, what are arms without letters? What hope of victory can a commander have, no matter how strong and courageous, leading the army into battle if Pallas does not assist him, armed with justice? And so he will extract from here all those who will be of use to him, able to help him with action or advice, such that sooner or later he will have to inscribe on the doors of our athenaeum this epigraph: "from here leads the way to heaven". So who would not be cheered by the fortune of our times, and especially by the fortune of having such a prince, who thinks it is in the interests of his glory that this school exists and prospers to his pleasure, such that the fame of its name will persist in the memory of our descendants? During their lives, princes certainly do not lack praisers and poets who exalt their works to heaven. Every day the printing presses groan under the incessant pressure; "the greatest and lowest of poets" cry out until losing their voices, and poetic trifles and flowers "bearing the names of the kings" can be seen in the hands of all. But when they are dead, and the shadow of the grave succeeds their royal splendour, then the muses fall silent, and those such highly praised names are gradually forgotten. On the contrary, princes who have established new academies or restored ancient ones attain a reputation that remains immortal even after their death. So still today in Spain the academy of Salamanca celebrates Alphonse VII, King of Castille; in France that of Paris exalts Charlemagne; in Belgium that of Louvain glorifies John, Duke of Brabant; in Poland that of Cracow celebrates Casimir II; among the German peoples the Vienna academy celebrates Albert, Duke of Austria; in Italy that of Bologna celebrates the emperor Theodosius, that of Pisa Lorenzo de' Medici, that of Parma Ranuccio I and, on the example of the others, the academy of Modena, many centuries hence, will celebrate Francesco II with the highest praise, as sovereign who legislated for it, as patron who filled it with talents and as parent who ensured it nourishment.