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John of Salisbury, Adam of Balsham and The Cornifician Problem*

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John of Salisbury claims that the entire *Metalogicon* is a defence of the *trivium* against an opponent whose name he is unwilling to give us; he simply dubs him Cornificius.¹ According to this Cornificius, there is no need for the student to study hard in order to learn the different arts and sciences; the student should simply be eloquent. But this is not a skill that is acquired through learning; it is primarily a gift of nature. The student's natural abilities are important, whereas serious and hard studies are not worth the effort. Natural abilities and some practice are all that is needed. Thus, Cornificius wants to throw away thorough education based on the *trivium* and the *quadrivium* in favour of a few Cornifician pointers, rules of thumb and a little practice. This is a serious distortion of the didactic principle which states that you must take the basic principle(s) from your teacher but perfect it yourself primarily through natural talent.²

Certainly, such complete depreciation of eloquence cannot have been normal, but the occasion for some sort of discussion of the topic "By what means is eloquence produced" was provided, for instance, by no less an authority than Cicero.³ Similarly, Boethius criticises those who preferred natural talent (*ingenium*) over studies.⁴ John devotes much of the *Metalogicon*, and much of the *Entheticus*, to discussing the same view.

Scholars have debated the identity of this medieval Cornificius and his

* Abbreviations: *Ars Diss.* = Minio-Paluello (1956); *Didasc.* = Buttimer (1939); *Entbet. Maior* = van Laarhoven (1987); *Hist. Pont.* = Chibnall (1986); *Metalog.* = Hall (1991); *Policrat.* (books I-IV) = Keats-Rohan (1993); *Policrat.* (books V-VIII) = Webb (1909); *Dialectica* = De Rijk (1970²).

¹ On the "Cornifician problem", see also Alessio (1953-54); Minio-Paluello (1954) 140-46; Garfagnini (1971); Ward (1972); Tacchella (1980); Tobin (1984); Nederman (2005) 65-75. On the use of the name "Cornificius", a name that was not John's invention, see Tacchella (1980) 278-79. A poet Cornificius is mentioned by Catullus (XXXVIII) and Ovid (*Tr.* II.436), but the medieval authors seem to have taken their clue exclusively from the well-known detractor of Vergil.

² E.g. Wilhelm von Conches, *Philosophia Mundi* XXII (ed. Maurach), p. 22: *Etenim principium a magistro, sed perfectio debet esse ab ingenio.* See also Abelard's *Dialectica* IV.1, pp. 470-71; Al-Ghazali, *Tractatus de Logica* V (ed. Lohr), p. 286.

³ Cic., *Top.* § 82: *Quibus rebus eloquentia efficiatur.*

⁴ Boeth., *De Top.* Diff. I.7 (ed. Nikitas), p. 20.

followers. Most scholars now believe that Cornificius was fictional, a straw man, so to speak, a personification of everything that John detests in education and learning. And it seems certain that there never was a “real” Cornificius completely like the one described in the *Metalogicon*.⁵

However, John’s attacks are very personal, and remarks in some contemporary authors may also be taken to indicate the existence of a degenerate kind of movement. Therefore, although, as has been pointed out to me, such vivid descriptions could well be John’s way of making the straw man appear more substantial, I still think it is permissible to search for a person or a group of people who might have inspired John’s attacks. In any case, that is what I intend to do in the rest of this article, and I will continue to speak as if Cornificius can be identified.

In fact, some scholars believe that there was indeed a group of people led by a person who was the target of John’s attacks, although John badly distorts the general picture of the former’s character. Reginald the Monk (*Reginaldus Monachus*) and master Gualo have been the most popular suggestions. Recently, Cary J. Nederman has added a third suspect: Arnulf of Lisieux.⁶ On this interpretation, Cornificius is Arnulf embodying all the intellectual flaws of the 12th century. There are, however, some weighty arguments against such an interpretation — and the arguments may, I think, rather easily be generalised to cover almost all the identifications that have been proposed until now.

First of all, despite the apparent similarity of Arnulf and Cornificius, the most important element is completely missing from the picture. John is certainly annoyed by Cornificius’ behaviour in the “trifles of the courts”,⁷ but the whole argument of the *Metalogicon* is focused on the problems concerning Cornificius’ *educational views*. On this issue, Nederman has no evidence relating to Arnulf.

This is not to say that discussion in Canterbury is irrelevant in this con-

⁵ Alessio (1953-54) 126-28; Palazzo (1957-58) 101; Tobin (1984) 6; Burnett (1996) 20; Guilfooy (2005). I thank J.B. Hall and A.L. Ritchie for stressing this point in a letter to me, which caused me to correct my (exaggerated) first draft of this article, although I am afraid that they will still think that I exaggerate.

⁶ On Arnulf, see *Hist. Pont.* XXIV, XLII, pp. 54-56, 83-86. See Nederman (2005a) 65-75, for a discussion of the problems concerning Cornificius along with Nederman’s arguments in favour of Arnulf, and, for other possible identifications, Ward (1972) 223-24n3 and Tacchella (1980) 284-85, who do not, however, subscribe to any of the possibilities mentioned.

⁷ See e.g. *Metalog.* I.4, p. 19, and the subtitle of the *Policraticus*, on the “trifles of the courts” (*nugae curialium*).

nection. On the contrary, in the prologue to book I of the *Metalogicon*, John informs us that he is directing his argument against some of his fellow members of the court (*concuriales*).⁸ But regarding the content, the proper procedure — or so it seems to me — is to look first at theories that were prominent in Paris in the 1130s and 1140s, not at the trifles of the court and the individuals who were in Canterbury during the 1150s. In this respect, I disagree with a number of scholars.⁹

Second, and related to the first point, it is problematic to start by identifying a single member of the Canterbury court as Cornificius. Arnulf (or someone else at the court) may be Cornificius, but who are the Cornificians? It seems very unlikely that a scholar at the Canterbury court had formed a particular theory of education that he tried to disseminate through other Canterbury scholars and disciples. In fact, the *Metalogicon* provides conclusive proof that this is not possible. For, according to John, the Cornifician tendencies had had to be countered already in Paris by his own masters. Again, the natural move on our part is to look at the Parisian schools to see where such ideas concerning education could have arisen.

In Paris individual schools flourished in the 1130s and 1140s. As is well known, John studied with practically all the prominent masters of his time, and he obviously enjoyed most of the teaching. Abelard and Gilbert were his preferred masters, and as regards the less prominent ones he explicitly commented on the things which he did not like. We can be fairly sure that John did not himself study in a thoroughly Cornifician environment, although some parts of his education may resemble it. First, John does state that, despite the fact that they were fighting the Cornifician kinds, even the best teachers were affected by Cornificianism;¹⁰ thus, John O. Ward claimed that John's teachers Alberic and Robert of Melun also exhibited Cornifician tendencies, and that William of Conches and Richard "the Bishop" may have altered their teaching to suit Cornifician needs.¹¹ And second, John reserves very harsh words for the school at Mont Ste Geneviève as it degenerated into pure logic

⁸ *Metalog.* I.prol., p. 9.

⁹ McGarry (1948) 659 and Tobin (1984) 5-6, who believe that John's defence is directed at the Canterbury circle in order to fend off the Cornifician tendencies that were prominent in Paris and were now reaching England as well. And Burnett (1996) 28, who says that John's philosophy of education "belongs not to the schools of Paris but to the milieu of the translators", which means in the milieu of "the members of the *curia*".

¹⁰ *Metalog.* I.5, pp. 20-21.

¹¹ Ward (1972) 228, 235-36.

after the departure of Abelard.¹² In a well-known passage from the letter known as “Confession of Faith to Heloise”, Abelard himself declined the title “Aristotle”, in the sense of arch-logician, if, as he said, it meant that he would be “kept away from Christ” (*nolo sic esse Aristoteles ut secludar a Christo*).¹³

But it seems to me that “Cornifician” is not the right predicate in these cases, and the Mont Ste Geneviève scholars cannot be the Cornifician school. The Abelardians were characterised especially by extremely strict logical argument and adherence to the *ars*, which is in accordance with Abelard’s own view: the liberal arts were necessary, not least in order to understand Scripture.¹⁴ The Cornificians are characterised by exactly the opposite features, that is, loose and rhetorical arguments, and the abandonment of argument and *ars* proper.¹⁵ Therefore, we must look for a school that John did *not* attend.

In 1939 Roger B. Lloyd claimed, without much argument and ignoring all the difficulties involved, that Cornificius was a class name but with the contents based on Adam of Balsham.¹⁶ In 1954 Lorenzo Minio-Paluello wrote an article on Adam of Balsham’s *Ars Disserendi*, which is, to the best of my knowledge, still the only substantial treatment of Adam’s work.¹⁷ Minio-Paluello notes some similarities between the Cornificians and the Parvipontani but concludes:

It cannot be suggested that Adam’s school was coming directly under John’s criticism: too many features in the description of Cornificius’ masters do not agree with what we find either in the *Ars Disserendi* or in John’s words about Adam. But there is no doubt that some connexion existed between Adam’s teaching and that of the ‘Cornifician’ school. [...] Should we conclude that Adam stood between the two groups ...?¹⁸

¹² *Metalog.* II.10, pp. 72-73.

¹³ Peter Abelard, *Confessio Fidei ad Heloisam* (ed. Burnett), p. 152.

¹⁴ Petri Abaelardi *Theologia "Scholarium"* II.28 (ed. Buytaert & Mews), p. 420-21.

¹⁵ Contrast *Metalog.* I.3, pp. 15-17, with *Metalog.* II.10, pp. 72-73, for the two groups of scholars.

¹⁶ Lloyd (1939) 92-101.

¹⁷ Minio-Paluello (1954) with the evidence for Adam’s *vita*, pp. 159-69. Adam’s work has been curiously ignored. See the revealing description in Minio-Paluello (1954) 120-21n2; and things have not improved that much even after the edition: Minio-Paluello (1956). For instance, Adam takes up only half a page in Kneale & Kneale (1962), *viz.* p. 227, and there is not even an entry on him in Gracia & Noone (2003), despite the broad scope of this handbook.

¹⁸ Minio-Paluello (1954) 146. Repeated, apparently with approval, by De Rijk (1962-67, vol.

Finally, in his, unfortunately rather unknown, 1971 article, Gian Carlo Garfagnini pointed out that John's descriptions would fit students of Adam.¹⁹

Lloyd was on the right path, but he exaggerated, I think. Minio-Paluello's suspicion, on the other hand, can be worked out with more precision than he himself did; for, since he was interested primarily in Adam, he did not really try to solve the problems, and thus did not proceed as far as the evidence allows. Thus, I basically agree with Garfagnini, and this is the view that I will try to substantiate with reference to a particular piece of doctrine found in the introduction to Adam of Balsham's *Ars Disserendi*, namely his conception of the "basic principles". Simultaneously, the examination will throw light on this aspect of Adam's thought.

John knew Adam relatively well, or at least he himself thought so, but he did *not* attend his school. His relationship with Adam was complicated.²⁰ On the one hand, he had great respect for him as a scholar who paid particularly close attention to Aristotle. But on the other hand he disliked the style of presentation in the *Ars Disserendi*;²¹ he may not have liked the fact that Adam testified against Gilbert of Poitiers in 1147;²² and, in particular, he was concerned about Adam's influence on his students. John's own pupil, William of Soissons, was a sad example of this; for even though John may well have been proud that he contributed to his education, he thought that William developed into a logician of a rather sophisticated and overly theoretical kind, and he further believed that Adam was to blame for this.²³

The introduction to Adam's *Ars Disserendi* takes up I-X in Minio-Paluello's edition and has the following structure:²⁴

I Introduction proper

II On the basic principles (*initia*)

I) 63, and Lawn (1993) 40. See also Tacchella (1980) 301-305 for a discussion.

¹⁹ Garfagnini (1971) 935-46. I have found no references to Garfagnini's views on the Cornifician problem in later scholarly literature.

²⁰ Ward (1972) 228n20 even thinks that John may well have changed his opinion of Adam over the years.

²¹ *Metalog.* IV.3, p. 142.

²² Minio-Paluello (1954) 159-60, citing Otto of Freising.

²³ On John's relationship with Adam, and on William of Soissons and his logical inventions, see *Metalog.* II.10, III.prol., III.3, IV.3, pp. 70-73, 102, 114, 142.

²⁴ *Ars Diss.* I-X, pp. 3-8. See also Minio Paluello's introductory essay: Minio-Paluello (1956) xxiv-xxv, for a sketch of Adam's introduction.

- III The basis of knowledge
- IV The basis of art
- V The basis of ability to take part in rational discourse/discussion
- VI A historical sketch (decay)
- VII A historical sketch (rebirth)
- VIII The distinguishing features of the *Ars Disserendi*
- IX The subject matter
- X The goals of the investigation

We must, Adam says (I), proceed from the “beginning” or “basic principle” (*initium*).²⁵ But there is not a single principle for the intellectual areas concerning discourse/dialectic.

First we have (structured) knowledge (*scientia*), the art (*ars*) and the ability to take part in rational discourse/discussion (*facultas disserendi*). These are each based on one or more of the three principles: natural talent, that is, the natural human capacity for quick and independent thinking and comprehension (*ingenium*),²⁶ practical use (*usus*) and art (*ars*), the latter having first been established through knowledge, *ingenium* and use.²⁷ Structured knowledge of

²⁵ In the introduction Adam consistently uses *initium* for “basic principle”, which is less common than *principium*. However, Calcidius (in his commentary on the *Timaeus*) and Adelard of Bath (*De Eodem et Diverso and Quaestiones Naturales*) both use *initia*. Later in the *Ars Disserendi*, Adam also uses *principium*.

²⁶ On *ingenium* in John’s work, see *Metalog*. I.prol., I.11, I.24, pp. 9-11, 29-31, 51-55; *Entbet. Maior* vv. 167-74, 1107-1108, pp. 117, 177. Cf. Guillelmi de Conchis *Glosae super Platonem* IX (ed. Jeauneau), p. 16 (with Jeauneau’s *apparatus fontium*): *Ingenium est vis naturalis ad aliquid cito intelligendum* = “Ingenium is a natural capacity for quickly apprehending something.” William puts this view forward several times, but he is explicit that *ingenium* can be made better by being taught and by study (*doctrina et studio emendatur*): Guillelmi de Conchis *Glosae super Platonem* XXII (ed. Jeauneau), pp. 40-41.

²⁷ Of course, the basic concepts *ingenium* (*natura*), *usus* (*exercitatio*) and *ars* in combination (“talent”, “practice”, “theory”) are much older than Adam, going back to the Ancient Greeks (φύσις, μελέτη, ἐπιστήμη), and John knew this fact: *Polierat*. VII.1, p. 93; *Entbet. Maior* vv. 1107-1108, p. 177. The distinction was known to the Middle Ages through Cicero (e.g. *De Or.* I), Boethius (Boeth., *In Cic. Top., ad.* § 7 [= PL. 64: 1048 Migne]) and Augustine (*De Doctr. Christ.* IV.3.4; *Trin.* X.11.17) in particular. *Cic., Top.* § 19, combined

discourse is based solely on the natural capacity for thought; art is based on both this capacity and on practical use; and the ability to take part in rational discourse is based on all three principles (II). Chapters III-V describe more elaborately the elements involved in knowledge, art and ability. Then, in VI Adam provides a historical sketch of the decline of discourse: first, he says, the ability decayed; then art was lost; and finally knowledge. But this decay was followed by a revival of discourse as a discipline (VII), and Adam intends to provide an important element of this revival with his *Ars Disserendi* (VIII). Descriptions of matter, method and goals conclude the introduction (IX-X).

The central concept, then, is *ingenium*, which is at the heart of establishing both knowledge, art and ability in discourse; for it is the primary capacity of human beings needed in discourse. And “discourse” cannot mean simply “dialectic” in a narrow sense. In a description of the reasons for the downfall of *ars disserendi*, Adam mentions as the first cause that no one has ever provided a single, complete description of it; the different elements of the discipline must be gathered from different authors.²⁸ If he was talking about dialectic proper, this statement would be obviously false.²⁹ A description of dialectic was at hand in the works of Boethius, and furthermore Aristotle’s *Topics* was available to Adam. Thus, *ars disserendi* must comprise logic in general,³⁰ as this discipline is viewed by Adam, and *ingenium* is therefore his foundation of logic. This is not to say that his conception of logic is entirely Aristotelian. It is very uncertain to which extent he knew the *Ars Nova*, and it seems rather clear that topical logic, rather than syllogistics, is the important kind of logic in his work. Generally, he is *sui generis*.

with Boeth., *In Cic. Top., ad.* § 73 (= PL. 64: 1167-69 Migne), also informed the medievals that *ingenium, usus and ars*, among others, could be the basis of authority. In Antiquity, the terms were primarily important in *rhetoric*, whereas they had gradually been transferred also to *logic* by Adam’s time. On the rhetorical tradition, see Fantham (2004) 82.

²⁸ *Ars Diss.* VII, p. 5: *Quare autem sic causa haec: primo quod a pluribus disperse de arte quaedam, a nullo totam artem ordine explicatam contingit inveniri.* = “The reason is this: first, that one may find something about the art scattered in different sources; it can not be found systematically explained in any single source.”

²⁹ The claim is similar to, perhaps even modelled on, the equally strange claim in Boeth., *De Top. Diff.* IV.1 (ed. Nikitas), pp. 72-73, concerning rhetoric.

³⁰ This is in accordance with Cicero’s use of *ars/ratio disserendi*: see in particular *Fat.* 1: ‘...totaque est λογική, quam rationem disserendi voco’, and further *Cic., Fin.* I.8. The medievals knew the definition through *Top.* § 6. But see e.g. Hugh of St. Victor’s *Didasc.* I.11, pp. 20-21, for distinctions between *logica* and *dialectica*, which were also well-known in the 12th century.

But *ingenium* is not something that is learned; it is a human capacity given by nature, that is: it is an essential part of human nature.³¹ Adam does not even indicate that *ingenium* as such can be trained: it is the principle of knowledge, and the next step, that is, the art of discourse, is established, not through a change in *ingenium*, but by use (*usus*) of the knowledge obtained through it; and *ingenium*, *usus* and *ars* then combine to establish the ability (*facultas*).³² *Ingenium* does not stand alone, then, but it is *the* central capacity.³³

Suppose now that one of Adam's followers — either one with more superficial theoretical inclinations,³⁴ one who wanted to stress the natural capabilities of man as opposed to the rest of God's creation, or simply someone more lazy —, used his master's theory. The goal of the theoretical sciences is pure knowledge, and thus we need only *ingenium*. The practical application through other means that is part of Adam's theory and extremely prominent throughout John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon*³⁵ would not be needed, or at least it would be needed only as a minor element. For *ingenium* would establish pure knowledge on its own. This is in accordance with John's repeated charge that the Cornificians do not want to debate and demonstrate their views; they simply avoid such situations, give empty speeches and pose as if they have knowledge.³⁶ John claims that they do not actually have such knowledge, but on the Parvipontanean conception of knowledge, they do: knowledge is what *ingenium* has brought them. In a debating situation the borders between the more important (knowledge based on *ingenium*) and the less important (art and ability based on practical use and, in the latter case, art) have, so to speak, been crossed. It seems reasonable that scholars who are convinced that they are superior are more likely to be fostered in a rather secretive school, which

³¹ See e.g. Conradi Hirsaugiensis *Dialogus super Auctores sive Didascalon* (ed. Schepss), p. 76: ...*natura doctrina usu, id est ingenio scientia assiduitate* ...

³² *Ars Diss.* II, p. 3: *Scientiae enim disserendi ex ingenio absque ceteris [scil. usu et arte] initium, artis autem ex hoc et usu, facultatis autem ex his et arte.* = "The basic principle/starting point of knowledge of argumentative reasoning comes from *ingenium* without use and art; that of art comes from both *ingenium* and use; and that of the ability comes from these two as well as art."

³³ These facts about *ingenium*, too, could be supported by the authority of Cicero and Augustine: see *Cic.*, *De Or.* I.113; *Aug.*, *De Doctr. Christ.* IV.3.4.

³⁴ John certainly thought that William of Soissons (mentioned above) developed into this kind of thinker in Adam's school. In general, the schools in the first half of the 12th century had strongly theoretical inclinations.

³⁵ See also Ward (1972) 251n85.

³⁶ *Metalog.* I.3, pp. 15-17.

is closed to outsiders and hangs on to particular dogmas, than in an open and competitive environment. John of Salisbury saw the Parvipontani precisely like this, that is, as an exclusive school that hung on to its own dogmas.³⁷

Thus, it takes only a minor change in Adam's theory to make a Cornificius. And, in fact, there may be evidence that Adam himself unwittingly provided even more of the foundation. John refers approvingly to "a certain wise man" (*sapiens quidam*) who had said that "*ingenium* proceeds from nature, it is furthered by *usus*, it is blunted by excessive work, and sharpened by moderate exercise".³⁸ This sage has never been identified,³⁹ but seeing (1) that his conceptual apparatus matches Adam's very well, (2) that John does not reveal his name, and (3) that the kind of gratitude he feels towards him is more suitable in relation to Adam than for example to one of John's own teachers,⁴⁰ I conjecture that John is in fact referring to him. And if this is correct, then the Cornificians would have had the authoritative statement by their own master that they should not exaggerate their studies beyond proper *usus*, but had misinterpreted it grossly.⁴¹ The *artes* are not part of the quotation, and therefore

³⁷ *Metalog.* II.10, p. 72: *Unde ad magistrum Adam acutissimi virum ingenii, et quicquid alii sentiant multarum litterarum, qui Aristoteli prae ceteris incumberebat, familiaritatem contraxi ulteriores, ut licet eum doctorem non habuerim, mihi sua benigne communicaret, et se quod aut nulli faciebat, aut paucis alienis, mihi patentius exponerebat. Putabatur enim invidia laborare.* = "As a consequence [*scil.* since I, John, while teaching, often had to recall what I had previously learned], I established a close friendship with Master Adam, a man of extremely sharp intellect, and the one who drew on Aristotle more than any other thinker, despite what other people of much learning think. Even though he was not my teacher, he kindly shared his views with me and explained them very clearly, which he never, or only rarely, did to others. For he was reputed to suffer much from [intellectual] jealousy." See also IV.3, p. 142.

³⁸ *Metalog.* I.11, p. 31: *Unde egregie sapiens quidam, cui dicti habeo gratiam, ait: "Ingenium a natura proficiscitur, usu iuvatur, immoderato labore retunditur, et temperato acuitur exercitio."*

³⁹ Webb has no entry on him in his *apparatus fontium*, and, probably as a result of this, there is nothing in Hall or McGarry on this issue either. Lejeune (2009) 128n93 simply states: "On ignore qui est ce sage. Un contemporain de Jean?"

⁴⁰ *Metalog.* II.10, p. 72, and, in particular, *Metalog.* III.3, p. 114: *Deridebat eos noster ille Angelus Peripateticus Adam, cuius vestigia sequuntur multi, sed pauci praepediente invidia profitentur, [...]. Habui enim hominem familiarem assiduitate colloqui et communicatione librorum et cotidiano fere exercitio super emergentibus articulis conferendi, sed nec una die discipulus eius fui. Ei tamen habeo gratias quod eo docente plura cognovi, ...* = "That English Peripatetic, our Adam [of Balsham], who has many followers, but few who are willing to admit it, deterred, as they are by bad repute, [...]. As a result of our many conversations, our exchanging of books and our almost daily discussions of topics that had arisen, we became friends, but I was not his student for so much as a day. Still, I am grateful to him, because I have learned a lot from him ..." (my italics in the translation).

⁴¹ For a similarly case concerning Gilbert of Poitiers and his students, see *Hist. Pont.* X, p.

John himself has to spell out the consequences for the establishment of these.

The degenerate Cornifician theory is also in complete accordance with the sketch that Adam provides. Decay from (a) the ideal state of knowledge, art and ability goes backwards, so to speak: first (b) “ability” is lost, then (c) the “art”, and finally (d) “knowledge” disappears.⁴² On this ladder of degeneration, the Cornificians are found at (c): they retain knowledge and the high regard for *ingenium*, and perhaps they use the knowledge to a small degree,⁴³ but nothing else. Cornificius, then, is a degenerate Parvipontanus.

A comparison with Hugh of St. Victor’s conception of the origin of logic is instructive here.⁴⁴ Hugh is not concerned with *ingenium* at all; natural gifts and intellect are not prominent in his analysis. But *usus* and *ars* are crucial. Of course, mankind wrote and spoke before the discovery of logic, Hugh says, but there were no general rules or structures to guide human beings. “All sciences/knowledge were founded in use before they were [structured] in art”

10 (quoting Gilbert, who is defending himself against charges of heresy): *Fateor me plures habuisse discipulos, qui me quidem omnes audierunt, sed quidam minus intellexerunt: quod opinati sunt scripserunt de corde suo, non de spiritu meo.* = “I confess that I have had many students, who admittedly all heard me lecture, but some of them understood very little. The opinion that they have formed and written down constitutes their own interpretation, not my meaning.”

⁴² *Ars Diss.* VI, p. 5: *Postremo autem — et arte ista et ceteris ex ista multipliciter et velut iam satis ad cognitionem explicatis — usum disserendi et sic ad disserendo explicata attendendi paulatim primo rarescere, omnino deinde praetermitti accidit. Quare — ad id ad quod ars nullis attendentibus — disserendi primo facultatem, inde artem, deinde scientiam posteriorum fugisse cognitionem necesse est; quare et singulorum quae edisseruntur artificiosam intelligentiam nullam esse.* = “Later — when both this art and others that had arisen from it had been thoroughly explained and were almost sufficiently understood — the use of argumentative reasoning, and so also the use of attending to that which had been explained by argumentative reasoning, started slowly to become rare, until it was eventually completely ignored. Since nobody attended to the subject matter of the art, it therefore happened as a necessary result, that first the ability for argumentative reasoning, then the art, and finally the knowledge of that which followed was no longer understood. Thus, not even of the individual subjects on which people reasoned by argument was art used to gain understanding.”

⁴³ On the position of use and practice in the Cornifician state, which should equal the degenerated state described by Adam, see *Metalog.* I.6, p. 23 (= John’s summary of a Cornifician view, with probable allusions to Cicero’s *De Oratore* and Vergil’s *Georgics*): *Usus magistrum reddit. [...] Assiduitas operis in quavis arte praestantissimum facit opificem.* On the surface, this would seem to imply a rather high level of training, but, since John also tells us that the Cornificians are unwilling to debate with other scholars, one must conclude that they do not train properly in the original Parvipontanean sense, that is, in the way that Adam wanted scholars to train.

⁴⁴ *Didasc.* I.11, p. 21.

(*omnes ...scientiae prius erant in usu quam in arte*).⁴⁵ So, Hugh would consider the Cornifician position a return to the pre-logical period. But it is to be noted that Hugh apparently does not see any such signs in the 1120s. His famous dictum “we have many who study, but few who are wise” is a topos.⁴⁶

I see two problems with the suggestion that Cornificius was a Parvipontanus of some kind. The first is easily solved, but the second is not.

(1) A central part of John’s charge is that Cornificius wants to abolish the *trivium*, and logic in particular. But could this really be true of a Parvipontanus? In fact, the answer is “yes”, if he has degenerated to the stage of accepting only *ingenium* and, to some extent, *usus*; for logic is an art, the *ars disserendi*, and art is not part of his knowledge. And even if he did accept this particular *ars*, one might bring him into accord with John’s description by letting him take *ars disserendi* in the more general sense of “art of discourse”, or “the art of speaking well”.⁴⁷ Since the basic concepts *ingenium* and *usus* are originally taken from rhetorical theory, this is not actually far-fetched; it could be construed simply as a kind of return to the ancient models, or simply, in accordance with Hugh’s view, a previous stage. Finally, one should also note that John is obviously exaggerating his descriptions of the Cornifician movement.

(2) If one wants the Parvipontani to be Cornificians, how can Adam then describe not only the decay but also the rebirth of *ars disserendi* as having taken place before 1132/3? Furthermore, Adam seems to think that the degenerate scholars have been finally defeated.⁴⁸ But in 1132/3 John of Salisbury had not yet even come to Paris, and he would, therefore, have had no opportunity to meet Cornificians; but it is clear from the *Metalogicon* that he believes them to be still very much alive. Adam and John are clearly talking about the same phenomenon, but their chronologies are different and incompatible, I think, even if one allows that teachers with similar tendencies preceded Cornificius himself.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ In fact, Hugh wants to generalise the *usus-ars* explanation to cover all the seven liberal arts, but this is irrelevant for the present purpose.

⁴⁶ *Didasc.* III.3, p. 53: *multos studentes, paucos sapientes invenimus*.

⁴⁷ Alexander Neckham, who is very critical of excessive subtlety in logic despite his admiration for Adam, could never accept a thoroughly Parvipontanean logic: see *Alexandri Neckam De Naturis Rerum*, ch. 174 (ed. Wright), p. 311, for his criticism of Parisian logic.

⁴⁸ See also *Metalog.* I.5, pp. 20-22.

⁴⁹ Alessio (1953-54) distinguishes between “Precornificiani” and “Cornificiani”. See further Tacchella (1980) 280-81 for the impossibility of establishing a certain chronological framework, and his notes 22-25 for further references.

There are problems here that I cannot solve, and, to the best of my knowledge, no scholar can claim to have solved the chronological questions concerning the Cornifician movement. But it seems probable that both Adam and John are a little cavalier as regards the facts. Concerning Adam's descriptions, it may be noted in particular that he finds it very easy to describe both the decay and the rebirth of studies in a Parvipontanean terminology, which might indicate that Adam actually saw this development in someone who accepted his basic principles. It is certainly easier to describe a development that is actually based on principles identical to one's own than a development based on completely different basic concepts.

Thus, objection no. (2) may suggest that Cornificius is not a real Parvipontanus after all, but someone inspired by the kind of thoughts that also fuelled Adam's school. On the other hand, there is something odd about Adam's general sketch of the decay. For is he seriously suggesting that logic as such had been almost abandoned in the first quarter of the 12th century? This would seem extremely unreasonable.⁵⁰ And if he is referring to a specific branch of logic such as dialectic proper, which would accord with remarks in the *Metalogicon*,⁵¹ then he would seem to be using the phrase "ars disserendi" inconsistently; for, as I noted above, it should signify logic broadly speaking, if the remarks in the following chapter (VII) are to make sense. Perhaps Adam's sketch cannot actually be regarded as historically correct, but is simply a way of attacking contemporary views that are based on a foundation similar to Adam's — whether or not they are strictly speaking part of Adam's school —, but, in his view, much distorted. In any case, there is, I think, no doubt that the Cornificians are very similar to, if not actually a degenerate kind of Parvipontani, whether or not they were, or had been, actually part of Adam's school.

To the above, Minio-Paluello's no less convincing arguments can be added. The most important is divided into two related ones.⁵² (1) John of Salisbury mentions that a number of terms are used much too frequently, for his taste, by the Cornificians.⁵³ These include *conveniens*, *inconveniens*, *argumentum* and *ratio*. Minio-Paluello observed that "these words occur over and over again in

⁵⁰ John of Salisbury claims that those who wanted to abandon logic had had some influence, but that they had always been fought by more prudent masters: *Metalog.* I.5, pp. 20-21. Even this must be an exaggeration.

⁵¹ *Metalog.* III.5, IV.24, pp. 119-20, 162.

⁵² Minio-Paluello (1954) 140-46.

⁵³ *Metalog.* I.3, pp. 15-17.

several passages of Adam's *Ars Disserendi*, with an insistence which would justify John's charge".⁵⁴ (2) But the really interesting thing is that the second recension of Adam's work, made later in the 12th century, has altered the text of particularly the passages containing these terms. "It is clear that the 'editor' of the second recension was careful to avoid as much as possible the use of those three words, at least when they occurred with a technical meaning."⁵⁵ These are both very strong arguments, although the number of uncertainties concerning the circumstances of the second revision may be said to weaken the second argument. For instance, if accepted, it would imply, either that John's criticism actually had an impact on contemporary philosophical schools, which I consider highly unlikely; or that more prominent masters and scholars voiced exactly this kind of criticism, perhaps even in John's school-days; or that Adam himself revised it, based on his conversations with John, but this seems to be impossible due to the nature of the second recension.⁵⁶ Thus, we would also have to raise the question of who made the second recension of Adam's *Ars Disserendi*. And was it primarily Adam's own views that were incorporated, or did other Parvipontanean scholars (and how many?) contribute the major part? Minio-Paluello recognised at least some of these problems, but he had no solution.⁵⁷ (3) As a supplement to the above, he stated as a third, and minor, argument that John criticised the Cornificians for not allowing non-logical examples, like "ass", "man" and so forth, in logical discussion.⁵⁸ In the first recension, Adam chose all his examples from logic itself, and Minio-Paluello points out that it is only in the second recension that examples are chosen from other disciplines, maybe as a result of criticism levelled against the original use of terms.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Minio-Paluello (1954) 143.

⁵⁵ Minio-Paluello (1954) 145.

⁵⁶ See the description in Minio-Paluello (1954).

⁵⁷ Minio-Paluello (1954) 132: "[T]he views of Adam and those of other logicians which have been worked into the structure of the *Ars* by the editor of the second recension cannot at present be separated."

⁵⁸ *Metalog.* I.3, p. 17.

⁵⁹ However, in the same chapter (*Metalog.* I.3, pp. 15-17), John criticises the Cornificians for their strange (non-logical) examples. See also the amusing, and anti-logic, contemporary satire by Vitalis of Blois, e.g. the following two passages: Vital de Blois, *Geta* 163-4, 409-411 (ed. Guilhou), pp. 41, 52: *Sed pretium pene miranda sophismata porto. // Iamque probare scio quod sit asellus homo. [...] Sic sum, sic non sum. Pereat dialectica per quam // sic perii penitus. Nunc scio: scire nocet. Cum didicit Geta logicam, tunc desiit esse ...* = "I come here with some truly wonderful sophisms as my prize. I am now capable of proving that a man is an ass.

Finally, I shall add a few simple observations. First, John stresses the fact that he was never Adam's pupil.⁶⁰ If the Cornificians were students of his, John would have had good reasons to distance himself. Second, it seems that the Cornificians did not generally recognise authorities except when they were useful. Thus, Seneca was adduced as an authority, because he had stated that the arts does not make a man good.⁶¹ Similarly, in the *Ars Disserendi*, Adam stresses his own originality in the art of logic;⁶² he wants "to free logic of all complicated accretions and superstructures",⁶³ that is, the unfortunate terminology and theories with which it has been burdened by previous authors.⁶⁴ John describes him as afflicted by intellectual jealousy, and the entire school, as described by John, is, so to speak, self-sufficient.⁶⁵ But Adam himself was a brilliant thinker who evaluated previous doctrines before discarding them, whereas one might easily imagine a lesser thinker of his school discarding everything that preceded, in apparent accordance with his master's teaching. Third, John O. Ward has pointed to *insipientia* as a trait of character found, fairly or not, in the descriptions of both Adam and Cornificius.⁶⁶ Fourth, and finally, in the *Entheticus*, John apparently refers to a Parvipontanus immediately after having described unreasonable scholars who reject the study of the ancient authors.⁶⁷ The Parvipontanean school is not the only one mentioned, but it is perhaps striking that novelties and lack of method are much stressed in this section of the *Entheticus*.

All answers to the Cornifician problem must necessarily be speculative. But, contrary to all previous suggestions,⁶⁸ the present one has, I believe, the advantage of beginning from the issue that is at the heart of the discussion:

[...] Thus I am, thus I am not. Damn that dialectic by which I have been thus completely destroyed! I know now: to know is harmful. When Geta learned logic, he ceased to be ..."

⁶⁰ See the quotation above (note 40).

⁶¹ *Metalog.* I.22, pp. 49-50. Sen., *Ep.* 88. On Seneca in the Middle Ages, see Nothdurft (1963).

On John's use of, and respect for, Seneca, see *Polycrat.* VIII.13, pp. 317-20.

⁶² *Ars Diss.* VIII, p. 6. See Minio-Paluello (1954) 116, 135. However, both Alberic and Robert of Melun did the same, according to John: *Metalog.* II.10, p. 71.

⁶³ Minio-Paluello (1954) 116.

⁶⁴ *Contra*, or so it would seem, Adelardus Bathoniensis, *Quaestiones Naturales*, prologus (ed. Burnett), p. 82, who claims that Latin scholars at the beginning of the 12th century did not like novelties.

⁶⁵ *Metalog.* II.10, IV.3, pp. 72, 142.

⁶⁶ Ward (1972) 228n20.

⁶⁷ *Entbet. Maior* vv. 49-66, 81-98, pp. 109, 111.

⁶⁸ Minio-Paluello and Garfagnini being, of course, partial exceptions.

educational theory. We still need a real name for Cornificius, if in fact he ever existed, but I believe that central aspects of the Cornifician views make more sense in the light of Parvipontanean theory than in any other context.⁶⁹ It may well be true, as Minio-Paluello conjectured, that Adam of Balsham stood between the Cornificians and other educational theories in the first part of the 12th century. Indeed, he probably did so in a much more direct way than Minio-Paluello suspected, namely as Garfagnini argued, either (1) as the actual teacher of Cornificius Parvipontanus, or (2) as part of the theoretical foundation of the Cornifician views, or (3) as part of the foundation of a theoretical movement of the Cornifician kind.

⁶⁹For instance, Godman (2000) 165 thinks that Cornificius reflects an extreme version of an imaginary pupil described by Hugh of St. Victor, *Didasc.* VI.3, p. 115.

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