For a college of humanistic studies in Renaissance Toulouse

The early Oratio de instituenda in republica juventute by Jean Bodin

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In 1559, Jean Bodin pled, before the city parliament, for the project of establishing a college of humanistic studies in Toulouse, financed with public money and open to students of humble origins, too: it would benefit the study of law, the social life, and the economy. Bodin then compared private education with public education: the latter favored friendship relationships between young people of different wealth, social class, and religious confession, a friendship that was more necessary than ever in France, then on the verge of the religious wars.

Keywords: Jean Bodin, college of humanistic studies, public education, private education, religious peace.

Per un collegio di studi umanistici nella Tolosa del Rinascimento. La giovanile Oratio de instituenda in republica juventute di Jean Bodin
Nel 1559 Jean Bodin difende, di fronte al parlamento cittadino, il progetto di istituire a Tolosa un collegio di studi umanistici, finanziato con denaro pubblico e aperto anche a studenti non abbienti: avvantaggiando lo studio del diritto, la vita sociale, l'economia. Bodin contrappone quindi l'istruzione domiciliare a quella pubblica: quest'ultima favorisce i rapporti di amicizia tra giovani diversi per censo, provenienza sociale, confessione religiosa, amicizia quanto mai necessaria in una Francia, sull'orlo delle guerre di religione.

Parole chiave: Jean Bodin, collegio umanistico, istruzione pubblica, istruzione privata, pace religiosa.

On the Education of the Youth in the State

In 1559 Jean Bodin gave a speech in front of the parliament of Toulouse to convince the elders to allocate part of the public budget to the establishment of a college of humanistic studies (Bodin, 1951a, 1951b; Mesnard, 1951; Mesnard, 1962; Husson, 1954; Rose, 1977; Renzi, 1991; Vasoli, 2001; Suggi, 2007; Di Bello, 2021). The works needed to set up the facilities that had been interrupted, and a new project raised fears that the college would end up not being built: the construction of a bridge over the Garonne, which was considered necessary for the commercial development of the city, and therefore a priority over any other initiative. A clear outlook was taking shape: the financial resources available to the treasury would be used in the construction of the bridge, while the birth of the college would have to wait for better times.

In 1559 Bodin was around thirty years old; he was not yet the author of the fundamental *Six Livres de la République*, which appeared in 1576 (Turchetti, 2018), he was not even a citizen of Toulouse – he was in fact born in Angers, in 1529 or 1530 – although he taught, as a lecturer, at the prestigious Faculty of Law where he had been a student, a pupil of Arnaud du Ferrier. However, he enjoyed good relations within the academic circles, the local bourgeoisie and nobility, and, in particular, he was close to the Du Faur family, one of the most prominent in the city. His oration is expertly shaped according to the canons of humanistic rhetoric, and there are two elements that stand out clearly from Bodin's arguments, once their rhetorical excesses are pruned out: the effects of a revival of the study of humanistic studies on social life, and the awareness that this renewal is in turn the result of a precise choice, made by administrators who have allocated to schools and colleges the resources needed for their functioning.

It was up to those who govern to create study and education centers based on new knowledge and Bodin repeatedly requested that even young people without economic resources be welcomed by the college, at public expense. He aimed for the widest possible increase of the number of educated people, since there would be a need for it: trained magistrates, officials and teachers were going to be more necessary than ever in the years to come, in view of the growing complexity of administration, bureaucracy and commerce. The Faculty of Law of Toulouse would be the first to benefit from the establishment of the college: Bodin referred to the new French legal school,

strongly characterized by the historical culture and philological approach characteristic of humanism. It is thanks to the *bonae litterae* that legal studies had been profoundly renewed: knowledge of Latin allowed one to directly read not only Justinian's *Corpus Juris Civilis* but also Roman historical works, thus grasping the links between the institutional changes that affected Rome and the changes which occurred on the economic, political and social levels. Ancient historians and moralists also offered an insight into the typical dynamics of political struggle, described paradigmatic examples, outlined the psychological traits of some protagonists of ancient history and shed light on the behavior patterns, passions and ambitions that often recur in processes linked to the conquest and management of power (Moreau-Reibel, 1933; Garosci, 1934; Franklin, 1963; Quaglioni, 1992; Turchetti, 1984; Turchetti, 2022; Prodi, 2000; Rossi, 2008; Pihlajamäki *et alii*, Eds., 2016; Fedele, 2017; Wijffels, 2021; Ruggiero, 2021; Isnardi, Parente, 1964). It was a sort of huge repertory, to which those responsible for guiding the "new" political bodies that were being established between the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century should turn: they were in fact large and populous states, which had to be governed by applying clear and well-defined laws. These laws should be issued in the awareness of the effects they could have on subjects, and making use of an administration that knew how to carry out its role. The teachers of the University of Toulouse had distinguished themselves in this renewal of legal studies, but their primacy was threatened by the birth of schools based on the new humanistic culture in other cities, to which a growing number of young people were resorting.

Falls and Rebirths

In the first part of his speech Bodin outlined a general picture of the rebirth of studies. He evoked the collapse of Greece, once the cradle of the most refined civilization, its schools, libraries, artistic treasures devoured by flames, a clear reference to the Ottoman conquest, and contrasted it with the revival of studies which took place first in Italy, thanks to Pope Nicholas V, Tommaso Parentucelli, and to Pope Leo X, Giovanni de' Medici, then in France, by virtue of the initiatives of Francis I. Bodin mentioned in particular the college established by Francis I in Milan in 1520, entrusted to Giano Lascaris so that he could replicate what he had done in Rome, where he

had created the Greek College of the Quirinale under the auspices of Leo X (Garin, 1952, 1961, 1993, 1976, 2012; Kristeller, 1965, 1969; Ciliberto, 2012; Hankins, 2022), and the establishment of the Collège de France and the Bibliothèque de Fontainebleau, to which Lascaris himself and Guillaume Budè contributed. The latter was considered by Bodin one of the main architects of the revival of studies in France (Bodin, 1951a, p. 8; 1951b, p. 35). According to Bodin, the choice of Francis I to finance every necessary expense was decisive: thus it was possible to attract to Paris the humanists fleeing from Italy following the Sack of Rome in 1527. Those intellectuals led France out of the barbarism that had long plagued it, so that they made it the new Greece, and Paris a true city of letters and an impregnable citadel of culture (Bodin, 1951a, pp. 8-9; 1951b, p. 35). A project of Francis I, however, remained unfulfilled due to his sudden death: bringing together the best of the French youth in a college where they could study all the sciences, the 'Collèges des Trois Langues' which was supposed to accommodate six hundred students and for which thirty thousand écus per year had been allocated (Bodin,1951a, p. 9; 1951b, pp. 35-36).

The revival of humanistic studies brought advantages in every area of social life: not only law, medicine, philosophy, rhetoric, history have benefited from it, but also the sciences, in particular astronomy, geometry and cosmography. Agriculture, architecture and even military art also benefited from it, as demonstrated by the case of Guillaume Du Bellay, a military man and a man of letters (Bodin, 1951a, p. 9; 1951b, pp. 35-36). Gone was the time when Greek literature was completely unknown, only fragments of Latin literature were known, medicine was ignored, and the knowledge of Roman law was at best vague and inadequate (Garin, 1949, 1957, 1958; Battaglia, 1960). Even humanities, however, undergo the cycle that regulates everything: the arts flourish, develop, decline and finally die, disappearing into long oblivion if not carefully cultivated (Bodin, 2013, pp. 608-627; De Caprariis, 1959, pp. 318-371; Franklin, 1963; Cotroneo, 1966; Dubois, 1977; Miegge, 1995, pp. 91-100; Suggi, 2005, pp. 221-242). Waxing or waning, this was the alternative: France had the task of defending its primacy in studies, threatened by the Renaissance which was underway throughout Europe (Bodin, 1951a, p. 10; 1951b, p. 38). Toulouse, this was Bodin's thesis, had to be part of this cycle of rebirth, seize the opportunity by creating the humanistic college, and thus avoid the decadence it would otherwise face.

Toulouse

In July 1551, Henri II issued the letters patent with which he ordered the closure of eight "sans exercises" colleges present in the city – in reality boarding schools for students of the Faculty of Law in which no teaching activity was carried out – and ordered the creation of two new institutes dedicated to teaching classical languages and humanistic culture (Mesnard, 1951, p. 2). The first should have arisen from the modernization of the ancient college 'de l'Esquille' with the name of *Collegium primarium* or *Collège des Capitouls* – the college which was the subject of Bodin's speech – the second, called *secondarium*, would have become in 1562, through the authorization by Charles IX, the Jesuit College.

Bodin addressed those who opposed the creation of the college: among them there were a small number of men who were hostile to letters, and those who simply believed that there were other, more urgent projects to which public money should have been allocated. The latter were truly interested in the common good and yet they were wrong, since they did not know where it lay, that is, in initiatives that would benefit everyone and do no harm to anyone, while not taking care of those initiatives would create a real disaster for the state. This was the case with schools: cities were worth what the education of their young people was worth, continued the Angevin, appealing to the authority of Solon and Lycurgus, legislators of Athens, and of Plato and Aristotle, fathers of political thought and in turn school founders. Solon, aware of the public function of education, provided severe penalties for fathers who did not take care of their children's education and established in detail how to impart it (Bodin, 1951a, p. 11; 1951b, p. 39). Like any other activity, education, Bodin claimed, had to be regulated by public decree (Bodin, 1951a, p. 12; 1951b, p. 41; Desideri, 2003).

Bodin then turned to the enemies of humanities, those who did not desire a good education either for themselves or for their children, men who were indistinguishable from beasts, who did not ask themselves on which laws their city should be founded: in fact it was not possible to legislate without knowing justice, but those who did not receive a good education would be unable to distinguish between what is right and what is not (Bodin, 1951a, pp. 12-15; 1951b, pp. 41-44).

The examples of Athens, Alexandria in Egypt and Rome confirmed that there was a connection between the development of the liberal arts

and the power and wealth of the cities dedicating significant resources to them. It also happened in Toulouse, which, thanks to the prestige of its Faculty of Law, attracted young people even from cities where universities existed, such as Bourges, Orléans, Valencia, Poitiers, Angers itself, Bodin's hometown, Grenoble, Cahors, Salamanca. However, Toulouse's primacy had to be defended, the Angevin continued: many students were already heading towards Strasbourg, Bourges and Orléans.

Bodin then criticized those who maintained that law did not agree with letters, explaining that rather the opposite was true: this was demonstrated by the work of masters such as Budè, Alciato and Connan (Bodin, 1951a, p. 17; 1951b, p. 47). It was thanks to the work of masters like those that the meaning and function of law had changed, taking on the role of a discipline thanks to which it was possible to intervene to regulate social life, guaranteeing the delicate balance between norms, equity and justice, and thus taking into account the different needs of social, economic and productive life. Laws not only had to be the expression of a principle of justice, they also had to appear as such, in order to fully legitimize political power. This was one of the characteristic features of the process of formation of the modern state (Turchetti, 1984; Prodi, 2000; Pihlajamäki *et alii*, Eds., 2016; Fedele, 2017; Wijffels, 2021; Ruggiero, 2021).

The study of law would be therefore strengthened by the union with humanistic studies: this would make clear the connections with other areas of knowledge, it would define the links between human justice and the eternal law that regulates every human event, and it would clarify the competences and limits of the legislative action of the sovereign and the Senate, the rights and duties of citizens, the boundaries of the judicial power of magistrates. Furthermore, research aimed at understanding the links between legal systems and the form of the state would benefit from this. It was thanks to this research that it would be possible to establish which laws were suitable for a monarchy, or for an oligarchy, and finally for a popular state (Isnardi, Parente, 1964; Turchetti, 2022).

Public Education, Private Education

After that, Bodin examined how the young people of Toulouse were educated: they were entrusted to private tutors or they were sent to study in

Paris, the latter being the choice commonly considered worthy of admiration. But, added Bodin, the teaching methods of the Parisian colleges were severe and harsh, the students being forced to suffer deprivations and humiliations, while both parents and children would have achieved great advantages if it were possible to train in humanistic studies in Toulouse and then enroll in the local law school.

As for home education, it came with quite a few drawbacks. First of all, it required that a single tutor would know each science, and also how to methodically deal with each discipline, having mastered the best teaching methods (Bodin, 1951a, p. 19; 1951b, p. 50). Teachers of this kind were almost impossible to find, and even if one could, no one would be able to pay them adequately. Furthermore, anyone who dedicated many hours to teaching their student every day would hardly have time to study. Resorting to multiple teachers would also be disadvantageous: the unity of the teaching would be lost, fragmented into notions lacking in coherence and in methods so different as to produce inconsistencies and confusion.

In addition, those educated at home were deprived of daily contact with their fellow students, which would lead, almost naturally, to emulating those who stood out for their qualities and to moderating excesses. Isolated, without any familiarity with peers, the child educated at home risked giving in to apathy and indolence, while instead the ability to speak in public and support cross-examination had to be fostered and developed, so as to become ready for public life, which required knowing how to speak in an assembly and managing one's emotions. Furthermore, it was impossible to identify the most capable among young people whose talents and virtues no one, save for their private tutor, would have had the opportunity to assess (Bodin, 1951a, p. 23; 1951b, p. 53). Finally, the economic treatment usually reserved for tutors, while unattainable for the less well-off, was anyway insufficient to guarantee good teachers. It was better to pay them adequately with public money, so as to have good and trained teachers, and to allow even young people without means to benefit from their teaching.

Bodin also criticized what he defined as "softness", the care given to children by the women of the house, which he accused of preventing the full formation of the virtues – strength of mind, sense of responsibility, dedication to work – typical of a good man (Bodin, 1951a, p. 24; 1951b, p. 56). He then turned his attention to the spreading of opinions that were dangerous for public morality. These were the result of the reckless habit of self-styled

masters of circulating books by philosophers, in which they discussed gods and demons, destiny, nature and the supreme good without any reference to religion, to the point that by then many adhered to the opinions of the Stoics and Epicureans (Bodin, 1951a, p. 24; 1951b, p. 56). Books of modern poets, who had far surpassed the Greek and Latin authors in terms of crude language and immorality, were already in the hands of young people (Bodin, 1951a, p. 24; 1951b, p. 57). For this reason, Bodin continued, it was necessary for a public institution and severe censorship to establish what to teach, how to comment on poets, how to explain philosophers (Bodin, 1951a, pp. 24-25; 1951b, p. 57). Adopting codified and common methods and study programs would have the further advantage of harmonizing the enormous differences between young people coming from families having different social backgrounds, wealth status, but also, and this was an aspect that deserved particular attention, different faiths.

Nothing better than a common education could strengthen the social bonds and ensure that shared will, mutual affection and trust would reign among fellow citizens. A similar agreement also had to be achieved in matters of religion, wrote Bodin, touching on an issue that was going to occupy him for years to come, and which would return several times in his major works. It is the great theme of *concordia* in matters of religion, without which, according to a long tradition of political thought, public life can only be unstable, contentious and dangerous. Bodin declared that he did not want to state which, among the different forms of Christianity in France – in which the Huguenots, the French Calvinists, were by then a consolidated presence – should be considered the true one. However, he denounced the difficulties which public life would encounter when someone was educated in a certain denomination, someone else in another, still others finally in none. This, in Bodin's opinion, was the origin of many enmities, rivalries, grudges, and this was where plots and civil wars came from.

Bodin, therefore, entrusted public education with the task of forming that social cohesion without which it would not be possible to have civil peace, while private education, precisely because it was fragmented, imparted according to multiple principles, methods and values, had the effect of dividing the population into different factions, hostile to each other. However, these factions were hostile, and Bodin was very clear on this, because they did not share any language that would allow them to communicate and perhaps recognize, beyond their differences, the

common aspects from which to imagine ways for a peaceful coexistence. Shared education instead favored the birth and consolidation of friendship relationships. Years shared at school, even more so if from early childhood, would have the effect of making men close to each other to the point of preventing them from becoming mortal enemies. Friendship, continued Bodin touching on one of the most frequent themes of the new humanistic culture, particularly the French one – just think of Montaigne – was in fact the strongest link to guarantee peace and stability to states, kingdoms, cities, but also to communities, homes and families (Bodin, 1951a, p. 26; 1951b, p. 59; Montaigne, 2012, pp. 331-355; 1992, I, pp. 242-259; Starobinski, 1984; Garavini, 1991; Panichi, 2004, 2010, 2017; Cappa, 2003, 2011).

The speech ended with a heartfelt appeal to finance the college, admitting even only a small number of poor students, chosen from among the most gifted. Bodin recalled the example of Bordeaux, ravaged in recent years by the ferocity of terrible struggles that left it wounded and prostrate, even though it dedicated huge resources to education and it generously compensated teachers, in order to attract capable and prepared ones (Bodin, 1951a, p. 27; 1951b, p. 60). Many other cities were doing the same, the Swiss ones but also Venice, Florence, Padua, Pavia and Bologna, and professors of liberal arts have settled in some centers in France: Auch, Montauban, Radez, Viviers and Nîmes. The latter was the beneficiary, in 1539, of the privilege granted to it by Francis I of hosting colleges and schools of grammar and arts on the model and with all the privileges of the Universities of Paris and Toulouse (Bodin, 1951b, p. 60, nota 17).

Bodin painted a picture before the eyes of his listeners that had to be as evident as possible: if the arguments based on the educational value of humanistic knowledge would not make inroads, it would be better to recall that Toulouse, having been made rich and prestigious by its ancient faculty of law, no longer enjoys the happy position that has ensured it such a fortune for a long time: other centers are making room for themselves, fierce competitors capable of taking students, visibility and riches away from it. The director of the college of Bordeaux, wrote Bodin, received five hundred gold pieces every year for his work, the citizens of Toulouse cannot hope to have someone direct the new city college by paying him less, and without granting the title of citizen, admitting him to the council and offering him a seat in the Senate, thus treating him like the most eminent of the Toulouse citizens. It has been written that Bodin intended to allude to himself here.

He was certainly well aware that under similar conditions Toulouse could really have aspired to attract a capable and competent scholar: there would be no shortage of competitors, wrote the Angevin, because the poor would be attracted by money, the wise by glory, the rich by honor (Bodin, 1951a, p. 29; 1951b, p. 62). He urged his audience: nothing was as necessary as "the sacred temple where youth must be initiated into virtue and the sciences" (Bodin, 1951a, p. 29; Bodin, 1951b, p. 64), neither a bridge, nor a court, nor new fortifications, nor roofs protecting from the weather.

Bodin's attempt was unsuccessful: the college was not established, and shortly thereafter Bodin left Toulouse for Paris, where in 1562 he became a member of Parliament, having the dual role of examining the legitimacy of the new laws and of being the court of last resort. However, his closeness to the Du Faur family would not diminish. This is attested by the dedication of the first edition of the *République* to Guy Du Faur de Pibrac, advisor to the king, member of the Paris Parliament of which he was president for a long time. He too, like Bodin, had studied law in Toulouse, at the school of Jacques Cujas, then at the lessons of Andrea Alciato, that school of law which gained so much from the rebirth of humanistic studies.

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