

Senectus odiosa - iucunda senectus. Senility in the Latin Literature of Renaissance (Erasmus and Paleotti)

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I. INTRODUCTION

Is senility a good period of life? When does it begin? What are its symptoms? Is it only a corporal condition or a spiritual one as well? The answer to these quite dramatic questions on a basis of old literature is not quite obvious. Discrepancies in opinions undoubtedly originate in the Classical period. Just think, that both phrases which appear in the title of this paper „odious senility” (*senectus odiosa*) and „enjoyable senility” (*iucunda senectus*) originated in the same work of Cicero, namely "Cato Maior de senectute"¹. If, following the Latin phraseology, we take into account other, typical and consolidated ways of description of the advanced age, the antagonisms are even more visible. Next to the whole set of word phrases which refer to its external symptoms, the lexicon of Latin lexical collocations "Gradus ad Parnasum", includes many others, which constitute more or less obvious evaluation of senility². Even a casual analysis indicates that phrases which affirm senility are in minority. Hence, the downturn of the human life was generally perceived negatively by the authors. Therefore, the accompanying *adiectiva* such as „sad” (*tristis*), „grave” (*gravis*), „miserable” (*miseria*, *infelix*), „arduous” (*aerumnosa*), „billious” (*foeda*) of similar meaning should not surprise³.

Legacy of the Middle Ages

The ways of consolidated literary expression is not only a question of selection of words but, as one can presume, perception of the world. The aim of this paper is just a presentation of opinions related to senility, based on the works of two outstanding authors, Erasmus of Rotterdam and Gabriel Paleotti. Opinions of those two authors are related to separate stages of Renaissance and developed under different political and geographic conditions. Moreover, they were expressed with application of different literary genres. However, they introduce us to the way of perception of people belonging to such a cultural phenomenon as Renaissance.

Literary monuments of the period preceding the modern times convince that senility was perceived with criticism then. Boetius is of the opinion that it comes too soon, changes appearance, and the death is liberation from senility⁴. According to Peter von Moos, consideration of the old age from eschatological perspective was preserved in the literature of the Middle Ages. Death was presented as a moment of liberation from anguish and transition to a better world which was considered to be the aim of human existence⁵. Prolonging senility, as it was believed, could only become an occasion to increase one's sins⁶. Consequently, a researcher into the literature from the period before Renaissance discusses the subject of advanced age in a chapter referring to the misery of the human existence (*De miseriis huius vitae*) defines death as *finis incommodorum* and the decadent period of life as *tristis senectus*⁷. The Latin phrases used by Moss are not far from the ones used by Lotario dei Conti di Segni in his treatise, who later became Pope Innocent III⁸. He is the author of an elaboration "De contemptu mundi sive De miseria humanae conditionis". According to Juanita Feros Ruys, it is there, that we find a chapter entitled "De incommodis senectutis"⁹. Desiderio Erasmo gave the same title to his minor literary work. It definitely does not show a necessary influence of the literary output of

¹ CIC. *De sen.* II, 4; I, 2; XVI, 56; XXIII, 85.

² *Gradus ad Parnassum*, ed. C. H. SINTENIS, corr. M. MÜLLER, Züllichaviae 1822, vol. 2, p. 366–367.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ BOETH. *De consol.* I, 7–14.

⁵ P. VON MOOS, *Consolatio. Studien zur Mittellateinischen Trostliteratur über den Tod und zum Problem der Christlichen Trauer*, Darstellungsband (München 1971), p. 263; Testimonienband (München 1972), p. 154–155.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151, 154.

⁸ INNOCENT III (1160/1–1216).

⁹ J. FEROS RUYTS, *Medieval Latin Meditations on Old Age: Rhetoric, Autobiography, and Experience*, w: A. CLASSEN (ed.), *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Topic*, Berlin 2007, p. 173; Cf. INNOCENTII III. *De contemptu mundi sive De miseria humanae conditionis libri tres*, ed. I. H. ACHTERFELDT, Bonnae 1855, p.27–28.

his predecessor, since the scholar could have based his idea on the Horace's message, according to which „numerous inconveniences take over the old man” (*multa senem circumveniunt incommoda*)¹⁰. Also the ideological layer, considered by some as a Renaissance version of a subject *de contemptu mundi* undertaken in the previous period, did not have to presume, as it would appear, that the author drew on to the heritage of the Middle Ages¹¹.

"A hymn on inconveniences of the advanced age"

The circumstances of the origination and the addressee of "Carmen de senectutis incommodis"¹² prepared by the forty years old Rotterdamer is quite well known. It is already in the title where the author mentioned that he dedicated his little piece of poetry to William Copp, only a couple years older than himself, later a physician of the king Francis I¹³. As it was confirmed by Paulo Giovio, the doctor was very famous¹⁴. He dealt not only with medicine, but also with literature¹⁵. Erasmus himself took advantage of his assistance during his visit to Paris, when Copp was at the beginning of his professional career and pursued his practice as a military physician. The Rotterdamer, in his letter to Jacob Batt confessed that the journey he had taken in winter had a negative impact on his health. After arrival in France he was frequently ill, and when he changed his dwelling he had a high fever at night which two years before nearly had killed him. Although he recovered, he continuously felt unwell, as he said. Finally, he said that he did not lose hope anyway. First, because he trusted the intermediation of St. Genoveva, the patroness of the city, whose assistance he had experienced already before. And further, also due to William Copp who was not only an outstanding physician but also his friend and a fond humanist¹⁶. The acquaintance of both scholars lasted also in the later period. It is confirmed by a letter written in a warm tone, which was sent to him by Erasmus at the end of August 1526 after an extremely painful fit of renal calculosis¹⁷. Probably, referring to his friend's medical and literary activity he addressed him as "the most eloquent physician" (*disertissimus medicorum*)¹⁸. He was to have confirmed the same under other circumstances, declaring that thanks to Copp the medicine started to speak (*medicinam eius opera primum loqui coepisse*)¹⁹. The first poems of the hymn to senility were not far from those concepts where the poet talking to the addressee called him "a unique glory of noble physicians" (*unica nobilium medicorum gloria*)²⁰. He also briefly substantiates that phrase. According to him, Copp comprised outstanding attributes both in the faculty of medicine (*ars*) and conscientiousness (*fides*) as well as care (*cura*). His genius (*ingenium*) made all illnesses fly

¹⁰ HOR. *Ars* p. 169.

¹¹ Cf. H. VREDEVELD, *Towards a Definitiv Edition of Erasmus' Poetry*, in: "Humanistica Lovaniensia. Journal of Neo-Latin Studies", vol. XXXVII-1988, p. 165.

¹² D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Carmen ad Gulielmum Copum Basiliensem de senectutis incommodis*, in: *Opera omnia* [...], Cura et imp. P. Vander, Lugduni Batavorum 1703, vol. 4, col. 755–758.

¹³ Gulielmus COPUS (1461–1532); Cf. A. MELCHIORIS *Vitae Germanorum medicorum* [...], Imp. heredum J. Rosae, Haidelbergae 1620, p. 11–12; G. M. KÖNIGII *Bibliotheca vetus et nova* [...], Typ. H. Meyeri, Altdorfi 1678, s. 211.

¹⁴ Cf. P. IOVII *Elogia virorum literis illustrium* [...], opera ac studio P. Pernaie, Basileae 1577, p. 143.

¹⁵ Biography of Copp, see: *Copus Gulielmus*, in: U. HUTTENI *Operum supplementum. Epistolae obscurorum virorum* [...], publ. E. BÖCKING, Lipsiae 1870, vol. posterior, pars II, p. 348–349.

¹⁶ *Erasmus Iacobo Batto*, in: D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Epistularum opus* [...], Ex off. Frobeniana, Basileae 1538, p. 340: *Ex quo Parisios redii, tenera omnino et delicata valetudine fuimus: tantos enim hyberni itineris labores, quos terra marique obivimus, non cura sed assidua lucubratio excepit, ut laborem non posuerimus, sed mutaverimus. Accessit hoc tempus tum per se difficile, tum meae valetudini mirum in modum inimicum. Memini enim posteaquam in Galliam sum profectus, nullam adhuc praeterisse quadragesimam, quae mihi morbum non attulerit. Nuper autem mutato domicilio, ita sum ea novitate offensus, ut nocturnae illius febris, quae nos ante biennium Orco fere demiserat, manifestata vestigia senserim: nos contra omni cura, medicorumque opibus pugnamus, vixque effugimus. Dubia enim adhuc plane valetudine sumus. Quod si denuo ea febris me arripuerit, actum de tuo mi Batte fuerit Erasmo. Non pessima tamen in spe sumus, diva Genovefa freti, cuius praesentem opem iam semel atque iterum sumus experti: maxime medicum nacti Gulielmum Copum non modo peritissimum, verum etiam amicum, fidum et Musarum quod rarissimum est cultorem: eius extemporalem epistolam ad te misi.*

¹⁷ Cf. *Erasmus Rot. Guilhelmo Copo medico*, in: D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Epistolae selectiores* [...], Typ. J. L. Brandmülleri, Basileae 1719, p. 458–459.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

¹⁹ U. HUTTENI *Operum* ..., vol. posterior, pars II, p. 348.

²⁰ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Carmen* ..., vol. 4, col. 755.

away from him²¹. That remark enables to mention the subject of the whole work. Since, according to the author, medical procedures had impact not only on the process of aging which nothing could stop anyway²².

Thanks to the correspondence of Erasmus, we also learn about the circumstances of origination of "Carmen de senectutis incommodis". We can learn it from the letter to John Botzheim, the canon in Constance during the scholar's first trip to Italy²³. According to the findings of researchers into the subject, it took place in 1506²⁴. It was already in December the subsequent year when the literary work was printed in Venice at Aldo Manuzio publishing house²⁵. Due to the place and the fact that the author wrote during his horseback trip, we wanted to call the hymn "an equestrian poem" (*carmen equestre*) or even the "Alpine poem" (*carmen Alpestre*). However, he confirmed that the experts rejected such a typology²⁶. Perhaps the applied metric system - the alternating catalectic iambic hexameter and dimeter - was to imitate the rhythm of rambling horse hoofs. Erasmus also uncovered a little of his technique. He avoided discussions writing down his ideas on a piece of paper held above the saddle and added that he had started to write to avoid boredom of the trip. Later during the break for the night lodging at a station he put down the text of his notes²⁷. That remark of the author himself indicates that he had unlikely taken advantage of external sources. The work was, to larger extent than normally in the case of Renaissance masters, a reflection of his personal view and the reflection of his ideas which he had adopted from others and which had sunk into his mind.

Not without influence on the poem's message was an incident that made the poet withdraw from the rest of the travelers and create alone. As he informed the monk from Constance, during the trip, a severe conflict broke out between an envoy of the king of England who was assigned for security, and a curator of the young people who were to study under Erasmus supervision²⁸. The quarrel was so violent that the weapons were used in a scuffle. The Rotterdamer was disappointed by the attitude of both colleagues and he was disgusted by their behavior when after such a fierce conflict they came into agreement drinking wine. He even found them to be deranged and untrustworthy. It all made the scholar to distance himself from participants of the journey²⁹. The uneasy atmosphere caused by the hassle might have had some impact on the idea of the very piece of work itself.

"Severe illness" (*morbus ingens*)

The whole piece undoubtedly constitutes a negative evaluation of senility as a period of the human life. The author describes it as „disgusting to the largest extent" (*teterrima senecta*), "rotten" (*cariosa*), "frigid" (*gelida*), "lazy" (*pigrum senium*), "sad" (*tristis senecta*), "sterile" (*sterilis*)³⁰. In his opinion it should rather be

²¹ Ibid.:

*Unica nobilium medicorum gloria, Cope,
Seu quis requirat artem,
Sive fidem spectet, seu curam, in quolibet horum
Vel iniquus ipse nostro
Praecipuos tribuit Gulielmo livor honores.
Cedit, fugitque morbi
Ingenio genus omne tuo [...].*

²² Ibid.

²³ Erasmus Roterodamus *ornatissimo viro D. Ioanni Botzhemo* [...], w: D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Opus epistolarum*, ed. P. S. ALLEN, Oxonii 1906, vol. I, p. 4: *Carmen ad Guilhelmum Copum de senectute scriptum est nobis in Alpibus, quum primum adirem Italiam.*

²⁴ L. E. ELLIOTT-BINNS, *Erasmus the Reformer: A Study in Restatement; Being the Hulsean Lectures Delivered Before the University of Cambridge for 1921-1922*, London 1923, p. 96–97; J. FEROS RUYSS, *Medieval ...*, p. 194.

²⁵ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Ode de senectutis incommodis*, In aed. Aldi, Ventiis 1507; Cf. J. GLOMSKI, E. RUMMEL, *Early Editions of Erasmus at the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies*, Toronto, Toronto 1994, p. 85.

²⁶ Erasmus Roterodamus *ornatissimo ...*, vol. I, p. 4.

²⁷ Ibid.: *Itaque quo taedium inter equitandum fallerem, abstinens a colloquio partium carmen hoc absolvi, notans interim in charta super sellam, ne quid excideret aliud, dum aliubi quaererem. E notulis describebam quod erat natum, ubi ventum esset in diversorium.*

²⁸ In this group were two sons of King Henry VII. Cf. P. SMITH, *Erasmus*, Kessinger Publishing 2003, p. 101–102.

²⁹ Erasmus Roterodamus *ornatissimo ...*, vol. I, p. 4.

³⁰ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Carmen ...*, vol. 4, col. 755–758.

described as a „slow death” (*mors lenta magis dicenda est*)³¹. Starting his discourse, he calls the advanced age „a severe illness” (*morbis ingens*), which unlike other ailments – does not stop after medical treatment. Since he dedicated the poem to a physician and considered the phenomenon as *morbis*, he describes the symptoms and provides details of what happens during the process of ageing. As he finds, the vital and mental forces weaken. He provides a detailed catalogue of things that change with the onset of senility³². A similar characteristics of people advanced in age is found also in another piece by the scholar, "De contemptu mundi". One of his protagonists says the following words:

*Longe abest ut canis albescat caput, ut frontem seniles rugae contrahant, ii mortis metu vivant anxii, qui annis iam graves, senio incurvi terram salutant, quibus iam leve caput, malae pendulae, oculi minores atque introrsum refugi, nasus perpetuo madens, dentes rarii, iidemque luridi, qui cornice vivaciores, iam dextera suos annos computant*³³.

Physical and mental changes lead, according to the scholar, to the situation in which senility deprives the man of the whole happiness (*commoda*). It leaves him, as he indicates summarizing that part of his discourse, only with the forename which will be engraved on his tombstone soon. The author's reflections make him lament over the human fate, especially over the fact that human life is so short. Here, he uses traditional funeral topic³⁴.

Little surprising can be Erasmus's specification related to the question of what age should be considered as the onset of senility. As he says, already after attaining the age of 35, it starts to deprive of vital forces. It is not all however, since before the age of fifty it has already affected our mental prowess³⁵. The author subsequently refers all the reflections to himself. Although he was to live another thirty years, at the peak of his mental prowess (*akme*) he confesses that he felt oncoming senility. It was marked by his temples and beard started to turn grey³⁶. In the dénouement of his literary work he returns to the subject. As he says, he found himself at the very threshold of senility (*in limine primo senectae*). He compares that time to the autumn when under the influence of the first cold wave the nature changes and the flowers wither³⁷. The scholar's opinions expressed in that way led to controversies among researchers. According to J. Feros Ruys, some believe that

³¹ Ibid., vol. 4, col. 755.

³² Ibid.:

[...] *quibus omnia carptim
Vellitque, deterritque
Commoda, quae secum subolescens vexerit aetas,
Formam, statum, colorem,
Partem animi memorem, cum pectore, lumina, somnos,
Vires, alacritatem,
Auctorem vitae igniculum, decerpit et huius
Nutricium liquorem,
Vitaleis adimit status, cum sanguine corpus,
Risus, iocos, lepores.*

³³ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *De contemptu mundi epistola*, in: *Opera ...*, Lugduni Batavorum 1704, vol. 5, col. 1247.

³⁴ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Carmen ...*, vol. 4, col. 755.

³⁵ Ibid.:

*Uni porro homini post septima protinus, idque
Vixdum peracta lustra,
Corporeum robur cariosa senecta fatigat.
Neque id satis, sed ante
Quam decimum lustrum volitans absolverit aetas,
Tentare non veretur
Immortalem hominis, ductamque ex aethere partem.
Et hanc laccessit audax
Nec timet ingenii sacros incessere nervos [...].*

³⁶ Ibid., vol. 4, col. 756.

³⁷ Ibid., vol. 4, col. 758.

Erasmus here assumes the attitude typical for his time, while others see rather a symptom of melancholy in them³⁸.

Apprehension of oncoming senility leads the scholar to lamentation on transitory character of youth (*iuventa*), to which he devotes a substantial passus in his poem³⁹. He recognizes it as a „better part” of life (*pars melior*), "sweet years" (*dulces anni*) and "happy time" (*felicia tempora*). As before, he uses in that part complorative motifs typical for epithapic composition, especially from the topos *flos cadit* and *vitae brevis hora*⁴⁰. Close to the funeral production is also a description of the author's literary occupations and fascinations included in that part which resembles the tombstone catalogue of the deceased's achievements⁴¹. The whole piece is closed by rhetorical questions which emphasize the lament on the passing youth⁴². The passage of time is however, inevitable. Erasmus devotes much space to that question. Confirming his erudition, he supports it with numerous arguments from mythology and literature. As he suggests, no secret practices, wonderful mixtures or magic manipulations are capable to bring back the years which have passed⁴³. That reflection leads in turn to comparisons which bring up a sort of „injustice” of human fate, since in nature, everything works in cycles. Alternative appearance of the sun, the moon, the seasons of the year is recognized by the scholar as a consequence of their „youth” and „ageing”. Finally, everything comes back to its beginning and the continuous cycle is repeated. The situation of the man is different, which is expressed in the author's words:

*At nostra posteaquam
Fervida praeteriit seclis labentibus aetas,
Ubi tristis occupavit
Corpus hiems, capitisque horrentia tempora, postquam
Nive canuere densa,
Nulla recursuri spes, aut secessio veris,
Verum malis supremum
Imponit mors una, malorum maxima, finem*⁴⁴.

Winter, from this point of view, is an allegory of the old age. Author also calls it "sad" (*tristis*). Not without importance seems also introduction of the verb *occupare* which stresses the hostile takeover of the power and the rule of senility over the human body. The white color is the identification mark of its onset, which as the snow over the fields, appears at human temples. Finally, people have no hope for regaining former vitality which becomes personified as the spring. The end of life - the worst misery of miseries is, according to the author, an inevitable consequence of ageing.

The way in which the scholar supports his opinions seems to be close to the one which appears at the beginning of his work. Senility is evaluated negatively again. The same symptom of its onset is provided, i.e. temples turn grey. Again the reference to death is made, which constitutes a strong coda of that part of the poem. It can also be found at the beginning of the complorative fragment. Its content comprises this time the way of life in the past and the lost years. Erasmus finally decides to quit making the old mistakes⁴⁵. Turning to himself, he encourages to active life style which seems to be close to the idea of *carpe diem*. He becomes in a way „Christianized” which draws attention of some researchers⁴⁶. From now on, all efforts are to be devoted solely to Jesus Christ. Since, it is thanks to him that the poet hopes to live afterlife - „permanent spring” (*ver perennum*). Therefore, he says good bye to his previous chores⁴⁷. Such end of the literary work is also not very far away from the elaborations which were found in epitaphs. There, the deceased usually expressed his last *Vale* to his close relatives or the ones who read the engravings on his tombstone where the author says good bye to particular forms of literary composition. Identical as in funeral monuments, the subject of permanent life and reward one can expect from Jesus Christ appears as the final part of his reasoning. The whole "Camen de senectutis incommodis" seems in its construction close to literary funeral forms. Particular elements of the content of the literary work are only slightly more developed. However, it does not change the fact that they

³⁸ J. FEROS RUYS, *Medieval ...*, p. 195–196.

³⁹ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Carmen ...*, vol. 4, col. 756.

⁴⁰ Cf. J. NOWASZCZUK, *Miejsca wspólne łacińskich epitafiów epoki renesansu*, Szczecin 2007, p. 105–120.

⁴¹ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Carmen ...*, vol. 4, col. 756.

⁴² *Ibid.*, vol. 4, col. 756–757.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, col. 757.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, col. 757–758.

⁴⁶ Cf. H. VREDEVELD, *Towards ...*, p. 164; E. KUSHNER, *Living Prism: Itineraries in Comparative Literature*, McGill-Queen's Press 2001, p. 215–216; J. FEROS RUYS, *Medieval ...*, p. 197.

⁴⁷ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Carmen ...*, vol. 4, col. 758.

appear one after another as a puzzle of blocks. There are also connections within the sphere which can be called the philosophy of life. Lamentation on the fragility of life, the miserable human fate and inevitability of death are typical motifs of this type of literary work. It is anyway similar to the consolation based primarily on a Christian hope for afterlife. As it was mentioned before, also in the formal layer, the motifs consolidated in the funeral tradition were applied.

Surprising, however, he can be evaluation of senility - extremely critical and devoid of any alternative, to which the author tries to convince the reader. In this literary work no characteristic features of the Renaissance joy of life can be found. Moreover, Erasmus finds many of his previous activities which were in accordance with the ideas of his time unnecessary, recognizing them as a waste of time. He further develops that opinion over some forms of literary composition with which he finds divergent⁴⁸. Whether that approach constitutes continuation of the Middle Ages treatment of senility or if it was rather an effect of the circumstances of the origination of the poem, remains an open question. Researchers are generally uniform in their opinions that the ode is not only an artistic work based on fiction generally, but on the contrary, it contains autobiographic elements⁴⁹. As some of them believe, the literary piece can be a reflection of a middle age crisis of the Rotterdamer or his neurasthenic experience of passage of time⁵⁰. Finally, according to H. Vredeveld, it is not a romantic nostalgic poem⁵¹. However, it seems little devoid of what is found in the very literary work, recognition of the poem as a Christian credo. According to E. W. Kohls, we definitely cannot question the influence of the ideas of the latter theologians presented in it, especially the ones connected with Reformation⁵². The religious denouement of the ode expresses in a way the author's beliefs. However it comprises its small fragment and constitutes rather a result of the adopted composition assumption. If it were really to be a kind of a creative manifesto, the author would have appeared to be inconsistent, since three years later, and it might have been on the way back from Italy, the literary piece appeared of which "Moriae encomium" is the best known. However, it is written, as the title suggests, *ludicra declamatione* and definitely cannot be included in the devout literary movement of Erasmus's literary output⁵³.

The statement that the poet saw the advanced age as the unwelcome and miserable time is beyond any doubt. After the analysis of his other literary works, indication of personal problems as the foundations of such evaluation seems to be far-fetched oversimplification. Senility is also one of the topics undertaken in "Adagia".

⁴⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, col. 757–758:

*Quae quondam heu nimium placuere et quae vehementer
Mellita visa dudum,
Tum tristi cruciant recolentia pectora felle,
Frustraque maceramur,
Tam rarum sine fruge bonum fluxisse, quod omni
Bene collocare cura
Par erat et nullam temere disperdere partem,
At nunc mihi oscitanti
Qualibus heu nugis, quanta est data portio vitae [...].*

*Post hac valete nugae,
Fucataeque voluptates, risusque, iocique,
Lusus et illecebrae,
Splendida nobilium decreta sophorum,
Valete syllogismi.
Blandae Pegasides, animosque trahentia Pithus
Pigmenta, flosculique.*

⁴⁹ J. FEROS RUYS, *Medieval ...*, p. 197–198.

⁵⁰ Cf. H. VREDEVELD, *Two Philological Puzzles in Erasmus "Poem on Old Age"*, in: "Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance", T. 49, Nr 3(1987), p. 597; C. H. MILLER, *The Epigrams of More and Erasmus: A Literary Diptych*, in: D. COUSINS, D GRACE (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas More*, Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp. 2009, p.135; R. STIEGLECKER, *Die Renaissance eines Heiligen: Sebastian Brant und Onuphrius eremita*, Wiesbaden 2001, p. 91.

⁵¹ H. VREDEVELD, *Two ...*, p. 597.

⁵² E. W. KOHLS, *Erasmus und die werdende Evangelische Bewegung des 16. Jahrhunderts*, in: J. COPPENS (ed.), *Scrinium Erasmianum*, Brill Archive 1969, vol. I, p. 209.

⁵³ Cf. D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Moriae encomium id est Stultitiae laudatio, ludicra declamatione tractata* [...], Basileae 1540.

Quoting opinions of various writers on that topic, the scholar also quotes a couple of lines of the text which he had prepared himself. It is just a fragment of "Carmen de senectutis incommotis", where important words are expressed that senility is *morbis ingens*⁵⁴. By comparing that passus with the others, the Rotterdamer illustrates that his literary output constitutes a part of the literary tradition which had been preserved for centuries. Both the ideas found in the poem to William Copp, as well as the very title of the chapter in "Adagia", which is "Senility itself is a disease", had been adopted from the Ancient works. It was in „Phormio” a piece of work by Terrentius where we can find a statement *senectus ipsa est morbus*⁵⁵. According to Erasmus, the prototypes of such opinions can be found in the Hellenic world, including Aristotle⁵⁶. Negative evaluation of senility appears even before the Stagirite, for example in Homer. Later, they appear as a constant motif in Roman literature in works of Virgil, Horace and Juvenalis⁵⁷. The Rotterdamer seems to make his readers aware that his perception of the advanced age is not the result of his personal despondency, but just the opposite, a result of deep knowledge of the Antique literature. It can be confirmed by the elements of his other literary works in which he uses similar formal technique and in addition formulates similar messages. In his treatise "De contemptu mundi" he encourages his interlocutor to think about death regardless of the age⁵⁸. In the described ode, he does not do anything else but follows his own encouragement. Besides, the demographic situation of the Renaissance is little known. The scholar, however, draws our attention to the fact that there were simply few old people⁵⁹. Moreover, they were not decrepit old men, since, as he explains, very few reach the age of sixty⁶⁰. No wonder that he unequivocally connected the advanced age with the inevitability of death, which he explained in a short statement "undoubtedly an old man cannot live long" (*senex quidem vivere diu non potest*)⁶¹.

Mala aetas – bonum senectutis

When Erasmus wrote his "Carmen de senectutis incommotis" Gabriel Paleotti was sixteen⁶². Therefore, he can be recognized as a representative of a subsequent generation of Renaissance authors. Unlike his predecessor, only towards the end of his life had he prepared a treatise related to the question under consideration which he entitled "De bono senectutis". It was published first time in 1595, which is only two years before the author's death⁶³. The literary piece consisting of three parts must have been received quite well since by the end of the century it was reissued at least twice⁶⁴.

Paleotti himself came from Bologna. He studied in his mother town and was awarded the doctoral degree in that field. Later, in 1556, he was appointed an auditor at the Apostolic Tribunal of the Roman Rota of the Holy See. During that period his name became more recognizable, because he was mentioned in the catalogue of fathers of the Council of Trent (*Catalogus Patrum*) among the experts of law (*doctores legum pro sacro Concilio*)⁶⁵. Shortly after the end of the Council meetings he was promoted to the rank of a cardinal and in 1566 he started to administer the religious community of his mother town. Soon he became its first archbishop⁶⁶. He was much involved in implementations of the recommendation of the Council of Trent so, along with Charles Borromeo, he is recognized as one of the propagators of restoration of the Catholic Church⁶⁷. His

⁵⁴ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Adagia*, in: *Opera ...*, Lugduni Batavorum 1703, vol. 2, col. 595.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, col. 594; Cf. TERENT. *Phorm.* IV, I, 9.

⁵⁶ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Adagia ...*, vol. 2, col. 595.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, col. 594–595.

⁵⁸ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *De contemptu ...*, vol. 5, col. 1247.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: *Et quidem si diligentius observes, longe plures ephobos quam canis comperies. Cum semper rara fuit canities, tum hac tempestate numquam neque contemtor, neque rarior.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: *Imo quoto cuique nunc eo aetatis venire contigit, ut sexagesimum videat annum? Profecto, vix millesimo cuique mortalium. Et quantum est hoc aevi? Et tamen quam rarus sit qui attingat, vides, adeo fragilis, incerta, totque casibus subiecta est vita hominum.*

⁶¹ D. ERASMI ROTERODAMI *De contemptu ...*, vol. 5, col. 1247.

⁶² Gabriel PALAEOOTUS, PALAEOOTUS (1522–1597).

⁶³ G. PALAEOTI *De bono senectutis*, Ex typ. A. Zannetti, Romae 1595.

⁶⁴ Cf. G. PALAEOTI *De bono senectutis*, Ex off. Plantiniana, Antverpiae 1598; Apud Minimam Societatem, Venetiis 1598.

⁶⁵ Council of Trent (1545–1563). Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium Tridentinum Oecumenicum et Generale XVIII sub Paulo III, Iulio III et Pio IV Pont. Max.*, in: F. LONGI A CORIOLANO *Summa conciliorum omnium*, Ex off. Plantiniana, Antverpiae 1623, p. 1066.

⁶⁶ L. BEYERLINCK *Magnum theatrum vitae humanae [...]*, Sumpt. I. A. Huguetan et M. A. Ravaud, Lugduni 1665, vol. 3, p.157.

⁶⁷ Biographical information of Paleotti, see: A. OLDOINI *Athenaeum Romanum [...]*, Ex typ. Camerali, Perusiae 1676, p. 262–263; G. FANTUZZI, *Notizie degli Scrittori Bolognesi*, Nella Stamperia di San Tommaso d'Aquino, In Bologna 1788, vol. 6, p. 242–259; F. UGHELLI *Italia sacra sive De episcopis*

literary output seems to reflect well the cardinals' interests and his involvement in development of a new, post-Trent style functioning of the Church⁶⁸. Beside the collection of his comments and letters related to the questions discussed during the Council, he is well known as the author of a literary work in law "De nothis spuriisque filiis liber singularis", related to the extramarital children⁶⁹. He devoted his other dissertations in Latin and

Italian to his diocese, functioning of councils of cardinals and liturgy⁷⁰. His dissertation on painting constitutes an elaboration which constitutes a subject of commentaries even at present times⁷¹. At the end of his life he supplemented that list with a separate monograph related to the senility itself. He was to undertake the elaboration of the subject upon a request of Philip Neri who was his personal confessor⁷². As he says, however, in his introduction to the treatise, The Saint was for him a vivid example of the abundance of goodness at advanced age (*vivum exemplar senectutis*)⁷³. So, he wanted to introduce him in that way to the readers of

his time. When he was about to complete the monograph, the founder of the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri (Oratorian Fathers) died at the age of eighty. That, in turn was the impulse for Paleotti to publish the literary work as soon as possible⁷⁴. He managed to do that already in the same year.

Addressing his readers, the author in the introduction of his book confirms that he knew the outlooks concerning senility which had been consolidated throughout the centuries. According to him, the very title may be surprising and paradoxical. Since it was the ancient tradition from which the attitude treating the advanced age as a bad period of human life (*mala aetas*)⁷⁵ was adopted. Cardinal does not share that opinion, so he turns to provide the arguments which confirm that senility is good for the man (*bonum*)⁷⁶.

Revision of the ancient points of view

Approaching a presentation of his view of the case, Paleotti clarifies terminology. As she finds, "old age" is not understood unequivocally by all. It is perceived differently by medical practitioners, lawyers and philosophers or theologians⁷⁷. The author himself differentiates between *senectus sensu proprio* and *senectus sensu translato seu metaphoric*⁷⁸. As the determinants of the advanced age in its proper sense, he adopts the symptoms generally known and described in medicine as the final stage of the human life before death. However, the author informs that this stage, under distinctions known from Greek, sometimes is divided into two separate periods, i.e. senility (*senectus*) and venerable age (*senium*), and further in his work he describes

Italiae [...], Apud S. Coleti, Venetiis 1717, vol. 2, col. 41–45; A. CHALMERS, *The General Biographical Dictionary* [...], London 1815, vol. 24, p. 36–37; A. LEDESMA *De vita et rebus gestis Gabrielis Palaetii S.R.E. cardinalis, primique Bononiensis archiepiscopi et principis*, Typ. C. Zeneri, Bononiae 1647; P. Prodi, *Il Cardinale Gabriele Paleotti (1522–1597)*.

⁶⁸ The List of preserved works, books and manuscripts, see: G. FANTUZZI, *Notizie ...*, vol. 6, p. 256–259.

⁶⁹ G. PALAEOTI *De nothis spuriisque filiis liber singularis*, Apud N. Basseum, Francofurti ad Moenum 1573.

⁷⁰ Cf. G. PALAEOTI *Episcopale Bononiensis civitatis et dioecesis* [...], Apud A. Benacci, Bononiae 1580; *Archiepiscopale Bononiense*, Exc. A. Zannettus, Romae 1594; *De sacri consistorii consultationibus*, Apud Minimam Societatem, Ventiis 1594; *Provisiones contra aliquos abusos, ad usum cleri Civitatis et dioecesis Bononiensis*, Typ. A. Benacci, Bononiae 1593; other works, see: G. FANTUZZI, *Notizie ...*, vol. 6, p. 256–258.

⁷¹ G. PALAEOTI *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre et profane*, Typ. A. Benacci, Bononiae 1582; *De imaginibus sacris et profanis libri quinque*, Ex off. D. Sartorii, Ingotstadii 1594.

⁷² Cf. G. FANTUZZI, *Notizie ...*, vol. 6, p. 257.

⁷³ G. PALAEOTI *De bono ...* (Romae 1595), no number of pages.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ G. PALAEOTI *De bono ...* (Romae 1595), no number of pages: *Verum quoniam argumentum hoc eiusmodi est, ut in eo non omnes facile conveniant, quinimmo tamquam paradoxum posset a multis forte haberi: propterea quod senectutem, quam veteres MALAM AETATEM dixerunt, ego contrario nomine tamquam salutare bonum audeam insinire.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1: *Si quaeratur quid in senectute potissimum sit spectandum, dubium non est, aliter responsorum esse medicae facultatis peritum, qui eam iuxta annorum numerum, sive ex temperamenti ratione metietur: aliter iurisconsultum, qui ad tempus successionis, aut ad testatoris mentem, cogitationem suam convertet: aliter philosophum, qui animi disciplinam, prudentiam, vitaeque moderationem respiciet: aliter theologum, qui immortalis animae statum, reddendaeque rationis vinculum contemplabitur: aliter etiam alios fortasse ratiocinatos.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

them together. Its symptoms, according to the cardinal, comprise a specific age and physical changes. However, he clarifies that the latter are not fully exact, since due to various circumstances, they may appear at different stages of life⁷⁹. Quite a detailed discourse concerning the hair turning grey constitutes, most probably, unintentional answer to Erasmus concerns. Paleotti describes to the reader that it does not constitute a clear indicator of approaching senility at all⁸⁰. On the other hand, turning to the application of a term *senectus*, he finds that it appears to describe not so much a physical state but moral and mental qualities supported and worked out by authority⁸¹. Bearing in mind those two realms, sometimes the concept of „old man” (*senex*) refers to young people. Following that approach to understanding, a Greek word of *presbyter* was assimilated to refer to Catholic clergymen⁸².

Semantic clarifications lead the author to present the most vital antique points of view on senility. He reduces them to four basic theses. According to what he provides based on the literary sources, some antique writers believed that the human life is naturally full of anguish at its all stages, especially in old age⁸³. Others, Paleotti continues, negatively evaluate not as much the very existence, but just its last stage, the advanced age. As they say that period lacks three scopes of values – *honestum*, *utile* and *iucundum* – which give the sense to life⁸⁴. Moreover, the man then suffers from internal anguish, bodily ailments and external difficulties⁸⁵. The third antique concept is found by the cardinal as a more moderate approach than the two previous ones. According to his principles, senility has its disadvantages, but it also has its positive sides. The author devotes a longer conclusion to describe the remedies for experiences of the advanced age, although he himself does not predestinate their effects⁸⁶. The last ancient opinion quoted by the scholar refers to the approach presented by Cicero in his work "Cato Maior de senectute". Tullius describes four spheres for which senility used to be evaluated negatively⁸⁷. However, it is not enough for the famous rhetorician, since he also indicates the important meaning of this stage of life. He presents examples of fine senility. Paleotti himself recognizes that concept the best, although he finds, as in the previous ones, certain shortcomings⁸⁸. Finishing his first volume, he emphasizes the importance of antique opinions but finally he does not identify himself with any of them⁸⁹.

Christian senility

After representation of the opinions on senility consolidated throughout the ages, according to which it is to a larger or smaller extent unwelcome, Paleotti himself sets up a question, how one can say it is good⁹⁰. In order to solve the problem he clarifies what the term *bonum* means to him. What is interesting, he does not use here the achievements of ancient thought but refers to scholasticism, which he considers to be a better school (*melior philosophorum schola*), and especially the theses of Thomas Aquinas. He even does not treat his approach as philosophical but includes it within the framework of theology⁹¹. The whole concept is to be not a description of advanced age in general, but of „Christian senility” (*senectus Christiana*). So the author precedes the discourse with a wider introduction in which he tries to explain the anthropological question raised in antiquity, which he briefly expresses with a phrase *unde in tam praeclaro opere tot tristitia lamentabiliaque*⁹². He

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 2–4.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 5–7.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 17–20.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 23–24.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 24–27.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 28–36.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 37: *Cicero enim, ut satis notum est, omnia adversus senectutem maledicta, ad quattuor praecipue causas redegit; quarum prima fuit, quod avocet homines a rebus gerendis; alera, quod corpus faciat infirmum; tertia, quod privet omnibus fere voluptatibus; quarta, quod haud procul absit a morte.*

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 37–40.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 46: *Quare, quae ad senectutis nostrae incommoda levanda illi nobis remedia attulerunt, quamvis ex omni parte id praestare non valuerint, quippe quae ad verum humanae felicitatis finem minime dirigantur. Quoniam tamen aliquem nobis aditum ad senectutis bonum adipiscendum praebuerunt, non sunt a viris Christianis repudianda: sed in usum proprium, quoad eius fieri poterit transferenda: ac reliqua, quae illis defuerunt, et sine quibus otiosa pene omnia redderentur, curandum a nobis, ut ex Christianae disciplinae documentis suppleantur.*

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁹² Ibid., p. 47–48.

translates it based on the Bible and the principles of Catholic theology. A longer discourse leads finally to the statement that disadvantages and ailments of the old age are the consequences of the original sin⁹³.

Then, looking for an answer to the question *quid est bonum*, Paleotti assumes that the goodness of each thing is all that, which is in accordance with its philosophical category of the form⁹⁴. Taking it for granted, he further explains how scholars understand thomistic assumption in relation to the man. He describes their points of view in the following way:

*Hincque dixerunt, quando utrumque hoc nomen, ad hominis actiones refertur, tunc considerandum esse prout hominis formae, quoad debitam operationem, convenit, quae est ratio, seu usus rationis: ita ut bonum dicatur hominis, quod est secundum usum rationis: malum autem, quod est praeter rationem: quod alias peccatum, seu culpa appellatur*⁹⁵.

Taking the rationality and its application for a human property, the author refers the whole approach to the very senility as such. He finds that sometimes mental capabilities of people of advanced age decrease along with the bodily strengths. This observation leads him to closer definition of the semantic scope of the term *senectus*, as he uses in his work⁹⁶. He closes his consideration with a conclusion that one cannot, based on a single method, specify the rules which define principles of the advanced age. Such a state of facts depends, first of all by diversity of people and their social status. After consultations with other experts, he decided to adopt current approach to senility based on external symptoms analyzing it within the whole spectrum of their onset and manifestations⁹⁷. At all stages of advanced age, the existence of goodness is not excluded. Evaluating the case in accordance to the Christian doctrine he says that even bedridden people can help others and experience goodness⁹⁸. So, he rejects the opinion of Hipocrates, according to which the success of life is based on the healthy body. Neither does he agree with the statement that senility cannot be light as expressed by Cato in the Cicero's work⁹⁹. Paleotti summarizes the whole with the following statement:

*Nos igitur, cum senectuti bonum attribuimus, non ideo aliis aetatibus sua bona tum animi, tum corporis detrahimus, nec senectutem omnibus undique ornamentis cumulatam esse existimamus; cum illam pro humana fragilitate, non levibus praesidiis indigere constet: sed appellamus bonum senectutis (ut dicunt theologi) secundum quid, habita scilicet ratione aliarum humanae vitae partium, infantiae, pueritiae, iuventutis et constantis aetatis. Si enim senectus cum reliquis conferatur, non solum illam paucioribus implicitam culpae, verum etiam pluribus affluentem donis censemus, quibus ad omne virtutum genus promptius et facilius quam aliae aetates, potest aspirare*¹⁰⁰.

Assuming that the old age is not deprived of goodness, the author, in turn, indicates the sources of the „roots” (*radices*), as he calls them, thanks to which, people of advanced age are capable to experience it. As he finds, their life is not so much confused as at other stages of development of the man. At the same time, they are experienced and reasonable. Moreover, the awareness of coming death makes them look more rationally at the world. As *quinta radix senilis boni*, the authority is recognized along with dignity¹⁰¹. The cardinal tries all the time to be reliable in his presentation. Therefore after indication what makes for goodness at advanced age, a substantial passage is devoted to discuss everything which he finds as its deficits. He calls them the „objections against senility” (*obiectioes adversus senectutem*). He presents the first ten in quite a compact way, in each case commenting generally consolidated opinions¹⁰². Especially lot of attention is devoted to avarice (*avaritia*), which he describes as *obiectio undecima*¹⁰³.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 51.

⁹⁴ Cf. TH. AQUINATIS *Summ. Th.* 1 pars 2 partis, q. 18, art. 5.

⁹⁵ G. PALAEOI *De bono* ..., p. 52.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 51–52.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 54–55.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 55–56.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 63–92.

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 98–118: *Prima obiectio; ex annorum incremento senectutem inquinari. Secunda obiectio; quod multis destituatur spiritualibus auxiliis. Tertia obiectio; quod senectus sit in iracundiam prona. Quarta obiectio; ob brevitate vitae. Quinta obiectio; cum senectute varia vitia iungi. Sexta obiectio; crescere cotidie fallacitas et insidias adversus senectutem. Septima obiectio; de tristitia iuncta senectuti. Octava obiectio; quod nimis vino et potationi indulgeat. Nona obiectio; senes erga nepotes et posteritatem nimis affectos et sollicitos esse. Decima obiectio varia sparsim mala complectitur.*

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 119–162.

After having referred to most frequent objections against advanced age, Paleotti devotes his third volume to more discerning consideration of a question what constitutes that *bonum* of the senility, and further to show how to achieve them. He starts with an observation that the goodness of the final years of the human life does not include all possible goodness. The author reminds, however, that also other periods of human development do not guarantee such a full spectrum. Moreover, the time of senility is to much more extent more abundant in goodness than other phases of life¹⁰⁴. Here, the scholar makes the terms more precise and shows that *bonum senectutis*, which became the object of his discourse is the same as good senility (*bona senectus*)¹⁰⁵. The latter, as he provides following Aristotle, is within the framework of a category of felicity (*pars felicitatis*). It is mentioned when one grows old later is not affected by pain or worries¹⁰⁶. In this place, the scholar clarifies what he finally considers as that eponymous goodness. Namely he writes:

*At vero bonum senectutis est honeste vivere, virtutes colere et naturae hominis, quae ratione praedita est, convenienter operari; quod a bona senectute diversum est, quamvis haec nomina aliquando confundantur*¹⁰⁷.

No wonder that the author, against universal opinions, considers *senectus* to be a better period of life than the adulthood, especially due to the advantages possessed by old people and avoidance of mistakes¹⁰⁸. What is more, even the experience and troubles of life are the instruments to reach the goodness (*instrumenta ad summum bonum adipiscendum*)¹⁰⁹. According to that the author substantiates, the adversities of fate are morally ambivalent. Their evaluation comes from the way in which they are used by the man¹¹⁰. However, in order to act properly, also in difficult and doubtful situations one needs preparation. The cardinal devotes a substantial part of his work to discuss how he has to live life in youth and at maturity in order to reach the extreme goodness in senility¹¹¹. He closes the whole piece with two huge catalogues. One of them includes „the fruit of senility” (*fructus senectutis*), i.e. the virtues one reaches thanks to appropriate living the advanced age. In the second one, drawing on the Biblical sources and ancient writings, he presents people of advanced age who were immortalized in tradition, constituting the models of fine senility¹¹².

Renaissance at the crossroads of opinions

Two visions of senility quoted in this paper are mutually different as to many aspects. It is not only the titles which include clear presumptions as to the content of the very works. The literary works were prepared by authors of different ages in the same period of Renaissance. Their opinions were expressed in one case by poetry in the other, by prose. However, more important seems to be that – drawing on the same sources, the authors lead the reader to totally different conclusions. Both for Erasmus and Paleotti, the ancient opinions on senility constitute the starting point and a basis for their considerations. The first one absorbs them and exaggerates so much that he allegedly suffers depression or a middle age crisis. It seems however, that the Rotterdammer draws the reader to nothing else but living through the ideas of the ancient world, which was a motto of Renaissance. In the literary work attention is drawn by a schematic arrangement of contents close to a model used in epitaphs. According to its premises, one part of the work appears as reference to Christianity and determination to create only religious works. As it was mentioned before, the author did not follow his decision, since shortly afterwards he prepared a work entitled "*Moriae encomium*" thanks to which he became a part of the history of literature. The scholar, describing senility, did not use, however, a similar, irreverent convention which was true for the subsequent period, but elaborated the undertaken subject with use of the funeral topic¹¹³. It is quite the opposite in the case of Paleotti. As Erasmus work can be considered as a kind of a literary *comploratio* on senility, the work of Paleotti undoubtedly fits the framework of a consolation. This author also refers to ancient opinions. He devotes nearly a third part of his treatise to their presentation. More so, he makes distinctions and generalization indicating the leading trends in consideration of senility. Finally, he abandons his earlier statements in order to take advantage of a scholastic philosophy in the part in which he presents his own ideas.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 164–165.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. ARIST. *Rhet.* I, 5 (1361b).

¹⁰⁷ G. PALAEOI *De bono* ..., p. 165.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 168–170.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 172.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 174.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 183–205.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 209–238.

¹¹³ Cf. A. JONSTONI *Encomium senis*, in: *Admiranda rerum admirabilium encomia sive Diserta et amoena Pallas disserens seria sub ludicra specie* [...], Typ. R. Smetii, Noviomagi Batavorum 1677, p. 277.

As the reference to the Bible and the history of Church refer basically to the sphere of the quoted examples, the whole work was subordinated to the Catholic doctrine. The scholar himself did not want to describe the ideal senility as such, but the Christian senility. A very clear connection between the content and the philosophy of life is not surprising for the author who was a priest deeply involved in reform of the Church. It might have been an indirect consequence of adoption of statements of Thomas Aquinas whose theses constituted a basis for his whole presentation, especially the discourse concerning perception of goodness. It might also have been, that the clearly describable religious outlook along with a tendency to encyclopedic systematization was the mark annunciating oncoming Baroque. Finally both works do not give a decisive answer to many questions set up in the introduction. However, they acquaint us with the Renaissance understanding of senility being a result of coincidence of ancient points of view and personal as well as social experience.