EDU 6918: Foundations
Session 5: Christian Humanism through Renaissance and Reformation

“Therefore, because we take care constantly to improve the condition of our churches, we have striven with watchful zeal to advance the cause of learning, which has been almost forgotten by the negligence of our ancestors; and, by our example, also we invite those whom we can to master the study of the liberal arts.”

--Charlemagne, 786 A.D.

I. Francis Petrarch (1304-1374) and the Roman Revival (Latin Antiquarianism)

A. Antiquarianism—searching for the classical past
--the major educational preoccupation of Europe's 14th and 15th centuries
--Dante (1265-1320) had asserted the historical supremacy of ancient Roman civilization and in The Divine Comedy suggested a reborn Christian Rome, but his ideas were based on small portions of Livy; Greek and Roman translations of classical works just beginning to emerge

B. Petrarch's father a cultivated Florentine exile, eventually settling in Avignon--Dante's and his grandfather were friends; here young Petrarch first encountered translations of Cicero in Latin
--pursued legal studies in Bologna in 1320 but dropped out to take a cardinal's clerical appointment which enabled him to pursue his self-appointed mission: the discovery and copying of classical works
--his edited version of Livy with marginal notes is the first production of modern scholarship, "I am as if on the frontiers of two peoples, looking forward and backward"
--In 1341 crowned Italy's poet-historian laureate, the most famous figure of his time; and the first formal recognition of history as a separate intellectual activity (before always part of literature). His signature work had been Africa, an epic poem about Scipio Africanus, against Hannibal in which its pagan hero was nevertheless a model of classical virtue--a reborn ideal.

This concept gave birth to his other lifelong monumental work of Roman historical biographies, De viris illustribus.

C. The Byzantine monk and linguist Bernard Barlaam was introduced to Petrarch in 1342 and taught him some Greek, but the bulk of his studies remained of the Roman works in Latin; in 1354 he accidently discovered a cache of Cicero's letters in Verona which following their translation, as Letters to Atticus, revived Roman republican ideals--and led Petrarch to Plato, Pliny, Augustus, and others.
--In 1347 he was commissioned by the papal librarian to reorganize the Vatican Library

D. As early as 1337 he wrote about the need to restore the neglected remains of the former empire: monuments, buildings, statuary, though books remained the most direct means of restoring the classical past as they contained its ideas.

E. Petrarch's educational program was the first to break decisively with the medieval tradition and spawned the modern Western liberal arts movement. Its tenets:
1. The mission--cultivate moral discipline in order to achieve personal freedom and fulfillment.
2. The method--classical antiquity teaches us to feel rightly about God and our fellow man, so reading about the lives of great moral exemplars would best guide human conduct.
--virtue and mature knowledge comes through an understanding of three central literary studies: history, philosophy, and poetry. Their greatest exemplars are Homer, Plato, Vergil, and the greatest of all, Cicero. Through personal virtue, republican national affairs could properly function, guided by the papacy.

3. The teaching of children was generally held in low esteem by the Italian public in Petrarch's time, but his writings give some indications of his thoughts on the matter: teaching is based on a clear grasp of the central ideas of knowledge. Petrarch often quoted Aristotle: "It is a mark of one who knows that he can teach," and Cicero: "It requires not only to know something but to teach it." The most fundamental skill is not in the instruction, but in the content, as "no skills will get clear speech out of an obscure intellect." This knowledge is most fully expressed in the highest forms of written poetry, history, and philosophy (vs. traditional medieval emphasis on dialectics) with knowledge expressed by students through writing and oratory. (Petrarch's generation had not yet discovered Quintillion's *Institutes of Oratory*.)

F. Limitations of Petrarch's pioneering efforts:
   1. Preoccupation with the romanticized epoch of ancient Rome--all past events are history.
   2. Spurned Arabic thinkers whose works had made the extension of his own possible.
   3. His educational revival was aristocratic--not a democratic movement for the masses.

II. John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) and The Great Didactic

A. The life and philosophy of Comenius
--born in Moravia and orphaned at an early age, experiences in a traditional Latin school led him to design a "new pedagogy" and became a Moravian Brethren minister. His most important works include the *Pansophia* and *The Great Didactic*, neither published till long after his death --Francis Bacon's (1561-1626) empirical emphasis on understanding practical "things," the "particulars," through inductive reasoning by means of observation and details in nature, rather than through the humanists' rhetoric and wordplay, gained wide appeal among the puritanically inclined middle class of 17th century Europe (cp. printing press and compass vs. syllogisms). Principal features:
   1. concern for practical vocational "work"
   2. the value of scientific methodology and invention
   3. millenarian optimism--progress and dominion over nature through knowledge

B. Therefore, a crucial period in the development of Western educational thought and fundamentally based on both theology and a new pedagogy--blending utopianism with pragmatism--ushering in the new millennium was a religious calling and a function of exploiting natural and human resources. The teacher, therefore, had a divine as well as a secular mission

C. Such ideas contribute to the development of the major Enlightenment themes:
   1. The rise of secularist thinking
2. Empiricism and reason in scientific investigation replacing blind faith
3. The idea of humanity’s inevitable progress
4. A distrust of authority and traditions that impede individual development

D. Comenian Aims

1. Universal schools with textbooks would be the "instruments of wisdom" for this "eventide of the world"
   --education would be used to open the world to investigation by the three divine means of learning:
   a. Human reason (expressed in philosophy and art)
   b. The natural world (requiring scientific investigation)
   c. Scriptural revelation (through biblical studies)
   --these three are mutually enlightening in the ascent to God and fulfillment

2. While this movement to fuller understanding is underway, 17th century world exploration is bringing Europe to the doorstep of humanity throughout the globe and opportunity to extend "universal peace over the whole world."
   --schools and textbooks would be used to "shine the light everywhere of one flock and one shepherd" for the final "brotherhood of man"
   --Comenius is heralded, therefore, as a prophet of Christian ecumenism (in an age of religious wars)

E. The Methods of Comenius

1. The mentality of children
   --childhood is an especially appropriate time to redeem man's corrupt nature--children are "more susceptible to remedy" as they have a more "natural tendency" to goodness, that otherwise will be corrupted over time by parental indulgence and social conflicts (i.e., the evidence of the two "fallen natures"--original and personal)
   --life and teaching should be "ordered" just as all things in nature are ordered: musical harmony, the human body, societies, clock mechanisms, planetary motion, etc.
   Therefore, scientific investigation validates the need for order in human affairs as well.

2. The role of the teacher
   --educators become "the servant whose mission is the art of cultivating" the mind to these understandings of universal order and truth to the point where God can transform the soul. This "cultivation" requires "methods;" hence The Great Didactic

3. Pedagogical methods
   a. Textbooks in all subjects but not encyclopedic volumes of facts, rather summaries of essentials, "epitomes"
   b. Visual aids to depict physical and abstract concepts (geometric figures, light properties, maps, etc.)
   c. The classroom should be arranged to engender "as much pleasure as fairs"
   d. Direct "sensory" observations to "investigate things"--stars, trees, rocks, and let students establish classification systems rather than just telling them how (i.e., the scientific method)
   e. Teach "practical application in everyday life and of definite use"
   f. Leisure-time activities "to imitate the different handicrafts"--farming, politics, architecture, soldiering, science (schools as "workshops humming with work")
g. Classics selected to promote "piety, morality, and the cultivation of the mind"
h. History as the most important subject, the "eye of life,"--cultural history, natural history, biblical history--all with special emphasis on one's own customs and homeland
i. Teaching the internal coherence of cultural and scientific knowledge (interdisciplinary studies)--specialization in teaching and textbooks can be dangerous (no astronomy without philosophy, no mathematics without theology, no politics without ethics)
j. Reason, science, and revelation all reflect God's "ideas." "Nature, Scripture, and Notions" are the "books of God" (Pansophia). This allows the vast "anatomy of the universe" to be "simplified" into "general kinds" (i.e., concepts)
k. Encourage students "urge for activity" and play, avoid harsh discipline.

F. Limitations of Comenian pedagogy
   1. The analogy of teaching to stimulus-response or mechanical "order"
   2. Universalism and the multicultural context

Session 5 Readings: Luther and Comenius

“Letter in Behalf of Christian Schools”

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Since power of speaking, in which both words and thoughts are praised, cannot exist without the help of memory, there is need to exercise memory. The mark of this ability is in children and has a threefold quality: it perceives without labor, it retains faithfully” and imitates easily. Something must be committed to memory daily, whether this be verses or important maxims from illustrious authors. “For memory is called the storehouse of learning and instruction, and in the fables is called the mother of the muses because it begets and nourishes. You will aid this in each quality whether you are mindful or forgetful by nature. For either you will strengthen the abundance or supply the defect and you will obey the verses of Hesiod. For thus he says: ‘If you strive to add small bits to little things and you do that frequently, a huge pile is accumulated.”

The disciplines are interconnected and a person cannot gain one unless he acquires the light of another. For who has the art of correct speaking unless he has seen the poets, and read the historians and orators? Whence, except from these, is whatever there is of reason, of antiquity, of authority, and of custom in grammar? Wherefore, the second part of grammar requires not only that the aforementioned authors be read and understood, “but that every class of writers” who have been tried, approved, and discussed, should be read and understood, “not only because of their contents but also because of their words which frequently receive their authority from writers.” Therefore it is advantageous and necessary that your teachers be very industrious in collecting, investigating, and explaining them to you. The ancients decreed “that reading should commence with Homer and Vergil, although there is need of mature judgment to comprehend their virtues. But for the acquisition of this judgment, there is abundance of time nor will they be read but once. In the meantime, the mind will be exalted by the sublimity of the heroic verse, and will conceive ardor from the magnitude of affairs and be endowed with the noblest sentiments,” as Augustine also approves in his first book of the City of God. But I do not see how Greek can be given to you, as a teacher of this subject is lacking. But I would say that you should acquire it, if you have the opportunity; for a knowledge of Greek, which not a few of the Latin emperors
learned, would help not a little to direct the kingdom of Hungary, in which there are many
Creeks, and would contribute much light to your Latin speech. For with me the’ authority of great
Cato, who as an old man gave his attention to Greek letters, prevails more’ than that of Gaius
Marius, who thought it disgraceful to learn this language whose teachers were slaves. We have
the desire to learn this language but the opportunity is lacking; hence let us speak of Latin
authors, of whom there is not such a great lack that with them we cannot acquire a fuller and
more elegant Latin speech.

Receive this further instruction and learn what authors you should read while you are a boy. They
are poets, historians, philosophers, and orators. For we shall reserve the theologians for an-o ther
time, although some of those included under the name of philosophers might be given to a boy
without danger as we shall afterwards indicate. For there is nothing which philosophy may
ignore. Let the discernment of your teacher assist you in choosing the poets who may be entrusted
to you. Among the epic poets let him prefer before all Vergil, whose eloquence, whose
reputation, is so great that it can be augmented by no praise, diminished by no censure. In him the
careful reader will discover the different kinds of style, which are thought to “be four: brevity,
fullness, simplicity, and elegance.” Lucan, a distinguished author of history, and Statius, who is
quite polished, should not be neglected. Ovid is every-where concise, everywhere delightful, but
in many places too wanton; yet his most famous work, to which he gave the name
Metamorphoses, ought in no wise to be cast aside, as the knowledge

of this on account of the skill displayed in the stories is of no small profit. Others who write in
heroic verse are far inferior to these and ought to be called versifiers rather than poets; I would
consider that Claudian and the author of the Argonaut$ least contemptible. Only three satirists are
found among us today: Horace, Juvenal, and Persius. Martial also perhaps may seem a satirist,
his verse has not observed the laws of satire. Horace, a little younger than Vergil, was a man
of much learning; he is useful everywhere whether you read his odes, his epodes, his satires, or
his Epistles.

Indeed there is a galaxy of orators who can be read, but Cicero is the most brilliant of all and
sufficiently pleasant and clear to beginners. He can not only be profitable but also loved.
Ambrose also wrote, an imitation of Cicero, a work not to be despised which I should think ought
to be read most suitably with his, so that what of Cicero is not in harmony with our faith may be
corrected from Ambrose. The works of Lactantius are elegant; there is nothing crude in Jerome;
the books of Augustine are faultless; you can make use of Gregory with no small advantage. In
our day the volumes of Leonardo Bruni, Güarino of Verona, Poggio of Florence, Ambrose the
monk of Camaldoli, are concise and fruitful for readers. Boys ought to read historians also, such
as Livy and Sallust, although to understand them, there is need of maturity. Then we have Justin
and Quintus Curtius and Arrian, whom Petrus Paulus translated, in all of whom we find truth and
not fables. “The History of Alexander” ought to be run through. And to these men Valerius, the
historian and philosopher, is not unworthy to be added. Suetonius should not be entrusted to a
boy. Also stories from Genesis, the Books of Kings, the Book of Maccabees, the Books of Judith,
Esdras, Esther, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles will be taken up with great profit. “For,” as
Cicero says, “history is the witness of time, the light of truth, the teacher of life, the messenger of
antiquity.” Therefore it is advantageous to know as many histories as possible and to train
yourself in them, so that, by the example of others, you may know how to follow what is useful
and to avoid what is harmful.

Therefore it will be the duty of the mayors and ‘council to exercise the greatest care over the
young. For since the happiness, honor, and life of the city are committed to their hands, they
would be held recreant before God and the world, if they did not, day and night, with all their
power, seek its welfare and improvement, how the welfare of a city does not consist alone in
great treasure firm walls, beautiful houses, and munitions of war; indeed, where all these are
found, and reckless fools come into power, the city sustains the greater injury. But the highest welfare, safety, and power of a city consists in able, learned, wise, upright, cultivated citizens, who can secure, preserve, and utilize every treasure and advantage.

In ancient Rome the boys were so brought up that at the age of fifteen, eighteen, twenty, they were masters not only of the choicest Latin and Greek, but also of the liberal arts, as they are called; and immediately after this scholastic training, they entered the army or held a position under the government. Thus they became intelligent, wise, and excellent men, skilled in every art and rich in experience, so that all the bishops, priests, and monks in Germany put together would not equal a Roman soldier. Consequently their country prospered; persons were found capable and skilled in every pursuit. Thus, in all the world, even among the heathen, schoolmasters and teachers have been found necessary where a nation was to be elevated. Hence in the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul employs a word in common use when he says, “The law was our schoolmaster.”

Since, then, a city must have well-trained people, and since the greatest need, lack, and lament is that such are not to be found, We must not wait till they grow up of themselves; neither can they be hewed out of stone nor cut out of wood; nor will God work miracles, so long as men can attain their object through means within their reach. Therefore we must see to it, and spare no trouble or expense to educate and form them ourselves. For whose fault is it that in all the cities there are at present so few skilful people except the rulers, who have allowed the young to grow up like trees in the forest, and have not cared how they were reared and taught? The growth, consequently, has been so irregular that the forest furnishes no timber for building purposes, but like a useless hedge, is good only for fuel.

Yet there must be civil government. For us, then, to permit ignoramuses and blockheads to rule when we can prevent it, is irrational and barbarous. Let us rather make rulers out of swine and wolves, and set them over people who are indifferent to the manner in which they are governed. It is barbarous for men to think thus: “We will now rule; and what does it concern us how those fare who shall come after us?” Not over human beings, but over swine and dogs should such people rule, who think only of their own interests and honor in governing. Even if we exercise the greatest care to educate able, learned and skilled rulers, yet much care and effort are necessary in order to secure prosperity. How can a city prosper, when no effort is made?

But, you say again, if we shall and must have schools, what is the use to teach Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and the other liberal arts? Is it not enough to teach the Scriptures, which are necessary to salvation, in the mother tongue? To which I answer: I know, alas! that we Germans must always remain irrational brutes, as we are deservedly called by surrounding nations. But I wonder why we do not also say: of what use to us are silk, wine, spices, and other foreign articles, since we ourselves have an abundance of wine corn, wool, flax, wood, and stone in the German states, not only for our necessities, but also for embellishment and ornament? The languages and other liberal arts, which are not only harmless, but even a greater ornament, benefit, and honor than these things, both for understanding the Holy Scriptures and carrying on the civil government, we are disposed to despise; and the foreign articles which are neither necessary nor useful, and which besides greatly impoverish us, we are unwilling to dispense with.

In the same measure that the Gospel is dear to us, should we zealously cherish the languages. For God had a purpose in giving the Scriptures only in two languages, the Old Testament in the Hebrew, and the New Testament in the Greek. What God did not despise, but chose before all others for His Word, we should likewise esteem above all others. St. Paul, in the third chapter of Romans, points out, as a special honor and advantage of the Hebrew language, that God’s Word was given in it…. King David boasts in the one hundred and forty-seventh Psalm: “He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known. Hence the Hebrew language is called
sacred. And St. Paul, in Romans 1:2, speaks of the Hebrew Scriptures as holy, no doubt because of the Word of God which they contain. In like manner the Greek language might well be called holy, because it was chosen, in preference to others, as the language of the New Testament. And from this language, as from a fountain, the New Testament has flowed through translations into other languages, and sanctified them also.

And let this be kept in mind, that we will not preserve the Gospel without the languages. The languages are the scabbard in which the Word of God is sheathed. They are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; the cask in which this wine is kept; the chamber in which this food is stored…. The apostles considered it necessary to embody the New Testament in the Greek language, in order, no doubt, that it might be securely preserved unto us as in a sacred shrine. For they foresaw what has since taken place, namely, that when the divine revelation is left to oral tradition, much disorder and confusion arise from conflicting opinions and doctrines. And there would be no way to prevent this evil and to protect the simple-minded, if the New Testament was not definitely recorded in writing. Therefore it is evident that where the languages are not preserved, there the Gospel will become corrupted.

Experience shows this to be true. For immediately after the age of the apostles, when the languages ceased to be cultivated, the Gospel, and the true faith, and Christianity itself, declined more and more, until they were entirely lost under the Pope. And since the time that the languages disappeared, not much that is noteworthy and excellent has been seen in the Church; but through ignorance of the languages very many shocking abominations have arisen. On the other hand, since the revival of learning, such a light has been shed abroad, and such important changes have taken place, that the world is astonished, and must acknowledge that we have the Gospel almost as pure and unadulterated as it was in the times of the apostles, and much purer than it was in the days of St. Jerome and St. Augustine. In a word, since the Holy Ghost, who does nothing foolish or useless, has often bestowed the gift of tongues, it is our evident duty earnestly to cultivate the languages, now that God has restored them to the world through the revival of learning.

Johann Comenius, *The Great Didactic* (1633-38, sel.)

THE GREAT DIDACTIC, IN WHICH IS PRESENTED A GENERALLY VALID ART OF TEACHING EVERYTHING TO EVERYONE, OR, RELIABLE AND PERFECT DIRECTIONS FOR ERECTING SCHOOLS IN COMMUNITIES, TOWNS, AND VILLAGES OF ANY CHRISTIAN STATE. In these schools all youth of both sexes, without exception, can be instructed in the sciences, improved in their morals, filled with piety, and, in suchwise, be equipped in early years for all that belongs to the life here and beyond. This will be done by a concise, agreeable and thorough form of instruction which derives its reasons from the genuine nature of things, proves its truth by dint of adequate examples taken from the mechanical arts, …arranges the sequence of instruction by years, months, days, and hours, and finally, …shows an easy and safe way for the happy pursuit of all these suggestions…. The Beginning and End of our Didactic will be to seek and find a method by which the teachers teach less and the learners learn more, by which the schools have less noise, obstinacy, and frustrated endeavor, but more leisure, pleasantness and definite progress, and by which the Christian State will suffer less under obscurity, confusion, and conflict, and will enjoy a greater amount of light, order, peace, and quiet.
Chapter 2: Man’s Ultimate Goal Lies Outside this Life.

. . . All our doing and suffering tells us that we do not achieve our ultimate goal here on earth but that all that is in us and we ourselves aim farther For what we are, do, think, talk, contemplate acquire, and possess is only a kind of ladder on which we always climb toward a higher rung, but never reach the top. After man has begun his life in the form of an amorphous mass he gradually takes on the contours of a body and later on begins to move After birth the senses awake, then knowledge arises as a consequence of observation, and finally, will assumes the office of the pilot by ad dressing itself to certain things and going away from other things. Also within the single levels of development we discover a definite improvement. Just as the rays of rising sun emerge from darkness, so knowledge of things gradually increases, and life lasts more as more light is ‘added. Also our actions are insignificant, feeble, and awkward at the beginning; but gradually the faculties of the soul unfold together with the faculties of the body, and in a noble mind all this aspires higher and higher.

2. There should be taught all that can make men wise, honest, and pious.

3. Education, which is preparation for life, should be finished before adulthood.

4. Education should be carried out not with beating, severity and any kind of coercion, but easily, pleasantly, and, so to speak, by its own momentum.

5. Not a semblance of education ought to be provided, but genuine education, not a superficial but thorough education; that means the rational animal man should be led by his own rather than a foreign reason. He should get accustomed to penetrating to the real roots of things and to take into himself their true meaning and usage, rather than read, perceive, memorize, and relate other people’s opinions. The same ought to be the case with respect to morality and piety.

6. Education ought not to be painful but as easy as possible, everyday only four hours ought to be spent for public instruction, and this in such a way that one teacher should suffice for the simultaneous instruction of a hundred pupils. And he should do that ten times more easily than is now done with one pupil.

Chapter 14: The Exact Method of Teaching has to be Borrowed from Nature. . . .

. . . If the natural order of learning is completely discovered then there will not be any difference between the development of art and the growth of nature. For Cicero says very truly, “If we follow nature as our guide we will never go astray.” . . . Therefore guided by nature we will explore the principles useful for, first, the prolongation of life in order to learn all that is necessary; second, the limitation of subject-matter in order to learn more quickly; third, grasping the right occasion in order to learn more effectively; fourth, the unfolding of the mind in order to learn more easily; fifth, the sharpening of the judgment in order to learn more thoroughly. Each of these points will be discussed in a special chapter, but with the limitation of subject-matter we will deal last.

Chapter 16: General Postulates of Teaching and Learning. . .

First postulate: Nature follows a well-ordered time plan…. Hence all material of learning must be so divided according to age levels that only that is assigned to the child which is within the compass of his capacity.

Second postulate: Nature prepares the material before it begins to form it…. Schools fail in this principle very often. . . .

Hence in order to improve teaching the following have to be done. 1. One has to have books and other adequate tools ready. 2. Perception must come before language. 3. Language must be
learned not from grammar but from fitting authors. 4. Observation has to precede analysis. 5. Examples have to precede the rules.

Third postulate: Nature chooses fitting materials for its activity. . . . Therefore in the future: First, each child entrusted to a school ought to stay in it. Second, the minds of the pupils should be made susceptible to the subject chosen for treatment. Third, all obstacles ought to be removed from the pupil

Fourth postulate: Nature does not get confused, but proceeds by carefully distinguishing the single objects. . . . Therefore pupils in schools ought to be occupied with only one subject at any one time.

Fifth postulate: Nature begins its activities from within…. Therefore in the future:
1. First one ought to train the knowledge of things, second the memory, and third the language and the hand.
2. The teacher should explore and apply all means and ways for making the acquisition of knowledge possible.

Sixth postulate: Nature begins all its formation with the most general and finishes with the single. . . . Hence the individual sciences are badly taught unless a simple and general survey of the total knowledge is given before. And one ought never to instruct anybody in such a way that he becomes perfect in one branch of knowledge to the exclusion of others. Furthermore, the arts, sciences, and languages are badly taught unless one begins with the elements.

Seventh postulate: Nature does not skip but proceeds evenly…. Therefore in the future:
1. The totality of the studies ought to be classified so that each step prepares for the next one.
2. There ought to be a carefully planned schedule so that each year, month, day, and hour may have its special task.
3. This schedule ought to be followed rigidly so that nothing is skipped or confused.

Eighth postulate: If nature begins it does not stop before it has finished…. Hence:
1. The pupil ought to stay in his institution until he becomes an educated, moral, and pious person.
2. The school ought to be situated in a quiet place.
3. Assignments ought to be finished without interruption.
4. Truancy and loafing ought not to be permitted.

Ninth postulate: Nature avoids contrasts and dangers…. Hence, care ought to be taken:
1. That the pupils have only such books which are fitting for their grade.
2. That these books be of such a kind that they can be called funnels of wisdom, virtue, and piety.
3. That disorderly behavior not be tolerated in schools and their surroundings.

If all this is carefully observed the schools can hardly miss their purpose.