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**Friedenthal, Meelis, Hanspeter Marti, and Robert Seidel, eds.**

*Early Modern Disputations and Dissertations in an Interdisciplinary and European Context.* Intersections, 71. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Pp. xxvi + 908, 46 color ill., 5 graphs, 4 tables. Hb, € 215,00/ \$259.00.

The text on the cover text of this collection of nearly a thousand pages explains that “from the 16th through the 18th century, printed disputations were the main academic output of universities.” The three editors confirm this claim with thirty-two case studies by different authors, investigating the topic of early modern printed disputations in an interdisciplinary and European context. The sources are short, almost exclusively Latin works of often fewer than fifteen pages with titles such as “Disputatio physica de ventis” or “Theses ethicae de voluptate et dolore.” They typically contain theses as short propositions or more elaborate arguments that served as the basis for a candidate’s oral exam, the *respondens*, and supervised, or “presided over,” by a professor, the *praeses*. In many, especially Central-European territories, the candidate was required to have his disputation printed at his own expense.

This genre of text has not entirely escaped the attention of historical scholarship. However the more extensive pre-1950 studies have considered these prints predominantly from the perspective of library sciences usually as some region or library attempted to catalogue the numerous printed university disputations then overfilling many bookcases. The editors of this volume rightly point out in the introduction that these printed disputations, although they might not look intriguing at first sight, are an enormously rich source for the study of the intellectual and institutional history of higher learning. Several studies, many of which are referred to in this collection and indeed were written or co-written by many of the contributors, and the articles herein collected demonstrate the potential of disputations as what might be called “normal science” (Thomas Kuhn).

With the exception of two rather general chapters that open the volume, the remaining thirty chapters are divided geographically: Britain (3 chapters), France (2 chapters), Germany, Austria and Switzerland (15 chapters), and Scandinavia and the Baltics (10 chapters). The editors focus on Northern Europe, featuring

studies linked to Uppsala, Lund, Tartu, Riga, and Turku. The time range covered reaches from the middle of the sixteenth century, the Reformation, Protestant and Catholic, to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century with an emphasis on the seventeenth century. Different articles assume different perspectives; some consider the dissertations from the point of view of intellectual and institutional history whereas others are more concerned with aet history and history of the book. Some contributions study the disputations as material objects held in libraries, as media of artistic visual and poetic expression, and as carriers of paratexts revealing traces of social and political networks, e.g. by means of dedications. In terms of the scientific disciplines or fields from which the disputations originate, all four faculties of the university are taken into account: philosophy (including, e.g., languages, history, and political philosophy), law, medicine, and theology.

Many chapters fit into the larger intellectual and political narrative of the early modern period. For example, they trace the impact of the Reformation and controversial theology in university disputations during the confessional age. Historians of science will find several contributions dealing with the so-called Scientific Revolution and its competing world views, for example, the influence of the ideas of Nicolaus Copernicus, Petrus Ramus, René Descartes, and Christian Wolff on the formation of the candidates.

Scholars interested in Jesuit studies will learn from Sibylle Appuhn-Radtke's chapter on intricate engravings used as single-sheet prints to announce disputations in Jesuit colleges, especially in the Holy Roman Empire. Jesuits Moritz Chardon, Francis Xavier, Luigi Gonzaga, Giovanni Paolo Oliva, Adam Pfister, Johannes Tanner, and Jacob Willi feature in her article. Gábor Fököli investigates the response of David Pareus, a theologian from Heidelberg, to Robert Bellarmine's refutation of Protestantism. Other Jesuits such as Péter Pázmány, Maximilianus Sandaeus, and István Szántó play roles in this article. Joseph S. Freedman takes a close look at a disputation from the Jesuit university of Dillingen over which Georg Stengel presided, entitled *On the Good Arts in General* (1616). Isabella Walser-Bürgler unravels the complicated, tense relationship between the Catholic Enlightenment and Josephinism at the Jesuit university of Innsbruck in the eighteenth century. Featured in this article are, among others, Jesuits Franz Xaver Mannhart and Luis de Molina. Other Jesuits and Jesuit institutions appear in other articles, for example, the Jesuit colleges in Münster (512), Paris (200), and Dorpat (632); and Jesuits Henry Garnet (158), Jacob Gretser (47–50), Athanasius Kircher (173), Stanisław Kostka (221), Juan Maldonado (60), Benet Pereira (642 ff.), and Francisco Suárez (512 ff.).

Overall, the scholarly quality of the volume is quite high, rooted in original research in sources practically ignored by other scholars. In terms of

methodology, the majority of the articles are thorough but also rather traditional. Only a few articles subject their sources to a quantitative analysis, for example those written by Urs B. Leu, Janika Päll, and Johanna Akujärvi. Other articles reconstruct social relations and networks. The editors note the benefits that digitalization and data analysis would bring to the field, but any steps this collection takes in that direction are small. Future researchers, however, can use this collection to launch their investigations.

The introduction addresses some helpful *desiderata* in scholarship. The authors admit that some territories were not sufficiently covered for different, justifiable reasons. Yet, the almost complete omission of Dutch regions, and many centers of Eastern Europe (e.g. Prague or Kraków) seems particularly lamentable as institutions in these areas, in contrast to those throughout most of southern Europe, produced many printed disputations. Also, scholars interested in mathematical disciplines might be disappointed. One chapter on cosmology comes the closest, but mathematics and allied sciences are practically ignored. A longer introductory chapter or a comparative, cross-regional study specifically dedicated to the praxeological dimension of the act of disputation and its economic and pedagogical underpinning would have been another valuable addition.

The volume's editing deserves a short comment. A native English speaker will most likely sense that the majority of the authors are not native English speakers yet only two articles are not in English. Research on disputations, occupying as it does a somewhat marginal place in historical scholarship, is rendered more accessible to a wider audience through the use of English especially because of the book's concentration on some more peripheral regions of Europe. This should be applauded. An index of places to supplement that of persons, a consistent use of abbreviations for religious orders and congregations, and a better arrangement of the individual bibliographies would have made a very good book even better. One can only hope that this avenue of research will be continued because there is still so much to discover, which, thanks to the progressing digitization of the sources, is now much easier.

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