Important light has been shed on the character and personality of Juan Luis Vives in the *Litterae ad Craneveldium Balduinianae*, rightfully restored to the University of Leuven in 1989 through the timely intervention of the King Baudouin Foundation. In one of the earliest of these Vives recalls the various academic careers that had attracted him at one time or another in his youth. Of these, he says, the beautiful young girl, Dialectics, has been defiled by brothel-keepers; he avows that he had once been interested in the study of law and also of theology but was deterred from it since the theologians steer their subject into such narrow straits and force one to sail past so many reefs that it is difficult for a man of slightly liberal views to avoid shipwreck (‘theologi in tantas angustias deducunt suam rem ac inter tot scopulos cogunt enavigare ut difficile sit homini paulo liberiori non facere naufragium’).¹ Thus his words may be said directly to evoke the theme of our proceedings. He writes this very early on in his career, towards the end of the year 1520, more than a year after the *In pseudodialecticos* and the *Aedes legum*, to which he makes specific reference in this letter.

Having broached the subject of law, Vives answers a question that had been put to him by Cranevelt in a previous letter, namely, what his opinion was of the triumvirate singled out by Claudius Cantiuncula, professor of civil law at Basel, as having introduced a new era in jurisprudence, sometimes referred to as the *scuola culta*. The three were Andrea Alciato, Udalricus Zasius and Guillaume Budé. Of Alciato Vives says disparagingly that he seems to belong to that class of grammarians who offer their services at a high price, but hastens to add that he does not wish to detract in any way from the scholar’s considerable learning. Concerning the famous jurist, Zasius, he affirms that his writings cannot be compared in his judgment with those of Budé,

Fig. 3. Robert Boissard, *Portrait of Juan Luis Vives*, engraving ca 1587. Catholic University Leuven, Central Library / Prentenkabinet, inv.nr. PA 153