Eighteenth-Annual Bainton Lecture:

**Erasmus’ and Lipsius’ Editions of Seneca:**
A “Complementary” Project?*

by Jan Papy

Itaque sententiam pro te, Seneca, audacter ferimus:
in Philosophia, ac praeassertim Morali eius parte, 
vicisti qui fuerunt, qui erunt.

J. Lipsius, *Judicium super Seneca* (1605), xi

“Erasmus ex Erasmo” vs. “Erasmus ex Lipsio”?

In the famous book by the late Professor Léon-E. Halkin *Erasmus ex Erasmo*¹

the Alexandrian philological axiom—“to elucidate Homer from Homer”—

stemming from Aristarchus of Samothrace has apparently been applied suc-

cessfully to Erasmus’ vast correspondence.² For the most reliable source, so it

is argued, for our knowledge of both Erasmus’ person and persona is Erasmus

himself, preferably his correspondence. Yet, however much Erasmus may be

“known” nowadays thanks to the study of his correspondence and this reduc-

tionist hermeneutical method, the present Bainton Lecture for the Erasmus

of Rotterdam Society focuses on Erasmus once again. It is the intention

of this contribution, however, to propose another Erasmus. Our general

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²Léon-E. Halkin, *Erasmus ex Erasmo: Érasmie éditeur de sa correspondance* (Aubel: P. M. Gason,

1983).

²Cf. Porphyry, *Questiones Homericae, ll.* 297.16 Schrader; *The Homeric Questions: A Bilin-


quest. 11.
question is whether it would be possible to present an Erasmus ex Lipsio, and if so, whether this different perspective would add something new to the traditional persona. But two preliminary remarks have to be made before we turn to a comparison of Erasmus' and Lipsius' editions of an author they both studied and commented upon: Lucius Annaeus Seneca.

Two preliminary remarks

First, it soon becomes clear that one is venturing onto thin ice if one tries to present an Erasmus as seen and used by Justus Lipsius. For one look at the highly detailed index of Lipsius' posthumous Opera omnia—an index at which Franciscus Raphelengius the younger worked for ten full years—reveals that Erasmus' name is mentioned only four times in the whole of Lipsius' oeuvre, which fills four folio volumes in the Antwerp 1637 edition. At first sight, this almost complete absence of Erasmus' name in Lipsius' works may appear striking, especially since Erasmus' humanist thought and humanist program are omnipresent in Lipsius' oeuvre. Lipsius had been educated by Cornelius Valerius at the Louvain Collegium Trilingue, Erasmus' famous humanist institution with its overall Erasmian method of reading and explaining texts. Moreover, not without reason Lipsius has often been compared to Erasmus, and this from the publication of Charles Nisard's Le triumvirat littéraire (1852), in which the triumvirate Erasmus-Melanchthon-Camerarius is compared to their heirs Lipsius-Scaliger-Casaubon. Indeed, both Erasmus and Lipsius were internationally recognized scholars, starting their scholarly careers as classical philologists and using the same philological method; both

1Justi Lipsii V. C. Opera omnia postremum ab ipso aucta et recensita, necim primum copioso rerum indice illustrata (Antwerp: Ex officina Plantiniana Balthasaris Moreti, 1637), 4 vols. in folio. The Index, at the end of the fourth volume (s.v. "Desid. Erasmus"), omitted, however, to mention Lipsius' Louvain (Antwerp, 1605), a description of Leuven and its University, in which Erasmus' name is only mentioned (Book III, chapter 4) as the important executor who took Hieronymus Busleyden's will to heart and was the first to guide the Louvain Collegium Trilingue, the new college for the teaching of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Another rather obvious 'omission' in the Index of 1637 is Lipsius' third oration (on Cicero) delivered at Jena University in 1572, which for an obvious reason has not been included in his Opera omnia, for he had been attacking the Catholics in it, while praising Luther and Melanchthon as the leading lights of Germany and Europe, along with Erasmus, whom he then called "the Great"; see Mark Morford, Stoics and Neotoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 130.