In 1684 the Franeker law professor Ulrich Huber (1636–1694) published a book on the question, which method was the best to teach law. He republished it in 1688 in a changed and expanded version; two more reprints followed, in 1696 and 1724. In the 17th century this was a matter of continuing concern. There were many complaints about the lack of knowledge of Latin with the students, their young age, their disinterest in the study and their preference for quick but superficial learning. At the same time there was a variety of ways in which teaching (lectures, disputations, privatissima etc.) and the material (the Digest, Institutes, compendia, etc.) was offered. As such the book was certainly not out of place. More but again not very remarkable was its form. Huber presented his thoughts on the question in the form of a conversation between four persons: himself, the Leyden professors Böckelmann (1633–1691) and Crusius (1644–1676), and a less known person, Wijngaerden. But interesting is, that Huber situated the conversation at Böckelmann’s countryseat in Hazerswoude in the year 1670 or 1671, during a lunch party with more persons.

Was this a historic meeting? Hewett has carefully searched for historical data and explores (in Ch. VII) in how far the dialogue contains, apart from the persons depicted, historic facts. She shows that there are inconsistencies. We know that Böckelmann bought his estate on 25 April and 27 June 1676, thus after the moment in which the dialogue is set. On 14 July 1676 he hosted indeed a fish lunch party (convivium pisciculorum) for the Senate of Leyden University on this estate: it is in the university records (p. 103), but these must have been inaccessible to Huber. In the Dialogus Böckelmann speaks of a prandium apud piscinam meam, ‘a meal next to my fish pond’ (p. 3; too freely translated by Hewett as ‘riverside garden’, although the estate bordered the Rhine). It is possible of course that Huber must have heard of that particular fish lunch party where, we may surmise, the fish was taken from a pond on the estate. Or he must have heard of Böckelmann’s estate and its fish pond: that is far from impossible. As far as we know Huber himself never was in Leyden in those years. Moreover, both Böckelmann and Crusius died in resp. 1681 and 1676, before the first edition was published. Moreover, Crusius could not even have been present on the Senate lunch since he died on 31 March 1676. And we do not know whether Böckelmann was in the habit of hosting such or other parties on his estate. Hewett’s conclusion is that an actual dialogue most likely never took place. Whether Huber did write already long before 1684 a draft of the dialogue, which he in 1684 would have updated and published, is, so Hewett, not clear too. It is more likely we are dealing here with creative writing of Huber.

Perhaps a little more can be said. Indeed, everything speaks for a fictitious dialogue, comparable to the genre of postmortal dialogues (and two of the participants were already dead in 1684), for which real elements have been used. What if it had not been the case? Could such a dialogue really have taken place, and then be published, is rather the question to be asked. If so, it more probably would have taken place as an academic dispute. Actually, Huber had already prepared the diatribe but hastened to publish it in 1684 after Noodt (1647–1725) had delivered on 2/12 February 1684 his inaugural lecture in Utrecht. Noodt, who had become professor in Franeker after Huber moved in 1679 to the Court of Friesland, moved to Utrecht in 1684. It is likely that Huber’s return to Franeker in 1682 instigated this, as their personalities and religious views
conflicted. In that inaugural lecture, *De causis corruptae jurisprudentiae*, Noodt deplored the in his eyes low state of legal education. As main cause he mentioned the compendia, which misled the students: *sapientae damnum est* (p. 121–122). So their views clashed long before and thus it seems better to assume that Huber had been brooding on the question since his return in 1682 – after all, he was confronted in his own faculty with a radically different view on teaching his subject – and thought it best to deal with it in this way. Had Noodt remained longer in Franeker, he might have published it a little later. In that case, being close colleagues, the form of this dialogue would have been better suited than a direct attack.

Apart from these aspects, which Huber may have heard enough along the lines of gossip to set up something with some resemblance to reality, the main interest of the Dialogus is the representation of the different points of view on the problem posed, the argumentation, and the view of Huber himself. The essence of the dispute is the question, whether law should be studied by way of compendia, a position defended by Böckelmann, or by a thorough study of the sources, defended by Crusius but in this representing Noodt’s views as expressed in the latter’s inaugural lecture. For Huber the comfortable position is, in this way, left to take a middle road. Böckelmann had previously taught at the university of Heidelberg with the help of compendia, according to him very successfully. He was the author of a popular compendium, the *Compendium Institutionum Justiniani*, published Leiden 1679. Crusius, who died young, functions in the dialogue as Böckelmann’s opponent, criticising compendia and their use. He had studied in Franeker with Huber and they knew each other, though not being close. He could be considered to represent the elegant school, and probably for that reason Huber uses him to attribute to him views of Noodt and suggests an opposition between him and Böckelmann, which in reality probably did not exist. As to the fourth person, Adriaen Wijngaerden, there was such a person who had studied in Franeker from 1666 onwards and had defended three disputations under Huber. He moved to Leiden after 1670 and finished studies in 1674, with i.a. Böckelmann and Crusius as promoters. Thus he could have been present at the fictitious party. His role is restricted, apparently just put in to enable Huber to set out, how to teach best private students. As such his role would fit his place. But Böckelmann’s *Exercitationes ad Pandectas* and *Collegium Pandectarum compendiose exhibens fundamenta et praecipuas controversias quae in singulis titulis occurrunt, praeside Joh. Friderico Böckelmanno*, both containing disputations, had been published in resp. 1664 and 1668 in Heidelberg by an Adriaen Wijngaerden (p. 59, note 132). Hewett does not make a remark on this, but the similarity cannot have escaped Huber. Wijngaerden plays a marginal role, providing Huber with the opportunity to express his views on law teaching. These are, that indeed compendia do not help to learn the law. Only hard working can bring knowledge and insight. He draws up a muster course (Dialogus 49–58; p. 114).

It was the late Theo Veen, the authority on Huber, who drew Hewett’s attention to this work of Huber and stimulated her to translate it and to submit it, with additions, as a dissertation. After his untimely death Hallebeek (VU Amsterdam) and Cairns (Edinburgh) took over and it was successfully defended on 22 April 2010. In her Introduction Hewett describes the two editions (of 1684 and 1688) and the various printings (p. XXIII–XXXI). An unbound copy in Edinburgh of the 1684 edition showed differences not present in other copies of this edition. Closer examination of these then showed that these pages had been substituted. Further, Huber made various changes for the 1688 edition (presented in the appendices A and B to Part II). It is this edition of 1688 which Hewett used here. After the Introduction she gives in Part II a facsimile of this edition on the left page with her translation on the right page.