

The Correct Date of a Letter by Juan Luis Vives to Erasmus

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According to P. S. Allen, it was on 4 June 1520 that Vives sent Erasmus a long report of his journey to Paris, describing how amazingly well he had been received by his Paris friends and former colleagues, notwithstanding the recent publication of his treatise *In pseudodialecticos*.¹ This forceful invective against the Paris dialecticians was published for the first time in Louvain at the end of April or the very beginning of May 1519, within a miscellaneous volume entitled *Opuscula varia* and containing fifteen short tracts in total.² The *In pseudodialecticos* occupied the very last place, a place of honour, and was introduced by a letter to Juan Fort, dated 13 February 1519. The year-date of the publication of this miscellaneous volume – which was of major interest for the date not only of that specific letter by Vives to Fort but also for that of all related letters from and to Erasmus, including some to or from Guillaume Budé –, has been for a long time a matter of debate. P.S. Allen at first was of the opinion that it had been printed for the first time in 1519 at Louvain, but he swiftly changed his view and in n. 7 to ep. 1108 he wrote: «From the suggestion here and in Ep. 1106, 64 seq. that the letter was a recent composition, and from its place at the end of the book, it seems probable that the date of publication must be 1520, and not, as proposed in Ep. 927 introd., 1519».³

¹ P. S. Allen - H. M. Allen - H. W. Garrod, *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi*, 12 vols, Oxford, 1906-1958, IV (1922), pp. 270-276 (ep. 1108). Allen assumed that in 1520 Vives travelled a second time to Paris, arriving there between 2 May and c. 14 May; see ep. 1108, introduction.

² A detailed description of this edition is given by Enrique González – Salvador Albiñana – Víctor Gutiérrez, *Vives · Edicions princeps*, València, 1992, pp. 117-119.

³ Allen III (1913), p. 508 (introduction to ep. 927) and IV, p. 270.

More than fifty years later Charles Fantazzi still stuck to that hypothesis. Strangely enough he even considered the 1520 Sélestat edition of the *In pseudodialecticos* to be the *editio princeps*, which was then incorporated a few months later into the Louvain miscellaneous volume. So he stated in the introduction to his critical edition of the *In pseudodialecticos* concerning the date of Vives's dedicatory letter to Juan Fort: «There seems to be no doubt that this date is to be considered Old Style, and therefore really 1520».⁴

Only three years after the publication of this critical edition Constant Matheussen presented a paper at the Fifth Conference of the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies, in which he clearly demonstrated that the first edition was indeed printed at Louvain in the year 1519. In 1985 he published a supplementary article on the matter, and he reiterated his point of view in the general introduction to the first volume of the *Selected Works of J. L. Vives*.⁵

The discovery and the publication of the new Cranevelt letters yielded the final proof that Vives's *Opuscula varia* effectively had been published for the first time in 1519. On 29 March 1520 Vives proudly boasted that he had published the year before no less than fifteen works: «Anno superiore quindecim libros simul uno partu effudi». Furthermore, another letter sent by Vives shortly after 22 May 1520 and received by Cranevelt on 6 June proves that Vives was at Louvain on 22 May and the following days. Hence he cannot have stayed at Paris during the same period.⁶ His journey to Paris must have taken place in 1519, this being also the year of the letter written by Vives to Erasmus concerning that visit to Paris.

But when exactly was this letter written? Allen dated that letter 4 June 1520. That date, however, is not given in the letter. It only

⁴ Charles Fantazzi (ed.), *Juan Luis Vives, In Pseudodialecticos. A Critical Edition. Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Leiden, Brill, 1979, p. 1.

⁵ Constant Matheussen, «The Date of the *Opuscula varia* of J.L. Vives», in I.D. McFarlane (ed.), *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Sanctandreami. Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, St. Andrews 24 August to 1 September 1982*, Binghamton – New York, 1986, pp. 263-268; Id., «De omstreden datering van een Leuvense Martens-druk: J.L. Vives' *Opuscula varia*», in Francine De Nave (red.), *Liber amicorum Leon Voet*, Antwerpen, 1985, pp. 285-301 (= *De Gulden Passer*, 61-63, 1983-1985).

⁶ J. IJsewijn – G. Tournoy, «Litterae ad Craneveldium Balduiniana. A Preliminary Edition», *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 41 (1992), pp. 1-85 (pp. 26 and 29-34).

says that Vives reached Bruges on the fifth day after he left Paris, which was Trinity Sunday, and that he wrote that letter the next day: «dieque postquam illinc discessi quinto, qui divae Trinitati fuit sacer, perveni Brugas essedo vectus, postridie haec ad te scripsi».⁷

Enrique González González examined the date of three letters (Allen 1104, 1108, 1111) and concluded rightly that they all had to be written in 1519. But then his interpretation and his calculation completely went astray. First of all he claims that in 1519 Trinity Sunday was on 10 June. Furthermore, in accordance with the Spanish translations by Riber and J. Jiménez Delgado,⁸ he is convinced that Vives left Paris on Trinity Sunday and arrived at Bruges five days later, so that in his calculation letter 1108 is to be dated on 16 June 1519.⁹ The correct interpretation, which one finds also in the English translation by R.A.B. Mynors,¹⁰ is that Vives arrived at Bruges on Trinity Sunday, which was the fifth day after he had left Paris. Since Trinity Sunday in 1519 was on 19 June,¹¹ this letter 1108 has to be dated the day after, viz. 20 June 1519.

In conclusion Allen's original hypothesis that Vives's «visit to Paris must have ended about the middle of June» of the year 1519 proved to be correct.¹² His later assumption, viz. that Vives travelled a second time to Paris, arriving there between 2 May and c. 14 May 1520 (see n. 1) has to be dismissed.

⁷ Allen IV, p. 276.

⁸ Lorenzo Riber (tr.) *Juan Luis Vives, Obras completas*, 2 vols (Madrid, 1947, II, 1687: «y a los cinco días de haber salido de allí, que fué la fiesta de la Santísima Trinidad, llegué a Brujas, en carruaje, y al día siguiente te escribí a ti». José Jiménez Delgado (tr.), *Juan Luis Vives. Epistolario* (Madrid, 1978), p. 194 : «A los cinco días de mi partida, que era el día de la Trinidad, llegué a Brujas, en un carruaje. Al día siguiente te escribo a ti».

⁹ Enrique González González, «Humanistas contra escolásticos. Repaso de un capítulo de la correspondencia de *Vives y Erasmo*», *Diánoia*, 29 (1983), 135-161 (p. 158)

¹⁰ *The Correspondence of Erasmus. Letters 993 to 1121, 1519 to 1520*, translated by R.A.B. Mynors, annotated by Peter G. Bietenholz (Toronto - Buffalo - London, 1987), p. 302.

¹¹ A. Cappelli, *Cronologia, Cronografia e Calendario Perpetuo* (Milano, 1983), p. 70.

¹² Allen, ep. 1015, 4n.

TOURNOY, Gilbert, «The Correct Date of a Letter by Juan Luis Vives to Erasmus», *SPhV* 14 (2012), pp. 511-514.

ABSTRACT

In a long letter to Erasmus (Allen, ep. 1108) Vives described his journey to Paris, which took place in 1519 – and not in 1520 as has been assumed before. That letter had been dated 4 June 1520 by Allen, and more recently 16 June 1519 by E. González. In this contribution is established the exact date of that letter, viz. 20 June 1519.

KEYWORDS: Juan Luis Vives; Erasmus.

RESUMEN

En una larga carta a Erasmo (Allen ep. 1108) Vives describió su viaje a París, que tuvo lugar en 1519 –y no en 1520, como se había supuesto anteriormente. Esta carta había sido datada el 4 de junio de 1520 por Allen y, más recientemente, el 16 de junio de 1519 por E. González. En esta aportación se establece la fecha exacta de la misma: el 20 de junio de 1519.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Juan Luis Vives; Erasmo.