

Gabriel Naudé (1600–1653) – Serving the Power and the Book

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Abstract: The author of this paper utterly agrees with Montaigne’s and his followers’ criticism of pedantry and specialized erudition. Consequently, the followings offer a personal reading of Naudé’s treatise on the library. Gabriel Naudé was the first to lay the theoretical basis of the public library. The author of the treatise *Advice on Establishing a Library* was himself an incarnation of cosmopolitanism by his implication in the debates of his time and his relationship to various European centres of power. He was a courtier, an agile political counsellor, pleasing in conversation, and holder of a much exercised sense of judgment. The library is an aspect of the formation of his personality. His interest in such an institution illustrates a new type of social contractarianism, imposed by absolute power: urban eloquence as opposed to medieval heroism. At the same time, this interest also addresses the technological shock provoked by the dissemination of printing. This paper offers a presentation and discussion of Gabriel Naudé’s perception on the library in a close textual approach. The practical issues of acquisitions and organization of book collections are treated with a spirit of intellectual opening deriving from scepticism, and of respect for the great intellectual figures of Antiquity and Modernity.

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Warning: the author of this paper utterly agrees with Montaigne’s and his followers’ criticism of pedantry and specialized erudition. Moreover, he profoundly dislikes the image of an overweight knowledge, the advancement of which is ensured by the accumulation of “scholarly production”. Let us also note in passing that such an image is also completely false. Consequently, the followings offer a personal reading of Naudé’s treatise on the library.

The modern public library witnessed the radical changes marking the beginning of modernity. This paper dwells upon the work of Gabriel Naudé, who, although not the first founder of a public library in the modern age, definitely was its first theoretician. The subject of the library – as a place for private joy and display of public glory – emerges for Naudé as the association of critical spirit with the discussion of the metaphysical hierarchy of knowledge. Inquiry and questioning are the basis of the research of any document and evidence, whether related to sacred sources or secular texts. The collapse of the threefold scale inherited from

scholasticism – divinity–humanity–nature – made it possible to conceive an arbitrary and practical classification of the books of tradition.

In his treatise *Advice on Establishing a Library* (*Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque*, Paris, 1627), Gabriel Naudé, medical doctor and philosopher – double competence which usually recommended a scholar educated at Padua in the 17th century – drew up a meditation on books of great importance. The library, whether public or private, is one of the aspects of edification of the ideal man as perceived in the 17th century, represented by the courtier, the man of letters, or the magistrate. The common characteristic of these figures is their relative spiritual independence, obtained on the condition of their subordination to the sovereign power. Most often, the price for the freedom of thought in relation with tradition and public authority is the absolute acceptance of princely power: it is necessary to “*abolir toute idée de droits autres que ceux du chef*”¹ – remarks Naudé in his daring book, the *Considérations politiques sur les coups d'état* (*Political Considerations on Coups d'Etat* (Rome, 1639 – edition in 12 copies). Naudé's support of absolute terrestrial power is inscribed in the mannerist idea of a culture based on compromise: acceptance of the state of affairs for the prevention of something much worse. The long-lasting religious wars left their deep marks on the consciousness of European intellectuals. “Tyranny is preferable to a civil war” – this is not a principle of parlour cynicism, but an urge to moderation, repeated by many political authors.

The autonomy and freedom of judgment were not alien to Naudé. The philosopher-librarian together with his intellectual friends, Pierre Gassendi, François La Mothe Le Vayer, and Guy Patin formed the *Tetrad*, a scholarly circle of learned debates. The group's name was an ironic anti-phrase referring to Pythagorean number mysticism. However, what really united the Parisian men of letters was not the harmony of spheres, but their fulfilment in a discrete community. The ideas of the *Tetrad* shaped and promoted a strong cultural trend: erudite libertinism. That is to say, an intellectual attitude that inherited the Machiavellian analysis of power, continued the tradition of scepticism of Montaigne's *Essays*, and concerned itself with the renewal of natural and moral Epicureanism.

Discretion, a virtue which later fell out of use, was very fashionable during the age of French classicism. The term was synonymous with social reason, as discernment was the filter of what a courtier allowed himself to display, and what he concealed within his self. Discretion went against royal majesty, since the presence of the learned counsellor was always overshadowed by the bright appearance of the sovereign. In the case that Naudé presented in his treatise, the patron might boast with the rarity and size of his library, but the task of acquisitions and organization belonged to his subordinate. It was in this quality that Naudé ranked among the foremost figures of his age. The treatise on the library is dedicated and addressed to Henri de Mesme, President of the Parliament of Paris. The French politician had remarked the young scholar for his *La Marfore ou discours contre les libelles* (*La Marfore* or a discourse against books, 1620) – a criticism against the technique of composing and editing political pamphlets and brochures. His interest in the world

¹ “To abolish all ideas about rights other than those of the chief” (All French quotations translated into English by E. G. Czintos)

of books turned the young author into a sought-after librarian. Following a few years of service for de Mesme, Gabriel Naudé left for Rome as a librarian of Cardinal Bagni and later of Cardinal Barbarini. In 1642, when planning the development of the royal library, and also in an attempt to win a brilliant political counsellor, Cardinal Richelieu invited him to return to his native city. Richelieu's plans remained unchanged even following his death in the winter of that year, and Naudé became the librarian of Mazarin, the new Chief Minister of the kingdom. Under his protection and enjoying the financial support of both public finances and the Minister's fortune – which His Eminence himself often confused – the libertine philosopher established the first large public library of France. The gathering of the 40,000 volumes meant several long expeditions for Naudé. *Omnia vana*: during the military and political revolts of the Fronde, *la Bibliothèque Mazarine* was plundered by noblemen, and finally the Parliament of Paris decided it to be auctioned. Under these circumstances Naudé accepted a new job as a librarian in the court of Queen Christina of Sweden. However, the rigour of the Scandinavian climate did not favour the French classicists. In 1650 Descartes's sturdiness was defeated by Stockholm's low temperatures. Three years later, falling seriously ill, Naudé returned to France, re-invited by Cardinal Mazarin, reinvested in his office. However, Gabriel Naudé died soon after his return. The scholar's fate betrayed a clear consciousness, rooted in the problems of modernity. The problem of the book is the sign of a culture in which the inheritance of tradition no longer means the respect of authority, but a civilization of commentaries and the exercise of a critical spirit.

The reason of the library

The justification of Naudé's treatise on the library was the lack of writings offering assistance in "au choix des Liures, au moyen de les recouurer, & à la disposition qu'il faut leur donner pour les faire paroistre avec profit & honneur dans vne belle & somptueuse Bibliotheque."¹ There had been similar attempts, but their seriousness was questioned. Naudé recorded thus the efforts of Juan Bautista Cardona, whose treatise *De la Real Biblioteca de San Lorens*, together with the work of Juan Páez de Castro, *Memorial al rey Don Felipe II sobre las librerias*, provided the principles of the library of the Escorial, founded under the patronage of Philip II of Spain. However, the researches made beyond the Pyrenees did not meet the exigencies of the libertine philosopher. The approach to this matter needed first a personal discipline involving three targets. First, whoever deals with the subject of libraries must have "vne cognoissance superficielle de tous les arts & sciences".² Behind this requirement lies the classical ideal of a universal philosophy encompassing both the natural and the human. The classification of the library mirrors the divisions of this total science. The second requirement is freeing oneself of "la seruitude & esclauage

¹ Gabriel Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une Bibliothèque* (Leipzig: Veb Edition, 1963), 11. "Choosing the books and the means to find them, and the order to arrange them to make them appear profitably and honourably in a fine and sumptuous library". 17th century English translation by John Evelyn, *Instructions Concerning the Erecting of a Library* (1661).

² *Ibid.*, 12. "A superficial knowledge of all arts and sciences".

de certaines opinions”¹. This is the subject of the philosophical issue of the tyranny of public opinion, customs, and scientific dogmas. The figure of the philosopher as a *man of wit* comes from the accomplishment of a life in the world, while remaining outside it – paraphrasing Pierre Charron, considered by Naudé in his *Bibliografia politica* (Venice, 1633) wiser than Socrates himself.² He must participate in civil life and scholarly debates with a reflective distance. And thirdly, as a result of the first two requirements, Naudé’s librarian must be able to make a well-informed and passionless judgment on the merits and quality of authors.

The superficial knowledge that the author spoke about was the courtier’s erudition – he is the *l’honnête homme* who appears ingenious and pleasant in conversation because his soul is nourished with experiences and readings encouraging personal meditation. Albeit taken from other authors, the ideas he expressed were his own since they derived from careful analysis. He had formed his personal way of reading in a systematic or spontaneous way. It was Jean Bodin who had already pointed out the intellectual novelty of the time: the development of printing and the appearance of public libraries would result in a wider access to documentation. However, the increasing number of publications in the field of history and the law did not automatically mean the expansion of the circle of literates who could find their way in the thickets of the past. The dissemination of printing did not multiply the number of Tacitus’s or Cicero’s proud modern followers. On the contrary – claims the French jurist: this discipline has depreciated in parallel with the increasing number of publications. While the authors, the more ignorant, the more prolific they are.³ In his *La Marfore*, Naudé had the same type of remarks about political publications. The *Advice on Establishing a Library* expanded Bodin’s advice, who strived to find a value identification system only in historiography. Naudé’s aim was to educate a type of man capable of appreciating works from the most varied fields. After the exposition of these three characteristics, Naudé kindly concludes by applying Florus’s description of kings and poets to the librarian: “Consules fiunt quotannis et novi proconsules;/ solus aut rex aut poeta non quotannis nascitur”.⁴

Sensing that this declaration lacks no vanity, the librarian of Henri de Mesme felt obliged to temper his enthusiasm: he did nothing else than follow the opinions of “personnes sçachantes & versees en la cognoissance des Liures, & les moyens diuers pratiquez par les plus fameux Bibliothecaires.”⁵ Similarly, his patron must pursue glory by following the examples of the Vatican Library and the

¹ Ibid. “Servitude and slavery to certain opinions”.

² Gabriel Naudé, *Bibliografia politica*, edited by Domenico Bosco (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1997), 107. The work is a dictionary of authors whose writings must be there on the shelves of a princely counsellor.

³ Cf. Jean Bodin, *Méthode de l’histoire*, transl. Pierre Mesnard (Alger: PUF, 1943). (Orig. *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, Paris, 1566).

⁴ Gabriel Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une Bibliothèque*, 13. (“New consuls and proconsuls are made every year, only kings and poets are not born every year”).

⁵ Ibid. “persons knowledgeable and versed in matters of the Book and the most diverse practices used by the greatest Librarians”.

Ambrosian Library. Naudé returned to the example of the *Bibliotheca Ambrosiana* on repeated occasions. Founded by Cardinal Frederico Borromeo in the Palazzo Dell’Ambrosiana of Milan in 1607, it was the second European library open for the public after the Bodleian Library of Oxford, established in 1602. The recognition of the predecessors works as an ingenious intellectual pirouette helping Naudé in avoiding the theological blame of pride. Although librarians are rare, just like kings and poets, Henri de Mesme’s protégé does nothing else than merely reorganize the remarks of his forebears. Similarly, the lord who wishes to excel by such a *fine and generous* enterprise will follow the accomplishments of Italian predecessors as models. These lines reveal the echoes of the not very distant military and cultural transalpine changes. The French feudal lords arrived in Italy under the command of Francis I in one of his endless wars with the Habsburgs. The small Italian principalities were at his mercy, yet they captivated their French neighbours by the refinement of their courts, the dynamism of arts, and the erudition of libraries. Baldassare Castiglione in his *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) generously concedes that the French can also be cultivated. The interest in libraries signals the decay of the aristocratic warrior pattern, by the appearance of new civil relations. The maintenance of a library supports “l’eloquence de ... discourse, la solidité de ... iugement, & l’eclat des plus belle Charges & Magistratures ... exercees”.¹

Gabriel Naudé answered the old pedagogical-political question of the relation between experience and learning in his own way. In practical things experience must be preferred, settled Aristotle, since a young man can be an excellent mathematician, but not a good strategist. But Naudé is aware of the fact that the times to come belong to a new kind of nobility distinguishing itself by public offices, replacing the ancient feudal caste based on bloodline and military prowess. The new type of intellectual, a creation of Italian and Flemish universities and also of French institutions like the Royal College or the College of the Four Nations, is a natural ally of the new aristocracy, stressing personal merit and not merely descent. Justus Lipsius, one of the cited authors in the *Advice on Establishing a Library*, pointed out that practice (experience) is the father of political prudence, while memory is the mother.² However, the former allows only individual accomplishments, while the maternal side of civil education is the magnificent way of literacy. This latter one is universal and covers all ages, while the way of experience is particular, and full of danger. It is an evidence of intelligence and strength to learn from one’s readings and others’ deeds, without waiting for the blows of destiny.³

The new public figure, the representative of this *noblesse de robe*, seeks glory by the library not only as a patron of *belles lettres* and a protector of artists, but also as a participant of the collective memory of educated people, retained either

¹ Ibid., 15. “the eloquence of discourses, the solidity of judgment and the success of the finest functions and magistracy exercised”.

² Justus Lipsius, *Politica: Six books of politics or political instruction*, edited, with translation and introduction by Jan Waszink (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2004) I, 8, p. 286, 4–5.

³ Ibid., 9. p. 288, 10–15.

by common readings, or by the interest in rare books. Once the addressee was established – Henri de Mesme in particular and the nobility employed in civil offices in general – Naudé sought arguments for establishing and maintaining a public library. He found too many justifications. The first was connected to the glory of the present and posterity, and the second with personal accomplishment. First, by his act of foundation, Naudé will earn the appreciation of the library's readers. The nobleman proves his wisdom by collecting “des esprits de tant de galands homes qui n'ont esparné ny leur temps ny leurs veilles pour nous laisser les plus vifs traicts de ce qui estoit le plus excellent en eux.”¹ Such a kind of glory, albeit popular, contains nothing trivial or demagogical. Whoever enjoys it does not wish to distinguish himself by all means, leaving the signs of “extraordinary powers”, inexplicable by force or ability, appear before the crowd. This glory exceeds by its honesty the fame gained by military parades or the ostentation of the refinement of luxury. Men whose prowess in battle would have insured their place in the memory of their descendants had the political genius of amplifying their reputation by founding libraries. Naudé mentions Matthias Corvinus and Francis I as skilful strategists and also founders of “Bibliothèques tres-curieuses & bien fournies”.² Matthias Corvinus established the *Bibliotheca Corviniana* on his own expense, and Francis I instituted a legal deposit (1536) which forbade the selling or sending abroad of any book or brochure before submitting a copy to the officials of the Royal Library.

But beyond the arguments on the worthiness of the princely or aristocratic figure, the establishment of a library also answers an internal necessity. Pursuing the exercise of one's own spirit in the name of an ancient ideal of human wisdom, recreated in the Renaissance, *l'homme d'esprit* wishes to find in the library the place of fruitful and pleasant conversation and entertainment,³ that is, of meditation on the written confessions of great old and new authors. The library is the main instrument of the *Cosmopolite*, a citizen of the world, because he may have access at all times to “Tout ce que est, qui fut, & qui peut ester / En terre, en mer, au plus cache des Cieux.”⁴ In order to triumph in this political and personal action, Naudé as a practical person did not fail to remind his patron that a library cannot be established “sans frais ny bourse deslier”.⁵

The organization of the library

How can we instruct ourselves in the new art whose frontiers Naudé had tried to delimit? Firstly, by being receptive to the experiences and advice of those concerned with the world of books, whether men of letters or owners of *literary salons*. His interest in these was not mere imitation, since personal experience has always been a

¹ Gabriel Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une Bibliothèque*, 17. “the spirits of so many distinguished people who spared no time and no efforts for leaving the most lively traces of what was most outstanding in them”.

² *Ibid.*, 19. “Very curious and well equipped”.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴ *Ibid.* “All that is, all that was, and all that could be / On earth, in the sea, in the most hidden Heavens”.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22 “without expense and the opening of one's purse”

source of inspiration. Secondly, another way of self-improvement in the new subject is the reading and annotation of the predecessors' writings, even if most often they had treated the subject as if it had been a familiar discipline, considering the first definitions and divisions of the subject already established and accepted. Besides the already mentioned Juan Bautista Cardona, Naudé also includes Richard de Bury into this category thanks to his work *Philobiblon* (written around 1340, but published for the first time in 1473). Under the pretext of being a treatise on the love for books, this work is at the same time an autobiography of the Norman prelate, who, according to Petrarca, "although an Englishman and educated in England, cultivating ever since his childhood an unbroken taste for antique thinking and an unmatched rigour for knowledge, showed extreme interest equally for the most futile questions and the most learned interrogations".¹ Another figure marked by Naudé is the Jesuit Antonio Possevino for his *Bibliotheca selecta de ratione studiorum in Historia, in Disciplinis, in salutem omnium procuranda* (1593). The work is an exhaustive bibliography of works of theology, philosophy, medicine, history, and crafts, used by Humanists as a guide for reading. In conclusion, the author of the *Advice on Establishing a Library* recommends the copying or acquisition of as many library catalogues as possible, both from the country and abroad, in order to have a comprehensive view on the production of typographies, interest of men of letters, and localization of rare documents.

The first properly technical issue discussed by the author was that of the number of books a library should hold. Since it is the first quality that recommends such an institution, and the first impression that the public perceives even before considering the quality of the collections, Naudé determinedly sustains the importance of an unparalleled and prodigious quantity. In his endeavour to impose his opinion, the counsellor of Henri de Mesme had to confront the opposing view of philosophical authorities claiming that one's curiosity must be restricted to but a few works of incontestable value. The rareness of value is one of the arguments by which Seneca consoles Lucilius when he complains about the lack of Roman libraries in Sicily. But this reasonable advice, Naudé's text warns, aims at personal fulfilment, and not civil action. *That there is no single virtue in mediocrity* – states the title of one of Jean Bodin's works (*Paradoxon, quod nec virtus ulla in mediocritate, nec summum hominis bonium in virtutis actione consistere possit*, 1596), rejecting an entire intellectual tradition avoiding excesses in search of mediocrity. Such restriction of readings may be useful for the scientist who pursues his success in a certain discipline. In addition, the insistence on the rareness of excellence aims at revealing the spiritual poverty of pedantry and dogmatism, parading with familiar titles and acknowledged writers without attempting a dialogue with them. However, the founder of a library pursues neither the glory of a particular science, nor the unmasking of erudite hypocrisy. He simultaneously targets reputation and honesty, offering to the city and himself "vne Bibliotheque

¹ Apud Bertrand Galimard Flavigny, *Le philobiblon*, http://www.canalacademie.com/ida649-Le-philobiblon.html?var_recherche=Le%20philobiblon Accessed 03.03.2011.

des plus augustes & des plus amples qui ait iamais esté”.¹ His purpose cannot be attained by the avarice and austerity of containing only a small number of volumes, however valuable they may be. Generosity is manifested by searching for, and yielding, the universality of knowledge. As a result, the library will seek to cover the diversity of all arts and sciences. Another guide in this endeavour may be Angelo Poliziano’s treatise entitled *Panepistemon* (*The omniscient*, 1488), a philological and philosophical analysis of Aristotle’s ethics, which attempts a classification of all human activities. Moreover, a library will be the more appreciated the more it succeeds in satisfying the greatest diversity of demands, similarly to a pasture where every beast finds its food.²

The reputation earned by the founder of the library did not only refer to the person who had the necessary means to supply it with plenty of books. He was also regarded as the possessor of solid judgment, since many searches for rare books ended in his house. Also, the new inventions allowed the purchase of a great number of publications with infinitely lower expense than what the ancients needed for only a few hundred books. It would undoubtedly be shameful for the library of modernity not to make good use of the benefits of book printing.

Nevertheless, the central problems discussed by Naudé’s treatise, judging by the number of pages dedicated to it, was the value of books and authors. The chapter addressed to the quality and condition of the works is a veritable guide to classical erudition: great authors of the antiquity, sacred texts, the most important commentaries, university disciplines. The inheritance of Humanist literary tradition was familiar to Naudé, who recommended the reading of great works in the original language, Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, and Italian, besides their translations in French and Latin. Controversial writings came next in Naudé’s library. Amongst the works treating a particular subject, whether about a species or an individual, there was the *Disputatione de sancti matrimonii Sacramento* (1602) of the Jesuit Thomas Sanchez. This work was listed in the *Index* of forbidden works at Rome, but its celebrity over the centuries was due to Pascal’s interest in it in his *Provincial Letters*. The doctrine of *mental reservation*, which allows a defendant at a court of law not to say the truth while not lying, is connected to his name. When questioned about his crime, he will deny it, while thinking about another day in which his behaviour was impeccable, without saying it out loud. Polemics and debates form the life of the scholarly world, therefore Naudé recommends the preservation of the entire folder of disputes. Sanchez and Pascal should be read together: “...tous ceux qui se sont exercez en pareille escrime, & qui sont tellement enchainés les vns euec les autres, qu’il y auroit autant de faute à les lire separément, comme à iuger & entendre vne partie sans l’autre, ou vn contraire sans celuy qui luy est opposé.”³ In this same spirit, the librarian should not mind the bad reputation of science

¹ Gabriel Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une Bibliothèque*, p. 31 “one of the most illustrious and ample libraries that ever existed”.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 33.

³ *Ibid.*, 42. “all those who have exercised themselves in this art of fencing, and who are so much chained together that it would be such a mistake to read them separately, as to judge or listen to one party without the other, or one adversary without his opponent”.

innovators and will seek to acquire the works of the disputers of traditional views. Regardless of their future destiny in the memory of posterity, their works reveal unusual spiritual openness and serve as opportunities for critical reflection. Occultist works, the meeting place of most “choses vaines & inutiles”,¹ will also be collected. The writings of heretics and the books of other religions alike will find their place on Naudé’s shelves. The collections of polemicists, innovators, cabbalists, heretics, and false prophets are made accessible for intellects that will be enforced and enriched by reading these works. The acquisition of dictionaries, anthologies, and manuals will be useful as an aid for finding a thread in the immense public memory deposited in the library.

[I]l est certain que la cognoissance de ces liures est tellement vtile & fructueuse à celuy qui sçait faire reflexion & tirer profit de tout ce qu’il voit, qu’elle luy fournit vne milliaice d’ouuertures & de nouvelles conceptions, lesquelles estans receues dans vn esprit docile, vniuersel & desgagé de tous interests, *Nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri*, elles le font parler à propos de toutes choses, luy ostent l’admiration, que est le vray signe de nostre foiblesse, & le façonnent à raisonner sur tout ce qui se presente, avec beaucoup plus de iugement, preuoyance & resolution, que ne fait pas le commun des autres personnes de lettres & de merite.²

Gabriel Naudé holds outstanding authors in high esteem, among which he mentions Erasmus, Lipsius, and Bodin, who appear as “vn Aigle dans les nuees, ou comme vn Astre brilliant & lumineux parmi les tenebres”.³ It is not only the main works of these authors that must be collected, but also their smallest fragments, letters, or sayings.⁴ Another of Naudé’s recommendations is the adaptation of this institution to the fashions and customs of the time. During his travels he notices the preference of Romans and Neapolitans for positive theology, those of Milanese for jurisprudence, the Spanish and the English for scholasticism, and the French for historical chronicles and controversies. The library continues local traditions and responds to deeply rooted demands.

A further series of precepts exposed in the *Advice on Establishing a Library* are presented in a polemical form in an endeavour to meet possible objections. Thus he insists on the cultivation of the moderns in order to avoid the ridiculous situation of those who continuously read the antiques and fail to realize what is happening

¹ Ibid., 45. “vain and useless subjects”

² Ibid., 43. “It is certain that knowing these books is so useful and fruitful for the one who knows how to reflect on, and profit of, everything he sees, because this knowledge offers him countless openings and new conceptions, which are received by a docile and universal spirit, free of any interest, *I am not bound to swear allegiance to the word of any master*, and which make him speak of all things, and take away his admiration for these as a true sign of our febleness, and prepare him to think about everything that appears, with much judgment, prevision, and resolution, which many of the cultivated and worthy people fail to do.” Latin quotation: Horace, *Epistles* I, I, 13–14.

³ Ibid., 50. “an eagle in the clouds, or as a brilliant and bright star in the dark”.

⁴ Ibid., 49–51.

around them. Ariosto and Tasso find their place on Naudé's shelves next to Homer and Virgil, Guicciardini next to Tacitus, and Montaigne and Charron next to Seneca.¹ Soon after, Naudé adds a criticism of those who, interested only in novelties, ignore old authors, depriving themselves voluntarily of a source of knowledge and the company of great spirits.

To conclude, the final *qualitative* advice refers to the nature of publications. Naudé warns about the possibility that the superficial aspect of some brochures might actually hide matters of high seriousness; such is the case of Machiavelli's *The Prince*. The last warning is about manuscript fetishism. Although not in despise of such documents, Naudé warns still about the uselessness of hunting manuscript copies and versions of already printed works.

The ideal library

The precepts about the recognition of the quality of books inspire Henri de Mesme's counsellor to draw up his new self-portrait, in which pride is hidden by the generic figure of the Librarian:

[C]eluy-là se peut dignement acquitter de cette charge qui n'a point le iugement fourbe, temeraire, rempli d'extrauagances, & preoccupé de ces opinions pueriles, qui excitant beaucoup de personnes à mespriser & rebutter promptement tout ce qui n'est pas à leur goust, comme si chacun se deuoit regler suiuant les caprices de leurs fantaisies, ou que ce ne fust pas le deuoir d'un home sage & prudent de parler de toutes choses avec indifférence, & n'en iuger iamais suiuant l'estime qu'en font les vns ou les autres, mais plustost suiuant le iugement qu'il en faut faire eu esgard à leur proper vsage & nature.²

Beyond his intellectual qualities and the range of his erudition of which Naudé makes use in his analyses regarding the classification of research subjects and the qualitative assessment of the documents, he also needed to cover fully technical issues in his *Advice*. He dedicated a whole chapter to the matter of book acquisition and preservation. For this, he took over, or simply transcribed passages from Richard de Bury's *Philobiblon, sive de Amore librorum*. The experience of the great Italian libraries was another source for him. The technicality of the subject does not drive away the readers. Naudé succeeds in producing a true code of social abilities. Naudé's librarian is involved in friendly relationships not only with the authors, but also their families, in order to acquire unfinished works or others hidden for fear of

¹ Ibid., 58.

² Ibid., 72–73. “he can acquit himself with dignity of this task who has no shrewd or reckless judgment, full of extravagance, and concerned with various childish opinions, which urge many people to hastily despise and reject everything that does not meet their taste, as if everyone should regulate themselves by the caprice of their imagination; or as if it wasn't the duty of a wise and prudent man to speak of all things with indifference and never make a judgment by the respect shown by others, but rather pursuing one's own experience and nature”.

political or religious censorship. Reference to Bodin at this point is nothing accidental. His work, *Colloquium heptaplomeres*, written towards 1587, was only published three centuries later, in 1858. Leibniz had access to this work as a librarian of the Duke of Brunswick at Hanover between 1676 and 1716. The young German philosopher considered scandalous and non-publishable this dialogue of a Catholic, a Lutheran, a Calvinist, a Muslim, a Jew, an atheist, and a deist, in which the balance of truth leans in no direction. Christina of Sweden ruins herself to get one of its copies. Although Naudé recommends prudence and an economical spirit, he does not hesitate in front of such a document: no effort is futile, no price is too high to pay for purchasing rare pieces of works, written by outstanding authors.

The model of Naudé's library is a completion of the Stoic garden: a quiet place, safe from the noise of the street and the family, whose windows look upon comforting vegetation. The optimal conditions for study and preservation are created by coupling Vitruvius's architectural art with nature's medical science.¹ As regards the ordering of books, Naudé prefers a kind of discipline which imitates military organization.² The captaincies will be established on the basis of university faculties (theology, medicine, law, history, philosophy, mathematics, etc.), and subdivided according to the parts of these subjects. As in any environment with officers present, the discipline will not lack some degree of ornamentation, with the condition that the binding and decoration of books would first of all observe the principle of usefulness.

The *Advice on Establishing a Library* concludes with an excursus on the main purpose of a library, a eulogy of public service that any such institution must undertake. Naudé supports his idea by the example of Roman euergetism.³ Besides baths, theatres, and amphitheatres, Roman notabilities also pursued their glory by creating libraries open for cultivated people. Overshadowed by their generosity, there is the librarian, a man of letters and philosophical application whose discipline is accomplished by the establishment of a scholarly institution, the *Bibliotheca Memmiana*. It includes:

L]'histoire tres-ample & particuliere des Lettres & des Liures, le iugement & censure des Autheurs, le nom des meilleurs & plus necessaires en chaque Faculté, le fleau des Plagiaires, le progrez des Sciences, la diuersité des Sectes, la reuolution des Arts & Disciplines, la decadence des Anciens, les diuers principes des Nouateurs, & le bon droict des Pyrrheniens fondé sur l'ignorance de tous les homes.⁴

¹ Ibid., 91–96.

² Ibid., 98.

³ Cf. Paul Veyne, *Le Pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976).

⁴ Gabriel Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une Bibliothèque*, 122. "The very ample and particular history of Letters and Books, the judgement and censorship of the Authors, the names of the best and most necessary [people] at each Faculty, the scourge of Plagiarists, the progress of Sciences, the diversity of Sects, the revolution of Arts and Disciplines, the decadence of the Ancients, the diverse principles of the Innovators, and the good reason of the Pyrrhonians, founded on the ignorance of all people".



Octavian Cosman, *Double Sun*, oil and ceramics on wood, 40 x 50 cm, 2006

Gabriel Naudé's treatise on the library is a memorable chapter in the birth of modern intellectuality. Serving a power which, under the old aristocratic and religious entitling applies a new kind of social contractarianism, the figure of the man of letters illustrates the rethinking of the relation between blood and merit, personal accomplishment and natural law. His public function is characterized by the balance between ambition and generosity, coming as a substitute for the ideology of feudal loyalty and military prowess. The obedience to the new senior is accompanied by the practice of critical reason, making the intellectual a good counsellor as well as a possible candidate for high-rank social offices. The intellectual's cosmopolitanism is a further risk, since the man of spirit is not rooted in any particular homeland. These two shortcomings are compensated for by a culture of discretion as a descendent of libertine dissimulation and sceptical modesty. The library as the collection of ancient and modern intellects is the fruit of his philosophy and the material illustration of the principles professed by the classical intellectual: erudition, freedom of thought, and a sound judgment. Scepticism makes him immune to joining the sects of some scholarly, religious, or political dogmas. His political ambition is rendered in the search of universality taking on the form of a plenitude of books and the tolerance of opposing opinions. The conflict between the public ambitions of patronage and the cultural and cosmopolitan interest of the scholar represents a chapter of the birth of the modern perception of public welfare.

The first theoretical discussion of the public library belongs to a representative of philosophical libertinism. The appearance in this intellectual context of the idea of the organization of readings for an educated public is therefore not arbitrary. It is the product of the development of criticism, which rejects any dogmatism and allows one to be open towards all participants to intellectual conflicts, religious disputes, or the confrontation of divergent political interests. Despite the events of the period – civil wars, confessional intolerance, resistance to innovating philosophical theories – the rediscovery of scepticism introduces an original idea: modern tolerance. The new Pyrrhonians are distinguished from ancient scepticists by the fact that for them doubt is no longer the result of the contemplation of nature, but an instrument of scientific investigation and public action. Doubt becomes a principle of civil gesture by the invitation to an exercise of dialogue, the space of which can very well be a public library.

Translated by Emese G. Czintos