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Organon 24, 195-207

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1988

Artykuł umieszczony jest w kolekcji cyfrowej Bazhum, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych tworzonej przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego.

Artykuł został zdigitalizowany i opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie ze środków specjalnych MNiSW dzięki Wydziałowi Historycznemu Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

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## BARTHOLOMÄUS KECKERMANN'S CONCEPT OF HISTORY

Bartholomäus Keckermann (1572—1609) was one of the scholars who raised the prestige of the Gdańsk Academic Gymnasium in the early Baroque.<sup>1</sup> The speed at which he churned out treatises in different disciplines, e.g. in logic, ethics, rhetoric, politics, jurisprudence, metaphysics or history is indeed astounding. In his short lifetime Keckermann produced more than 25 works<sup>2</sup> of different scholarly quality, which, in their method, mostly emulated medieval dialectics and erudite Renaissance works. In this contribution, I am looking at Keckermann's ideas on history. His historical studies were actually by-products of studies in various other disciplines as can be guessed from works such as *Systema ethicae tribus libris* (Hannover, 1608), *Systema disciplinae politicae* (Hannover, 1608), or *Synopsis disciplinae oeconomicae* (Hannover, 1610).

The most important work of all of Keckermann's historical considerations is the study *De natura et proprietatibus historiae commentarius privatim in Gymnasio Dantiscano propositus*, which appeared posthumously in Hannover in 1610, preceding Descartes's treatise on method by 27 years. I am pointing out that to indicate that Keckermann's reasoning is being conducted evidently at odds with requirements set up by the architect of the modern concept of inquiry. Keckermann's *De natura* is somewhat difficult to study because of the involved narrative. At different places, Keckermann presented mutually contradictory views of different scientists on the meaning of history without however saying clearly which of them he endorsed and which he refuted. That can be seen if only from the proposition that history is a scientific discipline along with the opposite assertion that it is not.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B. Nadolski, "Życie i działalność naukowa Bartłomieja Keckermanna" ["Bartholomew Keckermann's Life and Works"], *Studia z Dziejów Odrodzenia na Pomorzu*, Toruń, 1961, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *De natura et proprietatibus historiae commentarius privatim in Gymnasio Dantiscano propositu*, Hannoviae, 1610; F. Wujewicz in a collection of studies in philosophy and social doctrines ed. by Z. Ogonowski (Warsaw, 1979, vol. 2) translated this title as *The Qualities of History*.

Keckermann's eclectic type of narrative has induced scholars studying his works to draw conclusions which are exactly opposite to each other. E. Menke-Glückert and B. Nadolski, for instance, acknowledge Keckermann's historical reflections as being of scholarly value. On the other hand, E. Spektorski, W. Voisé and Z. Ogonowski argue Keckermann's reflections on history lack all scholarly value.<sup>4</sup>

Keckermann considered history at a time when the foundations of modern science were being laid. One specific process at that time was the emergence of new disciplines of science from the total body of philosophy. According to modern science, each new discipline should have its own subject-matter as well as its specific method. Modern science was opposed to Aristotelian ideas of cognition. Historians of science agree<sup>5</sup> that history as a discipline was trailing other specific disciplines. That Keckermann cannot be recognized as a modern scholar can be seen from his stubborn clinging to Aristotle. The Gdańsk scholar criticized the views of the Ramists, who opposed Aristotle demanding the recognition of history as a separate discipline.<sup>6</sup>

This alone would suffice to discard Keckermann's concept of history as expounded in his *De natura* were it not for the fact that work gained some renown in Pomerania as well as in England<sup>7</sup> in the 17th century, and that Szymon Starowolski referred to it in Poland.<sup>8</sup>

Keckermann devised an original concept of historical inquiry. Its most important element is the requirement that historians should refer to scholarly accomplishments of former and contemporary researchers alike. Above all, he recommended for study the two-volume anthology called *Artis historicae penus* which was published in Basle in 1579. Bodin was the author whom Keckermann mentioned more often than anyone else of those to be found in that collection.

<sup>4</sup> E. Menke-Glückert, *Geschichtsschreibung der Reformation und Gegenreformation. Bodin und die Begründung der Geschichtsmethodologie durch Bartholomäus Keckermann*, Osterwich/Harz, 1912; B. Nadolski, *op. cit.*, and his "Poglądy na historię uczonego gdańskiego Bartłomieja Keckermanna" ["Keckermann's Idea of History"], *Rocznik Gdański*, vol. 17/18; E. Spektorski, *Problema sotsialnoi fiziki v 17 stoletie*, part II, Kiev, 1917, p. 599; Z. Ogonowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 10—12.

<sup>5</sup> R. Colingwood, *The Idea of History*, London, 1960, p. 60 f.; L. Krieger, "History and Law in the 17th Century"; Puffendorf, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 21, No. 2; W. Voisé, *Myśl społeczna XVII wieku [Social Thought of the 17th Century]*, Warsaw, 1970, pp. 171—173.

<sup>6</sup> E. Spektorski, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 599.

<sup>7</sup> L. Mokrzecki, "Myśl o historii Degory Wheare w nawiązaniu do poglądów Bartłomieja Keckermanna" ["Degorah Wheare's Idea of History in Reference to Bartholomew Keckermann's Views"], *Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Humanistycznego Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego. Pedagogika, Historia, Wychowanie*, 1982. Mokrzecki mentions the English authors who studied Keckermann but mainly for his observations concerning theological and geographical matters.

<sup>8</sup> *Setnik pisarzy polskich albo pochwały i żywoty stu najznakomitszych pisarzy polskich [Eulogies and Lives of One Hundred Eminent Polish Writers]*, translated with a commentary by J. Starnawski, Cracow, 1970; J. Starnawski, "Szymona Starowolskiego Hekatontas i początki bibliografii polskiej" ["Szymon Starowolski's Eulogies and Lives of One Hundred Polish Writers and the Beginnings of Bibliography in Poland"], *Roczniki Humanistyczne, Filologia Polska*, vol. 12, Lublin, 1964, p. 136.

The following works were mentioned, in this order : *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* by J. Bodin ; *De historia* by F. Patricius ; *Dialogi* by I. Pontana ; *De institutione historiae universae at eius cum iurisprudencia coniunctione* by F. Baldwinus ; *De historiae institutione* by F. S. Morzilla ; *De scribenda historia* by J. A. Viperan ; a treatise without a title written by F. Robertellus on the mode of recording history ; remarks by Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Thucydides's way of writing historical texts, in A. Dudycz's Latin translation; *De scribenda univervistatis rerum historia* by G. Myliaeus ; *De artione scribenda historiae* by U. Fogliet; *De lectione historiarum* by D. Chytraeus ; *De scribende historiae* by Lucian of Samosata ; *De utilitate legende historiae* by S. Grinaeus, along with Coelius's commentary to Grinaeus's text ; *Oratori de argumentatio historiarum et fructu ex eorum lectione petendo* by C. Pezel ; *De historia* by T. Zwinger; Sambucus's introduction to Bonsinius's *History* ; and *De historia et ea veterum fragmenta rerum audiecta* by A. Ricobonus.

Of the host of matters raised in the above studies, let me point out above all the emphasis laid by Bodin, Myliaeus, but especially Zwinger, on scholarly accomplishments of the ancient students of world history and Church history in different countries, and also historiosophical reflections by Bodin, Baldwinus, Morzill and Myliaeus, and questions of chronology discussed by Chytraeus and Zwinger.

Apart from the *Artis historicae penus*, without even a mention of the contents of the anthology, Keckermann also referred to other authors, namely R. Reinecius: *Methodus cognoscendi et legensi scriptores*, A. Franckerberger : *De dignitate historiae prophetica*, as well as *Institutio antiquitatis et historiarum*, A. Possewin : *De historica et historicis*, J. Bauer : *Synopsis historiae*, Tilemann : *Discursus philologicus de historicum debitu*, S. Foxius: *De historiae institutione liber*, C. Curion: *De historiae legenda sententia*, A. Ricobon: *De historia liber*.<sup>9</sup> This most important collection of works concerning historical matters can be viewed as an attempt to compile something like a bibliography of subject-matters.

Keckermann pointed out that the style of historical narrative changed with the centuries, and he also recommended the relevant reading to that matter. As far as Babylonian or Jewish historical writing was concerned, Keckermann mentioned a book by the Persian historian Megathenes of the 4th century B. C. in Latin translation: *De judica temporum et annalibus persorum*.<sup>10</sup> To see how Roman priests used to write historical chronicles, he recommends the study of Macrobius: *Saturnaliorum conviviorum libri VII*,<sup>11</sup> and Cicero : *On the Orator*.<sup>12</sup> He also mentioned Photius's *Library* as a source of intelligence on how the

<sup>9</sup> B. Nadolski, "Życie i działalność...", p 255 f.

<sup>10</sup> B. Keckermann, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

historical accounts used to be written.<sup>13</sup> Of modern historians, Keckermann recommended the study of Procatius's treatise on the 1574 edition of the works of Guicciardini,<sup>14</sup> P. Eber: *Calendarium historiarum*,<sup>15</sup> Michael Beuterus without mentioning the title,<sup>16</sup> and E. von Demetrius again without mentioning the title.<sup>17</sup>

The listing of many different works was not only a result of keeping to rules of Renaissance erudition. Keckermann had at least two goals in mind, namely to collect the pertinent literature, and to work out an appropriate research method. He did not succeed in doing this last thing, as will be seen in what follows. Keckermann was thwarted in that respect by his lack of a clear vision of the subject-matter of historical research, and his excessive faith in the omnipotence of the logical method in the study of history.<sup>18</sup>

Of all of Keckermann's arguments in *De natura et proprietatibus historiae*, the best probably is his presentation of history's practical function and the concept of historical source. The Gdańsk scholar attributed several different functions to history. History, first, should preserve the record of unusual facts for posterity.<sup>19</sup> In addition to that, history has a duty to present main events (*generalia*) and fundamental events (*principalia*). Keckermann drew those ideas from his perusals of Herodotus, Polybius, Plato, J. Tovinus, and Paul of Corbesia.<sup>20</sup>

Keckermann said history has a duty to derive universally valid conclusions in the form of theorems and canons.<sup>21</sup> In this case, Keckermann quotes Andreas Franckenberger.<sup>22</sup>

Such a specific view of history, intended to provide a classification of past events and to forecast the future, must bring to mind the conclusion that history is a discipline of science. However, such a conclusion is at odds with Keckermann's refusal elsewhere of scientific status to history.

On the practical level, Keckermann attributed to history the job of supporting other disciplines. As he argued, history was to be part of economic, political, scholastic prudence as well as of jurisprudence.<sup>23</sup> Within moral prudence, history should perform a moral function. Its purpose was to indicate examples to follow which should deserve rewards and also bad examples which deserved punishment. History should also help man to make his choices when dealing with difficult things.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90 f.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

History's moralizing function, according to Keckermann, amounted mainly to indicating the road of virtuous conduct. Keckermann borrowed that particular idea from the Stoic philosopher Zeno of Kition.<sup>25</sup> Thus conceived of, history should help man mend his ways. Keckermann referred in that to Plutarch, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Strabo.<sup>26</sup> He mentioned that some historians, as Probus, for example, were fond of listing edifying examples, while others, like Machiavelli, had a taste for producing abominable examples.<sup>27</sup>

It is remarkable that if Keckermann mentions evil deeds, then he is thinking not only about effects of human actions but also takes account of supernatural events which happened in the past due to supernatural forces, say because of the devil's actions. Keckermann drew those stories from early Christian writers such as Ireneus, Epiphanius, Nikephoros and St. Augustine.<sup>28</sup> His religious orthodoxy undoubtedly made him take that particular attitude; it was basically opposed to Renaissance currents in culture, concentrating as it was on the supernatural, on satanism, witchcraft, etc.<sup>29</sup> That particular frame of mind made Keckermann refer himself repeatedly to the above-mentioned religious authorities as well as to Paul the Apostle, Tertullian, Luther or Melanchthon. It was under their influence that he demanded that the knowledge of the history of supernatural events should be in line with the teachings of the Gospel.<sup>30</sup>

In Keckermann's reflection a reader will find another matter of truly revolutionary significance for modern historiography, namely historical sources. Keckermann argued that not all past events are based on sources. Events referring to God's works described in the *Scriptures* have such sources, and events involving great men also have historical sources. But ordinary people's actions are recorded in no historical sources and for this reason ordinary people cannot become the subject-matter of historical research.<sup>31</sup> According to Keckermann, history has its sources in acts, diplomas, documents and agreements. He also recommended official letters, contracts and deals as possible sources. In his reflections on sources, Keckermann nowhere specified exactly the meanings of terms he was using. But since he preached that a historian can use acts, we can perhaps assume he was referring to archives. A historian has a duty to describe great events as well as those which are recorded in archives. But Keckermann appealed to historians not to copy documents, for that would make them lawyers, but only to list the gist of what documents are saying.<sup>32</sup> He recommended Caspar Schutz's history of Prussia as an example to follow.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>29</sup> H. Becker, H. E. Barnes, *Rozwój myśli społecznej od wiedzy ludowej do sociologii* [*Social Thought from Love to Science*], part one, Warsaw, 1964, p. 424.

<sup>30</sup> B. Keckermann, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19 f.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

Apart from acts as sources, Keckermann recommended to use descriptive source, mentioning the *Bible*, writings of the Fathers of the Church, biographies of priests, writings by reformers of the Church, mostly Luther, Melanchthon and Sleiden.<sup>33</sup>

Keckermann was a follower of a critical study of historical sources. He was somewhat biased as he indicated what were genuine accomplishments of the Reformation in that area while ignoring, or indeed discrediting, even more significant accomplishments of the Counter-Reformation. While he justly acknowledged the influence Flacius Illyricus, the originator of the *Magdeburg Centuriae*, had on historiography, Keckermann was perhaps too critical of the *Lives of the Saints* by Piotr Skarga, translated from Baronius, whom Keckermann did not spare either.<sup>34</sup> Baronius, at the time when Keckermann was working, made perhaps the greatest contribution to the development of the historian's techniques of work. The Gdańsk scholar, however, blinded by his religious orthodoxy, refused to acknowledge that man's merits.

But it should be said to Keckermann's credit that he was aware of the importance of written sources for the development of history. He shared Bodin's view that written materials were of great importance for students of history. Written documents enabled historians to collect intelligence about past events in libraries, whereas a lack of written documents impoverished the historian's stock of evidence as history is being reduced to oral sources alone.<sup>35</sup> This is why he spoke with a lot of respect about notes by Egyptian priests which were preserved in libraries.<sup>36</sup> Keckermann argued that for written documents to perform the function of historical source they should be available to historians. He disapproved of the practice of refusing access to sources kept at the Vatican and in archives kept at monasteries. On account of that, Keckermann charged the Church of being inclined to forge history.<sup>37</sup>

Whereas Keckermann's reflections on historical literature, on the practical function of history and the role of historical sources are generally acceptable, his remarks on the subject-matter of historical research or on research methods are more debatable.

Keckermann did not consider the meaning of subject-matter of historical research as a historian who had definite historical studies in his record but as a philosopher engaged in speculations. He argued that the historian had a duty to describe changing individual events as remote in the past as human memory reaches back.<sup>38</sup> Historical research had its subject-matter both in human actions

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114 f.

<sup>34</sup> B. Nadolski, *Poglądy...*, p. 260.

<sup>35</sup> B. Keckermann, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

and divine actions, as well as events occurring in nature.<sup>39</sup> That particular vision of historical research led Keckermann to depriving history of its status of a discipline of social science and obscured man's role in the historical process.

Keckermann presented positions taken by different scholars on the question of the subject-matter of historical research. In Aristotle, Keckermann noticed a tendency to consider history in terms of matter versus form. Matter, in that view, was represented by "objects," which I think can be reduced to historical fact, while form was represented by the specific kind of narrative which was interpreted by Keckermann as meaning the presentation of individual events in the aspects of veracity, accuracy of description and method.<sup>40</sup>

Reiner Reinecius took a different view of the subject-matter of historical research. He divided the subject-matter of historical research on the ground of its content using certain criteria, namely those of place, time and historical matters—this, to judge by the context, was what in modern historiography is referred to as the criterion of subject. Next Reinecius mentioned the generic criterion, which, again to judge by the context, was meant to refer to activities of individual people,<sup>41</sup> that is, biographies were to be studied.

In Bodin, Keckermann noticed a distinction between things divine, things natural and things human.<sup>42</sup>

In Bauer, in turn, the subject-matter of history referred to events concerning God and divine acts. Within divine acts, he distinguished the history of the universe and special history amounting to human actions.<sup>43</sup> History in the contemporary sense of the word, accordingly, accounted only for a small part of Keckermann's interests.

In keeping with his Protestant *Weltanschauung*, Keckermann distinguished between religious and secular history. He argued that religious history, concerning as it did divine matters, should be integrated with religious instruction, while secular history, as concerning human history, should be integrated with prudence.<sup>44</sup>

Keckermann also speculated on the subject-matter of historical inquiry, as can be seen from his arguments about universal history concerning general matters and particular history concerning individual matters.<sup>45</sup> He also spoke about absolute history, such as that which concerns the history of "absolute men."<sup>46</sup>

Keckermann reduced historical inquiry to the study of what he called objects. He went to excessive lengths to discuss those objects. He mentioned essential

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11 f.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.



objects, say God, soul separated from body, or angels ; mixed objects, that is, physical objects endowed with souls, say man ; and physical objects endowed with spirit, such as stones or minerals.<sup>47</sup>

That particular concept of historical inquiry, accordingly, turns out to be entirely medieval in spirit. Keckermann extends the subject-matter of human cognition beyond the field of human activity and, proceeding along the road of speculations, slips into hypostasizing. Keckermann, if only on account of that, cannot be regarded as a representative of modern scholarship. Modern scholarship and science sees its principal job in moving away from hypostases, and so in rejecting essential entities such as forms, archetypes or spirits, and to deal instead with physical beings.<sup>48</sup> Keckermann's proneness towards hypostases would have been described by his contemporary Bacon as *idola theatri*.

Yet despite our reservations against Keckermann's meticulous reflections on the subject-matter of historical inquiry, we can perhaps find in the Gdańsk scholar's considerations traces of the nowadays cardinal concept of historical fact, albeit presented in inchoate form. When Keckermann speaks about minor objects,<sup>49</sup> it does seem he means simple historical facts, and as he speaks about major collective objects, he probably wants to draw the reader's attention to complex historical facts.

A contemporary historian may find Keckermann's classification of objects by their matter interesting. He mentions ethical, economic, political, scholastic and ecclesiastic objects. He wants to present the history of mores, economic history, political history, as well as Church history.<sup>50</sup> This way we can assume that Keckermann demanded that definite sections should be distinguished in historical research.

Keckermann ascribed a great role in historical research to the historian's inquisitive frame of mind. He spoke of that in connection with urging historians to study exclusively individual objects, because history, facing the huge multiplicity of facts it does, is not a science nor does it apply a scientific research method. Scientific disciplines, on the other hand, do have their methods.<sup>51</sup> Not being a science, history is distributed among other disciplines. It also embraces the histories of other disciplines. But historians cannot study the past of other disciplines for that would be at odds with the logical order of procedure. A historian, for example, must not study the history of physics or theology. That would violate the logical order, for then the historian would have to trespass upon the subject-matter of those other disciplines.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11 f.

<sup>48</sup> E. Spektorski, *Nominalizm i realizm v obshchestvennykh naukakh*, Moscow, 1915, p. 32 ; A. Krawczyk, "Evegni Spektorski, a Student of Science," *Organon*, 1979, No. 15, p. 306.

<sup>49</sup> B. Keckermann, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

As he believed that there were clear boundaries of the subject-matter between different disciplines, Keckermann did not accept what other contemporary historians hold as true (as does Tykociner, for example), namely that different disciplines may be working in the same field of inquiry.<sup>53</sup> Keckermann charged other scholars with employing methods from other disciplines to explain away historical events. Thus, for instance, he criticized Bodin, a follower of a naturalistic interpretation of history, for introducing methods typical of physics in the realm of historical inquiry.<sup>54</sup> He further disapproved of Bodin's psychological approach towards human actions. Such a method was out of place in the realm of historical research. Keckermann believed theology, or pneumatology, were the proper disciplines to study human actions, but not history, for that was violating the logical order of things.<sup>55</sup>

Telling the difference between truth and untruth, Keckermann argued, was the principal purpose of historical inquiry. In that requirement, he toed the Renaissance. Keckermann called on historians to reject legends and to rely on facts alone. But for that historians needed historical sources.<sup>56</sup> Not all events are being mentioned in sources. Some events have been presented in meticulous detail on the ground of available historical sources, and so future historians will not be able to add a lot to those descriptions. For example, few new things can be revealed about antiquity beyond what can be found in Livius, Sallust, Tacitus or Trog.<sup>57</sup>

Keckermann was skeptical about the chance to get to know all that happened in the past. Not all events have been recorded in sources, and those which are, are sometimes recorded inexactly, in an incomplete way, or they are plainly false. All man-made sources are unreliable, and it is the *Bible* alone, as a source compiled under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that can be regarded as a reliable source.<sup>58</sup>

Yet despite that skepticism of his Keckermann believed historians should seek to enrich their knowledge. Historians should be familiar with earlier studies of a given fact and they should be critical of the historical sources they would be using.<sup>59</sup> But the historian must have another skill which is even more important, namely a power of logical reasoning, which will enable him to tell truth from untruth and make his argument clear enough. Keckermann even argued that a student of the past is a logician more than a historian. But if his concept of logic was applied by students of the past, not only new results could be produced but the requirement of logic itself could hamper historical inquiry. Keckermann was

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<sup>53</sup> J. T. Tykociner, *Research and Science*, quoted after Z. Kowalewski, *Nauki społeczne a rozwój społeczny* [*Social Science and Social Development*], Warsaw, 1971, p. 48.

<sup>54</sup> B. Keckermann, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

fond of making meticulous logical distinctions. For instance, he called for the study of the history of man as a mature being and at child age. He was angry with Bodin for instance, for shunning logical distinctions.<sup>60</sup> Apart from logical knowledge, a historian should also be familiar with theological matters so that his arguments should be in line with religious interpretations.<sup>61</sup> This shows that Keckermann never rid himself from the burden of religious orthodoxy, the dominance of which also began to show in the Gdańsk community.<sup>62</sup>

Keckermann also demanded that historical events should be considered from the causal point of view. Students should be aware of factors, principal and subsidiary alike, which caused processes to happen.<sup>63</sup> To this end, they needed to know historical sources.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, he recommended students to pay attention to teleological causes.<sup>65</sup> Explanations should include references to the first cause.<sup>66</sup> This requirement was at odds with requirements of modern scholarship. As he made this demand, Keckermann wanted his historical knowledge not to contradict Revelation.<sup>67</sup>

The concept of the subject-matter of historical inquiry made Keckermann formulate outdated directives as for method for use by historians. Apart from the correct requirement to study events which happened between people, Keckermann also recommended the study of events taking place between God and man or between God and angels.<sup>68</sup> He wanted historians to consider general events, a job which general history should do, and particular events which he thought particular history should take up.<sup>69</sup> Each of these histories should apply its own specific method.

Fond as he was of all kinds of logical distinctions, Keckermann was sure the studied reality could be understood better when that particular method was applied.<sup>70</sup> But he greatly exaggerated in his love of distinctions. There are perhaps a couple of sensible points in Keckermann's argument that each kind of history should use its own specific method, for this is being accepted as self-evident even today that different methods should be applied to study the history of the Church, of the economy, of politics or education.<sup>71</sup> But on the whole Keckermann's speculations about research methods, however correct they

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 21, 75.

<sup>62</sup> Z. Ogonowski, *Filizofia szkolna w Polsce XVII wieku [School Philosophy in 17th-century Poland]*, Warsaw, 1985, p. 47 f.

<sup>63</sup> B. Keckermann, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

may be, will not always be of help to the historian. Indeed, they may occasionally be even a hindrance, because he is quite muddle-headed at times. What strikes the reader most of all are his easy formulation of logical distinctions, his ambiguous notions and his inclination to produce hypostases. Twenty-seven years after Keckermann's *De natura...* appeared in print, Descartes published his *Discours de la methode...* which is a denunciation precisely of that kind of argument.

What historians may perhaps find more useful in Keckermann's reflections are his suggestions to consider historical events with a view to their territorial extent, the period which they cover, the substantive range of the events studied, and also acts of eminent individuals. It can be said Keckermann enjoined historians to study events in their temporal, spatial and substantive aspects. But when he called on historians to study lives of eminent people, he introduced readers into the realm of biographical literature. In that connection, he argued that other disciplines should play a subsidiary role towards history, specifically chronology, topography along with geography, and genealogy.<sup>72</sup> Chronology and topography were his favourite subsidiary disciplines, and he even called them history's eyes. He recommended the study of publications concerning chronologies of Chytraeus, Reinecius and Henning.<sup>73</sup> He attributed less importance to genealogy because genealogy could only concern human events,<sup>74</sup> and, as pointed out before, Keckermann believed history also happens beyond the sphere of human activity.

In Keckermann's arguments on the essential meaning of chronology you are unlikely to find any remarks against the Middle Ages, which were quite common already during the Renaissance. Keckermann clung to the medieval concept of historical periods envisaging four monarchies from the creation of the world through to his own times. To prop his argument he quoted K. Paucer and E. Reufner, two Protestant scholars. Regarding the monarchy as a historical epoch, Keckermann distinguished different kinds of polity in it such as kingdom, duchy, tetrarchy, tyranny, republic or polyarchy. He says the states of medieval Europe were founded in the fourth monarchy. He makes the baffling statement that the Polish state was created as early as in A.D. 800, whereas the Czech state only in the year 1086.<sup>75</sup>

Keckermann was inclined even to study the history of the Church against the pattern of the four monarchies, setting the beginning of the fourth one in the period of the Reformation.<sup>76</sup> That was a step backward compared with concepts of historical research circulating during the Renaissance, when scholars drew a distinction between times which were *antiqua* and *nova*, the latter of the two

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114—116.

being described as Dark Ages.<sup>77</sup> In Polish historiography, a similar classification was employed a short time thereafter by Szymon Starowolski, who used the terms *antiqua* and *barbara*.<sup>78</sup>

Keckermann also studied the style of discourse to be found in historical works. He opposed the idea of giving authors marks for their style. A historian's task was to present individual events but without any sign of sympathy or antipathy.<sup>79</sup> He should avoid ornamental expressions<sup>80</sup> so common in Renaissance historical studies which often reduced historical studies to rhetorical exploits.<sup>81</sup> Narratives must neither be sweeping nor high-strung in style, but they should conform to what he called the average Attic style, which was adequate to the substance and did not incite readers' emotions.<sup>82</sup>

Calling for a full presentation of historical events, Keckermann opposed the Renaissance kind of historiosophy in the form of abridgements called epitomes. For this reason, he criticized historical studies he knew by their abridgements.<sup>83</sup> But Renaissance scholars appreciated that specific style of writings because of their succinctness, clarity and usefulness for teaching purposes. Scaliger, Stadius, Lipsius, Puteanus and Salmاسius were among those who recommended that kind of writings.<sup>84</sup>

The above-presented considerations on Keckermann's concept of history justify the following conclusions: the Gdańsk scholar was aware of the importance for the historian to be familiar with the literature of the subject and with historical sources. At the same time, referring to Aristotle he was unable to define clearly the subject-matter of historical inquiry. He did not present history as a social discipline but as a collection of individual facts. Thus conceived of, history as a discipline lacking scholarly status could not be regarded in terms of historicism even in its religious aspect, which some historians in the Counter-Reformation attempted to do already in the 17th century.

If different scholars took an interest in Keckermann, then not because of an account of the main train of his thought but because of his subsidiary interests. Starowolski in his concept of bibliography emphasized it was necessary to append the literature of the subject to historical studies. British scholars

<sup>77</sup> V. Ferguson, *The Renaissance of Historical Thought. Five Centuries of Interpretation*, Cambridge, Mass., 1948, p. 4; Giannotti, *Libro de la republica veneziana*, Venice, 1548, p. 7; G. Logan, "The Relation of Montaigne to Renaissance Humanism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1975, p. 624.

<sup>78</sup> F. Bielak, "Działalność naukowa Szymona Starowolskiego" ["Szymon Starowolski's Scholarly Undertakings"], *Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Nauki Polskiej. Historia Nauk Społecznych*, No. 1, Warsaw, 1957, p. 251 f.

<sup>79</sup> B. Keckermann, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> D. Hay, "Flavio Biondo and the Middle Ages," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1959, p. 98.

<sup>82</sup> B. Keckermann, *op. cit.*, p. 44 f.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150 f.

<sup>84</sup> I. Lewandowski, *Florus w Polsce [Florus in Poland]*, Wrocław, 1970, p. 86.

acknowledged the significance of *De natura et proprietatibus* for the development of geographic studies, and were less interested in the meaning of that study for history. Since modern science sought to sever its ties to Aristotle, it justifies the view that Keckermann cannot be classed with the category of modern scholars. Despite his interesting arguments on the practical function of history, despite his ideas about reliance on the literature of the subject and the importance of historical sources for historians, Keckermann's reputation as a theoretician of history is damaged by his antiquated concept of historical inquiry, his propensity to hypostasizing, his practice of invoking teleological causes, and his subordination of historical considerations to the spirit of religious orthodoxy.