



Ludwig Boltzmann Institut  
Neulateinische Studien

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## Towards an Ideology of Print

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‘... if graving wer taken away we could have no printing. And therefore they that presse so much the wordes of *Non facies tibi sculptile*, ever, me thincketh, they condeme printed bookes, the originall wherof is of graving...’

(Stephen Gardiner to Nicholas Ridley, 1547)

The printed book may have been a ‘divine art’ (Nicholas of Cusa), but in its birth was its original sin: it was the work of manual labour. As such, it was not a liberal art,



despite its service to them, and its practitioners – men like Gutenberg, Sweynheim and Pannartz, and Jenson – were craftsmen. Aldus Manutius, however, was not a craftsman but a humanist. Similarly to what his contemporary Leonardo da Vinci did for painting, Aldus sought to liberate his art from its mechanical origins, subordinating execution to idea. The Christian religion provided an intellectual toolkit; yet the language of crafts and the mechanical arts remained essential to the new and influential ideology of print that he was creating.