

Basic Principles of the Critical Edition

1. Editorial Guidelines

Behind the idea of a Melanchthon Edition stands the desire to show Melanchthon in his humanistic-philosophical-theological context, and thus not only to make his texts accessible, but also to present him as part of a dynamic network of knowledge and scholarship, who simultaneously stood as an essential player in the theological reform efforts and controversies of his time. Melanchthon should be presented as the type of a sixteenth century scholar. On the one hand, his work has importance for the development of the academic enterprise, and is about the content of individual texts – going beyond, therefore, illuminating how knowledge in a specific context during a certain time span of the early modern period was organized. On the other hand, his work shows in many writings the ecclesiastical-political impacts of theological thought, or the formation of the latter through the concrete requirements of the structuring of the church. Research in the new scholarly edition may not be conducive to finding the “authentic” Melanchthon – however, it is a matter of reconstructing the *influential* Melanchthon in a new edition.

As a matter of principle for the Edition, surviving handwritten texts, where an autograph is available, will be taken as the guiding text. In other cases, the handwritten document is preferable, which as the transcription of a later hand, can be considered, or would be the authoritative one for the print transmission. With texts that only survive in printed form, the following principle for the selection of a printing as the source text applies: a certain printing of a Melanchthon writing cannot be excluded as the source text for the Edition because it is not (or apparently is not) personally-authorized by Melanchthon for printing. Examples of this can be found even in *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*, in which he had transferred the authorization for the printing of a letter to a friend or colleague (see MBW R Nr. 57 and Nr. 4965). But probably not all such cases are identifiable. That’s why Melanchthon’s authorization cannot be the sole criterion for the selection of a printing as the source text for the Edition. But that is to say: the source text for the Edition can be based on a printing that Melanchthon authorized OR it displayed the greatest impact OR it was especially important for the contemporary debate OR it represents the most complete edition of each piece of writing. In order to avoid a disparity, these decisions should not be left solely to the individual volume editors, but will be made in regular consultation with the editors.

Out of these preliminary considerations flow three more: 1. The selection of texts and versions to be included in the Edition respectively, on the basis of which the individual volumes will be comprised, is to be made most carefully and in common agreement among the participating editors. 2. Intervene very sparingly in the selected texts. This applies to errors (which are judged to be such by the editors) that could affect the reading. All interventions in the text will be documented in the apparatus.

The resolution of abbreviations and ligatures will be compiled into a list in the editorial commentary. 3. One of the core tasks of the editors is to place each respective text in the context of scholarly communication and discussion.

The editorial guidelines were so designed, that they will meet this objective and endure for the duration of the Edition. They remain valid for each volume of the Edition, as they exist in this affixed proposal. Accordingly, they will be printed in each volume.

2. Selection of texts to be edited

An objective of the Edition is to document which of Melanchthon's texts reached the public during his lifetime. Accordingly, the method of publication of the writings will be traced—that is, the dissemination of those texts of Melanchthon's in which he could have played a part will be described.

Thus, in exceptional cases even lecture notes will be included in the Edition. This pertains, for example, to the case of the *Dispositiones Rhetoricae* (see the description of the edition status in volume 2/2 *Schriften zur Rhetorik* in connection with 8.3).

The question of whether Melanchthon was involved in a particular printing, should, among others, be clarified through research in the letters (a collaboration with the Melanchthon Research Center in Heidelberg was obligingly arranged). But this should not be the sole criterion for the selection of texts. It is the responsibility of the editors to sift and choose from among the entire body of accessible material (printings and perhaps manuscripts), taking into account its history as well as its particular importance for the Edition. This significance is determined by the editorial interest in presenting an edition that offers the optimal basis for further research for representatives of different disciplines. The editorial guidance text could therefore possibly be the one that has been received the most and therefore has developed the most impact. But the decision for a printing as the source text of the Edition will in every case be justified in the editorial report through the description of the transmission and the textual witness. It will be the same for the selection of alternatives in the apparatus based on the textual evidence.

If variants of a text exist, then, according to the understanding of the editor, when occasional differences in other printings are noted, they will be listed in the variant apparatus. If the differences are not just occasional, but affect whole sentences or longer phrases (which may be omitted or added), then the printed version is to be regarded as a separate text, and should be treated as such. An exact formal determination of when a variant and when an independent text is present does not seem practical. This decision must be made at the discretion of the editors, who decide on the basis of their textual knowledge, when it is sensible to edit a text partially (a synopsis) or completely—or to record it in a variant apparatus. As a general rule, a synopsis should take place in the appendix. In this case those parts of the edited work should be depicted anew, to which – in a selected textual variant – deviations, additions or deletions will be found. The passages of the variant are

assigned to the text of the edited work, with additional appropriate references provided (i.e., page numbers of the corresponding edition). In the rare cases in which manuscripts are edited (early writings on physics, see the edition status in volume 6/1 *Naturphilosophie* in relation to 8.3) or serve as an additional basis for the Edition (*De Anima*, see the edition status in volume 6/2 *Psychologie*, in relation to 8.3), the deleted passages will be included in the variant apparatus if each editor cannot rule out an objective relevance.

In this way, an attempt is made to give an overall impression of the work of Melanchthon, without constructing a particular predetermined caricature of the man per an *editio princeps* or the edition of a later hand. But naturally, the *editio princeps* or the edition of a later hand can always serve as the foundation for the Edition, if the editors responsible deem it necessary.

3. Principles of Textual Composition

The principles of textual composition are guided by two main considerations: First, be sure that it is reader-friendly, and second, the text should retain its historical character.

Therefore, the editors have decided that it is a philological responsibility to prepare a critical, citable, reading text, along with the history of the text, showing its variability, documented in a variant apparatus and especially in the editorial report.

To guarantee the readability of the text, insertions in the guidance text will be made carefully: ligatures and common abbreviations will be eliminated. Also, italicized (or cursive) texts will often be edited in Antiqua. Grammatical errors or errors of speech (which are judged by the editors to be such) will be corrected in the main text, and the corresponding insertion will be documented in the textual apparatus. At the same time, the source text will be rendered according to the normalized sound of Latin. Likewise, upper and lower case letters and punctuation will be adjusted to today's standards (see also the guidelines in MBW, Bd. 1, pp. 35-8).

So that the texts will remain recognizable as a product of the sixteenth century—that is, so that the historical distance is not obscured—the marginalia will be depicted with full fidelity. Likewise the accents will be retained. Some facsimile pages may also be permitted in order to give some idea of the underlying printing.

The following apparatuses are planned:

1. A text-critical apparatus, in which editorial information can be found regarding the body of the text, and with notes documenting peculiarities or the corrections of errors. Obvious errors are corrected here.
2. A variant apparatus with information on manuscript and print variants should provide a citation for the alternative passage. The criteria for the selection of texts and statements on the respective affected manuscripts and printings will be given in the editorial report at the beginning of each volume. The abbreviations (sigla) are given on a separate list.

3. A subject apparatus, which should focus on the essentials (persons, things, citations). Verifiable references should, as far as possible, be substantiated through modern editions. No comment will be made on issues that can easily be resolved through reference to the appropriate dictionaries or lexicons. These lexicons and dictionaries will be listed separately in each volume. Research discussions cannot be performed here. First of all, they could cause the Edition to quickly become outdated, and secondly, the editorial schedule does not allow for detailed research on individual texts, even though it would be desirable to do so. More detailed discussions concerning this can be found in the respective editorial report at the beginning of each volume.