

the proactive role played by exegetical practices not only in the description, but also in the very making of the poetical tradition.

Eugenio Refini, *New York University*  
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*Écrits sur la dialectique et l'humanisme.* Rodolphe Agricola.

Ed. and trans. Marc van der Poel. Textes de la Renaissance 18. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2018. 332 pp. €42.

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This anthology of three of Rudolph Agricola's major texts is a revised and updated version of an edition first published in Paris in 1997. Contrary to that first version (following Alardus's 1539 edition), the revised text is based on a collation of the major early modern editions of Agricola's works. The volume contains the original Latin text and French translations of twenty-two of the seventy-five chapters of Agricola's major work, *De inventione dialectica* (1479), of the central part of *In laudem philosophiae et reliquarum artium oratio* (1476), and of the letter *De formando studio* (1484) addressed to the author's friend and disciple Jacob Barbireau. The very readable French text offers the additional asset of listing, in brackets, the classical sources that Agricola quotes.

The Dutch humanist's role in early modern studies is still somewhat neglected outside of a relatively small group of specialists; hence the editor's insistence, in his introduction, on the influence and innovations deriving from his work, exemplified in the samples provided in this anthology. The frequently debated but often ill-defined shift from Scholasticism to humanism finds a few concrete illustrations in these fundamental texts on dialectic, rhetoric, and the study of the humanities in general. The single biggest achievements illustrated in these treatises might be the combination of dialectic and rhetoric as well as the shift from purely formal criteria to practical applications of the art of reasoning, covered by the classical trivium and picking up on Aristotle's and Cicero's ideas.

Influenced by his Italian sojourns and by humanists such as Lorenzo Valla, Agricola insisted, in this context, on a more practical intellectual formation taking into account ethical, aesthetic, and social values and contexts. Whereas the trivium and the quadrivium are clearly reflected in Agricola's tripartite division of *logica*, *fysica*, and *ethica*, the aforementioned combination of traditionally separated fields such as dialectic and rhetoric, the focus on practicality over purely formal aspects, and the resulting focus on reception open up new perspectives for the art of reasoning. *Docere* has to lead to *movere*: public reception represents an essential criterion for the humanist orator who aims at influencing public opinion by touching critically on social, political, and religious issues.

This new focus on Agricola's treatises illustrates the formation of independent thinking and its objectives, facilitated by the multiplication of loci that his more nuanced

differentiations trigger. Erasmus and Thomas More are given as examples of independent critical thinkers who profited greatly from Agricola's groundwork, even though van der Poel gets somewhat carried away by his enthusiasm for Agricola's substantial achievements and influence at this point, as he proclaims that such freedom of expression comes to the fore for the very first time in the writings of these authors. Such attitudes existed before these treatises, however, as the long satirical tradition of the Middle Ages, for example, not least in popular theater, shows quite clearly.

It might be more prudent to state that Agricola's reshuffling of rhetorical categories facilitated the formation of critical thinkers, helped spread such tendencies, and ended up making the texts more effective. Its more pronounced focus on rational and irrational means to influence the audience, within the framework of concern for contemporary realities and practical considerations (nature of the subject; objective of the speaker), which replaced the exclusive Scholastic focus on theory, contributed to this development. The concentration on independent thinking is also reflected in the renewed interest in dialectic syllogisms, which allow for debate and diverging opinions, as opposed to scientific or demonstrative syllogisms which do not. Finally, the moral preoccupations typical for Northern humanism are reflected in the central place that faith occupies in all these considerations.

This edition is a wonderful introduction to Agricola's writings and it successfully demonstrates his pioneering work and importance for early modern humanism. Philosophy and *studia humanitatis* are put on equal footing as two sides of the same coin in the quest for knowledge through intellectual exchange. Further study of this essential author will certainly be inspired by this volume.

Bernd Renner, *Brooklyn College, CUNY*  
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*Il "Boezio" di Benedetto Varchi: Edizione critica del volgarizzamento della "Consolatio philosophiae" (1551).* Dario Brancato, ed.

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This critical edition represents one of the major editorial achievements of vernacular Renaissance philosophy in the last decade. The volume reconstructs the text of the vulgarizations of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae*, translated and published in 1551 by Benedetto Varchi, one of the most important intellectuals of the new emergent academies in Renaissance Italy between the forties and fifties. The critical edition includes an extensive essay on the reception of Boethius's work in the Renaissance, both in the vernacular and Latin, and its impact on the making of Italian culture. The importance of Varchi's vulgarization, and therefore of Brancato's philological work, is testified to by