# THE RECOVERY OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN THE CULTURE OF HUMANISTS AND THE COMMUNICATIVE ORIGINS OF THE REFORMATION

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*Ideas and opinions about communication and intellectual exchange underwent significant changes during the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The rediscovery of* parrhesia *by the humanists of the Quattrocento is one of the least studied of these changes, and at the same time, paradoxically, one of the most fascinating. My main argument in these pages is that the recovery of Hellenistic "freedom of speech" was a process that took place from the thirteenth century through the first decade of the sixteenth century; thus it began well before the term παρρησία was common currency among humanists. This is the most important and counterituitive aspect of the present analysis of early modern* parrhesia, *because it means that the concept did not develop at the expense of classical and biblical tradition so much as at the expense of late-medieval scholastic speculation about the sins of the tongue and the legitimation of anger as an intellectual emotion. To illustrate this longue durée process, I have focused on three stages: (i) the creation, transformation, and assimilation by fourteenth-century humanism of the systems of sins of the tongue, and especially the sin of* contentio*; (ii) the synthesis carried out by Lorenzo Valla between the scholastic tradition, the communicative presumptions of early humanism, and the classical and New Testament ideas of* parrhesia*; and (iii) the systematization and transformation of this synthesis in Raffaele Maffei's* Commentariorum rerum urbanorum libri XXXVIII. *In closing,*

I would like to express my gratitude to Chris Celenza, Eric MacPhail, Mercedes García-Arenal, David Robertson, Anna Laura Puliafito, Xavier Tubau, and Roland Béhar for their commentary on this text. Needless to say, all the remaining mistakes and unintended omissions are my own. The following abbreviations will be employed: Allen = *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod, 11 vols. and index (Oxford 1906–58); ASD = *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* (Amsterdam and Leiden, 1969–); Copeland = Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300–1475* (Oxford, 2009); CTC = *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries* (Washington, DC, 1960–); CWE = *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto, 1974–); DCOO = *Doctoris ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera omnia*, 32 vols (Montreal, 1896–1906); DG = *Corpus Iuris Canonici… Pars prior: Decretum magistri Gratiani*, ed. Äemilius Friedberg Friedberg and Äemilius Ludovicus Richter (Graz, 1959); Faral = Edmond Faral, ed. *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1962); ITRL = I Tatti Renaissance Library (Cambridge, MA, 2001–); JGOC = *Jean Gerson, Œuvres complètes*, 10 vols., ed. Palémon Glorieux (Paris, 1960–73); NCTUIR = *Nuova Collezione di Testi Umanistici Inediti o Rari* (Florence, 1939–76); and VBSQ = *Vincent de Beauvais, Speculum quadruplex sive Speculum maius: Naturale / Doctrinale / Morale / Historiale*. 4 vols. (1624, repr. Graz, 1965). Except where noted, I cite the translations provided in these editions.

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*I propose a hypothesis. The theoretical framework behind Maffei's encyclopaedic approach is not only that he was attempting to synthesize the Quattrocento's heritage through the prism of classical sources; it was also that he was crystallizing the communicative "rules of the game" that all of* Christianitas *implicitly accepted at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Taking the three ways of manifesting the truth considered by Maffei and fleshing them out in the figures of Erasmus of Rotterdam, Celio Calcagnini, and Martin Luther just before the emergence of the Protestant Reformation could help to explain from a communicative perspective the success and pan-European impact of the Reformation.*

In rebus obscuris diuersas ponimus opiniones, ut non tam scribere quam loqui tibi coram uideamur. (St Jerome, *Letters* 72.4)

The aim of the following pages is to study how anger interacted with a number of fundamental transformations in the history of the ideas on communication and intellectual exchange from the late Middle Ages to the Renaissance. My hypothesis will be developed in three closely related arguments.

First, the creation and development of the systems of the sins of the tongue by late medieval scholasticism provided a moral background to interaction and intellectual exchange that stressed dangers for the faithful. This moral aspect of communication continues in the writings of the humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Among the wide variety of items provided by the numerous systems of the sins of the tongue, *contentio*, which consisted either in disputing with deceit or with the sole goal of defeating the opponent in the discussion without regard for the truth, is a constant. And, by ascribing it to capital sins such as anger, envy, or vainglory, scholasticism set the ethical limits to learned interaction. Some of the most influential approaches to the sins of the tongue identified *contentio* as a perversion of truth, on the one hand, and as opposed to *caritas*, on the other.

Furthermore, far from what has been traditionally argued, the "systems" of the sins of the tongue, albeit a product of medieval scholasticism, did not remain encapsulated in medieval culture; instead, their impact can easily be traced through their technical use by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century men of letters. With regard to *contentio*, early humanists used the term to refer to the practice of intellectual exchange among scholastic thinkers that was opposed to the positive description of the ideas of learned interaction provided and developed by them. This "system" of the humanists, as should probably have been expected, was built upon two main concepts — *amicitia*, also in the form of *sodalitas*, and *sapientia* — and partly developed following the models of learned dialogue inherited from classical antiquity, mainly Plato and Cicero. This form of interaction, due to its open form, its ability to introduce and endorse different positions on a given topic, and its defense of their equal weight in a discussion, has traditionally been associated with the *disputatio in utramque partem*.

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Second, although this ideal of learned interaction enjoyed much success in fifteenth-century literature and has been regarded as quintessential to fifteenth-century humanism, some Renaissance intellectuals, Lorenzo Valla among them, perceived in this formula and its enactment the danger of becoming a fixed set of conventions and a realm for self-indulgence, as it neither seemed to foster truth as its main goal, but rather to imitate and reenact the truth of the ancients, nor to provide tools for contesting error or for emulating, that is, surpassing, the achievements of the past. Valla, known for his acrimonious character, developed a new intellectual position in this context, which involved, first and foremost, a reevaluation of *contentio* supported by both medieval scholasticism and contemporary sources. To Valla, the restoration of *bona contentio* came together with the defense of the nobility of spirit of a scholar who wants to foster truth according to a more perfect system of intellection than that offered by classical tradition. He would call this *libertas dicendi*. But, together with *libertas dicendi*, which is a manifestation of individual freedom, Valla developed his position further on in *libertas philosophandi*, which does not imply just the individual freedom to speak, but also the renegotiation of shared ideas concerning different realms of thought — the disciplines or *artes* — and, therefore, a social and intellectual right and virtue. Consequently, as happened in classical and early Christian times, the culture of the humanists, through its defense of *amicitia* and *prudentia*, paved the way for the two main preconditions — *isonomia* or a shared set of rules for discussion, and *isegoria* or a shared right to take the floor — for *parrhesia*: a violent eruption of truth and the right to defend it in this context, although Valla never used the term.

From this point of view, it is easy to see Valla's influence on the founders of the Reformation, as both contemporary scholars and early reformers themselves do not hesitate to admit. However, I maintain in building my third argument, this account tells only a part of the story, insofar as it does not explain how the first manifestations of the Reformation, when compared to other late-medieval and early modern "heresies," were received and discussed by the early sixteenth-century intelligentsia. Besides the historical, economic, military, political, and social circumstances that form the background of the Reformation, I would like to stress in the following pages that these radical transformations had already become part of the communicative culture of Renaissance humanists by the first decade of the sixteenth century. To demonstrate this, I will examine one of the first humanistic encyclopaedias published in the sixteenth century, the *Commentaries on Urban Matters* (1506) by Raffaele Maffei, which, in book 28, *On Honesty*, prefigures how dissidence will manifest itself in Christianity in the forthcoming decades and, in view of the evolution of intellectual exchange as presented here, clarifies the different approaches of Erasmus and Luther as reformers of the Church.

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## Sources for the Study of Conversation and Intellectual Exchange in the Middle Ages

Although our understanding of the history of communication from the late Middle Ages to the end of the sixteenth century has seen important advances during the last three decades,[1] a comprehensive history of the ideas that pertain to disputation, dialogue, and intellectual exchange and their role in early modern perceptions of heterodoxy, free-thinking, freedom of speech, skepticism, and tolerance remains yet unwritten. An important challenge for this area of research consists in the diversity and number of classical and Renaissance sources that need to be considered; however, equally exacting is the requirement to study the role played by medieval culture in such a history. Renaissance scholars should consider at least five different assortments of medieval texts for this task to be accomplished. Three of them combine theoretical and practical issues, while the other two are essentially theoretical and philosophical.

The first set is composed of the documents that grounded the medieval ideal of courtesy and advanced its further development. Even though the late medieval manuals of courtly conversation are comparatively far less abundant than their Renaissance counterparts, observations on good manners and polite talk are disseminated in a wide variety of testimonies. This corpus is important for our understanding of two complementary historical trends: first, the rise of the concept of *urbanitas* linked to the ideals of courtesy and polite conversation, and second, the way that scholasticism — when juxtaposed with the culture of Italian humanists of the Quattrocento and with their recovery of classical tradition — provided instruction on the arts of disputation and negotiation to secretaries, diplomats, noblemen, courtiers, and princes.[2] As is well known, there is also a non-scholastic

[1] Olga Weijers, *Terminologie des universités au XIII^e siècle* (Rome, 1987); Weijers, *La "disputatio" à la Faculté des arts de Paris (1200–1350 environ): Esquisse d'une typologie* (Turnhout, 1995); Weijers, *La "disputatio" dans les Facultés des arts au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout, 2002); Weijers, *"Queritur utrum": Recherches sur la "disputatio" dans les universités médiévales* (Turnhout, 2009); Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue* (Cambridge, 1992); Béatrice Périgot, *Dialectique et littérature: Les avatars de la dispute entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance* (Paris, 2005); Vittorio Hösle, *The Philosophical Dialogue: A Poetics and a Hermeneutics*, trans. Steven Rendall (Notre Dame, IN, 2012); Alex J. Novikoff, "Toward a Cultural History of Scholastic Disputation," *American Historical Review* 117 (2012): 331–64, and Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation* (Philadelphia, 2013).

[2] For classical *urbanitas*, see Edwin S. Ramage, *Urbanitas: Ancient Sophistication and Refinement* (Norman, OK, 1973). For insights, analyses, and dates of concepts such as *civilitas*, *affabilitas*, and *curialitas*, see the classical studies by Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Malden, MA, 2000), 236–56; John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle* (Princeton, 1970), 2, 117–19 nn. 1–30; R. E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* (London, 1983), 89a and 126b; C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210*

approach to the subject through the literary practices and models developed in and for the court, mostly written in the vernacular.[3]

A second group of texts, which records or describes *disputationes*, although adopted by the same stepfather, scholasticism,[4] shows a divergent origin; its development was intrinsically linked to the education of religious orders and became ubiquitous in the faculties of arts, theology, medicine, and canon law, as has been studied by Martin Grabmann, Alfonso Maierù, Brian Lawn, Alex Novikoff, and Olga Weijers, among many others.[5] Here not only the practice of disputation, *quaestiones*, *sophismata*, and magisterial disputations offers a challenging variety in praxis and scope to scholars with respect to the different statutes of an ever growing number of universities across Europe, but also the evolution of disputation as a form of exposition of truth against doubt, heresy, error, and unbelief presents unique complications for scholarship.

There is yet a third collection of polemical texts characterized by a mixture of both theory and praxis. Composed in the form of dialogue and strongly

(Philadelphia, PA, 1985), 111–254; Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1991), 96–199, 227–28, etc.; Aldo Scaglione, *Knights at Court: Courtliness, Chivalry, and Courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1991); Karl Uitti, "Remarks on Medieval 'Courtoisie': Poetry and Grace," *Modern Philology* 92 (1994): 199–210; Peter Burke, "Il cortigiano," in *L'uomo del Rinascimento*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Bari, 1998), 133–65; Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Cambridge, 1993); and Claude Roussel, "Le legs de la rose: Modèles et préceptes de la sociabilité médiévale," in *Pour une histoire des traités de savoir-vivre en Europe*, ed. Alain Montadon (Clermont-Ferrand, 1994), 1–90. Isabella Lazzarini's recent magisterial monograph on diplomatic communication, *Communication and Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350–1520* (Oxford, 2015), is the single most important work in English on the "rhetoric," in a broad sense, of diplomacy (189–212) and its relation to the previous and contemporary culture of dialogue and the emotions (213–38).

[3] Don A. Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism and the Courtly Tradition* (Washington, DC, 2005), 108–13, 193–94, 303–5, and Kathleen Andersen-Wyman, *Andreas Capellanus on Love? Desire, Seduction, and Subversion in a Twelfth-Century Latin Text* (New York, 2007), 39–40, 60, 105–12, and 217.

[4] Tony Hunt, "Aristotle, Dialectic, and Courtly Literature," *Viator* 10 (1979): 95–129; Eugene Vance, *From Topic to Tale: Logic and Narrativity in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, 1987), 14–27; and Sarah Kay, *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford, CA, 2001), 17–25.

[5] Both Franciscans and Dominicans insisted on instruction in disputation; on this point, see Bert Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education (c. 1210–1517)* (Leiden, 2000), 133–37 and 276–77, and M. Michèle Mulchahey, *First the Bow is Bent in Study … : Dominican Education Before 1350* (Toronto, 1998), 167–75 and 222–36. For the role of the *disputatio* in the faculties, see Martin Grabmann, *Die scholastische Methode im 12. und beginnenden 13. Jahrhundert*, vol. 2 of *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode* (Berlin, 1957), 13–27, 217–21, 480–82, and 558–60; Alfonso Maierù, *University Training in Medieval Europe*, trans. D. N. Pryds (Leiden, 1994), 62–69 and 117–41; Brian Lawn, *The Rise and Decline of the Scholastic "Quaestio Disputata": With Special Emphasis on Its Use in the Teaching of Medicine and Science* (Leiden, 1993); and Weijers's and Novikoff's essays mentioned above, n. 1.

monological in aims and methods, this collection is linked to the literature of the *eratopokriseis* and of the *problemata*, *zetemata*, *aitiai*, and *aporemata*. In this group, the *compendia* of sapiential literature, catechisms, manuals for conversion, contrasts between confessions, and, of course, a massive number of pedagogical dialogues on diverse matters should be included.[6]

In contrast with the three aforementioned groups, there are still two more that offer a theoretical approach to disputation. Thus, a fourth set is the technical discourse on disputation and the theories of argumentation, which can be easily traced in the medieval transmission of Boethius's *De topicis differentiis*; the recovery of and commentaries on Aristotle's *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*; *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations* (the *logica nova*), and *Rhetoric*; the glosses and first editions of Cicero's *De inventione*; and Ps-Cicero's *Ad Herennium*. This corpus, as Karin Margareta Fredborg has shown, makes some traditional assumptions about the relation of rhetoric and dialectic during the late Middle Ages fairly problematic.[7]

The fifth and last collection of texts is built upon a specific conceptual approach to the morality of language — the "systems" of the sins of the tongue — and presents two particularities when compared to the other four. First, the origin of this corpus is fundamentally medieval, and as such these texts provide priceless information on how scholastic thinkers tried to establish a theoretical paradigm for the ethics of language according to Christian morals. Second, insofar as the main concern of these systems was to perform theoretical and comprehensive analyses on the ways to commit sin through the use of words, they draw heavily from canon law, and at the same time they had a strong impact on the proscription of all kinds of attacks against the Church's authority and dogma. The thirteenth century was the golden age of these systems, but, as is

[6] For a critical discussion of these genres in classical literature, see Liba Taub, "'Problematising' the *Problemata*: The *Problemata* in Relation to Other Question-and-Answer Texts," in *The Aristotelian Problemata Physica: Philosophical and Scientific Investigations*, ed. Robert Mayhew (Leiden, 2015), 413–36; in early Christian literature, Claudio Zamagni, "Is the Question-and-Answer Literary Genre in Early Christian Literature an Homogeneous Group?," in *La littérature des questions et réponses dans l'Antiquité profane et chrétienne: De l'enseignement à l'exégèse*, ed. Marie-Pierre Bussières (Turnhout, 2013), 241–67; and in Byzantine letters, Pavel Ermilov, "Towards a Classification of Sources in Byzantine Question-and-Answer Literature," in *Theologica Minora: The Minor Genres of Byzantine Theological Literature*, ed. Antonio Rigo (Turnhout, 2013), 110–25. Its success in medieval literature and the difficulties for classification have been studied by Edmund Reiss, Peter Lebrecht Schmidt, and Eyvind C. Ronquist; see Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann, *Lateinische Dialoge 1200–1400: Literaturhistorische Studie und Repertorium* (Leiden, 2007), 4–10, 43–45, and 60–77, and Olga Weijers, *In Search of the Truth: A History of Disputation Techniques from Antiquity to Early Modern Times* (Turnhout, 2013), 28–30, 40, 50, and 262ff.

[7] Karin Margareta Fredborg, "Rhetoric and Dialectic," in *The Rhetoric of Cicero in Its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, ed. Virginia Cox and John O. Ward (Leiden, 2006), 165–92. See also James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1974), 104–8.

the case with respect to the other four groups mentioned, they enjoyed a quite fruitful afterlife, although they are comparatively much less studied by scholars of the Renaissance.[8]

The acknowledgement that they were not only known, but also deeply transformed in the hands of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century humanists, offers a fresh approach to many questions related to the history of the ideas that address communication in early modern Europe. One of these sins, *contentio*, sheds unexpected light on how anger gained a place in the culture of the humanists and in the establishment of a place for religious contestation in Christianity. As such, the vice of *contentio* maintains close links with the recovery of *parrhesia* during the Renaissance, and, accordingly, with the communicative premises that paved the way for the Reformation, although there are several other factors that were vital to the historical process. To demonstrate these links will be the core concern of these pages.

## The Systems of the Sins of the Tongue

Around the fourth and fifth centuries of our era, Christianity reshaped classical ideas on communication and conversation by shifting the focus of attention to an ethical point of view. As an important part of this transformation, monastic rules were instituted to limit communication among monks by imposing a strict observance of silence, and at the same time, Christian intellectuals started to develop analytical judgments about human interaction and language, creating what we could call a Christian proto-pragmatics and proto-psychology.[9]

The unsystematic set of ideas contained in these texts found further development in the lavish number of moral, pastoral, and theological treatises that

[8] The most comprehensive study on the topic during the Middle Ages is still Carla Casagrande and Silvana Vecchio, *I peccati della lingua* (Rome, 1987), which I follow closely in my account. So far as I know, we lack a study on the survival and transformation of the sins of the tongue during the Renaissance, with some exceptions regarding particular sins, such as Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge, 1997); Wietse de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden, 2001), 148–54; Elizabeth A. Horodowich, "The Unmannered Tongue: Blasphemy, Insults, and Gossip in Renaissance Venice," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2001) and Horodowich, "Civic Identity and the Control of Blasphemy in Sixteenth-Century Venice," *Past and Present* 181 (2003): 3–34; Bettina Lindorfer, "*Peccatum linguae* and the Punishment of Speech Violation in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times," in *Speaking in the Medieval World*, ed. Jean E. Godsall-Myers (Leiden, 2003), 23–42; and Martine Veldhuizen, "Guard Your Tongue: Slander and Its Punishment in a Late Medieval Courtroom," in *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe: Communication and Popular Politics*, ed. Jan Dumolyn et al. (Turnhout, 2014), 233–46.

[9] Ambrose G. Wathen, *Silence: The Meaning of Silence in the Rule of St Benedict* (Washington, DC, 1973), 179–223.

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gradually explored the many ways to commit sin through words. The most common approach was to provide a number of vices of the tongue, ordered according to the gravity of the attack against God's authority. The most trivial sin was "wordiness" and the most important was "vanity"; a casual observer would correctly infer that these ideas drew not only on Christian morals but also on communication issues.

With the rise of urban life and commerce in Europe, including the risk of new heresies, the contact of different confessions, and the establishment of precarious yet flourishing academic culture outside the monasteries, medieval scholars of the ninth to the twelfth centuries approached the culture of disputation in a new light, which transcended the narrow limits established by the erotapocritical tradition.[10] This revival was accompanied by the resurgence of the study of rhetoric and dialectic, spreading a culture of disputation that became ubiquitous in late medieval intellectual life, which was accompanied by an ever-increasing denunciation of its excesses from monasteries, schools, and ecclesiastical authorities alike.[11]

As a consequence, around the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, scholasticism approached the old topic of the "vices of the tongue" with a much more methodical understanding. In this new approach, language, morals, and salvation were addressed through what has been called the systems of the sins of the tongue. "System" conveys here an analytical attitude, rather than the ambition to provide a fixed and universally accepted listing and classification of sins. As a matter of fact, neither their number, nor their name, nor their origin, nor any

[10] Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century: A Study of Their Relations during the Years 1198–1254, Based on the Papal Letters and the Conciliar Decrees of the Period* (Philadelphia, 1933), 26–35; Artur Michael Landgraf, *Introduction a l'histoire de la littérature théologique de la scolastique naissante* (Montreal, 1973), 48–50; André Cantin, "Sur quelques aspects des disputes publiques au XI$^{e}$ siècle latin," in *Études de civilisation médiévale, IX$^{e}$–XII$^{e}$ siècles: Mélanges offerts à Edmond-René Labande par ses amis, ses collègues, ses élèves* (Poitiers, 1975), 89–104; Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983), 91, 322–29, 522–31; Stephen H. Brown, "Key Terms in Medieval Theological Vocabulary," in *Méthodes et instruments du travail intellectuel au moyen âge: Études sur le vocabulaire*, ed. Olga Weijers (Turnhout, 1990), 82–96; M. Michèle Mulchahey, "Dominican Educational Vocabulary and the Order's Conceptualization of Studies before 1300: Borrowed Terminology, New Connotations," in *Vocabulaire des écoles et des méthodes d'enseignement au moyen âge: Actes du colloque, Rome 21–22 octobre 1989*, ed. Weijers (Turnhout, 1992), 110, 114–15; Lawn, *The Rise and Decline of the Scholastic "Quaestio disputata,"* 12–17, 21–25, 39–44, etc.; Périgot, *Dialectique et littérature*, 42–56; and Novikoff, "Toward a Cultural History of Scholastic Disputation," 133–71.

[11] Edgar de Bruyne, *Études d'esthétique médiévale* (Paris, 1998), 1, 525–27; Jean Leclerq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* (Paris, 1957), 191–92; Gregory Lubkin, *A Renaissance Court: Milan under Galleazzo Maria Sforza* (Berkeley, 1994), 11; Novikoff, "Toward a Cultural History of Scholastic Disputation," 358–60, and Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation*, 190ff. I collect examples of the sins of the tongue in canon law below at nn. 28–30.

attempt at taxonomy enjoyed consensus among medieval authors. Nonetheless, they frequently concurred that the opposition between the sins of the tongue and the four cardinal and the three theological virtues was the most satisfactory method to address the subject.[12] By doing so, they were able to illustrate how language could raise an obstacle for men to acquire wisdom, or, even worse, open up a path to their perdition.

The success of this procedure was assured when Thomas Aquinas employed it in the *Summa Theologiae* (1265–74) [see fig. 1]; but it was not, by any means, the only possible approach, and some of his contemporaries came to the task with much more sophisticated strategies. Ps-Grosseteste's *De lingua* (ca. 1250–70), for instance, presented a fairly complex fusion of principles drawn from primitive monastic rules in addition to a good theoretical knowledge of the sinful tongue encapsulated in an allegorical interpretation of the beast of the Apocalypse [see fig. 2]. Aquinas and Ps-Grosseteste shared a well-populated list of sins,[13] as did William Peraldus and several other influential authors,[14] yet not only do some names differ among them, but also even those that find agreement often appear opposed to diverse virtues and linked to unlike vices.

For the sake of my argument, an equally popular and much less exacting catalogue of sins of the tongue provides valuable insights. In the *Speculum quadruplex* or *Speculum maius* (ca. 1255), widely read — for better or for worse — from the thirteenth until the seventeenth century,[15] Vincent of Beauvais dealt twice with

[12] That is the approach in William Peraldus's famous eighth chapter (*De peccato linguae*, ca. 1230) of the *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus* (ca. 1250), see Casagrande and Vecchio, *I Peccati della lingua*, 4, 116, and 141; Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 15–16: and Lindorfer, "*Peccatum linguae* and the Punishment of Speech Violation," 27–28.

[13] So far as I know, the most populated list of sins of the tongue (43) is the one collected by Jean Gerson (JGOC 9, 158) in his *Enumeratio peccatorum ab Alberto posita* (1400–15). This list is not mentioned by Casagrande and Vecchio.

[14] Peraldus studies twenty-four sins: *blasphemia* (blasphemy), *murmur* (gossip), *deffensio peccati* (excusing sin), *periurium* (perjury), *mendacium/falsum testimonium* (lie), *detractio* (detraction), *adulatio* (flattery), *maledictio* (reviling), *convicium* (insult), *contentio*, *bilinguium* (hypocrisy), *rumor* (hearsay), *iactantia* (boasting), *revelatio secretorum* (revelation of secrets), *indiscreta comminatio* (blunt threats), *indiscreta promissio* (promises made lightly), *ociosa verba* (idle words), *multiloquium* (loquacity), *turpiloquium* (base talk), *scurrilitas* (buffoonery), *bonorum derisio* (mocking good people), *pravum consilium* (evil counsel), *seminatio discordiarum* (sowing discord), and *indiscreta taciturnitas* (imprudent taciturnity). The influence of his *Summa de vitiis* (ca. 1250) was strong all across Europe and had an early impact in vernacular languages through translations into Catalan, French, and English.

[15] On the fortunes of Beauvais's *Speculum*, see Anne M. Blair's *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, 2010), 43–55 and 241–42; Blair, "Revisiting Renaissance Encyclopaedism," in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge, 2013), 388–91; and Mary Franklin-Brown's *Reading the World: Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age* (Chicago, 2012). The lexical influence of Beauvais's encyclopedia is not always distinct in early humanist texts, but

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| Virtues | Linked merits | Linked sins | Sins of the tongue |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Fides* | | | *Blasphemia* |
| *Spes* | | | — |
| *Caritas* | | | *Contentio* |
| *Prudentia* | | | — |
| *Iustitia* | *Religio* | | *Periurium* |
| | *Pietas* | | *Contumelia*<br>*Detractio*<br>*Susurratio*<br>*Derisio*<br>*Maledictio* |
| | *Observantia* | | — |
| | *Veritas* | | *Mendacium*<br>*Iactantia*<br>*Ironia* |
| | *Gratia* | | — |
| | *Vindicatio* | | — |
| | *Amicitia* | | *Adulatio*<br>*Litigium* |
| *Fortitudo* | | | |
| *Temperantia* | *Verecundia* | | — |
| | *Honestas* | | — |
| | *Abstinentia* | *Gula* | *Susurratio*<br>*Derisio* |
| | *Sobrietas* | | — |
| | *Castitas* | *Luxuria* | *Turpiloquium*<br>*Verba ludicra*<br>*Stultiloquium* |
| | *Pudicitia* | | — |
| | *Continentia* | | — |
| | *Clementia* | | — |
| | *Mansuetudo* | *Ira* | *Contumelia*<br>*Blasphemia* |
| | *Modestia* | | — |
| | *Humilitas* | *Superbia* | *Iactantia* |
| | *Studiositas* | | — |

Fig. 1. The "system" of the sins of the tongue, ca. 1100–1350. Distribution according to Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae IIa-IIae*, adapted from Casagrande and Vecchio, *I peccati della lingua* (Rome, 1987), 209.

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Fig. 2. The "system" of the sins of the tongue, ca. 1100–1350. Distribution according to Ps-Grosseteste's *De lingua*, adapted from Casagrande and Vecchio, *I peccati della lingua* (Rome, 1987), 159.

it is clear that early humanists were aware of the existence of these catalogues. See, for instance, Salutati's list in *De seculo et religione* 1.5. 8–9 (ITRL 62: 30–33): "And to put it in a nutshell: here are the heresies, infidelity, apostasy, blasphemy, dullness of sense, and blindness of intellect; here that depression that weighs on human minds so that they do not want to do anything good; here malice, rancor, small-mindedness, lethargy, a straying mind, despair, envy, hatred, whispering, carping criticism, exultation in the misfortunes of a neighbor and affliction in his prosperity; here is the contentiousness [*contentio*], the enemy of the peace that all things long for, discords [*discordie*], schisms [*scismata*], wars, quarrels [*rixe*], seditions [*seditiones*], scandals [*scandala*], imprudence [*imprudentia*], haste [*precipitatio*], rashness, thoughtlessness [*inconsideratio*], inconstancy [*inconstantia*], guile [*dolus*], carnal wisdom, trickery [*astutia*], fraud [*fraus*], concern for temporal and future affairs; here injustice, regarding of persons, homicides, slaughter, injuries [*iniurie*], acts of sacrilege [*sacrilegia*], thefts, acts of pillaging, unfair judgments [*iniqua iudicia*], calumnies [*calumnie*], betrayals [*tergiversationes*], false testimonies [*falsa testimonia*], slanders [*maledicta*], derision [*derisiones*], deceptions [*deceptiones*], illicit gains, usury, simony, curses [*execrationes*], misdeeds, spells [*fascinationes*], casting of lots [*sortilegia*], divination [*divinationes*], superstition [*superstitiones*], idolatry [*ydolatria*], augury [*auguria*], avarice [*avaricia*], betrayal [*proditio*], falsehoods [*falsitates*], lies [*mendacia*], perjury [*perjuria*], acts of violence, deceit [*fallacie*], cheating [*fraudes*], pretense [*simulatio*], hypocrisy [*ypocrisis*], boastfulness [*iactantia*], irony [*ironia*], adulation [*adulatio*], and lawsuits [*litigia*]." I provide Salutati's original in Latin only for the terms recognizable as sins of the tongue in medieval catalogues.

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the problem.[16] In the fourth book of the *Speculum doctrinale*, ten sins of the tongue were extensively discussed, adorned, and, at times, illuminated with a good number of proverbs taken from both classical and Christian traditions.[17] Besides this thorough and influential treatment, the following passage, hidden in the first pages of the *Speculum historiale*, might be Beauvais's most succinct approach to the sins of the tongue. It reads as follows:

> As truth, goodness, and justice or righteousness are the three virtues required in speech, the sin that comes from the mouth is multiple. Sin is committed against truth in three different ways: either if truth is violated, which would be lying; or if it is disregarded, which would be perjury; or if truth is distorted, which would be *contentio*. Against goodness sin is committed in two ways: against honesty with buffoonery and against utility through empty words and talkativeness or wordiness. Against righteousness sin is committed in two ways, namely, by praise and blame. In praise when something unworthy is praised as if it would be the opposite, which can be done in two ways: either praising others, where the sin would be flattery, or praising oneself, which would be boasting. In vituperation similarly, when God is reviled, which would be by blasphemy, and when one's neighbor is slandered, and this in two ways: either by requesting punishment, which would be cursing or blaming, and this in two ways: either openly, where the sin is contumely, or covertly, where the sin is detraction. Lying is threefold, namely, pernicious, forced, or jocular.[18]

[16] I am not counting Ps-Beauvais's tentative list of the sins of the tongue in the *Speculum morale* 3.1, dist. 1 (VBSQ 3, col. 871), adduced by Casagrande and Vecchio, *I peccati della lingua*, 131 and 139 n. 44. However, they overlook that the list offered at the beginning greatly differs when, thereafter (VBSQ 3, col. 1003–1283), Ps-Beauvais studies one by one the items as related to the deadly sins. Thus, when he deals with *superbia*, he studies the following sins of the tongue: *curiositas*, which works as one of the thresholds for the sins of the tongue, *levitas* and *superbia verborum*, *inepta laetitia*, *iactantia*, *singularitas* (which includes *sanctior apparere*, mainly limited to monastic life; *arrogantia*; *praesumptio*; *defensio peccatorum*; *simulata*, *fallax*, or *superba confessio*; *rebellio*), *hypocrisis*, *ironia* (which includes *adulatio*), *discordia* or *seminatio discordiarum* (which includes *pravus consilius*, *revelatio secreti*, *multiloquium*, *turpiloquium*, *scurrilitas*, *vaniloquium*, *promissio indiscreta*, *comminatio indiscreta*, *taciturnitas indiscreta* or *vitiosa*), *contentio* (which also includes *pertinacia*), *scandalus*, etc. When he deals with *invidia*, he appraises *detractio* and *susurratio* (which includes *derisio*); in *ira*, he includes *contumelia*, *maledictio*, *blasphemia*, *blasphemia illorum qui passim Deum negant*, *blasphemia eorum qui se diabolo reddunt*, *blasphemia proprie dicta*, *blasphemia annexis criminibus et poenis*, *blasphemia in Spiritum Sanctum*; *rixa* is considered here only as a physical confrontation. *Acedia* includes, again, *multiloquium*, *vaniloquium*, *murmur*, *mala taciturnitas*, and *indiscretio*; *mendacium* and *periurium* can stem from *avaritia*.

[17] Beauvais, *Speculum doctrinale* 4.165–75 (VBSQ 2, col. 395–401).

[18] Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* 1.44 (VBSQ 4, col. 17b): "Peccatum oris multiplex est, in sermone enim requiruntur tria, scilicet veritas, bonitas, æquitas siue rectitudo. [1.] Contra veritatem peccatur in uerbo tripliciter: aut quia veritas violatur, quod sit per mendacium; aut quia contemnitur, quod sit periurium; aut impugnatur, quod sit contentionem. [2.] Contra bonitatem vero dupliciter scilicet contra honestatem per scurrilitatem: contra utilitatem per vaniloquium, et multiloquium sive garrulitatem. [3.] Contra rectitudinem dupliciter scilicet in laude, et vituperatione. [3.1] In laude quando laudatur non laudandum, quod sit

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This second take on the problem was hardly original, insofar as Beauvais brought into play the three commonly accepted virtues of expression — truth, goodness, and righteousness — in addition to the eleven sins of the tongue [fig. 3].[19] But, for my purposes, Beauvais's list will be drastically reduced to highlight just one of the oldest and more frequently cited sins of the tongue: *contentio*.[20]

## Transforming the Middle Ages in a Culture of *Contentio*

In what follows, I will highlight the notion signified by *contentio* in the writings of leading figures in late medieval culture and in the humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. From classical antiquity to the end of the fifteenth century, *contentio* was employed in a number of technical and non-technical uses. Among these uses, as a form that is cognate with *contendere*, *contentio* generally meant a confrontation, either verbal, physical, or political,[21] or an effort — extended in time or not — made to achieve a goal.[22] With regard to the former, *contentio*

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dupliciter: vel in laude aliena, quod sit per adulationem, vel in propria per iactantiam. [3.2] In vituperatio similiter quando vituperatur Deus, quod sit per blasphemiam, aut proximus, et hoc dupliciter: aut imprecando poenam, quod sit per maledictionem, aut improperando culpam, & hoc dupliciter: aut aperte, quod sit per contumeliam; aut occulte, quod sit per detractionem. mendacium triplex est scilicet pernitiosum, officiosum, iocusum." My translation.

[19] The parallel of this passage with Giovanni della Rochelle's *Summa de vitiis*, fol. 105v[a], is evident. See the quotation of the latter in Casagrande and Vecchio, *I peccati della lingua*, 205 n. 19.

[20] *Contentio* already appears as a sin of the tongue in St. Paul (*Rom.* 1:29–30); see M. J. Lagrange, "Le catalogue des vices dans *l'Épître aux Romains* I. 28–31," *Revue biblique* 20 (1911): 534–49. The criticisms of verbal confrontations during the High Middle Ages have been studied by Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (London, 1995), 130–33, 140–44, 171–75, and 199–213 and Stéphane Gioanni, "Les joutes oratoires dans les textes latins (V[e]–XI[e] siècle): Du 'bon usage' d'une technique antique dans les sociétés chrétiennes du haut Moyen Âge," in *Agón: La compétition, V[e]–XII[e] siècle*, ed. Bougard et al. (Turnhout, 2012), 199–220.

[21] Quint., *Inst.* 7.6.9; Serv., on *Verg. Ecl.* 7.16; Leonardo Bruni, *Historiarum Florentini populi libri XII* Proem. 1; 2.28, 2.73, 2.115; 3.69; 4.17, 4.50–51, 4.77, 4.87, 4.100, 4.109, 4.113; 5.4, 5.6, 5.41, 5.51, 5.67, 5.69, 5.70, 5.80, 5.126, 5.129, 5.131, 5.147–48; 6.55; 7.2, 7.12; 8.8, 8.23, 8.125; 9.25; 9.21, 9.56; 11.8, 11.18, and 11.21 (ITRL 3: 1–2, 136–37, 182–83, 226–27, 306–7, 318–19, 392–93, 416–17, 426–29, 444–45, 454–55, 458–59; ITRL 16: 4–5, 6–7, 34–35, 42–43, 58–59, 60–61, 72–73, 116–17, 120–21, 122–23, 136–37, 206–9, 284–85, 292–95, 400–401, 414–15, 522–23; ITRL 27: 29–30, 126–27, 160–61, 174–75, 184–85, 186–87); Pietro Bembo, *Carminum libellus*, Appendix A 8. Sarca 160: "On my part there will be no opposition to your words" (Nulla tuis per me fuerit contentio dictis), ITRL 18: 138–39.

[22] Cic., *Tusc.* 2.22.51 and 55; Leonardo Bruni, *Historiarum Florentini populi libri XII* 7.13; 10.1; 11.35 (ITRL 16: 294–95; ITRL 27: 106–7 and 200–201); Pier Paolo Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adulescentiae studiis liber* 6 (ITRL 5: 8–9), see also his *Letters* 38 and 115 (*Epistolario*, ed. Leonardo Smith [Rome, 1934], 85 and 304–5); Lorenzo Valla's

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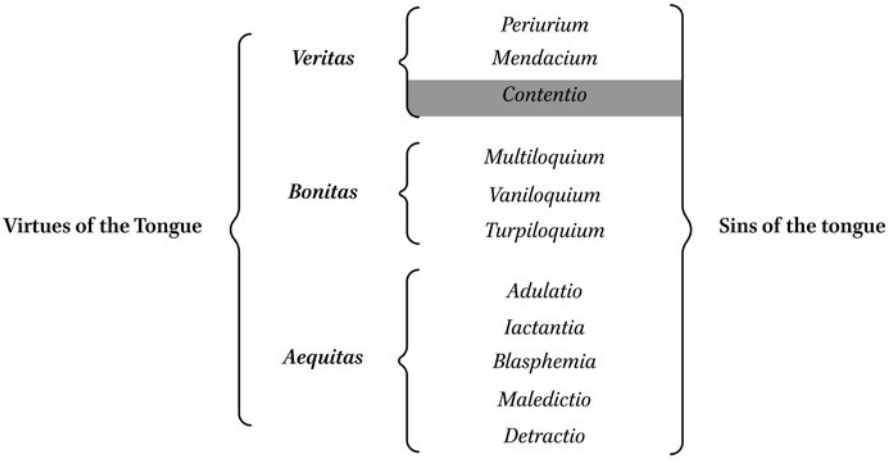


Fig. 3. The "system" of the sins of the tongue, ca. 1100–1350. Distribution according to Vincent de Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*.

had at least four different uses in classical and medieval rhetoric: as an equivalent to Greek *antithesis* or *antitethon*, that is, the comparison of two things or ideas opposed or contradictory,[23] as the juxtaposition of dialogue (*contentio*) and continuous discourse (*sermo*),[24] as a juridical and political disputation (*contentio*) opposed to familiar and philosophical conversations (*sermo*),[25] and as the set of

*De voluptate* 1.43.2, ed. and trans. Peter Michael Schenkel (Munich, 2004), 102, and *Elegantiae* 6.4. *In eundem De contendere*, in *Opera* (Basel, 1540), 200–201; A. Rinuccini, *Oratio exercitationis gratia edita ab Almanno Rinuccino in creatione Calisti pontificis maximi de anno MCCCCLV* (NCTUIR 9: 8, 9, and 16); G. Budé, *De philologia*, ed. and trans. M. M. de la Garanderie (Paris, 2001), 5.

[23] Cic. *Off.* 1.43.152, 2.2.8; *Rhet. Her.* 4.15.21, 4.54.58; Quint., *Inst.* 9.3.81–86; Marbod of Rennes, *De ornamentis verborum* (PL 171, 1688b–1689a); Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars versificatoria* (Copeland: 569); Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Summa de coloribus rhetoricis* (Faral: 322); Everhard the German, *Laborintus* 449–50 (Faral: 351); Nicolaus Dybinus, *Declaracio oracionis de beata Dorothea* (Copeland: 833); R. Agricola, *Letters*, ed. and trans. Adrie van der Laan and Fokke Akkerman (Assen, 2002), 104–5; Manetti, *Apologeticus* 5.68–69 (ITRL 71: 258), employed here to refer to contradictory testimonies of the Old Testament; Melanchthon, *Elementa rhetorices*, ed. and trans. Volkhard Wels (Potsdam, 2011), 264–67. On its use as a technique or method to expand examples, see Cic., *Inv. rhet.* 1.30.49 and, especially, Erasmus, *De copia* (ASD 1.6: 240–41; CWE 24: 616–18). This seems to have been the origin of the medieval term *collatio*, not related to the famous definition of dialogue found in Isidore, *Etym.* 6.8.2.

[24] Cic., *De or.* 3.53.203, *Orat.* 37, 45–47, *Div. Caec.* 10, 37, etc.; Quint., *Inst.* 3.6.44 and 9.1.29.

[25] Cic., *Off.* 1.36.132 and 2.14.48–49, *Fin.* 1.8.27–28 and 3.1.2, and *Fam.* 1.1.2; and even Isidore, *Etym.* 18.15.4. For the manifestation of this distinction in Plato's *Soph.* 222c–d and *Phdr.* 261a, and for Quintilian's objections, see Gary Remer, *Humanism and the Rhetoric of Toleration* (University Park, PA, 1996), 26–27, 27 n. 91, and 30–31 on the corresponding

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voice inflections and gestures employed in the discussion itself.[26] During the Middle Ages, *contentio* acquired new technical uses. In the realm of poetics, it was used to refer to a poetical debate or confrontation in the culture of the troubadours, although it belies the influence of a much more ancient genre.[27] It was also in the Middle Ages that canon law fixed *contentio* as a transgression against the authority of the Church and Christian dogma, as we see in the *Decretum*[28] and the *Epistles* of Ivo of Chartres,[29] or in the *Decretum Gratiani*,[30] to give some widely read and highly influential examples.

In the restricted realm of the sins of the tongue, we can use the following definition, provided by Radulfus Ardens in his *Speculum universale* (ca. 1190):

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differences with regard to decorum. With respect to this distinction, Arist. *Top.* Θ 161a16–161b5 and its differentiation between contentious and dialectical disputation (δυσκολαινόντες οὖν ἀγωνιστικὰς και οὐ διαλεκτικὰς ποιοῦνται τὰς διατριβάς) should also be taken into account; see Sara Rubinelli, *Ars Topica* (New York, 2009), 6–7. Some influential Renaissance treatises on rhetoric and dialectic considered *contentio* as the part of the *oratio* that contained the arguments: Trapezuntius, *Rhetoricorum libri quinque*, ed. Luc Deitz (Hildesheim, 2006), 53–59; Agricola, *De inventione dialectica libri tres*, ed. and trans. Lothar Mundt (Tübingen, 1992), 2.7 and 2.12, 240 and 274–77; and Melanchthon, *Elementa rhetorices*, 264–67. This is the basis for the division made by Sigonio in 1562 of dialogue in *praeparatio* (κατασκολή) and *contentio* (ἀγών) in *De dialogo liber*, ed. and trans. Franco Pignatti (Rome, 1993), 164.

[26] Arist., *Rh.* 1413b2–22; Cic., *Orat.* 85, *Off.* 1.37–3, 133–7; and *Rhet. Her.* 3.13.23–15.27.

[27] Elizabeth Merrill, *The Dialogue in English Literature* (Hamden, CT, 1969), 25–32; Martín de Riquer, *Los trovadores*, 4th ed. (Barcelona, 2001), 65–70; and Pierre-Yves Badel, "Le débat," in *Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters* 8.1 (Heidelberg, 1988), 95–110. For Latin debate poems and a good number of edited texts, Hans Walther's *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1920) still offers a firm point of departure. The term was still used with this connotation during the fifteenth century; see Kristeller, *Iter Italicum* 2: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Fondo Rossiano 999 (XI 149).

[28] Proem. PL 161, col. 58–59; Pars 3. De Ecclesia, chap. 46, col. 207–8; chap. 75, col. 214; chap. 201, col. 246; chap. 205, col. 247; chap. 283, col. 263–64; Pars 4. De observandis festivitatibus, chap. 46, col. 274; chap. 215–16, col. 311–12; chap. 229, col. 314, also collected in DG Pars 1, dist. 37, I pars, chap. 6, quoted in note below; chap. 245, also collected in DG Pars 2, causa 5, quaest. 4, chap. 3; Part 5, chap. 106, col. 360; Pars 6, chap. 2, col. 440a–b, chap. 161, col. 483; Pars 7, chap. 107–8, col. 568–69; Pars 13, chap. 52–63, col. 814–15.

[29] PL 162, Ep. 32, col. 44–45; Ep. 85, col. 106–7; and Ep. 138, col. 146–47.

[30] DG Pars 1, dist. 37, I pars, chap. 6. Item ex responsione Adriani Papae ad Carolum, chap. 49 (DG: col. 136–37); Pars 1, dist. 90, I pars [Litigiosus quoque prohibetur ordinari, quia qui sua potestate discordantes ad concordiam debet attrahere, qui oblationes dissidentium prohibetur recipere, nequaquam litigandi facilitate alios ad discidium debet provocare], chap. 5. Corripiantur, qui rixas et contenciones amant [In Cartaginensi Concilio IV, chap. 93–94] (DG: col. 313–14), this *distinctio* collects a number of items that will frequently appear in the systems of the sins of the tongue; ibid., chap. 12 (DG: col. 315); Pars 2, causa 3, quaest. 6, chap. 10 (1959: col. 522); Pars 2, causa 5, quaest. 4, chap. 3. In cognitione causarum contentiosi locum non habeant [In Tolletano Concilio XI, chap. 1] (DG: col. 548–49); Pars 2, causa 16, quaest. 1, chap. 39 (DG: col. 771–72); ibid., De penitentia, disct. 2, I pars, chap. 1 (DG: col. 1190–91); etc.

> *Contentio is an attack on the truth through the boldness of shouting.* Generally speaking, we also call *contentio* any dispute that exceeds its limits. This happens when an interlocutor seems to be defending the truth and refuting falsehood yet, in reality, he is doing just the opposite. This is typical among heretics and those who foster the division of the Church, and sophists in dialectics, and slanderers at the court of law.[31]

However, this apparently crystal clear division among the different uses of the term and its identification as a sin in a watertight corpus of treatises devoted to the technicalities of Christian morals of language is nothing but a mirage. As a matter of fact, the widely accepted contraposition contained in the *Elementarium logicae*, attributed to William of Ockham, between *contentio* and *scientia*,[32] or the estimation of *contentio* as the worst thinkable vice in the art of dispute[33] pale when we pay attention to the permeability of *contentio* as a sin of the tongue in works on education, on history, on political thought and legal theory, commentaries on literary works and literary polemics, letters, journals, and, for what interests us more here, in writings on theology[34] and ecclesiology.[35] Consequently, two

[31] Radulphus Ardens, *Speculum universale* 13, quoted in Casagrande and Vecchio, *I Peccati della lingua* (n. 8 above), 303 n. 24, my translation. The definition in the first sentence — *est contentio impugnatio veritatis per confidenciam clamoris* — stems from Ambrose's *Glossa super Epistola ad Rom.* 1:28 and was very popular during the Middle Ages thanks mainly to its presence in the *Glossa ordinaria*.

[32] "Socrates disputes scientifically, and he does not dispute contentiously; therefore, he disputes and he does not dispute" (Sortes [*sic*] disputat scientifice, et non disputat contentiose; ergo disputat et non disputat), Ps-William of Ockham, "Elementarium logicae venerabili inceptori Guillelmo de Ockham adscriptus," in *Opera Philosophica* VII*: Opera dubia et spuria venerabili inceptori Guillelmo de Ockham adscripta*, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert et al. (St. Bonaventure, NY, 1988), 294.

[33] St. Jerome, *Tractatus in librum Psalmorum. Series altera* 91.74, in *Obras completas*. I. *Obras homiléticas*, trans. M. Marcos Celestino (Madrid, 2012), 777; *Letters* 46.10, in *Obras completas*. Xa. *Epistolario I (cartas 1–85**)*, trans. Juan Bautista Valero (Madrid, 2013), 380; *Commentariorum in Epistulam ad Titum* 3:9, in *Obras completas. IX. Comentarios paulinos*, trans. Manuel Antonio Marcos Casquero and Mónica Marcos Celestino (Madrid, 2010), 696.

[34] JGOC 9: 191; 2: 35, 36–37, and 41. In *De quatuor virtutibus cardinalibus* (JGOC 9: 149), Gerson opposes *contentio* to *tranquillitas*, but in other instances relates it to envy (JGOC 3: 320), to *curiositas* (JGOC 5: 54) and to arrogance (JGOC 5: 337); cf. Leon Battista Alberti's *Pictura*, in *Intercenales*, ed. Franco Bacchelli and Luca D'Ascia (Bologna, 2003), 172–74. See also, JGOC 3: 38–39 and DCOO 12: 91n–92b (*Enarratio in cap. 14 Lucae*, art. 37).

[35] On the risks of *contentio* for the schism of the Church, clearly influenced also by canon law, see William of Ockham, *De Papa haeretico* 4.28 (quoting Romans 2:8–9); 5.15 (quoting Luke 22:25–26); 6.3; 6.79, which contains Ockham's own list of the sins of the tongue; 7.11; and 7.25 (ed. John Kilcullen et al., trans. Allesandro Salerno [Milan, 2015], 364, 488–89, 634, 1100, 1408, and 1522); Petrarch, *Liber sine nomine* 13.1 (ed. Paul Piur and Laura Casarsa, trans, Casarsa [Turin, 2010], 116); Leonardo Bruni, *Letters: Gregory XII to Peter de Luna, Called by Some, in This Pernicious Schism, Benedict XIII, in Hope of Peace and Union*, 11 December 1406 (*The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, trans. Gordon Griffiths, James Hankins, and David Thompson [Binghamton, NY, 1987], 324); Jean Gerson, *Letters*

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facts need to be stated once and for all. First, that the knowledge and implications of the systems of the sins of the tongue went well beyond twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholasticism and, second, that to correctly value and understand the evolution of the term *contentio* a more accurate approach than the one provided by its development in this context is needed. To do so, and despite the complexity and contradictions of the systems themselves, we can remain within the bounds of the texts already mentioned and use them as a guide to understanding how fourteenth- and fifteenth-century humanists operated one of the most decisive inversions for the history of free-thinking in early modern Europe.

In short, Aquinas and Ps-Grosseteste considered *contentio* a sin opposed to *caritas*,[36] while Beauvais and Ps-Ockham assessed it as a perversion of truth. Humanists, for their part, outlined a positive approach to linguistic interaction that considered its performative, rational, and pragmatic strands;[37] these aspects could be readily compared with the aims and methods of the systematic presentation of the sins of the tongue. I will coin here the term *sermo* for the ethical and oratorical model that they forged, following a distinction found in

49 (JGOC 2: 233), *In Marc.* 1:7 (JGOC 3: 105), *Contra curiositatem studentium* (JGOC 3: 239), *De theologia mystica* (JGOC 3: 277–278); *Trilogus in materia schismatis* (JGOC 6: 75, 79, 95); *Propositio facta coram Anglicis* (JGOC 6: 135), *Sermo habitus Tarascone coram Benedicto XIII* (JGOC 5: 83–84), *Contra errores Johannis Parvi* (JGOC 5: 192), etc.; Denis the Carthusian, *Dominica V post Trinitatem*, *Ad religiosos*, Sermo 4, *De unanimitate, pace et fraterna bono concordia* (*Opera omnia. Sermones de Tempore (Pars secunda)*, ed. Monachi Sacri Ordinis Cartusiensis [Monstrolius, 1905], 241); Leonardo Bruni, *Historiarum Florentini populi libri* 12.3.20 (ITRL 3: 254–57); Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's *Commentaries* 1.16.4, 1.15.2, 1.33.1, etc. (ITRL 12: 72–73, 122–25, 162–63, etc.); Marsilio Ficino, *Commentarium in Epistolas D. Pauli*, quoting Deut. 31:27 (ed. Daniele Conti [Turin, 2018], 84–85); Erasmus, *Annotationes in Lucam* 3:27 (ASD 6.5: 506): "Et Paulus non vno in loco monet piis hominibus huiusmodi genealogias et nunquam finiendas quaestiones esse vitandas, quod non solum nihil conducant ad pietatem, verumetiam pariant lites et contentiones, pestem christianae concordiae"; and Cornelius Agrippa, *Apologia adversus calumnias*, §§ 2, 5, and 35 (Cologne, 1533), sigs. c7r, d1r, and h7r.

[36] On Aquinas's position, see also his remarks in *Summa Theologiae* I-II q. 28 a. 4 arg. 1: "'Sed contentio repugnat amori;' *Super Rom.* II, lect. 2: 'Et quantum ad culpam tanguntur tria, quorum primum est contentionis pertinacia. Quae quidem, primo, potest intelligi hominis ad Deum, beneficiis ad se vocantem, contra quem homo contendere videtur divinis beneficiis resistendo.' Deut. XXXI, 27: 'Adhuc vivente me et ingrediente vobiscum, semper contentiose egistis contra dominum.' Secundo potest intelligi de contentione hominis contra fidem. II Tim. II, 14: 'noli verbis contendere.' Tertio potest intelligi de contentione hominum ad invicem, quae contrariatur charitati, quae est mater virtutum. Iac. III, 16: 'Ubi zelus et contentio, ibi inconstantia et omne opus pravum.' Secundo ponitur duritia eorum, scilicet, qui non acquiescunt veritati. Quod potest, uno modo, intelligi de veritate fidei. Io. VIII, 45: 'si veritatem dico, quare non creditis mihi?'" *Liber contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*, part 4, chap. 3, ad. 1; and *Super II Cor.*, chap. 12, l. 6.

[37] Neal W. Gilbert, "The Early Italian Humanists and *Disputatio*," in *Renaissance: Studies in Honor of Hans Baron*, ed. Anthony Molho and John A. Tedeschi (Dekalb, IL, 1971), 203–26.

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the works of Cicero and Quintilian.[38] In this context, *sermo* transcends general and technical uses of the term in classical and medieval Latin, involving, among other things, an explicit opposition to the sin of *contentio*. Reconsidered and modified in the course of at least two centuries of scholasticism, the conceptual model of *contentio* would be employed by humanists, paradoxically, to attack the practices of intellectual exchange among their more systematic critics, the British and French scholastic thinkers.[39] Therefore, it is far from accidental that the core concerns of humanism with regard to *sermo* can easily be identified with the social and intellectual values of *caritas/amicitia* and the quest for *sapientia/prudentia* through *honestas* [see fig. 4].[40]

[38] For the appearances of the opposition in classical literature, see Laurent Gavoille, "*Contentio* et les noms latins de la polémique dans l'épistolaire," in *Conflits et polémiques dans l'épistolaire*, ed. Élisabeth Gavoille and François Guillaumont (Tours, 2015), 33–49. It was introduced in Christian morals in early times thanks to Ambrose's *De officiis* 1.22.99–100. Remer, *Humanism and the Rhetoric of Toleration* (n. 25 above), 26–41, pointed out the role played by this coupling in the foundation of the idea of tolerance during the Renaissance that could serve as a complementary approach to mine. It should be stressed, nonetheless, that I am not interested in the impact of classical rhetoric on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literature or philosophy in these pages.

[39] Petrarch, *Invective contra medicum* 2.86–87 (ITRL 11: 68–71); *Familiarium rerum libri* 1.7, in *Familiarium rerum libri [I–V]. Le familiari [libri I–V]*, ed. Vittorio Rossi and Ugo Dotti, trans. Dotti and Felicita Audisio (Turin, 2004), 100–109; *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* 93–94, 106 (ITRL 11: 302–5, 314–15); *Contra eum qui maledixit Italie* 70–71 and 94 (ITRL 11: 426–29 and 450–51); *Res seniles* 10.2.122, in *Res seniles, Libri IX–XII*, ed. and trans. Silvia Rizzo and Monica Berté (Florence, 2014), 176–77; etc. This comparison was not limited to Italian humanists in the fifteenth century, as can be attested, for instance, in Jean Gerson's *Contra curiositatem studentium* (JGOC 3: 242–43). In the late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century, the identification of *contentio* with (scholastic) dialectic was still a commonplace; see for instance Antonio Urceo Codro, *Sermones (I–IV)*, ed. and trans. Loredana Chines and Andrea Severi (Rome, 2013), 60 and 96; Richard Pace, *De fructu qui ex doctrina percipitur*, ed. and trans. Frank Manley and Richard S. Sylvester (New York, 1967), 82–85, and Cornelius Agrippa's *De vanitate scientiarum*. VII. *De dialectica* (Cologne, 1531), sig. d1v.

[40] Petrarch, *Secretum* (ITRL 72: 22–23, 30–31, 112–13, and 144–45), *Familiarium rerum libri [I–V]*, 262–63, *Invective contra medicum* (ITRL 11: 60–61, 170–71, and 174–77), etc.; Pier Paolo Vergerio, *Epistolario* (n. 23 above), 174–75 and 401; Coluccio Salutati's *Letter to Pietro Turchi* 3 (ITRL 64: 170–71) and *De laboribus Herculis*, ed. B. L. Ullman (Turici, 1951), 191–205, with a long allegorical exposition of the fight between the philosopher and the Hydra, i.e., the sophist — on the fortune of the commonplace in Renaissance letters, see Jorge Ledo, "From Wit to Shit: Notes for an 'Emotional' Lexicon of Sophistry during the Renaissance," *Philosophical Readings* 11 (2019): 104–6 and 114–15; Leonardo Bruni, *Isagoge*, in *Opere letterarie e politiche*, ed. Paolo Viti (Turin, 1996), 228; Maffeo Vegio, *De educatione liberorum et eorum claris moribus libri sex: A Critical Text of Books I–III*, ed. Maria Walburg Fanning (Washington, DC, 1933), 43; Francesco Filelfo, *Commentationum Florentinarum de exilio* and *De paupertate* (ITRL 55: 122–23, 332–33, and 344–48); Girolamo Aliotti, *De optimo genere degende vite*, ed. and trans. Elisa Tinelli (Naples, 2016), 404–5; Georgius Trapezuntius, *Collectanea Trapezuntiana*, ed. John Monfasani (Binghamton, NY, 1984), 379 and

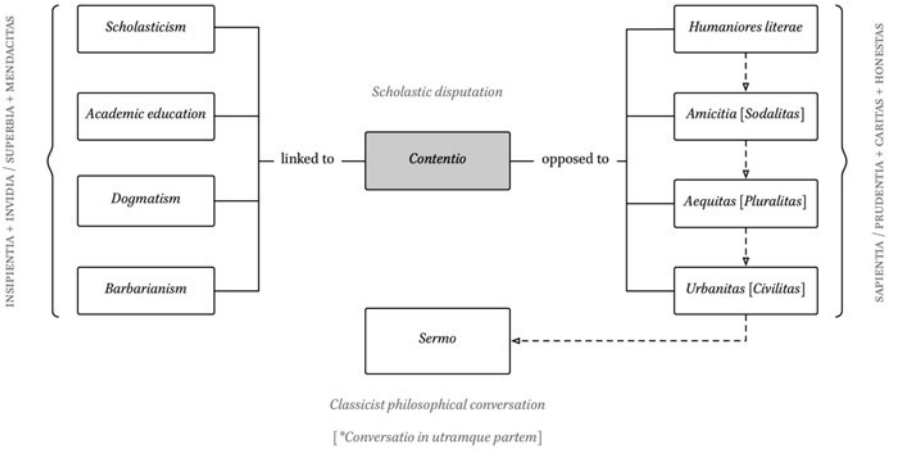


Fig. 4. The "humanistic turn," ca. 1350–1450.

The constitution of these principles during the fifteenth century was manifested in the development of a commonly accepted intellectual position regarding literary dialogue, letter writing, and conversation that has been usually identified with the recovery and implementation of Cicero's *disputatio in utramque partem*.[41]

586; Pontano, *De sermone*, ed. Sergio Lupi and Antonio Risicato, trans. Alessandra Mantovani (Rome, 2002), 122; etc. For the later fortune of the opposition between *contentio* and *sermo* based on these parameters, see Achille Bocchi, *Les questions symboliques*, ed. and trans. Anne Rolet (Tours, 2015), 1, 353 and 2, 279.

[41] David Marsh, *The Quattrocento Dialogue* (Cambridge, MA, 1980), 2–7, 9–23, 39–41, 49–50, 67, and 84–85; Victoria Ann Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY, 1985), 65–80; David Quint, "Humanism and Modernity: A Reconsideration of Bruni's *Dialogues*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985): 423–28; Annick Paternoster, *Aptum: Retorica ed ermeneutica nel dialogo rinascimentale del primo Cinquecento* (Rome, 1998), 74–81; Michael J. B. Allen, *Synoptic Art: Masilio Ficino on the History of Platonic Interpretation* (Florence, 1998), 56–62; and Stefano Prandi, *Scritture al crocevia* (Vercelli, 1999), 107–11, 168, 178–83, 203–4, and 233–37. It is important to note, nonetheless, that in the medieval and Renaissance university tradition, the dispute *in utramque partem* was commonly identified with an argument *pro et contra*, and as such was attacked by Vives in book III of his *De causis corruptarum artium*; see Annette H. Tomarken, *The Smile of Truth* (Princeton, 1990), 120–21. For the survival and transformation of the dispute *in utramque partem* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see, among others, Charles B. Schmitt, *Cicero scepticus* (The Hague, 1972), 58–66, 83–91, and 161; Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind* (Berkeley, 1978), 13–63; Zachary S. Schiffman, "Montaigne and the Rise of Skepticism in Early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45 (1984): 499–516; R. R. McCutcheon, "Heresy and Dialogue: The Humanist Approaches of Erasmus and More," *Viator* 24 (1993): 374–75; Donald Gilman, "Theories of Dialogue," in *The Dialogue in Early Modern France, 1547–1630: Art and Argument*, ed. Colette H. Winn (Washington, DC, 1993), 50–52; Gilman, "From Dialectics to Poetics: Johann Sturm's Definition of Dialogue," in *Acta Conventus*

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This new paradigm for dialogue coexisted, nonetheless, with a number of traditional forms of academic and literary disputation, including the erotapocritical tradition,[42] the wide range of private and public disputations held in the universities,[43] the vast tradition of the *quaestiones*,[44] the new genre of school *colloquia*,[45] and a fresh philosophical and literary humorist stream that owed much to the recovery and imitation of Lucian of Samosata.[46] In summary, the disputation

*Neo-Latini Hafniensis. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Copenhagen 12 August to 17 August 1991*, ed. Philip Dust, et al. (Tempe, AZ, 1997), 419–27; Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge, 1996), 97–99, 103, 116–17, 172–73, 299–300, 302, 306, and 374; Paternoster, *Aptum*, 99–101, 127–28, and 144; Luca D'Ascia, *Frontiere: Erasmo da Rotterdam, Celio Secondo Curione, Giordano Bruno* (Bologna, 2003), 151–53; Eva Kushner, "The Renewed Meaning of the Renaissance Dialogue," in *Le dialogue à la Renaissance: Histoire et poétique* (Geneva, 2004), 280–84; Périgot, *Dialectique et littérature* (n. 1 above), 225, 241, 334–41, 346, 456, 474–75, 489–90, 664–65, and 677; Eric MacPhail, *The Sophistic Renaissance* (Geneva, 2011), 53, 69, 80, 83, 90, 96–97, 102–3, and 134; and José R. Maia Neto, *Academic Skepticism in Seventeenth-Century French Philosophy* (Dordrecht, 2014), 39–40, 47–48, and 52–53.

[42] Maierù, *University Training in Medieval Europe* (n. 5 above), 48–49, 57, 74, 84–85, 101–2, and 136–37; Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 2001), 134–35, 165, and 371; and Ann Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn* (Oxford, 2003), 96.

[43] Besides the references collected above (n. 42), see Jacqueline Hamesse, "Approche terminologique de certaines méthodes d'enseignement et de recherche à la fin du Moyen Âge: *Declarare. Recitare. Conclusio*," in *Vocabulary of Teaching and Research between Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Olga Weijers (Turnhout, 1995), 15–28; Weijers, "De la joute dialectique à la dispute scolastique," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 143 (1999): 509–18; Weijers, "The Medieval *Disputatio*," in *Traditions of Controversy*, ed. Marcelo Dascal and Han-liang Chang (Amsterdam, 2007), 141–49; and Paul F. Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore, 2002), 152–57.

[44] Palémon Glorieux, *La littérature quodlibétique de 1260 à 1320* (Paris, 1935); Bernardo C. Bazan, "La quaestio disputata," in *Les genres littéraires dans les sources théologiques et philosophiques médiévales: Définition, critique et exploitation* (Louvain, 1982), 31–50; Lawn, *The Rise and Decline of the Scholastic "Quaestio disputata"* (n. 5 above), 85–100 and 107–26.

[45] See now Tom Deneire, "School Colloquia," in *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World: Micropaedia*, ed. Philip Ford et al. (Leiden, 2014), 1174–75. However, it should be considered that the teaching of Greek during the *Quattrocento* was partly based on questions or *erotemata*, as Chrysoloras entitled his grammar — abridged by Guarino of Verona and still known in the sixteenth century first thanks to the Aldine press, which took as a reference Ludovico Pontico Virunio's edition, then by Giunta in Florence, Gilles de Gourmont in Paris, and Arnald Guillén de Brocar in Alcalá — and also by the exercises of translation of Lucian.

[46] See Christopher Robinson, *Lucian and His Influence in Europe* (London, 1979), 15–16: in this classic study on the fortune of Lucian in European letters, Robinson argued that some of his production can be seen as a counterpart of the dialogue *in utramque partem*, either in the Ciceronian or in the Platonic vein. Besides, there is a clear interest in fifteenth-century authors and translators in calling their readers to the fact that these texts were humorous recreations of all that was contemptible in a serious classicist disputation. Hence, the use of the term *contentio* in many titles was not only inherited from medieval poetry and

in both, or more, sides of the question confronted not only the possibility of leaving the topic under scrutiny open, which was especially suitable for all kinds of *materia dubia*; but also, and equally important, it combined a number of fashionable ideas on behavior, representation, and interaction that would prove quite fruitful in their transformation during the Renaissance.[47] However, by the middle of the fifteenth century, as this new groundwork for intellectual exchange reached maturity, some authors started to look critically to the implications of the varied dimensions of *sermo*. Some of these ramifications would be addressed by Lorenzo Valla.[48]

## From "Bona Contentio" to "Libertas Dicendi" to "Libertas Philosophandi"

Finished by mid-1440, although it was first made available in 1448–49 and not printed until 1471, Valla's Latin grammar, the *Elegantiarum libri sex*, was widely read in its time — as the more than sixty-seven extant manuscripts and around one hundred and fifty early printed editions attest — and used by humanists all across Europe. The general preface to the work attracted the attention of Italian and Northern humanists alike: Valla offered an entry to humanism through the foundation of all disciplines, grammar. The work ushered in a new intellectual and cultural sensibility that brought scholars such as Rudolph Agricola to Italy and left an indelible mark on novices such as Erasmus of Rotterdam,

letters — for instance the *fabliaux*, clear in Poggio's *Facezie*, ed. and trans. Marcello Ciccuto (Milan, 1994), 196, 334, and 366 — but also refers to a subversion of commonly accepted values in educated interaction as can be easily seen in the titles of fifteenth-century works; see Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*: 1: Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale, Fondo Principale (II), VC 39 fols. 278–81; 3: Dublin, Trinity College C 2.17 and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles acquisitions latines (I) 596 fols. 16v–55; 5: Basel, Universitätsbibliothek (III), F VI 35, fols. 126–35; Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, MS Codex 829; and Thomas More's Letter to Ruthall (*The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. 3.I. *Translations of Lucian*, ed. Craig R. Thompson [New Haven, 1974], 4), who uses a synonym, *digladiationes*, to refer to Lucian's *Necromancers*. For the different terms employed to refer to verbal confrontations in the Latin of the humanists, see Ledo, "From Wit to Shit," 106–7 and notes.

[47] Cesare Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'umanesimo* (Milan, 1968), 28–32.

[48] My reading of Valla is not intended as a rebuttal of Lisa Jardine, "Lorenzo Valla and the Intellectual Origins of Humanist Dialectic," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 15 (1977): 143–64 and Jardine, "Lorenzo Valla: Academic Skepticism and the New Humanist Dialectic," in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. M. Burnyeat (Berkeley, 1983), 253–86. Jardine offers a take on Valla's place as a founding father of dialectical skepticism during the Renaissance. For convincing criticisms against her thesis, see John Monfasani, "Lorenzo Valla and Rudolf Agricola," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28 (1990): 181–200; Peter Mack, *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Leiden, 1993), 109 n. 35; and Lodi Nauta, *In Defense of Common Sense* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 252–55. My reading is, rather, an approach that takes into account his role in the defense of truth and in the reevaluation of *sermo*.

to mention two well-known examples.[49] Thus, our familiarity with Valla's work has conditioned its interpretation as an emblem of a new understanding of culture and education, of the exultant joy of a philological method that yielded sound fruits,[50] rather than as a critical discussion that delves into central aspects of the communicative principles established for *sermo* by previous generations of humanists.

In this sense, Valla's call to arms can be read as a movement towards freeing classical learning from the perils of a stately and self-indulgent stagnation. By assuming the opposition between *iracundia* (irascibility) and *ira* (anger), widely acknowledged by Italian humanists before him and cohesive with Aquinas's approach to this particular emotion,[51] Valla opens up *sermo* to a violent eruption of truth that grants a value for anger with ramifications in rhetoric, ethics, politics, and even theology. In this way, the culture of *contentio* would be characterized

[49] For the influence of Valla's corpus in Agricola and their vision as complementary authors by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century printers and editors, see Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica*, 64–65, 76–77, 83–84 n. 7, 157, 205, 215–16, 233, 249–50, 261– 62, 283–87, 346–50, 472, and 624–34; Lisa Jardine, "Inventing Rudolph Agricola: Cultural Transmission, Renaissance Dialectic, and the Emerging Humanities," in *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. A. Grafton and A. Blair (Philadelphia, 1990), 56–60; Mack, *Renaissance Argument*; and Lodi Nauta, "From Universals to Topics: The Realism of Rudolph Agricola, with an Edition of his Reply to a Critic," *Vivarium* 50 (2012): 190–224. For the impact of the prefaces to the *Elegantiae* on Erasmus and his early *Epitome* of the work (his very first work), see Eugenio Garin, "Erasmo e l'umanesimo italiano," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 33 (1971): 16–17; James D. Tracy, *Erasmus: The Growth of a Mind* (Geneva, 1972), 24–25, 109, and 152–53; C. L. Heesakkers's and Jan Hendrik Waszink's introduction to Erasmus's *Epitome* (ASD 1.4: 191–205); Jacques Chomarat, *Grammaire et Rhétorique chez Érasme* (Paris, 1981), 1, 225–65; Richard J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe: The Making of a Humanist, 1467–1500* (Edinburgh, 1990), 99–100, 141, 154–59, and 211; Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton, 1993), 65–67, 74, and 78; and Christopher Boyd Brown, "Erasmus against Augustine and Wittenberg: The *Ecclesiastes* and the *De doctrina Christiana*," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 104 (2013): 16–17.

[50] David Marsh, "Grammar, Method, and Polemic in Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantiae*," *Rinascimento* 19 (197`9): 114–16, and Francisco Rico, *El sueño del humanismo* (Barcelona, 2002), 19–23, 35–39, 61–63, and 113–14.

[51] Ps-Hugh of St. Cher, *Expositio super Apocalypsim*,16; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 158 a. 1 ad 2; II-II, q. 158 a. 2 ad 4; and *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* III, dist. 15, q. 2, a. 2, ad ob. 3. For the differences between medieval speculation on good and bad anger and the discussion of the humanists of the *Quattrocento*, rooted in political philosophy, see Hans Baron, "The Florentine Revival of the Philosophy of the Active Political Life," in *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism* (Princeton, 1988), 147–57; and Coluccio Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, 3.8.11, 188. The opposition between *ira* and *iracundia* is reflected in Patrizi, *De regno et regis institutione libri IX* (Paris, 1567), sigs. x5r–y1v. See also St. Augustine, *Enarr. in Psalm.* 87.7; Poliziano, *Una ignota Expositio Suetoni del Poliziano*, ed. Vincenzo Fera (Messina, 1983), 161; Beroaldo, *Commentationes conditae a Philippo Beroaldo in Suetonium Tranquillum* (Venice, 1510), fol. 220v; and Beroaldo, *Commentarii Questionum Tusculanarum* (Venice, 1499), fol. 47v.

by *iracundia*; in other words, in late medieval scholasticism the confrontation of views and intellectual positions serves no purpose except feeding the pride of the contenders and therefore remains motionless with regard to the final goal of language, that is, the advancement of learning. On the other hand, the culture of *sermo*, as established by previous generations of humanists, would foster the restoration of a number of intellectual virtues and cultural institutions endorsed by classical tradition, at the risk of becoming a series of empty conventions that would fail to recover and surpass the cultural grandeur of the ancients. For Valla, *ira* (anger) could serve as a disruptive element that plays a pivotal role in the culture of *sermo*, insofar as its value would be not emotional but intellectual — the indignation of one who sees truth obscured by error, falsehood, or ignorance of classical letters, or obscured in classical letters themselves, and sees outbursts in verbal anger as a manifestation of his nobility of spirit and as an act that leads to the restitution of truth.[52]

From a communicative point of view, Valla was not drawing his ideas out of thin air. Drawing from the Rule of St. Benedict, Aquinas had granted in the *Summa*, and in his *Commentaries on II Timothy*, *on Titus*, and on *Peter Lombard's Sentences*, the existence of a praiseworthy *contentio* (*contentio laudabilis*) when verbal (moderate) rage should be used for the impugnment of falsehood.[53] Not

[52] Persius and, most fundamentally, Juvenal (*Sat.* 1–3.1–9) defended *indignatio*, which stems from anger, as one of the fundamental reasons to write their satires, in contrast to Horace's approach to the genre. As such, the commonplace was repeated by medieval and Renaissance editors of both Roman satirists; see Dorothy Robathan et al., "Persius," CTC 3: 222b, 230a, 238b, 250b, 252a–b, 268b, 274b, 289a, and 303a; E. M. Sanford, "Juvenalis," CTC 1: 182a, 183b, 185b, 187a, 189b, 194a, 196b, 198b, 206a, 208b, 224a, and 229b; and F. Edward Kranz and Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Juvenalis: Addenda et corrigenda," CTC 3: 1976: 434a, 435a–b, 436b, and 444b. However, satirical *indignatio* seeks to write a reprimand (*reprehensio*) of *mores* rather than a restitution (*restitutio*) of justice or truth and "always seems … to be rooted in the highly contingent and personalized historical moment." Ralph M. Rosen, *Making Mockery* (Oxford and New York, 2007), 4. This *indignatio* took deep root in Renaissance letters thanks partly to Petrarch, *Liber sine nomine* (n. 35 above), 6, 20, 26, 30, 38, 46, 66–68, 88, 124–26, and 186, where it is transformed into an intellectual stimulus and a therapy for the soul, to produce a vindication that serves as a private defense for him, his friends, and his patrons against slander and injustice. On the other hand, Valla's approach to *indignatio*, it seems to me, can be seen as an expansion of this idea of anger as an illness of the soul (ITRL 60: 188–89 and 294–95) and writing as a means to alleviate it, on the one hand, but, on the other, always keeping in mind that it is closer to forensic *indignatio*, that is, a rhetorical device that reinforces the virtue of a speaker — that is, what Aristotle calls *pistis dia tou ēthous*, *Rh.* 1387b5–15, 1408a16–25; see also Cic., *De or.* 2.51.205–9; Quint, *Inst.* 6.2. 26–27 — who aims to denounce injustice publicly.

[53] *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 38 a. 1. co: "Si autem contentio dicatur impugnatio falsitatis cum debito modo acrimoniae, sic contentio est laudabilis"; *Super II Tim.*, chap. 2, l. 2; *Super Tit.*, chap. 3, l. 2; and *Super Sent.*, IV, dist. 38, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 3. Cf. Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae* 2, tract. 20, quaest. 127. *De contentione*, mem. 1–3, in *Opera omnia* 33, *Summae Theologiae. Secunda Pars (Quaest. LXVIII–CXLI)*, ed. S. C. A. Borgnet (Paris,

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long before Aquinas, Alexander of Hales considered in the *Summa Halensis* (ca. 1250) the necessity to defend truth, to foster research, and to acquire training, as sufficient reasons for defending the use of *contentio* (*bona contentio*);[54] in subsequent generations, it is easy to find endorsements of good *contentio* in a number of highly influential orthodox Catholic thinkers.[55] However, humanists also played a role in the appreciation of verbal irascibility in some respects, insofar as their culture was certainly not one free of acrimonious invectives, both against scholasticism and among themselves.[56] Besides their attacks on each other, it is

1895), col. 419a–421b. Among the sins of the tongue (*De peccatis quae in verbis consistunt*), Albert considers only lying (*mendacium*), talkativeness (*multiloquium*), *contentio*, and abusive words (*maledictum*).

[54] Casagrande and Vecchio, *I peccati della lingua* (n. 8 above), 298–99.

[55] Casagrande and Vecchio provide the following as examples of the idea of a praiseworthy *contentio*: Umbertus de Romanis's *De eruditione praedicatorum* (ca. 1270–77); Astesano da Asti's *Summa de casibus* (1317); Rainerius de Pisis's *Pantheologia* (*ante* 1351), which has been called "one of the longest books ever written in the Middle Ages" and which saw five printed editions already in the fifteenth century, with its *princeps* in 1473; see Dennis E. Rhodes, "Notes on the Bibliography of Rainerius de Pisis," *British Library Journal* 22 (1996): 238–41; and Antoninus of Florence's *Summula confessionis* (*ante* 1459, *princeps* 1473), which was equally popular both in Latin and in the vernacular. See also Denis the Carthusian, *Dominica V post Trinitatem, Ad religiosos, Sermo* 4, *De unanimitate, pace et fraterna in bono concordia* (DCOO 30: 243–44), and cf. by the same, *De fide orthodoxa* III, 84 (DCOO 18: 409). The same applies to Tommaso di Vio's *Docta, resoluta, ac compendiosa de peccatis Summula* (Lyon, 1528), fol. 49v–50r and 213v, cf. 162v and 170r. On the other hand, Erasmus's opposition to *bona contentio* is clear from the *Enchiridion — Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Annemarie Holborn and Hajo Holborn (Munich, 1933), 131–36; CWE 66: 123–26 — to the *Ecclesiastes* — ASD 5.4: 398; CWE 67: 643. Ulrich von Hutten, who had a wonderful ear for these technicalities, uses it in the *Epistulae obscurorum virorum* 2.43, ed. and trans. Jean-Christophe Saladin, *Lettres des hommes obscurs* (Paris, 2004), 547.

[56] See John Monfasani's quite clear statement on this regard: "Italian Renaissance humanists were a contentious lot. They quarreled among themselves. They assailed politicians, philosophers, and clerics. They even turned on the ancients. Valla attacked Aristotle; George of Trebizond, Plato. Antonio da Rho did not spare a Church Father in his *Dialogus in Lactantium*." John Monfasani, "Episodes of Anti-Quintilianism in the Italian Renaissance: Quarrels on the Orator as *Vir Bonus* and Rhetoric as the *Scientia Bene Dicendi*," *Rhetorica* 10 (1992): 119. On the fortune of some of these polemics in the fifteenth-century printing press, see Concetta Bianca, "*Contentiosae disputationes* agli esordi della stampa," in *Forms of Conflict and Rivalries in Renaissance Europe*, ed. David A. Lines et al. (Göttingen, 2015), 29–37. Further examples and analyses of the different character of these diatribes in Emilio Mattioli, *Luciano e l'umanesimo* (Naples, 1980), 122–39; Michael J. B. Allen, "The Second Ficino-Pico Controversy: Parmenidean Poetry, Eristic and the One," in *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone: Studi e documenti*, ed. Gian Carlo Carfagnini (Florence, 1986), 417–55; Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli* (Princeton, 1998), 26–30, 39–51, 54–56, 76–77, 82–100, 253–60, etc.; Ennio I. Rao, *Curmudgeons in High Dudgeon* (Messina, 2007); Johannes Helmrath, "Streitkultur: Die 'Invektive' bei den italienischen Humanisten," in *Die Kunst des Streitens*, ed. Marc Laureys and Roswitha Simons (Göttingen, 2010), 259–93; *The Art of Arguing in the World of Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Marc Laureys and Roswitha Simons

important to stress that most of them would have agreed that verbal violence could serve in private interaction as a proof of honesty (*sinceritas*, *honestas*) of the speaker, and that outspokenness should be considered in this context as a sign of trust and true friendship (*amicitia*).[57] Actually, Valla's concept of restoration (*restitutio*), as expressed twice in the general preface to the *Elegantiae*, is nothing but an expansion of these intellectual positions, which he developed from the beginning of the 1440s.[58]

In his well-known letter to Joan, or Giovanni, Serra (13 August 1440), there is a passage in which Valla strikes back at his critics with a number of adjectives that they had attributed to him.[59] In the systems of the sins of the tongue, all of them are usually linked to *contentio*:

> I have slandered your masters; take up their defense for your own praise and glory, especially with the favor and applause of so many waiting to be won! … Surely, there must be one man among such a crowd brave enough to write against me

(Leuven, 2015); and Andrea Rizzi, "Violent Language in Early Fifteenth-Century Italy: The Emotions of Invectives," in *Violence and Emotions in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Susan Broomhall and Sarah Finn (Abingdon, 2016), 145–58.

[57] See, for instance, the epistles by Giovanni Conversano (Coluccio Salutati, *Epistole* 12.1, 309) and Pier Paolo Vergerio (*Epistolario* [n. 22 above], 262) to Coluccio Salutati, to Niccolò Niccoli by Poggio Bracciolini (*Lettere. I. Lettere a Niccolò Niccoli*, ed. Helene Harth [Florence, 1984], 173–76), by Maffeo Vegio to Lorenzo Valla (ITRL 60: 114–15), or to Francesco Tranchedino by Francesco Patrizi da Siena (*Le lettere di Francesco Patrizi*, ed. Paola de Capua [Messina, 2014], B.60, 355).

[58] "Verum enimvero quo magis superiora tempora infelicia fuere, quibus homo nemo inventus est eruditus, eo plus his nostris gratulandum est, in quibus, si paulo amplius adnitamur, confido propediem linguam romanam vere plus quam urbem, et cum ea disciplinas omnes, iri *restitutum*" and "Camillus nobis, Camillus imitandus est, qui signa, ut inquit Virgilius, in patriam referat eamque restituat; cuius virtus adeo ceteris praestantior fuit, ut illi qui vel in Capitolio, vel Ardeae, vel Veiis erant, sine hoc salvi esse non possent. Quod hoc quoque tempore continget, et ceteri scriptores, ab eo qui de lingua latina aliquid composuerit, non parum adiuvabuntur. Equidem, quod ad me attinet, hunc imitabor, hoc mihi proponam exemplum; comparabo, quantulaecumque vires meae fuerint, exercitum, quem in hostes quam primum educam; ibo in aciem, ibo primus, ut vobis animum faciam." *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Milan, 1952), 598, 600. There is a knowledgeable summary of Valla's "anti-classicism" regarding Latin language and history writing in Michele Cataudella "L'*Antidotum in Facium* di Lorenzo Valla," in *Valla e Napoli: Il dibattito filologico in età umanistica*, ed. Marco Santoro (Pisa, 2007), 53–60.

[59] Not only his enemies, but also Valla's friends wrote letters to advise him to refrain from his customary contentiousness. See W. Scott Blanchard, "The Negative Dialectic of Lorenzo Valla: A Study in the Pathology of Opposition," *Renaissance Studies* 14 (2000): 149–89. Some time after Valla's trial by the Inquisition in Naples in 1444, fellow humanists, such as Francesco Filelfo, recommended, without polemic overtones, that he remain silent with regard to the Church, to the Pope, and, in general, to religious matters in the *Satyrarum Hecatostichon* 2.4 (*Satyrae. I (Decadi I–V)*, ed. Silvia Fiaschi [Rome, 2005], 95–98); see the remarks by W. Scott Blanchard in "Patrician Sages and the Humanist Cynic," *Renaissance Quarterly* 60 (2007): 1136–40.

> rather than simply barking with the rest of the pack. But if none of you dares respond in writing, that is an admission that you are unequal to the challenge, that your case is weak and that you are a *wicked slanderer* [*improbum calumniatorem*]; that it is not I but you who are *envious* [*invidum*], you who are *proud* [*superbum*], you who are *spiteful* [*malignum*] and *slow-witted* [*stolidum*]; that you are aware of your weakness and prefer to trade words instead of blows, snarling like a dog instead of fighting like a man.[60]

Valla will recall this epistle in his prologue to the *De professione religiosorum* (1441–42), written after a confrontation with a Franciscan friar held on January 1441, in which the development of his position is of utmost importance for my argument. To explain his attitude towards his enemies, Valla links his combative stance to the core concerns of *contentio* as a means to prove truth with a forensic approach, hence the allusion to Cato the Elder.[61] More importantly, he refines it with clear ethical and philosophical implications, those of ancient *parrhesia*:

> I come back to the second part, that I always attack somebody. In this regard, I recently wrote to my great friend Serra a long and rich apologetic letter. Those who expect from me an answer must know that my practice has been to date, and will be even more from now on, *to follow both the style and the opinion of the ancient Greeks and Latins and to speak freely according to their custom*.[62]

This link is even clearer in his preface to *De Constantini donatione* (1440), where the references both to classical and to early Christian *parrhesia* leave no doubt about Valla's position:

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[60] "Calumniatus sum magistros tuos: suscipe tu illorum patrocinium cum tua laude et gloria, presertim parato tot hominum favore atque assensu.... Certe ex tanto numero aliquis existere debet qui contra me rescribere audeat, non omnes contra unum pariter illatrare. Sin nemo audet rescribere, iam te mihi imparem confiteris, idest malam te causam habere teque improbum calumniatorem esse, non me, te invidum, te superbum, te malignum ac stolidum, qui tue tibi conscius infirmitatis non manus vis mecum conserere sed verba, nec pugnare more hominum sed canum ritu servire." *Correspondence* 13.6 (ITRL 60: 78–79); my emphasis appears in italics.

[61] "I ask you, was there ever anyone among the Romans so good and so upright as Cato? And yet there was not a single evil citizen that he ever failed to prosecute. As a result, Cato was charged no less than eighty times by wicked citizens — a record surpassed by no one — and yet this made him no slower to launch prosecutions. On the contrary, his accusations gained new vigor each time he left the courtroom victorious, as always, acquitted of every charge. And since none of these men who accuse me has yet proven his case, I shall take comfort in my good fortune alongside Cato and the wise men of history. Nor will I desert my principles, for I know that this will earn me more glory than disgrace, and bring me more joy than grief." *Correspondence* 13.6 (ITRL 60: 77).

[62] "Redeo nunc ad alteram partem, quod mihi semper aliquem deligo ad reprehendendum. De qua re nuper ad amicissimum mihi Serram scripsi apologetica epistola longa sane et uberi. Qui autem hic responsum a me spectant, sic habeant et consuesse me et consueturum posthac magis ut stilum ita opiniones veterum sequi tam Grecorum quam Latinorum et more illorum libere loqui." *De professione religiosorum* 1.14–15, ed. Mariarosa Cortesi (Padua, 1986), 10; the emphasis appears in italics and the translation is my own.

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> If the man who said, "I am unwilling to write against those who have the power to proscribe" should be thought to have acted as prudently as he spoke, how much more should I act similarly towards someone who does not even allow that possibility of proscription? … Unless by chance we think that the supreme pontiff will bear these assaults with greater tolerance than others would. Hardly, since Ananias, the high priest, in the presence of the tribune who was sitting as judge, ordered *Paul* to be struck on the mouth because he said that *he passed his life with good conscience* [*Paulo, quod bona se conscientia conversatum esse diceret*], and Phasur, holding the same office, threw *Jeremiah into prison for his outspokenness* [*Ieremiam ob loquendi libertatem coniecit in carcerem*]…. But there is no reason why this double threat of danger should trouble me or keep me from my plan. For the supreme pontiff is not allowed to bind or release anyone contrary to human and divine law, and giving up one's life in the defense of truth and justice is a mark of the greatest virtue, the greatest glory, the greatest reward…. Anxiety be gone, let fears retreat far away and worries disperse! With *a bold spirit* [*forti animo*], great confidence, and good hope, the cause of *truth* [*veritatis*], the cause of *justice* [*iustitie*], and the cause of *God* [*Dei*] must be defended. No one who knows how to speak well can be considered a true orator unless he also dares to speak out…. Did not Paul, whose words I have just used, reproach Peter to his face before the church, "because he was reproachable," and leave this in writing for our instruction? *But I am not a Paul who can reproach Peter: I am rather a Paul who imitates Paul in such a way — which is something much greater — as to become one spirit with God* [*Immo Paulus sum, qui Paulum imitor, quemadmodum, quod multo plus est, unus cum Deo spiritus efficior*], since I scrupulously obey his mandates.[63]

In this compelling introduction, in which the sack of Rome seems to be announced with prophetic overtones,[64] Valla performs three important operations. The first is

[63] "Quod si prudenter ut dixit sic fecisse existimatus est, qui inquit, 'nolo scribere in eos qui possunt proscribere,' quanto mihi magis idem faciendum esse videatur in eum, qui ne proscriptioni quidem relinquat locum? … Nisi forte putamus patientius hec esse laturum summum pontificem quam ceteri facerent. Nihil minus, siquidem *Paulo*, quod *bona se conscientia conversatum esse diceret*, Ananias, princeps sacerdotum, coram tribuno, qui iudex sedebat, iussit os verberari, et Phasur eadem preditus dignitate, *Ieremiam ob loquendi libertatem* coniecit in carcerem…. Verum non est causa, cur me duplex hic periculi terror conturbet arceatque a proposito. Nam neque contra ius fasque summo pontifici licet aut ligare quempiam aut solvere, et in defendenda veritate atque iustitia profundere animam summe virtutis, summe laudis, summi premii est…. Facessat igitur trepidatio, procul abeant metus, timores excidant. *Forti animo*, magna fiducia, bona spe, defendenda est causa *veritatis*, causa *iustitie*, causa *Dei*! Neque enim is verus est habendus orator, qui bene scit dicere, nisi et dicere audeat…. An non Paulus, cuius verbis modo sum usus, in os Petrum coram ecclesia reprehendit, 'quia reprehensibilis erat,' et hoc ad nostram doctrinam scriptum reliquit? At non sum Paulus, qui Petrum possim reprehendere: *immo Paulus sum, qui Paulum imitor, quemadmodum*, quod multo plus est, *unus cum Deo spiritus efficior*, cum studiose mandatis illius optempero." *De donatione Constantini* 1–2 (ITRL 24: 2–5). My emphasis appears in italics.

[64] "I would not dare to say that others, instructed by me, should prune with steel the papal seat, the vineyard of Christ, which is teeming with undergrowth, and force it to bear plump grapes instead of emaciated berries. When I do this, will there not be someone who

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the claim that many of the practices of the Church of his time are nothing but the result of misinterpretations, either based on mischievous interests of prelates through the ages or attributable to their lack of knowledge,[65] which the *oratio* exemplifies in its presentation of the donation as a forgery.[66] From a communicative perspective, this denunciation is presented with the call for a restoration of the Church as an "interpretative community" where all its members — with the ability and knowledge to do so — should share the right to contest the corruptions of Christian doctrine and institutions.[67] The second operation, Valla's

would wish to stop my mouth or his own ears, to say nothing of calling down punishment and death?" (Non ausim dicere, ut alii per me edocti luxuriantem nimiis sarmentis papalem sedem, que Christi vinea est, ferro coerceant, et plenas uvas, non graciles labruscas ferre compellant. Quod cum facio, nunquis erit, qui aut mihi os aut sibi aures velit occludere, ne dicam supplicium mortemque proponere? *De donatione Constantini* 3 (ITRL 24: 6–7).

[65] "Those who think that this person spoke the truth and defend him make themselves his allies, *complicit in his foolishness and insanity* [*cuius stultitie atque vesanie affines se ac socios faciunt*]. Yet they now have nothing with which they can decently excuse their opinion, not to say defend it. Is there anything decent about excusing an error when you refuse to accept a manifest truth just because some great men thought otherwise? *They were great, I say, in rank, not in wisdom or virtue* [*magni, inquam, dignitate, non sapientia nec virtute*]. How can you tell whether those whom you follow would have persevered in their view, rather than abandoned it, if they had heard what you have heard? Furthermore, it is highly inappropriate to want to give more credit to a man than to the truth — that is, to God. For some who have been overcome by all arguments are apt to answer me: 'Why have so many supreme pontiffs believed that this was true?' You are my witnesses that you urge me where I would not go, *and you force me unvillingly to speak ill of supreme pontiffs over whose mistakes I would rather draw a veil* [*et invitum me maledicere summis pontificibus cogitis, quos magis in delictis suis operire vellem*]." *De donatione Constantini* 71 (ITRL 24: 116–19). On the origins in Valla's thought of the corruption of the proto-apostolic era, see Salvatore I. Camporeale, "Lorenzo Valla's *Oratio* on the Pseudo-Donation of Constantine: Dissent and Innovation in Early Renaissance Humanism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57 (1996): 17–19 and 24. For precedents in the context of humanist culture, see Robert Black, "The Donation of Constantine: A New Source for the Concept of the Renaissance," in *Languages and Images of Renaissance Italy*, ed. Alison Brown (Oxford, 1995), 63–70.

[66] The indictment was not a novelty. In 1433, Nicholas of Cusa denounced the falsity of the document in his *De concordantia Catholica* 2.2–3. Valla's awareness of the work by his predecessor has been proved by Wolfram Setz, *Lorenzo Vallas Schrift gegen die konstantinische Schenkung, De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione: Zur Interpretation und Wirkungsgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1975), 28–29; Ricardo Fubini, "Contestazione quattrocentesche dalla Donazione de Costantino: Niccolò Cusano, Lorenzo Valla," in *Costantino il Grande dall'Antichità all'Umanesimo*, ed. Franca Fusco and Giorgio Bonamente (Macerata, 1993), 403–16; and Fubini, "Humanism and Truth: Valla Writes against the Donation of Constantine," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57 (1996): 79–86.

[67] Although the political interests of Alfonso of Aragon as a motivation for the *De donatione Constantini* to be written should not be discarded, there is an important move made by Valla that is not usually stressed and that is directly related to the state of affairs in the councils of Pisa (1408–9), Constance (1414–18), Basel-Ferrara-Florence (1431–49), and to the way that the idea of the Church as *universitas fidelium* was presented there: Joseph Gill, "The

mention of truth, justice, and God as sufficient reasons to challenge such perversions, interests us in that it is clearly connected with the justification of anger and *contentio* both in the scholastic take on the sins of the tongue and in the political thought of *Quattrocento* humanists.[68] His third and last movement is momentous, in that Valla suggests that the relation of the faithful with God should not be mediated by secular or ecclesiastical authority; therefore, the defense of his position is that of a radical Christianity, fairly close to some of the parameters that will shape the Lutheran Reformation.

In a later epistle (25 October 1443), in which Valla asks Guarino of Verona for Pliny the Younger's *Panegyric of Trajan*, not of Nerva, he further develops the ground on which the *De donatione* was built:

> There is said to be an oration of Pliny's, which is not just eloquent but of surpassing eloquence. If you have seen it yourself, please write to me to let me know. It is an oration in praise of Nerva, delivered before Nerva himself. Pliny himself mentions it in his first epistle, in which he says that he has imitated Calvus, the so-called Latin Demosthenes. All the same, I am surprised to hear him say that "it consists of almost nothing but *forensic disputatiousness* [*in contentione*]," if it is entirely taken up with praise. If you have it and can send it to me, I will return the favor by sending you my oration, *itself consisting of almost nothing but forensic disputatiousness, On the Fraudulent and Falsely Trusted Donation of Constantine*.[69]

This passage makes it difficult to accept Salvatore Camporeale's argument that, for Valla, *De donatione* is based on "a demonstrative mode of argumentation,

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Representation of the *Universitas fidelium* in the Councils of the Conciliar Period," in *Councils and Assemblies: Papers Read at the Eighth Summer Meeting and Ninth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker (Cambridge, 1971), 177–95, and Antony Black, "Popes and Councils," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*,VII, *c. 1415–c. 1500*, ed. Christopher Allmand (Cambridge, 1998), 65–86. Valla's expansion of the concept, which Marsilius of Padua and Jean Gerson presented before him, goes beyond prelates thanks to the new philological method developed in the context of *Quattrocento* humanism, and will prove fundamental in his development of *parrhesia* linked to *Christiana veritas* as detailed below. For Marsilius of Padua and Gerson's ideas on the subject, see F. Battaglia, *Marsilio da Padova e la filosofia politica del Medio Evo* (Firenze, 1928), 85–91, and Bettina Koch, "Marsilius of Padua on Church and State," in *A Companion to Marsilius of Padua*, ed. Gerson Moreno-Riaño and Cary J. Nederman (Leiden, 2012), 145–48.

[68] Compare, once more, with the *Letter to Serra* 23 (ITRL 60: 96–97).

[69] "Orationem quandam Plinii non dico eloquentem sed admirabili eloquentia haberi aiunt; eam si tu vidisti, velim per litteras me certiorem facias. Est enim de laudibus Nerve apud ipsum Nervam; de qua ipse Plinius meminit in prima epistola, ubi ait se imitatum esse Calvum quasi Latinum Demosthenem: tam et si miror quod '*prope tota sit in contentione dicendi*,' ut ille testatur, si in laudibus tota versatur. Eam si penes te habes ad meque mittes, mittam ego tibi vicissim orationem meam, que et ipsa prope tota in contentione versatur, *De falso credita et ementita donatione Constantini*." *Correspondence* 21.2 (ITRL 60: 138–41).

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not a judicial one."[70] In truth, this passage forces us to reconsider also Valla's qualification of the work as his "purest piece of oratory."[71] In the discussion of his letter to Giovanni Tortelli (25 May 1440), Valla states that the subject of *De donatione* is "canon law and theology, though it contradicts all canonists and all theologians."[72] My contention is that Valla is not merely acting in his oration *pro suo more* or just following Quintilian.[73] His choice of the term *contentio* seems to have been motivated by two different reasons. The first is closely related to his conception of dialectic as dependent on rhetoric, and, therefore, of his *oratio* as a discourse that goes beyond the first of the traditional three *officia oratoris*, that is, *docere* or *probare*. The second is that Valla is acting here as an orator whose aim cannot be reduced to winning the argument, but rather "to favor what is honorable" and to contribute "to a good and happy life," counseling "against what is disgraceful and harmful"; hence he affirms the rhetorical

[70] Salvatore I. Camporeale, *Christianity, Latinity, and Culture: Two Studies on Lorenzo Valla, with Lorenzo Valla's Encomium of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Patrick Baker and Christopher S. Celenza, trans. Baker (Leiden, 2014), 35; cf. Vincenzo de Caprio, "Retorica e ideologia nella *Declamatio* di Lorenzo Valla sulla *Donazione di Costantino*," *Paragone* 29.338 (1978), 36–56, and Celenza, "Lorenzo Valla, 'Paganism,' and Orthodoxy," *Modern Language Notes* 119 (2004): S77–S78.

[71] "Write back and let me know if you have seen my speech *On the Donation of Constantine*: despite its length, *it is the purest piece of oratory I have ever written*. If you have not seen it, you will receive it from me (Orationem meam *De donatione Constantini*, qua nihil magis oratorium scripsi, sane longam, rescribe an videris, habiturus a me eam, nisi vidisti)." *Correspondence* 23 (ITRL 60: 156–57).

[72] Mariangela Regoliosi, "Tradizione e redazioni nel *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione* de Lorenzo Valla," in *Studi in memoria di Paola Medioli Masotti*, ed. Franca Magnani (Naples, 1995), 43, and John Monfasani, "Disputationes Vallianae," in *Penser entre les lignes: Philologie et philosophie au Quattrocento*, ed. Fosca Mariani Zini (Lille, 2001), 237–39, have convincingly shown that the following excerpt from the letter to Tortelli refers to *De donatione* and not to *De professione religiosorum*: "In the meantime, I send you this little work which I have just completed; the subject is canon law and theology, though it contradicts all canonists and all theologians" (Interim mitto ad te opusculum, quod proxime composui, rem canonici iuris et theologie, sed contra omnes canonistas atque omnes theologos). *Correspondence* 12 (ITRL 60: 70–71). Camporeale gave an equally unsatisfactory explanation of the letter to Tortelli and to Aurispa in the review of his monograph on *De donatione*. Salvatore I. Camporeale, "Lorenzo Valla's *Oratio* on the Pseudo-Donation of Constantine: Dissent and Innovation in Early Renaissance Humanism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57 (1996): 26.

[73] Camporeale (*Christianity, Latinity*, 27), states: "Therefore, Valla's *Oration* must be understood within the coordinates *vis verborum/vis rerum* of this kind of inductive, rhetorical analysis. Only on the basis of this kind of interpretation can we understand the full meaning of what Valla wrote to Giovanni Aurispa." In a subsequent essay on the *Ecomium of St. Thomas* (Camporeale, "Lorenzo Valla between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," in *Christianity, Latinity*, 272–73) he links this *magis oratorium* both to Valla's appreciation of St. Jerome and to Quintilian's use of the term "to describe the application of philological and historical analysis to a literary or diplomatic text, e.g., the ps-Donation of Constantine."

excellence of the *oratio*.[74] Further, there is a third point related to the communicative culture in which Valla developed his career.[75] *Contentio* signals here the opening of a space for verbal violence, which he himself calls *truculentia* at the end of *De donatione*,[76] and which elsewhere is identified with St. Paul's (s) word:[77] a space for the expression of indignation through verbal violence which

[74] Valla, *Repastinatio*. 2, Proem. 6 (ITRL 50: 4–5): "And just as we dress one way to go out in public, another way when doing something at home, one costume for the magistrate, another for the private person — the reason being that one must respect the public gaze — so also the dialectician, *whose speech is domestic and private* [cuius domesticus et privatus est sermo], will not try for that elegance and grandeur of expression sought by *the orator, who must speak before the whole community* [orator, cui apud universam civitatem dicendum et multum publicis auribus dandum est] and whose public audience is much to reckon with, requiring much skill besides in matters of great import and needing that most difficult science of managing emotions, as well as experience in all sorts of business, knowledge of every people, and every record of events *and — above all — living with integrity, with a certain exceptional dignity of mind and excellence of body and voice, the reason being that the orator is like the public's guide and leader* [et — ante omnia — sanctitas vitae, ac eximia quaedam animi dignitas et corporis vocisque praestantia, siquidem orator est velut rector ac dux populi]." On the passage, see John Monfasani, "Lorenzo Valla and Rudolf Agricola," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28 (1990): 184–85.

[75] For the scarcity of rhetorical discussions on *parrhesia* inherited from classical antiquity and for complementary gnomic and historical sources, see Frederick Ahl, "The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome," *American Journal of Philology* 105 (1984): 185–208; Luigi Spina, *Il cittadino alla tribuna* (Naples, 1986), 96–99 and 100–103; and David Colclough, *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 2005), 25–37.

[76] "But in this first speech of mine *I do not wish to encourage rulers and peoples* to restrain the Pope as he surges ahead in his unbridled course and to force him to stay within his own borders, *but only to counsel him, when perhaps he has already recognized the truth*, to move back voluntarily from a house that is not his own into the one where he belongs and into a haven from irrational tides and cruel storms. But if he should refuse, then *we shall gird ourselves for a second, much more aggressive speech*" (Verum ego in hac prima nostra oratione nolo exhortari principes ac populos, ut papam effrenato cursu volitantem inhibeant eumque intra suos fines consistere compellant, sed tantum admoneant, qui forsitan iam edoctus veritatem sua sponte ab aliena domo in suam et ab insanis fluctibus sevisque tempestatibus in portum se recipiet. Sin recuset, tunc ad alteram orationem multo truculentiorem accingemur). *De donatione Constantini* 97 (ITRL 24: 158–59).

[77] "Instead they [the ancient theologians] devoted themselves wholly to imitating the apostle Paul, by far the prince of all theologians and the master of theologizing. *His manner of speaking, his power, his majesty were such that what fell flat when spoken by others*, even the apostles, *he uttered loftily*; what in the mouths of others stood its ground, rushed from his into battle; and what from others shone dimly, from him seemed to flash and burn, *so that it is not off the mark for him to be represented holding in his hand a sword, i.e., the word of God. This is the true and, so to speak, the genuine mode of theologizing. This is the true law of speaking and writing*, and those who pursue it doubtless pursue the very best manner of speaking and theologizing. Therefore the ancients, the true disciples of Paul, should not be criticized by modern theologians or placed second to our Thomas on account of not having mixed theology with philosophy" (qui non sunt hunc in modum theologati sed se totos ad imitandum Paulum apostolum contulerunt, omnium theologorum longe

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expands — and this would be the final goal of his *oratio* — a form of inalienable freedom (*libertas dicendi*) into two interconnected forms of liberation, in other words, two forms of *caritas*.[78] One is linked to the realms of thought (*disciplinae* or *artes*) outside theology but essential to theological judgment (*libertas philosophandi*),[79] while the other relates to the renegotiation of the ideas — and texts — shared by the community of the faithful and steeped in the nature of individual and institutionalized faith (*libertas theologandi* or *libertas Christiana*).[80]

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principem ac theologandi magistrum. Cuius is est dicendi modus, ea vis, ea maiestas ut quae sententiae apud alios etiam apostolos iacent eae sint apud hunc erectae, quae apud alios stant apud hunc proelientur, quae apud alios vix fulgent apud hunc fulgurare et ardere videantur, ut non ab re gladium, quod est verbum Dei, manu tenens figuretur. Hic est verus et, ut dicitur, germanus theologandi modus, haec vera dicendi et scribendi lex, quam qui sectantur ii profecto optimum dicendi genus theologandique sectantur. Quare non est ut illis veteribus, vere Pauli discipulis, hoc nomine, quod ab his philosophia theologiae non admisceatur, aut detrahant novi theologi aut noster Thomas sit praeponendus). Valla, *Encomion Sancti Thomae Aquinatis* 20, in Camporeale, *Christianity, Latinity, and Culture*, trans. P. Baker, 310–11.

[78] It should be mentioned, once more, the importance of *sodalitates* for the recovery and development of this idea, as is eloquently expressed some thirty years after Valla by Paulo Antonio Soderini in his oration addressed to the Senate of Venice, read in the Platonic Academia of Florence in December 1473 and collected in the *Declamationum liber* by Benedetto Colucci da Pistoia (NCTUIR 2: 28, lines 25–29, line 6). There is an English translation of the relevant passages in Amos Edelheit, *Ficino, Pico and Savonarola: The Evolution of Humanist Theology 1461/1462–1498* (Leiden, 2008), 135–36.

[79] "The point is not that Pythagoras called himself a 'philosopher' but that he and they were right to call themselves 'philosophers.' It was not a man they followed but truth and excellence, which was their immediate aim wherever they found it, without regard to anyone's authority. *Consequently, no one after Pythagoras was called a 'sage,' and philosophers have always had the freedom to say straightforwardly what they think, not only against leaders of other groups but also against their own* [Itaque et nemo post Pythagoram appellatus est sophus, et libertas semper philosophis fuit fortiter dicendi quae sentirent, nec solum contra principes aliarum sectarum sed etiam contra principem suae], which is even truer of those not committed to a group." Valla, *Dialectical Disputations*, 1. Proem 3 (ITRL 49: 2–5). Monfasani's appreciation of the problem seems, therefore, more than just: "The sophisms of *De professione*, the quirkiness of *De Eucharistia*, the inconsistencies in his treatment of the Trinity in the *Dialectica* and hypocrisy of his several defenses of the *De vero bono* all suggest someone who had a serious purpose when swimming in theological waters, but not primarily a theological one. His aims, depending on which work is at issue, were rather primarily cultural, social, philosophical, or even political. Valla was, if I may end with an oxymoron, a seriously flippant theologian." John Monfasani, "The Theology of Lorenzo Valla," in *Humanism and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. M. W. F. Stone and J. Kraye (London, 2000), 13. See also Nauta, *In Defense of Common Sense* (n. 48 above), 270–72. My approach differs from Camporeale's division between civic and Christian freedom as the framework of Valla's *Oratio*.

[80] In view of the passage already cited from Valla's *Encomion Sancti Thomae Aquinatis*, his last work, it must be stated that Valla is quite clear about the separation of philosophy and theology, at least from the preface of his *De libero arbitrio*; in *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento*, 524–25.

It should be noted, however, that Valla's approach leaves aside the best known literary realm of freedom for *Quattrocento* humanists, that is, Lucianic dialogue. In his letter to Cardinal Landriani (21 January 1444), Valla's disassociation from the Lucianic tradition is far from trivial, even if he admits that he can understand the comparison made by his critics.[81] Although contemporaries of Valla could envision a function of Lucianic dialogue to deal with political, philosophical, and religious matters under the veil of fiction,[82] we should take into account that Valla neither played his ideas *sub persona* (in truth, just the opposite), nor did he write satire as such, and that the use of Lucianic *parrhesia* was clearly mediated during the fifteenth century by the image of ancient Greek comedy as a perfect example of how a virtue could be easily perverted.[83]

In sum, in the hands of Valla, verbal anger (*contentio*) took shape in a form of individual freedom as clearly differentiated from as dependent on *bona contentio*,

[81] "For I will readily confess, and actually accuse myself, of giving the appearance of sparing neither man nor god, as Lactantius says of Lucian. Anyone who wants to criticize me will in consequence not lack for material. In addition there is the most recent charge: I am censured for harassing not only the dead but the living as well, and for this some men have even threatened me.... Nor would I write to you about this, nor make supplication of anyone, *but remain content in a clear conscience, fortunate in my discoveries, nourished by the noble freedom of saying what I think* [contentus animi conscientia inventionibusque felix ac generosa quod sentiam dicendi libertate me pascens]." *Correspondence* 25 (ITRL 60: 163–64). Cf. Michael O. Zappala, *Lucian of Samosata in the Two Hesperias* (Potomac, MD, 1990), 3, 98, and 170 and David Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1998), 6–7, both of whom comment on this passage.

[82] See, e.g., Leon Battista Alberti's *Momus*, Proem. 6 (ITRL 8: 6–7). Good overviews on the use, production, and consumption of Lucianic dialogues during the fifteenth century are presented in Christiane Lauvergnat-Gagnière, *Lucien de Samosate et le lucianisme en France au XVI^e siècle* (Geneva, 1988), 25–57, and Lorenzo Geri, *A colloquio con Luciano di Samosata* (Rome, 2011), 31–117.

[83] This form of *parrhesia* or *licentia* is discussed and attacked many times during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, mainly through Hor. *Sat.* 1.4, 1–5 and Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.65 and 94. See, for instance, Petrarch, *De remediis utriusque fortune*, ed. and trans. Christophe Carraud (Paris, 2002), 1.69, 326–27; Poggio's letter to Antonio Beccadelli (ITRL 42: 130–39); G. Tortelli's *Orthographia* (Venice, 1493), sig. i1v; and Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Satire di Persio*, ed. Lucia Cesarini Martinelli and Roberto Ricciardi (Florence, 1985), 9–13. Francesco Patrizi (*De institutione reipublicae libri novem* [Paris, 1569], 2.5, 49; *De regno et regis institutione libri IX* [Paris, 1567], 2. Proem. and 2.9, 45 and 89–90) stresses the dangers of its use with princes; and Rudolf Agricola (*De inventione dialectica libri tres* 3.4 and 3.9, ed. and trans. Lothar Mundt [Tübingen, 1992], 462 and 500) and Erasmus (ASD 4.3: 68; CWE 27: 84; and my note to *Moria de Erasmo Roterodamo* [Leiden, 2014], 58 n. 1–4) advise of its limits. See the latter's letter to More in the *Encomium Moriae*: "Now for the charge of biting sarcasm. My answer is that the intelligent have always enjoyed freedom to exercise their wit on the common life of man, and with impunity, provided that they kept their liberty within reasonable limits" (Iam vero vt de mordacitatis cauillatione respondeam, semper haec ingeniis libertas permissa fuit, vt in communem hominum vitam salibus luderent impune, modo ne licentia exiret in rabiem).

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and developed in an unexpected direction the ethics of friendship of the culture of the *sermo*. Parallel to classical antiquity and early Christianity, the culture of humanists, through its defense of *amicitia* and *prudentia*, paved the way for the two main preconditions — *isonomia* or a shared set of rules for discussion and *isegoria* or a shared right to take the floor — for *parrhesia*: a violent eruption of truth and the determination to defend it, although neither Valla nor most of his contemporaries ever used the term.[84]

## The Institutionalization of *Parrhesia* in Rennaisance Letters

Decades ago, both Setz and Camporeale defended the important role that *libertas*, as enacted in Valla's *De donatione*, played as a source of inspiration in the first writings by von Hutten and Luther.[85] Likewise, countless studies have highlighted the weight of economic, social, political, exegetical, educational,

[84] For the concepts of *isonomia* and *isegoria* as conditions for *parrhesia*, see Giuseppe Scarpat, *Parrhesia greca, parrhesia cristiana* (Brescia, 2001). Further discussion on the value and the connotations of the three concepts appears in Arnaldo Momigliano and Sally C. Humphreys, "The Social Structure of the Ancient City," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Classe di Letteratura e Filosofia*, ser. 3, 4.2 (1974): 338–49; Luigi Spina, *Il cittadino alla tribuna* (Naples, 1986), 61–95; Kurt A. Raaflaub, "Stick and Glue: The Function of Tyranny in Fifth-Century Athenian Democracy," in *Popular Tyranny: Sovereignity and Its Discontents in Ancient Greece*, ed. Kathryn A. Morgan (Austin, TX, 2003), 62–65; and Raaflaub, "Aristocracy and Freedom of Speech in the Greco-Roman World," in *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ineke Sluiter and Ralph Mark Rosen (Leiden, 2004), 41–62. Although it is arguable that early texts such as Bruni's *Oratio in funere Iohannis Strozze* (§§19–23) or Filelfo's third book of *De exilio* include hints at classical *parrhesia*, in truth, the use or commentary of the Greek term is very scarce during the *Quattrocento* and limited mainly to its rhetorical connotation. See, for instance Angelo Poliziano's *Enarratio in Sapphus Epistolam* 21. *Lusibus* (*Commento inedito all'epistola ovidiana di Saffo a Faone*, ed. Elisabetta Lazzeri [Florence, 1971], 33) or Marco Musuro's introduction to Aristophanes (ITRL 70: 276–77).

[85] Wolfram Setz, *Lorenzo Vallas Schrift gegen die konstantinische Schenkung* (Tübingen, 1975), 151–76; Camporeale, *Christianity, Latinity*, 131–32; Giovanni Antonazzi, *Lorenzo Valla e la polemica sulla donazione di Costantino* (Rome, 1985), 161–64 and 189–90; and now David M. Whitford, "The Papal Antichrist: Martin Luther and the Underappreciated Influence of Lorenzo Valla," *Renaissance Quarterly* 61 (2008): 26–52. For the role of the *disputatio in utramque partem* as enacted by the young Valla in the "sensibility" of Luther, see Hösle, *The Philosophical Dialogue* (n. 1 above), 388–89. For Luther's admiration for Valla, see Charles Trinkaus, "The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10 (1949): 51–62; Mario Fois, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla nel quadro storico-culturale del suo ambiente* (Rome, 1969), 192 and 637; and Mariangela Regoliosi, "Lorenzo Valla e l'Europa," in *L'humanisme italien de la Renaissance et l'Europe*, ed. Théa Picquet et al. (Aix-en-Provence, 2010), 87–89. There are fresh approaches to Luther as a *parrhesiastes* based on very different premises to the ones I defend here in Anita Traninger, "Libertas philosophandi," in *Neue Diskurse der Gelehrtenkultur in der frühen Neuzeit: Ein Handbuch*, ed. Herbert Jaumann and Gideon Stiening (Berlin, 2016),

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and philological circumstances that supported the rise and triumph of the Reformation. But, to my knowledge, we still lack an explanation based on simple communicative notions — if these terms are appropriate — that help to explain why the Reformation was considered susceptible to intellectual discussion by the European intelligentsia as a whole. The next step in the history of evolution of *contentio* could help to explain a difference, even if minor, between previous heresies, such as those of Cecco d'Ascoli, Pietro de Abano, John Wycliffe, Biagio Pelacani, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and that of Luther. In addition, this analysis shall stress the importance of the set of communicative premises shared by all the parties involved in the Reformation; as a result, it will argue that the two main critical factions against the Catholic Church in the second decade of the sixteenth century — Erasmus on the one side, the one led by Luther on the other — are the consequences of an impulse rooted in the influence of Lorenzo Valla.

Surprisingly, perhaps, a key text to study the parameters of *bona contentio* and *parrhesia* relevant to the interaction with other critical manifestations of the need for reformation of the Catholic Church is the fourth encyclopaedia[86] published by a humanist in the sixteenth century: Raffaele Maffei's (1451–1522), *Thirty-Eight Books of Commentaries on Urban Matters* (*Commentariorum rerum urbanorum libri XXXVIII*). Dedicated to Pope Julius II, this massive volume of 547 folios appeared in 1506 from Johann Besicken's press in Rome accompanied by Maffei's translation into Latin of Xenophon's *Oeconomica*.[87] It was intended both as a compendium of the knowledge of his time and, in Grafton's words, as a digest of "the whole corpus of Greek works on history and geography into an orderly, accessible, and fairly compact form."[88] Thus, the three parts in which

282–87, and Carl P. E. Springer, *Cicero in Heaven: The Roman Rhetor and Luther's Reformation* (Leiden, 2016), 89–100.

[86] The first is Georgio Valla's *De expetendis ac fugiendis rebus opus* (*princeps* 1501), the second Gregor Reisch's *Margarita Philosophica* (*princeps* 1503), of enormous success, as it saw more than ten editions in the first decade of the sixteenth century; the third is Petrus Crinitus's *De honesta disciplina* (*princeps* 1504); and the fifth is Symphorien Champier's *De triplici disciplina* (1508). Although Maffei's approach to encyclopedism is nurtured by a vast amount of sentences taken from classical and medieval sources, it should not be confused with a polyanthea such as Ravisius Textor's *Officina* — supposedly printed for the first time in Basel in 1503, although no copies are extant today — or Nanus Mirabellius's (1507). As is evident, I leave aside from this list the encyclopedias written or published before 1500 with the exception of Valla.

[87] That same year Maffei abandoned the Roman Curia. For an account of his life and his literary production, see John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of Reformation* (Baltimore, 1983). A still useful but quite succinct presentation of Maffei's *Commentaries* can be found in Carlo Dionisotti, *Gli umanisti e il volgare fra Quattro e Cinquecento*, ed. Vincenzo Fera and Giovanni Romano (Milan, 2003), 35–47.

[88] Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*. 1. *Textual Criticism and Exegesis* (Oxford, 1983), 43.

the *Commentaries* are divided — *Geographia*, *Anthropologia*, and *Philologia* — present an example of state-of-the-art humanist learning *in utramque linguam* at the very beginning of the sixteenth century and a successful one, as its more than eight editions attest.[89]

Located in the third part of the *Commentaries*, *Philologia*, book 28, *On Honesty and Its Parts* (*De honesto et eius partibus*), appraises the problem of truth. Despite my reconstruction of its structure [fig. 5], Maffei approaches the topic in a linear fashion, not analytically, relying heavily upon the authority of Aristotle, Quintilian, Athenaeus, and Plutarch. Thus, having treated in its first chapters the importance of the knowledge of liberal arts for the instruction of the soul and the role of the philosopher as an educator of the prince;[90] the value of education in every stage of life;[91] the inextricable link between knowledge, justice, and prudence, coupled with wisdom as the finest form of freeing oneself from mundane servitudes;[92] the view that every form of education leads both to philosophy and to theology;[93] the estimation for the philosophers in ancient times;[94] and an anthology of sayings by the Seven Sages of Greece and by the Stoics,[95]

[89] In 1511, 1515, and 1526 in Paris by Badius Ascensius and Jean Petit; in 1529 in Turin by Baudius, Bremius, and Ferrarius (Emődi András, *A nagyváradi római katolikus egyházmegyei könyvtár régi állománya: Altbücherbestand der Bibliothek der Diözese in Großwadein*. I. *Ősnyomtatványok. XVI. századi nyomtatványok. Régi magyar könyvtár. Katalógus* [Budapest, 2005], Ant. 55, 28); in 1530, 1544 and 1559 in the Frobens' press in Basel; in 1552 in Lyon by Sebastian Gryphius; in 1565 by Lucius in Heidelberg; and in 1599 in Lyon. I use for my commentary the *princeps*, *Commentariorum urbanorum Raphaelis Volaterrani octo et triginta libri*, printed in Rome by Johannes Besicken in 1506.

[90] "Prudentia igitur prius actingenda [*sic*], quae unica cum aeque intellectu ac voluntate consistat, sub ea doctrina continetur, utranque vero coniunctam Graeci sophiam, nos sapientiam dicimus, in qua monstratore prius est opus. Scribit enim Aelianus De var. histor. quod prisca fuit consuetudo ut viri magni iuxta se magistros alumnosque haberent. Sic Ulysses Alcynoum, Achilles Chironem, Patroclus Achillem, Agamemnon Nestorem, Telemachus Menelaum, Hector Polydamanta, Hiero Syracusanus Simonidem Chium, Polycrates Anacreontem, Proxenus Xenophontem, Antigonus Zenonem, Alexander Aristotelem." *De honesto* [1.] *Ac primum de prudentia et doctrina quod magistri in ea necessarii*, fol. 404r.

[91] *De honesto* [2.] *Qui aptiores ad doctrinam, et quid aut quomodo discendum*, fols. 404v–405r.

[92] *De honesto* [3.] *Quod doctrinam cum prudentia ac iustitia coniungere opus*: "Cleanthes dicebat homines absque disciplina et literis tantum forma distare a feris. Plato scientiam ait citra iustitia ceterisque virtutibus calliditatem pocius quam sapientiam. Zeno dicebat quod in disciplinis quidam erant philologi, quidam logophili, id est, amatores pocius verborum quam scientiae, item nonnullos esse philosomatos, id est, corporis amatores pocius quam philosophos, sive etiam philotimos, aut philocrematos, id est amatores honores ac pecuniae." fol. 405r.

[93] *De honesto* [4.] *Quod doctrina omnis ad philosophiam ac theologiam referenda*, fol. 405r–v.

[94] *De honesto* [5.] *Quod docti semper in praetio fuere* and 6. *Quod unus quandoque in populo sapientia praeditus, plus ceteris videat*, fols. 405v–406r.

[95] *De honesto* [6.] *Apophthegmata septem sapientum ex Demetrio Phalereo*, fol. 406r–407v.

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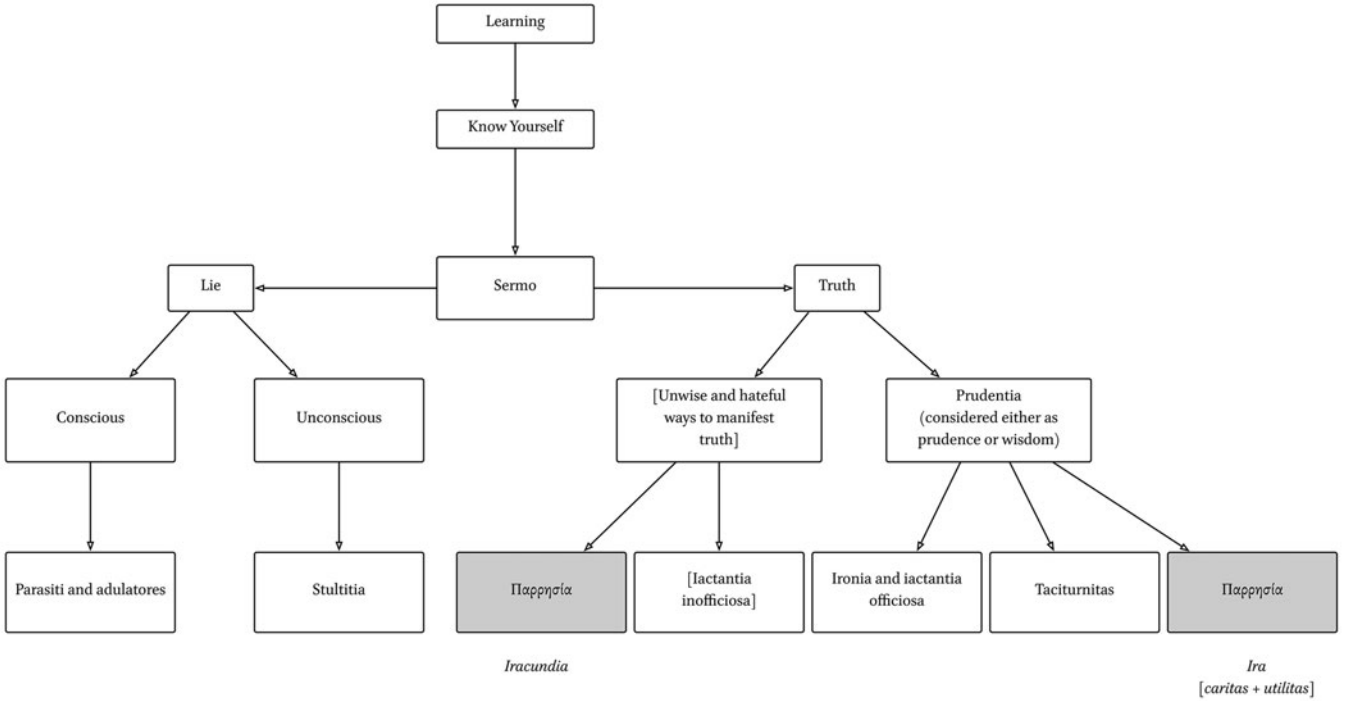


Fig. 5. The systematization of *parrhesia* according to Raffaele Maffei's *Commentariorum rerum urbanorum libri XXXVIII*, book 28. *De honesto et eius partibus* (1506).

Maffei devotes chapter seven to the saying carved at the pronaos of the temple of Apollo at Delphi — *know thyself* — as the point of departure of his exposition on how language should manifest truth to open up a path to wisdom, and on how ethics and self-awareness relate to political power or, for that matter, to any kind of authority.[96]

At the beginning of this second part of the *De honesto*, Maffei introduces those expressions that are despicable in themselves or that provoke hate in the listener. The former are reduced to two forms of lying, intended and unintended. Intended lying is epitomized by flatterers and parasites,[97] while unintended lying stems from the lack of knowledge (*stultitia*) of the speaker.[98] The latter are related to truth. As Maffei has stated before, *prudentia* should be the core principle of honesty, and, consequently, depending on its use or misuse, we have applaudable or hateful ways of presenting truth. Hateful truth could be manifested either in what he calls "boasting" (*iactantia*) or in *parrhesia*. With regards to boasting, Maffei offers a *via media* between Aristotle and Plutarch[99] and provides examples of both dutiful and remiss boasting, suggesting that the latter should be considered among the hateful ways of presenting truth.[100] As in the case of *iactantia*, his examples show that he contemplates a negligent use of outspokenness, as shown in the actions of Thersites, Drances, Democharis, Cleitus, or Aristomenes,

[96] *De honesto* [7.] *De noscendo seipsum*, fol. 408r–v.

[97] *De honesto* [8.] *De impudentia loquendi, ac primum de parasitis*, fol. 408v; [9.] *De nobilibus parasitis et adsentatoribus, ex Athenaeo*, fol. 408v; and [10.] *Dicta contra parasitos et adsentatores*, fol. 409r.

[98] *De honesto* [11.] *De veritate*: "Tres sunt causae ob quas promissis non stamus. Aut enim animo fallendi dicimus, vel postea nos penitet, seu certe volenti praestare quod promisit, deest facultas. Prima est malae voluntatis, secunda infirmi iudicii, tertia inopiae facultatis. Hec omnia minime deo conveniunt, qui ob bonitatem non decipit, ob stabilitatem non retractat, ob potentiam imperfectum non relinquit.... Veritas apud deos hominesque bonorum omnium potissima est, cuius imprimis [*sic*, *sc.* in primis] eum participem esse oportet qui futurus est felix. Infidelis autem est cui mendacium voluntarium existit amicum, cui autem involuntarium, stultus; utrumque igitur fugiendum, cum uterque tam infidus quam imprudens non sit amandus." fol. 409r–v. See also the last chapter of *De honesto* [15.] *De stultitia*, fol. 411r–v; and compare Valla's criticisms on the historical process of corruption of the Church above at n. 66.

[99] Arist., *Eth. Nic.* 4.7 1127a13–1127b30; Plut., *De laude ipsius*, *Mor.* 539b–547f.

[100] *De honesto* [12.] *De ironia et iactantia officiosa*: "Iactantiae quoque plura traduntur exempla. Plutarchus, qui super hoc pulcherrimum edidit tractatum, ait: 'ob delendam calumniam nos ipsos non inepte laudare possumus, ut accidit Pericli invidiam sustinenti.' Sic enim in concione: 'mihi viri Athenienses subcensetis tali viro, qui in his quae necessaria sunt reipub. obeundis aut summa experientia ac fide providendis nemini me cessurum profiteor.' Et apud Romanos Scipio accusatus, hodie inquit, 'P. C. Annibalem vici, Carthaginem tributariuam feci, hanc patriam maximo periculo liberavi, eamus hinc in Capitolium, et gratias di[i]s immortalibus agamus.' At quam fatue et inepte Cicero saepius extra propositum liberatam a se patriam a Catilinae coniuratione iactat? Legimus item apud Virgilium: 'Sum pius Aeneas, fama super aethera notus.'" fol. 409v.

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which are, according to Maffei's examples of *iracundia*, opposed here to *caritas* and *amicitia*.[101]

What interests us the most, however, is his forthcoming explanation of the three ways to express truth according to *prudentia* and self-awareness. In the first place, there is the coupling of "dutiful boasting" (*iactantia officiosa*) and "dutiful irony" (*ironia officiosa*) that has been mentioned before. Following Plutarch, Maffei defends boasting when circumstances require the speaker to recall his or her achievements in order to make a statement. This should be done, he affirms, without provoking envy or disaffection in the listener. Irony is an acceptable form of honesty when it is directed to acquire or manifest truth, for instance, when Socrates says that he knows nothing.[102] A second form of *honestas* can be found in silence (*taciturnitas*), traditionally considered the safest form of prudence, that is, to speak little and only when the opportunity recommends doing so.[103] In his garnering of adages and apophthegmata, Maffei draws heavily from the most popular collections of the time, both classical and contemporary: Plutarch's

[101] *De honesto* [11.] *De loquendi libertate*: "Loquendi etiam libertas, quam Graeci παρρησίαμ vocant, ad veritatem pertinere videtur. Est enim philosophorum et perfectorum hominum, sicuti Diogenes ad Alexandrum, et ex nostris Nathan ad David, Helias ad Achab, Heliseus ad Ioram palam criminibus variis obnoxios reprehenderunt. Sunt tamen qui illam impudenter exerceant, ut Thersites homericus, et Drances virgilianus, ut Demochares, Demosthenis nepos…. Hanc igitur ob causam, magis quam ob ebrietatem, Alexander Clitum interfecit, quod audientibus multis eum vituperasset. Aristomenes quoque Ptolemai praeceptor, quod eum dormientem praesentibus legatis excitasset, ab eodem necatus est…. Deinde ne irati moneamus, ut magis ex libidine nostra impelli quam ex amici charitate videamur." Fols. 409v–410r.

[102] The problem is also appraised by Francesco Patrizi da Siena in *De regno et regis institutione libri IX* 2.11. *Dicteria, prudentie condita sale principibus honesta*, 87–88. Maffei adds to Socrates the examples of Samuel and David: "apud nostros quoque Samuel ad immolandum domino venisse se ait, cum potiorem causam aliam haberet, et hoc facere nihilominus decrevisset. David quoque Saulis servuum sibi insidiantem dicebat, cum Saul potius ei insidiaretur, I. Reg. XVIII. Praeterea Abraami de coniuge, et aliorum multa huiuscemodi."

[103] "Plato ait civitatem Atheniensium omnes Graeci existimant esse, ut philologam, id est, variae doctrinae, ita et polylogam, id est, multarum legum, magis quam polylogam. Laconicum igitur genus, pro brevi capiunt, ut Philippus Macedo cum peteret ab eis, an eum in urbem recipere vellent, rescripserunt tantum literis maiusculis 'NON,' author Plutarchus Περὶ ἀδολεσχίας. Ubi etiam [*De garrulitate* 21, *Mor.* 513a–b] tris ponit responsionum modos: unum necessarium, ut interrogatus, 'est ne intus Socrates?' dicat tantum, 'est.' Secundum ad iucunditatem, quando dicit: 'Intus est, nunc fere ingressus.' Tertium ad nugationem, ut quando plura alia adduntur non interrogata, neque ad rem pertinentia. Ex quo dicit: 'plus fastidii adferre virum bonum alioquin inepte et intempestive loquentem, quam pravum et indoctum, tempestive.' Sed iam nostros adeamus. Ambrosius, De officis: 'silendi patientia, opportunitas loquendi et contentus [*sic*, *sc.* contemptus] divitiarum, maxima sunt virtutum fundamenta.' Isidorus: 'si cupis tuas augere virtutes, prodere noli, nec loquaris nisi interrogatus, nec prius quam audias.' Denique David in toto psalmorum libro, nihil pocius [*sic*] quam linguae innocentiam ac silentium petit, aut extollit. Brevitate sermonis inter Romanos maxime…." *De honesto* [12.] *De taciturnitate*, fol. 411r.

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*De garrulitate*, Stobaeus's *Eclogae*, and Filippo Beroaldo's *Commentaries on Apuleius's Golden Ass* and his *Oratio proverbialis*;[104] however, he also mentions two deities, Harpocrates and Angerona, that will have an unexpected fortune in Renaissance letters.[105] The third and last form of *honestas* is, compared to the other two, an immediate manifestation of truth. In his definition of this virtuous *parrhesia*, it is clear that Maffei is considering it as opposed to its hateful counterpart. Consequently, this *parrhesia* stems from *caritas*, is marked by its purposefulness, and is distinctive of philosophers and righteous men. Linked here to anger, not irascibility, *parrhesia* is an expression that violates *decorum* and undermines authority for the sake of friendship, virtue, and truth.[106]

[104] F. Beroaldo, *Apuleius cum commento Beroaldi et figuris noviter additis*, ed. Celio Calcagnini (Venice, 1516), fol. 157v; *Orationes, Praelectiones, Praefationes, et quaedam Mythicae Historiae Philippi Beroaldi: Item plusculae Angeli Politiani, Hermolai Barbari, atque una Iasonis Maini Oratio; quibus addenda sunt varia eiusdem Philippi Beroaldi opuscula: ut de terrae motu et alia addi solita: cum epigrammatis et eorum commentariis* (Paris, 1515), fols. 56v–57v.

[105] "Diogenes cuidam philosopho, qui contentiosus aliquid disserebat: 'Miser,' inquit, 'quod optimum in vita philosophi ac praecipuum verbis philosophando corrumpis.' Aegypti Harpocratem mutorum deum celebrabant, Romani vero Angeronam deam cum digito ad os adalligato in ara Volupiae colebant, quod videlicet silentium magnam in posterum voluptatem praestaret." *De honesto* [12.] *De taciturnitate*, fol. 410v.

[106] "Loquendi etiam libertas, quam greci παρρησίαμ vocant, ad veritatem pertinere videtur. Est enim philosophorum et perfectorum hominum, sicuti Diogenes ad Alexandrum, et ex nostris Nathan ad David, Helias ad Achab, Heliseus ad Ioram palam criminibus variis obnoxios reprehenderunt…. Quapropter Socrates dicebat, ut scribit Stobeus, 'Sicuti nec gladium obtusum ad incidendum, ita nec loquendi libertatem sine effectu aut utilitate esse oportere, ut non odio magis quam iudicio contendere videamur,' eamque ex disciplina non tradi, sed ex natura. Aristonymus dicebat: 'sicuti mel gustu quidem dulce ulcera mordet ac sanat, sic sermo philosophicus.' Eusebius: 'Fiducia,' inquit, 'loquendi a libero animo veritatemque amante procedit, hoc praestabis si non cuicunque nec semper putabis convicium aut obiurgationem facere, sed pro tempore personis et modis.' … Diogenes recte apud Platonem: 'Quid,' inquit, 'utilitatis philosophus adfert, si neminem in dicendo mordet? Melle igitur utatur oportet apud exulceratus et medicina egentes homines' [Stobaeus, 3.13.68, Plut., *De disc. adulatore ab amico* 17, *Mor.* 59d]. Plutarchus insuper in libro de vero amico et adulatore [36, *Mor.* 74c] multa praeclare ad hoc propositum disserit ex quibus nos pauca in medium adducemus: 'Diogenes,' inquit, 'dicere solebat quod aut benevolentissimos amicos, aut infestissimos inimicos habere oportet; alteri enim monent, altero vero redarguunt.' … Sed haec veritas multas habet cautiones. Primum ne praeterita reprehendamus quae corrigi nequeunt, quum sit opus potius inimicorum. Deinde ut modestiae gratia nosipsos simul in eadem culpa connumeremus…. Non enim amici, sed sophistae officium est ut a praesentibus laudetur, alienis erroribus exornari, veluti chirurgi faciunt, qui artificium coram multis ostentant…. Haec enim veritas inter amicos pars potissima …' fols. 409v–410r. Following his custom, Agostino Nifo copies almost verbatim the second part of the passage in his *De re aulica: La filosofia nella corte*, ed. and trans. Ennio de Bellis (Milan, 2010), 205–7.

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## Maffei's *De Honesto* and the Transformation of Renaissance *Parrhesia* in the Early Reformers

Maffei's compendium on *honestas* was directly related to the classical problem of how the philosopher should talk to men in power, a much cherished topic to Renaissance humanists from Petrarch onwards that saw a number of revivals, thanks partly to the recovery first in manuscript, thereafter in print, of Plutarch's *Moralia*.[107] According to the parameters presented in the pages above, it can easily be argued that these questions were adaptable and expandable to the realm of politics and society, and, as such, they could offer some important hints at how Renaissance humanists manifested the need for reformation of the Church during the first two decades of the sixteenth century. It is important, nonetheless, to stress that I do not intend to close these pages by suggesting the direct influence of Maffei on the examples that I am going to provide — something that would have horrified him;[108] moreover, I do not intend to present the *De honesto* as a *vade mecum* for moderate and radical reformers to express their truth. Rather, I would like to emphasize the observation that book 28 of the *Commentaries* embodies some commonly accepted notions on communication, truth, and power that, on the one hand, should be read as a reformulation of late medieval and renaissance ideas on (*bona*) *contentio* presented under a classicist guise, and on the other, that book 28 should be considered as the first systematic defense of oblique contrivance to advocate for the truth. As such, it shall be

[107] *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum* (*Περὶ τοῦ ὅτι μάλιστα τοῖς ἡγεμόσι δεῖ τὸν φιλόσοφον διαλέγεσθαι*, *Mor.* 776a–779c). It was a well-known opuscule of Plutarch during the *Quattrocento*, frequently cited by humanists and translated into Latin by Teodoro Gaza. See Claudio Bevegni, "Teodoro Gaza traduttore del *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum* di Plutarco: Primi appunti per un'edizione critica con particolare riguardo alla lettera dedicatoria ad Andrea Bussi," in *Mosaico: Studi in onore di Umberto Albini*, ed. Simonetta Feraboli (Genoa, 1993), 33–42. The most popular translation during the first half of the sixteenth century was that of Erasmus (ASD 4.2: 225–31), who published it under the title *Cum principibus maxime philosophum debere disputare*. Erasmus's rendering was published for the first time in 1513 at Badius Ascensius's press in Paris, and not in 1514 in Basel as was previously supposed. See Erika Rummel, *Erasmus as a Translator of the Classics* (Toronto, 1985), 73. See my discussion on this edition in Jorge Ledo, "Erasmus's Translations of Plutarch's *Moralia* and the Ascensian princeps of *ca.* 1513," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 68 (2019), forthcoming.

[108] Erasmus had a copy of Maffei's *Commentaries* in his private library: F. Husner, "Die Bibliothek des Erasmus," in *Gedenkschrift zum 400. Todestage des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, Historische und antiquarische Gesellschaft zu Basel (Basel, 1936), §284, 242; A. Vanautgaerden, "Item ein schöne Bibliothec mit eim Register: Un deuxième inventaire de la Bibliothèque d'Érasme (à propos du manuscrit C via 71 de la Bibliothèque Universitaire de Bâle)," in *Les humanistes et leur bibliothèque: Actes du Colloque international, Bruxelles, 26–28 août 1999*, ed. Rudolf de Smet (Leuven, 2002), §284, 105. And so did Calcagnini: Antonella Gighnoli, *"Chartacea supellex": L'inventario dei libri di Celio Calcagnini* (Rome, 2016), §§697–99, 204.

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useful to analyse and understand the relation of truth and anger with literature, philosophy, and theology at the beginning of the sixteenth century [fig. 6].

Thus, the finest example of the use of *iactantia officiosa* and *ironia officiosa* appeared in print no later than five years after the impression of the first edition of Maffei's *Commentaries*: Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* (Paris, 1511). However, there is no straightforward link of Erasmus's work to the tradition of the paradoxical encomium, and what has been traditionally attributed to Erasmus's character sheds dubious light on the matter. In any case, Maffei's framework of paradox is worth considering in this connection. As is well known, Erasmus received around 1514 a letter from a student of theology from the University of Louvain and a former famulus, Maarten van Dorp, in which he is questioned about the rationale for writing a work like the *Praise of Folly*.[109] Erasmus, in his extensive response to the letter, sent in May 1515, proposes the following explanation:

> Nor was the end I had in view in my Folly different in any way from the purpose of my other works, though the means differed. In the Enchiridion I laid down quite simply the pattern of a Christian life. In my book on the education of a prince I openly expound the subjects in which a prince should be brought up. In my *Panegyricus*, though under cover of praising a prince, I pursue indirectly the same subject that I pursued openly in the earlier work. And the Folly is concerned in a playful spirit with the same subject as the *Enchiridion*. My purpose was guidance and not satire; to help, not to hurt; to show men how to become better and not to stand in their way.[110]

In sum, Erasmus links two pairs of his works according to how they express their content, implicitly or explicitly. If the *Institutio principis Christiani* (1516), dedicated to young Charles V, is a treatise that lays the foundations necessary to become a virtuous king, the *Panegyricus ad Philippum Austriae ducem* (1504), under the pretext of a praise of Philip I of Castile, is in reality a rhetorical desideratum that in its adulation does not portray Philip himself, but rather the image of what Philip could be in the hope that the rhetorical formula exert traction on the object of praise. With regard to the second two, the *Enchiridion* (1501) and the *Moria* (1509–11) (the former is an exhortation to an anonymous person), Erasmus himself will mention in his letters that the first work had been written on behalf of a Christian wife worried by her husband, a quarrelsome, womanizing, heavy-drinking soldier, an exhortation to embrace the Christian faith from the interior to the exterior — in short, a catechism — while the latter is a fictive lecture delivered by a goddess in a classroom in the Sorbonne in front of a large group of students and professors of theology, where the topic is exactly the same although

[109] Allen II, 304; CWE 3: 17–23.
[110] CWE 3: 114–15, lines 93–101; Allen II, 337, 86–94.

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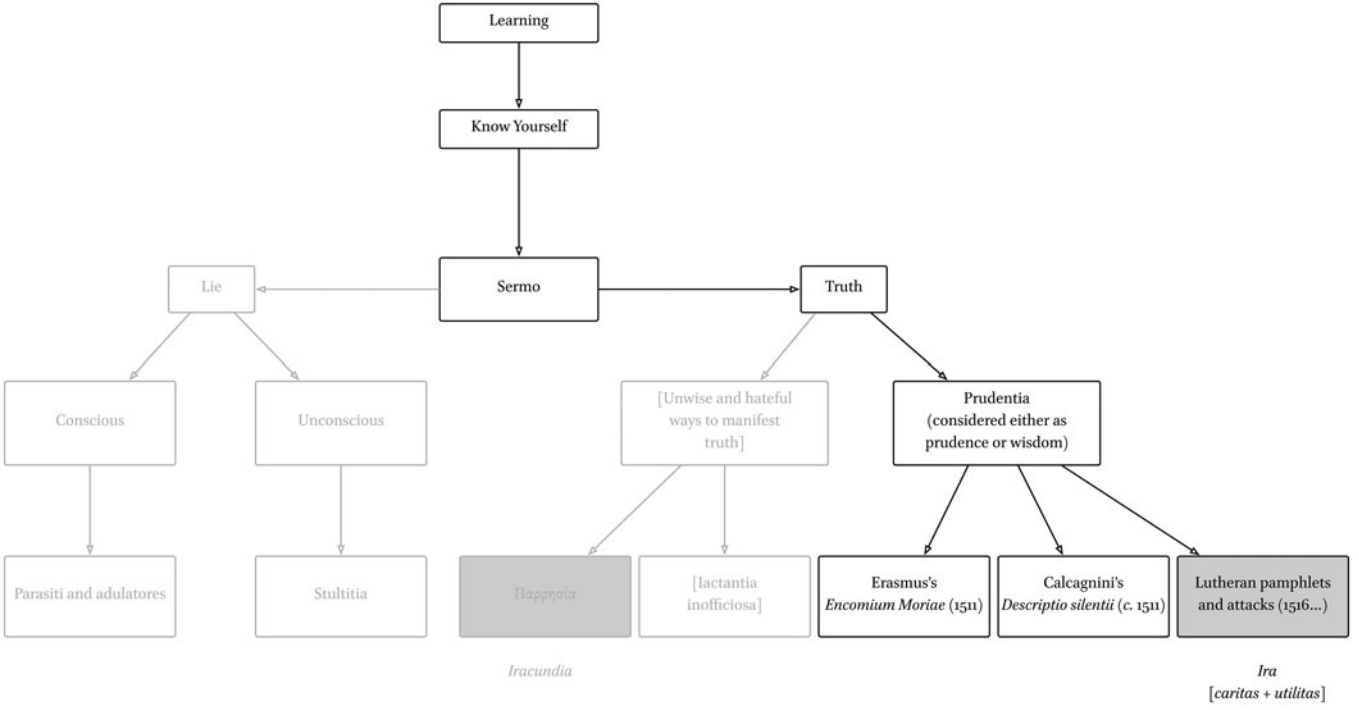


Fig. 6. Epilogue. The systematization of *parrhesia* according to Raffaele Maffei applied to the main literature of contestation from the second decade of the sixteenth century (1510–20).

presented from the opposite perspective. A bit further in Erasmus's response to Dorp, we read the following:

> And they [the theologians] act their absurd parts, more farcical than the original Atellanes, without a mask. I was at least more modest, for when I wanted to show how ill-judged I could be, I wore the mask of Folly, and, like Socrates in Plato, who covers his face before reciting an encomium on love, I myself acted my part in disguise.[111]

So we must concur — whether we follow Maffei or not — that we are in front of a paradox. Confronted with the contrast of "true" doctrine with the mask that corresponds to Maffei's *ironia officiosa*, we are pointed directly at the intention of the author, that is, who is hidden and what aim is concealed behind the *persona* in the fable. In other words, we perceive that a lie is in play, whether under the veil of rhetorical formulas that embody the panegyric, or under the cloak of fiction, which in certain contexts (apparently) could not be true, and yet, nonetheless, is the only way to manifest truth, that is, *honestas*.

But Erasmus is going well beyond this paradox in the *Praise of Folly*. If we come back to Maffei [figs. 5 and 6], it is evident that not only does he protect himself, but he also protects his own mask. For this reason, he creates a paradox inside the paradox. What Folly (*stultitia*) says must necessarily be a lie, but an unconscious one, which, as stated by the scholastic theologians who are attacked by Folly herself, is not even a sin.[112] On the other hand, insofar as Folly (*stultitia*) is by definition imprudent, she presents herself without a filter (παρρησία), and accordingly her *iactantia* is skewed or poorly judged, which does not imply that what she says is untrue. Lastly, Erasmus the author has created, in the tradition of Socrates and Plato, a mask employing irony according to the topic he faced; therefore, he has manifested truth prudently, wisely, and honestly. But this position also has

[111] CWE 3: 116–17, lines 162–66; Allen II, 337, 154–58.

[112] In scholastic theology, there was no guilt when a sin was commited due to "invincible ignorance" (*invincibilis ignorantia*) — P. Abelard, *Ethics*, ed. and trans. D. E. Luscombe (Oxford, 1971), 62–66; Aquinas, *Super Sent*. II, dist. 22, q. 2, a. 2, c, and *Summ. Theol*. I–II q. 76 a. 3 ad 3. Because ignorance did not depend upon the will, but on (the lack of) knowledge. The idea became a commonplace. See, for example, Bonaventure, *Opera omnia:* Tomus II. *Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*. Tomus II. *In secundum librum Sententiarum*, ed. PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura (Ad Claras Aquas, 1885), 514a–b, 521–27, and 724–26; J. Duns Scotus, *Opera Omnia*, III [Lyon, 1639] (Hildesheim, 1968), 451b, and *Opera omnia*, VI. 2 [Lyon, 1639] (Hildesheim,1968), 1061a; Gregorio de Rimini, *Lectura super primum et secundum Sententiarum*, VI. *Super secundum (Dist. 24–44)*, ed. A. Damasus Trapp and Venicio Marcolino (Berlin, 1980), 148–49; William of Ockham, *Opera philosophica et theologica*, *Opera theologica* VIII, ed. Girardus I. Etzkorn, Frank E. Kelley, and Joseph C. Wey (St. Bonaventure, NY, 1984), 354, cf. 365–66. For the nature of the debate on "invincible ignorance" among the Oxford Dominicans, see Hester Goodenhough Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise: Contingency and Necessity in Dominican Theology at Oxford, 1300-1350* (Leiden, 2004), 267–307.

important consequences for the understanding of authorial responsibility during the Renaissance. As attacks against the *Praise of Folly* became more bitter and fierce during the 1520s and the 1530s, Erasmus will progressively abandon in his justifications of the work the argument *sub persona*, that is, that he is using a mask to present truth, to substitute truth — if I may use the image — with an automaton, so that Folly may oscillate within the bounds of *stultitia*, spiteful truth, and undue boasting without requiring an author who takes responsibility for her words.

In 1509, the same year that the *Praise of Folly* was being written, Celio Calcagnini, a good friend of Erasmus,[113] probably furnished the finest example of the second technique to present truth according to Maffei: the *Descriptio silentii*.[114] The opuscule is, even today, poorly known to scholars of the Renaissance, despite its undeniable value as an introduction to the parameters from which the ideas of silence developed in sixteenth-century Europe. Built upon the *Tablet of Cebes*, Calcagnini transforms his literary model by locating at the center of the ascent to virtue the god Harpocrates, extolling the importance of learning to remain silent after acquiring an education in the liberal arts as the only way to obtain wisdom as the path to happiness. Although at first sight the *Descriptio* seems to be an apology of silence, which can be easily outlined in accordance with Maffei's *De honesto* [fig. 5], one fascinating aspect of the work

[113] On the friendship between Erasmus and Calcagnini, which started with the visit of the former to Ferrara in 1508, see Danilo Aguzzi-Barbagli's "Celio Calcagnini of Ferrara, 17 September 1479–24 April 1541" in Peter G. Bietenholz and Thomas Brian Deutscher, *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*. 1. *A–E* (Toronto, 1985), 242–43, and Richard J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe: The Prince of Humanists, 1501–1536* (Edinburgh, 1993), 68, 257, and 304. Some interesting notes on the impact on Erasmus of Ferrarese culture of the time are presented by Giancarlo Fiorenza, *Dosso Dossi: Paintings of Myth, Magic, and the Antique* (University Park, PA, 2008), 65, 132, and 186 nn. 48 and 50.

[114] For the dating of Calcagnini's *Descriptio silentii* (490–94) (so far as I know, printed for the first time only posthumously in 1544) see my forthcoming edition and translation into English of the work. Besides Calcagnini's use of his sources, the strongest argument for proposing such an earlier time of composition is the prefatory letter to the opuscule, directed to Tommaso Fusco and unnoticed by scholars until now. Tommaso Fusco died in 1514, and from 14 October 1506 was bishop of the archdiocese of Ferrara-Comaccio (jurisdiction of Comacchio). Considering Calcagnini's appointment to the chancery of Ippolito I d'Este in 1510 after three years as a chair of Greek and Latin at the University of Ferrara, and Fusco's death in 1514, it seems plausible that the *Descriptio* was composed not before 1506 and not much later than 1510. Calcagnini also dedicated a funebrial poem to Fusco, collected in his *Apologi*, in *Caelii Calcagnini Ferrariensis, protonotarii apostolici, opera aliquot: Ad illustrissimum et excellentiss. principem D. Herculem secundum, ducem Ferrariæ quartum. Catalogum operum post præfationem inuenies, et in calce Elenchum. In dicanda enim erant retrusiora quædam ex utriusque linguae thesauris, quæ passim inferciuntur, et ad ueterum scripta intelligenda pernecessaria sunt* (Basel, 1544), 633–34.

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lies in the disposition of the elements in the picture and the selection of key concepts crafted in the ekphrasis, insofar as both allow a much more refined number of readings. For instance, it can be interpreted as a résumé sent to Fusco for Calcagnini to show off his skill as potential secretary of Ippolito I d'Este, that is, his ability to create a text that needs an equally skillful reader to fathom the hidden meanings, allusions, and correspondences embedded in an apparently conventional disguise.[115] Although for several reasons Calcagnini has been traditionally identified as a "nicodemite,"[116] and the *Descriptio* was read accordingly by some of his contemporaries, what the *Descriptio* shows is that silence can function at very different levels and not only as a tool to hide truth from inquisitive eyes, but also as a means to pile up verities and concentrate them in crafty works of art.

For the third and last example, that of the direct manifestation of truth, Luther predictably comes to mind. His fierce attacks against the Pope and the Catholic Church would be perfect examples of *bona contentio*, or, in Maffei's terms, of Renaissance *parrhesia*. Here, it is worth mentioning once more the role of Valla as a model for his attitude towards religion. However, it would also be à propos to adduce Maffei himself, who authored one of the first attacks on Luther in Italy. In his *Nasi Romani in Martinum Luterium Apologeticus* (1518–19), Maffei cannot identify Luther's attitude as parrhesiastic, insofar as it would imply that he is expressing truth. Rather, he addresses Luther in the following way. First and foremost, he refuses to associate Luther either with the medieval culture of disputation (*contentio*) or with the Renaissance tradition of arguing

[115] Calcagnini (490) states in his prefatory letter that the *Descriptio* was, in fact, a request made by Fusco: "You have imposed on me, most excellent Thomas, an excessive and utterly difficult task: to praise silence, something that can only be done by remaining silent. Hence, someone rather more cunning could strike back at me with my occurrence — I talk whilst I would heed the others that keep their mouths shut. I do expect, nonetheless, that both my obedience to you and your affection for me could easily dilute all calumny; for denying you something, most noble man, there shall be a sin. But, with perfect justice, I will emulate the Lacedaemonians talking on silence, and I would rather not be considered to be deviating from my intention, since silence and talking minimally are closest. Farewell, remember your Celio. (Rem arduam ac prorsus difficilem proposuisti mihi, Thoma uir maxime, laudandum scilicet silentium, quod nemo faxit qui sileat. Proinde quispiam paulo argutior possit me meo calculo replodere qui garriam dum caeteris tacendum consulam. Spero tamen meam in te obseruantiam, tuamque in me pietatem posse omnes calumnias facile diluere, tibi enim uiro undecunque absolutissimo quippiam negare, piaculum esto. Sed, iure optimo, de silentio uerba faciens Laconas aemulabor, ne uidear omnino a proposito diuertere, proximum enim est tacere ac loqui paucissima. Bene uale, tui Caelii memor)"; I use here my forthcoming edition and translation of the text.

[116] I am referring to the classic studies on the topic by Carlo Ginzburg, *Il Nicodemismo: Simulazione e dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa del 500* (Turin, 1970), 163–65 and Albano Biondi, "La giustificazione della simulazione nel Cinquecento," in *Eresia e riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento: Miscellanea* I (Florence, 1974), 61–65, which do not mention the *Descriptio* as a nicodemitic manifesto.

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on both sides of the question (*in utramque partem*). Nonetheless, he recognizes Luther's position as directly inherited from Augustinian voluntarism.[117] Maffei's degree of appreciation here is quite important, in that his efforts to deny early Lutheranism the status of partaking in the Renaissance culture of communication as presented in these pages do not challenge my argument for continuity in an essential way, but rather confirm that the long evolution from *contentio* to *parrhesia* provides a crucial yet densely complicated background to the communication ethics of the Reformation. Many Renaissance intellectuals and contemporary scholars will concur with the fact that both Catholics and Reformers considered that the *Encomium Moriae* of Erasmus paved the way for Luther. Actually, it is possible that the tensions between Erasmus and Luther in the years from 1519 to 1524, beyond their differing approaches to dogma and institutions, can be read as a whole as a polemical exchange on two ways to express truth and the basis for reform, which is intrinsically linked to the history of the evolution of *contentio*. But this, I am afraid, would be another story.

[117] See the *Nasi Romani in Martinum Luterium Apologeticus* (ca. 1518–19) of Raffaele Maffei, extant only in manuscript form and critically edited by Luca D'Ascia, "Martin Lutero e il 'Genio Romano': L'*Apologeticus* di Raffaele Maffei; Studio ed edizione," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 29 (1993): 128–29: "Et quamquam fides eloquiumque sacrum nec philosophia nec dialectica ad suam propriam requirit auctoritatem, attamen ut res melius ac luculentius in contradicendo videantur et ut debiliores credendo non erret aut adversariorum argumentis apparentibus non opprimantur, ita nostri per disputationem in utramque partem restituunt ut non pugnantia, 'non contra naturam' neu contra ius fasque sentientes ut illi opponunt nos christiani Petro sic iubente 'precepto' simus nostre fidej rationem reddere paratij. Talem itaque modum a maioribus neglectum Alexander de Ales in scholis fidelium introduxit longe postmodo locupletiorem Aquinas reddidit Hunc ergo simul cum ceteris refellere tu audes teque omnibus his et auctoritate et doctrina hoc modo preferre? Nam qui explodit se pociorem exploso reiectoque facit: Tu inquam Theologus Aquilonius frigus in corde patrium gerens litteram in hac parte non spiritum sapiens, lector non degustator: scholasticus ipse potius qui alios hoc nomine taxas appellari dignus Est enim scholastici proprium luxuriantis vigore ingenij ac de schola recentis: famae potius quam alicuius utilitatis, itemque exercitationis magis quam veritatis inquirendae studio multa supervacua iactare. Tyrones more qui veteranos imprudenter avidus gloriae provocat. Sive indomiti equi qui per avia dumosque erecta iuba fremens ac freni adhuc indocilis errat, seu vitulj ferocioris et iam pedibus spargentis arenam et cornu matrem petentis. Causam igitur videamus cur tantos ac tales non recipit Martinus Quod inquis que si nec per Canones neque per Concilia decreta sunt tibj dissentire liceat ac eatenus credere qua ingenio sensuique tuo quadrare videatur: Per me quoque tibj licebit si Augustino similis 'esses' idem de se quodam loco refenti fueris. Hoc iure suo ille quidem quod ante ipsum nihil sacris a doctoribus scriptum suis fortasse comparandum Eius primum commentari sententiaeque iurj canonico et universae theologiae fundamenta iecerunt. Huic tu te similem facis? Post eum secutos omnes derides? Doctoremque hoc modo Quintum illis priscis constituere videris?"

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## Conclusion

Few scholars would deny that the legacy of the late medieval period weighs heavily on the shoulders of the humanists and reformers of the new epoch. Although today we enjoy the fruits of centuries of scholarly research into the immensely complicated background of the Reformation, there is still much work to be done on the evolving theory (or theories) of communication that opened the way for the new ethical and philosophical horizons of truth and anger that shaped the Reformation and other currents of European intellectual life. As I have argued in this contribution, the evolution and contours of *contentio* as a sin of the tongue, its transformation in the hands of Lorenzo Valla, and the systematic treatment of *parrhesia* at the beginning of sixteenth century provide crucial yet neglected features in the cultural terrain of the Renaissance, pointing the way to a reevaluation of the theory of communication as an essential aspect of these intellectual developments. The perennial interplay of argument and literary artistry would never be the same.

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