

# THE EVOLUTION OF THE NOTION OF *COMPARATIO* IN THE DIALECTICAL WORKS OF VALLA, AGRICOLA, AND VIVES

MATTEO GIANGRANDE

**Abstract:** This paper provides an account of the evolution of the notion of *comparatio* in the main dialectical works of Valla, Agricola, and Vives. It highlights the elements of continuity and discontinuity and sheds light on the original contributions of Vives's treatment. In Valla, Agricola and Vives, the notion of *comparatio* characterizes: a) the locus of the relation to another in the *inventio* method; b) the cognitive act through which one can grasp the relationships of similarity and difference between concepts; c) the epistemic method for weighing the degree of plausibility of probable arguments. The paper also shows how Vives enhances the role of *comparatio* within dialectical art. Firstly, he attributes a pre-eminent position to the locus of the *comparatio* by virtue of the transversality of its application to all the other loci. Secondly, he identifies the explanation of the key concept of syllogism in the act of compering two sentences with a third. Finally, he finds the essence of the *disputatio* in the method of comparing equally probable contradictory arguments. This can rightly be considered an innovative element of the Vivesian dialectical treatment with respect to the most advanced European humanist movement of the first decades of the sixteenth century.

**Keywords:** Juan Luis Vives; Rudolf Agricola; comparative method; *inventio* method; humanistic dialectic.

## 1. Introduction

In a 2008 essay dedicated to Juan Luis Vives's contributions to rhetoric and dialectics, Peter Mack stated that, although the Vivesian conception of dialectics has solid foundations both in Aristotelian logic and in Rudolf Agricola's *De inventione dialectica libri tres*, and although it expresses positions common amongst the humanists of the 1520s, Vives understands and uses some themes in a more advanced and original way than his contemporaries. The

first innovative concept identified by Mack in Vives's dialectical work, specifically with respect to the thematization of the *inventio*, is *comparatio*.<sup>1</sup> Mack recognized and specified that, in the humanistic attempt to combine dialectics and rhetoric, a renewed emphasis on the role of comparison in the rhetorical analysis of writing style is not a cause for surprise.<sup>2</sup> Consider, as a paradigmatic example, Erasmus's use of comparison in *De copia* as a technique of rhetorical and stylistic amplification to impress the audience.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, according to Mack, there is an element of originality in the Vivesian characterization of the notion of *comparatio* that lies in the way Vives employs it in the treatment of dialectics and in it, of the *inventio* method.

A specific research question of an historical nature that relates to the adoption of the notion of *comparatio* in the treatment of dialectics within European humanism derives from this observation. Specifically, we will try to outline what Vives's innovative use of the theme of comparison consists of with respect to what are considered his main sources on dialectics, Valla and Agricola,<sup>4</sup> authors "generally held responsible, each in his way, of having inaugurated the transformation of the Aristotelian-Scholastic logic into a humanist dialectic,"<sup>5</sup> which rejected the idea of abstracting language from the living context in which it functions.

---

1 MACK 2008, 247–250. Not only the judgment of historiography, but also Vivesian positions on dialectics appear ambivalent. On the originality of Vives as a philosopher of the language of the Renaissance, see COSERIU 1971, 234. For a critique of Vives's contribution to dialectics, see BROADIE 1993, 192–206. The 'tensions' in Vives's thoughts on language and dialectics are situated in the more general context of the humanistic critique of school abstractions in NAUTA 2015, 325–345.

2 MACK 2001, 3.

3 ERASMUS 1978, 593.

4 See WASWO 1987, 113–133.

5 NAUTA 2007, 193. It has been shown that the idea of an 'apostolic succession' in the humanist logic between Valla and Agricola distorts history. MONFASANI 1990, 182. Mack observes that in the sixteenth century, "Valla was read through Agricola": rather than being a source of inspiration for the North European humanist reformers of dialectics, Valla's study was only of occasional interest. MACK 1983, 58–72.

Although the *comparatio* is a canonical topic of *inventio*, to our knowledge there are no specific treatments in the field of the history of Renaissance logic and rhetoric on this concept's evolution.<sup>6</sup> We have found no treatment of the theme of *comparatio* in the authoritative studies that Ashworth and Jardine dedicated to logic and late medieval and humanistic dialectics.<sup>7</sup> Nauta's study of Valla's dialectical work mentioned *comparatio* in a cursory manner, while Mack dwelled at greater length on the function of *comparatio* in Agricola, but did not highlight his methodological implications fully.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, to achieve our goal, we will analyze the use of the notion of *comparatio* in the main works amongst those dedicated to dialectics first by both the Italian humanist and the Dutch humanist, and attempt to outline some of its distinctive features. Next, we will describe the use of the notion of *comparatio* in Vives's dialectical works. Finally, we will compare the different characterizations of the notion to identify both its continuous and discontinuous aspects.

## **2. *Comparatio* in Lorenzo Valla's *Repastinatio dialectice et philosophie***

*Comparatio* in Valla's dialectic work, the *Repastinatio dialectice et philosophie* – a reform<sup>9</sup> of the Aristotelian-Scholastic dialectic animated by the “desire to make logic conform to real language,”<sup>10</sup> to its ordinary use,<sup>11</sup> and in accord-

---

6 Although it derives from the contours of this essay, we point out Peter Mack's study of Agricola's use of the comparison between writing and the visual arts, such as painting. Echoing Alberti, Agricola believes that the clarity and vividness of painting as a spatial medium facilitates the understanding of the written text as a temporal medium. See MACK 1992, 179.

7 ASHWORTH 1974; JARDINE 2008.

8 MACK 1993, 161–165.

9 Nauta stated that Valla's critique of scholastic philosophy rests “inside and outside the Aristotelian paradigm,” NAUTA 2009, 268.

10 MACK 1993, 94.

11 “The only truly authoritative *consuetudo sermonis* for Valla was the literary practice of

ance with common oratory practice,<sup>12</sup> can mean either ‘relation to other’, or ‘relationship of similarity’, or express the modalities to determine the ‘specific difference’ between subjects of the same genus or the degree of the plausibility of a ‘probable demonstration’.

The first use of the notion of *comparatio* allows us to appreciate the intrinsic relation Valla drew between the grammatical rules of the Latin language and the fundamental structures of logic and ontology. First, in addressing predicaments and transcendentals and recognizing Aristotle’s invention of categories and following, not without misunderstandings,<sup>13</sup> the Latin translation of the Greek philosophical vocabulary Quintilian proposed,<sup>14</sup> Valla uses the notion of *comparatio* to capture the category of the ‘relation to other’.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, explaining the attempt to reduce predicaments, or substance, quality, or action,<sup>16</sup> Valla addresses comparative adjectives and the nature of the term comparison: specifically, starting from grammatical observations, he demonstrates that comparative adjectives do not fall under the category of substance, but under that of quality, as one can be more

---

the best authors, not ordinary language in the modern sense,” MONFASANI 1989, 323. While noting that it would be anachronistic to interpret the *Repastinatio* in the light of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of ordinary language, Nauta observed that both Valla and the philosophy of ordinary language have a common “fundamental belief according to which philosophical problems derive from the misunderstanding of language,” NAUTA 2009, 288.

12 As it is intended to propel the opponent or the public onto the battlefield of the disputation, the argument is analysed from a rhetorical, not a logical perspective. NAUTA 2009, 211 and 239.

13 MACK 1993, 74–80.

14 QUINT. *Inst.* 3.6.23–24.

15 “‘Ad aliquid’, unde ducte translatio et comparatio,” VALLA 1982, 10.

16 Nauta characterizes this attempt, differentiating it from that of Ockham’s nominalism, as “the cutting of a useless ‘superstructure’ of technical jargon and empty concepts by reducing them [...] to the basic elements of a common sense worldview,” NAUTA 2007, 194. On the relationship between Ockham and Valla, see NAUTA 2003, 613–651. Mack questioned the success of the operation: “The attempt to develop these positions and avoid further difficulties led Valla to contradictions that he was not willing to acknowledge,” MACK 1993, 58.

or less white, but not more or less man,<sup>17</sup> although there are qualities, and therefore adjectives, such as being odd, or three, or full, which, because they are not comparable, do not assume the comparative.<sup>18</sup> Further, in addressing quantifiers, he observes that when the term of the comparison is not a single individual or certain individuals, but ‘all’ of the other individuals within a genus, the comparison takes the grammatical form of the superlative.

Therefore, with the category of *comparatio* and through the comparative adjectives, the degree of certain specific qualities of a substance or set of substances or actions in relation to each other or another set of substances or actions, which serve as a term of comparison because they belong to the same genus, can be grasped and expressed.

A second general meaning of *comparatio* in Valla’s dialectical work is ‘analogy’, or ‘relationship of similarity’. Numerous occurrences with this meaning are found in the textual *corpus* of the *Repastinatio*. Let us mention only one significant example: to explain the function of virtue or knowledge as a means to achieve the goal of bliss, Valla uses the ‘similarity’ with the door of a house, which is a means to enjoy the function for which the house is built.<sup>19</sup> Valla uses *comparatio* as an analogy for largely explanatory purposes.

---

17 “Indigna sane homine erudito oratio, qui pene prima rudimenta grammatices aut oblitus videtur, aut non didicisse. ‘Magis’ enim et ‘minus’ cum nomine substantivo iungi grammatici negant, sed cum adiectivo aut quod vim optineat adiectivi, cum quo iunctum adverbium illud ‘magis’ instar est nominis comparativi quod nunquam substantivum est: ‘magis doctus’ unde fit ‘doctior’, ‘minus doctus’ unde forsitan dici posset fieri ‘indoctior’. Ex ‘homine’ autem cum non fiat ‘hominior’, ineptum fuit dicere ‘homo magis homo’ et ‘minus homo’, et non recipere substantiam ‘magis’ et ‘minus’, sicut recipit qualitas,” VALLA 1982, 157.

18 “Sicut autem substantiva recipiunt nonnunquam ‘magis’ et ‘minus’, ita nonnunquam adiectiva non recipiunt – non dico usu, quale est Romanus, Italus, Poenus (et si Plautus dixit ‘nemo est me Poenus Poenior’ si modo adiectivum est Poenus), sed etiam natura et rei veritate, ut impari imparius, cubitali cubitalius, triplici triplicius, pleno plenius, rotundo rotundius, quibus, ad exactissimam veritatis legem ac Stoicam loquentes, non uteremur. Et ut inquit Cicero, non ad aurificis stateram, sed ad popularem quandam trutinam,” VALLA 1982, 160.

19 “Utque humiliore utar comparatione, sicuti ianua domus et gradus scalarum non eum

He characterizes the Aristotelian demonstration of the wishful relation between matter and form as ‘analogical’, ‘related’ to that, and equally desirable between, male and female.<sup>20</sup> Again, he disputes the ‘similarity’ that Aristotle indicates between the visibility of colours through light and the audibility of treble and bass through sound.<sup>21</sup> Sounds and light are not comparable, because, while treble and bass are species of the genus sound, colors are not species of light, but are themselves a genus.<sup>22</sup> In short, there is no ‘proportion’, the ontological equivalence that allows comparability. A further paradigmatic example of the use of *comparatio* to express an analogical relation is found when Valla addresses the ordering of the individual parts of the syllogism, and compares the major and minor premise of the syllogism to flour and water as ingredients in bread.<sup>23</sup> Finally, even the ‘parables’, short narratives from which teaching of a moral nature is deduced, are, in accordance with the teachings of Quintilian and the Ciceronian denomination [*collatio*], comparisons intended as rhetorical arguments based upon analogy with an exemplary case, but in which the terms of comparison are very distant.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, a second sense of *comparatio* in Valla captures a relation of similarity, affinity, and conformity between two objects, situations, or concepts. This relation can certainly be a rhetorical figure, as when comparisons are established and parables are told, but also a dialectical procedure, such

---

prestant usum in quem domus ipsa inventa est, ita virtus seu passio atque doctrine non sunt voluptas ac beatitudo, in quem finem tendimus, sed illuc perducunt,” VALLA 1982, 97.

20 “Adice huc flosculum aristotelice probationis, ex comparatione: quod materia sic appetit formam, ut femina marem,” VALLA 1982, 111.

21 “Quia comparavi sonum splendori, non protinus probaverim illam Aristotelis comparationem, dicentis: Quemadmodum sine lumine non sunt visibiles colores, ita neque sine sono acutum et grave,” VALLA 1982, 121.

22 LAFFRANCHI 1999, 262.

23 VALLA 1982, 282.

24 “Nam ‘parabole’, quam Cicero ‘collationem’ vocat, longius res, quae comparantur, repetere solet,” VALLA 1982, 339.

that because of two elements' similarity in some respects, it can be assumed that there are similarities in other respects as well. Then, it is noted that the very possibility of comparison (in a dialectical sense) rests in the property of the reciprocal logical-ontological correspondence between the elements, so that species can be related only with other species, not with genera, and conversely. The role of the logical-ontological categories in the analogical relation is taken to an extreme in the comparison between God and other entities. Commenting on some expressions in the sacred text to criticize the medieval theory of transcendentals, Valla notes that both God and other entities participate in being, but only God *is* in the strict sense, while the other entities *are not* in the strict sense,<sup>25</sup> as language is otherwise unable to express the immeasurable relationship between God and created things.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, on a more rhetorical level, Valla uses not reasoning by analogy, but the 'figure' of the similarity between the sun and God to illustrate the Trinitarian relationship.<sup>27</sup>

A third use of the notion of *comparatio* is related to the concept of 'specific difference'. When he discusses the topic of the definition by genus and specific difference, Valla shows the way its discovery requires the comparison of the relationship with other subjects of the same genus<sup>28</sup>. He offers an example where he reveals the difference between dialectic and rhetoric,<sup>29</sup> and

---

25 "[...] Scilicet quia Deus tantum proprie est, cui cetera comparata proprie et vere non sunt," VALLA 1982, 14.

26 "Ergo cum in rebus divinis deficiant apta verba, accommodamus ea que possumus et Deum comparamus rebus ab illo creatis," VALLA 1982, 52.

27 "[...] Sed adiungam essentiam comparaboque Patri quidem, ut iterum dicam non 'potentiam vitamque solis' sed 'solem potentem vivumque', Filio autem non 'lucem solarem' sed 'solem lucidum', Spiritui vero Sancto non 'solis ardorem' sed 'solem ardentem', eritque Pater 'Deus potens et vivus', erit Filius 'Deus sapiens', erit Spiritus Sanctus 'Deus amans'," VALLA 1982, 52. On the use of the 'comparison' in Valla in Trinitarian terminology, see LAFFRANCHI 1999, 211.

28 "'Qualis' comparisonem indicat et suo substantivo indiget," VALLA 1982, 165.

29 Indeed, this seems to clash with the Vallian idea that dialectics is to be subsumed under

compares the different ways in which both the dialectic and speaker present the syllogism: the first, naked; the second, ornate.<sup>30</sup> A second example insists more on the comparison's ability to express and allow us to appreciate differences, even semantic. Analyzing the meaning of apparently equivalent qualities, such as 'being unfair' and 'being unjust' in comparative propositions, Valla observes that a man who is 'more unjust' than another is morally more deplorable than one who 'is no longer just' compared to another: "being the most unfair" is worse than "not being the most just."<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the comparison is configured as the category and the 'topic' to find and express the specific difference between subjects belonging to the same genus and, more generally, the relevant differences between the qualities of substances or actions.

Valla's fourth, and final, use of the notion of *comparatio* is related to the modalities of 'probable demonstration' and 'topics'. In his view, as language is a vehicle for communication and debate,<sup>32</sup> arguments must be evaluated not on the basis of their formal validity, but their persuasiveness.<sup>33</sup> Referring to the authority of Cicero, and above all of Quintilian,<sup>34</sup> Valla distinguishes essentially two types of demonstration: those that are necessary and those that are credible or not inconsistent. Necessary demonstrations are relevant to logicians, while probable demonstrations are relevant to speakers. For Valla, the characteristic that distinguishes a necessary demonstration from a probable one is that the comparative degree is absent in the necessary demonstra-

---

the category of invention as one of the five subdivisions of rhetoric. Evidently, here, dialectics and rhetoric are canonically considered as a species of a single genus, that of the *artes sermocinales*.

30 "Erat enim dialectica res brevis et facilis, id quod ex comparatione rhetorice diiudicari potest," VALLA 1982, 175.

31 "Que ratio facit ut in comparatione sit apertior hec differentia, quoniam peior est vir altero 'iniustior' quam altero 'non iustior'," VALLA 1982, 222.

32 According to Valla, the degree of a thinker's intelligence is correlated with the liveliness of the debate with the authorities: see BLANCHARD 2000, 185-186.

33 NAUTA 2007, 202.

34 CIC. *Inv.* 1.29-30; 44; QUINT. *Inst.* 5.8.6.; 9.3.



tion, while the probable demonstration does have a comparative degree. This is because given that one necessary proposition, strictly speaking, may not be more necessary than another, one likely proposition may be more or less plausible than another. Every probable proposition or demonstration is such because it necessarily has one or more correlated contradictory propositions or demonstrations that are more or less probable with respect to it.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, the comparison itself is one way by which probable proof can be found. In addressing the topics, Valla defines “*apposita vel comparative*,”<sup>36</sup> those topics that show the greater from the lesser, the lesser from the greater, and the same from the same. In fact, they correspond to the arguments *a fortiori*, of the slippery slope and by analogy. In any case, the ‘comparative’ argument derives the validity of its conclusion from a premise the terms of which have a comparative relation to those of the conclusion.

However, it is interesting to highlight the way the lesser or greater probability of a demonstration, even if logically correct, can be determined only by comparing it in relation to the probability of a contradictory demonstration that serves as a term of comparison. Therefore, only the careful comparison between two probable and mutually exclusive demonstrations allows us to estimate and weigh the degree of epistemic trust that different rational agents can legitimately accord to each of them.

Ultimately, Valla’s notion of *comparatio* is constructed coherently with the remainder of his thought, beginning with a reflection on the grammatical

---

35 “Sed hae duae posteriores sunt inter se similiores et paene idem quia utraque credibiliter probat. Ideoque non immerito maximi auctores, quorum sunt Cicero et Quintilianus, duas tantum partes fecerunt sive species probationum, ut aliae sint necessariae, aliae non repugnantes sive credibiles – quarum prior ad logicos, utraque ad oratores pertinet, illa caret comparatione, haec non caret. Nam omne verisimile est alio aut maius aut minus; necessarium non est aliud alio maius minusve, ad legem veritatis, sed ad vulgarem forte consuetudinem,” VALLA 1982, 241.

36 VALLA 1982, 267.

rules and structure of the Latin language, specifically on the use of comparative adjectives. Further, because species can be related only to other species, not to genera, and conversely, comparability in a dialectical sense is based fundamentally on the logical-ontological equivalence between the terms of the comparison. For Valla, the use of comparison is essential in dialectics as part of the *inventio* because it is indispensable to both grasping and expressing the degree of certain qualities of substances and actions, and finding both similarities and specific or relevant differences between them on the part of the same genus. Further, by finding those similarities and differences, it is possible to construct arguments by analogy or, in any case, arguments in which the premises entertain a comparative relation with the conclusion. Thus, the use of comparison is essential to estimate and weigh the degree of epistemic trust that can be accorded rationally to a probable demonstration.

### 3. The *comparatio* in Rudolf Agricola's *De inventione dialectica*

The reception of Agricola's dialectical work, which was "original and underestimated" by critics,<sup>37</sup> significantly influenced those members of the Northern European Renaissance movement of the sixteenth century,<sup>38</sup> Erasmus, Vives, Melanchthon, and Ramus, who intended to replace the highly formalistic late medieval logic with a humanistic one oriented towards grammar and rhetoric.<sup>39</sup> For the humanists, 'dialectics', rather than logic, could mean

---

<sup>37</sup> MACK 1993, 120.

<sup>38</sup> Agricola's work was published 46 times between the *editio princeps* of 1515 and the last known printing (Cologne 1579). "The concentration of editions in Cologne and Paris reflects a concentration of interest in Agricola in northern France, the Netherlands and Lower Rhineland," MACK 1993, 271. On the role Erasmus played in circulating Agricola's work, see JARDINE 1994, 25. The question of the reasons for Agricola's poorer reception in Italy is interesting.

<sup>39</sup> See MACK 1993, 257–374. Mack highlighted that, unlike Melanchthon and Ramus, Agricola's focus on *inventio* and not argumentation has discouraged the development of his own dialectical school. Mack also highlights the way in which his debt to Valla has been

the study of probable argumentation (both of dialectical syllogisms and non-deductive reasoning) of topics and of disputation. Devaluing rhetoric as a sort of ‘cosmetic’ of discourse, Agricola focuses with greater completeness and care than Valla on dialectics not as judgment, but as *inventio*, topics, or discovery of arguments,<sup>40</sup> and therefore, as a method to organize and direct our cognitive processes<sup>41</sup>. From this perspective, the term ‘*comparatio*’ in Agricola’s work describes both a topic, the mental act that establishes reciprocal relations between objects and concepts, and the method through which to find and refine probable arguments and refutations, and judge their degree of likelihood.

A first, fundamental use of the notion of *comparatio* identifies a specific topic. Agricola believes that in some cases, the *comparatio*, by virtue of its comprehensibility and incisiveness, is related more to the orators’ linguistic-stylistic model,<sup>42</sup> to the rhetorical process of the *elocutio*. However, he asserts that in fact, the *comparatio* plays its principal role in the *inventio*, not only because it makes the discourse less dialectical, i.e., less tangled and quirky, but above all because it shows the peculiarities of objects that would otherwise

---

overestimated, which illustrates schematically the discontinuity between the two authors and shows that Agricola does not accept the Vallian critique of Aristotelian categories: MACK 1993, 248–249.

40 Jürgen Blusch argued that Agricola’s effort to present the ancient dialectic to contemporaries is not based upon “independence from tradition” but on “independence in relations with tradition,” for example, adapting the ancient notion of *inventio* to the attentions of the humanists. BLUSCH 1994, 371.

41 In contrast to Boethius’s theory according to which the topic should have been based upon something as uniform and inflexible as maxims, for Agricola the topic based upon categories helps us look at the object and refine and elaborate a perspective on things. MACK 1993, 166–167.

42 For Agricola, the *comparatio* is drawn from contexts that do not require in-depth research, but that are known rather well, evident, and within everyone’s reach. Thus, it has the power to engage the simplest minds quickly and impress them lastingly. Therefore, *comparatio* is topic that speakers often find useful. AGRICOLA 1992, 144. Therefore, he argues that the comparison is suited to the way that the majority thinks, that of both an incompetent and acute audience: AGRICOLA 1992, 144, 154.

have seemed similar by facilitating the development of differences in individual aspects.<sup>43</sup>

Agricola observes that there is no consensus on denomination. Grammarians call comparison “what we [dialecticians] call similitude.” On occasion, dialecticians call the example *comparatio* incorrectly, because, although the example is a comparison, the comparison is not always an example.<sup>44</sup> Agricola then calls the comparison of equality what Cicero calls similitude.<sup>45</sup>

With respect to the classification of the *loci*, the category of the *comparata* is subsumed in the *accidentia*, which in turn is subsumed in the external *loci*. They are those that are associated externally with the *res* and are articulated in *loci* that are in necessary and interdependent connection with the object, such as the *cognata* (efficient cause, final cause) and the *applicita* (place, time, connection), and in *loci* that have a contingent relation with it, the *accidentia*, or oppositional *repugnantia*.<sup>46</sup> As mentioned, for Agricola, the category of *comparata*, together with those of contingent circumstances, of the name of the thing and its pronunciation and similitude, are accidents that are connected not only to the present state of things, but also to the circumstances that precede and follow it in temporal order.<sup>47</sup>

---

43 “Cum dixerim autem comparisonem in uno fieri, quod sit comparatis commune, nolo, quoniam id fallat, quod nonnunquam eis, quae comparantur, sua singulis tribuuntur propria,” AGRICOLA 1992, 148.

44 “In nomine vero non usquequaque consentit usus. Nanque apud poetas comparisonem vocant grammatici, quam nos similitudinem dicimus. [...] At quam comparisonem nos, illi plerumque exemplum dicunt. [...] Et est sane exemplum inter comparata, sed non omnibus comparatis conveniet hoc nomen,” AGRICOLA 1992, 144.

45 “Nanque quem locum Cicero similium fecit, is in eum, qui est inter comparata a paribus, recidit,” AGRICOLA 1992, 184.

46 “Externi autem, quae cognata dicuntur, efficiens, finis, effecta, destinata. Quae applicita, locus, tempus, connexa. Quae accidunt, contingentia, pronunciata, nomen, comparata, similia. Quae repugnant, opposita, distantia,” AGRICOLA 1992, 37.

47 “Comparisones similitudinesque non modo ex iis ducimus, quae rebus coniuncta sunt, sed persaepe ex iis, quae praecesserunt, nonnunquam et ab iis, quae temporum ordine sequuntur,” AGRICOLA 1992, 120.

Agricola defines *comparata* as two things compared through a third—the aspect according to which the comparison takes place—that they share in common. The *comparata* can be one greater than the other, like a king compared to an ordinary man in terms of wealth, one less than another, like a pupil compared to the teacher in terms of erudition, or equal to the other, like a just respect for another simply in terms of probity.<sup>48</sup> The arguments that derive from the comparison topic are recognizable by the fact that their terms are compared mutually. Therefore, to make a *comparatio*, it is necessary that the two terms are related externally, their association is accidental, and the relationship occurs with respect to a third party, which is the aspect of the two things on the basis of which the comparison takes place in terms of majority, minority, or equality.

For the Dutch humanist, the definition of *comparatio*, its hallmark, is understood best by comparing it with similar topics, such as the *exemplum* and *similitudo*. While the example is a kind of *comparatio*, and is characterized by being designed to imitate or disapprove, the similarity occurs when two objects are placed, in some way, in ‘mutual proportion’, and not compared, as in the *comparatio*, with a third element, aspect, or property common to both.<sup>49</sup> In contrast to *similitudo*, which can relate things that have nothing in common, to find comparisons, it is necessary to focus on objects that belong to the same genus or nature of the subject analysed, as not everything that is greater, lesser, or equal to the subject in any respect can be compared.<sup>50</sup> In addressing the

---

48 “[...] Duo conferuntur in uno tertio, quorum alterum altero vel maius est, ut rex populari opibus, vel minus, uti discipulus magistro eruditione, vel par, ut iustus iusto probitate,” AGRICOLA 1992, 34.

49 “Similia sunt, quando iunguntur aliqua, non in tertio, quod sit ambobus commune (quemadmodum fit in comparatione), sed utrunque in singulis, quorum quemadmodum hoc in isto, sic illud se habeat in illo,” AGRICOLA 1992, 146.

50 “In inveniendis autem istis ad ea praecipue respiciendum est, quae eiusdem sunt generis cum eo, quod nostri est propositi,” AGRICOLA 1992, 149.

method for describing any object through the *loci*, Agricola reiterates that the condition necessary for a comparison is the identification of a third aspect common to all *comparata*, on which the comparison can take place, because *comparationes* are never simply from object to object, but always related to an aspect they share.<sup>51</sup> In fact, by showing the different applications to the various *loci* of the method of *divisio*, in relation to the topic of *comparatio*, the conceptual subdivision that derives from the analysis consists first in identifying the multiple aspects, the different properties or qualities, the many ‘third parties’ on the basis of which the comparison between objects can take place.<sup>52</sup>

Agricola’s pragmatic approach to the dialectical art does not disguise “the metaphysical foundation of topics,” although it intends to de-hypostatize universals.<sup>53</sup> In his view, just as universals exist outside the soul, while our mind must grasp the similarities between different things and combine them under species and genera and general schemes, in the same way the *topoi* – which were not invented by individual minds, but discovered by observing the structure of the real, and of which universals are a subclass – describe true aspects of objects, laws, rules, and precepts, and function as ‘labels’ of the general and common characteristics of things, which the dialectic uses flexibly to identify probable arguments.

A second use of the notion of *comparatio* captures precisely the mental act through which the type of relation between objects or concepts is established or allowed to be established. For Agricola, the different form of things derives from their comparison in the relationship: compared with man, the

---

51 “*Comparationes itidem, et similitudines rerum, non fiunt per se rerum ad res, sed semper accipitur aliquid in re, per quod fiat eius ad aliam rem comparatio,*” AGRICOLA 1992, 410.

52 AGRICOLA 1992, 52.

53 NAUTA 2012, 216.

living being is a genus, compared with the sensitive faculty, it is a subject, compared with the body and soul, it is the whole, and so on.<sup>54</sup> The form – for example, genus or species, all or part, cause or effect, and so on – that an object or concept assumes depends upon the object or concept with which it is compared and related, not its nature.<sup>55</sup> For example, because Agricola believes that the relation between genus and species is similar to that between species and individual,<sup>56</sup> if the concept is species compared and related to the genus, when compared to the individual, it does not retain the form of the species, but rather assumes that of the genus. However, the mental act of comparison not only characterizes the relation between genus and species, but also allows us to grasp the reciprocal relations between moments and elements in an event: what is cause, effect, means, end, and so on, depends upon the perspective from which one looks at their mutual relations, which are established through comparison.<sup>57</sup> Further, *comparatio* allows to establish and highlight equality and inequality, similarity and dissimilarity, identity, and the quantitative and qualitative difference between interdependent elements of an external relation.<sup>58</sup>

---

54 “[...] Quam accipiunt aliae aliis comparatae (ut animal homini comparatum genus est, virtuti vero sentiendi: subiectum est, corpori et animae: est totum),” AGRICOLA 1992, 122.

55 “[...] Locorum discrimen non tam ab rerum naturis, quas habent per se quaeque, accipi, quam ab habitudine, quam sumunt inter se comparatae,” AGRICOLA 1992, 174.

56 “Sane differentia, quod ipsum nomen prae se fert, dicitur commodius, quoties generi, quod dividit, comparatur. [...] Suae enim speciei comparata, cuius substantiae pars est, rectius proprium dicitur quam differentia,” AGRICOLA 1992, 54.

57 “Fiunt autem ista plerunque causae et eventa, prout varie ultro citroque comparantur; suntque eadem etiam persaepe et fines et efficientia et effecta et destinata,” AGRICOLA 1992, 100.

58 “Aequalitas autem vel inaequalitas, ut sunt a philosophis definita, differentium rerum eadem vel diversa quantitas (ut tripedale tripedali comparatum aequale est, et tripedale bipedali et maiora minoribus sunt inaequalia), similia etiam, ut dicuntur diversa eandem habentia qualitatem (ut album albo) et dissimilia, quae diversas qualitates habent (ut sunt album et nigrum): haec omnia huius loci poterant videri, si acciperentur veris et his ipsis, quibus comparantur, nominibus, et talibus etiam, quae proprie essent connexa,” AGRICOLA 1992, 116.

Comparison as a mental act that allows us to grasp and highlight differences is also configured as an epistemic tool capable of knowing the essence of the thing in a negative way: while the human mind is forced to admit that the essence of the thing remains unknown and hidden in depth, it is within its power to compare it with other objects and concepts to capture what that object or concept is not.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, comparison, in a third sense, characterizes the method by which to find, elaborate, refine, and judge dialectical syllogisms, respectively.<sup>60</sup> It is above all the inventive act through which the mind can find a conjunction/disjunction that is not in itself evident, and thus acquire epistemic confidence about the probable correspondence or contradiction between the two terms of the proposition. In fact, Agricola clarifies that to determine the correspondence or contradiction between concepts that do not reveal these by themselves, it is necessary to identify a third term that is known to correspond or contradict one of the two terms with certainty, and subsequently, to compare that third with the other. If there is correspondence or contradiction with the third, there will be between the initial terms as well. Compared to the initial terms, the third term is called *medium argumentationis*, as it highlights the correspondence or hidden contradiction between the two. It is also called *argumentum*, as it probably connects two concepts. Further, it is the tool through which trust is generated in the propositions that it joins or separates. Dialectics refers this operation related to the invention of a *medium*, a link between two terms, to *inventio*.<sup>61</sup>

---

59 "Reliqua, ut intra altiores rerum naturae sinus recondita, aut ignoramus, aut ex istorum comparatione magis, quid non sint, dicere, quam, quid sint, comprehendere valemus," AGRICOLA 1992, 80.

60 Agricola does not emphasize a difference in method between scientific exposition and dialectical argumentation, as everything that is argued falls neatly within the dialectical invention. In this respect, fruitful observations can be drawn from a survey of Agricola's use of *probabiliter*.

61 "Si qua duo itaque velis perspicere, convenient inter se nec ne, si sint eiusmodi, ut quemadmodum magnitudines diximus applicari non posse, sic et ista consentanea sint an



The use of the comparative method allows the speaker to refine his argument in relation to that of the other party. In fact, the comparison between two states of things, each of which is described through all of the *loci*, offers the ability to distinguish what is useful to construct the argumentative strategy for everything that has been found.<sup>62</sup> It may transpire that what in itself can be considered an evil in a dispute becomes the only remedy for worse evils.<sup>63</sup>

To Agricola, *comparatio* is a dialectician's most useful argumentative strategy, because in a disputation – which, as a rule, like all deliberations and considered consultations, oscillates between a better and a worse – the comparison with other positions, affirmed explicitly in the speech or insinuated tacitly into the listener's mind, allows one to strengthen one's own position or weaken that of the counterpart.<sup>64</sup> It is the most effective method to sharpen the consideration and evaluation of the essence of things.<sup>65</sup> This is why a judge proceeds by comparing all of the statements: he is not interested in ab-

---

dissidentia, ex ipsis perspici nequeat: necesse est tertium aliquod invenias, quod alteri horum consentaneum esse certius sit: idque alteri deinde comparatum, proinde ut illi fuerit consentaneum vel dissentaneum, ita esse inter se ambo, quae proposita fuerant, sciamus. Id tertium tum medium argumentationis dicitur, quoniam proposita velut extrema duo coniungit, tum, quia probabiliter propositis iungitur, instrumentumque est faciendae de illis fidei, vocatur argumentum. Hanc partem excogitandi vel medii vel argumenti vocant dialectici inventionis," AGRICOLA 1992, 16.

62 "Comparatio vero inter se duarum rerum descriptorum per singulos locos hanc praestat utilitatem, ut, quicquid invenerimus, facile aptemus instituto nostro, et in usum argumenti traducamus et videamus etiam, quod inventum nostrum aptum sit argumento, quod ineptum, et quid in hanc illamve partem magis prosit nobis, et si quid conatui nostro repugnat, ut id ne attingamus quidem," AGRICOLA 1992, 422.

63 "Et quemadmodum reliquis in rebus, sic hic fit, ut, quae per se in malis numerarentur, aliis comparata malis, in remediorum habeantur loco," AGRICOLA 1992, 424.

64 Observations on the relations between amplification, comparison, and emotional state in Agricola can be found in McNALLY 1966, 346.

65 "Posuerimque vel inter utilissimas exercitationes dialectici augendi rationem, cum priores illas, tum hanc postremam ex comparatione. Quando omnis hominum deliberatio, omnia consilia fere inter magis minusque bona iactantur. Neque quicquam est, quod acrius expendere vim rerum intuerique doceat quam comparatio," AGRICOLA 1992, 450.

solute truth, but in which of the two opposing parties' arguments is closer to the truth.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, comparison is the most useful method for those who must judge which of two contradictory statements is the most likely in situations of uncertainty.

#### 4. The *comparatio* in Juan Luis Vives's *De artibus*

In analyzing the notion of *comparatio* in Vives, we will turn to some brief logical-linguistic writings that correspond to the third section of the *De disciplinis* dedicated expressly to the 'sermocinal arts': the *De prima philosophia sive de intimo naturae opificio*, the *De explanatione cuiusque essentiae*, the *De instrumento probabilitatis*, the *De censura veri*, and the *De disputatione*.

Seen above all in *De prima philosophia*, in a more general sense, comparison is an instrument able to grasp differences, distinctions, excellences or degenerations. Some examples are that between the immortality of God and temporality of creatures,<sup>67</sup> or more generally, that between divine perfection and human degeneracy, or the difference between the capacity of human and angelic knowledge,<sup>68</sup> or yet again, when the greater or lesser capacity of minds is evaluated through a comparison based upon the criterion of speed of execution.<sup>69</sup> Alternatively, we see this when Vives, in the first book of *De censura veri*, observes the way that the nuances of meaning between synonyms and the difference in meaning of *voces* with the same reference can be grasped through comparison.<sup>70</sup>

---

66 "Perpetua vero dictio tractu aequalitateque sua iudici est aptior, ut qui non adeo, quae prorsus sunt vera, sed e duobus magis sequatur verisimiliora dicentem, quique potius ex toto orationis complexu, omniumque eorum, quae dicuntur, comparatione accipere malit, quid probet aut aversetur adversarius," AGRICOLA 1992, 300.

67 VIVES 1782, 247.

68 VIVES 1782, 291.

69 VIVES 1782, 260.

70 VIVES 1782, 145.

At the same time, it is possible to grasp the congruences and non-contradiction between elements through comparison; for example, when addressing gnoseological questions, Vives observes that the deduction, by the human mind, of precepts or *regulae universales* takes place starting from the mutual comparison of expressions that universalise sensitive perception. The *comparatio* of precepts is particularly important because, attributable to both the variability of circumstances and the errors the authorities hand down, the rules are often uncertain. Not seeing anything contradictory in the rules, either between them or with the present state of things, allows us to credit the precepts themselves. Ultimately, the comparison, and the finding of concordances, between the rules allows to identify those most universal and applicable to the real.<sup>71</sup>

Further, in Vives, *comparatio* taken in a second sense is a topic and a strictly philosophical method of investigation. In the second book of *De censura veri*, he notes that comparison makes it possible to establish whether concepts/things are equal, unequal, or opposite, and, if unequal, whether they are the majority or minority identifiable through comparative adjectives.<sup>72</sup> Further, if they are opposites, whether they are contrary, exclusive, contradictory, or separate.<sup>73</sup> In addition to the comparison based upon quantitative relations of degree or proportion, in Vives the *comparatio* is used in general for the ‘relation to other’, for oppositional comparisons based upon similarity or difference.

Particular attention to the use of *comparatio* can be found in *De instrumento probabilitatis*, where he exposes his theory of *inventio*. For Agricola, “the connections between the terms of the propositions” are founded on “similar

---

71 VIVES 1782, 192.

72 VIVES 1782, 150.

73 VIVES 1782, 165.

connections really existing in the world.”<sup>74</sup> Like Agricola, for Vives the *topoi* are not a mere invention of ours, although they have been captured through repeated observations; instead, “they must be rooted in reality.”<sup>75</sup> The *loci* reflect the ontological order; they are ‘labels’ that derive from the consideration of what things have in common that the dialectic can use to find arguments. The association of things with *loci* is a heuristic tool that facilitates the construction of a transition from the order of being to the order of knowledge. The *ars inveniendi* favours the search for similarities and differences, through which the mind detects common patterns in the immense variety of nature, and groups things into categories. As for Agricola, the topic provides a guide for the direction of cognitive and argumentative processes for Vives as well.

Vives emphasizes the central role of the topic of comparison as a method of investigation.<sup>76</sup> Whenever an object raises an issue that offers the opportunity for an internal disputation, then our minds should inspect it meticulously, *omnilaterally*, like an unknown location, to allow the hidden truth to become manifest to our judgment. To know perfectly what form of congruence exists between the terms of a proposition, it is necessary to make the characteristics and properties of both manifest and compare them. The Valensian humanist insists on a close relation between the art of *inventio* and the first philosophy,<sup>77</sup> which is based upon plausible conjectures.<sup>78</sup> In fact, the

---

74 MACK 1993, 140.

75 NAUTA 2015, 337. Like Agricola, Vives also rejects the use of maxims, or universal propositions, a fundamental element of Boethius’s dialectic, whose function was to allow syllogistic inferences.

76 “Nihil est in natura quod non cum aliquo alio similitudinis nodo vinciatu,” VIVES 1782, 104.

77 “[...] Nam quum objecto dictum additur, nisi quae utrobique latent, expromantur ac conferantur mutuo, non facile utique scietur quemadmodum illa inter se congruant, quocirca multum ars haec a prima philosophia adjuvatur,” VIVES 1782, 87.

78 “Philosophia opinionibus tota et conjecturis verisimilitudinis est nixa,” VIVES 1785, 417. On the relation of Vives’s thought to the tradition of Renaissance academic skepticism, see CASINI 2009, 33–60.

first part of *De instrumento probabilitatis* concludes by highlighting how much the *ars inveniendi* and the *prima philosophia* can benefit and nourish each other.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, from a pedagogical viewpoint, *De tradendis disciplinis* explains the exercises that the teachers of dialectics have to propose to the students who are being trained in the *ars inveniendi*, and Vives recommends using the topics concretely to compare two or more elements. He prescribes: “When these concepts have been diligently broken up and well known [through the *loci argumentorum*], having taken an appropriate theme, arguments will be devised, on both sides, whose points will be weighed either separately or by the method of comparison.”<sup>80</sup>

In the Vivesian treatment of the *inventio*, the notion of *comparatio* concerns what, using a general category, we can call the topic of ‘relations to the thing, to the fact’: ‘ad rem’.<sup>81</sup> The first type of relation is the reference to similar cases that had occurred previously. The second is that between separate terms, which Vives calls *ad aliquid*, i.e., with respect to a specific aspect. This can be between peers, for example, “*amici, inimici, sodales, socii, vicini,*” *ad aliquid majora*, such as “*Dominus, princeps, magistratus, maritus, tutor, patruus, magister,*” and *ad aliquid minora*, such as “*civis, subditus, privatus, servus, filius, uxor, discipulus.*”<sup>82</sup>

---

79 Vives refers implicitly to the passage in Aristotle’s *Topica* that states that topics are “useful in connexion with the ultimate bases of each science; for it is impossible to discuss them at all on the basis of the principles peculiar to the science in question, since the principles are primary in relation to everything else, and it is necessary to deal with them through the generally accepted opinions on each point. This process belongs peculiarly, or most appropriately to dialectic; for, being of the nature of an investigation, it lies along the path to the principles of all methods of inquiry,” Aristotle, *Topica* I, 2, 101 a 33 – 101 b 5. Quotation from ARISTOTLE 1960, 277 and 279.

80 VIVES 2011, 154. For example, even in *Agricola*, the most effective exercise for the philosophy student is precisely the ‘comparison’ of concepts through dialectical methods. In fact, then, the exercise of the comparison of precepts will be prescribed and employed regularly in the teaching of rhetoric in the Jesuit *ratio studiorum*.

81 VIVES 1782, 101.

82 VIVES 1782, 102.

With respect to this type of relation, further considerations can be made. The first concerns its nature. A relationship can be natural, like that between father and son, voluntary, as amongst friends, or casual, as between ‘magistratus et privatus’ or between ‘dominus et servus’. The second examines the differences in time and space, such as between before and after, between in front and behind, or above and below, or, if there is a pre-existing order, between the previous and the next, and so on. The third concerns whether the qualities in question are attributed by others or derive from external circumstances.<sup>83</sup> If a quality is attributed to or derives from something else, then, according to Vives, it should not be considered a relation but, more properly, an *attributum*.<sup>84</sup>

In the treatment of the topic of ‘ad rem’, Vives also inserts the reference to ‘comparata,’<sup>85</sup> the concept of which includes, on the one hand, the relations that establish similarities or differences – sometimes even between accidental correlates – associated with the argument strictly by analogy, to the various forms of the *exemplum* (*parabola*, *similitudines*, *historiae*, *rebus naturae*, *fabulae*, *apologi*), particularly appropriate for advice, exhortation, and deliberative consultation; on the other hand, those that establish quantitative relations relate to the degree: “a majori ad minus, ab hoc in illud, et a pari ad par.”<sup>86</sup> The topic of *comparatio* is particularly important within the general economy of the treatment of *ars inveniendi*, to the extent that, more than other topics, “comparatio alios quoque inter se locos commiscet.”<sup>87</sup>

The last element in the discussion of the form *ad rem* is the notion of *di-*

---

83 VIVES 1782, 102.

84 VIVES 1782, 103.

85 VIVES 1782, 104.

86 VIVES 1782, 104.

87 VIVES 1782, 105.

*versum*,<sup>88</sup> of opposition between correlates, between terms that cannot exist without each other, and which includes opposition by ‘contrariness’, between terms that capture the greatest difference within a common genre; opposition by ‘contradiction’ between mutually exclusive terms; by ‘deprivation’, in which one of the two terms expresses the lack of the other, and opposition by ‘separation’. Again, the central role of comparison also stands out with respect to the opposition between correlates. Vives notes: “nisi collata nihil hic agunt.”<sup>89</sup>

Finally, and this appears to us the remarkable innovation of the Vivesian treatment, the category of *comparatio* is used to define both the syllogism and the disputation. Following Quintilian, Vives describes the ‘perfecta argumentatio,’ which the Greeks call syllogism and which concerns the art of the dialectic properly as ‘collectio’,<sup>90</sup> a collection: “Ratiocinatio est collectio trium enuntiationum, in quibus tertia quae inferri significatur, ex duarum connexione naturaliter elicitor.” In this context, ‘naturaliter’ emphasizes the fact that inference is necessary and self-sufficient. Explaining this description further, Vives defines ‘syllogismus’ as “comparatio duorum ad tertium, ex qua nascitur illorum duorum habitus inter se, ut vel nectantur, vel dissolvantur.”<sup>91</sup> The syllogism is the comparison of two sentences with respect to a third, from which the relation between the two arises, so that they merge or dissolve. The reason that this definition is the rule, which we have already observed at work in Agricola, according to which all things that are congruent with a third are congruent with each other and those congruent with each other are congruent in the same way with a third.<sup>92</sup> The ability of comparison

---

88 VIVES 1782, 105.

89 VIVES 1782, 105.

90 VIVES 1782, 169. See also QUINT., *Inst.* 9.2, 103.

91 VIVES 1782, 169.

92 “Ut quaecunque duo cuiquam tertio consentanea sint, inter se quoque esse consentanea,”

to highlight the congruence or discordance of one concept with respect to another, their relation between universal and particular, genus and species, combined with the rules of deduction, allows us to construct well-formed syllogisms.

Finally, the Valensian humanist describes and explains the concept that the term 'disputatio' conveys with the following expression: "Argumentorum ad aliquid probandum, aut improbandum, comparatio."<sup>93</sup> Disputation is 'comparison' – the act of comparing, comparative examination, research conducted with the comparative method. A necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the disputation is the justification, reasoning, evidence that is adduced in support of a specific thesis. The disputation as a comparison is designed to demonstrate or demolish, to prove or disprove, the veracity of a given piece of evidence, or validity of a given reasoning or justification.

Therefore, the dispute is a method intended to search for truth, and which takes place by giving the mind the opportunity to invent, compare, and ponder contradictory arguments. And yet, this epistemic ideal, which emanates from the forensic principle of the shining truth in the contradictory, is achievable only if all the agents involved assume an attitude oriented toward recognizing the value of the arguments, not prevailing in the confrontation.

---

AGRICOLA 1992, 14. However, unlike Agricola, Vives also specifies the nature of the cases from which it is not possible to deduce necessarily a congruence or discrepancy: if two things are not congruent with a third, they will not necessarily be congruent. Alternatively, things that are only congruent with a third in part are not necessarily congruent with each other, or things that are congruent with a part of a third thing completely are not necessarily congruent with each other: VIVES 1782, 169.

<sup>93</sup> VIVES 1782, 68.



## 5. Conclusion

This overview offered on the use of the notion of *comparatio* within the main dialectical works of Valla, Agricola, and Vives allows us to grasp continuity and discontinuity, and the original contributions of the Vivesian treatment.

First, and in a general way, in Valla, Agricola and Vives, the notion of *comparatio* functions to characterize both a topic, that of the 'relation to another', and a gnoseological tool able to grasp the relevant relations of similarity and difference between concepts or objects, and an epistemic method to weigh the degree of likelihood of probable arguments.

Compared to the more generic and 'grammatical' Vallian treatment of the topic of the relation to another, both Vives, and particularly Agricola, offer a more detailed and circumscribed account of the *comparatio* as a decisive topic for the *inventio* method. However, despite the exhaustiveness and precision of Agricola's observations, it is the Valensian humanist who attributes a pre-eminent position to this topic by virtue of the transversality of its application to all the other *loci*.

Although with different emphases, for all three, the mental act of comparison is crucial to grasp and mark the reciprocal relations and the specific and relevant differences between concepts. Nonetheless, it seems conceivable that Agricola's emphasis on comparison's ability to identify congruences and discrepancies, correspondences and contradictions, conjunctions and disjunctions between concepts and propositions, may have prompted Vives to recognize in the *comparatio* of two sentences with respect to a third a clear explanation of the cardinal concept of syllogism. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact that Vives refers to a passage from the first book of the *De inventione dialectica* in his explanation of the concept of syllogism.

Finally, for all three humanists, *comparatio* represents an indispensable method of argumentation in the field of the probable. The dialectic refines and weighs the degree of epistemic confidence in one's probable demonstrations through the contradictory comparison of the counterpart's statements. Compared to Agricola, Vives goes so far as to find the essence of the *disputatio* in the method of *comparatio* of probable contradictory demonstrations. The recognition of the contradictory comparison of arguments as the essence of the disputation can rightly be considered an 'innovative' element of the Vivesian dialectical treatment with respect to the most advanced European humanist movement of the first decades of the sixteenth century, as Mack has observed correctly. Nonetheless, it is appropriate to point out that, rather than an element of original discontinuity, it appears to us to be to a greater extent a direct and consequent evolution present in essence in the treatment of the *ars inveniendi*, specifically that of Agricola.

MATTEO GIANGRANDE

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI "G. D'ANNUNZIO" CHIETI-PESCARA\*

---

\* [matteo.giangrande@sn-di.it](mailto:matteo.giangrande@sn-di.it); Dipartimento di Scienze Filosofiche, Pedagogiche ed Economico-Quantitative, Via dei Vestini 31, 66100 Chieti CH, Italy.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

AGRICOLA 1992 = RUDOLF AGRICOLA, *De inventione dialectica libri tres*, ed. LOTHAR MUNDT, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag.

ARISTOTLE 1960 = ARISTOTLE, *Posterior Analytics, Topica*, eds. HUGH TREDENNICK and EDWARD S. FORSTER, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.

ASHWORTH 1974 = E. JENNIFER ASHWORTH, *Language and Logic in the Post-Medieval Period*, Dordrecht, Reidel.

BLANCHARD 2000 = W. SCOTT BLANCHARD, "The Negative Dialectic of Lorenzo Valla: A Study in the Pathology of Opposition", *Renaissance Studies* 14/2 (2000), 149–189.

BLUSCH 1994 = JÜRGEN BLUSCH, "Agricola als Pädagoge und seine Empfehlungen *De formando Studio*", in *Rudolf Agricola 1444-1485. Protagonist des nordeuropäischen Humanismus zum 550. Geburtstag*, ed. WILHELM KÜHLMANN, Bern, Peter Lang, 355–385.

BROADIE 1993 = ALEXANDER BROADIE, *Introduction to Medieval Logic*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Casini 2009 = LORENZO CASINI, "Self-knowledge, skepticism and the Quest for a New Method: Juan Luis Vives on Cognition and the Impossibility of Perfect Knowledge", in *Renaissance Scepticisms*, eds. GIANNI PAGANINI and JOSÉ R. MAIA NETO, Dordrecht, Springer, 33–60.

CICERO 1949 = CICERO, *On Invention. The Best Kind of Orator. Topics*, Translated by H. M. HUBBELL, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library 386).

COSERIU 1971 = EUGENIO COSERIU, "Zur Sprachtheorie von Juan Luis Vives", in *Aus der französischen Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Festschrift z. 65. Geburtstag von Walter Mönch*, ed. WERNER DIERLAMM, Heidelberg, Kerle, 234–255.

ERASMUS 1978 = ERASMUS, *De Copia*, ed. CRAIG R. THOMPSON, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

JARDINE 1994 = LISA JARDINE, "Ghosting the Reform of Dialectic: Erasmus and Agricola Again", in *Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. PETER MACK, London, Palgrave

Macmillan, 27–45.

JARDINE 2008 = LISA JARDINE, “Humanistic Logic”, in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, eds. CHARLES B. SCHMITT, QUENTIN SKINNER, and ECKHARD KESSLER, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 173–198.

LAFFRANCHI 1999 = MARCO LAFFRANCHI, *Dialettica e filosofia in Lorenzo Valla*, Milan, Vita e Pensiero.

MACK 1983 = PETER MACK, “Valla’s Dialectic in the North: A Commentary on Peter of Spain by Gerardus Listrius”, *Vivarium* 21/1 (1983), 58–72.

MACK 1992 = PETER MACK, “Agricola’s Use of the Comparison between Writing and the Visual Arts”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992), 169–179.

MACK 1993 = PETER MACK, *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic*, Leiden, Brill.

MACK 2001 = PETER MACK, *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric 1380–1620*, New York, Oxford University Press.

MACK 2008 = PETER MACK, “Vives’s contributions to Rhetoric and Dialectic”, in *A Companion to Juan Luis Vives*, ed. CHARLES FANTAZZI, Leiden, Brill 2008, 227–276.

MCNALLY 1966 = JAMES RICHARD MCNALLY, “Dux illa directrixque artium: Rudolph Agricola’s Dialectical System”, *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 52/4 (1966), 337–347.

MONFASANI 1989 = JOHN MONFASANI, “Was Lorenzo Valla an Ordinary Language Philosopher?” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50/2 (1989), 309–323.

MONFASANI 1990 = JOHN MONFASANI, “Lorenzo Valla and Rudolph Agricola”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28/2 (1990), 181–200.

NAUTA 2003 = LODI NAUTA, “William of Ockham and Lorenzo Valla: False Friends. Semantics and Ontological Reduction”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 56/3 (2003), 613–651.

NAUTA 2007 = LODI NAUTA, “Lorenzo Valla and the Rise of Humanist Dialectic”,

in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. JAMES HANKINS, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 193–210.

NAUTA 2009 = LODI NAUTA, *In Defense of Common Sense: Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.

NAUTA 2012 = LODI NAUTA, "From Universals to Topics: The Realism of Rudolph Agricola", *Vivarium* 50/2 (2012), 190–224.

NAUTA 2015 = LODI NAUTA, "The Order of Knowing: Juan Luis Vives on Language, Thought, and the Topics", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 76/3 (2015), 325–345.

QUINTILIAN 2002 = QUINTILIAN, *The Orator's Education*, vols. I–V, ed. DONALD A. RUSSELL, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library 124–127 and 494).

VALLA 1982 = LORENZO VALLA, *Repastinatio dialectice et philosophie*, ed. GIANNI ZIPPEL, Padua, Editrice Antenore.

VIVES 1782 = JUAN LUIS VIVES, *Opera omnia, Volume 3*, ed. GREGORIO MAYANS Y SISCAR, Valencia, In officina Benedicti Monfort.

VIVES 1785 = JUAN LUIS VIVES, *Opera omnia, Volume 6*, ed. GREGORIO MAYANS Y SISCAR, Valencia, In officina Benedicti Monfort.

VIVES 2011 = JUAN LUIS VIVES, *L'insegnamento delle discipline*, ed. VALERIO DEL NERO, Florence, Olschki.

WASWO 1987 = RICHARD WASWO, *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.