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CICERO IN THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF GIORGIO VALLA

1. *Introduction*

Cicero has been a fundamental reference point for school education and the system of *artes liberales*, especially for rhetoric and philosophy, from ancient times to the Renaissance. Although many scholars have written on this subject, even in recent times, much research remains to be done, especially on the diffusion of Cicero's work and thought during humanism and the Renaissance¹. Nevertheless, it is interesting to consider how Cicero's influence in university education and literary culture changed during humanism. To address this issue, I intend to focus my attention on the Venetian environment in the second half of the 15th century². In this context, many important phenomena co-existed: the tumultuous development of the art of printing, the wide diffusion of the study of Greek and Greek authors, and a renewed attention to the natural sciences that was conveyed by Greek works³.

In particular, my discussion focuses on Giorgio Valla, a humanist who was trained in the Milanese area but carried out his teaching activity in Venice for an extended period. He distinguished himself

¹ Cf., for example, Cox-Ward 2006, Steel 2013 (in particular: A.M. Gowing, *Tully's boat: responses to Cicero in imperial period*, 233-250; S. MacCormack, *Cicero in late antiquity*, 251-305; D. Marsh, *Cicero in Renaissance*, 306-317), La Bua 2019. On Renaissance rhetoric cf. Green-Murphy 2006, Mack 2011, MacDonald 2017, 377-474. For Cicero's rhetoric in the Renaissance, cf. Mack 2011, 13-21, Raschieri 2017a.

² On the opinion of the Venetian patriciate about the study of rhetoric during the 15th century cf. Cox 2006, 132: «In the face of the Venetian patriciate's scepticism with regard to the utility of the study of classical rhetoric, there are indications that humanists working in Venice may have sought to develop a form of rhetorical instruction consciously differentiated from that of mainland humanism by its more pragmatic and vocational character, and representing in some sense a classicising updating of the medieval dictaminal tradition of civically oriented rhetorical study».

³ In Venice, the study of mathematics and natural sciences was carried out mainly in the School of Rialto, where an Aristotelian, Averroistic, naturalistic, and scientific study prevailed. In the two schools of San Marco, instead, the prevailing interest was humanistic-philosophical and moralistic-religious. At the Rialto School, the teachers were only noble and not professional masters. Cf. Nardi 1963.

through his literary and scientific interests, but, above all, through his encyclopaedic conception of knowledge. Moreover, besides being well integrated into the Venetian educational and cultural system, he had many links with Italian and European humanists, as testified by his correspondence. First of all, I provide some details about Giorgio Valla's life, his activity as a translator and publisher of Greek scientific works, and his important library. Secondly, I analyse his interest in Cicero and Greek rhetoric and present his commentaries on Cicero's works: *De facto*, *Topica*, *Timaeus*, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (which, according to Valla, was a work of Cicero), *Partitiones oratoriae*, and *Tusculanae disputationes*. Finally, I present Valla's posthumous encyclopaedia, the *De expetendis ac fugiendis rebus*, and, in particular, I study Cicero's presence in books on rhetoric.

2. *Life of Giorgio Valla*

The primary source for Valla's life is the Vatican Code Lat. 3537, which contains a biography of the humanist and a collection of letters that Valla exchanged with famous men of his era (including Niccolò Leonicensino and Pico della Mirandola). Giorgio Valla was born in Piacenza in 1447 and lived in Milan from 1462 to 1465 to study Greek with Constantine Lascaris⁴. In 1465, he moved to Pavia, where he continued studying Greek with Andronikos Kallistos and began studying mathematics and science with the mathematician and scientist Giovanni Marliani. At that time, Valla probably met Leonardo da Vinci, thanks to the mediation of Marliani. From 1466 to 1485, he taught in Pavia, but, in some periods, he moved to Genoa (1476-1479) and Milan⁵.

In 1485, Valla left Pavia to move to Venice, where he taught Greek and Latin at the San Marco School to replace Giorgio Merula. The proponent of Valla's passage from Pavia to Venice was the humanist, am-

⁴ On the life and work of Giorgio Valla, cf. Raschieri 2020. It is possible to read a complete and updated bibliography (in pdf and TEI-xml) at [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu). In particular, cf. Branca 1980, 161-166.

⁵ During his stay in Pavia (1476-1477), Giorgio Valla published his first printed work in Milan (or Pavia), the *De orthographia sive de ratione scribendi*. This work is dedicated to Antonio Simonetta (born in 1457), son of Elisabetta Visconti and Cicco Simonetta, ducal secretary in Milan under the Sforza family. Cf. [Incunabula Short Title Catalogue \(ISTC\)](#). A manuscript copy of the work is kept in Lonato at the library of the Fondazione Ugo Da Como (ms. 163); cf. [Manus On Line](#).

bassador, and patriarch Ermolao Barbaro. In 1496, Valla was imprisoned for eight months because the Republic of Venice suspected him of conspiracy with Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, who was an ally of the King of France, Charles VIII. In those years, the Venetian Republic and Ludovico Maria Sforza (also known as Ludovico il Moro), Duke of Milan, had formed a league against Charles VIII. However, Valla was exonerated and was able to return to his freedom and teaching. He died in the early 1500s, perhaps due to poor health as a result of incarceration. In the following two years (1501-1502), his adopted son, Giovanni Pietro da Cademosto, edited the posthumous works of his father.

In addition to these biographical data, we have some information on the topics of the courses that Valla held at the School of San Marco⁶. In 1491, he read and analysed the second book of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*; the following year, he held a course on Vitruvius's work and Plautus's comedies. In 1496, Aristotle's *Magna Moralia* and *Poetica* were the subjects of his lessons, and, in 1499, Valla explained Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes*. In all likelihood, he offered courses on other works of Cicero as well during his teaching activity in Pavia, as we will see later. Valla also read Juvenal's *Satires* to his students, since he published a commentary on this work at the beginning of his stay in Venice (1486)⁷.

3. Valla as translator and editor of Greek scientific works and his library

The most known and studied activity of Giorgio Valla is undoubtedly that of translator and editor of Greek scientific works⁸. This part of his scholarly activity is also the most innovative. His earlier interest in the exact sciences, under the guidance of Giovanni Marliani, had a significant development in his mature age. In 1481, Valla published in Milan a Latin translation of Galen's *Ad medicinam introductorium*⁹. Then, after his arrival in Venice, in 1488, he published the collection of the *Astronomici veteres*. This volume contains the astronomical and geographical works of Avienus and the translations of Aratus's astronomical poem by

⁶ Cf. also Tessier 2003.

⁷ Cf. *ISTC* <https://data.cerl.org/istc/ij00655000>. On this work, cf. Lo Conte 2012.

⁸ For an in-depth analysis of this activity of Valla, cf. Raschieri 2012.

⁹ Cf. *ISTC* <https://data.cerl.org/istc/ip00607000>.

Germanicus and Cicero. Moreover, this volume includes the *Liber medicinalis* of Serenus Sammonicus¹⁰.

This publishing activity of Greek scientific works resumed with higher intensity a decade later. In 1497, Valla published the *Harmonicum introductorium* of Cleonides and, in the following year (1498), he published an extensive collection of Latin translations of Greek works on rhetoric, mathematics, astronomy, music, theology, philosophy, and medicine, with the works of Nicephorus Blemmida, Euclid, Hypsicles, Proclus, Aristarchus, Timaeus, Cleonides, Eusebius, Cleomedes, Athenagoras, Aristotle, Psellus, Galen, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and the Persian physician, alchemist, and philosopher Rhazes, as well as Valla's work on argumentation (*De expedita ratione argumentandi*)¹¹. Valla thus developed his interest in Greek philosophy. He had already demonstrated this interest in 1488, with the edition of the *Problemata* of Pseudo Alexander of Aphrodisias¹². Later, in 1496, he held a course on the *Magna Moralia* and the *Poetica* of Aristotle, and, in the same year, he published the *Magna Moralia* as part of a wider collection of Aristotelian translations¹³. His interest in science is also well attested by the posthumous edition (1502) of a commentary on the astrological work of Claudius Ptolemy (the *Opus quadripartitum*).

The collection of translations, published in 1496, clearly shows the multiplicity of Valla's interests and the originality of his encyclopaedia. The starting point is rhetoric, which allows for the construction of a correct organisation and argumentation of knowledge. The second pillar is the mathematical knowledge that permits to represent reality in a precise and proper way. Then it is possible to the higher realities (with astronomy, music, and theology) and the earthly condition (with philosophy and medicine). This collection of Giorgio Valla aroused much interest in the contemporary intellectual environment. In a recent study, Claudio Scarpati has argued convincingly that we must identify this collection of translations from Greek and not Valla's encyclopaedia *De expetendis ac fugiendis rebus* with the «Book of Giorgio Valla» that Leonardo owned and we read as the first item in the catalogue of Leonardo's books¹⁴.

¹⁰ On this collection, cf. Raschieri 2010, 70-73.

¹¹ On Valla's edition of the *Harmonicum introductorium* of Cleonides, cf. *ISTC* <https://data.cerl.org/istc/ic00742000>; on this collection of translations, published in 1498, cf. *ISTC* <https://data.cerl.org/istc/in00044000>.

¹² Cf. *ISTC* <https://data.cerl.org/istc/ia00387000>.

¹³ This translation of the *Magna Moralia* was published in the same year in [Paris](#) and [Venice](#).

¹⁴ Scarpati 2000.

In his time, Giorgio Valla was also famous for his library, which was rich in Greek and Latin manuscripts. We know from his letters that many humanists (such as Pico della Mirandola) borrowed books from Valla. For example, Niccolò Leonicensino obtained from Valla a copy of the 9th-century manuscript with the works of Archimedes and Eutocius for Poliziano. After the death of Giorgio Valla, his Greek books were preserved together and are now in the Estense Library of Modena. The Latin codices were instead dispersed, and, for this reason, it is not possible to identify Cicero's manuscripts that belonged to Valla¹⁵.

4. *Interest in Cicero and Greek rhetoric*

Giorgio Valla showed a lively interest in Cicero's work throughout his life. In his teaching years in Pavia, he probably wrote the commentary on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, published in 1490 under a pseudonym. The humanist published his commentaries to the *Topica*, *De fato*, and the *Timaeus* of Cicero in 1485, the year of his arrival in Venice. This shows that, in previous years, he had read and explained these works in his lectures in Pavia and Genoa. We have already mentioned the edition of the *Astronomici veteres*. This book includes a fragment of the Ciceroian translation of the work of Aratus. In the last year of his life (1499), Valla analysed Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes*, and his adopted son published his notes in 1502 along with a commentary on the *Partitiones oratoriae*. From this list, we can see that Valla was particularly interested in the rhetoric and philosophy of Cicero which, together with the moral and rhetorical works of Aristotle, constitute the cultural foundation of Valla's encyclopaedic system.

It is useful to analyse an original work of Giorgio Valla to clarify his interest in rhetoric and philosophy. The *De expedita ratione argumentandi*, published in the collection of 1498, was a great success among European humanists throughout the 16th century¹⁶. In this work, Valla applies the *loci* theory to the *quaestiones* and the investigation of the natural world and philosophy. Rhetoric and logic thus became a practical discipline of argumentation. In this way, Valla moves from oratory to the orderly elaboration of the *artes* and integrates the forms of the handbook

¹⁵ On Valla's library, cf. Heiberg 1896, Mercati 1938, and Raschieri 2013.

¹⁶ On this work, cf. Vasoli 1981, Fubini 1983, and Tamborini 2017.

and encyclopaedia. This approach was later essential for the investigation on the *methodus* of knowledge in transalpine humanism. In this work, Valla combined the explanations on the *loci* of Cicero and Quintilian and updated them with the most recent doctrines of Nicephorus Blemmida (13th century). He thus effectively presented the ontological foundations of Aristotelian logic¹⁷.

The encyclopaedic arrangement is possible in a rhetorical and philosophical perspective and assumes an institutional function in the higher education of the San Marco School¹⁸. Valla gives priority to the mathematical and physical sciences (Archimedes, Euclid, Galen) since he thinks that the evident argumentation has priority over the probable argument. At the same time, he thus manifests his hostility towards the Averroist traditions and lays the foundations for a new systematic, for a new encyclopaedism founded on the classical tradition and incorporated into the Christian vision of the world. According to Valla, rhetoric is the discipline of discourse and argumentation. Thus, a new organisation of studies is possible, and this new method includes textual philology, rhetoric, mathematical scientism, and neo-Aristotelianism. This view of the world is functional to a call to order in studies and morals¹⁹.

5. *Commentaries on De fato, Topica, and Timaeus (1485)*

In the summer of 1485²⁰, Giorgio Valla published in Venice, at the printer Antonio da Strada of Cremona – the same printer who three years later published his *Astronomici veteres* – a two-volume work with commentaries on Ciceronian works²¹. The first volume contains the commentary on *De fato*, dedicated to Giangiacomo Trivulzio, the ducal secretary of Milan, and the commentary on the *Topica*, dedicated to his

¹⁷ Cf. Vasoli 1982.

¹⁸ On the relationship between humanism and the encyclopaedia, cf. Fubini 1983.

¹⁹ Cf. Fubini 1983.

²⁰ I consulted the copy of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (cf. online at [urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00049532-9](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00049532-9) and [urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00049533-5](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00049533-5)). For the publication date, cf. the colophon of vol. 2: *Ciceronis libellus de universitate cum suo commentario a clarissimo viro domino Georgio Valla Placentino composito, diligentissime per Antonium de Strata Cremonensem Venetiis impressus est die xi Iulii Mccccclxxv*. On Antonio Strada, who also printed other volumes edited by Valla (the *Satirae* of Juvenal in 1486, the *Astronomici veteres* and the *Problemata* by Alexander of Aphrodisias in 1488), cf. Quadrelli 2019.

²¹ Cf. ISTC <https://data.cerl.org/istc/ic00563000>.

former Genoese student Bernardino Selvatico. The second volume contains the commentary on *De universitate*, that is, Cicero's *Timaeus*, which Valla dedicated to Ermolao Barbaro.

Once again, this work testifies to the fact that the works of Cicero, not only those on rhetoric but also those on philosophy, accompanied Valla in his first years of teaching. We can ascribe the commentary on *De fato* to the Lombard period (between Milan and Pavia), the commentary on *Topica* to the Genoese years, and the commentary on *Timaeus* to the beginning of Valla's Venetian stay. In this regard, the dedication of the commentary on the *Timaeus* to Ermolao Barbaro is very significant: Valla dedicates his first work printed in Venice to the man who wanted him at the School of San Marco.

Furthermore, this collection of school material testifies to the variety of Valla's interests in Cicero. With the commentary on *De fato*, Valla focuses on the problem of human destiny, which is studied and analysed through the tools of dialectics²². In the commentary on *Topica*, he investigates the theory of argumentation that he will develop later, in a personal way, in the *De expedita ratione argumentandi*. In this commentary, instead, Valla wants to prepare a tool that is useful from an educational point of view. He declares that he aims at reducing the commentaries to the *Topica* of late antiquity, those of Marius Victorinus and Boethius, in the form of short notes²³. Finally, with the commentary on *Timaeus*, Val-

²² From the prefatory letter: *At de fato et praestantissimorum philosophorum et Cicerone tanto autore disserente disputatione potest quicquam acutius, gravius, disertius inveniri? et, cum eam omnem trinis potissimum singularibus constare disciplinis compertum habeamus – morali, naturalique philosophia et arte disserendi quam graeca appellatione dialecticam appellamus –, potestne mentem tuam quicquam pascere sublimius?* «But is it possible to find something deeper, authoritative, clearer on the fate than the discussions of the most important philosophers and the discussion carried out by such an important source as Cicero? And, since we know for certain that all that discussion is based above all on three individual disciplines – moral philosophy, natural philosophy and the art of discussion, which we call dialectics by a Greek name –, is it possible that something higher nourishes your mind?».

²³ From the prefatory letter: *Propositum autem nobis est quae ab illis [Marius Victorinus et Boethius] explicata pluribus fuere voluminibus in brevem summam contrahere [...]. Ubi iudicium aliquando nostrum inseremus, suum tamen linquemus audientibus. Quod eo libentius fecimus, Bernarde Salvatice, ut totus hic Topicorum liber interprete non careret cum tam Victorinus quam Boethius totum non fuerint interpretati. Nos vero ad finem usque eVecti commentariolos et breves interpretatiunculas concludamus.* «However, we intend to summarise in brief what they [Marius Victorinus and Boethius] explained in several volumes [...]. When we sometimes introduce our opinion, however, we will leave the listeners their opinion. Bernardo Selvatico, we have done this all the more gladly so that all this book of *Topica* would not be without commentators since both Victorinus and Boe-

la intends to approach the scientific interests of the Venetian cultural environment and to attempt, in the wake of Cicero, a synthesis between cosmology, physics, and the study of human nature.

6. *Commentary on the Rhetorica ad Herennium (1488)*

We can find a fascinating example of Giorgio Valla's interest in the rhetoric and work of Cicero in a volume with the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and the *De inventione*, published in Venice in 1490²⁴. This edition and, in particular, the commentary on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* was very successful and had numerous reprints in the following decades²⁵. The late antique commentary of Marius Victorinus accompanies the text of the *De inventione*. At the side of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, we find a commentary by Girolamo Capiduro, an otherwise unknown student of Giorgio Valla. In an article recently published in the journal *Rhetorica*, Maria Teresa Laneri convincingly demonstrated that, in reality, the author of the commentary on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* was Giorgio Valla, who used a pseudonym for reasons of opportunity²⁶.

The problem was, in fact, the heated debate in the Venetian humanistic circle that concerned the paternity of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Giorgio Valla supported the Ciceronian authenticity of the treatise, while one of the negators of the Ciceronian paternity was Ermolao Barbaro, who, as we have seen above, had sponsored the passage of Giorgio Valla to Venice. This fact, according to Maria Teresa Laneri, suggested to Valla an attitude of caution, and the humanist decided to publish the commentary with a pseudonym. It seems probable that Giorgio Valla, in that particular cultural context, published the extensive commentary he had prepared many years before when he taught rhetoric in Pavia (1466-1476).

thus did not comment on it entirely. But, having come to the end, we conclude small notes and short comments».

²⁴ The volume (ISTC <https://data.cerl.org/istc/ic00682000>) was printed in Venice at the beginning of September 1490 by the printer Guglielmo from Trino (Gulielmus Tridinensis cognomento Anima Mia). On this printer, cf. Plebani 2004. I consulted the copy of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (cf. online at [urn:nbn:de:bsb:12-bsb00045791-3](http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsb:12-bsb00045791-3)).

²⁵ Edit16 database (National catalogue of Italian editions of the 16th century) reports nine editions that were published in Venice by various printers throughout the 16th century (1546, 1550, 1554, 1557, 1564, 1569, 1571, 1578, 1586); cf. the titles linked at the record on Girolamo Capiduro: http://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/scripts/iccu_ext.dll?fn=11&i=3057.

²⁶ Laneri 2019.

From our point of view, it does not matter that the thesis supported by Valla on the Ciceronian paternity of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* turned out to be wrong in the long term. This story is interesting for at least two reasons. First, this commentary testifies to the long-lasting attention of Giorgio Valla to the rhetorical texts of Cicero, which was not episodic or a simple school duty. The richness of the commentary shows the quality of the analysis carried out by Valla and his significant commitment to making the text of the *Rhetorica in Herennium* a useful tool for his students²⁷. Second, the humanist felt the urgent need to intervene, albeit indirectly, in the contemporary dispute over the author of the Latin work. Of course, even in his time, the fact of attributing the commentary on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* to one of his alleged pupils appears more as an act of modesty on the part of the humanist rather than a cautious distancing from his work.

7. *Commentary on the Partitiones oratoriae and the Tusculanae disputationes (1502)*

The posthumous volume of 1502, published by the adopted son of Giorgio Valla, Giovanni Pietro da Cademosto, collects the last fruits of the teaching and study activity of the humanist²⁸. The work brings together the commentary of an astrological work by Ptolemy, the *Apotelesmata*, which is illustrated by explanatory drawings, and the continuous commentaries, without the original text, of two Ciceronian works, the *Partitiones oratoriae* and the *Tusculanae disputationes*. The volume closes with Cademosto's commentary on some obscure passages of Pliny's *Naturalis historia*²⁹: in particular, he explains the preface to the first book and some passages from the second book on astronomical

²⁷ In this regard, Valla follows the medieval teaching tradition. On the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* during the Middle Ages cf. Ward 2006 and 2018, 92-116. In particular, Ward 2018, 93 says: «The *De Oratore*, the *De optimo genere oratorum*, the *Brutus*, and *Orator*, were not popular textbooks in the Middle Ages. Indeed, knowledge of these works is rarely found in the sources. One reason is simply that these works do not “teach the art” in the concise and systematic manner to be found in the vastly more popular *De Inventione* and *Ad Herennium*».

²⁸ *Edit16* CNCE 36423 (http://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/scripts/iccu_ext.dll?fn=10&i=36423). I consulted the copy of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (cf. online at [urn:nbn:de:bsb:12-bsb10139908-8](http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsb:12-bsb10139908-8)).

²⁹ Cf. the title *Iohannis Petri Vallae in Plinii praefationis primi libri Naturalis Historiae obscuriores locos interpretatio*.

questions and on the relationships between the musical notes, also, in this case, with illustrative images³⁰.

The commentary on the *Partitiones oratoriae* opens with a subject that was very much appreciated by Giorgio Valla: the defence of the Ciceroian paternity of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, with an explicit reference to the contemporary debate on the subject³¹. In general, in his commentary, Valla makes extensive use of Greek sources, reported in the original language, for lexical comparisons and extensive quotations not only of orators (Demosthenes, Lysias, and Isocrates) and philosophers (Plato and Aristotle) but also of the mathematician Nicomachus of Gerasa³².

In the section dedicated to the *Tusculanae disputationes*, the commentary stops at chapter 79 of the first book and presents the transcription of observations made by Giorgio Valla during his lectures, as his son explicitly states in the prefatory letter³³. Despite the incompleteness of the

³⁰ The work is dedicated to the nobleman Giusto Giusti from Verona; cf. the heading of the prefatory letter: *Ioannes Petrus Valla clarissimo ex Iustis Iusto Veronensi senatori equiti iurato iuris utriusque doctori salutem dicit aeternam*. On the topics covered, cf. the beginning of the commentary: *In secundum Naturali Historiae librum interpraetatiunculas igitur posituri existimamus minus obviis sensibus abstrusioribusque succurrendum quaeque aperta fuerint omittenda. Et perinde prius epistolam paucis perstringemus dictuque necessaria dumtaxat attingemus ne expositionem loquatiorem quam utiliorem fecisse videamur*. «Therefore, while we are going to write short notes on the second book of *Naturalis historia*, we believe that it is necessary to deal with less easy and more abstruse concepts and that we must omit what is evident. In the same way, we will first address the prefatory letter briefly and touch only on what is necessary to say so that it does not seem that we have written a commentary more verbose than useful».

³¹ *Marcus Tullius Latini eloquii specimen insigne [...] scripsit [...] ad Herennium verum suum velut ipse attestatur praeceptorem. Ut mihi non videantur audiendi qui ad Herennium libros negent esse Marci Tulli cassa nuce inaniore adducendo rationes [...]. Cumque desint ad comprobandum Ciceronis non esse rationes, citant Laurentii Vallae testimonium quod nusquam est ut circumspectum planeque prudentissimum virum levissimum videri velint quippe qui ubique testimonia ex eo Ciceronis citat libro Ciceroni ipsum semper attribuendo*. «Marcus Tullius wrote an excellent essay of Latin eloquence to his master Herennius, as he attests. In my opinion, we should not listen to those who deny that the books to Herennius are by Marcus Tullius and who claim more vain motives than an empty walnut [quotation from *Hor. sat.* 2, 5, 36]. And since there are no reasons to prove that it is not by Cicero, they cite a testimony of Lorenzo Valla that there is nowhere. They wanted him – a cautious and prudent man – to seem reckless since, every time he cites evidence from that book of Cicero, he always attributes it to Cicero». On the debate about the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, cf. Laneri 2019, 267-271.

³² On Nicomachus of Gerasa (flourished c. 100 CE), cf. <https://mathshistory.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Nicomachus/>. On *Cic. part.* 80, *ut [studia] numerorum ac sonorum, ut mensurae, ut siderum*, Valla cites the *Introductio arithmetica* of Nicomachus (1, 4, 4-1, 5, 2) about arithmetic, geometry, and music.

³³ *Saepenumero a me, optime Marce, poposcisti ut patris dictata in primum Ciceronis quaestionum Tusculanarum tibi publicanda exhiberem quod scires ob contractam amicitiam, dum cum ipso frequenter versareris, post publicas lectiones ipso dictante aliquot fuisse*

commentary, this work is interesting for reasons that are related to the biography of Valla. At a time when his health was probably unsteady, following his harsh imprisonment, and the end of his mortal life seemed near, Giorgio Valla pondered the problem of death and the existence of the soul through Cicero, and proposed these reflections to his students during 1499, a few months before his death in January 1500.

8. *The encyclopaedia De expetendis ac fugiendis rebus (1501)*

Giorgio Valla's encyclopaedic work, *De expetendis ac fugiendis rebus*, was published posthumously by Giovanni Pietro da Cademosto in 1501³⁴. The work appears as two large volumes *in folio*, respectively of 314 and 335 sheets, printed by Aldo Manuzio. The project of a vast encyclopaedia of science and philosophy dates back to the youth of Giorgio Valla. In particular, Giovanna Gardenal has shown that we can find the first outline of this project in Valla's manuscript with the title *Quibus rebus humana perfecta sit felicitas*, now kept in the Ambrosian Library of Milan (Ambr. G 18 sup.), dating back to the years when Valla was in Genoa (around 1480)³⁵.

Valla divided this work into seven *hebdomades* (groups of seven books), for a total of 49 books. This organisation demonstrates his interest in numerology³⁶. From the *Vita* and the letters of Valla, we know that this work accompanied the humanist throughout his life: in 1491, he composed the book 19 on astrology; in 1494, he finished the book 42 on the economy; in 1498, he completed the last book on the *res externae*. The first volume contains an introduction on the distinction between arith-

perscripta. «Most excellent Marco, you have often asked me to offer you to publish my father's lectures on Cicero's first book of *Tusculanae disputationes* because you knew because of close friendship, while you were frequently with him, that some had been written in full under his dictation after the public lectures». The letter is addressed to Marco Firmano (or Firmiani), who financed the printing of the book; cf. the *colophon*: *Impressum Venetiis aere eruditi viri Marci Firmani*. In 1499, Marco Firmano obtained, together with Giovanni Pietro da Cademosto, the privilege of printing the commentary by Bernardino Saraceno on Plautus (cf. Boorman 2006, 82); the volume of Plautus was printed in the same year by Simone Bevilaqua (cf. ISLC <https://data.cerl.org/istc/ip00784000>).

³⁴ *Edit16* CNCE 46533 (http://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/scripts/iccu_ext.dll?fn=10&i=46533). I consulted the copy of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (cf. online vol. 1 <urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10148187-8>, vol. 2 <urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10148188-3>).

³⁵ Gardenal 1981, Fubini 1983, 258-259.

³⁶ Cf. Fubini 1983, 264.

metic and philosophy (book 1), and the books on arithmetic (2-4), music (5-9), geometry (10-15), astrology (16-19), and physiology and metaphysics (20-23). The second volume presents medicine (24-30), grammar (31-34), dialectics (35-37), poetics (38), rhetoric (39-40), moral philosophy (41), economics and architecture (42-44), politics (45), the advantages and disadvantages of the body (46-48) and, finally, the *res externae*, such as the concepts of *gloria* and *amplitudo* (49)³⁷.

The starting point of Valla is the possibility of knowing the world, due to the faculties of the human mind, created in the image and likeness of God. In his work, the humanist manifests a profound anti-epicureanism which provides for the primacy of the *mens* over *voluptas*, in explicit contrast with Lorenzo Valla's vision of the world³⁸. Giorgio Valla adheres to a program of restoration of moralism that allows a comprehensive reconstruction of human knowledge. In this project, the humanist combines the globality of knowledge and the didactic transmission of the disciplines because he starts from faith and follows an absolute and unitary principle of truth. In this encyclopaedic view, Valla innovates the traditional order of the disciplines: he anticipates mathematics and music, and, on the contrary, sets grammar and rhetoric after medicine³⁹. His work method mainly involves the re-proposal and arrangement in Latin of the Greek works he had collected, read, and commented on with his students at the San Marco School⁴⁰.

³⁷ About mathematics in the encyclopaedia of Valla, cf. Tucci 2008 and 2014 and Rollo 2014a and 2014b; on astronomy, cf. Landucci Ruffo 1977a; on medicine, cf. Landucci Ruffo 1977b and 1981, Ieraci Bio 2017, and Martí Casado 2020.

³⁸ Cf. Fubini 1983, 259-261.

³⁹ On the division of the liberal arts, in addition to the division of *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and *quadrivium* (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music) codified by Martianus Capella (4th-5th century), for the Middle Ages, we can cite the division into three sections of the *Speculum maius* by Vincent of Beauvais, a work written in 80 books in the years 1235-1244: *Speculum naturale* (about God and the natural world), *Speculum doctrinale* (about language, ethics, craftsmanship, and medicine), and *Speculum historiale* (about world history). In the *Speculum doctrinale*, the sections on grammar, logic, rhetoric and poetry (book 2) precede the explanation on medicine (books 12-14), arithmetic, music, geometry, astronomy, astrology, weights and measures, and metaphysics (book 16).

⁴⁰ On the fortune of the *De expetendis ac fugiendis rebus* at the European level, cf. Hieronymus Wolf (*M.T. Ciceronis libri tres de Officiis*, Basileae 1563, 117, ll. 30-32), *Conatus est et Georgius Valla omnes artes liberales totamque philosophiam opere De rebus expetendis et fugiendis complecti*, «Giorgio Valla also tried to gather all the liberal arts and all the philosophy in the work *De rebus expetendis et fugiendis*». About Wolf's commentary on the *De officiis*, cf. the paper of Walther Ludwig in this volume. Nicholas Copernicus also used Valla's encyclopaedia; cf. Rosen 1981. On the fortune of Giorgio Valla, cf. also Sottili 1986; in particular, the Venetian humanist is cited among the

9. *The books on rhetoric in the De expetendis ac fugiendis rebus*

In the two books devoted to rhetoric (39 and 40), Giorgio Valla explicitly mentions Cicero and Quintilian as his primary sources, despite numerous references to Greek authors and especially to Aristotle. Furthermore, the subdivision of the topics mostly follows the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Another interesting element is the attention that Valla shows for the lexical richness of Cicero⁴¹. For example, he mentions the various terms used by Cicero on the *genus infinitum* and *finitum* (39, 3):

Infinitum Graeci thesim, Cicero in rhetoricis quaestionem, in topicis propositum, in partitionibus oratoriis consultationem, in oratore infinitam quaestionem nominavit. Finitum hypothesin Graeci, quod infinito subiicitur, Cicero in rhetoricis in topicis causam, in oratore modo causam modo definitam quaestionem at in partitionibus controversiam⁴².

Moreover, in the cases in which Cicero and Quintilian present differences, Valla compares the two opinions, for example on the *genus deliberativum* (39, 16)⁴³. Finally, Cicero is an excellent source not only for the

sources of Heinrich Bebel (*Commentaria de abusione linguae latinae apud Germanos; Commentaria contra modum epistolandi Pontii*) and Ortwin Gratius (*Commendatio grammaticae discipline in Orationes quodlibeticae*, 1508); on Bebel cf. Mack 2011, 243-244. Moreover, the study of Giorgio Valla's work is recommended by Gerardus Listrius in the *Commentarioli in dialecticam Petri Hispani*.

⁴¹ On the synchronic and diachronic variability of rhetorical lexicon in Cicero, cf. Raschieri 2017b.

⁴² «Greeks called the *genus infinitum* “thesis”, Cicero in the *De inventione* called it “*quaestio*”, in the *Topica* “*propositum*”, in the *Partitiones oratoriae* “*consultatio*”, and in the *De oratore* “*quaestio infinita*”. The Greeks called the *genus finitum* “hypothesis”, as it is subordinate to the *genus infinitum*, Cicero in the *De inventione* and the *Topica* called it “*causa*”, in the *De oratore* at one moment “*causa*”, at another “*definita quaestio*”, and in the *Partitiones* “*controversia*”.

⁴³ «Est – inquit Cicero – in deliberando finis utilitas, ad quem omnia referuntur in consilio dando sententiaque dicenda» [Cic. part. 83]. At Quintilianus [Quint. 3, 8, 1]: «*Deliberativas quoque miror – inquit – a quibusdam sola utilitate finitas*». Sed, quoniam non ut vulgus utilitatem intelligit Cicero, ita ne quidem Quintiliani adversatur sententiae, quod ipse quoque fateatur Quintilianus cum subiungit: «*Nec dubito quin ii [si] qui sunt in illa priori sententia secundum opinionem pulcherrimam ne utile quidem nisi quod honestum esset existimarint. Et est haec ratio verissima si consilium contingat semper bonorum atque sapientium*» [Quint. 3, 8, 1-2]. «In the deliberative genre,” says Cicero, “usefulness is the purpose to which everything refers in making a decision and giving an opinion. Nevertheless, Quintilian says: “I am amazed that some have defined deliberative discourses only based on profit.” However, since Cicero does not conceive usefulness as ordinary people do, so neither he is contrary to Quintilian's opinion. Even Quintilian himself admits this when he adds: “Nor do I doubt

theory but also for the examples that Valla draws from the speeches of the Roman orator.

In book 39, in particular, Valla exposes the various parts of rhetorical art in the following order: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *memoria*, *pronuntiatio*, and *elocutio*⁴⁴. Here we note the more significant space that Valla dedicates to *inventio* and *elocutio*. In contrast, the chapters on *dispositio*, *memoria*, and *pronuntiatio* are concise and present a reverse order in comparison to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, with the treatment first of *memoria* and then of *pronuntiatio*. In book 40, Valla explains the parts of speech, with many examples taken from the speeches of Cicero⁴⁵. Furthermore, in this book, we read a broad treatment of the *loci*, with the comparison between the theories of Cicero and Aristotle. After this section, Valla explains the argumentation theory, with examples also in Greek⁴⁶. The last chapters of

that those who are of that previous opinion, according to excellent advice, have not even judged anything useful except what was honest”».

⁴⁴ Book 39, after a general introduction on rhetoric (chap. 1), is dedicated to *inventio* (chap. 2-17; this section also contains the discussion on judicial, deliberative, and demonstrative genres, and, within the discussion on judicial genre, the theory of *status quaestionis*), *dispositio* (chap. 18), *memoria* (chap. 19), *pronuntiatio* (chap. 20), and *elocutio* (chap. 21-39).

⁴⁵ Valla cites the following speeches by Cicero: *In Pisonem* (chap. 35), *In Catilinam* (chap. 36), *Pro Archia* (chap. 35), *Pro Caelio* (chap. 2, 3), *Pro Cluentio* (chap. 3), *Pro Ligario* (chap. 2, 3, 34, 35), *Pro Milone* (chap. 2, 3, 34, 35), *Pro Murena* (chap. 3, 24, 35), *Pro Roscio Amerino* (chap. 2), and *Pro Tullio* (chap. 3). These quotations are often mediated by Quintilian (cf. especially the quotations in chapter 35).

⁴⁶ Book 40 discusses the parts of the discourse: *principium* (chap. 2), *narratio* (chap. 3), and *conclusio* (chap. 36). Valla replaces the discussion on *confirmatio* and *confutatio*, or *reprehensio*, with a large section on *argumenta* or *loci* (chap. 4-33) and on *argumentatio* (chap. 34-35, dedicated respectively to deductive and inductive reasoning). He justifies his choice in this way (chap. 4): *Confirmatio et confutatio, seu reprehensio, sequitur ostendenda, sed, quoniam utraque argumentis conficitur, cum de argumentis locutus fuero, de utraque parte dixisse dictum esse [sic] intelligendum erit*, «The *confirmatio* and the *confutatio*, or *reprehensio*, must be presented below, but, since both are formed by the proofs, after I have analyzed the proofs, it will be clear that I will have exposed both». Valla resumed this topic in chap. 35: *Ac de confirmandi ratione iam satis. Refutatio, sive reprehensio, est per quam argumentando adversariorum confirmatio diluitur aut infirmatur aut alleviatur. Haec eodem inventionis fonte utitur quo confirmatio*, «But that is enough about the demonstration method. The confutation, or rectification, is that by which the demonstration of the adversaries is ruined, weakened or lightened with argumentation. This uses the same source of invention as the demonstration». On the enthymeme, Valla cites an example of Demosth. 22, 7 (*Adversus Androtionem*): οὐ γὰρ εἶ τι πώποτε μὴ κατὰ τοὺς νόμους ἐπράχθη, σὺ δὲ τοῦτ' ἐμμῆσω, διὰ τοῦτ' ἀποφεύγοις ἂν δίκαιως, ἀλλὰ πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἀλίσκοιο· ὥσπερ γὰρ εἶ τις ἐκείνων προήλω, σὺ τὰδ' οὐκ ἂν ἔγραψας, οὕτως, ἂν σὺ νῦν δίκην δῶς, ἄλλος οὐ γράψει, «If the practice has at any time been contrary to the laws and you have only followed precedent, you cannot in fairness escape, but ought all the more to be convicted; for if any of the former delinquents had been condemned, you would never have proposed the resolution, and in the same way, if you are punished

book 40 are devoted to history (37)⁴⁷, dialogues (38), and letters (39). Finally, Valla explains the problem of *imitatio* (40) and *exercitatio* (41).

As evident from the previous observations, Cicero is clearly present in these books on the rhetoric of Valla's encyclopaedia. He is not only the primary origin of rhetorical theory but also the source of examples, taken from his speeches. Despite this critical presence of Cicero, Valla makes the selection and review of the contents according to his peculiar interests. In particular, he gives ample space to the theory of *loci* and argumentation. In the wake of Cicero, therefore, rhetoric becomes the art of discussion and effective argumentation for any discourse and any subject (scientific, philosophical or literary).

10. Conclusion

From his formative years, Giorgio Valla showed a sincere interest not only in Greek and Latin culture but also in literary and scientific subjects. Moreover, he maintained strong, lifelong links with the more general historical and cultural contexts, both Italian and European. Another particular characteristic of his personality is the connection between teaching, editorial activity, and cultural commitment. In particular, Valla distinguished himself for his remarkable attention to Greek science. This interest involved many fields: the collection of manuscripts, the study of works, the dissemination activity with the translation into Latin, and the arrangement of scientific and literary knowledge. In these various fields, the library and publishing activity were always central to Valla and assumed great importance to him in a wide geographical area and for an extended period.

Throughout his life, Valla showed considerable interest in Cicero's work in various fields, including rhetoric, philosophy, and astronomical poetry. This interest in Cicero and Greek rhetoric was the premise for Valla to develop his personal doctrine on the theory of argumentation. With this theory, Valla not only combined rhetoric and logic but also provided the basis for an updated arrangement of the sciences and a theory of knowledge closer to the needs of his time. Valla testified to this

now, no one else will propose it in the future». Transl. by A.T. Murray. Demosthenes' passage is accompanied by the Latin translation of Valla.

⁴⁷ On this chapter, cf. Pineda-Villalba 2020.

interest in Cicero through the continuous activity of commenting on Ciceronian works, from daily teaching to printed volumes. In this area as well, Valla distinguished himself for the variety of his interests and the revival of the late antique exegetical tradition. This attitude towards Cicero led the humanist to compose a synthesis between cosmology, physics, and the study of human nature. With the example of the commentary on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, we saw that Valla was able to insert himself into the cultural debate of his time. Moreover, this case shows that the exegetical activity on Valla is mostly still to be done, with the potential for exciting results. In any case, Valla's interest in Cicero continued until the last years of his life, and, even in the last phase, it focused on both rhetoric and philosophy. Indeed, reflection and teaching on the work of Cicero were closely linked to the biographical, even dramatic, events of Valla's life.

However, the most characteristic element of Valla was his overall vision of the *artes liberales* and their organisation in a vast encyclopaedia of the human and natural sciences. Cicero's rhetoric was the necessary premise for this arrangement of knowledge. More specifically, in Valla's encyclopaedia, Cicero with Quintilian was the primary source for the books on rhetoric. Valla integrated Latin authors with Greek works and, in particular, with Aristotle's *Rhetorica* and *Poetica*. However, the presence of Aristotle in Valla's work was not as predominant as in the works of the authors in the following decades. In any case, even in the books on rhetoric, Valla's prevailing interest is mainly focused on the theory of argumentation. In conclusion, we can say that Giorgio Valla's interest in Cicero is a significant example of the persistent importance of Cicero's work in the system of *artes liberales*, even in the new cultural horizons of humanism and the Renaissance.

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