BETWEEN CHAOS AND CONSENSUS
LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND POLITICS IN EARLY MODERNITY

José María Pérez Fernández

Juan de Icíar, *Arte subtilissima, por la qual se enseña a escreuir perfectamente* (1550)

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1. Universals and Particulars

Renaissance philosophy and civic humanism cannot be reduced to a single school of thought, and their complexity would require more than just a whole volume to exhaust this intricate topic. It lies beyond the scope of this book to provide a detailed description, or even a complete survey, of the main components in Renaissance thought. It rather aims to outline only certain strains in civic humanism which acquire a particularly heuristic relevance when they are put to the task of shedding light on a comparative study of the English and the Spanish literary canons in this period through the case studies of *La Celestina* and the interlude *Calisto and Melebea.*

The division of history into periods is always arbitrary and never devoid of controversy — one is here reminded of Mephistopheles's dictum in Goethe's *Faust:* 'Gray, dear young fellow, is all theorizing, and green, life's golden tree' (Arndt, trans. 2001: I.2038–39.53). In addition, it is a fact that what scholarship has traditionally called the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance overlapped for a number of decades, in the opinion of some, even for centuries, in the views of others. Consequently, a proper understanding of the changes that took place in this period is impossible without an awareness of the fact that the Renaissance moved as much away from the late Middle Ages as it also emerged out of them, and that one cannot be understood without the other. When approached under the guidance of its own texts, however, the end of the fifteenth century evinces a vivid sensation of change and momentum, which only increased with historical and intellectual developments in the early years of the sixteenth century, of which the discovery of America or the Protestant Reformation are only the most obvious and outstanding to modern eyes.

Underneath them, a myriad of developments were weaving a European network of texts and attitudes that contributed to this sense of change. One of the factors that turns *La Celestina* into such an interesting text is precisely that it stands with

one foot in the Middle Ages as it decidedly anticipates developments that will take full flight in modernity and even the Enlightenment.[1] The tone that Rojas conveys in his introduction witnesses to this, and the fact that he was under the influence of Petrarch's *De remediis* is revealing, since this treatise — one of Petrarch's most famous texts — is a response to the felt need for a rethinking of moral philosophy and a set of pragmatic formulas with which early modern subjects could approach the changing conditions of everyday life under the guise of the ups and downs of fortune.

The description of one of the strains of thought that contributes to define this period postulates that during the late Middle Ages the principles of Aristotelianism provided scholasticism with a steady epistemological foundation against this changing world of experience. However, the gap between the abstract subtleties of late medieval dialectics and the actual processes that were taking place in late medieval and Renaissance cities could no longer be ignored. Petrarch and subsequent humanists felt an urge to deal with these new troubling and complex realities, and, above all, they felt the pressing need to come to terms with the doctrinal and philosophical challenges posed by the developments of early modernity. In very broad terms, we can say that the source of many of the controversies and changes that took hold during this period in a wide diversity of fields was founded upon the dialectic between particulars and universals, i.e. the relation of fluid and changing particulars with abstract universals, especially the ways in which the particulars of fragmented and postlapsarian time could be interpreted under the light of normative universals, and what a close analysis of the former could reveal about the validity and legitimacy of the latter.

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[1] Jose Antonio Maravall, in his groundbreaking essay on *La Celestina* takes a sense of crisis towards the end of the fifteenth century as the starting point for his analysis of Rojas's work, since, in his opinion, *La Celestina* is the result of a certain break in the medieval order (see for instance Maravall 1972, p. 29, passim). This book starts from similar premises.

The focus on particulars accounts for the fact that many of the texts in this period are imbued with a new historical conscious-ness which displayed itself in the form of a growing concern with historical distance from the remote past, in particular with the classical world, and with the urge to reinterpret past and present texts and events under the light provided by their own originating contexts. This development went hand in hand with an awareness of the fluctuating nature of human language.[2] This resulted from the inescapable evidence of continuous changes in the natural world, and most importantly, with the increasingly complex structure of social-discursive interaction within the framework of an emergent capitalist economy. This led to a reassessment of the gamut of traditions that Europe had inherited from the classical world and the medieval tradi-tion. In some cases, this reassessment led to a breaking point, but this break with the past was not generalised: it is a fact that continuities were significant and long-lasting, as it is impos-sible to deny that new perspectives contributed to the more radical revision that many texts and concepts underwent.

The question of a new vision of history is fundamental for a proper understanding of the humanist project, and beyond it, for a proper understanding of the role that the philological interpretation of texts and historical documents played in the debate on the nature and function of exemplarity not only in historical, but also in legal, theological, and, of course, literary texts. In other words, humanists in this period were concerned first with establishing the original meaning of ancient texts, and then with trying to find out whatever lessons they could learn from them with the aim of providing practical solutions to the actual problems they were facing in what they consid-ered was a period of change. In this framework, the method of philological analysis as a sort of technical — one is tempted

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[2] See Pocock (1975, pp. 16–17) on historicism and — not incidentally — common law, two questions related to this new concern with particulars. On history and philology, and the centrality of linguistic concerns for the legal debates of the period see Kelley 1966, pp. 184–85, 198–99.

to say, empirical — prerequisite for proper interpretation amounts to its acknowledgement as an early version of critical reason applied to hermeneutical practice. Hence Victoria Kahn's identification of historical hermeneusis in the Renaissance as a form of practical reason (1990: 464–76).[3] If we cannot conceive of the Renaissance as completely separate from the late medieval world in which it originated and with which it continued to hold close ties in many fields, neither can we do so without contemplating it as the prelude to momentous changes which would in the long run bring about full modernity and the Enlightenment. The opening lines of Petrarch's *De remediis* epitomise this tenor, and they contain in a nutshell the humanist concern with man as well as the promise of the self-reflexivity that would become one of the central features of modernity. As opposed to the rest of creation, says Petrarch, human beings are the only animals not endowed with a blessed ignorance of themselves:

> When I thinke upon the affayres, and fortunes of men, their uncertaine and sudden chaunces and changes, truely I finde nothyng almost more fraile, nothing more unquiet, then the lyfe of man. For I perceiue howe *nature hath prouided well for all other liuinge creatures, by a woonderful kind of remedy, to wit, a certaine ignorance of themselves: but in us only she hath conuerted our memorie, understanding, prouidence, and moreouer the diuine giftes of our minde, unto our owne toyle and destruction.* For being always subiect not onely unto vayne and superfluous, but also hurtfull and pestiferous cares, we are both greeued with the present time, and also vexed with the time past, and that is to come: so that we seeme to feare nothyng so muche, as not to seeme at all tymes to be in miserie. (1579: riii; emphasis added)

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[3] See also her *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (1985).

This book does not intend to outline an intellectual history of the Western world on the inexorable road to modernity, but it does aim to contemplate certain specific developments in early sixteenth century Europe and its literature as part of a *longue durée* in which the Middle Ages evolved out of the classical world into the Renaissance, and then beyond towards the Enlightenment. In this respect, it will have to stress continuity as much as change. It is a fact that very few ideas were genuinely new in human experience in the Christian West in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. What did change were the historical context and the ways in which these ideas were reassessed in order to provide answers for the particular historical concerns of the specific period in which they were circulating with unprecedented, in some cases, and reinforced vigour, in others.

2. Rhetoric and Reason. Nature and Custom

Traditional accounts of early modernity show civic humanist thought abandoning the abstract subtleties of Aristotelian universals and embracing the more unstable and fluid tenets of rhetoric — interactive and dynamic, versatile and hence fit to deal with the particulars of experience — as the linguistic articulation of right, or natural reason.[4] One of the areas that underwent a thorough exploration in this period was the relation between language as the cohesive factor of human societies and reason as the abstract, transcendental component in the human psyche, and in turn how these two (i.e. language and reason) related to divine providence. In this respect one of the most fruitful paradoxes of humanist thought stems from the fact that it construed reason as the main axis upon which

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[4] Quentin Skinner (1978: 207–08) describes right reason and law of nature as concepts coming from scholastic philosophy and legal thought, and contrasts them with the unsettling developments in the fields of legal hermeneusis and the secularisation and relativisation of knowledge.

human experience and human nature revolved: on one side of it there were language and rhetoric as the earthly and ineluctable, postlapsarian expression of reason, and on the other side lay God as the foundation and drive behind human reason. The conflict for many humanists at this time originated in the intuition first, and the growing evidence later on, that reason was as much an abstract product stemming from actual human postlapsarian language as it was the result of divine inspiration or the intervention of providence. The drive to solve this paradox originated much of the texts produced in this period in a wide diversity of fields. In consequence, we shall see that many of these humanists moved from a conception of man as *homo rationalis* to one of man as *homo sermocinalis*.

Historicism, language, and hermeneusis intersect in the Italian Quattrocento in the new method of philological analysis, which was applied for the dissection of all sorts of texts with far-reaching consequences. The combination of philological analysis with the revaluation of rhetoric, and the influence of Ciceronian academic scepticism was to a large extent responsible for the tacit implicature that troubled many humanists: reason did not descend from above as much as it emerged out of rhetorical interaction and debate. Another field in which the dialectic between universals and particulars, and their relation through hermeneusis was fundamental was that of legal theory. Natural law has been described as 'the main theme of early modern legal and political thought' (Kelley 1994: 89).[5]As Kelley demonstrates, natural law was interpreted in diverse

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[5] Referring to the all-important question of legal hermeneutics Kelley emphasises how it overlaps with other fields: 'From being a questionable and indeed illegal practice, legal "interpretation" became a major genre in which questions of sources, authenticity, authorial "intention", and rational and contextual "meaning" were discussed with great sensitivity and ingenuity — thus marking the convergence of the legal theory of interpretation with the older, philological, philosophical, and theological varieties. It marked, too, a new phase in the endless conflict between (interpretive) judicial and (declarative) legislative interests' (1994: 91). On the question of natural law, and the transition from Medieval to Modern, see Brian Tierney ('Grotius. From Medieval to Modern', in Tierney 1997, pp. 316–42).

ways (1966). Of all these different interpretations, this books is concerned with the identification between natural law and right reason, and their interaction with the concepts of custom, linguistic communities and the rhetorical processes that intervened in the establishment and harmonisation of human societies. This dichotomy was not always stable, and since the purpose of this project is to take hermeneutical advantage of such fluctuations, the fact that the concept of natural reason and natural law appear in interaction with dialogism and the rhetorical tradition will prove particularly fruitful. As we shall see, these paradoxes and their accompanying controversies stemmed from the need to establish universally applicable norms for the ever-changing world of everyday life and its innumerable particulars. Kelley stresses the fact that the debates over method in the field of law 'touched also on the methodology of emergent political and social as well as legal "science", especially with the attempt to accommodate geographical, cultural, and historical factors both in judgments and in the theory of law', precisely because of 'the overlapping questions of fact, value, reason, and public interest' (1994: 91).

The concept of natural law responded to a variety of definitions that reveals the fluidity of the times when it came to looking at the foundations of the principles that rule societies and constitute thought systems. Thus, natural law was defined as stemming from divine providence, or identified with right reason, or even custom (the so called *second nature*, *altera natura*). It is also revealing to consider the distinction between a *primary law of nature* (running along the lines of natural reason) and a *secondary law of nature* (stemming from actual social practice). Kelley reminds us that that the dichotomy between naturalism and historicism 'derives from the ancient distinction between nature and custom — which in legal terms is to say, according to Aristotle, between law that was natural (*physikon*) and law that was arbitrary (*nomikon*)' (1966). Most importantly, Kelley points to the subsequent developments of modernity by stressing that: 'in the next century this quest for "the spirit of the laws" would be carried on even

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more profoundly by Montesquieu and Vico' (1994: 90). These dichotomies and the constellations of ideas and concepts that their diverse versions constituted, when applied to the philosophy of language, to political thought, legal doctrine, social and political doctrines, as well as to the analyses and proposals for the solution to these contradictions, is what we shall find thematised in the undertows that drive *La Celestina* and *Calisto and Melebea.*

The rejection of what humanists saw as irrelevant and unnecessary abstractions and the emphasis on concrete analysis, together with the return *ad fontes* facilitated by the unearthing of seemingly lost ancient texts and the new philological techniques, had led to the detection of changes and imperfections in language which called attention to its contingency and historicity, and at the same time, made it possible to approach texts from a more critical perspective. The results were a reassessment of legal and sacred texts that produced new developments concerning the nature and function of laws, and far-reaching reinterpretations of religious doctrine. The unsettling discovery of history and change in language contributed to opening up new areas of research and inquiry in the fields of moral, social and political economies, as well as on the different components in the dialectic between the individual and the social structures in which it became integrated. The epistemological principle that language and meaning — and by extension, interpretation — were not legitimised by abstract universals beyond history and time, but stemmed instead on social convention and consensus, rendered this eminently human tool inherently historical.

Given the central role accorded to language in human societies, and its power over the affects, some humanists like Juan Luis Vives found these insights quite disturbing. This assumption, in its different versions and with different degrees

of endorsement, lies at the roots of many momentous changes in this period.

But the changes were not just epistemological or doctrinal. There were also sweeping changes in terms of socioeconomic dynamics, as well as profound political rearrangements that could be roughly subsumed under the heading of the transition from medieval modes of social and political organisation towards the emergence of larger political units, such as the increasingly bureaucratised nation-state built up around the figure of the absolute monarch. Another type of discourse which humanism developed with the aim of controlling these changes and their practical consequences involved the elaboration of a body of laws designed to contain and regulate social exchange. The growing diversity and sophistication of early modern life, its fragmentation, and division into different realms of action and spheres of discourse demanded the articulation of elaborate legal texts to regulate and coordinate these different spheres both within their own individual contexts as well as among them as a whole. This necessity fostered the kind of preventive legislation defended by Juan Luis Vives and other civic humanists.

European civic humanism is generally understood as the kind of humanism concerned not with pure philosophical speculation, but with the practical application of its ideas and postulates to politics, society, and education.[6] As we shall see,

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[6] According to Copenhaver and Schmitt, the humanist curriculum 'had more to do with linguistic, literary, and historical issues than with philosophical problems, least of all with those questions that fell outside the province of moral philosophy' (1992: 25). On humanists as regulators of daily life, the forerunners in the application of critical (and practical) reason to all the different walks of life, and on their roots in the Protagorean tradition and on the sophists, they add: 'Until the end of the sixteenth century, humanists stressed moral philosophy as the branch of philosophical studies that best met their needs. They subordinated philosophy as a whole to moral interests because only through moral inquiry could they discover how all the various uses of reason ought to be integrated within some larger scheme of value and action. Humanists were not professors of philosophy; they were neither producers nor even large consumers of philosophy as

this legal reformist ethos inspired the concluding lines to *Calisto and Melebea* as well as other works that came out of the humanist circles around Thomas More. One of the main purposes of this joint normative effort was to counter the anomie detected in the perceived acceleration of changes during this period, diagnosed through the *omnia secundum litem fiunt* principle that Rojas located at the centre of his introduction to *La Celestina*:

> That chaunge and alteration of fashions in their apparell, that pullinge downe of old howses and buildinge vp of newe, and manie oder sondrie effectes and varietyes, all of them proceedinge from the feeble and weake condition of man's variable nature. (Martínez Lacalle, ed. 1972: 113)

> Aquel mudar de trajes, aquel derribar y renovar edificios y otros muchos afectos diversos y variedades que desta nuestra flaca humanidad nos provienen. (Lobera et al., eds. 2000: 19)

The Heraclitean strain that lies behind the Petrarchan *omnia secundum litem fiunt* principle originated in the renovated Stoicism of the late Middle Ages.[7] As an alternative to scholastic habits of thought, Stoicism provided a response to the new circumstances of life in the cities, which some humanists formulated in terms of the unpredictable and ever-changing nature of fortune. Stoic morality turned out to be a useful tool to survive in a callous and inherently unstable urban world,

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that discipline was practised in late medieval and early modern universities. They cared most about poetry, rhetoric, grammar, and history, but also about ethics, politics, and oeconomics' (1992: 28). See also Kahn 1985a, p. 44.

[7] For the influence of Stoicism on Petrarch's thought, see Trinkaus 1995, p. 49; 1979, p.6, pp. 34–35; Bouwsma 1975, pp. 16–18; see also chapter 4 ('Stoics, Sceptics, Epicureans, and Other Innovators') in Copenhaver and Schmitt 1992, pp. 196–284.

in which, as Rojas correctly assessed, everything seemed to move along the lines of the *omnia secundum litem fiunt* principle. As a response to these new challenges, Juan Luis Vives and other humanists of a similar hue sought to reconcile the need for a secular ethics of rational control which Stoicism postulated with Christian doctrine and the Church's insistence on the moral obligation to restrain the passions. Inextricably bound with this was the need to create laws that could harmonise society and its organising principles with the tenets of Stoicism through the joint application of natural reason and Christian theology.[8] The comprehensively normative value of this harmonisation of pagan Stoicism with Christian doctrine is epitomised in this text by Juan Luis Vives, who emphasises that this combination is the right one for a proper conduct of both the private and the public aspects of human life:

> Our mind is a victim of its own darkness; our passions, stirred by sin, have covered the eyes of reason with a thick layer of dust. We need a clear insight, serene and undisturbed. All the precepts of moral philosophy can be found in the teachings of Christ. In his doctrine, and in his words, man will find the remedy to all moral diseases, the ways and means to tame our passions under the guidance and the power of reason. Once this order has been secured man will learn proper behavior in his relations with himself, with God, and with

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[8] Bouwsma relates the educational ideal of humanism to the Stoic idea that virtue is acquired through learning and the intellect (1975: 23–24). He claims that Stoicism, with 'its conception of a rational law of nature, it assisted in the rationalization of law and social relations', which led to the 'systematic codification of the chaos of existing legislation, to the general rule of law, and to more equal justice' (ibid.: 25; emphasis added). He concludes that: 'The social thought of Stoic humanism thus reflected and probably helped to promote the rationalization of society on which large-scale organization in the modern world depended. But it also made the human world a colder place' (1975: 25–26; emphasis added). On Vives' influential synthesis of Stoic and Christian morality in his work *Introductio ad sapientiam* (Louvain, 1524), see Charles Fantazzi's introduction to Vives' *De subventione pauperum* (Matheeussen and Fantazzi, eds. 2002, pp. xii- xiii).

his neighbor; he will act rightfully not only in the privacy of his home but also in his social and political life. (English translation qtd. in Noreña 1970: 207)

Beyond the diagnosis of the influence of Stoicism, this particular interpretation of humanism overlaps with Max Weber's classical account of early modern rationalisation and its processes. Among these processes, Weber identified the emergence of the modern state, capitalism, and, most interestingly for the purposes of this book, the specialisation and subdivision of law into separate spheres, such as sacred and secular, private and public, civic and criminal. The complexities of the unstable social, political, and economic networks that were emerging at this time required a detailed and careful rational organisation, which in turn set in motion the general process of compartmentalisation of life into different spheres (Weber 1958: 'Introduction').[9] Habermas has also underlined the centrality of the development of the idea of subjective freedom within this process, which took place in parallel with the creation of a sophisticated body of civil law (1987: 83–84). This new legal framework in turn facilitated the rational pursuit of self-interest, and formally guaranteed ethical autonomy and self-realisation in the private sphere. Habermas points to the fragmentation of early modern life as the price to pay for this rationalisation and for the emergence of this subjective freedom (ibid.).

3. True Nobility and Self-Interest

We can find several revealing testimonies of some of the changes described in the preceding chapters in a paradigmatic text that came out of the humanist circles around Thomas More. *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte,* printed by John Rastell *c.*

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[9] See also Cascardi 1992, pp. 17–18.

1527,[10] constitutes a pristine display of some of the competing varieties of contemporary political, social, and economic thought. These varieties are represented by the figures of a merchant, a knight, and a ploughman, all of them engaged in a debate about the nature of true nobility, to which a fourth character, a philosopher, provided the closing remarks. The topic of true nobility is illustrative of both the continuities and the disruptions between the late Middle Ages and the early modern period.

¶ Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte.

A dyaloge betwen the Marchaut the
knyght and the plowman dysputyng who is a verey Gen-
tylman ℸ who is a Noble man and how men shuld
come to auctoryte / compylid in maner of an en-
terlude with divers toys ℸ gestis addyd therto
to make mery pastyme and disport.

John Rastell, *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*
(*c.* 1527)

We need to go back to the classical world to trace the origin of the notion of virtue as true nobility, which can be found in Horace (Skinner 1978: 45–46). It then timidly reemerged in the thirteenth century, only to gain a renovated and reinvigorated relevance in the mercantile and civic context of the Italian Quattrocento. The question of true nobility had already been incorporated into Dante's *Convivio* (*c.* 1304–1307), who in turn had taken it from his master Brunetto Latini (1220–1294), who dealt with this topic in his *Books of Treasure* (*Li Livres dou Trésor*, written in French during his exile in France between 1261–1268). The topic was subsequently developed by humanists such as Buonaccorso da Montemagno's *De nobilitate*

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[10] The authorship of *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* is disputed between John Rastell and John Heywood. See Bolwell, who argues in favour of Heywood's authorship (1921, pp. 93–4); Skinner 1978, p. 237; Watkins 1999, p. 783; Axton and Happe, eds. 1991, p. xii; Axton, ed. 1979, p. 20 (who defends the combined authorship of Rastell and Heywood).

(1428), Poggio Bracciolini's *De vera nobilitate* (1440), and Christophoro Landino's *De vera nobilitate* (*c*. 1487). Another interlude also printed by Rastell, Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrece* (composed *c*. 1486), took Buonaccorso's work as its main source. Cartwright (1999: 138–39) underlines the fact that *Fulgens and Lucrece* couples the concept of individual freedom with the values of meritocracy as opposed to ancient aristocratic privilege. In his introduction to his edition of *Fulgens and Lucrece*, Greg Walker emphasises the significant 'lengths to which Medwall goes to play down the radicalism of his assertions', and how in the face of a courtly audience made up mostly of aristocrats many of the characters 'all issue apologies and disclaimers for the content of the play' (2000: 305).[11]

In *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* the knight stands up for the ideas and interests of landed aristocracy, and the merchant defends the values of the new bourgeoisie, i.e. the principles of entrepreneurialism and liberty as the foundations of an open space for the exchange of goods with an accompanying legal space that could uphold and legitimise such practices. The

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[11] Buonaccorso's treatise was translated by Sir John Tiptoft, and printed by Caxton in 1481, the same year in which Caxton printed Malory's *Morte Darthur*. This was the eclectic sign of the times. Note the coexistence in Caxton's pioneering press of books that propagated the ethos of chivalry with essentially humanist texts, which challenged the aristocratic ethos. On Buonaccorso and Tiptoft's translation see also Skinner, who claims that for Poggio 'The truly noble man is perceived, as in Buonaccorso, as a highly active and ambitious individualist, a man who cultivates "honesty and valuable skills" which he then devotes to his own glorification and the service of the common wealth' (1978: 81). Skinner also underlines the potential radicalism in the idea of true nobility: 'Underlying this stress on the centrality of the virtues in political life is a potentially radical theory about the qualities required for political leadership. If the possession of virtue is the key to good government, it appears that we ought to nominate only those of the highest virtue to serve as our rulers and magistrates. The radical implication contained in this proposal is of course that we ought not to rest content with the idea of an hereditary ruling class founded on lineage and wealth; we ought instead seek out the most virtuous members of society, wherever they are to be found, and ensure that they alone are appointed as leaders and governors of the commonwealth' (1978: 236).

merchant defends the creation of a market for the exchange not just of material goods, but also of labour, and underlines the importance of endeavour, wit, and study in opposition to what he views as the sloth and social parasitism that the traditional values of the medieval aristocracy were prone to foster. The ploughman takes a more radical stance by arguing against private property, although he eventually reaches a more moderate conclusion than one would expect from the tenor of his initial and more radical remarks.

The discourse of dialogical reason and intersubjective agreement goes hand in hand with a new idea of commonwealth based on reciprocal trust and profit, both at the social or political level and in the fields of entrepreneurialism and trade, justified on the basis of the common good that such undertakings provide for society and for the nation. We shall find a socially marginal — but exacerbated — insistence on mutual profit in the language of the servants in *La Celestina*.[12] Rastell's perspective is less disenchanted, and in *Gentylnes and Nobylyte*, this discourse is used by the merchant for more lawful purposes. After making a detailed list of the imports that his trade makes available across society to 'all maner people', he concludes that by virtue of these activities — which he rates as 'good deeds'— he deserves to be considered a nobleman. The merchant vindicates his business practices not just on account of the personal profit he makes, but mainly because of the prosperity that they generate, which contributes to improve the commonwealth by eliminating poverty and providing goods — including medicines — which would be otherwise unavailable. He insists on two keywords that drive his endeavour, labour and study, two central concepts in the ethos of meritocracy:[13]

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[12] See Maravall, 1972, pp. 66–69. For more detailed observations on the world of the servants in *La Celestina*, see Maravall's chapter IV, 'La clase ociosa subalterna. La desvinculación de las relaciones sociales. El principio de egoísmo' (1972, pp. 79–97).

[13] See Vives's *De subventione pauperum* and his defence of the value of work in Matheeussen and Fantazzi, eds., 2002, book I, chapter VI.

I say *the comyn well of every land*
In fete of marchauntdyse doth pryncypally stand,
For if our commoditees be utteryd for nought
In to strange landis, and no ryches brought
Hydyr therfore, we shuld come to beggary,
And all men dryffyn to lyf in mysery.
Then *we noble marchauntis that in this reame be,*
What a grete welth to thys land do we:
We utter our warys and by theyrs good chepe,
 And bryng them hyder, that *grete proffet*
And pleasure dayly commyth to this regyon
Too all maner people that here do won
Forthermore, ye see well with youre eyes,
That of straynge landis the commodytees
We have such nede of them that be there
That in no wyse we may them forbere
As oyle, sylkis, frutis, and spyces also,
Golde, sylver, yryn and other metallis moo,
All drammys and druggys longyng to physyke,
Whych men must nedes have when they be seke,
Whych in thys reame can not well grow
Our contrey is to colde and not hote now
Without whych thyngis we shulde lyfe in mysery,
And oft tymes for lak of them we shulde dye.
And *I spende my studi and labour contynually*
And cause such thyngis to come hyder dayly
For the comfort of thys land and commen welth,
And to all the people grete proffet and helth.
And for such noble dedys, reason wyll than
That I ought to be callyd a noble man,
And nother of you both that here now be
In noblenes may accompare with me.
(1994: first part, lines 245–276; emphasis added)

It is this contribution to the commonwealth through en-
trepreneurialism and personal effort which defines the social

standing of the merchant, not the values of blood and lineage. The merchant advocates the legitimacy and dignity of his trade and business by opposition to the knight, who has inherited his wealth and power directly from his ancestors, not through ingenuity and risk-taking endeavour. This argument that the merchant throws in the face of the knight is not devoid of a certain upstart arrogance, which must have faithfully captured the tone and mood of some contemporary attitudes:

> But I wold thou knewist it, for all thy
> krakkys, I am able to bye now all the land
> That thou hast, and pay for it owt of hand;
> Whych I have got by myn own labour and wit,
> And that whych thou hast, thyn awncestors left it.
> (1994: first part, lines 22–26)

Moreover, the knight and his aristocratic ancestors have acquired their wealth in an illicit way, by taking advantage of the labour of those under them, and not giving anything at all in return. The attitude of the knight is socially and economically monological, by (in the view of the merchant) not taking part in the network of self-interest and commercial exchange, whether of goods or of labour. In other words, the landed aristocracy is accused of not participating in the type of fair trade that brings mutual benefit — one of the main arguments of the merchant to legitimise his activity. Note how the merchant describes the production process, be it the extraction of metals, or the use of wool and other raw materials, which are then turned into goods for the use and benefit of 'lordys and estatis', who refuse to become part of this new paradigm of production and trade by offering what the merchants and artisans deservedly expect in return. That is why — the merchant claims — rather than being considered a gentleman, the knight should be classified as a 'chorl'. See the merchant's definition of gentility:

For I call hym a gentylman that gentilly
Doth gyf unto other men lovyngly
Such thing as he hath of hys own proper.
But *he that takith ought away from another,*
And doth gyf hym no thyng agayn therfore,
Owght to be callyd a chorll evermore.
But myn auncestours have giffyn alwey
To thyn auncestours such thyng as they
By their labours did trewly get and
For myn auncestours bildid howsis wher'ein
Thyne auncestours have had their dwellyng place.
Also myn auncestours have made tolis
To all maner crafti men belongyng,
Wherby clothis and every other thyng
Whereof thyn auncestours nede have had
With the same tolys have ever be made.
So myn auncestours have gyffin their labours
Ever to comfort and help thyn auncestours.
[…]
How can lordys and estatis have ought in store
Except thartyfycers do get it before?
For all metalls be dyggyd furst by myners
And after wrought by the artyfycers
Woll, fell, and every other thyng
That is necessary to mannys coveryng
And all other thyngis that men use and were
Is alwey made by the artyfycer.
(1994: first part, lines 44–61, 68–75; emphasis added)

This is an open and spirited defence of the creation of a legal space for business practices that can facilitate the emergence of a market where not only goods and products, but also waged labour, are exchanged. It is very clear that, as opposed to the values of serfdom upon which the landed aristocracy based their economic practices and values, the new merchant classes favour a space for trade, and for the dynamic and more flexible

pursuit of more general private interests and profit, for personal autonomy — where individuals can choose whom they associate with in order to trade their goods and their labour.[14]

This is the ethos that the servants and the bawd who coordinates them display in *La Celestina*. They repeatedly insist on the idea of associating with those who will provide them with the highest returns, rejecting their bonds of fidelity to Calisto, of which they make nothing. Maravall points out that the Spanish word *salario* ('salary') started to be used regularly in Spanish in the fifteenth century. It is also used in this sense in *La Celestina*, a development which runs parallel with the fact that the relations between master and servant were undergoing gradual changes due to the new economic dynamics under which those relations were being absorbed (Maravall 1972: 70). The master-servant relation had changed from being a personal and familial kind of attachment, in which the servant stood as a member of the pre-modern extended household. This relation was originally based on mutual care and fidelity, and was now turning into a new kind of employer-employee relation in the context of the new monetary economy. Servants are not household members anymore but hired hands, who are to a certain extent free to leave their masters in search of a better pay. This is of a piece with the changes produced in the European labour market as a result of the collapse of the serfdom system after the demographic debacle brought about by the Black Death.[15]

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[14] Fernand Braudel devotes chapter 7 of his three-volume *Civilization and Capitalism to money and monetary economy* (1992, vol. I, pp. 436–78). One of the sections of this chapter is significantly titled 'Money and credit: a language' (pp. 477–78): 'Like ocean navigation or printing, money and credit are techniques, which can be reproduced and perpetuated. They make up a single language, which every society speaks after its fashion, and which every individual is obliged to learn' (Braudel 1992: 477). He deals with the emergence of the labour market in vol. II, *The Wheels of Commerce*, pp. 49–54. See also 'The development of industrial capitalism' in Rice and Grafton 1994, pp. 53–60.

[15] See Maravall 1972, pp. 87, 92. There were also significant changes in the meaning of the word *commodity* in English; see part two below.

The merchant also voices concerns in the fields of politics and economics that had already been formulated a century before in the Italian city-states of the fifteenth century. Thus, Bruni in his famous *Oration* of 1428 praised the endeavour of Florence's merchants, and he defended the pursuit of each individual's own interests and affairs as one of the elements that sustains the equilibrium of the republic. The same spirit can be found in Poggio's *On Avarice and Luxury* (1428–29), where he defended the legitimacy of the pursuit of wealth as part of the foundations of the commonwealth, or in Matteo Palmieri's (1406–1475) *Della vita civile* (composed *c.* 1434–37). Alberti's treatise on *The Family* (*Della famiglia*, composed *c.* 1434) has been described as a work in which the merchant class in Florence is described 'in the fullness of its good sense and sober ostentation' (Bolgar 1954: 281). As a typical Renaissance dialogue, *Della famiglia* also complies with all its central characteristics. It contrasts different points of view, and therefore makes use of the Ciceronian technique of the *in utramque partem dicendo*.[16] Alberti cautions against the extreme pursuit of self-interest as potentially damaging, but he also praises the benefits of trade for the stability of the commonwealth: 'There is nothing like avarice to destroy a man's

[16] 'Upon close scrutiny *Della famiglia* does not, of course, present a single, homogeneously bourgeois outlook. As a dialogue it expresses conflicting points of view. It is a monument of attitudes. It enables us to relive social and moral conflicts which troubled early capitalist society. Ponderous and slow of speech, delighting in heavy ironies and elaborate insinuations, Alberti's personages confront much of what it means to be consciously urban — to experience social mobility, to recognize the psychological as well as the practical importance of purchased commodities, to wish in vain for stable families and firm public authority amid fluctuating fortunes and alliances. They debate these subjects on the basis of ethical assumptions derived from Christianity but under the no less pervasive influence of classical models. To all that they learn from the classics, moreover, Alberti's personages add a ubiquitous Renaissance quality, a commitment to action, and this is why they seem implicitly optimistic. Reason is their source of policy, policy their means to achievement. Such a view of thought itself was a new thing' (Watkins 1999: 1–2).

reputation and public standing. What virtue is so bright and noble but that, under the cloak of avarice, it is wholly obscured and passes unrecognized' (Watkins, ed. 2004: 159). In an early display of entrepreneurial and capitalist spirit, Alberti praises good management, which is a middle way between irresponsible liberality and overkeen acquisitiveness. One of the protagonists in the dialogue, Lionardo, asks Gianozzo about good management, of which he is a good example:

> You are well known among our kinsmen as a man neither so eager to spend as not to be absolutely thrifty nor so thrifty that anyone could ever accuse you of being less than liberal. I want to beg you, therefore, since thrift is such a very useful thing, do not deny us the advantage of learning about it from you. We will listen more faithfully to you than to another, who might teach us avarice rather than thrift. (Alberti, Watkins, ed. 2004: 162)

In Book II (*De re uxoria*) Alberti praises merchants, as an occupation both profitable and honorable. He starts by praising hard work, diligence, and self-reliance, and decries sloth, an injunction which Juan Luis Vives will echo a century later:

> If riches come through profits, and these through labor, diligence, and hard work, then poverty, which is the reverse of profit, will follow from the reserve of these virtues, namely from neglect, laziness, and sloth. These are the fault neither of fortune nor of others, but of oneself. One grows poor, also, by spending too much. Prodigality dissipates wealth and throws it away. The opposite of prodigality, the opposite of neglect, are carefulness and conscientiousness, in short, good management. Good management is the means to preserve wealth. Thus we have found out that to become rich one must make profits, keep what one has gained, and exercise rational good management. (Watkins, ed. 2004: 44)

Rational good management is precisely what Celestina practises in her particular trade. When contemplated against these humanist texts and their ethos, Rojas's text, its plot, and its characters acquire subtle touches of irony, sarcasm and a potential for social criticism which would be absent from a more superficial reading. Like the merchant in *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*, Alberti concludes that for all these and for other reasons merchants are honourable people. He casts his defence of the honourability of trade in the solemn robes of Stoic self-control and temperance, which leads to freedom from the vagaries of fortune and the irrationality of the affects:

> Such is the way, I think, with all great business enterprises, all merchant and trading ventures worthy of a noble and honorable family. Hence merchants ought always to be what our great ancestors were and what, no doubt, the Albertis are and always will be-leaders in great enterprise, men of the highest usefulness to their country, bringers of honour and fame to the family, men who grow from day to day, not in money and goods only but likewise in dignity and in the eyes of men. Then we, like them, can say that in our labors the spirit is never enslaved but always free. Our body is subjected to no dishonorable or vile burden but adorned always by modesty and temperance. Insofar as fortune controls the outcome of our undertakings, I shall not claim we never, but generally we do not, let it upset our minds through the turbulence of our feelings. (Watkins, ed. 2004: 147)

A version of a different position was formulated in England during the mid-sixteenth century, when the so-called commonwealthmen expressed serious reservations concerning the danger inherent in the exacerbated pursuit of self-interest.[17]

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[17] The commonwealthmen show concern for 'the protection of the common good against the encroachments of an uncaring individualism' (Skinner 1978: 226).

Significantly, some of these authors, while praising trade and commerce in general, criticised the attitude of those who relentlessly sought wealth with the exclusive aim of climbing higher in the social order; thus subverting what was generally taken as the natural order of society. This was the case of Robert Crowley, and his 'The Marchauntes Lesson' (included in *The Voice of the Last Trumpet*, 1550), where he offers advice and warning for merchants. Some of the contents remind us of the merchant's self-defence in *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*.[18] He reminds the merchant that the end of his calling should always be the commonwealth, and that the goods with which he trades must be offered at a reasonable price. Like the ploughman in *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*, he also warns against greedy speculation in times of scarcity, both with goods and with money:

> Apply thy trade therfore I say
> To profit thy contrey wythal
> […]
>
> If thou venter into straunge landes,
> And brynge home thinges profitable:
> Let pore me haue them at thine handes.
> Upon a price reasonable.

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[18] Note Kenneth J.E. Graham's description of the commonwealthmen, and their significant paradoxes: 'The commonwealth men's idea of an economy limited to a few simple, traditional, and carefully regulated transactions in the local market is consistent with their idea of a God who is both the model and the guarantor of just exchange; understood as payment for services rendered, salvation was consistent with common-sense notions of such exchange. Hence in Crowley's works, the idea of salvation as payment for good works sits uneasily next to a belief in salvation as unmerited grace' (2005: 145). Graham also comments on the fact that the language of the market was introducing itself in theological and social debate: 'It is not surprising, then, that the theology of Crowley and his fellows sometimes adopts the language of the marketplace, elevating the processes of exchange that seem so debased in works like the Confutation of Shaxton' (2005: 145).

Though y^u maist thy money forbeare
Til other mens store be quite spente
Yet if thou do so that thy ware
May beare high price, y^u shalt be shente

[…]

No more shalt thou nede for to lende,
Thy goodes out for vnlawfull gayne
In suche sorte that by the yeres ende,
Thou maist of one shilling make twain.
(Crowley 1992: lines 13–14, 17–24, 101–104)

Crowley expresses however his pessimism at the actual state of affairs: these merchants will heed no advice, and will always strive to make as much money as they can, by all means available, in order to climb in the social scale. They try to marry their daughters above their standing, instead of doing so to someone of their own class:

Let it suffice the to marye
Thy daughter to one of thy trade:
Why shouldst thou make hir a Lady
Or bye for hyr a noble warde?
(1992: lines 109–112)

Their social ambitions also show in their attempts to buy land with the aim of ennobling their sons, instead of having them learn their own trade:

So sone as they haue ought to spare,
Beside their stocke that must remaine:
To purchase landes is all theyr care
And all the studye of their braine.
[…]

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Thou shalt aye haue inough in store
For the and thine in thy degree:
And what shouldest thou desire more,
Or of hygher estate to be?

[…]

And let thy sonnes euerychone
Be bounde prentise yeres nine or ten
To learne some art to liue vpon
For why sholde they be gentilmen?
(Crowley 1992: lines 49–52, 105–108, 113–116)

In this respect, the position of the commonwealthmen for whom Crowley stands as a representative lay half-way between the defence of trade as a source of wealth, prosperity and stability, on the one hand, and on the other the most radically communitarian postulates expressed by the ploughman in *On Gentylnes and Nobylyte*. We shall see that in many relevant aspects of his work, Juan Luis Vives is a representative of this *via media*. The attitudes of these merchants also echo the attitudes expressed by Pleberio, Melibea's father, in *La Celestina*, first in his dialogue with Alisa, his wife, while planning Melibea's marriage, and then in the midst of his despair after Melibea's suicide. In the latter he complains about the accumulation of wealth in which he had engaged all his life, rendered pointless as a result of his only daughter's love-affair with Calisto through the mediation of Celestina, and her subsequent suicide.

Fernando de Rojas, *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (1514)

The gamut of opinions on this and similar issues shows the complexity of the existing tensions between the pursuit of self-interest and commercial activities, which political theorists saw as essential to the development of a healthy and prosperous commonwealth, on the one hand, and on the other the caution that some of these humanists predicated against the immoderate taste for money and power that this ethos unleashed, which could bring about negative consequences for the community. *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* shows this tension in dialogic and dramatic form. In a different way, Juan Luis Vives sought to tilt the balance towards a more controlled system which would permit commercial activities while taking care of its unwanted byproducts — which included vagrancy, prostitution, and bawdry of the kind which Celestina practised.

All of this shows Rojas's *omnia secundum litem fiunt* principle busy at work: not just at the level of textual interpretation — closely related, as we shall see, to the linguistic and hermeneutic concerns of Italian fifteenth century humanism —, but also at the level of life in the city, as well as within the realm of the economy of sexual desire and marriage as a means to stabilise and transmit property.[19] As this book will demonstrate,

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[19] Significantly, Rice and Grafton deal with this topic jointly with the question of meritocracy, true nobility, and a new mercantile ethos in early modern Europe: 'It was not only getting much and spending little that framed the bourgeois sense of self and order. The merchant also set out to create a special kind of household, one as stable, hierarchical, and subservient to his aims and needs as the outside world of commerce was fluid and threatening. The books of advice, from the most private to the most literary, all stressed the central importance of creating the right sort of family. The young man must marry, but only the right sort of woman. She must come from a good family, so that the marriage created a useful alliance. She must bring an adequate dowry, so that the marriage helped create wealth (though the promised sum should not be so extravagant that her family would be bankrupted by paying it or be likely to refuse to pay). She must have a good body, one capable of producing many children, and a good character, so that she would bring them up to be honest and capable. And she must be young and docile, willing to give up the control of her own family for the new, but equally complete, control of her husband. He would serve as a master and teacher, if a nominally benevolent one. The books laid out in

these epistemological tensions were also displayed in terms of language as common currency. All these social values were now set loose, and humanists of the period evinced an enthusiastic attitude combined with anxiety at the prospects of the consequences of such social and economic forces. As he did in epistemology, theology or the philosophy of language, Vives assumed a mediating role between the different threads of social and economic doctrine that had emerged as a result of the changes brought about by the new context and the ideas that were being used to either sustain or combat them.

4. Radical Humanism and its Discontents

The new openings in hermeneutics intersected with these social and economic concerns in the radical interpretation of certain passages of Scripture, notably in the *Acts of the Apostles*, which led some to defend the abolition of private property and postulate early versions of communism — Erasmus, More and Vives engaged with the different interpretations of this text and their consequences.[20] The new philological methods of textual interpretation inaugurated by the Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457), and then extended by Desiderius Erasmus, and many others, were responsible for establishing the interpretation of Scripture on a new basis. Thus, texts were unleashed in a world where epistemology and hermeneutics appeared dominated by the *omnia secundum litem fiunt* principle, a development that was made possible and magnified, by the invention of print. Valla's analysis of *The Donation of Constantine* (1440) was the first instance of the far-reaching consequences that a philological analysis of a text could bring about. The authenticity of this document, which, as Bower-

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minute detail what the husband must do to train his wife, even explaining the best times at which to engage in sexual intercourse and the best ways of carrying it out' (1994: 65–67).

[20] See Acts II.41–45, IV.32–35.

sock points out in his introduction to *The Donation of Constantine*, had been used by the papacy for centuries to legitimise its claims to 'political authority over the realms of the western Mediterranean' (2007: vii) , was dismantled by means of Valla's philological analysis. Valla not only uses the method of philological analysis: he also resorts to the techniques of forensic rhetoric, couching his arguments also in the form of a debate before the jurors.[21]

The work of scholars such as Hexter, Todd, Norbrook, or Baker[22] has demonstrated the existence of two kinds of humanism: radical and moderate. Baker refers to Hexter's distinction between 'a "radicalism" that extends from sixteenth-century Humanism through the Enlightenment and the "scientific socialism" of Marxism' (1996: 22).[23] This reading is of particular interest for this book, because one of its main aims is to show how the epistemological and discursive developments witnessed in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as exemplified in *La Celestina* and its first English adaptation

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[21] 'His analysis of language and style has often been seen, rightly, as the beginning of serious philological criticism. The speeches and the argument against the Donation are finely spun with all the finesse of a master rhetorician. Ultimately philology proves to be an even more powerful instrument than rhetoric for demolishing the document' (Bowersock 2007: vii). See also Melissa M. Bullard's introductory essay to the symposium in homage to Salvatore Camporeale, one of the most important among Valla scholars: 'Well before the Protestant Reformation, Valla's reach back to the language and customs of early Christianity constituted an implicit and direct political challenge to the ecclesiastical authorities of his day, hence Camporeale's insistence that for Valla, rhetoric was inseparable from politics. For just as rhetoric gives form and power to discourse within particular historical communities, it can also compel the members of those communities to action' (2005: 480).

[22] See Baker for an account of the main positions with respect to this controversial question: 'The ascription of political "radicalism" to sixteenth-century humanism constitutes one of the more promising ripostes to the overworked notion of an irremediably "liberal" or "bourgeois" humanism' (1996: 1).

[23] J.H. Hexter, 'A Window to the Future: The Radicalism of *Utopia*' in *Utopia*, 1965, pp. cv-cxxiv and especially cxvi.

evolved later on into full modernity, in particular into the emergence of the novel as the genre that embodies the aporias and concerns of modernity. Baker emphasises, in line with David Norbrook, the wavering attitudes of some of the most prominent humanists of the time, after things had got out of control with the onset of the Reformation and the theological and political developments of their so-far essentially speculative and theoretical works (Baker 1996: 1).

The rejection of the metaphysical universals of late medieval scholastic Aristotelianism implicitly led to the erosion of the theological foundations of political legitimacy — Valla's philological analysis of the *Donation of Constantine* also contributed to this. The emphasis on the postlapsarian, human, and particular nature of human societies contradicted *de facto* the religious beliefs of the time. It is not thus a matter of explicit radicalism, but rather of contradictions and anxieties provoked by the all too eloquent implications of its tacit epistemological developments. More importantly, the first adaptation of *La Celestina* into early modern English emerged from the circle of humanists around Thomas More, one of Vives's patrons in England. Baker has also used the reception of the English translations of More's *Utopia* to illustrate the varieties of humanist thought in sixteenth-century England. Baker focuses in particular on the Lucianic features of More's *Utopia* and Erasmus's *Moriae encomium* in ways that relate his reading with Valla's probabilistic epistemology, Bakhtin's dialogism, and the inherent ambiguity of humanism; all of which, when applied to the anxieties of humanism located in the reception of a text like *La Celestina* — expressed in part in its English adaptation — will yield interesting conclusions when contemplating the work of Rojas as a precursor to the dialogism of the novel.

Towards the end of the *omnia secundum litem fiunt* prologue, Rojas acknowledges the controversies that his work

has created. He has prepared the reader for this conclusion all along the detailed description contained in the preceding lines, in which he has copiously demonstrated how the whole cosmos first, then the world of nature, as well as the social world of man, are dominated by strife and dissension. This agonistic ethos is as problematic as it is creative, and at no point does Rojas appear to cast an unambiguously negative light on it. The whole introduction is imbued with subtle irony. This is simply the way things work: a fact of nature, which creates and destroys itself continuously. He attributes part of this strife to the affects, and he acknowledges the fact that the same text does offer different levels of interpretation, and hence serves different purposes.

Towards the end of the passage, Rojas acknowledges the impossibility for an author to control the way in which his text will be interpreted:

Pues que diremos entre los hombres a quien todo lo sobredicho es sujeto? Quien explanara sus guerras, sus enemistades, sus envidias, sus aceleramientos y movimientos y descontentamientos? Aquel mudar de trajes, aquel derribar y renovar edificios y otros muchos afectos diversos y variedades que desta nuestra flaca humanidad nos provienen? Y pues es antigua querella y usitada de largos tiempos, no quiero maravillarme si esta presente obra ha sido instrumento de lid o contienda a sus lectores para ponerlos en diferencias, dando cada uno sentencia sobre ella a sabor de su voluntad. Unos decían que era prolija, otros breve, otros agradable, otros escura; de manera que cortarla a medida de tantas y tan diferentes condiciones a solo Dios pertenece. Mayormente pues, ella, con todas las otras cosas que al mundo son, van debajo de la bandera desta notable sentencia; que aun la mesma vida de los hombres, si bien lo miramos, desde la primera edad hasta que blanquean las canas, es batalla. Los ninos con los juegos, los mozos con las letras, los mancebos con los deleites, los viejos con mil especies de enfermeda-

des pelean, y estos papeles con todas las edades. La primera los borra y rompe, la segunda no los sabe bien leer, la tercera, que es la alegre juventud y mancebía, discorda. Unos les roen los huevos, que no tienen virtud, que es la historia toda junta, no aprovechandose de las particularidades, haciendola cuento de camino. Otros pican los donaires y refranes comunes, loandolos con toda atención, dejando pasar por alto lo que hace mas al caso y utilidad suya. Pero aquellos para cuyo verdadero placer es todo, *desechan el cuento de la historia* para contar, *coligen la suma para su provecho, ríen lo donoso, las sentencias y dichos de filósofos guardan en su memoria para trasponer en lugares convenibles a sus actos y propósitos.* Así que cuando diez personas se juntaren a oír esta comedia en quien quepa esta diferencia de condiciones, como suele acaecer, quien negara que haya contienda en cosa que de tantas maneras se entienda? (Lobera et al. eds.:19–20; emphasis added)[24]

The combination of this new approach to texts with the massive distribution of printed materials fostered the creation of a diversity of frequently clashing interpretive communities, which in turn started to evolve into an early version of Habermas' public sphere.[25] As Fantazzi had shown with his *De communione rerum* (1535), Vives tried to restrain the consequences of statements that he had made earlier in his *De sub-*

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[24] Once more, part of the sources for the description of this universal strife is in Petrarch's *De remediis*.

[25] Print, by fixing texts, also paradoxically increased the awareness of the historical distance from the past. The question of print and its impact has been approached by Elizabeth Eisenstein in her *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979, vol. I, p. 186–195, also 300–301). Eisenstein demonstrates how print contributed to the spread and growth of science as it contributed to the multiplicity of interpretation (and hence to a considerable degree of confusion and controversy) of Scripture (vol. II, 699–701). On how philology contributed also to provide a sense of historical distancing in legal studies, and its far-reaching implications for political thought, see Skinner 1978, p. 106.

ventione pauperum (1526), which demonstrates the ambiguity and different readings which could be drawn from the texts that humanism was opening up for reinterpretation. *De subventione pauperum*, an innovative proposal for social reform, displays the pragmatist and down-to-earth character of this aspect of Vives's humanism. This stands in sharp contrast with the dialogical and purely speculative character of works such as More's *Utopia*.

However, the socioeconomic conditions out of which all these works emerged are the same that facilitated the production of works such as *La Celestina* — or later, picaresque literature. All of them constitute, each in their own particular way, different generic and discursive responses to the epistemic, social, political, and economic changes that were taking place at this time.[26] Typical for Vives, *De subventione pauperum* combined appeals to Christian charity in its first book with more modern policy proposals — in the context of a local polity such as Bruges, which in many ways reproduced the model of merchant-ruled Italian city-states — , with the aim of approaching the problems of poverty and public morality as well as health posed by the economic activities of the city.[27] Vives, who was personally involved through both marriage and business ties with the Spanish merchants that had settled in Bru-

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[26] According to Noreña, the treatise 'was an investigation into the causes of social injustice and a manual of public welfare and education of the poor and the handicapped. Vives' treatise is comparable to the first book of More's *Utopia* by which it has been unjustly overshadowed. If Vives' work never reaches the platonic idealisation of More's masterpiece, it surpasses the *Utopia* in the prophetic pragmatism of its programs. The serene and thoughtful style of the book reflects Vives' passionate concern with the social turbulence of his days: the peasants' revolt in Germany; the insurrection of the Communes and the Germanias in Spain; the uprising of the common people in England against Wolsey's war taxation; the pest and the hunger in the desolated fields of France and Southern Spain; and finally, the distress of Bruges gradually yielding to the competition of Antwerp and the tricky manoeuvring of English merchants' (1970: 96).

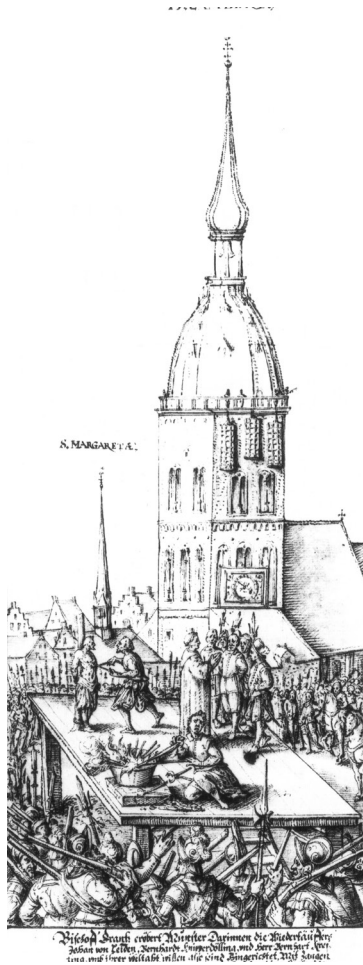[27] See Noreña 1970, p. 50; also Matheeussen and Fantazzi, eds. and intro., 2002, pp. ix, xix.

ges for several generations, shows in this treatise his concern with the side-effects of the development of trade, the increasing economic activity in the city, and the effects of the flow of population from the countryside, all of which produced an underclass of professional beggars, as well as phenomena such as prostitution, topics approached by *La Celestina*.

Together with all these reforms, justified by the changes in society and the markets,Vives's proposal amounted to an effective secularisation of social aid that met the opposition of the more traditional factions of the Catholic Church, and in particular of the mendicant orders.[28] This evinces the thin line that Vives was treading, trying not to appear radical or at least unambiguously engaged with Protestantism, or to defend the unprincipled accumulation of wealth as practised by some businessmen in the period, as he distinctly distanced himself from scholasticism. It also demonstrates the different ways of interpreting Scripture that were unleashed at the time, and how humanism — even Protestant humanism — was deeply concerned with controlling the most radical outcomes of this unprecedented freedom of interpretation.[29] Anabaptist claims against private property which led to events such as the Münster Commune originated in interpretations of the Gospels that had been unleashed by the new ethos of a fresh and personal approach to Scripture. As it is well known, this interpretation of Scripture also appears in Thomas More's *Utopia*.[30] This was

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[28] '*Tratado de la misericordia divina y humana of Gabriel de Toro* (Salamanca, 1534). Domingo de Soto *Deliberación de la causa de los pobres; In causa pauperum deliberatio* (1545). Juan de Robles, also known as Juan de Medina. De la orden que en algunos pueblos de España se ha puesto en la limosna para remedio de los verdaderos pobres. Both men [i.e. De Soto and De Robles], were adamantly opposed to any secularization of the care of the poor, which is implicitly advocated by Vives, although he is careful not to exclude ecclesiastical involvement' (Matheeussen and Fantazzi, eds. and intro.: xxvi–xxvii; emphasis added).

[29] On this, see Matheeussen and Fantazzi, eds. and intro., 2002, p. xxviii.

[30] See Baker: 'the communism that the Utopians practise is said to have a New Testament analogue in the primitive communism of the early Christian Church, as described in Acts 2:44–5 and 4:32–5. Indeed, one reason

another proof of the contentious nature of the debates raging at this time around matters of signification and interpretation: from either side of the divide, both reform-minded Catholics like Vives and Protestants like Luther were forced to put a stop to the radical outcomes of the process which their own writings and methods of interpretation had initiated. This is yet another instance of the anxiety the new modes of reading were causing and of the attempts to control and hedge in the unwanted results of the logic inherent in the process that had been set in motion by philological analysis and the historicist approach to language and interpretation.[31]

Faced with the aristocratic parasitism of the knight and the exploitative ethos of the merchant, the ploughman in *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* displays the pride of the basic pro-

S. MARGARET.A:

Execution of the leaders of the Münster Commune, Münster City Archives

that the Utopians take to Christianity when Hythloday introduces it to them is that the organization of the early Church reminds them of their own society' (1996: 7).

[31] Baker (1996: 1–2, 8) has approached these anxieties about 'the potentially radical elements of Erasmian humanism'. In particular, Baker addresses the 'hermeneutical anxiety' provoked by these more radical elements — an expression that can be applied to Rojas, to Vives, to More, and to most of early modern humanism when faced with the proliferation of texts and their potentially unwanted or disturbing interpretations (Baker 1996: 8).

ducer, without whose labour neither the night nor the merchant would benefit from the status they enjoy. He sets out to reason in order to prove why they are morally and socially inferior to him, and why he is 'the noblyst man of vs all':

> By the same reason it prouith lo
> Ye be but caytyfies & wrechis both two
> And by the same reason proue I shall
> That I am the noblyst man of vs all
> For I haue nede of no maner thyng
> That ye can do to help of my lyffyng
> For euery thyng whereby ye do lyf
> I noryssh it & to you both do gyf
> I plow I tyll & I ster the ground
> Wherby I make the corn to habounde
> Whereof ther is made both drynk & bred
> Wyth the which dayly ye must nedis be fed
> I noryssh the catell & fowlys also
> Fyssh & herbis & other thyngis mo
> Fell herr & woll whych the bestis do bere
> I noryssh & preserue which ye do were
> Which yf ye had not no dowt ye shuld
> Starue for lak of clothis because of colde
> So both you shulde die or lyue in necessite
> If ye had not cofort & help of me
> And as for your fyne cloth & costly aray
> I cannot see whi ye ought or mai
> Call your self noble because ye were it
> which was made bi other menis labour & wit
> And also your dilicate drinkis & viand
> Bi other menis labours be made so pleasand
> Therefore mayster marchaunt now to you I sei
> I can not see but I am able & mai
> Lyf wythout you or your purueaunce.
> (1994: first part, lines 305–332)

The ploughman even echoes the slogans of the Lollards, arguing in favour of radical egalitarianism, a principle that stems from one of the most ancient and venerable communitarian readings of Scripture:

> For thy folysh and pyuysh oppynyon
> Was because of the grete domynyon
> Of the landis and rentis wher to thou wast bore
> Whych thyn auncestours had long tyme before
> Thou thynkyst thy self a gentylman to be
> Ant that is a folysh reason semyth ne
> For when adam dolf and eue span
> Who was then a gentylman
> But then cam the churl and gederyd good
> And ther began furst the gentyll blood
> And I thynk verely ye do beleue
> That we cam all of adam and eue
> (Rastell 1994: second part, lines 9–20)

He attributes private property to tyranny and oppression, which led to submission of men who had originally been created by God as free individuals, and to the establishment of the unfair laws of inheritance. This is an interesting account of the origin and evolution of human societies, and a diagnosis of the situation in which they stood at the time, which bears an interesting comparison with Cicero's account of the origin of civilisation in his *De inventione*:

> By gogges swete body thou lyest falsely
> All possessions began furst of tyranny
> For when people began furst to encrese
> Some gafe them self all to Idylnes
> And wold not labour but take by vyolence
> That other men gat by labour & dylygence
> Than they that labouryd were fayne to gyfe

Them part of theyr gettinges in peas to lyfe
Or elles for theyr landis money a porcyon
So possessyons began by extorcyon
And when such extorsyoners had oppressyd
The labouryng people than they ordeynyd
And made laws meruelous strayte & hard
That theyr heyres myght inioy it afterward
So the law of inherytaunce was furst begon
Whych is a thyng agayns all good reason
That any inherytaunce in the world shuld be
(Rastell 1994: second part, lines 127–143)

But the ploughman is not as radical as he starts out to seem: he ends up defending a notion of nobility close to that of the merchant, based upon honesty and hard work, and fair returns for the labour he has put in all his basic endeavours. He praises those who contribute to the common good with their wealth, by building churches, repairing the highways, and alleviating the cares of those who are deprived. They are economically and morally good because they insert themselves in the mechanisms of mutual benefit, and they provide for the public good as they pursue their own private profit. However, he is not totally uncritical of the merchant classes, pointing out their shortcomings in a tone similar to the one used by the commonwealthmen, denouncing their covetousness and their lack of social solidarity in times of scarcity. A serious offence committed by many of these merchants, when they ascend to positions of political responsibility, is that they disdain 'all lerning law and reason' and instead make their judgments based on their 'will and affection':

Many be good and worshipful also
And many charitable dedis they do
Byld churchys & amend the hye ways
Make almyshowsys & help many decays
But some be couetous & full falsely

Get theyr goodis by dysseyt & vsury
And when they haue a .M.li. in theyr cofers
They wyll rathyr suffer theyr neyghbers
To sterue for hunger & cold & to dye
Or they wyll gyfe to help them a peny
And yet more ouer when any of them be
Promotyd to rule or auctoryte
They dysdayn all lernyng law & reason
And Iugge all by wyll & affeccyon
(Rastell 1994: second part, lines 191–204)

The ploughman seeks to rationalise the structure of land property by legitimising it in favour of those who use their assets in the benefit of the commonwealth; this he identifies as the same source of legitimacy for governors. He concludes that the only legitimacy for landowning princes, rulers, bishops, curates, preachers and teachers stems from the fact that the revenues that their assets provide facilitate their freedom from work. This allows them to focus on their real job, which is that of being 'executers' of the commonwealth; the same principle applies to the members of the military, whose main social function is 'to defende the people dayly':

But such men as haue gret rentes and lands
And no estate but terme of theyr lyuys
And euery thyng theron wyll norysh and saue
For the grete zele & loue that they only haue
To the comyn welth of theyr contrey
And for god sake lo these people be they
That be worthy to haue possessyons
And such people of vertuouse condycyons
And no nother shuld be chosyn gouernours
& thei shuld haue lades to maintain their honours
Terme of theyr lyuys as long as they take payn
For the comyn welth thys is good reason playn
So that no man owght to haue any land

But such as be apt and haue charge in hand
For the comyn welth as pryncys and rulers
Bysshoppes curates prechers and techers
Iugges mynysters and other offycers
That of the comyn welth be executers
And valyant men of the chyualry
That be bounde to defende the people dayly
Such men as be apt to all such thynges
Shuld haue landes to mayntayne theyr lyffynges
(Rastell 1994: second part, lines 299–320)

He opposes inheritance because it goes against the principle that no one should live in idleness as he enjoys the products of somebody else's labour. No one, he claims, should be free to leave land to his children so that they can live in 'sloth and gluttony', doing 'nought by lyfe voluptuously':

So enherytaunce is not besemynge
To let them haue landes that ca do no such thing
Nor I thynk it not resonable nother
One man to lyf by labour of an nother
For ych man is borne to labour truly
As a byrde is to fle naturally
Nor a man ought not to haue such lyberte
To lefe landes to hys chyld wher by that he
Shall lust for to lyfe in slouth & gloteny
Compellyd to do nought but lyfe voluptuously
(Rastell 1994: second part, lines 321–330)

The ploughman relates all these evils to bad rulers (who live 'after theyr lustis voluptuous') and therefore indulge not in justice, but in tyranny. Inheritance, as a practice that goes counter to natural reason (here identified with justice) lies at the roots of all these social, economic, and political evils:

Then thys grete myschef shuld folow of hit
Oft tymes they shuld rule that haue lyttyll wyt
Or disposyd to be proud & couetous
Or to lyfe after theyr lustis voluptuous
Which yf such men had auctoryte
Many thynges no dowte mys orderyd shuld be
Where Iustyce shuld be / there wold be tyranny
where peas shuld be warr debat & enuy
So there is no good reason that I can se
To proue that any enherytaunce shuld be
(Rastell 1994: second part, lines 337–346)

Although he seems to start from rather radical premises, such as the abolition of private property, the ploughman thus ends up proposing a sort of compromise solution. A reading of *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* leaves one with the overall impression that the dialogue has woven a network of arguments that brings together the most *reasonable* proposals of all of these characters. In that respect, the dialogue is representative of reformist humanism and its endeavour to harmonise the different discursive and ideological threads that were in circulation at the time. As we shall see, the role of the philosopher towards the end of the dialogue is precisely to voice the *commonsensical* conclusions that represent the ideology of Rastell and of Vives.

The concept of *distribution* throws some very interesting light on the diversity of the controversies that constitute the background to *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*. In particular, since this concept is closely related to the ethos of meritocracy as an essential component of social and economic justice. As Kenneth Graham points out, distribution is not just a sociopolitical and an economic term, but also a rhetorical figure, and it is also employed indifferently in the context of economic discourse as well as in those theological treatises concerned with distributive justice on earth. Graham describes its origins in Aristotle and its subsequent evolution, in particular those authors who

dealt with it in England in this period, and who prove the variety of interpretations of this term. These authors spanned all of the English sixteenth century, and included Sir Thomas Elyot, Henry Brinkelow, Crowley, Thomas Wilson, Henry Peacham, or Ralph Robinson and his translation of More's *Utopia*. In legal terms, distribution 'derived from the Aristotelian idea of distributive justice and given its best-known Tudor statement in the third book of Thomas Elyot's *Book Named the Governor*' (Graham 2005: 139).

Distribution refers in the fields of economics to trade at a fair price in which all those involved gain and which therefore results profitable for the commonwealth. In some other cases it is also coupled with the meritocratic appointment to office, as well as to the merit-based legitimation of property, wealth, and honour — which is just what the ploughman advocates. The term was also used to describe the more traditional policies of alms giving and poor relief. Distribution was also used to refer to the increasing level of specialisation in society, and the right place for every function, attitude, and social class; in the words of Thomas Wilson 'when we apply to every body, suche things as are due unto them, declaryng that every one is in his vocacion' (qtd. in Graham 2005: 139–40).[32] Significantly, it could also describe a more radical rationale for the distribution of wealth which verged on communitarianism — as was the case in Ralph Robinson's 1551 translation of *Utopia*.[33]

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[32] Graham concludes that 'this meant a caring king, obedient nobles and subjects, godly bishops, and a patriarchal domestic structure' (2005: 139–40). This meritocratic ethos and the idea of a commonwealth inspired on Ciceronianism can also be found in the works of Sir Thomas Smith (1513–1577), *A Discourse for the Commonwealth* (1549) and *De republica anglorum: A Discourse on the Commonwealth of England* (composed *c.* 1565, published 1583); for more information on the work of Thomas Smith see Hadfield 2005, pp. 19–22.

[33] 'The pertinence of Robinson's *Utopia* to the situation of both Cecil and the commonwealthmen in 1551 can best be understood in comparison to English attempts to mitigate the potentially radical elements of Erasmian humanism. Such mitigations reach their zenith in Chaloner's *Praise of Folie*, but Richard Taverner's 1539 translation of Erasmus's famous adage

This radical interpretation informs some of the initial vindications of the ploughman, echoing also the proposals put forward by the type of Anabaptist radicalism that Vives sought to combat with his *De communione rerum*. This short treatise constitutes one more battle within the manifold doctrinal war in which reformist humanism was involved. If Vives had reacted against scholastic logic with his epistle *In pseudodialecticos* (1519), he also found himself compelled to delegitimise radical Protestantism in his *De communione rerum*, a determined defence of private property against the radical collectivist claims of those involved in the Anabaptist upraising which had taken place in Central Europe. This upraising is generally acknowledged to be the result of the tensions and conflicts arising from the end of the medieval feudal order and the rise of early capitalism. Much of its spirit was founded upon a medieval millenarian ethos, now revived within the context of the radical versions of the Protestant Reformation. Note the strongly anticapitalist tone in the following text by Bernt Rothmann, one of the leaders of the Anabaptist rebellion (the Anabaptists sought to legitimise their defence of the abolition of private property precisely in their interpretation of Scriptural texts such as those found in the *Acts of the Apostles*):

> Amongst us God — to whom be eternal praise and thanks — has restored community, as it was in the beginning and as befits the Saints of God. We hope too that amongst us community is as vigorous and glorious, and is by God's grace observed with as pure a heart, as at any time before. For not only have we put all our belongings into a common pool under the care of deacons, and live from it according to

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— *Amicorum communia sunt omnia* — provides a good initial indication of the kind of hermeneutical anxiety that could accompany the translation of Erasmian texts even before Norfolk' (Baker 1996: 8). Baker cites cases in which Tudor authors expressed this hermeneutical anxiety caused by the radical interpretation of Acts 2 and 4, including Elyot's *The Book Named the Governor* (1531).

our needs: we praise God through Christ with one heart and mind and are eager to help one another with every kind of service. And accordingly, everything which has served the purposes of selfseeking and private property, such as buying and selling, working for money, taking interest and practising usury — even at the expense of unbelievers — or eating and drinking the sweat of the poor (that is, making one's own people and fellow — creatures work so that one can grow fat) and indeed everything which offends against love — all such things are abolished amongst us by the power of love and community. And knowing that God now desires to abolish such abominations, we would die rather than turn to them. We know that such sacrifices are pleasing to the Lord. And indeed no Christian or Saint can satisfy God if he does not live in such community or at least desire with all his heart to live in it. (Rothmann, qtd. in Cohn 2004: 266)

Significantly enough, this pamphlet was published in 1534, the year before the publication of Vives's *De communione rerum*. The whole point of Vives's response revolved around what he offered as the right interpretation of this text and its actual application to ethics, laws, society, and economic practices.

The ploughman is also used by Rastell as a mouthpiece for the new ethos of antischolastic humanism — in which he evinces the influence of the more secular side of Vives's humanism, exemplified by his antischolastic *In pseudodialecticos* (1519). This was Vives's first work and it must have been influenced not just by his youthful immersion in the University of Paris, dominated at the time by the scholastics, but also by the controversies that Vives had witnessed as a teenager in his native Spain. Juan Luis Vives had been born in Valencia in 1492, the year that saw the publication of *Arte de la lengua castellana* by the Spanish humanist Antonio de Nebrija, the first Europe-

an grammar of a vernacular language. During his school days Vives witnessed a controversy between one of his teachers, the scholastic Amiguet, and the humanist Petrus Badfa. Badfa defended the same positions as Antonio de Nebrija, who had been involved with the humanists inspired by Lorenzo Valla during his stay in Bologna towards the end of the fifteenth century. Upon his return from Italy, Nebrija had got in trouble with the Inquisition after he announced his intention to publish philological research on the texts of Scripture. The general inquisitor started a preemptive process against him in 1504, to which Nebrija responded with his *Apology*, a fundamental document of Spanish humanism. This *Apology* was written just a year before Amiguet gave the thirteen-year old Vives some homework to do: he was told to compose, as an exercise in rhetoric, an oration against Nebrija. We lack documents to assure us that Vives actually did his homework. But we do know that he reacted forcefully against this antihumanist education: Nebrija was practically the only Spanish scholar for whom Vives showed public admiration and respect (Noreña 1970: 23–24).

In the following passage, the ploughman urges the knight to use natural reason instead of the authority of Scripture or theology to defend his positions in favour of inheritance and the interests of the landed aristocracy. He accuses the knight of trying to prove an indefensible point by turning to the devious last resort of citing the Scripture, instead of using reason and wit. Here we have a clear instance of the secularisation of thought and philosophy, with the vindication of rational argumentation through rhetorical expression as the fundamental strategy for the legitimation of these new socioeconomic practices. We can arguably infer from this passage that for the ploughman, the point of arrest that ultimately justified meaning and detained the process of infinite regression set in motion by signification and argumentation lay in what he calls natural reason, more than in a mere incontestable, authority-based, divine principle that stood beyond the reach of pragmalinguistic agreement and rhetorical expression. Note the explicit reference of the

ploughman to the fact that the principles of philosophy and
those of theology often disagree:

    K
    Yes that shall I proue by good auctoryte
    For rede in the byble and thou shalt therin see
    God sayd to abraham tibi dabo
    Terram hanc et semine tuo
    whych is as much to say to expounde yt trew
    I shall gyfe thys land to the and thyn yssew
    Here is a good proue that it was goddes wyll.
    That Abraha and his blode shulde continew styl
    As possessyoners and haue the gouernaunce
    Of that lande as theyr propre enherytaunce
    P
    Thou answerest me now even lyke a fole,
    As some of these fonde clarkes that go to scole
    When one putteth to them a subtyll question
    Of phylozophy to be provyde by reason,
    Whan they have all theyr wyttes and reason spende
    And can not tell how theyr parte to defende,
    Than they wyll aledge some auctoryte
    Of the lawes or elles of devynite,
    Whiche in no wyse men may denye
    And yet ye knowe well that *of phylozophy*
    The pryncyples oft contraryant be
    Unto the very groundys of devynite
    For the phylozophers agre here unto.
    'Quod mundus fuit semper ab eterno',
    And devynys: 'quod in principio omnium
    Creavit deus terram et celum'
    But thou dydest promyse openly, eyen now,
    Onely by naturall reason to prove how
    That enherytaunce ought for to be had
    (Rastell 1994: second part, lines 347–375; emphasis added)

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The debate articulated in the interlude echoes crucial questions of philosophy and metaphysics, which were then mixed up with more mundane matters. The ploughman implicitly brings to the fore the contradictions between Christian doctrine and Greek philosophy (such as the fundaments of Stoicism), exploiting them in his defence of natural reason and rhetorical argumentation in order to justify a new social order, as opposed to the traditionally hierarchical principles based on pre-established authority. The tension between these two trends lies at the heart of humanist thought, and stems from the synthesis of pagan Greek philosophy with the doctrine that emerged from Scripture, a synthesis carried out by Augustine many centuries before. Charles Trinkaus has pointed to the significance of Augustine's revival in the Renaissance, since he had already approached problems which were again haunting contemporary philosophy. In general terms, what Trinkaus calls major cultural innovations during the Renaissance could be read as part of a renewed attempt to relate the particular with the universal, the historical with the transcendental, and the mundane with the metaphysical, in an age of economic practices and political changes which were challenging the traditional social and moral economies of the late Middle Ages.

These religious and secular controversies are just part of that conflict, external symptoms that articulate the nuances and avatars of this underlying problem. This was the case not just in epistemology, but also in approaches to language, to political thought and, of course, to morals (Trinkaus 1983b: xxi-xxii). Francis Oakley has described this dichotomy, putting it in relation with the origins, developments and ultimate consequences of the concept of natural law, its relation to theology and the role it played in the formulation of John Locke's political thought. The description of this paradox by Oakley coincides with the exposition of the ploughman: the dichotomy here lies between the philosophers' concept of a world that has always existed *ab eterno*, stemming from the Greek 'intuition of the divine as limited and innerworldly, and of the universe as necessary and eternal', and on the other the Christian 'personal

and transcendental Biblical god of power and might, upon whose will the very existence of the universe was contingent' (1999: 232).[34]

These contradictions had already emerged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries between Christian scholasticism and Arab-Aristotelian amalgams. In trying to solve these contradictions, Aquinas seems to anticipate the eclecticism of the humanists. Note that, according to Oakley's account, one of the tasks that Aquinas sought to carry out was to demonstrate the primacy of reason over will in God's mind, and therefore as an inherent part of Creation (1999: 228–29). The problem is that as a result of humanism's linguistic turn, under the spell of the rhetorical tradition and Ciceronian academic scepticism, reason does not appear to be articulated on a set of syllogisms whose clockwork mechanism mirrors the logic inherent in God's mind and hence in the constitutive structure of the cosmos. Instead, the philological and linguistic premises of humanism ultimately result in a pragmatic, intercommunicative social interaction of speakers who agree on the meanings of words, and hence on the arguments used to defend different (and often conflicting) positions. Humanists such as Valla viewed language as constitutive of reality, rejecting the hypostatisation of abstract nouns into universals and unmasking them as simply resulting from an internal process

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[34] 'In the historic encounter between the Greek philosophical tradition and religious views of biblical provenance, the great stumbling block had been (and necessarily remained) the difficulty of reconciling the personal and transcendental biblical God of power and might, upon whose will the very existence of the universe was contingent, with the characteristically Greek intuition of the divine as limited and innerworldly and of the universe as necessary and eternal — or, to put it somewhat differently, with the persistent tendency of the Greek philosophers to identify the divine with the immanent and necessary rational order of an eternal cosmos' (Oakley 1999: 228). For more details on Augustine's synthesis see Oakley 1999, pp. 227–28, who traces the Platonist and Aristotelian genealogy of Augustine's God, whose composite nature fostered debate during the Middle Ages, debates which were again reinvigorated under new perspectives towards the end of the Middle Ages and the onset of modernity.

of abstraction within language itself that turns concrete nouns into abstract nouns.[35] Aristotelian scholastic logic aspired to be the outward display of Divine Reason at work in the world of creation and the intellect; once this view is challenged by humanism, reason appears located upon the much shakier ground of rhetorical interaction. Consequently, Oakley describes a late medieval tension between an eternal, transcendent, and inscrutable divine will on the one hand, and, on the other, the world as 'an aggregate of particular entities' — in other words, the conscience of a dichotomy between two realms, one dominated by an eternal transcendental principle and the other made up of the fragmented temporality of created particulars (1999: 230–31). The brief detour that the ploughman takes in his challenge to the knight displays the background to these concrete debates as a controversy between the competing claims of theology and pagan philosophy when it came to dealing with the particular implications of their respective worldviews.

The dialogue is brought to an end with the intervention of the philosopher, whose final speech defends a sort of *via media* delineated upon the principle of virtue as the central and ineluctable requirement for those employed in public service, and therefore as the essential component of nobility and gentility. He concludes by urging those in power to use natural reason conveyed and articulated through rhetorical persuasion in order to move their subjects — or rather, citizens — into agreement and compliance with the laws that will provide social harmony and stability. This amounts to the secularisation of the discourse used to legitimise political power, and points towards an incipient separation of the spheres of the public as the realm for political debate and action, on the one hand, and the private on the other as the realm for personal conscience and religious beliefs:

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35 See Trinkaus 1995, p. 151; see also Mack 1993, p. 60.

So *vertue is ever the thyng pryncypall*
That gentylnes and noblenes doth insue.
Then these *hedys, rulers, and governours all*
Shuld come therto be cause of theyr vertue,
And in auctoryte they ought not continue
Except they be good men, dyscrete and wyse,
And have a love and zele unto justyce.
Wherfore, sovereyns, all that here present be,
Now marke well these reasons here brought in
Both agayns men of hye and of low degree
for thys intent only — to rebuke syn.
For *the best wey that is for one to begyn*
To convert the people by exortacyon
Ys to perswade them by naturall reason.
(Rastell 1994: second part, lines 648–661; emphasis added)

The conclusions of the philosopher are rich in nuggets that reveal the ideology of Rastell and his circle as moulded under the influence of the thought of Juan Luis Vives and the civic humanism of that period. When natural reason proves insufficient to move subjects into obedience, the philosopher proclaims the need to elaborate laws to punish the conduct of those who are not led by their own reason and conscience to *feel* in their heart the need to modify their conduct. Note that here the underlying process is one in which the *affects* must be moved by rhetorical persuasion into leading the *will* in the right direction along the principles of *right* or *natural reason* and the dictates of *individual conscience*. These are the components of the subjective process that makes up a responsible citizen. Both rulers as well as officials must take good care to act and provide laws which *educate* good citizens, using repression only as a last resort. This is an idea that we can find positively defended by Vives in his *De subventione pauperum*, and in the final speech of *Calisto and Melebea*.

In *De subventione pauperum*, written as we have seen as a response to the serious problems that vagrancy and poverty

were causing in that city — one of the busiest trading posts in Europe — Vives stated that the sins and vices of paupers are frequently attributable to the neglect of the Church and of civic authorities. In the following passage, Vives criticises Church abuses and emphasises the need for preventive legislation. Note how Vives also subtly mentions the fact that the Church disapproves of the word 'selling' — i.e. they reject mercantile activities — but then they indulge in avarice and greed, a criticism of the Church's anti-mercantilist ethos:

For Church discipline has deteriorated to such a point that no ministrations are given free of charge; *they abhor the word selling, but they make everyone count out their contribution*. The bishop or the pastor do not think that such shorn sheep belong to their fold and pasture. Therefore no one sees these beggars going to confession or receiving communion with others at the table of the Lord. And since they never receive instruction they inevitably have perverted ideas about things and lead very disorderly lives. And if by chance they somehow rise to riches, they would prove themselves to be intolerable because of their base and vulgar upbringing. Whence it follows that those vices that I mentioned earlier are engendered, which are to be imputed not so much to them as also at times to the magistrates, who do not make other provisions for the city. *They do not establish correct norms for the governing of the people, thinking that they are only responsible for making decisions in financial suits or felonies, when on the contrary it would be more fitting for them to devote their energies to how they can produce good citizens rather than how to punish or control evil-doers. How much less need there would be for punishment if the proper precautions were taken beforehand*! (Fantazzi and Matheeussen eds. 2002: book II.I.93; emphasis added)[36]

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[36] There is more veiled criticism in II.VI.2, II.VIII.7, 8, 9, 10, where Vives approaches the complaints of those who so far have been managing — or

The concepts of will, affects and reason, and their harmonisation within the ideal, centred self, will also prove very useful for the analysis of the negative exemplarity of *La Celestina*. When the existing laws prove to be insufficient — as is the case in new situations, with novel economic and social practices such as those occurring during a period of transition — then fresh preventive legislation has to be put in place. The need for neutral officials is also formulated. These should be virtuous and they must at all times be held accountable for their actions and dictates. In other words, public officials are to be appointed on the basis of their private virtue and the effective value of their service to the community, and not because of the capricious individual will of monarchic or ecclesiastical authority. They must then be liable for their decisions and service to the commonwealth — their ultimate source of *public* legitimation together with their *private* virtue — and duly punished if found wanting.[37] Their public and consensual legitimacy, based upon the principles of virtue and social efficiency, contrasts with the sources of legitimacy for monarchic and ecclesiastical power,

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rather, mismanaging — Church funds and institutions for the poor, and will resist the shift of this function into secular, civil government.

[37] The notion of public virtue and the necessity to hold public officers accountable stems, as Skinner relates, from the political doctrine of Marsilius of Padua (*c.* 1270–*c.* 1342) and Bartolus of Saxoferrato (1313–1357), whose writings played a fundamental role in the articulation of early modern constitutionalism as it appeared in Italian city states: '[…] they are prepared to argue that sovereignty lies with the people, that they only delegate and never alienate it, and thus that no legitimate ruler can ever enjoy a higher status than that of an official appointed by, and capable of being dismissed by, his own subjects. […] As well as exercising this long-term influence, the theories of Marsiglio and Bartolus also had an immediate ideological significance in the Italian City Republics of their own time. They not only provided the fullest and most systematic defence of Republican liberty against the coming of the despots; they also suggested an ingenious way of arguing against the apologists for tyranny in their own terms' (Skinner 1978: 65). As we shall see below, these views were also echoed in some of Vives's writings (*De subventione pauperum*, book I, chapter IV, 'Quam secundum naturam sit benefacere', 'How natural it is to do good'; in Fantazzi and Matheeussen, eds. and intro., 2002, pp. 23–25).

ultimately divine, and therefore totally beyond the reach of the discourse of social negotiation and rhetorical argumentation along the lines of right — because natural — reason:

> For when that a man by hys owne reason
> Juggyth hym selfe for to offend,
> That grudgyth his conscyens and gyffyth compuncyon
> In to hys herte to cause hym amend
> But such blynd bestis that wyl not intend
> To here no good councell nor reason
> Ought by the law to have sharp coreccyon.
>
> But then yf the laws be not suffycyent
> Whych have be made and ordeynyd before
> To gyfe therfore condygne ponyshment,
> The pryncys and governours be bound evermore
> To cause new laws to be made therfore,
> And to put such men in auctoryte
> That good men, just and indyfferent, be.
>
> But because that men of nature evermore
> Be frayle and folowyng sensualyte,
> Yt is impossyble in a maner therefore
> For any governours that be in auctoryte
> At all tymys just and indyfferent to be,
> Except they be brydelyd and therto compellyd
>
> By some strayt laws for them devysyd,
> As thus, that no man such rome ocupye
> But certayn yerys and than to be removyd;
> Yet that whyle bound to attend dylygently,
> And yf he offend and surely provyd,
>
> Wythout any favour that he be ponysshyd.
> For the ponysshment of a juge or officer
> Doth more good than of thousand other.
> (Rastell 1994: second part, lines 662–689)

We need to contemplate *La Celestina* and its first English adaptation from the perspective provided by this background if we want to achieve a comprehensive understanding of their origins, the ends they pursued, the kind of audiences and readers that they sought and found, as well as the different types of exemplarity with which they attempted to move them. The following pages should prove that in many respects these texts stand at the intersection of momentous and complex changes in values which involve the private and public spheres. They thematise subjects such as the emergence of urban markets and profit-oriented modes of thought and behaviour, the need for legal reform, the changes in the structure of the conjugal family as the axis between the private and the public realms, as well as the changing role of individuals within it, notably the role of women as individuals with their own right to the ethical autonomy and potential for self-realisation which was becoming articulated in the new body of private civil law. Taking into account the background for both works and the persons who were instrumental in their composition and publication, I intend to discuss both of them as texts which evince the contradictions and anxieties that were being generated along this process of rationalisation of life, customs and law.

PART TWO

SENSUS COMMUNIS
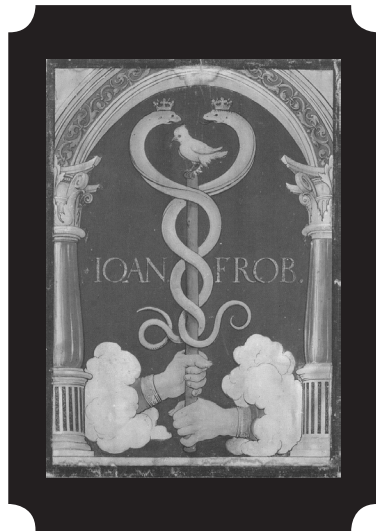
Hans Holbein the Younger,
Printer's device of Johnan Frobe (*c*. 1525)

5. Self-Interest and the Life in Common

The changes and controversies described in the preceding part ran parallel with significant rearrangements in the doctrines upon which private and public ethics were founded. Hence the importance of the refashioned dialectic between the individual human psyche and its social articulation within political communities whose rationale was based on the uneasy combination of secular moral philosophy and Christian doctrine. A considerable part of this redefinition started to gravitate towards processes founded upon rhetorical expression and linguistic communities. Significantly, though, the classical and late medieval philosophical systems that were providing humanism with a consistent idea of social order and the potential for improvement (such as Stoicism) found themselves running counter to actual trends within the path that early modern European society had undertaken. This is precisely the area where we can locate one of the main fissures which subsequently turned into a source of anxiety — the contradiction between the tenets of Christian-Stoic reason and the actual materialistic drift of early capitalist socioeconomic mechanisms. This is what *La Celestina* evinced, and one of the main reasons for the disquiet it provoked.

According to Juan Carlos Rodríguez's *La literatura del pobre* (1994), this disorder resulted from the new socioeconomic and ideological structures, i.e. what he calls the ideological matrix of *animism*, or the dialogic relation between the self and the other, if we understand this self as possessing a constituent soul (or *anima*, hence the use of the term *animism* by Rodríguez). This soul was on its way to losing the religious legitimacy provided by the neatly arranged, hierarchical structures of the traditional medieval world system. The type of discourse that emerged from these new structures was far from being orderly and harmonious, in spite of the efforts of humanism to construct texts that could legitimise them; hence the anxiety at the contradictions and shortcomings of humanist

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thought when it came to providing solace and refuge from the accelerating changes that were taking place in social, moral, and economic relations. From Rodríguez's perspective, who follows Maravall in this respect, the distortions in this picture were produced by the forces of urban markets, which contrasted with the late medieval values of service to a lord. The new urban underclasses — represented in Rojas's work by Celestina and her circle of servants and prostitutes — were led to negotiate their way around the city through the mechanisms of naked profit and self-interest, instead of doing so through the equally pragmatic but nevertheless more elevated rhetoric of humanist social and individual ethics that Vives and other humanists were striving to implement. Charles Trinkaus has also provided a similar account of the changes in economy and society towards the end of the Middle Ages and the onset of the Renaissance. It is quite interesting that, coming from different perspectives (Rodríguez is an Althusserian Marxist, whereas Trinkaus sought to root the origins of Renaissance humanism on the early Christian grounds laid down by the Church Fathers), both scholars coincide in the distorting effect of the market upon the new social ethics.[38]

Humanists found in the tradition that had come down from Protagoras a doctrinal source for their belief in the power of rhetorical invention and civic concord when it came to providing a rational structure to life in society, and hence a remedy for the doses of chaos and fragmentation that the processes of early modernity were starting to unleash. Vives and the humanists who emerged out of the European merchant classes used this Protagorean tradition in their endeavour to negotiate

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[38] 'Stated in its broadest terms, the cultural problem of the Renaissance and Reformation, with which the question of free will was directly concerned, was the fact and the consequence of a divorce between ethics and economics, between the moral and the expedient, between the spiritual and the material. While one set of values and one set of rules and injunctions applied to the individual's pursuit of goodness and spiritual well-being, an entirely different set applied to his conduct of business, political relations and the daily routines of worldly life' (Trinkaus 1983c: 263–64).

and implement a new space for an eminently civic and secular type of polity, based on a sociopragmatic agreement within the public sphere of law. This consensus would then legitimise the free exchange of goods and the pursuit of self-interest alongside the weaving of the social fabric in all its complex diversity so that all the aspects that could affect the harmonious and orderly running of the community could be regulated. Some of the items included in this agenda were the prevention of poverty, the punishment of sloth and social parasitism, the regulation of family life and the functions of each of its members, or the protection of private property against the onslaughts of the new radical collectivism that had been spawned by the onset of the Protestant Reformation.

On all these topics, a humanist like Vives found something to say.[39] This discourse was founded along the principles of virtue and free will, which circulated socially through the actions and utterances of individuals whose right to enjoy freedom was accordingly granted by their very virtuous behaviour; otherwise the community — i.e. the state — had the right to discontinue their right to remain free. These two concepts were in turn rooted in a secular ethos which was put into practice through the use of rhetorical persuasion along the lines of natural reason, as the analysis of *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte* has demonstrated. These processes of thought and rhetorical expression, legitimised in part by the appropriation of the po-

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[39] Fantazzi has underlined the role that Vives assumed during his stay in England, where he arrived in 1523, soon becoming a close associate of other humanists such as John Fisher, Thomas Linacre or William Latimer: 'In addition to his professional duties at Oxford Vives immediately became a kind of official spokesman for humanist ideas on the conduct of the state. *De consultatione*, ostensibly a treatise on rhetorical deliberation, was in effect a political document, as were his translations of Isocrates' *Areopagitica oratio* and *Ad Nicoclen*, both of them dealing with the duties of monarchs, which he dedicated to Cardinal Wolsey' (Charles Fantazzi, 'Introduction' to Vives's *In pseudodialecticos* 1979: 9).

litical thought of classical antiquity, created an incipient ethos of linguistic and social consensus which stood in opposition to the once incontestable principle of the authority of Scripture and theological discourse upon which the absolute monarch or the Catholic Church legitimised their claim to political power. In spite of his initial reference to God's will and original sin in the following text, Vives immediately proceeds to declare that the power of monarchs (or for that matter, of any type of political system) lies in the consensual will of its subjects (in its individual components), and that this power would crumble down if they withdrew it. The *primum mobile* for societies may still nominally lie in God's will, but the actual support for any type of political system has been transferred on to the processes of mutual collaboration, fellowship, and 'community of life', leading to a foundational consent that in the text appears virtually disengaged from its divine origin.[40] God may have so willed it *in principium*, but the responsibility for the proper functioning of any type of polity lay in consensus amongst its members. Vives also emphasises the motivating power of fear and the danger inherent in the exacerbated pursuit of self-interest, which can lead to the dissolution of the republic:

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[40] Bouwsma attributes this expanding gulf between the earthly and the heavenly realms to the renovated influence of Augustinianism: 'There are, for the general development of European culture, even broader implications in the sense, within Augustinian humanism, of man's intellectual limitations. It pointed to the general secularisation of modern life, for it implied the futility of searching for the principles of human order in the divine order of the cosmos, which lay beyond human comprehension. Man was accordingly now seen to inhabit not a single universal order governed throughout by uniform principles but a multiplicity of orders: for example, an earthly as well as a heavenly city, which might be seen to operate in quite different ways. On earth, unless God had chosen to reveal his will about its arrangements unequivocally in Scripture, man was left to the uncertain and shifting insights of a humbler kind of reason, to work out whatever arrangements best suited his needs. […] Indeed, it is likely that the sharp Augustinian distinction between creation and Creator, since it denied the eternity of the universe, also promoted that secularisation of the cosmos implicit in the Copernican revolution' (1975: 45–46).

God wished that *man, depraved in mind and proud because of his original stain, need the help of another to live in society and community of life, otherwise there would never be any lasting or reliable fellowship among them*. For each man through the arrogance implanted in him and through his nature prone to evil would spurn and repudiate his fellow unless he were restrained by the fear that one day he might need him. Fortune's favor has not so exalted anyone that it does not cast him down, though he be reluctant, to beg the help of one beneath him. Nay more, fortune's favor is not obtained nor is it preserved without the help of those inferior to us. Proof of this are *great kings, whose power is sustained by their subjects and would collapse immediately if they should cease their support*.

What child or old woman does not know that *great empires are strengthened by consent and would not exist at all if no one obeyed*? And certainly *no republic can stand for long in which each one seeks only his own advantage and that of his friends and no one looks to the common good*, whether everything is subject to the rule of one man, which is called monarchy, or administered by a few, which is called oligarchy, or whether supreme power and command belong to the people, which is called a democracy. A republic is just and an empire beneficial if the responsibilities and purposes of those that govern are directed to the public good. But if each one exploits whatever he can for himself by craft, cunning and power, even the people become tyrannical over themselves and no longer retain liberty and power, but in a short time are dragged off as slaves to be subjected to the control and jurisdiction of another. This was shown in two great nations, Rome and Athens, and it will prove true of all those nations that have citizens who prefer that they are great and powerful themselves rather than their country. (Fantazzi and Matheeussen, trans. and eds. 2002: 23– 25)

In the concluding lines of Rastell's *Of Gentleness and No-bility*, the philosopher urged rulers and officials to harmonise the social fabric and bring the citizenry together not simply by coercion; the best way to do so is 'to perswade them by naturall reason', and they must do so preferably with the weapons of rhetoric and discursive agreement. This should create a fluid balance among the different components of the commonwealth, with the aim of weaving an ideal network of mutual interests held together by the power of rhetorical persuasion and linguistic consensus, which would resort to repression when voluntary obedience is denied. This text bears an interesting comparison with classical humanism's founding myth as found in Cicero's *De inventione*: as opposed to the apparently unrestrained Ciceronian optimism regarding the foundational power of eloquence, Vives adds the element of fear and the pursuit of self-interest to an equation which also includes reason and persuasion, all of them oriented towards the consensus that holds societies together. The practical consequence of including fear as a social cohesive amounts to an acknowledgment of the rationalised instinct of self-preservation as another basic component of social organisation.

6. Rhetoric and Consensus

The identification of language and social organisation, with its roots in the sophistic and rhetorical tradition that stemmed from Protagoras,[41] had in Cicero's *De inventione* one of its main paths of transmission. The following paragraph constitutes one of the key texts in the humanist myth of the founding power of discourse and rhetoric. It deals with the foundation of civilization, the persuasive power of the sophistic-rhetorical *logos*, and the roles of reason and custom, violence and repression, in the establishment and upkeeping of social order:

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[41] See Plato's *Protagoras*, 320–28.

After cities had been established how could it have been brought to pass that men should learn to keep faith and observe justice and become accustomed to obey others voluntarily and believe not only that they must work for the common good but even sacrifice life itself, unless men had been able by eloquence to persuade their fellows of the truth of what they had discovered by reason? Certainly only a speech at the same time powerful and entrancing could have induced one who had great physical strength to submit to justice without violence, so that he suffered himself to be put on a par with those among whom he could excel, and abandoned voluntarily a most agreeable custom, especially since this custom had already acquired through lapse of time the force of a natural right. (Cicero, Hubell, trans. and ed. 1976: I.ii.3)

Civic organization thus established belonged to the realm of sense experience, and the linguistic negotiation and harmony required to build up and sustain the network of tensions and balances in the republic was — or should aspire to become in the eclecticism of the humanists — a reflection of Christian-Neoplatonic universals, as the originally Greek *logos* and the Ciceronian *ratio* had come to be interpreted in the patristic thought of Augustinianism. We shall see that, even in the more sceptic and Protagorean of humanists — such as Lorenzo Valla, whose work is a *de facto* development of Ciceronian academic scepticism based on rhetoric and a probabilistic notion of *veritas* — this transcendental principle keeps cropping up. Vallas's work in this respect is typical of humanism: it flaunted the eclecticism (as well as the paradoxes and contradictions) inherent in a new system that tried to integrate the paganism of classical authors (Cicero, Seneca, Quintilian) with the renovated influence of Augustine.[42] The result was a combination

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[42] Deliberately controversial as his work turned out to be, both in its contents and in its tone, it would be inaccurate to picture Valla as an unambiguous secularizer. In his defence of eloquence and Ciceronianism against

of the emphasis on faith and grace with a more rhetorical and communicative consensual view of human nature, as it integrated human subjectivity as the central constituent in the social fabric. These two poles define the spectrum over which early modern thought oscillated when it came to organise the particulars of history into normative universal principles.

In contrast with the ideal social harmony brought about by rhetorical consensus, we find on the other extreme the creative role bestowed upon the agonistic *omnia secundum litem fiunt* principle. An avatar of the idea that a degree of chaos and social strife can lead through eventual consensus to a harmonious republic where freedom reigns can be found in in Machiavelli's *Discourses*, where he concluded that from the tumult of the Roman republic and the clashes of interests between

those who accuse him of being too close to paganism, he retorts that all of the Church Fathers were masters of eloquence, and before them, Saint Paul was the most notorious among Christian orators: 'And certainly, only the eloquent, such as I have just listed above, constitute the columns of the church, which you can trace back to the apostles, amongst whom Saint Paul was in my view most eminent in eloquence well above other skills' ['*Et certe soli eloquentes, quales ii quos enumeravi, columnae ecclesiae sunt, etiam ut ab apostolis usque repetas, inter quos mihi Paulus nulla alie re eminere, quam eloquentia videtur*'] (1544: preface to book 4, 235; translated by the author). Later on he adds: 'We must not condemn the language of the pagans, or their grammar, their rhetorics, their dialectics, or their other arts (since even the Apostles themselves wrote in Greek), but their dogmas, their religions, their false opinions on the action of virtues, by means of which we ascend to heaven' ['*Non lingua gentilium, non grammatica, non rhetorica, non dialectica, caeteraeque artes damnandae sunt (siquidem Apostoli lingua Graeca scripserunt) sed dogmata, sed religiones, sed falsae opiniones de actione virtutum, per quas in caelum scandimus*'] (1544: preface to book 4, 236; translated by the author). See in this Mack's claim that 'some of Valla's comments promote his aim of placing the doctrines of Christianity above the teachings of the philosophers, rather than the other way round' (1993: 71). See also Maristella Lorch, whose analysis of Valla's contributions to rhetoric and philology concludes that: 'Valla makes clear that the specific task of the superior art of rhetoric is the reconstruction of a text. In this capacity rhetoric serves as "the rebuilder of the Temple of Jerusalem". No other art — canon law, medicine, astronomy — can claim the same superiority in rebuilding the temple of God' (1988: 346–47).

different political factions and social classes, came legislation that promoted civic liberties:

> I must not fail to discuss the tumults that broke out in Rome between the death of the Tarquins and the creation of the tribunes, nor yet to mention certain facts which militate against the view of those who allege that the republic of Rome was so tumultuous and so full of confusion that, had not good fortune and military virtue counterbalanced these defects, its condition would have been worse than that of any other republic. To me those who condemn the quarrels between the nobles and the plebs, seem to be cavilling at the very things that were the primary cause of Rome's retaining her freedom, and that they pay more attention to the noise and clamour resulting from such commotions than to what resulted from them, i.e. to the good effects which they produced. Nor do they realize that in every republic there are two different dispositions, that of the populace and that of the upper class and that all legislation favourable to liberty is brought about by the clash between them. (Walker, trans. 1970: 113)

As demonstrated by the former text by Vives, the combination of Ciceronian academic scepticism, Stoic moral philosophy (both private and public), classical political thought and Augustinianism was the formula that humanism proposed to deal with the existing contradictions between a view of life that was aware of its inherently unstable but organised, even creative, chaos, channelled through the principles of discursive fluidity — and the more immovable, hierarchical principles of late medieval Aristotelian scholasticism and pre-Reformation Catholic theology. Trinkaus's definition of the Protagorean tradition accords with Vives's description of the competition and fear that imbues societies-because of the depraved postlapsarian nature of man — and the healing, normative role that

rhetorical invention plays in bringing order to this constitutive chaos:

> [...] all men confront life and the external world as chaos, and they do not so much discover an underlying structure (as the pre-Socratics thought) as create and impose one. Rhetorical invention is the instrument by which men transcend their isolated individual shuddering before chaos and act upon the world by collective convention, agreeing to establish the human community and give it certain standards of justice and piety, which they then enforce. (1979: 36)

The Ciceronian tradition brought to the foreground the probabilistic and dialogical *ratio argumentandi* of the Academic sceptics versus the formalistic logic of scholastic syllogisms. This Ciceronian tradition lies at the roots of the technique and ethos of the *argumentum in utramque partem dicendo* method:

> For even though many difficulties hinder every branch of knowledge, and both the subjects themselves and our faculties of judgment involve such a lack of certainty that the most ancient and learned thinkers had good reason for distrusting their ability to discover what they desired, nevertheless they did not give up, nor yet will we abandon in exhaustion our zeal for research; and *the sole object of our discussion is by arguing on both sides to draw out and give shape to some result that may be either true or the nearest possible approximation to the truth*. Nor is there any difference between ourselves and those who think that they have positive knowledge except that they have no doubt that their tenets are true, whereas we hold many doctrines as probable, which we can easily act upon but can scarcely advance as certain; yet *we are more free and untrammelled in that we possess our power of judgment uncurtailed, and are bound by no compulsion to support all the dogmas laid down for*

us almost as edicts by certain masters. (Cicero, Rackham, trans. 2005: 473; emphasis added)

It is significant to see that Cicero traced the origins of the *in utramque partem dicendo* method to Socrates' maieutics, because this method lies at the origins of Lorenzo Valla's essentially linguistic critique of Platonic objective ontology. Valla's critical analysis led him to conclude that Platonic abstractions result from the reification of concepts whose origin lies in a merely linguistic progress from concrete nouns to abstract ones, its aim being to postulate the causal anteriority of Ideas and Forms over the concrete, particular things that had actually been used as a starting point (Waswo 1979: 258–59).[43] This amounts to a process of abstraction that covers its own traces and origins in particulars, and in doing so postulates an ahistorical, universal principle as the *fons and origo* of all knowledge (the heterological principle, or *alieniloquium*), thus reversing the actual process. The distrust of actual, spoken language and its inherently fallacious and imperfect nature was taken up by Augustinian doctrine, which located the existence of the *alieniloquium* in Scripture: this is the place where the *supernatural fiat* dwelt, and hence the source and origin of semantic — and consequently, doctrinal — legitimacy.[44] This legitimacy originates, then, in God's will — which provides a link with the controversy regarding the Augustinian emphasis on divine will in contrast with the inherently rational and eternal cosmos of Greek philosophy, as referred to above. We have seen that Vives, following in the wake of Cicero and Valla, appears to pay mere lip service to divine will, and immediately moves on to discuss the necessarily consensual nature of human societies; but we shall also see that in other texts Vives goes in the opposite direction, i.e. from an initial acknowledgment of the

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[43] See also Copenhaver 2005.

[44] The origin of the concept of *alieniloqium* lies in Petrarch's theory 'of the religious origin and nature of poetry, speaking a hidden meaning through an *alieniloquium* (or foreign speech)' (Trinkaus 1979: 103–4).

consensual constitutive nature of language and human knowledge to the acceptance of an ultimately divine principle that rules everything from outside the system. Vives was aware of the potential consequences of this inherent fluctuation, and he insists on its dangers, in particular because of language's hold on human affects:

> Those who stated that the main links for human society were justice and language certainly gained a profound insight into the essence of human nature. Of these two attributes, language is the most powerful and influential among men, since justice, being peaceful and mild, is only felt as obligation in the conscience of those who have been educated in rectitude and honesty; language, however, does not just win minds, but above all rules the affects, whose dominion over men is uncontrollable and onerous. (Rodríguez, ed. 2000: 8; translated by the author)

7. Communication, Credit, and Currency

Giovanni Pontano's (1426–1503) *De sermone* (1509) also insists on the essentially intercommunicative nature of discursive reason as the fundamental component of human society, and thus belongs in the genealogy of the Ciceronian-humanist myth of the foundation of civilisation, which, according to Trinkaus, postulates 'the bonds of social existence as growing out of discourse' (Trinkaus 1983: 217). The opening paragraphs of his *De sermone* evince the fluctuating dialectic between *ratio* and *oratio* in humanist thought. As Pontano tries, like other humanists did, to assert the primacy of *ratio* over *oratio*, he cannot help but implicitly acknowledge that one cannot exist without the other. If *ratio* could not be ministered through speech, i.e through the channels of intersubjective communication, isolated *ratio* would then turn man into a solipsistic, self-contained entity, thus contradicting the inherently

social nature of man, and rendering *ratio* an absolute isolated feature whose incommunicability would turn the possibility of its existence into an ontological aporia. Let us be reminded here of Vives's assertion that God had willed that man required other men to live in society. Instead of God, Pontano mentions Nature, but he also claims that 'we are born for life in society', ['*sociabiles… nati sumus'*] (2008: 76–78; translated by the author). What is even more important, he claims that if man's *ratio* could not be socially implemented through speech and conversation, man would be totally unable to reach the summum bonum. Speech is the interpreter of reason, and therefore a fundamental tool for both knowledge and action ['*ratio dux est ac magistra dirigendis actionibus uirtutibusque comparandis, oratio uero mentis est interpres rationisque ipsius instrumentum quasi quoddam'*] (Pontano, Bistagne, trans. 2008: 76–78).

The similitude between Pontano's sociolinguistic doctrine and Vives's definition of speech as *rheuma logou* in the following paragraph are evident. As it was for Valla, for Pontano, and for Vives, the defining feature of man is his capacity for speech, i.e. man is *homo sermocinalis* (vs *homo rationalis*). Like Pontano, Vives directly relates speech to reason — despite the fact that he has before acknowledged the irrational, affective hazards of language. Pontano talks about nature as the bestower of *ratio* and *oratio* upon men. In Vives they appear as God's gifts. These are the two extremes between which Vives's (and humanist) thought wavered, and the source of much anxiety. This was what drove Vives to draw the long lists of works, the definition of literary canons, for the proper education of the citizens through the emotional appeal of the right kind of literary language to their affects, which was (as Stephen Gosson would put it decades later) the way in which the mind was infected. This was also part of the undertow that drew the humanist circles around Thomas More and John Rastell to radically modify *La Celestina* when they first adapted it into early modern English. Myth, fiction, literature, poetry: all of these are conflated in the diverse connotations of the Latin

noun *fabula*. *Fabulae*, like Mercury, play the role of mediators between the gods and men. The Latin noun *fabula* is related to the verb *fari* (to speak), and one of its significations is also conversation:

> Man through a particular gift from God, was endowed with an elevated and sublime mind that could lead him to knowledge, worship and love for the Creator of all things. But since this mind is contained in a body, and since man himself must live in society, just as he was created for that sempiternal society, so he could communicate with others, he was bestowed with speech, which flows from the mind like a brook from its spring; this is the reason why the philosopher Democritus called it *rheuma logou*, that is, the flow of reason; and there is no more apt instrument for society. That is the reason why Mercury, who in poetic fictions [*apud fabulas*] is credited as being the best orator, is presented as the interpreter between the gods and men. (Rodríguez, ed. 2000: 8; translated by the author)

Of course, Erasmus or Vives were far from being in downright favour of a tautological approach to knowledge, and at the end of the day, neither was Valla, but the corollary that underlies all this humanist body of thought is that the Protagorean approach postulated a tautological principle as the driving force of human discourse and knowledge, versus the heterological principle of Platonism, or the abstract universals of Aristotelianism.[45] Here lies one of the most fruitful paradoxes which lurk in humanist thought, and which also informed a considerable part of the European Latin and vernacular literatures of the period.

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[45] In directly approaching the essential problem of tautology and the paradoxes of representation, Valla's merit, or achievement, was not the solution of a problem, but the discovery of its existence (on this, see Waswo 1979, pp. 267–69).

Once more we have to go back to classical antiquity to find in Cicero the origin of the idea of the constitutive nature of language and oratory, as well as the concept of civilised, polite conversation: language operates at the public as well as at the private levels. In the following passage from *De oratore*, man appears defined as essentially a *homo sermocinalis*:

What in hours of ease can be a pleasanter thing or one more characteristic of culture, than discourse that is graceful [*sermo facetus*] and nowhere uninstructed? For *the one point in which we have our very greatest advantage over the brute creation is that we hold converse with one another, and can reproduce our thought in word*. Who therefore would not rightly admire this faculty, and deem it his duty to exert himself to the utmost in this field, that by so doing he may surpass men themselves in that particular respect wherein chiefly men are superior to animals? To come, however, at length to the highest achievements of eloquence, *what other power could have been strong enough either to gather scattered humanity into one place, or to lead it out of its brutish existence in the wilderness up to our present condition of civilization as men and as citizens, or, after the establishment of social communities, to give shape to laws, tribunals, and civic rights?* And not to pursue any further instances — wellnigh countless as they are — I will conclude the whole matter in a few words, for my assertion is this: that the wise control of the complete orator is that which chiefly upholds not only his own dignity, but the safety of countless individuals and of the entire State. Go forward therefore, my young friends, in your present course, and bend your energies to that study which engages you, that so it may be in your power to become a glory to yourselves, a source of service to your friends, and profitable members of the Republic. (Cicero, Sutton, trans. 1942: I.viii.32–34; emphasis added)

Before the generation of Vives and Erasmus, Lorenzo Valla had laboured to create an alternative to Aristotelian logic and its universals, and to combat the medieval primacy of philosophy and dialectic upon which scholasticism was founded, and he had also used Cicero and Quintilian, the leading authors of the classical Latin rhetorical tradition, as a source of inspiration in his challenge to the scholastic logic of his day.[46] Valla's *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* (1438–39) is central to what might be called the linguistic turn that humanist thought brought about, since its basic purpose was 'to restore the use of language and logic to the subjectivity of a human subject acting in a qualitative way' (Trinkaus 1995: 150–1). As Brian Copenhaver declared in a 2005 symposium in honour of Salvatore Camporeale, one of the first and most oustanding amongst Valla scholars, Lorenzo Valla 'was a remarkably original thinker who has been much underrated in the Anglophone world, in part because he has not been read often enough or carefully enough in a contemporary philosophical framework' (508).[47]

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[46] See Mack 1993, pp. 49–51 for a nuanced view of Quintilian's influence upon Valla.

[47] Valla and the interpretation of his work under the light of twentieth-century philosophy have been the object of intense controversies, such as those held by Richard Waswo (1989) and John Monfasani (1989). See also Marcia Colish's review of Waswo's *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance* (1988). Starting with Camporeale's 1972 book, and followed by Hanna-Barbara Gerl in 1974, his work has been approached by a number of scholars who include Maristella Lorch, Lisa Jardine, Richard Waswo, John Monfasani, or Peter Mack. The papers presented in the symposium mentioned above, published in the *Journal of the History of Ideas,* point the way to the different modes in which Valla's work can be approached from a fresh perspective. Bullard summarises Camporeale's views (which tend to coincide with the analyses by Waswo, Lorch, or Jardine): 'Valla understood discourse as *usus* based in common parlance (*sermo comunis*), performed and received within a community of participants. In Camporeale's words, Valla concluded that *verba* and *res* do not refer in any way to an ulterior ontological dimension of language. Consequently, *verba* and *res* can't be accepted in any way in a metaphysical sense without perverting the *sermo communis*' (Bullard 2005: 479). For a nuanced approach to Valla's

Even more than by logic or reason, or the objective nature of the question being discussed, truth in Valla appears to be determined by subjective discourse — by communicative interaction — as cognition. In Valla's thought truth becomes a subjective product that depends on the accordance between feeling and speech, whereas falsity in turn emerges as a discord between both. Note the dialogical component in Valla's definition of truth. This text also stresses the central role accorded to the affects in humanist epistemology, and the troubled relation that humanists had with it — one frequently feels that they, literally, did not know what to do about them as they simultaneously, and uneasily, acknowledged their importance:

> There is *no investigation of truth before a controversy concerning the matter is born*. Hence truth is the knowledge of the matter of controversy, falsity indeed lack of knowledge of the same thing, which is a kind of prudence or imprudence, or wisdom or folly. Or we say truth is on the one hand knowledge of the mind concerning some matter, on the other hand, the signification of speech derived from knowledge of the mind. For I wish speech to be taken in two ways: in one he speaks the truth when he speaks thus as he feels; in the other when he speaks what he feels or something different by simulation or dissimulation. And thus there will be a double kind of speaking, the one out of ignorance, the other out of malice, the one imprudence, the other injustice.[48] (qtd. in Trinkaus 1995: 381; emphasis added)

concept of *usus* see Mack 1993, pp. 51–60. Like other participants in the symposium, Bullard surveys the intellectual and critical fortunes of Valla over the centuries, and emphasises the need to return to Valla: 'His legacy frequently goes unacknowledged in reconstructions of antecedents to modern intellectual history and philosophy despite the late twentieth century's lingering love affair with philosophies of language and the stress on contextualization pioneered by Heidegger and Wittgenstein, which share many of the same concerns Valla had plumbed for his day' (Bullard 2005: 478).

[48] Note that here Trinkaus translates Valla's *anima* as 'mind', thus giving the false impression that Valla was being more *neutral* than he originally

Ernst Cassirer also underlined the linguistic nature of humanist attacks on the coincidence of logic and grammar in Aristotelian dialectics, stemming from the blurring of the originally Platonic distinction between 'the two significations of the λόγος, between the concept "as such" and its representative in language' (1955: 126).[49] The coincidence of Aristotelian categories as 'the most universal relations of being' (ibid.) with their function as 'the basic specifications of actuality, the ultimate "predicates" of being', and the fact that 'the structure of the *sentence* and its division into words and classes of words served Aristotle as a model for his system of categories' constituted the soft underbelly that humanist critique of Aristotelian logic and universals approached through the work and thought of authors such as Valla, Vives or Ramus. As Cassirer relates, this led first to a return to the original Platonic sources, and then to a more refreshing, fundamental critique based on particulars, as opposed to a system of thought that took abstractions based on grammatical-logic categories as its foundation:

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meant — or was able to with the lexical means at his disposal — and eliminating the inherent ambiguity in the Latin anima, which in the context of Valla's *Repastinatio* lies somewhere halfway between the pre-modern world of auratic presences and the more disenchanted, objectified, modern worldview which establishes a dichotomy between mind and soul. See also Trinkaus 1983 ('The question of truth in Renaissance rhetoric and anthropology'), where he establishes a connection between the topic of reason and will as constitutive of the self and Valla's rhetoric.

[49] Cassirer's relevance for an international (which in this period is to say a European) approach to Renaissance philosophy was underlined by Schmitt and Skinner in the introduction to their collection on the topic: '[Cassirer] tried for the first time to trace the rise of modern philosophical concerns to the period of the Renaissance. Cassirer's contribution, extended in many subsequent works, was of special significance. Paying little or no heed to modern linguistic or national boundaries, he began to do justice to one of the most essential factors separating Renaissance from later philosophy — its fully international character, based on the use of Latin as an almost universal language of scholarship' (Schmitt and Skinner, eds.: 1988).

When modern thinkers began to attack the Aristotelian logic, when they contested its right to be called 'the' system of thought, the close alliance into which it had entered with language and universal grammar, proved to be one of its most vulnerable points. Assailing it at this point, Lorenzo Valla in Italy, Lodovico Vives in Spain, Petrus Ramus in France attempted to discredit the Scholastic-Aristotelian philosophy. At first the controversy was limited to the sphere of linguistic study: it was precisely the 'philologists' of the Renaissance who, on the basis of their deepened understanding of language, demanded a new 'theory of thought'. They argued that the Scholastics had seen only the outward, grammatical structure of language, while its real kernel, which is to be sought not in grammar but in stylistics, had remained closed to them. The great stylists of the Renaissance attacked syllogistics and its 'barbarous' forms, not so much from the logical as from the aesthetic angle. But gradually this battle of the rhetoricians and stylists against the mere 'dialecticians' — exemplified by Valla's *Dialectical Disputations* — took on a new form. As Renaissance scholars went back to the actual classical sources, the Scholastic notion of dialectic was replaced more and more by the original Platonic conception. Invoking Plato's dialectic, the Renaissance thinkers now demanded a return from words to 'things'. (1955: 127)

Lisa Jardine has underlined the fundamental role that Valla and Agricola's critique of scholasticism played in dismantling what both considered the undue emphasis laid on what she calls 'high technical skill with syllogistic' in detriment of the kind of disputational dialectics based on the *in utramque partem dicendo* method of the Academic sceptics transmitted through Ciceronianism (1977: 147–48). The nature of Valla's novelty lies on the fact that he no longer distinguished between dialectic and rhetoric and, as a result of this, he contributed to place rhetoric at the top of the hierarchy, with philosophy and

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logic in the lower rungs.[50] The outcome of Valla's new paradigm was a reassessment of the relation between language and its constitutive meaning with truth and the phenomenal world. Jardine provides an account of Valla's use of Ciceronian Academic scepticism, which is paradigmatic of humanism's attitude to knowledge. She traces Valla's sources in classical antiquity and in Augustine's *De civitate dei*, which provides a background and a genealogy for the Heraclitean *omnia secundum litem fiunt* principle, founded not just on the actual convulsions of early modern life, but also on the disputational nature as well as on the epistemological consequences of the new philosophy of language predicated by Valla and his humanist followers (Jardine 1977: 147–49). It is interesting to note that Valla's first version of the preface to his *Dialecticae disputationes* put an emphasis on scepticism that disappeared in subsequent versions, after Valla had got in trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities when he was prosecuted on charges of heresy. It is also significant to note how Valla defended himself from the accusations of the Inquisition, first by recanting his emphasis on historical particulars, and then claiming to favour eternal principles instead, a revealing retreat when contemplated within a context in which, as we have seen, the

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[50] Echoes of this controversy, as well as of Cassirer's analysis in terms of the new primacy of style and the *aesthetic* over logic, dialectic and grammar, can be perceived in Sidney's *On Defence of Poesy*, where he puts poetry at the apex of the arts, combining the best qualities of history's particulars and philosophy's universals. By the time Sidney wrote his *Defence* this idea had gone beyond the circles of humanist doctrine to become a commonplace in the literature of the period. Let us not forget that Sidney was prompted to write his *Defence* after Stephen Gosson's attack (*The School of Abuse*, 1579) upon poetry and plays (i.e. against *fabulae*), which emphasised their infectious and socially pernicious nature, precisely because they infected the mind by means of poetry's powerful appeal to the affects. The subtitle of Gosson's pamphlet is very revealing: 'a plesaunt invective against Poets, Pipers, Plaiers, Jesters and such like Caterpillers of a Commonwealth'. Gosson was a Puritan who echoed Vives's concerns about the affective appeal of poetry, which according to the former 'slop downe into the hart, and with gunshotte of affection gaule the minde' (qtd. in Robinson, ed., Sidney 1970: xix).

particulars of history were gaining *de facto* epistemological primacy as opposed to Platonic-Aristotelian universals:

> My accusers say that I am a follower of Epicurus. But in the third book [of the *De vero falsoque bono*] we condemn the Epicurean along with all other philosophies, because *their "virtues" aim at the present time, not at eternal life*. (qtd. in Jardine 1977: 157; emphasis added)

By underlining the primacy of language and rhetoric over philosophy, Valla was also implicitly acknowledging the epistemological centrality of those *fabulae*, i.e. the symbolic dimension of human communication, which frequently ended up articulating the irrational, affective components in human nature that cannot be reduced to mere discursive *ratio*. This reading is particularly relevant for our purposes, because by emphasising the primacy of symbols — be they linguistic or artistic — over abstract universals, Renaissance humanism also underlined the importance of fiction/artistic representation (as symbolic forms) when it came to formulating knowledge and interpretation. In confluence with this reading, Lisa Jardine acknowledges the far-reaching importance of Valla and Agricola's reassessment of dialectics for Western thought, which runs parallel with *La Celestina* as a precursor of the modern novel.[51]

The following quotation from Celenza's contribution to the symposium on Camporeale's work on Valla confirms the relevance played by the latter in the generation of some of the ideas that underpin *La Celestina*. Such ideas turned Rojas's

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[51] 'The shift of interest which we detect in dialectic from Agricola onwards is not a shift from respectable dialectic to the "soft option" of rhetoric, but a shift from certainty to probability as the focus of intellectual attention. And as such, I believe one could make a case for such a dialectic as a strong influence in the rediscovery of classical strategies of argumentation which were ultimately to revolutionize Western thought in the hands of Descartes' (Jardine 1977: 164).

work into a forerunner of the modern novel, and granted it an important place within the genealogy of modernity. Celenza's insight also justifies an approach to the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries as parts or periods within a comprehensive and further reaching concept of modernity's *longue durée*:

> The more important questions for us to ask are: was Valla, in his self-separation from contemporary philosophy and his proud waving of the banner of philology and rhetoric, actually being more 'philosophical' than the philosophers? Was he engaging in the search for wisdom, the 'love of wisdom', in (what we can see with informed hindsight was) a more effective way than then-institutionalized philosophy might have allowed? There is an important issue of method lurking beneath this question. If, on the one hand, we stick only to contemporary sources and measure Valla against the work and thought of his contemporary, university-based philosopher-theologians, we can state that Valla is not really a philosopher at all, or at least not a good one. If, on the other hand, we look at Valla over the broad history of philosophy, he starts to seem a lot more interesting. The proper comparands for Valla are not, say, Thomas Aquinas, or William of Ockham, or even John Buridan, but rather Plato, Vico, Nietszche, and Croce. (2005: 502)

Several years before Celenza, Maristella Lorch had already stated in the introduction to her translation of Valla's *De voluptate* that: '[…] because of the philosophical implications of his concepts of *voluptas* and *virtus*, more than any of his contemporaries Valla should be related to Machiavelli, Erasmus, Montaigne, and Giambattista Vico' (1977: 16).

8. Civic Communities and Common Language

The emphasis on the rhetorical bent of Ciceronianism was inseparable from the growing importance of legal studies, which in turn went hand in hand with the fact that many humanists were also involved in law and politics. All these developments were also related to the fact that the complexity of early modern life required detailed regulation and the establishment of new legal bases for social organisation. There was also a close connection between legal studies and a historicist approach to texts with the new technique of philological analysis and its application to the interpretation of classical legal texts, which were then used to legitimatise changes and to question the spurious presumptions of scholastic thought accumulated — in the opinion of the humanists — over centuries of medieval misconceptions and the barbaric stylistic corruption of Latin.[52] The close relation of this revolution in epistemology with the correct interpretation and translation of the original texts has been underlined by Kelley:

Of all the professional strongholds into which philology forced its way, Roman law was the most amenable to Valla's historical methods and probably the most relevant to the

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[52] According to Skinner, humanists: 'first of all turned their attention to the texts of the Roman law, especially in the form in which they had been definitively codified in the reign of Justinian […] the Italian humanists — and especially Lorenzo Valla — had originally become interested in the law as part of their campaign against scholasticism. They wanted to challenge the orthodox scholastic approach to the interpretation of the Civil Code, above all the deliberately unhistorical assumption that the main aim of the jurist should be to adapt the letter of the law as closely as possible to fit existing legal circumstances. Denouncing this methodology as barbarous and ignorant, they sought to insist that a true appreciation of the Code required that its text should be appreciated in the light of their own historical and philological techniques. The outcome of applying this approach was that the humanists began to make a number of substantive contributions to a new and more historically-minded kind of legal science' (Skinner 1978: 201–202). See also Skinner 1978, pp. 105–106, 207–208.

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study of history in particular. Certainly it was the least intelligible of subjects without a thorough knowledge of ancient culture. This was an article of faith with all the legal humanists, a distinguished line of scholars which led from Valla through Poliziano to the great masters of the *mos gallicus*. […] The purpose of this 'French method' was above all to humanize the study of law, by allying it, in the words of Alciato's disciples, with 'good letters' and with 'good arts'. (Kelley 1966: 186)

J.G.A. Pocock has sought to explain the new vision of history of civic humanism within a far-reaching and profound framework where even the concept of time and other epistemological fundamentals were deeply altered:

Since rhetoric was both civic and active, it was possible for the rhetorician — or the humanist *qua* rhetorician — to provide a language in which to articulate a civic consciousness... The rhetorician and the citizen were alike committed to viewing human life in terms of participation in particular actions and decisions, in particular political relationships between particular men. (1975: 60–61)

This is another instance of the move towards the secularisation not just of the processes and concepts used to legitimise the regulation of society and political power, but also of the parameters for an understanding of life and history, which were gradually ceasing to be contemplated *sub specie aeternitatis* — that is, from a transcendental principle standing beyond history and human language — and were instead considered as pertaining to the fragmented and imperfect individual moments of postlapsarian time. As a result, Pocock concludes, 'the humanist rhetoricians were converting the intellectual life into a conversation between men in time' (Pocock 1975: 61). The intersubjective exchange that wove the intellectual net-

work of humanism was dialogic in nature, and was established in the first place with the ancients, that humanist source for textual legitimacy. But it also took place among the citizens themselves, and most importantly not just in the languages of classical antiquity or Scripture, but in the new *vulgare*, constituting a series of particular speech acts with which consensus was interwoven. This consensus was in turn incorporated into a series of laws devised for the harmonious and mutually beneficial normalisation of the commonwealth. The aim of civic humanism was to provide organised rationality through acts of communication both with the ancients and among citizens.

The methodological answer to this epistemological challenge lay in the disciplines of philology and rhetoric as well as in political practice. Philology determined and fixed the original meaning of ancient texts as established by and within their own historical contexts. Rhetoric arranged, normalised and channelled speech acts into intersubjective debate. And politics turned these speech acts and their performative power into specific legal texts and particular actions devised for the harmonisation and advancement of the commonwealth.[53]

The political consequences of this explicitly historical approach to law led to an implicit acknowledgment of its contextual relativity, and were thus far-reaching. This proves particularly relevant when it comes to stressing the contradictions and tensions between the drift of humanist thought, with its logical consequences, on the one hand, and the status quo and the in-

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[53] 'The humanist stress on communication was enough to raise the question of how particular men, existing at particular moments, could lay claim to secure knowledge. The answer could not be given in terms of the simple cognition of universals, or the intellectual animal would be thrust back into the universe of the scholastics, the political animal into that of the imperial hierarchies; to give it in terms of the simple accumulation of experience would be similarly fatal to humanist and citizen alike. Yet an answer must be given somehow, or Petrarch would be unable to read Livy, Florence unable to govern itself. How might a conversation between particulars be capable of organized rationality? The rhetoric of philology, or of politics, might provide the answer; but politics was more than rhetoric' (Pocock 1975: 62–63). See also Kelley 1966, p. 187.

terest of contemporary monarchies, on the other. Like those questions concerning language, signification, and knowledge, the radical implications of the new concepts of man-made law would take generations to be explicitly spelled out and systematically incorporated into political creeds. But these new concepts had started to circulate — and most importantly, to pose practical problems — already in early sixteenth-century England.[54]

The analysis of the Cromwellian revolution in the Tudor administration by Geoffrey Elton is a case in point. In the first place, it shows how theory found its way into actual politics, although the significant and far-reaching implications of these *de facto* developments would take some time to be explicitly spelled out. In the second place, because, in an equally significant way, these developments took place as Tudor humanist circles were responding to the ideas that were circulating in the period, embodied in texts like *La Celestina*. We must not forget that many of the civil servants that participated in this Cromwellian reform had — like Cromwell himself — been educated in Italy, notably in Padua. They included authors such as Thomas Starkey, or Richard Morison, who translated Vives's synthesis of Stoic and Christian morality (his *Introductio ad sapientiam*, published in Bruges in 1524) into English in 1544:

> The Reformation statutes demonstrate that the political sovereignty created in the 1530s was to be a parliamentary one. There was no thought — no possibility — of a purely royal despotism. The highest authority in the land was recognized to lie in that assembly of king, lords, and commons whose decrees (by name of statute) commanded complete and universal obedience and could deal with any matter on earth, including even spiritual concerns hitherto reserved to spiritual authority. The Tudor revolution established the supremacy and omnicompetence of statute. (Elton 1991: 167)

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[54] See Kelley 1966, pp. 194–95; Elton 1991, pp. 167–68.

Within the dichotomy between universals and particulars, which underlay much of the philosophical, moral and political debates of this period, Elton refers to the revealing fact that, at the end of the day, it was Thomas More who ended up dying in his unwavering defence of 'a universal Christian law to which man-made law must conform' versus Cromwell's revolution, whose ultimate consequence postulated that 'in law and on earth there is nothing that an act of parliament cannot do'.[55] Elton's conclusions are revealing when they are used for an analysis by analogy with Rastell's response to *La Celestina*:

Of course, this truth was not at once put in so clear-cut a fashion; it took centuries to talk about the law divine and the law natural, with which the law made by man was supposed to be consonant, before men would admit in all its starkness the simple theory of Thomas Cromwell. To this day one may meet with attempts to discover some sort of morally binding restraint on the powers of parliament. But in the modern state there are, in fact, no limitations on the supremacy and competence of statute: parliament may forbear doing certain things because it is too sensible or too frightened to attempt them, but there is no one who can dispute its authority. (Elton 1991:168)

Once more we witness the wavering positions of civic humanism, with its profound contradictions and paradoxes, caused by dichotomies between universals and particulars, anticipating trends which would be fully developed and explicitly formulated in the modern age, trends which would eventually lead to the Enlightenment, and beyond it, to our current world.

All this opened up an area of debate, which in the eyes of some authors constituted one of those dangerous and unwanted

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[55] Elton 1991, p. 168. For contemporary political doctrines on the role of parliament in England, in particular in the work of Sir Thomas Smith, *De republica anglorum*, see Hadfield 2005, pp. 21–22.

consequences of humanist thought. Although neither Valla nor most of the rest of Renaissance humanism ever explicitly pursued these ideas to their ultimate consequences, or explicitly spelled out the radical doctrines inherent in them, it is not surprising to see that this incipient awareness of the subjectivity of knowledge, externally articulated through the discursive construct that man erects by means of the dialogical processes of common speech would be a source of unease for humanism. Because one of the potential conclusions towards which these new ideas gravitated was that law might be regarded as particularised and relative — hence the precarious equilibrium of the republic as opposed to the universals of philosophy, or the absolute authority of a divinely sanctioned monarchy. Instead, the area of communicative exchange and debate articulated upon rhetorical persuasion and the harmonisation of different groups who were simultaneously pursuing their particular interests became the foundation for a legitimate society and its normative corpus.

This is the reason why humanists increasingly sought the common citizen as their main audience. The individual citizen became the axis upon which the harmonisation of particular interests and well-being (i.e. the realm of the private), on the one hand, and the pursuit of the common good (i.e. the realm of the public) on the other, came to rest. As Skinner has demonstrated, the Florentine authors of the Quattrocento rejected magistrates as the natural audience for those who wanted to produce literature of counsel, choosing to address the whole body of the citizenship instead. The proper education of the citizens, through their persuasion into acquiring an active civic conscience, ensures the harmonisation of the republic, which entails rejecting the primacy of the aristocracy (who frequently fall prey to their own subjective appetites) and the encouragement of private citizens to take responsibility for affairs of governance in the terms defined by early modern republicanism: i.e. the accountability of public officers and the coincidence of private and public virtue in their actions with the aim of pursuing the common good. In order to establish

this common ethos the basic tool is the articulation of a common type of discourse to be used as the channel through which the whole body politic interacts with itself. This ideal of common language takes as its starting point, but also subsumes and harmonises within it, the atomised particulars that constitute the private sphere and orients them into the common, public good. Giovanni Pontano expresses this ideal in his *De sermone* (1509), where he distinguished between the elevated oratory of social leaders and the common language in which regular citizens go about their daily affairs, i.e. those which weave the social network of a harmonious commonwealth:

> (1) But certainly in the most populated cities, and in the largest states, the most important offices and the highest authority are held by those who among the rest show the best skills in eloquence; hence those who are powerful in this are called orators.
>
> (2) But in this regard I am not referring at all to what is called the power, the skill, or the art of oratory, but only to the common language in which men conduct themselves above all in addressing their friends, going about their affairs, in everyday conversations, in meetings, assemblies, and the accustomed reunions both private and public (*familiaribusque ac ciuilibus*). Which is why these individuals are praised for a different reason than those who are called orators or the eloquent.[56]

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56 (1) '*Nec uero populosissimis in ciuitatibus amplissimisque in administrationibus non maximum sibi peperisse locum summamque auctoritatem eos constat, qui inter coeteros essent elocutione praecipue clari; inde ea qui pollerent oratores dicti.*
(2) '*Sed nos hac in parte de ea quae oratoria siue uis facultasque siue ars dicitur nihil omnino loquimur, uerum de oratione tantum ipsa communi quaque homines adeundis amicis, communicandis negociis in quotidianis praecipue utuntur sermonibus, in conuentibus, consessionibus, congressionibus familiaribusque ac ciuilibus consuetudinibus. Qua e re alia quadam hi ratione commendantur quam qui oratore dicuntur atque eloquentes*'. (Pontano, Bistagne, trans. 2008: 78, book I.iii.).

Pontano goes on to defend urbanity (*urbanitatis*) and politeness (*facetudinis*) as virtues that facilitate social exchange and can be used as means to assuage difficult situations in the conduct of everyday business, or to overcome obstacles in the middle of negotiations. He concludes that the combination of urbanity, good manners, and truthfulness in conversation are essential for bringing together the different strands of society, and turning the common wealth into a single body.[57]

As Victoria Khan has demonstrated, what compromise and consensus, achieved through common language, and common sense, do for society is to establish another system of values, i.e. a type of truth based on pragmatics:

We are speaking about truth here, not that truth which is sought by scientists or mathematicians, which has to do with the certainty of syllogisms in disputations about nature and the disciplines, sciences and faculties of man, but about that truth which shows there is nothing fictitious, deceitful or counterfeit in conversation or speech or customs. [...] Those who have followed this [truth], and hold to it in speaking, business, and domestic habits, are called truthful, and that virtue [is called] truth.[58] (English translation qtd. in Kahn 1985: 42–43)

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[57] '*Quemadmodum autem uirtutis huius, de qua pauca locuti sumus, siue comitatis urbanitatis ue siue facetudinis, proprium munus est atque officium sedare molestias, in cessationibusque ac in relaxatione a negociis iucundum aliquid quaerere ad reficiendos animos, siue in ipsis quoque laboribus ac negociis interque molestias reficere eos, quo uegetiores ipsi fiant longeque ualentiores, siue peruincendis aut tolerandis laboribus difficultatibusque, siue leniendis doloribus atque molestiis, qui finis ei uirtuti est constitutus, sic, cum eadem ipsa oratio ac sermo uel praecipuum sit uinculum retinendae societatis, ad quam colendam nati atque educati sumus, coetusque ipsius una sociati et ampliandi et conseruandi, sic, inquam, alterius uirtutis, cuius etiam initia quaerimus, proprium munus est ueritatis studium ac cultus*' (Pontano, Bistagne, trans. 2008: 1, book I.xiii).

58 '*Loquimur autem de ueritate hoc in loco, non illa quidem quae a physicis quaeritur aut mathematicis quae ue uersetur circa certitudinem syllogismorum in ipsisque disputationibus, que sunt de rerum natura deque*

Urbanity and truthfulness are the essential attitudinal and doctrinal components required for an effective use of common language if it is really meant to harmonise society. Pontano combines right reason (*ratio recta*) with truthfulness (*veritas*), the golden mean (*mediocritas*), and endeavour (*laborum honestum*). Section two mentions, on top of these, other concepts which coincide with the ethos of the English commonwealthmen quoted in chapter one, which in turn brings us to the words of the ploughman in *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte*: the distribution of wealth ('*Verum ipsis e uirtutibus aliae uersentur aut in eroganda pecunia aut in obeundis periculis*'), and giving each one his due ('*in reddendo quod suum est cuique*'). Even more revealingly, Pontano talks about verbal exchange as the distribution of materials ('*nomineque singulae appellentur suo, hae quidem duae quae tum ueritatem in dicendo tum leporem sequuntur circa orationem tantum operam suam conferunt uerbaque sibi perinde ac materiam subministrant*'). For all of these processes to take place there is one fundamental cement, which is fidelity ('*altera uero quae hominem ipsum ita constituat, ut per eam constet humana conciliatio uigeatque in ciuitate fides*'): fidelity operates in the exchange of words and in the exchange of goods, and in the same way as the value of goods must be faithful to its true nature, so the meaning of words must keep faith with the things they refer to (*singulae appellentur suo*). Even as Pontano acknowledges the

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disciplinis atque scientiis hominum ac facultatibus, uerum de ueritate ea, quae nihil in sermonibus atque in oratione, nihil etiam in moribus inesse fictum, fallax, fucatum indicet, nihil quod simulatum, adulatorium, mendax, gloriosum, uanum quodque supra uires appareat supraque facultates ipsas aut ueri fines excedat captus ue nostre terminos; quam assecuti qui sint retinenantque et in dicendo et in tractandis rebus domesticisque in consuetudinibus, ii ueri dicuntur, et uirtus ipsa ueritas, ni fortasse proprie magis ueraces illi, uirtus autem ipsa ueracitas, ut ueritas sit rei ipsius, ueracitas uero ea utentis habitus. Ac nihilominus et uerum fuisse hominem Catonem dicimus et quod summa etiam in eo inesset ueritas, Sybillas quoque ueras et uates etiam atque haruspices ueros. Haec uero a nobis eo consilio dicta sunt quo dictinctius intelligamur quaenam res ipsae sint et quales' (Pontano, Bistagne, trans. 2008: 96–97, book I.xiii).

consensual nature of language and trade, he still proclaims his reservations about its inherent fluctuation by stressing the need to adjust the price/meaning of goods/words in line with their actual value/signification.

The postulation of urbanity and truthfulness as these essential components is also illustrated by the work of Matteo Palmieri (1406–1475), one among the group of humanists who had helped transmit the notions of liberty and active citizenship to Renaissance Italy from the Ciceronian tradition. Cicero's presence is ubiquitous in Palmieri's *Della vita civile* (1436) and the Roman author constitutes his main source for the Stoic notion of the absolute necessity of fidelity, stability, and truthfulness (*constantia et veritas*) as some of the basic virtues of the social self. These virtues are articulated through both language and action, but especially *constantia* and the stable self must make themselves present through language.

Cicero's *De officiis* bases the fundamentals of peaceful and prosperous civic life on virtue and industry at both the personal and social levels, which are then sanctioned by the inescapable concurrence of justice, understood as the balanced and stable correspondence between words and deeds, language and meaning. The reference to the Stoics and the need to follow their example in the study of language as an ancillary discipline for active social life, in order to establish the true meaning and intent of words, is very significant, and directly links the tradition of civic life with rhetorical practice on a solid moral basis. Irrespective of the doubtful etymology — as he himself acknowledges — Cicero puts the emphasis on the fact that the notion of good faith, or fidelity, derives from the straightforward combination of action (*quia fiat*) and words (*quod dictum est*):

> The foundation of justice, moreover, is good faith — that is, truth and fidelity to promises and agreements. And therefore we may follow the Stoics, who diligently investigate the etymology of words; and we may accept their statement that

'good faith' is so called because what is promised is 'made good', although some may find this derivation rather far-fetched. (Miller, trans. 1942b: I.vii.23)

In other words, peaceful and prosperous civic coexistence depends on a proper and stable agreement as regards the meaning of social utterances and their purport. This notion of common language runs parallel in the Renaissance with the emergence of early civil society, the new bureaucratic classes, and the need to establish effective channels of communication as well as legal standards between states and individuals. The need for a common language was both the result of the natural development of more complex bureaucratic and legal demands for effective social interaction, as well as of all these theoretical treatises that called for a common set of linguistic and moral values to grant effective and truthful circulation of verbal articulations and exchanges in all the spheres of the expanding social life.[59] The practical purposes of this doctrine of sociolinguistic transparency were extended in Renaissance republican thought to preclude the arbitrary decisions of absolutist rulers. These decisions were literally uncivil, because by their own nature they emanated not from the basis of common linguistic/legal agreement oriented towards the prosperous progress of the commonwealth, but from the external, extra-civil source of individual royal or imperial will, i.e. from an arbitrary source outside these new circles of social agreement. Limited as the new standards still were at this time, their abrogation naturally resulted in the alienation of the commonwealth. But for Valla *Latinitas*, as the complex network woven by the community of Latin speakers constituted in the first place the foundation for a major political unit such as the Roman Empire, and eventually its long-lasting legacy. This notion was already in circulation in places other than Italy, such as Spain, where Nebrija

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[59] The first examples of a homogeneous koine of the variety commonly known as early modern English emerged from the clerks-bureaucrats of the late medieval court.

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had been active during the last years of the fifteenth century. Let us recall here the connection between Nebrija and Vives: as stated above, after leaving Spain for good when Vives was just a teenager, Nebrija was the only Spanish scholar whom Vives ever praised in public. When Nebrija died, Vives was offered the chair in rhetoric that the Spaniard had held in the recently created University of Alcalá. In view of the difficult situation for converted Jews in the Iberian Peninsula, Vives rejected the offer. In all probability, Valla must have been the source for Nebrija's famous assertion in his *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, that language has always been the companion of empire. Nebrija had spent ten years in Bologna, where he moved at the age of nineteen. There he became acquainted with the humanist movement and its zeal to purify Latin from the accretions that had turned it into an unrecognizably barbaric deformity. Francisco Rico directly related Nebrija's stay in Italy with the influence that Valla's work exerted on the Spaniard's intellectual education and the subsequent development of his work.[60]

Nebrija's is the first grammar of a vernacular language ever composed, and it was written in the spirit of humanist linguistics. These are the opening (and one would add, prophetic) words in the dedication of his *Gramática de la lengua castellana* to Queen Isabella in the year of its publication, 1492:

> When I am bent on meditation with my own self, my very illustrious queen, and I put before my eyes the antiquity of all the things which for our remembrance were set down in words, one thing I find and conclude to be most certain: that language was always the companion of empire; and it followed it in such a way, that they jointly started, grew and flourished, and afterwards jointly did they fall.[61]

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[60] See Rico 1978, pp. 38–39; also Quilis's introduction to Nebrija's *Gramática de la lengua castellana,* pp. 10–11.

[61] 'Cuando bien conmigo pienso, muy esclarecida reina, y pongo delante los ojos el antiguedad de todas las cosas que para nuestra recordación

Nebrija's introduction echoes Valla's preface to his *Elegantiarum latinae linguae*: 'wherever the Roman Empire is, there rules the Roman language too' ('*ibi… Romanum imperium est, ubicunque Romana lingua dominatur*') (1544: 8; translated by the author). Valla extols Latin as standing above all the other goods that the Roman Empire gave to the peoples it conquered: above laws, and letters, and also above military conquest, since it is far 'sweeter than arms', because it exerts peaceful *imperium*. He even compares Latin to a sacrament: '*Magnum ergo Latini sermonis sacramentum est*' (ibid.: 8). Latin is more valuable and profitable than any other type of material good, or any other type of food, because it is nourishment for the soul: '*optimam frugem, et vere divinam, nec corporis, sed animi cibum*' (ibid.: 7). Latin has taught the liberal arts, and has provided excellent laws too: '*Haec enim gentes illas, populosque omnes omnibus artibus, quae liberales vocantur, instituit. Haec optimas leges edocuit: haec viam ad omnem sapientiam muniuit: haec denique praestitit, ne barbari amplius dici possent*' (ibid.: 9).[62] There was thus a keen sense of language as the vehicle and constitutive element

Lorenzo Valla, *Elegantiarum latinae linguae* (1544)

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y memoria quedaron escritas, una cosa hallo y saco por conclusión muy cierta: que siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio; y de tal manera lo siguió, que juntamente comenzaron, crecieron y florecieron, y despues junta fue la caída de entrambos' (Nebrija, Quilis, ed. 1989: 109; translated by the author).

[62] See Kelley 1966, pp. 185–86.

of large and complex political communities, in all their diverse dimensions: administration, law, commerce, the arts, or religion. All these structures were inseparable from the community of speakers who wove them into existence. But beyond the establishment of political communities, *sensus communis* also became an important concept in the realm of epistemology.

9. *Sensus Communis*

The notion of *sensus communis* as elaborated upon by Gadamer, and Habermas's description of the emergence of the public sphere provide conceptual tools that contribute to explain and analyse some of these central drives of early modernity (Habermas 1989: 9). In dealing with Hegel's concept of modernity, Habermas continues to use concepts that were fundamental for civic humanism: consensus, will, and the communication between private individuals (i.e. intersubjectivity) as the basic components of the public sphere. Significantly, what Habermas is discussing here is a way of approaching the relation between universals and particulars. This shows how close Habermas's proposal is to classical civic humanism and how central the concepts that we find in *La Celestina* and in Rastell are to some of the founding concepts of modernity:

A different model for the mediation of the universal and the individual is provided by the *higher-level intersubjectivity of an uncoerced formation of will* within a communication community existing under constraints toward cooperation: In *the universality of an uncoerced consensus arrived at among free and equal persons*, individuals retain a court of appeal that can be called upon even against particular forms of institutional concretization of the common will. As we have seen, in Hegel's youthful writings the option of *explicating the ethical totality as a communicative rea-*

son embodied in intersubjective life-contexts was still open. (Habermas 1987: 40; emphasis added)

In *Truth and Method* Gadamer traces the origin of the Kantian notion of taste to the humanist concept of *sensus communis*. In the following passage, Gadamer categorises education (or cultivation, *Bildung*) as the next step after the development of humanist thought — first through the education of the courtier, then on to the education of the citizen. And in this process, common sense — articulated through common speech — plays a fundamental role as a *mode of knowledge*:

Gracian's ideal of *Bildung* (cultivation) was supposed to be a completely new departure. It replaced that of the Christian courtier (Castiglione). It is remarkable within the history of Western ideals of *Bildung* for being independent of class. It sets out the ideal of a society based on *Bildung*. This ideal of social *Bildung* seems to emerge everywhere in the wake of absolutism and its suppression of the hereditary aristocracy. Thus the history of the idea of taste follows the history of absolutism from Spain to France and England and is closely bound up with the antecedents of the third estate. Taste is not only the ideal created by a new society, but we see this ideal of 'good taste' producing what was subsequently called 'good society.' *It no longer recognizes and legitimates itself on the basis of birth and rank but simply through the shared nature of its judgments or, rather, its capacity to rise above narrow interests and private predilections to the title of judgment...* The concept of taste undoubtedly implies a *mode of knowing*. The mark of good taste is being able to stand back from ourselves and our private preferences. Thus *taste, in its essential nature, is not private but a social phenomenon of the first order. It can even counter the private inclinations of the individual like a court of law, in the name of a universality that it intends and represents.* (Gadamer 1975: 35–6; emphasis added)

Habermas and Gadamer's texts constitute further evidence to provide arguments that place *La Celestina* and *Calisto and Melebea*, together with the issues they debate, within the genealogy of modernity. We can find one of the roots of the idea of taste and common sense in the ideal of the golden mean (cf. Pontano's reference to *mediocritas*), as well as in the awareness of linguistic change and the notion of discursive communities — cf. Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*[63] or Valla's thought. The notion of a common sociolinguistic norm also went hand in hand with the waning of the aristocratic ethos in favour of a meritocracy which sustained society and its values on the basis of common elements and capacities in human nature that could be developed through the ethical and educational ideals of humanism.[64]

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[63] 'I say, hastening to deal with the question, that I call "vernacular language" that which infants acquire from those around them when they first begin to distinguish sounds; or, to put it more succinctly, I declare that vernacular language is that which we learn without any formal instruction, by imitating our nurses. There also exists another kind of language, at one remove from us, which the Romans called *gramatica*. The Greeks and some-but not all-other peoples also have this secondary kind of language. Few, however, achieve complete fluency in it, since knowledge of its rules and theory can only be developed through dedication to a lengthy course of study. Of these two kinds of language, the more noble is the vernacular: first, because it was the language originally used by the human race; second, because the whole world employs it, though with different pronunciations and using different words; and third, because it is natural to us, while the other is, in contrast, artificial' (Dante, Botteril, trans. and ed. 1996: I.2-4).

[64] On the existing analogies relation between Valla, the humanist philosophy of language, and twentieth-century authors (Habermas among them) see Celenza: '[…] at the end of the two great twentieth-century traditions (analytical, Wittgensteinian, language philosophy versus continental, Heideggerian existentialism), the main ideas to emerge (in the thought of people like Donald Davidson, Richard Rorty, Jurgen Habermas, and Stephen Toulmin) have centred on the importance of conversation, consensus, and the way language functions in, creates, and delineates social spaces. The best Renaissance humanists, and Valla is of this variety, can speak to us today precisely because they wrote material that has to do with conversation, group dialogue, and the kind of consensus that can be established in

These are then some of the social and political implications of the reassessment of language and philosophy carried out by Lorenzo Valla, who in his *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* had criticised Aristotelian scholastic categories as formulated in medieval logic on the grounds of their distance from common linguistic usage. His reform of these categories, which he reduced from ten to three, relies on the fact that his new proposal uses the criteria offered by 'natural sense and common use', based on Quintilian's principle of common linguistic usage (Waswo 1979: 256–57).[65] Valla's philological method was based on an analysis of the different stages and modes in the usage of Latin (as in the case of the *Donation of Constantine*) over different historical periods. The fact that such empirical analysis of linguistic use can be applied to the identification of historical differences in texts also coincides with the importance accorded to style by those humanists inspired by the Ciceronian rhetorical tradition (this is the case of Valla's *Elegantiae*).

The stylistic ideal based on the use of language as common currency had a long tradition in classical Latin poetry and poetics, and even beyond Quintilian, it can be traced back to very revealing texts which prove the relevance of this constellation of ideas when it comes to approaching questions of poetics and literary doctrine. This is the case of the Horatian theory of poetics, based on a balanced combination of innovative, original use of language (imaginative and creative, i.e. private and subjective) with a style that may mirror the language used by the common citizen (public and consensual, and hence normative):

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the public forum of debate and discussion. But one can only understand this sense of humanism's importance if one comes at the problem with a perspective that includes modern philosophy with its emphasis, since Nietzsche, on language and its problems' (2005: 502).

[65] See also Waswo 1979, p. 260, and his references to the work of Camporeale and Gianni Zippel on the relevance of Valla's reassessment. See also Copenhaver 2005.

It has ever been, and ever will be, permitted to issue *words stamped with the mint-mark of the day*. As forests change their leaves with each year's decline, and the earliest drop off: so with words, the old race dies, and, like the young of human kind, the new-born bloom and thrive. Many terms that have fallen out of use shall be born again, and those shall fall that are now in repute, if *Usage so will it, in whose hands lies the judgement, the right and the rule of speech*. (Horace, trans. Fairclough 1928: 455–57; emphasis added)

A new dimension is added here to fundamental questions of epistemology and philosophy, literary stylistics and socioeconomic practices, since Horace uses the revealing metaphor of language as common currency, an analogy also used by Quintilian, who claimed that 'usage however is the surest pilot in speaking, and we should treat language as currency minted with the public stamp' (Butler, trans.: 112–113). The concept of common language also appears with a remarkable emphasis in Vives's very first work, *In pseudodialecticos* (Read 1983a: 61–62).[66] In the opening paragraphs of this epistle, addressed to his friend and compatriot, Juan Fuertes, Vives rejoices in the 'rebirth of the humanities' (*renascentium litterarum*) and complains about the convoluted, unintelligible language of the Parisian scholastics under which he had been educated:

In our friendly conversations together, whenever reference is made to the rebirth of the humanities, more particularly

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[66] See also Fantazzi, ed.: 'In his adherence to the strict canons of grammar and style Vives is a true successor of the Italian humanists, like Lorenzo Valla, Leonardo, Bruni, Poliziano, and others, who never ceased to inveigh against the perversions of the Latin language wrought by the Parisian doctors. In the preface to his *Elegantiae*, Valla had laid all the blame for this upon the Gauls, as he referred to them, who had taken the Capitoline by storm. Vives, like him, calls upon men of letters to resist this flood of barbarism descending from the Seine and defend decent Latinity against its imprudent assailants' (1979: pp. 12–13).

the origins of this revival, or to the state of the other high-er disciplines, we cannot help feeling a certain pride in our age. On the other hand, these same scholars often complain that in Paris, the very citadel of learning, the center from which all new ideas should be radiated abroad, certain in-dividuals have espoused a hideous form of barbarism, and are propagating outrageous doctrines or 'sophisms', as they refer to them, which are unrivalled in their vanity and stu-pidity. When men of genuine talent decide to dedicate them-selves to such pursuits, their valuable mental abilities go to waste and like fertile fields left uncultivated, they produce a useless accumulation of weeds. Indulging in idle reveries, they devise nonsense for themselves and a new type of lan-guage which they alone can understand. (Fantazzi, ed. 1979: 26–28)

He accuses the scholastics of using a private jargon that no-body else can understand, which evinces their lack of common sense (*sensu communi*), and declares that the language that Ar-istotle developed was not some type of private code, but rather 'the current form of Greek which everyone spoke':

Fortunately, their discussions are carried on in some form of the Latin language, no matter how bad or corrupt it may be, for if such madness were understood by the common people, the whole working-class to a man would drive them out of the city with hisses, shouts and the clanging of the tools of their trade. Such would be a fitting punishment for these fools, who lack any degree of common sense [*sensu communi*]. Is anyone of the opinion that Aristotle fitted his logic to a language which he had invented for himself, in-stead of to the current form of Greek which everyone spoke? [*uulgarem illum Graecum, quem totus populus loquebatur*]. (Fantazzi, ed. 1979: 36)

He keeps hammering away at this idea with insistence, and applies it to any discipline, not just to grammar or rhetoric (which are here tacitly defined as disciplines not as specialised as logic), but also to logic itself, since it would be foolish to 'use a language that he has invented himself instead of that used by the rest of mankind' (Fantazzi, ed. 1979: 36). First he sets usage as the foundation for the norm, from which rules are then drawn. The primacy that Vives establishes here in relation to usage when it comes to the norm runs parallel with the nature of Valla's critique of abstract categories: it was the concrete noun that enjoyed primacy, and then through dialectical/logical operations an abstraction was constructed, but always in a secondary manner in relation to the primacy of the concrete. Since rhetoric, logic and grammar use the same language, truth or falsehood are determined in either of these through the uses of common speech, not through some secondary oversophisticated private language that only a few can understand:

> Their logic is truly something extraordinary, expressed in a language which they claim to be Latin, but which Cicero, if he were to come back to life, would not understand. It is just as much a defect in logic as it would be in grammar or rhetoric for someone to use a language that he has invented himself instead of that used by the rest of mankind. These three arts deal with language which came from the people and not from teachers, for first the Latin and Greek languages existed, and afterwards grammatical, rhetorical and logical formulas were observed in them. Language was not twisted to suit the rules, but rather the rules followed the pattern of the language. We do not speak Latin in a certain way because Latin grammar bids us to speak; on the contrary, grammar recommends us to speak in a certain way because that is the way Latin is spoken. The same is true of rhetoric and logic, each of which is expressed in the same language as grammar. *That is how we determine the truth or*

falsehood of a statement. Logic finds out truth, falsehood, or probability in the common speech that everyone uses, as rhetoric discovers ornament, brilliance, or gracefulness of expression. (Fantazzi, ed. 1979: 36; emphasis added)

Vives continues to add that the rules of logic, like the rules of grammar — i.e. the ones that determine whether 'a certain statement in the indicative mood is true or false, or another statement in another mood is not true or false' — have to be 'adapted to the common usages of speech'; otherwise it would be impossible to communicate them, and thus to make them available for debate and argumentation:

In logic it is usage that ultimately determines whether a certain statement in the indicative mood is true or false, or another statement in another mood is not true or false. For before logic was ever discovered, these rules taught by the logician were already in existence; he merely transmits them, *because the consensus of speakers* [*loquentium… consensus*], whether of Latin or of Greek, so sanctions. Consequently, *the precepts of logic no less than those of grammar or rhetoric were adapted to the common usages of speech*. But these so-called sophists must compensate in some way for their lack of talent and learning, which prevents them from attaining *a reasonable success in debate and argumentation with the stock vocabulary available to everyone from a common public coinage*. Forgetful of the true function of the logician, which is the skillful manipulation of ordinary vocabulary, they have invented private meanings for words contrary to the customs and conventions of mankind [*idque uulgaribus notisque uocabulis atque orationibus, quibus unusquisque uti debet tamquam nummis quibus publica forma est, quod erat uerum dialectici munus, confinxerunt ipsi sibi nescio quos uocabulorum significatus contra omnem hominum consuetudinem & usum…*]. (Fantazzi, ed. 1979: 39; emphasis added)

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Vives's emphasis on common speech and the consensual nature of this vehicle that informs and consequently makes possible human communication, and hence the establishment of societies and polities, is not devoid of the potential for political radicalism that was also circulating at the time.[67]

The fluctuation in humanist views on the dialectic between *oratio* and *ratio*, and the primacy of one or the other, comes to the foreground once more in another work by Vives, composed around the period in which he worked and taught in England. Vives crossed the Channel for the first time in 1523. Soon after that, and thanks to the patronage of Cardinal Wolsey, he was appointed to a chair in Oxford. While Wolsey's institution, the College of the Cardinal, was being built, Vives read in Corpus Christi College. Here the curriculum was one of the most updated in England, with an abundance of humanist textbooks and authors that included the *Elegantiae* of Lorenzo Valla. After a brief return to Bruges, Vives came back to Oxford during the first half of 1525. During his second stay in England Vives also made some practical suggestions to Cardinal Wolsey regarding the curricular designs of Oxford University, all of them oriented to reinforce the presence of grammar, rhetoric and poetry to the detriment of scholastic philosophy and dialectic. But beyond a mere reform of the curricular contents, during this period Valla also embarked on a more ambitious reform of the categories of knowledge, through one of his most important works, *De disciplinis libri xx* (1531). His emphasis on the epistemology and the methods of Valla's humanism led him to linguistic matters, but as he did this, he was also constantly preoccupied with the proper use of language, i.e. the functional use of language oriented towards specific goals that could be comprehended within the general framework resulting from the combination of Stoic and Christian morality.

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[67] See Read 1983, p. 63.

Thus, although his epistemology takes as its starting point the postulates of Ciceronian Academic scepticism and their probabilistic theory of knowledge, Vives constantly recoils from its far-reaching implications (Waswo 1980: 599). For example, in the following passage Vives ends up by rejecting the *in utramque partem dicendo* methodology, and as he does so he also negates the notion of epistemological dialogism, in part because of the

Juan Luis Vives, *De disciplinis libri xx* (1531)

moral relativity this may lead to. This is in accord with Vives's implicit dislike of the *omnia secundum litem fiunt* principle, and his unease with the cosmic and social discord that Rojas records in his introduction to *La Celestina* — not to mention its content, which constitutes a socially realistic and fictional instantiation of such principles of disorder at work. Thus, in spite of the fact that he admits the consensual nature of human language and the value of common usage in the Horatian and Quintilian spirit, Vives here stops short of following the radical implications of this train of thought, urging philosophers not to stop in the mere consideration of words, but focusing instead on the ultimate causes of this world, which is ruled by God as the *summum bonum*. Thus, although he acknowledges in the following passage the essentially subjective nature of

knowledge, he ends up taking sides with Aristotle and Plato against Cicero and Protagoras of Abdera:[68]

> We enter upon the cognition of things by the passages of the senses, nor have we other means, enclosed in this body. As those in a room who have but one place to look out, by which light is admitted and by which they see outside, discern nothing but as much as it allows to be seen, so we see only as much as is permitted by the senses, although we glimpse outside, and the mind gathers something beyond what the senses have presented — but only as far as is granted by them. The mind certainly mounts above them, but still supported by them; they open the way to it, nor does it come forth otherwise; indeed it decides that other things exist, yet it does not observe those things. Therefore we say they are, or are not, this or that, of such a kind or not; we reckon on the basis of our belief, not of the things themselves: to us in fact their measure is not themselves, but our mind. For when we call things good, bad, useful, useless, we are not speaking of the things, but of ourselves. And sometimes we follow the lead of the senses to the point that just as things appear, so do we openly report them, however much the mind may determine to the contrary: hence Cicero may say those things do not exist that cannot be touched or perceived; nonetheless they are comprehended by the mind and the intelligence. Therefore things must be assessed by us not by their own characteristics but by our estimation and judgment. But neither do we immediately agree with the opinion of Protagoras of Abdera, who said that such things as were to be judged in that way were all things, on which he is rightfully refuted by Plato and Aristotle. For we do not say

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[68] Rita Guerlac and Malcolm Read coincide with Waswo's opinion on Vives's reticence to pursue the consequences of the train of thought he has taken up from Valla and other humanists. See Rita Guerlac, ed. *Against the Pseudo-dialecticians: A Humanist Attack on Medieval Logic*, p. 31; see also Read 1983, p. 58.

that as we determine of things according to our judgment we distort the truth of those things according to our judgment. We have therefore cognition and judgment of the senses, of the fantasy, and of the mind. (English translation qtd. in Waswo 1980: 606)

Words may stand in Vives's way, then, and they may constitute the external structure of the world as it is apprehended and processed by the human senses, the human fantasy, and the human mind, in a process of elevation and abstraction away from the particular to the universal and transcendental. However, he is still indebted to Augustinianism in asserting the theological foundations of knowledge. In this he also agreed with the Neoplatonists of the Renaissance, such as Ficino.[69]

As we have just seen, Horace is another fundamental source for the concept of *common language*, who locates this ideal in the dialectic process of using a type of style which is sophisticated and imaginative, but also natural and firmly rooted in common usage. An artistic idiom that admits the use of poetic licence for the creation of new vocabulary, but also avoids the excesses of *raving* poets. In the same passage in which Horace acknowledges the decline and the constantly changing nature of language — a fact of which humanists were acutely aware, and one of the axes of their debates on language — he also promotes common usage, natural, everyday speech, as the proper norm. This is what he calls '*nomen…signatum praesente nota*'. The comparison of the linguistic sign with a piece of currency, bestowed with the contingent and communally determined value of the market, constitutes an image rich in socioeconomic overtones, with implications in the context of a cultural materialist analysis of the idea of common language as a social and marketable commodity. For one thing, for both the currency system and language to function effectively, they

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[69] Note for instance the similitude between Vives's description of gnoseological processes and Ficino's psychology. See Marsilio Ficino's anthropology in book XIII of his *Theologia Platonica*.

need to rely on the principles of truthfulness and fidelity (*veritas et constantia*), as Pontano stressed in his *De sermone*.

The analogy between the currency system and the notion of pragmalinguistic consensus is very significant in the context of the early modern period — which had witnessed since the thirteenth century at least, among other new human artefacts, the emergence and generalised implementation of accountancy and book-keeping,[70] and the widespread use of the bills of exchange. It is not by chance that this coincided with the creation of a legal space that legitimised the pursuit of self-interest and individual liberty. Under the light shed by this analysis, the use of the currency trope by philosophers of language and those engaged in poetic doctrine and practice gains a new revealing dimension (Waswo 1987: 14–15).

Richard Waswo has pointed out how the meaning of the word *commodity* started to change from referring to the functional nature of an object to refer to marketable produce: 'It was in the fifteenth century that the word "commodity" (in English and in French) began to shift from designating the useful qualities of an object (what was "commodious" about it) to objects produced exclusively for sale' (Waswo 1996: 5–6). The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed. 1989) defines *commodity*: 'As a quality or condition of things, in relation to *the desires or needs of men*'; this definition, whose use is classified in the *OED* as obsolete, is then illustrated with usage examples spanning the period 1430–1682. A subsequent meaning (also classified as obsolete) is provided as 'Advantage, benefit, profit, interest: often in the sense of private or selfish interest', with examples taken from the period 1571–1836. Finally, a definition of *commodity* within the realm of commerce appears as: 'A kind of thing produced for use or sale, an article of com-

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[70] See Braudel 1992, vol. II, *The Wheels of Commerce*, 'Capitalism equals rationalism?', pp. 572–578. See also Jardine, who emphasises 'the fierce pride in mercantilism and the acquisitiveness which fuelled its enterprises [those of the European Renaissance]', and concludes her prologue with the claim that 'the seeds of our own exuberant multiculturalism and bravura consumerism were planted in the European Renaissance' (1996: 33–34).

merce, an object of trade; in *pl*. goods, merchandise, wares, produce. Now esp. food or raw materials, as objects of trade'. This definition is then supported with usage examples spanning a much wider period, from 1436 to 1985 (and, of course, well beyond 1985). It is important to stress the private component of self-interest implied in the first definition, later on rejected by usage, but running parallel during the early modern period with its significance as a marketable object. This confirms that early modern usage located a component of private, subjective *voluntas* in the pursuit of self-interest in combination with its public nature as marketable good. This analysis is of a piece with Maravall's of the emergence of the Spanish term *salario* around the fifteenth century, precisely at a time in which the relation between masters and servants started to be established through the exchange of the latter's labour for cash, instead of the previous familial, serf-like type of relation (Maravall 1972: 87).

In one of his orations to the Florentine Academy the Italian humanist Bernardo Davanzati (1529–1606) — who combined his work as translator and man of letters with the activity of merchant banking — defined the value accorded to currency and precious metals in terms of its consensual nature:

> Now, *Gold* and *Silver* contribute very little in their own nature to our Lives, for which all Earthly Things seem to have been created. Yet Men, as if they would make Nature asham'd of this, have agreed to make those Metals of equal value to all other things, to make'em the Price and Measure of all, and the Instruments of changing and exchanging whatever can be found good in this World. (Toland, trans. 1696: 7–8; emphasis added)

Later on, he insists on the same idea: 'It was said in the Definition, *By the Consent of Nations made the Price and Measure of things*; because Men have agreed to fix that Value upon those Metals, for they have no such Privileges from Nature'

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(ibid.: 14). Davanzati's discourse abounds in concepts related to the question of language and the self, such as desire, self-interest, will, consent, or fidelity. Davanzati uses for his defence of loans arguments whose tenor is very similar to those used by the merchant in *Of Gentleness and Nobility*. Davantazi also referers to his definition of value based on necessities and desires, the reason for the contingent and changing nature of value. For such transactions to occur effectively, all the parts involved in them need first to agree on their value and then make good on their word. Hence the importance placed on the articulation of formal normative texts (i.e. laws) that could regulate the establishment of written contracts, upon which the whole legal and economic system relied. In other words, they need to apply the principle of *constantia et veritas* combined with the principle of *fides* as formulated by Cicero in *De officiis*.[71]

10. Conclusions. A Theory on the Origins of the Novel

The ideal of common knowledge as a sort of sociolinguistic pact in the realm of the public sphere, with its concomitant legal and economic space for the individual pursuit of particular interests, finds its counterpart in the development of dialogical experientialism in literature.[72] This in turn issues from the emergence of a multiverse made up of different types of discourse that needed to be harmonised. The fields of literature and the visual arts responded to this fragmentation with a miscellany of tones and attitudes. The hybridity and variety of the generic shifts in the early modern canon stem from the heterogeneous modes of this response.

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[71] Waswo points to the etymology of *credit*, from *credo*, closely related to the concept of *fides* (1996: 22).

[72] *Experientialism* is the translation of the Spanish *experiencialismo*, a term used by Rodríguez (1994: 42–43) to refer to the discourse of subjective experience and perception (from Galileo to Montaigne) which uses these observational accounts to textualise and legitimise the perceiving subject.

What Pocock categorised as an emphasis on the separate moments of history contemplated through the subjectivity of particular individuals can thus be reformulated as this type of experientialism in the early modern canon. This dialogical subjectivity appeared in the field of literature under different guises: in the form of epistolary, first-person accounts, i.e. the picaresque novel; in a more explicitly dialogical form, such as the Tudor interludes; or also in hybrid texts like *La Celestina*, standing at some point between the humanistic comedy and the early modern novel. This experientialism erected upon the frame of dialogical or intersubjective rhetoric constitutes, like linear perspective in painting or the notion of *sensus communis* in epistemology, an attempt to provide a fluid but still unifying principle for the multiverse that resulted from the breakdown of the Scripture-based medieval principle of theological authority, subsequently reinforced with the onset of the Reformation, and followed later by the fragmentation of the equally authoritative authors from the canon of classical antiquity.

The concept of multiverse was proposed by Cambon, who asserted that after the end of the hegemony of classical authors as a unifying principle — if ever such a moment existed, or it was just a phase in early humanism when the faith in classical antiquity had not yet been tainted by scepticism — there began 'a process that made a cultural multiverse of what had formerly been a graspable universe' (1979: 161). Blumenberg's insights on perspective and Copernicus lend weight to an account that establishes close parallelisms between the fragmentation of subjectivity in the fields of values as well as in epistemology. Blumemberg's account of the development of perspective as a scientific method for the representation of nature and the cosmos runs parallel with the topos of society understood in agonistic terms or with the multiple perspectives that were fundamental for the probabilistic gnoseology proposed by the *in utramque partem dicendo method*.[73]

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[73] See 'Perspective as the Guide for Cosmological Expansion', in Blumenberg, 1987, pp. 530–39.

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The Mexican novelist and critic Carlos Fuentes also empha-
sised the notion of the polygeneric and heterogeneous charac-
ter of early modern writing in his analysis of *El Quijote* and the
transition from epic to the novel. Fuentes holds that after the
onset of modernity epic and tragedy were no longer viable be-
cause there was not an ancestral order that could be restored, or
a unique normative universe. There simply remained multiple
levels of reading and interpretation that corresponded to the di-
versity of levels in reality (Fuentes 1976: 93). This awareness
of the emergence of diverse levels of reading, reflecting the
multiple levels of empirical experience appears clearly defined
in the introductory letter by Rojas quoted above. The diagno-
sis of Fuentes coincides with Rojas's anxiety about the exist-
ence of a reading public that could subject his pregnant text
to a host of divergent readings. The awareness of the inherent
complexity of writing and the virtual nature of its existence
in an ever-changing network that originated at the dialogical
intersection between a heterogeneous community of readers
and the text is precisely what constituted Cervantes's moder-
nity, and what also turned *La Celestina* into a founding text in
European literary modernity.

La Celestina oscillates thus within a continuum of gener-
ic varieties with humanist dialogue and comedy in one of its
extremes and the picaresque on the other pole. If *La Celestina*
prefigures the world of the early modern novel (i.e. the pica-
resque and *El Quijote*), *Calisto and Melebea* constitutes one
step in the direction of the representation on stage of early
bourgeois humanist principles and anxieties, which included
family values and their preservation against the material and
moral dangers posed by life in the city, with its anomic and
amoral market mechanisms.

The inextricable conflation of property transmission, the
painful loss of a daughter, and metaphysical concerns about
cosmic strife and the passage of time are all topics which are
displayed in Pleberio's lament at the end of *La Celestina*. Ple-
berio outlines a gloomy and pessimistic account of life on
earth, which takes the reader in a circular movement back to

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the introductory letter by Fernando de Rojas and its Heraclite-an *omnia secundum litem fiunt* ethos. This final lament contrasts with the conclusion to *Calisto and Melebea*, in which Melebea's father warns against idleness and defends the values of prayer, and the humanist consensual ethos along the lines of hard work and education, as well as preventive legislation to avoid the damaging presence of vagrants and go-betweens.

All these epistemological and moral concerns can be arranged into the following genealogy: the concern of certain humanists with language as currency, resulting from user consensus, then the injunction by one of the servants that Calisto use 'el lenguaje que a todos es comun', and the diagnosis of Calisto's problem as a problem of the direction taken by his will resulting from the impact upon his affects of a surfeit of *fabulae* in the form of overblown Petrarchan romances, which has eventually found its way into his *ratio*:

CALISTO   Thou foole, thou foole! The sounde man sayes to the sicke, god sende thee thy health. I will no more counsell. I will goe alone by my selfe to *Masse*, and will not returne home till you come and call me, and crave a rewarde of me for the good newes thou shalt bringe by the happie comminge of Celestine. *Nor will I eathe anie thinge till Phebus his horses feede themselues and graze their fill in those meadowes where they are wonte to bayte when they haue ended their Iorney.*

SEMPRONIO   *Good Sir, leave of theise Circumlocutions, leave of theise poeticall fictions, for that speach is not comely which is not common to all, or which but fewe doe vnderstande.*

(Martínez Lacalle, ed. 1972: 204–5; emphasis added)[74]

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[74] Calisto: ¡Oh loco, loco! Dice el sano al doliente: 'Dios te de salud'. No quiero consejo ni esperarte mas razones, que mas avivas y enciendes las llamas que me consumen. Yo me voy solo a misa, y no tornare a casa hasta que me llameis, pidiendome albricias de mi gozo con la buena venida de Celestina. Ni comere hasta entonce, *aunque primero sean los caballos de Febo apacenta-*

A significant link between *La Celestina* and *El Quijote* goes by way of *La segunda Celestina* (1534), Feliciano de Silva's sequel to Rojas's popular work. Both de Silva and Cervantes pick on one of the most significant undercurrents in the work of Rojas, that is, the topic of 'the language which is common to all' ('el lenguaje que a todos es comun'):

Woe is me! Pity bids me speak, reason bids me silence, pain bids me make my weariness public, and the discretion which is owed to your worth bids me cover it. Your beauty demands what hope denies; reason demands from hope what your worth denies; faith encourages me, what you deserve disencourages me, thought dares, understanding fears, memory wearies me, will assails me, desire deceives me and love encourages me so that I lose heart. Oh, love, there is no reason which in your irrationality can find no highest reason in its opposites! And since with your irrationality you deny me what by reason of your laws you promise, with this reason I have to love my lady Poliandria, to set you up and couple you with the reason that you continually lack, the counsel that you deny in my disease I want to demand from my wise and faithful servant Sigeril, since he is free from you, he may perchance give me better counsel than the one I lack. I would, therefore, call him. (Translated by the author)[75]

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dos en aquellos verdes prados que suelen, cuando han dado fin a su jornada. Sempronio: Deja, señor, esos rodeos, deja esas poesías, que no es habla conveniente la que a todos no es común, la que todos no participan, la que pocos entienden. Di 'aunque se ponga el sol' y sabrán todos lo que dices. Y come alguna conserva con que tanto espacio de tiempo te sostengas' (Lobera et al. eds. 2000: 198; emphasis added).

Mabbe does not translate the rest of the original paragraph, which says: 'Say, "although the sun sets" and everybody will know what you are saying. And eat some preserve to sustain you all this time' (translated by the author).

[75] 'iAy de mí!, que la pena me manda dezir y la razón callar, el dolor publicar mi fatiga y el comedimiento que a tu valor se deve encubrilla. Tu

Whereas de Silva exacerbates the stylistic exuberance of Calisto in his character Felides (like Calisto, a young aristocrat who's fallen madly in love), Cervantes criticises and mocks this style in the opening paragraphs of *El Quijote*, in which he describes the reasons for Alonso Quijano's disease: his reading frenzy or 'locura de la lectura', inspired by — among others — a surfeit of de Silva's overblown rhetoric:

You shall therefore wit, that this Gentleman aboue named, the spirts that he was idle (which was the longer part of the yeere) did apply himselfe wholly to the reading of bookes of Knight-hood, and with such gusts and delights, as he almost wholly neglected the exercise of hunting, yea and the very administration of his household affaires: and his curiosity and folly came to that passe, that he made away many acres of arable land to buy him bookes of that kind; and therefore he brought to his house as many as euer he could get of that subiect: and among them all, none pleased him better then those, which famous *Felician of Silua* composed. For the smoothnesse of his prose, which now and then some intricate sentence meddled, seemed to him peerflesse; and principally when he did read the courtings of letters of challenge, and Knights sent to Ladies, or one to another; where, in many places he found written the reason of the unreasonablenesse, which against my reason is wrought, doth so weaken my reason, as with all reason I

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hermosura pide lo que niega esperanca; razón della me demanda lo que niega tu valor; fe me esfuerca, tu merecer me desmaya, el pensamiento osa, el entender teme, la memoria me fatiga, la voluntad me congoxa, el desseo m'engana y el amor me esfuerca para mas me quitar el esfuerco. iOh amor, que no hay razón que en tu sinrazón no tenga mayor razón en sus contrarios! Y pues tu me niegas con tus sinrazones lo que en razón de tus leyes prometes, con la razón que yo tengo para amar a mi senora Poliandria, para ponerte a ti y casarte con la razón que en tí contino falta, el consejo que tu niegas en mi mal quiero pedir a mi sabio y fiel criado Sigeril, podra ser que, como libre de tí, pueda mejor dar consejo en el que a mí me falta. Por tanto quierole llamar' (Silva, Baranda, ed. 1988: 114).

doe iustly complaine on your beauty. And also when he read
the high Heauens, which with your divinity doe fortifie your
diuinely with the starres, and make you deserueresse of the
deserts that your Greatnesse deserues, &c. With these and
other such passages the poore Gentleman grew distracted,
and was breaking his braines day and night, to vnderstand
and vnbowell their senses. An endlesse labour: for euen Ar-
istotle himselfe would not understand them, though he were
againe resuscitated onely for that purpose. […] In resolu-
tion, he plunged himselfe so deepely in his reading of these
bookes, as he spent many times in the Lecture of them whole
dayes and nights; and in the end, through his little sleepe and
much reading, he dryed vp his braines in such sort, as he
lost wholly his iudgement. His fantasie was filled with those
things he read, of enchantments, quarrels, battels, challeng-
es, wounds, wooings, loues, tempests, and other impossible
follies. And these toyes did so firmely possesse his imag-
ination with an infallible opinion, that all that Machina of
dreamed inuentions which he read was true, as he accounted
no History in the world to be so certaine and sincere as they
were.[76] (Shelton, trans. 1620: 2–4; emphasis added)

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[76] 'Es, pues, de saber, que este sobredicho hidalgo, los ratos que estaba
ocioso — que eran los mas del año — se daba a leer libros de caballería
con tanta afición y gusto, que olvidó casi de todo punto el ejercicio de la
caza, y aun la administración de su hacienda; y llegó a tanto su curiosidad
y desatino en esto, que vendió muchas hanegas de tierra de sembradura
para comprar libros de caballerías en que leer, y así, llevó a su casa to-
dos cuanto pudo haber dellos; y de todos, ningunos le parecían tan bien
como los que compuso el famoso Feliciano de Silva, porque la claridad
de su prosa y aquellas entricadas razones suyas le parecían de perlas, y
mas cuando llegaba a leer aquellos requiebros y cartas de desafíos, donde
en muchas partes hallaba escrito: La razón de la sinrazón que a mi razón
se hace, de tal manera mi razón enflaquece, que con razón me quejo de la
vuestra fermosura. Y tambien cuando leía: . los altos cielos que de vuestra
divinidad divinamente con las estrellas os fortifican, y os hacen merecedora
del merecimiento que merece la vuestra grandeza. Con estas razones perdía
el pobre caballero el juicio, y desvelabase por entenderlas y desentranarles
el sentido, que no se lo sacara nil as entendiera el mesmo Aristóteles, si re-
sucitara para sólo ello. […] En resolución, el se enfrascó tanto en su letura,

A direct reading of these texts illustrates this genealogy, and the implicit presence in literary texts of these undercurrents whose remote roots lie in more abstract controversies about the nature of language, and its social and subjective dimensions.

La Celestina also prefigures the picaresque by approaching the question of the mercantilization of sex, and of characters who stand on the margins of society but who — with their first-person accounts — parody and mimic the language of self-construction, the values, and the mechanisms that allow for functional individual insertion in normative social structures.

These themes, spanning *La Celestina*, Tudor Interludes, and later on the concerns of the novel as the central genre of modernity, stem from the more profound and abstract epistemological concerns on the nature of language and signification, the nature and internal structure of the early modern self (and its formation through the textual mediation of poetry and fiction), its insertion in a type of community based on linguistic interaction (i.e. rhetorical consensus), and the creation of a body of legal texts based on rhetorical and legal consensus (including the role of the affects).

que se le pasaban las noches leyendo de claro en claro, y los días de turbio en turbio; y así, del poco dormir y del mucho leer se le secó el cerebro, de manera que vino a perder el juicio. Llenósele la fantasía de todo aquello que leía en los libros, así de encantamientos como de pendencias, batallas, desafíos, heridas, requiebros, amores, tormentas y disparates imposibles; y asentósele de tal modo en la imaginación que era verdad toda aquella maquina de aquellas sonadas sonadas invenciones que leía, que para el no había otra historia mas cierta en el mundo' (Cervantes, Riquer, ed. 1980: I.1.34–35).

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