

# Ars et methodus

Philipp Melanchthon's  
Humanist concept of philosophy



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Edited by  
Herman J. Selderhuis

In Co-operation with  
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Bruce Gordon (New Haven), Barbara Mahlmann-Bauer (Bern),  
Tarald Rasmussen (Oslo), Violet Soen (Leuven),  
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Sandra Bihlmaier

## **Ars et methodus**

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# 1. Introduction

The present study inquires into Philipp Melanchthon's concept of philosophy and its underlying universal concept of method (*methodus*).<sup>1</sup> Melanchthon reinterprets concepts taken from the rhetorical-dialectical tradition of the Renaissance and merges them with Ciceronian and Stoic assumptions on logic and theological presuppositions in his endeavor to elaborate a method which can integrate all branches of human knowledge into one philosophical discipline. This study will focus on Melanchthon's elaboration of a universal methodical precept throughout his subsequent works of dialectic and rhetoric. It shows how doctrines of formal logic, dialectical argumentation, and rhetoric status theory are integrated into a pedagogical and philosophical project of developing a method of appropriate interpretation and of knowledge organization, applicable to all fields of knowledge. It provides a detailed account of how this concept has emerged and how it shaped Melanchthon's understanding of philosophy.

## 1.1 Reading the Renaissance Text

In his *Oration on Philosophy* (1536), Melanchthon writes:

I have set up an oration in which I shall demonstrate that the Church has need of liberal education, and not only of knowledge of grammar but also of the skill of many other

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1 To avoid ambiguities, in this chapter, I will refer to Melanchthon's concept of method, specifically to the hermeneutical instrument Melanchthon had developed for the reading and generating of spoken and written discourse. Critical reasoning and the defiance of authority have contributed to what I call modern philosophical "method" and which, thus, claims to depart from the Melanchthonian notion of *methodus* which is dependent on Ancient authorities. I use the notion of methodology to refer to the manner in which Renaissance and early-modern texts are to be read, and how concepts employed in them, like "philosophy", "method", "truth" employed in them are to be understood. I have rendered all Greek words in Latin transcription for the sake of simplicity, by also omitting all diacritical signs. I have reproduced the Greek *Ypsilon* by "u" or "y", depending on the Latin loan words containing these letters.

arts and of philosophy. Since we have established this, even if other subjects present themselves for discussion, good minds must nevertheless give attention mainly and most zealously to the purpose of applying their studies to supporting and honoring the Church. [...] This reason must encourage and incite us most to strive, with the greatest exertion of our minds, for perfect knowledge, from which some benefit of the state or the Church may derive. Indeed, for us professors no oration on another subject is worthier [...]. Therefore I said that one kind of philosophy has to be chosen which has as little as possible of sophistry and which preserves the true method; the teaching of Aristotle is of that kind.<sup>2</sup>

The cited fragment offers a glimpse into Philipp Melanchthon's self-understanding and his view on the nature and the scope of philosophical study. The theological and political relevance of philosophy and the important part the professor plays in conveying this discipline are stated rather straight-forwardly. Clarity and order are singled out as properties of the philosophy to be taught ("little as possible of sophistry and which preserves true method"). At the face of it, there is no difficulty in understanding what Melanchthon believes that philosophy, as a discipline, should aim at and, if only briefly stated above, how it should be taught. From a modern point of view, however, endowed with the benefit of hindsight regarding the development of philosophical traditions and a different concept of philosophy and rules of philosophical reflection, this fragment raises questions considering Melanchthon's (from today's standpoint) rather unfamiliar view on philosophy. It is common knowledge that modernity has claimed the right to autonomous philosophizing<sup>3</sup> and denied the role played by philosophy as the handmaiden of theology. Also, it claimed to have burst the institutionalized teaching tradition and having renewed the practice of philosophy from without. Modern philosophers might agree with the contention that philosophy is to be practiced by means of true "method". However, modern philosophical inquiry, claims to be everything but Aristotelian. In fact, the modern endeavor is to replace Aristotelianism, or any other philosophical tradition relying on authority with the "method of reason", i. e., critical reflection and reasoning.<sup>4</sup> If at all, Melanchthon's view on philosophy seems pre-modern,

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2 *De Phil.*, 126–130.

3 The reflections of Descartes are, of course, singled out as representative for this "turn towards modernity": *Disc.*, 119: "Thus, it is custom and example that persuade us, rather than any certain knowledge. And yet a majority vote is worthless as a proof of truths that are at all difficult to discover; for a single man is much more likely to hit upon them than a group of people. I was, then, unable to choose anyone whose opinions struck me as preferable to those of all others, and I found myself as it were forced to become my own guide."

4 Descartes aims to replace the doctrine of the syllogism and logic in general (he refers to the *Ars Magna* of Raymond Lull) with a set of simple rules guiding his reasoning in the examinations of subject matters and determining his reasoning only to accept what appears most clear and distinct and deduce afterwards all other matters from these. See *Disc.*, 119–122.

deeply entrenched into theological and pedagogical tradition and committed to the authority of Aristotle.

Thus, some difficulties arise as result of a first reading of the brief excerpt cited above.

1. First of all, there is the problem of the text itself. The fragment seems rather straight-forward but does not itself reveal, e. g., why it takes for granted that philosophy should serve theological and political affairs. Second, it implies a disciplinary status of philosophy which is not further explained. Third, it employs a concept of “method” seemingly familiar but claims to extract it from the works of Aristotle.
2. Second, familiarity with the texts themselves and their genre (orations on various disciplines in the humanist tradition of the sixteenth century) does not immediately disclose the relevance and role of this text in the time’s cultural setting and its philosophical value, especially if the modern reader is deeply entrenched into her own views on philosophy. A degree of strangeness seems to characterize the text above which requires further contextual information, different from just the acknowledgment of the customariness of this genre of writing.
3. Third, the reading and the interpretation of the text will implicitly affect the exposition of the views which it allegedly purports. So, the modern reader tends to dismiss it as un-philosophical and pre-modern if she wants to interpret it by comparison with the contemporary understanding of philosophy and by assuming it to be the “advanced” one.

The current study aims at adopting a manner of reading and interpretation which tries to understand the views of the various works it draws on, on their own terms. As will become clear from the following, this does not mean that I have found a way to dismiss the bias that inevitably infuse every confrontation with unfamiliar texts. Rather, the present work represents a historical anatomy which complements the argumentative (taken in the broadest sense possible) analysis of the textual corpus and its different narratives. That is why I believe it is important to briefly summarize the current debate which concerns the way one should read and analyze early modern texts. There is no actual thematization taking place about the interpretation of Renaissance texts. The methodological observations are mainly concerned with early modern textual material. The difficulty in reading Renaissance works has often been emphasized without any attempt to suggest helpful interpretative precepts. I nevertheless think that there is a lot to gain from the current debates of early modern scholars in the reading of Renaissance texts. I will show below what and how I am integrating some of their suggestions in my own reading and interpretation of Philipp Melanchthon’s *opera philosophica*.

In the third part of the chapter I refer directly to scholars who have regarded Melanchthon as philosopher (not just as a theologian or Humanist teacher) and on which current scholarship is building on again. I suggest that it is crucial that a valuable literature which concerns particular historical, philosophical, pedagogical and theological aspects of Melanchthon's works be brought to the attention of the current debate, despite the fact that the authors of this literature have worked within a different methodological paradigm. This does not relativize their research. It rather offers great opportunities to inquire into the pre-suppositions for the doctrines they are attributing to Philipp Melanchthon. Thus, it complements their perspectives. I also show that rereading Melanchthon's and Renaissance texts altogether determines a rethinking of what philosophy means (as discipline, method and practice) as well as an understanding of what previous thinkers thought a philosopher was to do. Thus, I briefly compare two different ways of approaching philosophy of the (distant) past: one that tries to do justice to the comprehension of the historical figure, the other that is deeply influenced by recent developments in the history of philosophy. At the end of the chapter I give an outline of the methodological precepts I am drawing on in the current analysis. I will also summarize the structure of the study by briefly pointing to the main thematic aspects of the chapters.

## 1.2 Historians of philosophy and their methodologies

The current debate concerning the methodology employed in early modern philosophy focuses on overcoming the dichotomy between two approaches to philosophical texts of the past defended by early modern scholars. The rational reconstruction of past texts with the purpose of coming to terms with contemporary philosophical problems is contrasted with the specifically historical inquiry into the contexts of philosophical discourses, which attempts to achieve an interpretation of the texts closest to their actual meaning and purpose, independent of their usefulness for present-day philosophical issues. These two tendencies belong to what the authors of the Volume *Philosophy and Its History* edited by Morgen Laerke, Justin E. Smith and Eric Schliesser and published 2013 call the "appropriationist" and the "contextualist" approach to past philosophical texts.<sup>5</sup> A third genre, aware of the historicity of philosophical theories and called the "heritagist" stance by Stefan Hessbrüggen-Walter, does not focus on recovering the past philosopher's own world, but uses the past theory to make sense of the present state of affairs, in a way that resembles "appropriationism". Although the aim of the volume is to gather different methodological approaches

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<sup>5</sup> Laerke, Smith and Schliesser, 2013.

and to put them into a “critical conversation with each other”, it merely revives, to a great extent, the problems that have already been put forward by Rorty, Schneewind and Skinner in their coedited volume: *History in Philosophy*, published in 1984. However, by reiterating those problems that have been preoccupying historians of philosophy for the past 50 years, the editors point to a central and persistent concern of the philosopher of early modern thought: the search for the most appropriate instruments that do justice to both the historical context as well as to the relevance of historical arguments for problems in philosophy characterized by their historical continuity. Richard Rorty had assigned this assumption of continuity to the genre of *Geistesgeschichte*, the genre which indicates which questions are to be regarded as philosophical, giving philosophy its honorific use by constructing and changing canons of philosophical figures and problems. *Geistesgeschichte* can be identified with what has been called above the “heritagist” approach. It synthesizes, according to Rorty, the historical and the rational reconstructive approaches (the “appropriationist” and the “contextualist”) being both self-justificatory and self-conscious. In Rorty’s words:

*Geistesgeschichte* wants to keep us aware of the fact that we are still en route – that the dramatic narrative it offers us is to be continued by our descendants. When it is fully self-conscious it wonders whether all the issues discussed so far may not have been part of the contingent arrangement of earlier times.<sup>6</sup>

I don’t think that we can doubt the fact that in a way, we definitely are “en route”: the history of the transmission of concepts, doctrines and practices and their continuous transformations evinces the continuity of our “story”. But more often than not, external elements constitute the fundamental developing framework for particular ideas which sprout and develop or remain rather unfruitful until later reconsiderations or complete extinction. These elements shape the way ideas are transmitted, thus offering manifold possibilities for the form and the method of manifestations of such ideas. An inquiry into these elements is advocated by the “contextualist” approach.

This approach has been recently revived not only by means of the fruitful articles of the volume *Philosophy and Its History*, mentioned above, but also by Conal Condren, Ian Hunter and Stephen Gaukroger in their volume *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe*<sup>7</sup>, published in 2006. Their methodology, which is briefly summarized in the introduction of the volume, is taken up and extensively explicated in Ian Hunter’s paper: “The History of Philosophy and the Persona of the Philosopher”<sup>8</sup>. Hunter’s central thesis is that accounts of past

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6 Rorty, 1984, 61.

7 See Condren, Gaukroger and Hunter “Introduction”, 2006, 1–16.

8 Hunter, 2007, 571–600.

philosophies should be treated as objects of historical investigation and not, as current practice dictates, as manifestations of human knowledge which is based on quasi-transcendental structures and which only a philosophical method is able to recover. He charges Rorty, Skinner and MacIntyre with only replacing the concept of historical context with concepts like “paradigm”, “knowledge communities”, “speech acts”, “social practices” etc.<sup>9</sup> Hunter claims, all of the mentioned authors continue to treat these concepts as a feature of quasi-transcendent structures of human reason which become intelligible only with the aid of philosophical-historical mediation. Thus, Hunter highlights the difficulties which arise with a particular employment of the notion of context. Instead of approaching philosophical texts with a philosophical method, assuming that philosophy, as expression of reason, must always inform the method of description itself, Hunter intends to develop a less philosophical and more historical conception of philosophical contexts, “not as quasi-transcendent structures with internal objects, but as ensembles of cognitive and ethical arts maintained in particular institutional settings”<sup>10</sup>. The assumption is that philosophies share no essential or continuously evolving form and must be described instead of terms of the cultivation of diverse philosophical arts, methods, cognitive techniques, ethical exercises, in particular historical contexts and that they are tied to interests and objectives arising in particular historical circumstances.<sup>11</sup> Condren’s, Gaukroger and Hunter’s proposal consists of the possibility that philosophy might be identical to the activities that have been deemed philosophical by their authors

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9 Hunter emphasizes the importance of the author’s intention, as argued by Quentin Skinner in his programmatic article “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas” (1969). The paper was published afterwards in “Vision of Politics” (2002), as part of an extensive engagement with adjunct arguments, responses to various objection and supplementary explanations concerning the “contextualism” Skinner is advocating. There, Skinner gives a fine-grained presentation of his integration of Austin’s speech act theory into the interpretation of early modern texts: “I have been arguing that texts are acts, so that the process of understanding them requires us, as in the case of all voluntary acts, to recover the intentions embodied in their performance. But this is not the mysterious empathetic process that old-fashioned hermeneutics may lead us to believe. For acts are in turn texts: they embody intersubjective meanings that we can hope to read off.” (120). In contrast to Skinner, Hunter’s methodological concept of the “philosophical Persona” does not focus on linguistic performatives, interpreted as conditions of beliefs that belong to a network of beliefs and which can be interpreted holistically. The “Philosophical Persona” represents a specific kind of self, pedagogically holding together an ensemble of rather loose assemblages of intellectual arts (doctrines, modes of proof, logico-rhetorical techniques, ethico-cognitive exercises, experimental apparatus *and* also speech-acts). The persona is introduced in opposition to the philosophical concept of the subject of knowledge. (Hunter, 2007, 583)

10 Hunter, 2007, 574.

11 *Ibid.*, 575.

regardless of whether to modern eyes these activities resemble post-Kantian epistemology and regardless of whether they look more like theology, poetry polemics or natural sciences.<sup>12</sup>

As observed above, all the presented methodological positions mainly focus on early modern philosophy which, as the canon has it, begins at the earliest with Francis Bacon and Galileo Galilei. By doing so, they of course question the fact that past theories can be employed unproblematically in buttressing present philosophical solutions to present philosophical problems. However, as Hessbrüggen-Walter has pointed out, even when trying to break methodological and interpretative boundaries by allowing disciplines like history, archeology or anthropology to productively infuse reflections on how to read past texts best, authors seem to always rely on what they regard as early modern philosophy. Thus, the only way of raising awareness about this inherited selection of authors and problems is to insist, as Richard Rorty had already pointed out and as Vermeir puts it, on

the full richness of the practice of philosophy as a subject matter, including practices of philosophizing (writing, reading, acting, philosophical engagement in the world) institutions, social structures, material culture.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, the rather vague character of such a concept as “context” remains a problem since there is, as Walter-Hessbrüggen has observed, an intrinsic decisionistic element in picking out what exactly should be treated as context and how it is argued that it has made an impact on specific texts, practices and habits of past figures.<sup>14</sup> I do not believe that any appropriate approach can avoid the endeavor of considering the contextual dimension of the way concepts and theories are formed and transmitted. This endeavor cannot be ignored if the intention of the historian of philosophy is to better understand the texts he is dealing with. By context I mean both historical and social aspects as well as intentional and programmatic elements which, are interconnected, and which give a more thorough account of why and how philosophy has been conceived, discussed and transmitted in the Renaissance and early modern period. This likely applies to all philosophies no matter the century they were conceived in.

A volume doing justice to an extensive range of historical, social and cultural aspects of the activity of philosophizing in the Renaissance is Heinrich C. Kuhn’s “Philosophie der Renaissance”<sup>15</sup>. Kuhn organizes his volume in “contexts”, entitling the chapters with names of places (cities) in, around, and in relation to

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12 Condren, Gaukroger and Hunter, 2006, 5.

13 Vermeir, 2013, 56.

14 Walter-Hessbrüggen, 2013, 144.

15 Kuhn, 2014.

which philosophical and cultural activities broadly understood developed. Next to the names he places a particular year which serves as terminus a quo for the presented contextual narrative. While he does not offer a detailed inquiry into how philosophers should read philosophical texts, the structure and narratives which he employs to introduce the reader into Renaissance thought testify and buttress Kuhn's project. His aim is to facilitate the transmission of the breadth, richness and diversity and also the contingency of Renaissance Philosophy and to excite the curiosity, interest and enthusiasm of the reader for further research. Kuhn believes that the main obstacle standing in the way of the reader of Renaissance texts is the blatant lack of familiarity of the problems treated in those texts and their reliance on a heritage of traditions which presupposes intensive reading and research in order to be overcome. In his Introduction to the volume he says:

Viele der philosophischen Texte der Renaissance sind durchaus geprägt davon dass sie Texte in einer und für eine Zeit großer Veränderungen sind, aber sie reagieren auf die Veränderungen ihrer Zeit und sind daher kaum auf Veränderungen unserer Zeit übertragbar.<sup>16</sup>

While we may encounter little problems in reading and understanding Descartes's *Discourse*, Kuhn thinks that texts such as Gregor Reisch's *Margherita Philosophica* confront readers who lack specific background knowledge with insuperable obstacles regarding the understanding of the text. Philipp Melanchthon's works are not less challenging to the modern reader. In the following, I will try to familiarize the reader with the Humanist's writings.

### 1.3 Melanchthon as philosopher and his conception of philosophy

It has only been in recent years that Philipp Melanchthon has been receiving attention from historians of philosophy from within traditions on either side of the Atlantic. That, is, of course, if we do not take into account the two great German scholars who have singled out important aspects of Melanchthon's philosophical doctrine and practice. Deeply entrenched into the narratives of Geistesgeschichte, both Dilthey and Gadamer emphasize the foundational character of Melanchthon's views, having created two important traditions of thought thereafter: the stoically infused theory of natural right and the rhetorically grounded tradition of hermeneutics. Wilhelm Dilthey's detailed historical documentation into the possible sources of Stoicism in Melanchthon's textbooks and Hans-Georg Gadamer's analysis of his rhetorical works represent the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 10.

foundation on which part of recent scholarship has drawn in exploring aspects of Melanchthon's oeuvre in greater detail.

Dilthey's inquiry aims at reconstructing the manner in which Melanchthon sets the stage for subjective understanding of truth, thus confining the criteria of certainty to man's intellectual powers. This is the philosophical turn which places Melanchthon, in Dilthey's view, between the old philosophers and their medieval transmission, and the natural law system of the seventeenth century:

Verfolgt man die allmähliche Ausbildung der Lehre von einem unveränderlichen natürlichen System von Wahrheiten im Geiste des Menschen, sucht man den alten Schriftsteller, insbesondere der römischen Philosophie und der von ihr bedingten Tradition, in diesem Vorgang festzustellen: so muß man bei Melanchthon verweilen. Denn Melanchthon ist für Deutschland das Mittelglied, welches die alten Philosophen und deren Tradition in den mittelalterlichen Schriftstellern verbindet mit dem natürlichen System des 17. Jahrhunderts.<sup>17</sup>

What Dilthey had started and what has been left dormant for almost a century, Günter Frank has taken up and complemented with a study on the theological presuppositions for such an optimistic view on man. He has shown that Melanchthon's Neoplatonic and Stoic theory of the natural light is complemented by a theological anthropology. The God-likeness of the human intellect allows man to acquire truth by intellectually participating in the mind of God. By uncovering the Pauline theological assumptions of Melanchthon's anthropology which refer directly to the extent of the *similitudo* that man shares with God<sup>18</sup>, Frank clearly demonstrates how intertwined theology and philosophy are in Melanchthon's thought. Moreover, Frank's analysis testifies to the philosophical views arising from a productive interplay of Reformed theological and classical philosophical thought. While Frank emphasizes the internal argumentative topics of Melanchthon's view on man, Sachiko Kusukawa stresses the historical presuppositions of the origin and elaboration of Melanchthon's philosophical textbooks, while insisting on the theologico-philosophical doctrine of providence<sup>19</sup>. Her contextualist approach offers valuable insight into the manner in which Melanchthon integrated and distilled Lutheran precepts in his philosophical writings, and his purpose of conceiving them the way he did. I will go into a more detailed analysis of Frank's and Kusukawa's claims in the second and third chapters of this study.

The pedagogical dimension which, according to the view of the historians of philosophy, ultimately leads to a fully-fledged theory of textual interpretation is stressed by Gadamer in a manner which, I believe, has only recently been

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17 Dilthey, 1986, 226–227.

18 Frank, 1995, 104–108.

19 Kusukawa, 1995.

properly acknowledged. What started as an effort to systematize the precepts of eloquence and teach them to the arts faculty student turned into a means not only of producing orations, but above all, of reading and understanding classical texts:

Noch charakteristischer aber ist, daß Melanchthon den eigentlichen Nutzen der Rhetorik, der klassischen ars bene dicendi, geradezu darin sah, daß die jungen Leute die ars bene legendi, das heißt die Fähigkeit, Reden, längere Disputationen und vor allem Bücher und Texte aufzufassen und zu beurteilen, nicht entbehren können.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, according to Gadamer, Melanchthon turns from rhetorics to hermeneutics without being aware that he becomes the founder of a new tradition which will take on various forms of manifestations in the centuries to come. The kinship between rhetorics and dialectics which Melanchthon professes and which he subordinates to a general concept of rationality hints at the understanding of logic (in a sense comprising all forms of argumentation) a natural, universal human capacity of understanding and discoursing. This, as Gadamer points out, and as Melanchthon and his humanist peers never tired to emphasize:

[...] hat aber eine andere wichtige Seite, die von dem Begriff der Techne aus nicht recht sichtbar wird: die Ablösung der 'reinen Kunst' von den natürlichen und gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen der alltäglichen Praxis ist in beiden Fällen nur im beschränkten Umfang möglich. Im Falle der Rhetorik bedeutet das, daß losgelöst von Naturanlage und natürlicher Übung das bloße Regelwissen als solches und seine Einlernung nicht zu wirklicher Beredsamkeit verhilft, und es heißt auch umgekehrt, daß die bloße Kunstfertigkeit der Rede, wenn sie keinen angemessenen Inhalt besitzt, leere Sophistik bleibt.<sup>21</sup>

Here Gadamer hints at the ethically and politically-oriented character of Humanist literature altogether and the Humanist's stress on the *vita activa*. This dimension can only be understood if historical and socio-political circumstances are taken into account, besides the intellectual revolution of the "Humanist Learning".

Joachim Knappe draws on Gadamer's interpretation and offers a complementary analysis on Melanchthon's early rhetoric which he had written in Tübingen (published in 1519). Knappe reconstructs in detail Melanchthon's hermeneutical method of the elaboration of *loci communes*, which, as Gadamer had remarked, is part of the universal capacity of man to understand and be able to inquire into the written word. Needless to say, while developing this rhetorical method of interpretation and pairing it with the *desiderata* of universal intelligibility and thus with the art of dialectic and its natural origins, Melanchthon philosophized while elaborating a pedagogically and theologically motivated

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20 Gadamer, 1976, 8.

21 Ibid, 17.

concept of *methodus*. This has been tackled by authors like Gilbert<sup>22</sup>, Risse<sup>23</sup>, Mack<sup>24</sup>, and Kusakawa<sup>25</sup> and will also be the core subject of the present study.

I have singled out some of the recent authors who have dealt with Melanchthon's various philosophical writings and who have acknowledged the works of Dilthey and Gadamer. While the latter did not find it difficult to subordinate Melanchthon's reflections on anthropology, metalogic, dialectic, rhetoric etc. to the tradition of philosophical thought, in the late twentieth century historians of philosophy have rarely included Melanchthon in their philosophical canon. Dilthey's assertion that although Melanchthon had not been a creative thinker he belongs to the most underestimated historical figures has not necessarily determined posterity to give his influence the deserved credit:

Melanchthon gehört zu den von der Nachwelt meist unterschätzten Personen, welche ohne schöpferischen Vermögen doch eine unermeßliche Wirksamkeit zu entfalten vermocht haben.<sup>26</sup>

The richness and diversity of knowledge which Melanchthon tried to gather together and write about in his life-long teaching career puts philosophically trained readers into a difficult position. Suddenly, as a consequence of the Melanchthonian project, all branches of knowledge, however loosely bound and organized, seem to belong to philosophy. The challenge of doing justice to Melanchthon's universalistic concept of philosophy has been taken up again in recent times. The volume edited by Günter Frank and Felix Mundt, *Der Philosoph Melanchthon*<sup>27</sup> published 2012, is one of the attempts to integrate the various disciplines which have employed Melanchthon's time and engagement. The book brings together enquiries into Melanchthon's understanding and writings on ethics, dialectics, rhetorics, psychology, poetry, and pictorial art. Of the enumerated topics, only ethics seems to directly relate to one of the branches of the discipline we today refer to as philosophy (next to metaphysics and epistemology). Thus, it is reassuring and also helpful that Günter Frank prepares the reader for the volume's thematically focused articles by means of an introduction which displays Melanchthon's understanding of philosophy<sup>28</sup>. Melanchthon holds an encyclopedic view on philosophy as a subject which, as he sees it, is constituted of the seven liberal arts to which poetry and history are added. However unfamiliar this enumeration of different disciplines put together under the concept of

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22 Gilbert, 1960.

23 Risse, 1964, 121.

24 Mack, 1993, 320–333.

25 Kusakawa, 1997, 337–354.

26 Dilthey, 1986, 227.

27 Frank and Mundt, 2012.

28 Frank, 2012, 1–10.

philosophy might appear from a post-Kantian vantage point, focused on epistemological problems and a critical method of inquiring into the conditions of knowledge, this was a common view shared by most Renaissance authors. Melanchthon, however, in contrast to most of his contemporaries, strikingly excludes one discipline which today belongs to the philosophical canon: metaphysics. He remains faithful to this concept of philosophy throughout his career and dedicates his textbooks to subjects such as ethics, physics, and psychology and to methodical concerns regarding learning and organizing philosophical knowledge. I believe that this has been encountered as a difficulty by historians of philosophy who, as Richard Rorty had remarked over 20 years ago, “like to see the history of our race as a long conversational interchange” in order to reassure themselves of the rational progress that has been made in the course of recorded history and had to confront themselves with writings of Melanchthon or of his contemporaries. The “strangeness” of Melanchthon’s view on philosophy does not necessarily deny that he was engaged in important philosophical conversations of his time, but it does testify to our set expectations regarding the nature of rational progress and its historical unfolding. And, to our requirements of how such a conversational interchange should be conducted. A rather unproblematic conversation with Melanchthon seems, at least at times, unfeasible.

The definition and organization of philosophical knowledge is only one peculiar element which seems to deviate from today’s understanding of philosophy and its subdivisions. Another is the fact that, as the articles in the volume edited by Frank and Mundt testify, most of the philosophical sources they rely on are pupil-oriented textbooks, orations in praise of various arts and sciences and epistles. They incorporate various ancient, medieval and contemporary doctrines and they instruct with regard to already given theories, fitting them to assumed presuppositions rather than attempting a fully-fledged problematization of the conditions of true knowledge. Even when the texts refer to the conditions of knowledge, the inquiry is everything but critical in a Kantian sense. This authority-dependent and often theologically infused problematization of the self- and its relation to the world- and to God has lead historians of philosophy who rely on a well-defined concept of philosophy to question and ultimately deny any philosophical relevance. Robert Pasnau, who dedicates his thorough analysis to metaphysical themes between the thirteenth and the seventeenth century considers a definite canon of philosophers and of philosophical problems when he remarks:

Consider for instance the so-called Renaissance humanism. It is perhaps too much to say that there is no philosophy in authors like Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino, but one can at least say that if this sort of work had become the model for post-scholastic thought, then philosophy would have become something very different. The same might be said, a century later, for authors ranging from Giordano

Bruno to Michel de Montaigne. Montaigne's *Apology for Raimond Sebond* is a famous landmark for post-scholastic skeptical thought. It is not, however, a work of philosophy. Montaigne, in his free-wheeling way, does from time to time cross over recognizable philosophical ground, but his way of proceeding is utterly unphilosophical, free of any argumentation or conceptual analysis.<sup>29</sup>

His brief assessment to Renaissance humanism and the authors who are categorized as creators of *belle lettres* relies on a definition of philosophy which not only includes rational argumentation and conceptual analysis among other essential features, but is a product of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, despite the fact that figures such as Descartes and Locke having of course been referred to as the forefathers of the purported philosophical concept<sup>30</sup>. Pasnau seems to be aware of the heritage attached to our present conception of philosophy. And he points to its contingency while nevertheless buttressing this specific understanding of philosophy. Thus, Pasnau relies on a canon of philosophical texts, problems and authors which excludes Renaissance authors and their intellectual endeavors. His understanding of philosophy contrasts the one implied by Frank and Mundt in their attempt to do justice to all the aspects of Melanchthonian thought.

The treatises of René Descartes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz or Immanuel Kant do indeed seem closer to contemporary understanding of how philosophical reflection is undertaken, in part because their works have been presented to us as paradigmatic for an understanding of philosophy which shapes the way we think about it today, and also because the time in which they have done so is nearer to ours. Regarding, however, poetry or rhetoric as part of philosophy is not only at variance with rational, logically guided argumentation, which we today regard as necessary conditions for philosophical reflection, but also with an assumed and integrated disciplinary system which strictly separates the fine arts from philosophy<sup>31</sup>. Thus, an encounter with the writings of a scholar neither sharing our definition of philosophy and its settled branches, nor the methods and ends of philosophical activities, is deemed philosophically unfruitful. His writings might, however, require different methods of interpretation rather than the reading off them our modern understanding of philosophy with the aid of rational reconstruction. His texts might unveil insightful philosophical consid-

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29 Pasnau, 2013, 92.

30 On how historical figures are being turned into fathers of philosophical traditions and embedded into great narratives of philosophical family networks in which they figure as the common ancestors see Kolesnik-Antoine's paper on the mechanisms of canon-construction in nineteenth-century France: "Is the History of Philosophy a Family Affair? The examples of Malebranche and Locke in the Cousinian School", 2013, 159–178.

31 On the historical development of the grouping together of the fine arts and their bestowing with philosophical principles thus guaranteeing their unity see Kristeller, 1980, 119–228.

erations which do not seem straight-forward when sought after at the level of the meaning of single utterances or fragments. This possibility is directly related to methodological issues involved in reading and interpreting historical texts, especially if these texts have been written against the background of a collection of practices, institutions, social structures and a material culture completely foreign to the reader. Early modern authors like Descartes, Hobbes and Galileo are, as I said above, considered to be closer to us chronologically, and thus easily understandable in their philosophical debates. It is noteworthy, however, that the methodological discussions concerning past philosophers and their works take into consideration especially these authors, which one is inclined to take as vouchsafing our own philosophical commitments. Part of the reason is that, while acknowledging the distance to ancient or medieval philosophy, the reader believes to share the early modern views on how philosophy is thought of and practiced. It has become clear over the last 20 years of intense research in intellectual history that he does not.

I believe that the debate concerning methodology in Renaissance philosophy still has to be properly kindled in order to stimulate fruitful debates on the nature of Renaissance thought and its relation to medieval, early modern or contemporary philosophy. What counts as philosophy and what does not should, in my opinion, take more heed of what has been regarded as such in the circles of the intellectual elites we deal with in our analysis of past philosophical texts. Thus, texts of canonical philosophers can be read as participating in institutional, social and intellectual commitments with lesser known or even unknown actors. The latter might have taken the same or the opposite stance to the philosopher's doctrine. A better knowledge of the "obscure" figures implies a better understanding of both the context as well as of the possible intention and impact of the canonical texts. It must be sufficiently clear by now that contextual analysis, understood in its broadest sense, is a necessary hermeneutic tool in the hand of the historian of early modern and Renaissance philosophy. This means that historians of philosophy take an interest in the way things once hung together, but, it does not mean, in Justin Smith's words, that they should be seen as "relativists". Neither does it mean that they believe that that "anything goes" in the historical investigation of philosophical truth, but only, that they aim at different registers of truths<sup>32</sup>. These truths define the answers to questions like: What did the past philosophers argue against/for? What did they deem philosophy to be? Why did they hold that particular philosophical stance? And how much of what they believed to be philosophy has been transmitted or transformed by their pupils, followers, by generations to come and by the assessment of other, later philosophers? It is, of course, a group of historical truths that allow

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32 Smith, 2013, 41.

us to inquire into the way “things once hung together”, about answers, actions and reactions to debates in history that might contain insightful philosophical lessons. There is a story to be told, and I strongly believe with the “contextualist” group that the story has been shaped by the authors and their intentions, transmitted in and by means of institutional settings, social structures and in given historical circumstances. All these contextual elements contributed in turn to the manner of transmission and form of manifestation of the particular philosophical theories and practices, and they should be taken into account if the particular philosophy is to be understood. I also believe that acute inquiry into what past philosophers thought they were doing when practicing philosophy and what they were intending to obtain thereby does not exclude the possibility of displaying their arguments or judging them by professional standards. I think that until we have recovered the meaning of the work, there can only be arguing which ignores the texts rather than focusing on the texts. Challenging Rorty<sup>33</sup> and agreeing with Ursula Goldenbaum<sup>34</sup> I think we have to grasp the meaning of the text before checking its truth. As Julie Klein has pointed out, there is no way of reading texts without already being committed to prior modes of thinking which we have inherited from past philosophers<sup>35</sup>. Texts which do not reflect those modes tend to get easily ignored or assimilated. And the categories of *epoch-entypische Problemfelder* of the sort Stephan Otto is suggesting for use, and among which he identifies problems like “language, history, ethics, physics, method” are, as I see them, only helpful as long as we do not perceive them as having a transcendent character which defines them as a part of the group of universal problems with a history of their own.

#### 1.4 Method, material and aim of study

My inquiry into Melanchthon’s works is only possible because most of his works including some of his letters have been preserved, collected and edited by Karl Brettschneider and Heinrich Bindseil in the *Corpus Reformatorum*. Also my work relies on Robert Stupperich’s student editions, Heinz Scheible’s critical edition of Melanchthon’s letters, as well as on sixteenth century extant prints which have not been integrated into the *Corpus Reformatorum* but are available for reading in the European Melanchthon Academy in Bretten<sup>36</sup>. My interest lies in the his-

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33 Rorty, 1984, 53, note 1.

34 Goldenbaum, 2013, 73.

35 Klein, 2013, 157.

36 The first collection of Melanchthonian works was a five volume edition that appeared 1541 in Basel. Afterwards, Caspar Peucer, Melanchthon’s son in law, also prompted a completed version of the 1541 edition in the 1560s. The project of a collective edition of Melanchthon’s

torical and systematical development of the Melanchthonian concept of method and its relevance for his understanding of philosophy. Thus, the reconstruction of these views presupposes a familiarity with the Melanchthonian philosophy, as a project of institutional, pedagogical and conceptual reform. This project is entrenched in a particular historical and social context and dependent on a series of assumptions, prejudices, inherited intellectual frameworks, and subjected to continuous revisions and elaborations. My own analysis assumes a series of historical presuppositions and relies on precious historical research undertaken by Renaissance and Reformation Scholars for the general setting of the Melanchthonian project. While it takes for granted the results of this historical research which constitutes the background against which the Melanchthonian project has been developed, it does not lose sight of the connection of the pedagogical and philosophical reform Melanchton is undertaking to the actual historical and institutional setting. Melanchthon's works, which are all meant for a broad public of pupils, teachers, politicians, and only to a lesser extent for the erudite "outsiders", can only be read against this broad institutional and socio-historical background. A great obstacle to be overcome in this endeavour is that of paying attention to as many works of the German Humanist as possible. Since his oeuvre is hardly an easily assessable in one, I hope that, by inquiring in

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works has only been resumed by the preliminary studies of Georg Theodor Strobel and Johannes Dretzer in the nineteenth century. The latter only managed to edit the first volume, the *Loci Theologici summa cura ac diligentia postremum recogniti et aucti, item Appendix disputationis de coniugio ad editionem per Joan. Oporinum Basileae an. MDLXI factam denuo editi*, ab J. A. D. Erlangen 1828. A year later, Friedrich August Koethe announced an edition of *Melanchthons Werke* in six volumes. The Church administrator Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider was asked for advice concerning editorial aspects of some of Luther's works by publisher Carl August Schwetschke from Halle, in 1827. As a response, Bretschneider elaborated a detailed plan for a collective edition of the works and letters of Luther, Melanchthon, Calvin and Zwingli. Thus the first volume of the *Corpus Reformatorum* (CR) appeared in 1848 and after Bretschneider died, the Halle librarian, Heinrich Ernest Bindseil continued the general superintendent's work. He kept up the publication of the *Corpus Reformatorum* starting with the sixteenth volume and finalizing the edition on the three-hundredth anniversary of Melanchthon (1860). The *Corpus Reformatorum* is, however, not complete. Various Melanchthonian works were not included and the plan of the Society of Reformation History (of the *Supplementa Melanchthoniana*), meant to add some of Melanchthon's works to the *Corpus Reformatorum*, also failed at the beginning of the twentieth century when the project was denied necessary funding. Robert Stupperich edited an independent student edition consisting of nine volumes and some of the works not extant in the *Corpus Reformatorum*. The only critical edition of Melanchthonian works that takes heed of the necessary hermeneutic and historiographical requirements is, however, that of Melanchthon's correspondence, edited and commented by Heinz Scheible. I am thankful to Professor Günter Frank for this valuable information about the history of the various publications of Melanchthon's works which was a part of the preliminary work on a planned edition of Melanchthon's philosophical works. I have not been able to find any other detailed research on this topic in recent scholarship.

greater detail into his editions of dialectic and rhetoric, as well as by looking at his philosophical works, I can provide a more thorough insight into the features of Melanchthon's understanding of dialectic, rhetoric, method and philosophy and the conceptual transformations which this understanding entails. The material which I have selected for this limited undertaking are the three most important editions of his dialectic and rhetoric respectively; I am also considering his late works on ethics, psychology and natural philosophy, as well as some of the orations he writes on the need to reform the liberal arts studies, on the praise of eloquence, and on philosophy. My study aims at complementing Günter Frank's detailed analysis of the theological and metaphysical presuppositions of Melanchthon's philosophy. It works out the relevance of Melanchthon's method which I believe to be the key instrument in shaping a particular concept of philosophy as incorporating universal knowledge. These reflections on the essential constituents of philosophical knowledge present a peculiar ideal of the philosopher, or, as Hunter puts it, of the "philosophical persona": the persona of the polymath. Thus, the second chapter of this study scans the traditions which have influenced Melanchthon's own doctrines most. Since the *Praeceptor Germaniae* has read and wrote more than I could possibly have done in the past three years of my research, the main strands of thought that he has integrated and reinterpreted in his textbooks can only be illustrated briefly and by means of a meager outline. I will, nevertheless, point to the doctrines which I believe to represent the pivots of his notion of man, philosophical knowledge, and method. The third chapter constitutes the core of the present study. It takes under close considerations the reinterpretations and reconceptualization that Melanchthon has undertaken of notions like *dialectic*, *rhetoric*, *demonstration*, *method* and *topos*. By giving an elaborate description and reconstruction of each of Melanchthon's textbooks on dialectic and rhetoric. I show that he selects central concepts of ancient and medieval logic as well as essential tenets of Humanist dialectic, and that he merges them in an attempt to construct a rigorous and all-encompassing instrument of textual interpretation and knowledge-organization. I will refute some historiographical and systematical claims and endorse others, thus aiming at presenting a more detailed and thorough interpretation of the Melanchthonian reform of the trivial arts. The fourth chapter will inquire into the fundamental role that Melanchthonian method plays for other branches of philosophy, like moral and natural philosophy. I will re-emphasize here the philosophical presuppositions which Melanchthon adds to his elaboration of *dialectic-as-method* and argue that they represent the basic principles on which all branches of human knowledge are systematically structured. My conclusions will, finally, entail a brief summary of the presented and argued topics.



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## 2. On fathers and grandfathers: Melanchthon's heritage of dialectic

### 2.1 Philipp Melanchthon: A Renaissance Humanist

All teaching and all intellectual learning that involves the use of reason proceeds from pre-existent knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Of all the various forms of appreciation of philosophy, pertaining to the history of European thought, the understanding of philosophy in Renaissance Humanism was the one most explicitly committed to the previous knowledge it rested upon. So much so that its philosophical discourse promoted the recovery of ancient thought as its primary goal. Ancient thought was employed in tackling practical problems in the European daily agenda: problems in internal politics, foreign affairs, economics, jurisprudence, cultural and educational policy. Renaissance Humanists, a part of the learned inhabitants of various European regions in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, differed in two substantial respects from their peers, who remained committed to the Scholastic tradition indebted to the developments of the High Middle Ages: they were to a great extent obsessed with the recovery and publication of ancient texts and they were convinced that the doctrines dug out of these texts should be employed both in speculating about and in the handling of public affairs.<sup>2</sup> However, the intellectual elite of the Renaissance shared not only a strong institutional affiliation with their medieval

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1 *An. Post.*:71a1–2.

2 For a detailed analysis of the meaning, the representatives and the historical development of Renaissance Humanism as well as its influence on scholarly practice and on philosophy see Kristeller, 1990, 113–138; On the reassessment of Kristeller's approach and the appraisal of "radical Humanism" the way it has been put forward by thinkers like Petrarca and Valla and their new historiographical and hermeneutic methods see Fubini, 2006, 128–136; On the fundamental difference between the understanding of philosophy in medieval art faculties and among Renaissance Humanists, with an emphasis on the different autonomies conferred to philosophy by the so-called "Averroists" on the one side, and Petrarca on the other, see Hankins, 2007, 30–48; On the Humanist's criticism of and their reform of scholastic dialectic from the standpoint of the employment of natural language and classical Latin see Perreiah, 1982, 3–22.

forerunners and their contemporaries, but also, as is the case with most Humanists of Northern Europe, the same textbooks and commentaries, the same educational background, notwithstanding their differences. Thus, while striving to rely on ancient knowledge and scorning the technicalities of philosophical academic discourse the already existing knowledge that the Humanist implicitly draw on is recent and scholastic in nature. It is the knowledge they have been acquiring for the past centuries that composes the curricula of the artistic and higher faculties in universities. Even the harshest critiques of scholastic philosophy could not make their intellectual heritage simply disappear. Thus, Humanist projects are cultivated against the intellectual developments of scholastic teaching even while implicitly drawing from them.

By the time Philipp Melanchthon successfully graduated as master from the artistic faculty in Tübingen, the Humanist turmoil had reached Northern Europe and, through his closest teachers and friends, it had reached Melanchthon himself.<sup>3</sup> The curricula on which Melanchthon and his peers draw and which, in Tübingen, Melanchthon had to keep to in his own teaching as an arts graduate was molded on the Aristotelian logical, natural philosophical and metaphysical works. Introductory works meant to aid in the teaching practice were also used: the *Summa naturalium Alberti*, for example, as a manual for the introduction to natural philosophy, or the *Summulae Logicales* of Peter of Spain for the logic course.<sup>4</sup> While Melanchthon does not mention the former in his own works, the *Summulae Logicales* becomes a reference work in his later textbook on dialectic. The old quadrivial disciplines were scarcely taught. Johannes Stöfler who taught mathematics was not a member of the faculty. Heinrich Bebel, was also directly subordinated to the university and taught the *studia humaniora* somewhat parallel to the *libri ordinarie legendi*.<sup>5</sup> This is the body of knowledge which Melanchthon deemed unsatisfactory for proper teaching. In a letter to Johannes Reuchlin written the same year as the writings mentioned above (1518), he confesses his eagerness to leave Tübingen, the workhouse (*ergasterium*) in which he feels he is becoming a child again, being among children (*repuerasco inter pueros*).<sup>6</sup> The canon of the subjects and books to be taught in Tübingen is an

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3 On the influence of Johannes Reuchlin on Melanchthon's education and his professorship offer received by Frederick the Wise, see Karl Hartfelder, 1889, 56–61; Wilhelm Maurer, 1996, 14–44. See also Melanchthon's and Reuchlin's Letter exchange from July 1518 see MBW, T1, 19 and 20, 66–69.

4 Lorenz, 2010, 732. In his reference (note 37) Lorenz adds that the *Commentaria in Summam physice Alberti Magni*, (Hagenau, 1507) emerged from the teaching practice at Tübingen. Lorenz does not give any direct evidence that Melanchthon had actually used this work, he only refers the reader to the statutes of the artistic faculty at Tübingen: For the exact statutes see Roth, 1877, 320–375.

5 Ibid., 738.

6 MBW, T1, 19, 66.

inheritance of the aristotelization of the university curricula in the thirteenth century. In the wake of the recovery of the Aristotelian corpus, the scattered translations of Boethius and Cicero, the isolated works of authors like Ptolemy, Euclid and Galen, and the many Jewish and Arab translations were reinterpreted to fit an Aristotelian systematization of sciences, and the arts faculty became a philosophical faculty.<sup>7</sup>

One of the chief texts that has been used to support Melanchthon's Aristotelianism<sup>8</sup> is the epilogue of his grammar (published while Melanchthon was still in Tübingen<sup>9</sup>) where Melanchthon reveals his intentions to restore the Aristotelian oeuvre (*ad instauranda Aristotelica*). In it, Melanchthon declares the intention to challenge this project together with other learned men like Willibald Pirckheimer, Georg Simler and Wolfgang Hagenau. He believes that what had been written until then of Aristotle among the Germans had strayed very far from the philosopher's works themselves.<sup>10</sup> In the foreword of the same edition, which Melanchthon had written as a letter to Bernardus Maurus two months earlier, he had uttered the intention to "renew" Greek philosophy.<sup>11</sup> In the inaugural speech he holds in Wittenberg in the autumn of 1518, Melanchthon elaborates on his intention of this "renewal" of the language arts. What he calls the "cleansing" of Aristotle (*Aristoteli purgando socias manus adiicerem*) he defines in terms of the reinterpretation of elements belonging to Aristotelian philosophy and their teaching.<sup>12</sup> This will become clear from the detailed inquiry into his speech which I undertake below. Günter Frank has dedicated much attention to this intent of "renewal" and "purification" of Aristotelianism. He claims that Melanchthon's project consists in a pedagogical reinterpretation of Aristotelian works, both

7 Lohr, 1982, 86–87.

8 For a brief summary of the scholarship's dominant view see Günter Frank, 2011, 51–72.

9 The work was printed at the Anshelmian printing house where Melanchthon had started to work as an assistant, as soon as he was matriculated in Tübingen. Heiko Oberman argues that the Humanist program was especially endorsed by the staff of lectores gathered around Anshelm's printing shop in Oberman, 1981, 19. Maurer, 1996, 30.

10 CR 1: 26 and MBW, T1, 16, 64: "Nam quae in Aristotelem hactenus apud Germanos scripta sunt, a nescio quibus veluti in stipem emendicata, adeo non referunt Aristotelem, ut indignum sit nobile *peri paton* in hos rapsodos incidisse. Habemus ceu subsidiarios laboris huius nostri clarissimos Germaniae viros, *Capnionem*, decus nostrum, *Bilibaldum Pirckheimer*, *Georgium Simler*, *Wolfgangum Hagenoum*, *Ioannem Icolampadium*, omnes externarum quoque literarum adsertores, *Franciscum* tem *Stadianum*, ut ingenio ad omnia studia habili, ita iudicio accurato et incredibili diligentia in philosophorum sententiis excutiendis."

11 MBW, T1, 16, 63.

12 CR 11, 20: "Ad haec male precatus nugis, obnixe a me contendit, Aristoteli purgando socias manus adiicerem: Conaturum omnia sese pro viribus, uti artium elementa vindicta Barbarorum liberaretur. Primi nominis studia, a sordibus recipi non posse, nisi purgatis adulescentiae rudimentis." This intention of "cleansing" the Aristotelian interpretations and thus freeing the elements of the arts from their barbarous confinement.

against doctrines belonging to other Greek and Roman authors, as well as along the lines of a Humanist method of interpretation and disposition.<sup>13</sup> His thesis is grounded on an inquiry into both the structure that Melanchthon employs in the construction of his philosophical and theological teachings, and the various philosophical sources which the German Humanist relies on in the elaboration of his conceptual apparatus.<sup>14</sup> His thesis refutes the claim of scholars like Wilhelm Maurer, Heinz Scheible, Hans-Rüdiger Schwab, and Heiko Obermann that Melanchthon had intended to publish a new, "purified" edition of Aristotle's works.<sup>15</sup> Frank argues convincingly, that not only is an actual rendering of Aristotle's intentions and views an unattainable desideratum of hermeneutics, but that Melanchthon, in his own textbooks, relied on an almost finalized Humanist endeavor of providing new translations and interpretations of the Greek works.<sup>16</sup> Frank argues that Melanchthon is neither interested in editing a new translation of Aristotle, along Humanist philological lines, nor is he committed to producing further commentaries as paraphrases or detailed explications of each book and every argument which he finds in the translations he works with.<sup>17</sup> Rather, Melanchthon intends to interpret the Aristotelian philosophy "anhand ihrer Hauptpunkte (loci praecipui), und zwar unter einer pragmatischen Perspektive, also in ihrer Anwendbarkeit auf das Leben."<sup>18</sup> Melanchthon repeatedly emphasizes that he follows the doctrine of Aristotle in his textbooks.<sup>19</sup> However, his method of interpretation and display, i. e. his conceptual apparatus, his theological presuppositions and the structure he imposes on his teachings testify to the integration of various, (1) philosophical (ancient, medieval and contemporary) and (2) theological considerations, as well as (3) to the employment of a method of argumentation and depiction which Melanchthon carves out from a multifarious and rich tradition of dialectical (topical) argumentation. All these aspects have been given detailed attention by recent scholarship in subsequent attempts to provide a clearer picture of Melanchthon's stance towards the literary and theological authorities he acknowledged as such. These assessments also intended to show how various "authorities" determined the structural and substantial outcome of the Melanchthonian oeuvre. In the following, I will give a short overview of the perspectives from which these problems have been dealt

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13 Frank, 2011, 71–72.

14 Frank, 1995, 22–23; Frank, 2001; Frank, 2008, 656–574; Frank, 2012, 71–72; Frank, 2017.

15 Maurer, 1960, 39; Scheible, 1997, 25; Schwab, 1997, 19; Oberman, 1989, 75.

16 A Greek edition of Aristotle had been available since the late 1540s, published in Venice, and various new translations from the Greek were extant, thanks to the assiduous works of Humanists translators like Argyropulos, Bruni, Gaza and others. See Kraye, 1995, 199–202; See also Grafton, 1988, 777–778.

17 Frank, 2012, 71.

18 *Ibid.*, 60.

19 CR 13, 184; CR 13: 178; CR 11, 282.

with in the context of such an overwhelming oeuvre. I will proceed by presenting the scholarship's stance on the above enumerated aspects by means of an artificial analysis. (Since the levels differentiated above are only to be encountered in an interwoven state in the writings of Melanchthon).

### 2.1.1 The question of authority

Philipp Melanchthon shared with some of his peers, a very broad interest in philosophical and theological learning, which, aided by his remarkable knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, facilitated a first-hand confrontation with some of the extant original texts and with both their traditional and more recent Latin translations.<sup>20</sup> Because he was engaged in a process of reforming university teaching at Wittenberg, the references to the works and doctrines he worked with are generous and straight-forward, and have been closely examined by historians and philosophers in their studies on Melanchthon's intellectual allegiance. At the end of the nineteenth century, Wilhelm Dilthey had provided the German Melanchthon scholarship with a very positive image of the Melanchthonian adaptation of Ciceronian tenets, by attributing to Melanchthon a philosophical "subjective turn". This turn, however uncritical, had placed the origins of knowledge in the human "light" of reason and its inherent truths and thus, had acknowledged, to a certain extent, the autonomy of man's rational capacities.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, although Dilthey praises both Melanchthon's Humanist "freedom of thought" and his appreciation of logical rigour, he attributes to Melanchthon the establishment of a new German Peripatetic school and deplores his failure to integrate new and original reflections into his mainly

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20 On the influence of Greek works, particularly on scientific practices in the Renaissance, and on the rather diminishing importance of the knowledge of Greek during the sixteenth century, see Vivian Nutton, 1993, 15–28. Nutton's paper reveals that a small number of scientifically interested thinkers of the Renaissance actually had extensive knowledge of Greek and that economical considerations inhibited numerous editions of Greek authors such as Galen, Archimedes or Theophrast. The actual analysis of Greek works was left, in the sixteenth century, to the antiquarian, not the scientist (natural philosopher). It is, of course of great relevance for the understanding of the Melanchthonian oeuvre that Philipp Melanchthon was a brilliant Greek scholar and that his interest was dedicated to both the actual works and to their reinterpretation for his own project of school reform.

21 Dilthey, 1986, 240–245. Dilthey writes: "Wenn Descartes in einem auffälligen Zirkel die Sicherheit der ursprünglich im inneren Lichte gegebenen Wahrheiten darauf gründet, daß Gott nicht täuschen kann: so findet sich bei Melanchthon dieselbe Wendung. Dem Standpunkt der Skeptiker gegenüber bleibt schließlich nur die Berufung auf den Willen Gottes, nach welchem im natürlichen Licht und der den Wahrheiten desselben eigenen Evidenz uns eine Führung für das Leben gegeben sein soll." (245)

pedagogical endeavors: "Nur ein neuer Lebensatem ging nicht von ihm aus."<sup>22</sup> Dilthey cautiously explains that Melanchthon's interpretation of Aristotle had, at the same time, presupposed substantial transformations and reconceptualizations along the lines of nominalistic thought, increased interest for natural knowledge and the advent of Reformed theology. Melanchthon, Dilthey thinks, remained faithful to the Aristotelian structure of the logical works and mingled in his ethics, both Aristotelian and Ciceronian views. His books on physics and psychology testify to Aristotelian topics, Stoic panpsychism and Platonic theology. His theory of the soul is deeply influenced by the Platonic theory of ideas and the ethical focus of all his philosophical work is indebted to a Ciceronian influence. So, while Dilthey draws attention to a collection of ancient works and contemporary circumstances that had influenced Melanchthon's own interpretations, ultimately he settles on two authors which had a determining impact on the Melanchthonian oeuvre: Aristotle and Cicero. Dilthey's analysis does not go into the details of Melanchthonian reconceptualization, but his assessment hints on the predominately external factors influencing his work. These essentially amount to (1) philosophical Nominalism, as one of the "ways" in which metaphysics and natural philosophy was taught in Tübingen<sup>23</sup>, (2) the development of new natural perspectives on natural knowledge (e. g. the new anatomical views of Vesalius), and (3) Reformed theology, as brought about by Luther's sweeping political and religious reform. Melanchthon's allegiance to Aristotle and Cicero, is thus, not further inquired into, on the level of concrete conceptualization and structure of the Melanchthonian works. This is shown by the fact that Melanchthon's "Aristotelianism", "Ciceronianism", "Platonism" or, all these tendencies taken as an "eclectic" whole<sup>24</sup> are taken to represent, together with Melanchthon's commitment to theological tenets, the ground for a deeply unphilosophical and unoriginal work. At the end of the nineteenth century Karl Hartfelder, after scanning over the philosophical textbooks of Melanchthon, writes, referring to the textbook on physics:

Wir haben in diesem philosophischen Werke Melanchthons, wie in den andern, keine originale Geistesschöpfung, sondern ein praktisches Handbuch, in dem aristotelische Philosophie für die Bedürfnisse der Zuhörer geschickt zurecht gemacht ist.<sup>25</sup>

Hartfelder insists on the dependency of Melanchthon's views on Aristotle. He explains that, although Melanchthon had not realized his plan of an original edition of Aristotle ("den Plan einer Ausgabe des ganzen Aristoteles im Urtext"),

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22 Ibid., 256.

23 Obermann, 1979, 28–55; Kusakawa, 1995, 7–26.

24 A review of the German scholarship of the twentieth century on Melanchthon's integration of philosophical doctrines is given in Frank: 1995, 15–16.

25 Hartfelder, 1889, 246.

he extracts paragraphs from Aristotle and works them over in his textbooks which only distinguish themselves through their clarity and common sense.<sup>26</sup> Hartfelder believes that Melanchthon had followed Aristotle in his doctrine, except where the philosopher was contradicting the tenets of Reformed religion. The main difference between Melanchthon's interpretation of Aristotle and that of his scholastic forerunners constitutes the fact that, Melanchthon was interested in the thoughts of Aristotle himself ("die Gedanken des Aristoteles selbst"). Thus, the authority of Aristotle becomes decisive, Hartfelder writes, and Melanchthon takes no heed at hiding this fact: both scientific rigour and positions are taken from the Stagirite.<sup>27</sup> The pedagogical collection of excerpts along Aristotelian and theological lines, eventually led, according to Hartfelder, to a marginalization of Aristotelian philosophy altogether:

[...] Melanchthon, der Schöpfer des humanistisch-evangelischen Aristotelismus, der glückliche Erneuerer der peripatetischen Philosophie, hat, ohne es zu wollen, den Anlaß gegeben, daß Aristoteles selbst bald wieder weniger gelesen wurde Seine geschickten Kompendien genügten vielen Lernenden in den Grade, daß ein Verlangen nach dem griechischen Texte sich nicht regte.<sup>28</sup>

Regarding Melanchthon's own interpretation of dialectic, Hartfelder emphasizes that Melanchthon's plan was to reproduce the pure Aristotelian doctrine ("die reine Lehre des Aristoteles") and had only taken notice of the observations of Boethius and Alexander of Aphrodisias, and not of the various scholastic commentaries. Also, while integrating Agricolan and Erasmian thought in his book on topics, the fact that Melanchthon gives priority to the matter dealt with by Aristotle is again insisted upon:

Ferner ist Melanchthon mit Agricola einig in der hohen Wertschätzung des Aristoteles, Quintilian und Cicero; nur dürfte Melanchthon inhaltlich noch mehr von Aristoteles abhängen.<sup>29</sup>

In Hartfelder's view, Melanchthon had not only renewed Aristotelianism, and at the same time secured its downfall, but he had done it in a systematic, pedagogical manner, which made him the teacher of Germany, but, then again, it didn't make him a philosopher: "Melanchthon war eben kein Philosoph, sondern Praeceptor Germaniae".<sup>30</sup>

An attempt to provide a more contextualized view on the Melanchthonian inheritance and allegiance of philosophical authorities is rendered by Quirinius Breen in the middle of the twentieth century. In a paper dedicated to Melanch-

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26 Ibid., 248.

27 Ibid., 246–249.

28 Ibid., 249.

29 Ibid., 218–219.

30 Ibid., 220.

thon's conception of the *loci communes* he works out the Melanchthonian commitment to Cicero's view on man as a prominently social being, the orator's conception of probable knowledge and his understanding of the *loci* as places of arguments. Breen singles out Melanchthon's dependency on the Roman rhetorician in the development of the Humanist's theory of dialectic and its application in his theological writings:

The more widely one reads in his writings the more one realizes that both by training and by predilection Melanchthon is a rhetorician.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast to Hartfelder, Breen claims that, by accepting and praising the Aristotelian view on certain knowledge, and, at the same time, by interpreting Aristotle in a rhetorical fashion, Melanchthon "saved Aristotle under the veil of eloquence and the arts belonging to it [eloquence]."<sup>32</sup> And, thus, he permitted Aristotle to be studied on a par with theological matters. This had led, according to Breen, in the aftermath of Melanchthonian theology, to a reintegration of Aristotle in the theological field, by "a generation that knows him better."<sup>33</sup> It is perhaps necessary to remark that both Hartfelder and Breen are correct in their assessment of the development of Aristotelianism after Melanchthon's death. Inside of many of the Lutheran universities, Aristotle was being reintroduced in a modified form, taught in a very systematic and didactic manner, and refocused towards metaphysical themes.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century also were a period of latent struggle with authorities, especially undertaken by *gentlemen* doing philosophy as a liberal art, i. e. as leisure activity.<sup>35</sup> Neither Hartfelder nor Breen have (or could have) captured the whole picture of Melanchthon's allegiance. The fact that they can bring forth arguments for their claims, testifies to the broadness of the Melanchthonian engagement with the philosophical canon of his time. However, when providing the context of Melanchthon's reception of Aristotelianism, Breen argues in a convincing

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31 Breen, 1947, 207.

32 *Ibid.*, 1947, 209.

33 *Ibid.*

34 On the development of Lutheran metaphysics in the aftermath of Melanchthonian thought see Sparrn, 1976 and Leinsle, 1988, 149–161.

35 Famous examples of early modern philosophers doing philosophy outside university walls are Francis Bacon and René Descartes. Paul-Richard Blum has analyzed philosophical endeavours under the methodological distinction between philosophical philosophy and school philosophy: "Philosophenphilosophie", "Schulphilosophie". The blurred lines between the historical foundations of these abstract categories is indicative for the artificiality of this distinction. For the present study, it is important to keep in mind that, as Blum has put it, a historical reconstruction can only attempt to be a broad generalization of the very complex and colourful case it approaches. See Blum, 1998. An illuminating social history of early modern natural philosophy is provided by Simon and Schaffer, 1985. For a new and convincing analysis of Aristotelianism in the sixteenth and seventeenth century see Martin, 2014.

manner, that Melanchthon, did not focus on “Aristotle himself” or remained completely faithful to any of his doctrines, but did indeed praise and employed Aristotelian views on the grounds of his own convictions regarding the possibility of attaining and securing knowledge. But these convictions are to be understood in their proper relevance only in their relation to divine knowledge, achieved through revelation. In Breen’s words:

To pursue the good and true and beautiful, therefore, cannot in any sense be as important as going to heaven. It has no status in the order of things saved. Therefore they [the arts] have a secondary significance and they are preserved only by obedience. There is no rational justification for them on the plane of being.<sup>36</sup>

I will return to the theological pressuppositions of the Melanchthonian project later. Breen believes that rhetoric and a particular conception of dialectic, as transmitted through Cicero and taken over by Humanists like Agricola and Erasmus, had provided Melanchthon with a perfect homiletical tool. Since he was committed to a Ciceronian anthropology and theory of knowledge, Melanchthon’s endorsement of Aristotle is seen to be a productive misinterpretation.<sup>37</sup> While Hartfelder briefly points to an external context against which Melanchthon reinterprets ancient authors, Breen indicates the regulative power of certain knowledge, which served Melanchthon’s scientific and theological purpose, but he does not elaborate. However, in a paper written later, Breen does offer an insightful inquiry into the Renaissance intellectual framework of Melanchthon’s scholarly work and the manner in which this framework interacted with the religious movement of the Reformation.<sup>38</sup> Still, he endorses his earlier view that both Calvin and Melanchthon, applied in their Scriptural interpretation instruments of textual analysis developed because of their commitment to a theory of argumentation from probable knowledge. It was Aristotle interpreted as a “Ciceronian” that had influenced their understanding of hermeneutics. Certain knowledge remained regulative only to be secured by means of revelation.

In contrast to the view that Melanchthon was committed to Aristotle, Wilhelm Maurer argues in favor of a Platonic and Ciceronian infusion in Melanchthon’s philosophical works. Maurer claims that Johannes Reuchlin, (a distant relative and mentor of the young Melanchthon) had acquainted him with a Ficinian brand of Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy. Maurer provides merely a collection of circumstantial knowledge. He depicts the preoccupation of Reuchlin with Stoic, Pythagorean, Platonic, Kabbalistic thought, his indebtedness to the Ficinian Neoplatonic reinterpretation of Plato and thus, also, to the Platonic flavor of Aristotelianism which had been transmitted by the commentaries and

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36 Breen, 1947, 207.

37 *Ibid.*, 207–209.

38 Breen, 1960, 1–14.

treatises of the Middle Ages. Maurer insists on the favorable attitude towards Ficino on the side of Melanchthon's mentors at Heidelberg and Tübingen, and of, course, on the theological context in which Platonism was more positively evaluated than the Aristotelian tenets.<sup>39</sup> This historical assessment definitely describes the views of some Renaissance authors, anxious to reiterate Platonic and Neoplatonic doctrines or to establish a harmony between Plato, Aristotle and other philosophical schools. And while there is no doubt that Ficino's Academy provided the context for the first, the latter project was followed by Renaissance philosophers like Reuchlin and Pico. They believed in a perennial philosophical truth transmitted through the works of the Ancient philosophers, who were seen as essentially agreeing with each other.<sup>40</sup> While Johannes Reuchlin and Pico Della Mirandola might have seen no obstacle in bringing together Christian, Kabbalistic and Hermetic thought, Melanchthon remained committed to a specific canon of perennial philosophy, which was determined by his theological allegiance. This is argued by Gideon Stiening in a detailed inquiry into the philosophical elements of Melanchthon's theory of knowledge.<sup>41</sup> As Volkhard Wels has argued, a Ficinian brand of Platonism was untenable for the Humanists committed to Reformed theology.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, in tackling Melanchthon's own employment of Platonic thought, and thus trying to provide direct references to Platonic works in Melanchthon's texts, Maurer insists on Melanchthon's praise of Plato<sup>43</sup> and his laudatory remarks in his early textbook on rhetoric.<sup>44</sup> I believe that, while Maurer is right in attributing an important role to the Neoplatonic thought present in Melanchthon's oeuvre, the medium of the transmission of this thought is mainly Ciceronian and Stoic, and less Ficinian. This has been endorsed and argued in detail by Günter Frank, both in his assessment of Neoplatonism and in his display of Stoic elements present in the theory of the soul, the theory of knowledge and the theory of mind Melanchthon is putting forth.<sup>45</sup> Frank has focused on two of the most relevant aspects regarding Melanchthon's Neoplatonism. First of all he seeks to show to what extent Melanchthon actually integrates Platonic or Neoplatonic terminology and cosmological, psychological and noological views into his own logical, ethical, anthropological and theological textbooks. (I am referring here to Melanchthon's subsequent editions of

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39 Maurer, 1996, 84–98.

40 On the tradition of the *philosophia perennis* in the Renaissance see Schmitt, 1966, 505–532 and Schmidt-Biggemann, 1998.

41 Stiening, 1999, 761–779.

42 Wels, 2007, 81–104.

43 CR 11, 413–425.

44 See chapter 3.3.2.8. below.

45 Frank, 2001, 3–18; Frank, 2008, 549–574.

his *Loci theologici*<sup>46</sup>). This is shown in great detail in his extensive work in the theological philosophy of Philipp Melanchthon.<sup>47</sup> The fundamental aspects which have been given a Platonic polish by Melanchthon are the philosophical doctrine of creation, of the natural world, the philosophical notion of God and, of course, the theory of the rational soul.<sup>48</sup> The first two have been reiterated by Frank in a later paper, in which he tackles the question which had preoccupied Maurer: what is the source of Melanchthon's Neoplatonism? This is the second crucial aspect which concern Melanchthon's indebtedness to Neoplatonic thought. Since Frank, who probably has the greatest expertise concerning the entire Melanchthonian oeuvre, agrees with the scholarly assessment that Maurer's arguments have been rather artificial, he is anxious to inquire into other possible sources, besides Cicero, that could have been available to Melanchthon and might have influenced his work. This endeavour determines him to emphasize two interesting points of departure for further historical study of Platonic tradition in the German Renaissance: one is the *Platonis Omnia Opera*, an edition composed by Melanchthon's friend Simon Grynaeus (1493–1541). "Grynaeus", Frank writes,

used not only fragments of Cicero, Plutarch and Ficino for his edition but also undiscovered manuscripts. Melanchthon expressly praised Grynaeus for his edition of Plato's writings in a letter of November 1534.<sup>49</sup>

A second very interesting fact is that there is a copy of Grynaeus's edition, extant at the monastery of Erfurt which has Melanchthon's own remarks on its pages. These however, are still in need in closer examination.<sup>50</sup> While Plato is often directly referred to, in a Neoplatonic, Ciceronian manner, more often than not, Melanchthon employs concepts like "ideas", "natural light", "common notions" without directly naming any authority in particular. It has also been pointed out, by Dilthey, and more recently by scholars like Gilbert, Salatowsky, Stiening, Mundt, and Frank<sup>51</sup> that the Stoical theory of cognition, was essentially received

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46 On an analysis of the different editions and the context of the publication of Melanchthon's theological commonplaces see Pauck: 1969, 3–17. See also Eusterschulte: 2012, 11–45, compare note 560.

47 Frank, 1995.

48 See also Bellucci, 1998, 59–62.

49 Frank, 2001, 18.

50 Ibid.

51 Neal Gilbert believes that Melanchthon's theory of knowledge constructed around the belief that there are ingrafted truths in the human intellect is to be traced back to Galenic and Euclidian thought. He offers a convincing picture of the Stoic notion of "art" which, transmitted by Cicero, Quintilian, Lucian and Hermogenes enjoys a fabulous career in the Renaissance. See Gilbert, 1960, 69–71 and his chapter on Melanchthon: 125–128. In his analysis of Melanchthon's theory of the rational soul Salatowsky takes up Stiening's (1999) and Frank's

by Melanchthon mediated through Cicero, Augustine, Galen, Plutarch, and possibly Diogenes. This theory has informed his own view of the acquisition and systematization of human knowledge, and might have, as I suggest in the third chapter of my study, influenced Melanchthon's rigorous view on the art of dialectic. The aspects emphasized subsequently and with different intensity by Melanchthon and Renaissance scholars provide us with a diversity of attempts to explain the Melanchthonian approach towards philosophical authorities. While Melanchthon relied on the teachings of all the above enumerated philosophical schools, and on other authors who will come up in the course of my analysis, this did not prevent the German Humanist from criticizing various views belonging to these authors. One of the most often criticized philosophies by Melanchthon is Stoic determinism, since it was inconsistent with the Humanist's natural-theological view of the physical world.<sup>52</sup>

Günter Frank and Sachiko Kusakawa have given, in my opinion, the most fruitful manner of approach when it comes to understanding the Melanchthonian works. On the one hand, one should, as Frank claimed, look for the philosophical and theological aspects which prompted the specific integration of philosophical authorities.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, as Kusakawa has pointed out focusing only on natural philosophy, it is important to understand "why Melanchthon chose to write [natural philosophy] as he did", by paying attention to the immediate context in which Melanchthon wrote his works. Kusakawa directs her focus towards the historical context of Melanchthonian philosophy. She gives much attention to the external incitement of the composition of Melanchthon's textbooks. And there is no doubt that the aftermath of the Reformation had caused serious upheaval and had determined an important political, social and also institutional change. The latter had effected a transformation not only of the assessment of the functionality of university teaching, but also in the manner in which a series of reconceptualizations were effected concerning the interpretations of ancient authorities. However, at the level of textbook creation, historical urgency and intellectual allegiance can only be artificially separated and, thus, need to be considered together.

The present study focuses on the manner in which, in a more restricted context – the institutional framework of Wittenberg University at the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation – Philipp Melanchthon's project of the reformation of the language arts and, indirectly of the other liberal arts emerges and develops. This development is traced from Melanchthon's student years in Tübingen to the

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(2001) rendering of Ciceronian mediated Stoicism of Melanchthon. See Salatowsky, 2006, 35–131. See also Mundt, 2012, 151–159.

52 This is elaborately undertaken in Melanchthon's *Initia Doctrinae Physicae*, CR 13, 342.

53 Frank, 1995, 28.

height of his career in Wittenberg. It discloses Melanchthon's endeavor to cope with the challenge of conceiving a new curricula: that of (1) of functionality, i. e. pedagogical success, and (2) philosophical broadness and rigour. Thereby, by taking heed of both Frank's suggestion and, to a more limited extent, of Kusukawa's advice, this study provides a detailed inquiry into the way in which Melanchthon deals with authorities on a conceptual and theoretical level and why he chooses to do so, against the context of institutional transformations. However, the inquiry limits itself to the widely known editions of the language arts, some of the Melanchthonian orations and his most prominent philosophical textbooks. The inquiry is also less focused on the political and social context and more on the conceptual (but of course, implicitly historical) development of Melanchthon's most wide spread textbooks. Still, it takes into account the determining factors in the conception of these textbooks: the pedagogical project, its social and political goals, its theological presuppositions and thus, the cultivation of a particular "brand" of Humanist and encyclopedic type of philosophy.

### 2.1.2 The theological presuppositions

The present study only touches on the relationship between Melanchthon's philosophical views and his commitment to specific theological tenets, insofar as the latter represent assumptions which have an essential bearing on the manner in which the philosophical views are integrated and systematized. Thus, what has been regarded as the "problematic relationship between (Reformed) theology and philosophy" and the bearing of theology on philosophy<sup>54</sup> in the early modern period, will not be tackled, unless it discloses interesting aspects and, at times, what appear to be inconsistencies in the Melanchthonian "propaedeutical" (dialectical and rhetorical) and philosophical works. Kusukawa, as pointed out above, had indeed taken Reformed theological commonplaces like the law/gospel dichotomy, the sola scriptura/sola gratia principle, the emphasis on providence and on worldly obedience under the law, which Luther and his peers did not tire to insist upon, as the determining factors for the substantial and formal com-

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54 Representative for the modes of understanding and defining the concept of early-modern "natural philosophy" and its relationship to theology are the articles of Andrew Cunningham (1991, 377–392) and Edward Grant (2000, 279–298). While the first understands natural philosophy as essentially concerning nature as a divine creation, the latter argues in favour of an assumed separation in the works of late medieval and early modern authors, between theological matters and philosophical inquiries. I believe, that, in the case of Melanchthon's writings, and other Renaissance authors, a clear-cut differentiation cannot be made. I also doubt that such a differentiation would be productive for the quest of gaining insight into the projects of renaissance texts and early modern (natural) philosophers.

position of Melanchthon's works.<sup>55</sup> However, Kusakawa attempts not to delegitimize the status of Melanchthonian natural philosophy, but to explain the endeavors of Melanchthon in the context of a very specific reform projects he is trying to undertake. She demonstrates that natural philosophy was not a clearly defined static concept, but a dynamic one. Margaret Osler describes this concept as going through the processes of appropriation (from previous world-views) and translation (in different fields of expertise).<sup>56</sup> To reformulate it according to Hunter's terminology, Kusakawa's analysis discloses the views and intentions of the philosophical "persona" which promoted a particular "brand" of natural philosophy. Kusakawa writes: "What I have attempted in this study is to understand natural philosophy as a whole, as something with a distinct identity of its own."<sup>57</sup> This is the understanding of philosophy (natural, metaphysical, or of any other focus) which this study is committed to, as has been expressed in detail in the introduction.

Cristoph Meinel supports Kusakawa's claim that the search for a scientific basis, which Melanchthon seeks to provide through his textbooks, represents the attempt to put the precepts of Luther (the locus of wordly obedience and ethical behavior) on solid ground. Melanchthon's natural philosophy furnishes, as determined by its theological assumptions, the scientific ground of ethics and anthropology.<sup>58</sup> His theological convictions indeed shape the manner in which his reflections on man, knowledge and the natural world are further elaborated. However, Melanchthon's theological views (the belief in providence, the limitation of human knowledge, the image of man as a mirror and mediator of the divine) are consistently backed up by philosophical assumptions which are taken from Platonic, Neoplatonic and Stoic thought. And while some are taken for granted and not further reflected upon (like man's access to simple and evident truths), others (like the theory of man, the theory of the origin and structure of sciences, the concept of "method" as a hermeneutical and knowledge-systematizing tool, the reflection on the epistemic importance of language, the emphasis on historical criticism and the understanding of philosophy as an encyclopedia of knowledge) testify to a serious engagement with philosophical problems and

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55 Kusakawa, 1995, 27–74. While regarding the material he integrates into his textbooks, Kusakawa calls Melanchthon's method "eclectic", and the formal structure he employs "pedagogical". She claims that the determining factor of these texts is essentially "Lutheran". Melanchthon's natural philosophy, she writes, was meant to teach "the self-knowledge of the fallen man and the greatness of the Creator". In Frank's, Stiening's and Salatowsky's view, who tackle the Melanchthonian theory of the soul on its conceptual level and disclose the determining theoretical presuppositions, Melanchthon provides a "theologische Anthropologie". Salatowsky (1996, 131) supports the view of the authors discussed above.

56 Osler, 1997, 91–107.

57 Kusakawa, 1995, 5–6.

58 Meinel, 2011, 250–251.

with their elaboration. Frank points out that Melanchthon's philosophy cannot be called "Lutheran", as Kusakawa had claimed, since, on the one side, it concerns problems which have been repeatedly tackled throughout intellectual history and rest on the integration of various philosophical doctrines, and on the other, it explicitly goes against Lutheran anthropology and the Reformer's evaluation of the relevance of philosophy. Clearly, Melanchthon's repeated praise of philosophy, although distinct from, and irrelevant for theological truth, constitutes both a conflicting and a productive part of his "theological philosophy", as Frank calls it. Frank explains that the structuring principle of the law/gospel dichotomy does not turn Melanchthon's natural philosophical tenets into "Lutheran" natural-philosophical views.<sup>59</sup> Frank's systematic approach does not however, invalidate the thesis that the project of Melanchthonian philosophy was developed on the basis of specific theological assumptions and had a very clear pedagogical purpose. These aspects are not contested by Frank, since he himself reveals some of these presuppositions in great detail.<sup>60</sup> Still, Frank's analysis is focused, as mentioned in the previous chapter, on the "spezifischen theologisch-philosophischen Rezeptionsmotiven" which have determined the integration of various philosophical approaches.<sup>61</sup> Thus, he evaluates the Humanist, theological and philosophical context which influenced the Melanchthonian views and inquires into the manner in which the Humanist and Reformer determined a transformation of relevant philosophical and theological concepts and categories.

While I am indebted in my own study to all of the above mentioned works, I show that Melanchthon's project of reforming the language arts and the system of liberal arts as a whole, has not been primarily prompted by the need of inculcating Lutheran tenets. In the course of subsequent socio-political and religious conflicts, Melanchthon did try to harmonize, as much as possible, his theological and his philosophical convictions. On the level of philosophical collation, reinterpretation and conceptualization, however, Melanchthon works with ancient and contemporary doctrines which he merges to the end of reforming the manner in which philosophy is being learned and taught. His Humanist endeavours are expressed publicly prior to his confessional allegiance and to his commitment to Lutheran tenets. That is why, I claim, that even in the face of historical turmoil, Melanchthon maintains his stance towards his initial project of institutional and pedagogical reform at the University of Wittenberg. I believe that prior to being a Lutheran (which does not strike me as a particularly reav-

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59 Frank, 2012, 23–24.

60 The most elaborate exposition of the theology behind Melanchthon's philosophy is Frank, 1995, 185–227. The argument against Kusakawa's assessment is made in his article on Melanchthon's natural philosophy, 2012, 25.

61 Frank, 1995, 28.

eling category), Philipp Melanchthon is a Humanist and, as a brilliant pedagogue, a systematic thinker. These two features determine him to remain faithful to his Humanist allegiance, and to distance himself from some of its manifestations. Melanchthon's elaboration of his (pedagogical, hermetic and organizational) method rests on a tradition of logic of debate developed by Aristotle and transmitted by the thinkers of later Antiquity and Early and High Middle Ages to his forerunners and Humanist peers. Its employment was originally tested in a context of reasoned speech and argumentation practice, being afterwards absorbed by a context of institutionalized debate on the one side, while, on the other side, its theoretical precepts were being relegated to a subordinate branch of logic.<sup>62</sup> This tradition was transformed and employed in textual exegesis when the Humanists's rejection of the Scholastic commentary practice and their teaching of logic became virulent, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Textual exegesis has been put to great theological use and Melanchthon did indeed become, as Gadamer had suggested, the actual forefather of Reformed hermeneutics.<sup>63</sup> It is this Melanchthonian version of the dialectical tradition that I am inquiring into. While Kees Meerhoff has provided the scholarship with useful expositions on the manner in which this has been put to use in the interpretation of scriptural and rhetorical texts<sup>64</sup>, I try to show how Melanchthon managed to set up a collection of rules, an entire art of argumentation, disputation, analysis, interpretation and knowledge-organization on the basis of a series of original reconceptualizations and transformations of different doctrines. My aim is to show how Philipp Melanchthon has put together a fruitful instrument for understanding, producing and organizing textual (and perhaps other than textual) knowledge from scattered parts of the *Organon* which had been intentionally kept separate.

### 2.1.3 The question of method: the transformation of philosophy

Surprisingly, the manner in which Melanchthon conceives, structures and presents his textbooks on the liberal arts (the trivium, physics, ethics and psychology) sparked, among Melanchthon scholars, a debate on the authorities which Melanchthon followed, as presented in 2.1.1 above. Broadly, as Dilthey, Hartfelder and Maurer have shown, Melanchthon borrows Aristotelian topics, interprets them with a Ciceronian flavor and harmonizes them with theological tenets. Barbara Bauer provides an inventory of all the ancient, medieval and

62 Bird, 1962; Leff, 1983; Green-Pedersen, 1984; Ebbesen, 1982.

63 Gadamer, 8.

64 Meerhoff, 1994, 46–62.

contemporary authors Melanchthon refers to in his textbook on physics. On the structure of the books she comments:

Auffällig ist, dass sich Melanchthon in der Gliederung des Lehrstoffs an die Reihenfolge hält, die die Studenten und älteren Kollegen noch as der Sentenzenvorlesung des Petrus Lombardus (gest. um 1160) gewohnt waren.<sup>65</sup>

In the same year, Sachiko Kusukawa writes in her article on what she calls “Lutheran method” – which she identifies with Melanchthon’s concept of method – that the German Humanist’s textbooks had been written in a question-and-answer form that did not “seek knowledge of why certain questions are asked or why those questions ought to be answered in a particular way.”<sup>66</sup> This statement is even more surprising since it comes as a preliminary conclusion to a detailed review of Melanchthon’s textbooks on dialectic. Kusukawa seems to have no answer to the question “why then did Melanchthon consider his loci the best way to teach students?” and is satisfied with a hint at the “catechetical”<sup>67</sup> and dogmatic type of instruction that the loci are facilitating. She deplores the fact that Melanchthon explains nowhere “how to select the loci and why a particular selection of topics is justified.”<sup>68</sup> As a matter of fact, Melanchthon does explain how the loci should be selected and he also elaborates on the fact that a methodical treatment of subject matter is to be found in some exemplary works. He also explains why he believes those works are representative for an appropriate treatment of philosophical subjects. I am referring here to a chapter in Melanchthon’s *De dialectica libri quatuor* (1528), which Kusukawa cites extensively. What is more, Sachiko Kusukawa even explains, appropriately, that Melanchthon believes that some authors treat in their works “the essential points of a given subject” using thereby the questions listed as the method of simple themes. Thus, one can infer that, after having asked these questions, one already attains a preliminary collection of features to be treated under one subject matter. Had Kusukawa given more attention to this method, borrowed from rhetoric, and had she looked at the complementary rhetoric textbooks in which this method is treated, she would have been able to explain the process of textual analysis which is the starting point of Melanchthon’s loci communes method. This method integrates the list of simple themes and topical argumentation and provides therewith the main subjects of an art and the main arguments to be brought forth. It is a method of analysis and interpretation, which brings forth the main topics underlying it, after having been applied on various texts. Guided by this new knowledge, Melanchthon structures his own philosophical textbooks. I will go

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65 Bauer, 1997, 163.

66 Kusukawa, 1997, 351.

67 Schmitt, 1988, 798.

68 Ibid.

into the details of this method in the chapter dedicated to Melanchthon's first edition of rhetoric, the *De Rhetorica Libri Tres* (1519). Had Kusukawa recognized the interpretatory function of the method Melanchthon is working out from different sources, she would have had no problem in explaining why he picks out the specific *loci communes*. The failure to understand the interdependency of Melanchthon's dialectical, rhetorical and philosophical textbooks had driven scholars to treat the Melanchthonian concept of "method" either as a rather misplaced concept arising solely from the late textbooks of Melanchthonian dialectic – as Ong, Risse, Ashworth have done<sup>69</sup> – or, due to the difficulty of consulting so many textbooks, to miss to acknowledge the actual application of Melanchthon's *loci communes* method (which is both dependent on the dialectical rules of analysis as well as on its rhetorical function) in these writings.<sup>70</sup> It is of course difficult to see how all these concepts of doctrine hang together, since Melanchthon's concept of method and his understanding of the *loci* seems to be completely different, at the face of it, from his theory of the *loci communes* presented in his rhetorical works. And also, it is difficult to see how these concepts actually belong to a method of interpretation, textual production and of knowledge organization which becomes the guiding line for the conception of an encyclopedic understanding of philosophy. Günter Frank is the only author that I am aware of who has acquired sufficient insight into the entire Melanchthonian to understand the fundamental scientific status that the theory of dialectic enjoyed, in its Melanchthonian interpretation. In his latest work, he gives what I believe to be the most accurate summary of the manner in which Melanchthon understands the value and function of dialectic:

Für Melanchthon ist die Topik die Wissenschaft schlechthin. Dies wird schon aus seiner jugendlichen Absicht deutlich, die Werke des Aristoteles neu herauszugeben. Was ihm hier vor Augen stand war der Versuch, vor dem Hintergrund einer pragmatisch-persuasiven Perspektive der Dialektik die Hauptpunkte der aristotelischen Philosophie für die Praxis des Lehrens und des Lernens darzulegen. Sichtbar wird diese topische Struktur von Wissenschaft aber auch im äußeren Aufbau seiner wissenschaftlichen Werke.<sup>71</sup>

My study explicates exactly this productive correlation between Melanchthon's understanding of the language arts and their fundamental importance for the

69 Risse, 1967, 82–106; Kuroпка, 2002, 31–40; Pozzo, 2002, 56; Ong 2004, 236–239; Ashworth, 2008.

70 While some of the scholars: Meerhoff, 1994; Meerhoff, 1991; Knape, 1993; Wels, 2001; Kuroпка, 2001; Knape, 2001; Mack, 1993; Mack, 2001 acknowledge Melanchthon's rhetoric as a counterpart of dialectic and insist on the complementary reading of both these textbooks, an integrative reading and an inquiry of the application of Melanchthonian method in his philosophical writings is still lacking.

71 Frank, 2017, 173.

apprehension, organization and transmission of knowledge. Melanchthon's method of textual interpretation and knowledge organization arises from an original reinterpretation of views and theories concerning the manner in which certain knowledge is to be understood, achieved and, above all, transmitted by means of the inescapable medium of speech. An interesting and productive suggestion of this study is that textual hermeneutics is seen, in the context of Melanchthonian writings, as a productive model for the acquisition of knowledge in general. If knowing always involves a process of interpretation, an inquiry is needed into the manner in which thought and speech provide the essential framework for this interpretation. Melanchthon's textbooks can be understood as attempting such an inquiry. The extent to which Melanchthon and some of his peers have such a 'hermeneutic' theory of knowledge acquisition can remain a topic for further research.<sup>72</sup>

## 2.2 Melanchthon between Tübingen and Wittenberg: The seeds of Reform

Melanchthon takes his plan to work on and reestablish the relevance of the seven liberal arts – which he has already displayed in his Tübingen Oration *De artibus liberalibus*<sup>73</sup> – with him when he leaves for Wittenberg, at the request of Frederick the Wise, to become one of the famous Greek professors of the sixteenth century. In his inaugural speech *De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis*, held in August 1518, Melanchthon reveals his program to the students and the university staff. He states both his reason for wanting to reform the university curricula, as well as his understanding of philosophy, its constitutive parts and its great relevance for teaching, learning and acting. This will be the topic of the next section.

Melanchthon's inaugural speech is an admonition to the illustrious teachers and leaders of the Wittenberg University (*Clarissimi viri, Academiae Saxonicae Principes*) to protect the students of the good sciences and arts (*bonis literis*). The main subject of his oration, is, as The Humanist himself explains, the comparison

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72 In her detailed study on the manner in which astrology is evaluated in Melanchthon's Wittenberg, Claudia Brosseder writes: "Als sein weiteres, gleichwohl weniger aussagekräftiger Indiz dafür, dass die Wittenberger ihre Astrologie als eine zutiefst hermeneutische Kunst auffassten, kann gewertet werden, wie sie die Loci Melanchthons verwendeten. Diese leiteten das Auffinden der Deutungen und die Struktur ihrer Horoskopanalysen." I believe that because the astrologers in Wittenberg used the method of the loci developed by Melanchthon in interpreting the stellar signs, they both provided legitimacy for the reading of the heavens as a hermeneutical endeavor, and revealed the far-reaching application of a method originally conceived for interpreting texts.

73 CR 1, 5–14.

between the new and useful work in the arts and sciences, and the one inherited from the Scots and French by the ignorant German forefathers. While the first is attributed to the study of Latin and Greek works, the latter is called barbarous. Melanchthon gives a brief history of decay, in which philosophy, which he identifies with the liberal arts (*humanae disciplinae*)<sup>74</sup>, sinks into oblivion, because of the routine and custom of the professors, who gradually become authorities, of replacing the actual Latin and Greek texts. This has a devastating effect on philosophy and even more so on the interpretation of religious works. The origins of the complicated and useless commentary work of the barbarians are simple and necessary for philosophy and thus, need to be recovered. The domain of the sciences extends to three different fields, logic, physics and ethics.<sup>75</sup> Logic teaches all the powers and the distinctions of speech, which are necessary for introducing the student into the world of study. First, grammar helps the student to grasp (read and write) texts. Dialectic will afterwards aid his judgment in reflecting on the boundaries, origins, kinds and connections of and between things. It will provide the one dealing with any subject whatsoever (*sicubi quid inciderit*) with everything one needs to know about it, in order to hold it, as it were, in readiness, "in order to seize the thoughts of the listeners by means of the art, that they cannot opinate otherwise".<sup>76</sup> Because what some call dialectic and others rhetoric is, to Melanchthon, the same art. Melanchthon regrets having spent seven years on useless dialectical studies<sup>77</sup>, and insists on the importance of recovering the proper usefulness of dialectic, that of "ordering and distinguishing things", which is the prerequisite for every scientific inquiry. Moreover, he claims that the *Posterior Analytics* have been misinterpreted by the scholastic professors as a part of metaphysics, whereas it is nothing but a method of ordering discourse. One of the closest colleagues he had in Tübingen, Franciscus Stadianus, taught on the Aristotelian treatise and Melanchthon remarked on that occasion, how much of the *Posterior Analytics* actually contained Aristotelian rhetoric. At this point Melanchthon remembers having planned together with his friend, to "cleanse" the Aristotelian text, in the sense of freeing the

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74 CR 11, 22.

75 Isidor of Sevilla renders this tripartite division of philosophy in his *Etymologiae*, which prevails for over 2000 years (from the Stoic conception of philosophy to Immanuel Kant's employment of the division); *Etym.* II. XXIV. 3–4: "Philosophiae species tripartita est: una naturalis, quae Graece Physica appellantur, in qua de naturae inquisitione disseritur: altera moralis, quae Graece Ethica dicitur, in qua de moribus agitur: tertia rationalis, quae Graeco vocabulo Logica appellatur, in qua disputatur quemadmodum in rerum causis vel vitae moribus veritas quaeretur. In Physica igitur causa quaerendi, in Ethica ordo vivendi, in Logica ratio intelligendi versatur."

76 CR 11, 18: "[...] et artis adminiculis ita sensus auditorum capias, ut dissentire temere non queant."

77 CR 11, 19.

Aristotelian interpretations from the cavillations of the Scholastic teachers. The only information he further reveals about this project is that he was determined to pursue his plan, and hoped for a fruitful outcome.<sup>78</sup>

Whereas the trivial arts are necessary for the further higher arts, Melanchthon believes that one has to study Latin as well as Greek and Hebrew, so that the things themselves and not their shadows may reveal themselves in the texts of the philosophers, theologians, historians, orators and poets. Philosophy is thus a discipline which relates to natural knowledge, the doctrine of morals and a wide collection of clear historical examples.<sup>79</sup> The sharpening of the mind, through dialectic, and the acquisition of language skills in Latin, Greek and Hebrew permit a true understanding of the religious works and ease the path to the divine.<sup>80</sup> This endeavor to disclose the meaning of the original texts and re-learn the liberal arts may seem difficult, but it should not deter the students from the right path, since as Melanchthon insists, the teachers will be there to guide and lead them through their studies. Aided by the protection of the German dukes, Germany, which had already begun to bloom again through its educational sites, would be able to foster all the best arts and sciences for the scholar's own delight, but also for the interest of posterity.<sup>81</sup> Melanchthon is, thus, planning a sweeping educational reform. He explicitly relies thereupon on the enforcement of both his colleagues as well as his employers. Transformations of educational policies should be, as Melanchthon sees is, on the top of the political agenda of his time.

Melanchthon identifies philosophy with the liberal arts and at the same time situates the language arts as necessary instruments for acquisition of philosophic knowledge which is identified later in his oration with physics, ethics and history. Moreover, these classifications are constantly reorganized and complemented with the various fields of knowledge that fall under them. Thus, mathematics and natural philosophy are seen as belonging together, ethics comprises both historical examples and oratory and poetical illustrations, the higher arts: theology, medicine and jurisprudence drawing on and completing the philosophical studies. The boundaries between the various disciplines seem fluid enough to permit their grouping together under various classes. But they all belong to philosophy, whereas the dialectical and rhetorical skills represent the only pos-

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78 CR 11, 20.

79 CR 11, 23: "Complector ergo Philosophiae nomine, scientiam naturae, morum rationes, et exempla".

80 Ibid.

81 CR 11, 25: "Videor enim videre mihi tacitus aliquot loci refluere Germaniam, planeque moribus et communi hominum sensu mitescere et quasi cicurari, quae Barbaris olim disciplinis effera, nescio quid immane solita est spirare. Proinde locabitur operam, non modo commodo vestro, eoque ad posteros propagando, sed omnino gloriae non intermoriturae Principis omnium consensu optimi, qui nihil adserendis bonis literis habet potius."

sible and accurate instruments for philosophical inquiry. Without them, there would not be any ordered and accurate discourse and all inquiries would stray away from the things which the words should refer to. And this is exactly what Melanchthon holds against scholastic dialectic in his explicit attacks against the followers of philosophers like Aquinas, Scotus and Durandus.<sup>82</sup>

In the present study I shall argue that Philipp Melanchthon remained faithful to his early plan of reforming the philosophical studies, first of all, by means of anchoring them not in famous commentaries, but in the newly available translations.<sup>83</sup> Melanchthon's Humanistic inheritance becomes obvious in the way his own textbooks rely on original texts and avoid any references to the commentary tradition. The textual basis extends towards the end of his career and Melanchthon is careful to increase the number of examples and citations he uses in his manuals. Second, his plan of "renewing Aristotle" or, one may say, "renewing" ancient philosophical doctrines in general, amounts not to a new series of commentaries and paraphrases on the margins of the text, but in completely new interpretations of the key concepts which constitute these texts. Also, it further implies a mapping of these concepts in a highly original manner according to a method (*ars, via, methodus*) he himself develops and which he extracts from the dialectic and rhetoric tradition of Antiquity, the Early Middle Ages and the Renaissance. I inquire into the development of this method from its first employment in the early *De Rhetorica Libri Tres* (1519) to the extended treatment it receives in his mature work of dialectic: *Erotemata Dialectices* (1547). I show that Melanchthon's late dialectic emerges from an original collation of doctrines on forms of reasoning and their practical implications, taken from Aristotle and transmitted by Cicero, Quintilian, the Greek commentators, Boethius, Peter of Spain, and the Humanist works of Lorenzo Valla, Rudolph Agricola, George of Trebizond and others. That is why, the second part of this study is dedicated to the tradition on which Melanchthon relies on. The third part is making both a historiographical as well as a systematic point: it argues that the late Melanchthonian concept of dialectic and method can only be understood when read against its subsequent conceptual transformations undertaken in the previous textbooks of dialectic and rhetoric. Thus, as suggested, I try to show that, against the assessment of the scholarship, Melanchthon's method is a collection of techniques of argumentation and knowledge disposition which appears in a fully-fledged form as early as the very first edition of the so-called *Dalektik-Rhetorik*<sup>84</sup> of 1519. The conception of this method is sparked by the

82 CR11, 17: "Sensim neglectae meliores disciplinae, eruditione Graeca excidimus, omnino pro bonis non bona doceri coepta. Hinc prodire Thomae, Scoti, Durandi, Seraphici, Cherubici, et reliqui proles numerosior Cadmea sobole."

83 On the availability of the ancient works in the Renaissance see Grafton, 1988.

84 Knappe, 1993, 26.

pedagogical project of the German Humanist. Also, I claim that this concept maintains its relevance and use in all the following editions of rhetoric and dialectic. Consequently, a proper understanding of the Melanchthonian reform of the language arts and, in particular, of its methodical core, is possible only if all of the stages of its development are considered. Also, I believe that only by considering the doctrines and concepts which have been reinterpreted and the manner in which they have been given a different meaning and application in the first place, can a thorough account of Melanchthonian dialectic and method be given. Thus, by means of a thorough analysis I show that Melanchthon elaborates a theory of interpretation, argumentation and knowledge organization which draws on the rhetorical theory of the status, the Aristotelian theory of dialectical reasoning, the Aristotelian view on demonstration and Stoic assumptions on logic, as transmitted mainly through the Ciceronian oeuvre. His aim is to provide structured philosophical knowledge to the students confronted with the whole panoply of philosophical material. The present study endeavors to cope with Kees Meerhoff's contention that

it remains to be shown, how, by some isolated suggestions made by Agricola, Melanchthon was able to create an entire hermeneutic system in which the logical theory of the syllogism and the rhetorical theory of the status of case link together.<sup>85</sup>

However, the current analysis does not limit itself to the Agricolan inheritance of Melanchthon but extends to the manner in which various other authors have contributed to the Melanchthonian merge of syllogism and rhetorical status-theory. The fourth part of this study works out the relevance of rhetorical-dialectical method for the Melanchthonian encyclopedic system of philosophy. It shows that the language arts provide the appropriate tool for the interpretation and organization of natural and ethical knowledge. Moreover, the method of dialectic facilitates a better grasp of the theological doctrines, insofar as they can be understood with the aid of reason and its ordering operations. This, however, does not dissolve the tension in Melanchthon's understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Melanchthon teaches a method which structures different branches of knowledge by grounding them on the sources of human cognition and organizing them along topical and rhetorical principles. The universal application of his dialectical method and its rationalist origin is developed to fit the Melanchthonian concept of philosophy and the *persona* of the philosopher this concept is engendering: that of the polymath. However, it is important to notice that the polymath is deeply dependent for his salvation on the divine grace, which he can neither foresee nor bring about. This study ends with a restatement of the essential claims it enforces.

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85 Meerhoff, 1991, 367.

The following section will inquire into the works of the philosophers who have influenced Philipp Melanchthon in a considerable manner. This is why I especially focus on philosophical doctrines which, I believe, played a crucial role for the Melanchthonian project. The exposition will follow the development of the dialectic tradition from its Aristotelian conception to the Renaissance. Needless to say, only a very limited number of authors have been inquired into. I have tried to compensate the focus on a few thinkers with a relatively detailed interpretation of their views. Striking as it may seem, I have left out the notion of dialectic in the Platonic works. I have not encountered any substantial contribution of Plato's dialectic to the Melanchthonian understanding of the concept.

The brief overview sketched below cannot do justice to the complexity of this development in the Middle Ages and will only tackle the elements that constituted the framework for the development of Melanchthonian dialectic. I remain indebted to essential monographies and studies which I will mark as essential for further study and which deal with the various ancient, medieval and early modern interpretations and elaborations on the notion and function of dialectic.

## 2.3 Aristotle's legacy: forms of knowledge and discourse

[...] a deduction (*sylogismos logos*) is an argument in which, certain things being laid down, something other than these necessarily comes about through them [...] it is a dialectical deduction if it reasons from reputable opinions (*endoxon*).<sup>86</sup>

### 2.3.1 Dialectical argumentation

Aristotle's *Topics* is regarded today as a theory of informal argumentation which depicts the structure and procedure of the Academic<sup>87</sup> debate from which the scientific dispute has emerged and, subsequently enjoyed a prolific history of academic specialization.<sup>88</sup> However similar to the scholastic *disputatio*, the art of dialectical argumentation enjoys a greater similarity to a battle, which the parties of the argument (usually two) are immersed in. A dynamic interplay of ingenuity, expertise and swiftness guarantees the successful outcome of an argument, not

<sup>86</sup> *Top.*: 100a25–26 and 100a29–30; I believe that the term deduction, suggested by Jonathan Barnes comes closer to the meaning of *sylogismos logos* than reasoning, which has been used by Forster since I believe that the Aristotelian concept of syllogisms refers to a valid argument.

<sup>87</sup> The capital letter marks the reference to the Platonic Academy.

<sup>88</sup> König, 2002, 114–116.

necessarily implying its ultimate finalization. This is what the first lecture of the work now known to us as the *Topics* conveys. The work is constituted by eight books, and the first and last represent the stage directions for the use of the argumentation schemes which are listed in the books two to seven. The *Topics* is written with the purpose of discovering a method

by which we shall be able to reason from generally accepted opinions about any problem set before us and shall ourselves, when sustaining an argument, avoid saying anything self-contradictory.<sup>89</sup>

Aristotle believes this can be done by focusing on the various ways in which something can be said of some other thing, i. e. by focusing on predication. Every proposition being composed of subject and predicate expresses a certain relation between the entities designated by the two terms. Aristotle thinks that every proposition and every problem indicates “either a genus, a peculiarity or an accident”.<sup>90</sup> The peculiarity expressed of the subject in a proposition indicates either the essence of the subject – thus, constituting a definition<sup>91</sup> – or some non-essential property, but belonging to the subject and convertible with it alone (the famous example is the peculiarity of laughter in man). Accident is a non-essential, non-peculiar property indicated of a subject, and genus its encompassing kind. These types (*schemata*) of predicates are the so-called categories: essence, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action, passion. Every predicate seems to be implied under its specific category as every predicate expresses either an essence, or a quality, a quantity, a habit and so on.<sup>92</sup> The dialectician must of course make sure that he has gathered a supply of predicates, which he can relate to other predicates and to the problems tackled. Equipped with this knowledge, the two partners of dialectical debate are able to work with dialectical propositions and resolve dialectical problems. This is what Aristotle says these two starting points of dialectical argumentation are:

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<sup>89</sup> *Top.*:100a18–22.

<sup>90</sup> 101b19.

<sup>91</sup> By showing that a particular peculiarity, accident or genus belongs or does not belong to a subject, one expresses or invalidates a definition. So, in way, all of the predication modes are “definitory”. Aristotle, however, objects to treating these as subordinated to a single method of inquiry, i. e. the definitive one, probably objecting to the Platonic view on definitive method (*Soph.*216a–236d): 102b31ff: “But we must not for this reason seek for a single method of inquiry which is generally applicable to all of them; for it is not easy to discover, it would be wholly obscure and difficult to apply to our present treatise. If however, a special method of inquiry is provided for each of the different classes which we have distinguished, the exposition of the subject before us would be more easily performed on the basis of what is appropriate to each class.”

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*: 103b20ff.

A dialectical proposition is a question that accords with the opinion held by everyone or by the majority or by the wise – either all of the wise or the majority or the most famous of them – and which is not paradoxical; for one would accept the opinion of the wise, if it is not opposed to the views of the majority.[...] It is also obvious that all opinions which accord with the arts are dialectical propositions, for one would accept the opinions of those who have examined the subjects in question.<sup>93</sup>

A dialectical problem is a subject of inquiry which is tackled with the purpose of determining a particular choice or the avoidance of something or of determining the truth and acquiring knowledge regarding some controversial subject.

Its subject is something which either men have no opinion either way, or most people hold an opinion contrary to that of the wise, or the wise contrary to that of most people, or about which members of each of these classes disagree among themselves.<sup>94</sup>

Examples of dialectical problems are: whether pleasure is worthy of choice or not or whether the universe is eternal or not. Every problem can also be a thesis, which is, according to Aristotle, an opinion set forth by some famous philosopher and which contradicts the general opinion. However, not every thesis needs to be a problem, since it does not necessarily urge debate or raise doubt. It doesn't make any sense to debate about theses or opinions that are easily solved or whose solution is much too remote. The dialectician argues starting from dialectical propositions and tackles dialectical problems. There are also, according to Aristotle, three classes of dialectical propositions and problems: ethical, physical and logical:

Ethical propositions are such propositions as: should one rather obey parents or the laws, if they are at variance? Logical propositions are such as the following: is knowledge of contraries the same or not? Physical propositions are of the type of: Is the universe eternal or not? There are similar classes of problems. The nature of each of the above classes is not easily explained by definition but we must try to obtain knowledge of each of them by the habitual practice of induction, examining them in the light of the above examples.<sup>95</sup>

The nature of dialectical argumentation allows the tackling of any problem whatsoever, whether they concern ethics, logics or physics, under the consideration of the common views expressed about them. Interestingly, Aristotle presupposes that there are classes into which types of propositions fall, depending on the subject tackled. The way of establishing these classes is not further expounded. However, Aristotle assumes an inductive process of relating singular problems to some universal classes to which they belong. That the examination in

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93 Ibid.: 104a2–104a12, 104a33–104a35.

94 Ibid.: 104b4–9.

95 Ibid.: 105b20–105b32.

the light of examples is not what we today would label as “induction” is apparent. It refers to a process of relating the more general to the particular which falls under the method of dialectical inquiry.

Dialectic, as a general art of argumentation which is grounded in the relation between terms, allows a lax and rather free inquiry into all possible problems that arise. Not focused on finding a scientific rendering of a subject, dialectic reveals possible material connections between terms. Philosophy, on the other hand, deals with problems “from the point of view of truth”.<sup>96</sup> This will be re-emphasized in book eight as we will see below. Yet, Aristotle believes that dialectic is of great use in the philosophical sciences: both because it sharpens the ability to distinguish falsehood from truth and because it provides a method of dealing with first principles through generally accepted opinions. One cannot question first principles with the scientific means of the science to which they belong to. But in dialectical argumentation they are considered propositions which can be tackled on a general level of predication. After undertaking a philological and systematical analysis of Aristotle’s puzzling assertion on the relation between dialectic and the principles of sciences, Robin Smith concludes that to Aristotle dialectic does not include a method for establishing objective starting points in the sciences, but it is used in connection with the “examination of the common principles.”<sup>97</sup>

The dialectician uses arguments of deductive and inductive type. Aristotle believes that inductive arguments, which presuppose “the progress from particulars to universals” are more widely used and have a more powerful effect on an audience or on the partners of debate, since the inference employed rests on matters drawn from sense-perception. A versed partner of dialectical dispute is, however, prone to use deduction which is, according to Aristotle, more cogent and more efficacious.<sup>98</sup> The means to acquire an abundance of predicates and thus, to argumentatively inquire into a dialectical problem, and to find premises supporting or rebutting dialectical propositions are fourfold: (1) the dialectician must provide himself with propositions, (2) be able to distinguish in how many senses a particular expression is used, (3) discover differences (between expressions used) and (4) be able to investigate their similarities.<sup>99</sup> This way he can react swiftly to the problem exposed, argue for and against using all of the above elements, and insightfully pick out the appropriate argument to refute his opponent. Technically, the opponent is allowed to answer yes or no to the argu-

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96 Ibid.: 105b30–31.

97 Smith, 1993, 354.

98 Ibid.: 105a15ff. The statement of Aristotle that mirrors this is in Book VIII, 157a18–20: “In dialectical argument, the syllogisms should be used against dialecticians rather than against the multitude; on the contrary induction should rather be used against the multitude.”

99 Ibid.: 105a20–26.

ments adduced. However, if he does not agree to the premise stated, he must argue against it in order to deconstruct the proposed argument. What does such an argument-finding procedure look like? Aristotle lists over four hundred examples which are mainly classified according to the mode of predication, i.e. according to the predicable which can be identified from the proposition/problem proposed.<sup>100</sup> Even though Aristotle often picks other classificatory criteria, like “greater and less”, “opposites and contraries” or “the desirable and the preferable”, all these subclasses can ultimately be ascribed to the four major modes of predication. This does not mean that the predication itself determines directly which strategy one should use, since there are various strategies which can be considered relevant for a particular predication-type, as the enumeration above suggests. The list of predicables represent, however, a broad classificatory attempt which facilitates a starting point for the parties of the debate.

With the introduction of examples, Aristotle brings in the notion of the *topos*. While not tackling with the concept of the *topos* in the introductory book, Aristotle uses it as soon as he starts giving examples of procedures which the good dialectician should follow. In his eighth book, which mirrors the first in its explanation of the functioning, matter and purpose of dialectic, Aristotle introduces the comparison with mnemonic *topoi* (also referred to as places, topics and *loci*, in the Latin tradition):

For just as to a trained memory the mere reference to the places in which they occur causes the things themselves to be remembered, so the above rules will make a man a better reasoner [...].<sup>101</sup>

If we look, thus, at the examples given in the books two to seven, we can develop a notion of what such a *topos* amounts to. In the second book of the topics, after tackling the problem of destruction and construction of universal and particular arguments, Aristotle enumerates some procedures regarding inquiries which deal with accidental predication:

One commonplace is to look whether your opponent has assigned as an accident something which belongs in some other way. This mistake is usually committed in respect of genera, for example, if someone should say that white happens to be a color,

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100 Stump argues that the predicables function like “indexing tabs” for the collections of topics; See Stump, 1989, 26: “It is clear that the topics are generally ordered according to the predicables. Topics useful for problems where the predicate is an accident are discussed in Books II–III; topics involving genus and property are found in Books IV and V respectively; and Books VI–VII contain topics involving definition. If Aristotle’s *Topics* seems like a boxful of blueprints, it is, at any rate, equipped with indexing tabs. Once the arguer has determined which predicable is being used in his problem, he has specified the section of the *Topics* in which topics appropriate to his problem are found.” This view is endorsed by Christoph Rapp, 2000 and Robin Smith, 1993.

101 *Top.*: 163b28–30.

for white does not happen to be a color, but color is its genus. [...] For a predicate taken from a genus is never applied to a species in a derived verbal form, but all genera are predicated unequivocally of their species; for the species take the name and the description of the genera.<sup>102</sup>

Another example, from the third book is the following:

The commonplaces which deal with the more and the greater degree must be taken as generally as possible; for when they are so taken they would be useful in a number of cases. Of the actual instances given above some can be made of more general application by a slight change in the way in which they are worded. We can say, for example, that that which naturally has a certain quality has the quality in a greater degree than that which does not possess it naturally.<sup>103</sup>

In the fourth book, Aristotle writes:

Further, you must look whether there is any case in which the species assigned is true but the genus is not true, for example if 'being' or 'knowable' were given as the genus of 'conjectural' [...], but it is obvious that 'being' and 'knowable' are not predicated of that which does not exist. And so neither 'being' nor 'knowable' is the genus of 'conjectural'; for things of which the species is predicated, the genus must also be predicated.<sup>104</sup>

From the examples of topics displayed above, also listed in contemporary discussions of the *Topics* as standard places, we can deduce a pattern, which Aristotle follows in illustrating his *topoi*. Bearing in mind the dynamic situation of debate, it is not surprising that Aristotle starts with the indication of a path to be followed by the arguer in reasoning his way through the presented premise. So while the opponent states a proposition, his partner has to see whether any fault has been committed in the predication, e.g. as we have seen above, whether something has been expressed as an accident of the subject, while the predicate is actually its genus. Such faults can be tracked down at any point in the process of argumentation: they might occur right from the start, when the opponent brings forth an argument in favor of the dialectical proposition, or in some of the side argument which are meant to support one of the key arguments. This part of the topic is called "strategy" by Eleonore Stump.<sup>105</sup> It is often given together with a principle or law that justifies the strategy. In the first example above, e.g. the law is that: "all genera are predicated unequivocally of their species". So, while the strategy enables one to find flaws in the opponent's argument, the principle justifies the counterargument. Although some topics appear either in the form of the strategy or in the form of the principle, they are often constituted of both parts, and I believe that they should be taken together as complementary con-

102 Ibid.: 109a34–109b9.

103 Ibid.: 119a12–18.

104 Ibid.: 121a20–27.

105 Stump, 2004, 167.

stituents of a topic. Scholars have been long debating over the nature and definition of a topic, but I will not go into the various interpretations here.<sup>106</sup> It will suffice to observe at this point that Aristotle has written an exposition on dialectical argumentation and has given the necessary set of rules which the dialectician immersed in Academic debate should master if he is to partake in it. These rules rest on Aristotle's view of propositions and predication and his belief that an insight regarding how words and expressions are generally used can provide the starting point for inquiring into all possible utilizations of these expressions. Thus, Aristotle's reflection on speech and on the general patterns in which we argue or discourse by giving "reasons" determined the elaborate inquiry into these patterns and their presuppositions. Aristotle urged his students to keep to the predicables and categories as guiding principles of how predicates are stated about subjects and connected to other subjects and to other predicates. Metaphorical speech transgresses the boundaries of dialectical argumentation, especially because it operates with deviant use of terms. Knowing the various meanings of a term proves to be a useful skill in argumentation, provided that the opponent misses some of these meanings and becomes easily confused by not having considered one or the other. Thus, he may easily be misled, on the grounds of his lack of wit or memory. The dialectician should not, however, operate with a metaphorical use of terms, however, since often, this presupposes a misuse of language rather than a skilled employment thereof:

For if we know the various senses in which a term can be used, we shall never be misled by false reasoning, but we shall be aware of it if the questioner fails to direct his argument to the same point, and we shall ourselves, when we are asking questions, be able to mislead the answerer, if he does not happen to know the various meanings of a term. This, however is not always possible but only when some of the various meanings are true and others false. This kind of argument, however, is not a proper part of dialectic; therefore, dialecticians must be very much on their guard against such verbal discussion, unless it is quite impossible to discuss the subject otherwise.<sup>107</sup>

In book eight, Aristotle gives clear indications about how one is supposed to argue if one is a questioner or an answerer partaking in the dialectical debate. Although one must try to argue from "afar", in order not to lead the opponent directly to the argument but in such a way that she is ready to consent to one's premises without acknowledging that they destruct her own argument<sup>108</sup>, the

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106 Rapp und Wagner, 2004; Slomkowsky, 1997; De Pater, 1965; Stump, 1989.

107 Ibid.: 108a29–37.

108 Aristotle explicitly urges the questioner to *deceive* the answerer, so the latter cannot foresee the conclusion and the way the premises connect. This is, however, not yet a contentious practice since a skillful dialectician can grasp connections between different parts of predication which his opponent might not always be able to follow, if these are not stated as

predications must be clearly stated. That means that not only “verbal discussions” but also contentious arguments should be avoided and the examples brought forth for the sake of illustration should clarify, not obscure the argument,

being to the point and drawn from things which are familiar to us, of the kind which Homer uses and not the kind Choerilus employs [an ancient Greek playwright].<sup>109</sup>

The insight into the processes and principles of argumentation is useful for the acquisition of knowledge and philosophical wisdom. Some people just have, according to Aristotle, a natural ability to choose the true and avoid the false. So while dialectical dispute is useful for training, and does not have to employ only true arguments (but tackle problems on both sides), it can be productively put to use in philosophical inquiry.<sup>110</sup> However, philosophers who mainly use argumentation for the purpose of finding truth or seeking knowledge tend to argue in a more straightforward manner than the person practicing discussions. Both the student of dialectic and the philosopher may use hypotheses which can be very easily defended and easily attacked, i. e. primary principles or arguments that rely on those principles. But the principles require the employment of definitions and the clear and unambiguous statement of the argument. Surely, in dialectical debate, clarity must be achieved, in exposing the premises. However, the answerer does not intend to give in to the premises exposed by the questioner, since, in this case, he would have to admit defeat and the argument would be straight-forward and unproblematic. Also, if the principles are not accepted as plausible premises, their questioning transgresses the purpose followed by the questioner, since he only deals with readily acceptable opinions and is not committed to proving them by means of scientific demonstration. So while dialectic can tackle primary principles, it has to start with the assumption of the fact that they have been assumed as true for some reason (the expert’s or the people’s convictions). In other words, some principles always need to be brought forth and assumed if they are to be inquired into. On the other hand, when one supports the arguments with primary principles, these are very easily made clear by means of definitions, which the dialectician may employ in his favor. If the meaning of the terms employed is grasped, one may easily work with them, especially if they refer to primary principles:

If, however, the definitions of the first principles are not laid down, it is difficult and perhaps wholly impossible [to make clear the most primary of the elementary princi-

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directly pertaining to the thesis upheld. The connections, i.e. various predications are, nevertheless, valid and pertinent to the question at hand. See *Top.*: 155b20ff.

109 *Ibid.*: 157a15–17.

110 *Ibid.*: 163b10–19.

ples, i. e. to grasp their meaning]. There is a close resemblance between dialectical and geometrical processes.<sup>111</sup>

The difference in aim between the dialectician arguing for the sake of competition, and the one arguing for the sake of inquiry, or with the aim of teaching is also emphasized by Aristotle:

for he who is learning must always state what he thinks, since no one even attempts to teach a lie; on the other hand, when men are competing with one another, the questioner must by some means or other appear to be producing some effect, while the answerer must appear to be unaffected; but in meetings held for discussion, where the disputants argue not in competition but for the sake of experiment and inquiry, no formal rules have yet been laid down [...].<sup>112</sup>

Whatever the purpose (debate, inquiry, practice), Aristotle advises his students to gather together already framed arguments

where, though we are provided with very few arguments, those which we have will be useful on the greatest number of occasions. These arguments are universal and those for which it is more difficult to provide material from readily accessible sources.<sup>113</sup>

Aristotle suggests that a list of general arguments might be useful, especially if they are cogent through their universality, not by means of their immediate insightfulness, but by their wide applicability. Aristotle might be suggesting here that the principle-parts of the topics, might be worth listing and remembering for further usage in dialectical and philosophical, but also rhetorical argumentation. Later in this chapter, we shall see that some of Aristotle's interpreters subscribe to this suggestion.

### 2.3.2 Scientific reasoning

Since in each genus it is the attributes that belong essentially to that particular genus that belong to it of necessity, it is evident that scientific demonstrations are concerned with essential attributes and proceed from them. For accidental attributes are not

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111 Ibid.: 158b39–159a2. This resemblance between dialectic and geometry refers to the necessity of grasping the meaning of the terms under debate. When the definitions are stated, argumentation can proceed swiftly. In mathematics, argumentation will be short “because the intervening stages are not many”. Aristotle thus distinguishes dialectic from sophistry and compares the strategy of argumentation to mathematical deduction. This comparison implies that regarding their mechanism, neither mathematics nor dialectic necessarily operates with scientifically proven assumptions.

112 Ibid.: 159a28–38.

113 Ibid.: 164b16–20.

necessary and therefore we do not necessarily know why the conclusion is true; not even if the attribute belongs always but not per se, as in syllogisms through signs [...].<sup>114</sup>

Demonstration starts with primary, true principles, and deduces from those the essential attributes by the means of middle terms which disclose an essential relation between the terms of the premises (minor, major). The obtained conclusion will constitute the premise of the next demonstrative deduction and so on. Because the exposed attributes apply essentially, they are not predicated of any genus other the one of which they are necessarily predicated. The middle term is not a topic which validates (as principle/law) one of the possibilities of predication. We have seen above that topics rests on the understanding of the use of the predicables. Demonstration only rest on essential and necessary predication, which is a narrowing down of the possibilities of predication to those which have been acknowledged as true and necessary. Even though Aristotle does not discuss the scientific practice of “discovery” which has led to the truths he obviously takes for granted in his *Posterior Analytics*, his remarks on the nature of principles at least permits some insight into his view on primary and indemonstrable truths. The principles of each genus cannot be demonstrated, since it would require a superordinated science to provide their proof which would entail the principles of all existing things.<sup>115</sup> But there is no superior science which constains and explains all these principles. One is of course entitled to doubt them but then, the principles will not be considered principles anymore, but rather theses, on which some of the experts, or a great majority of people disagree. That is why I believe that Aristotle does not put one principal science at the beginning which has a monopoly on all the first principles. There are different ways of knowing: by deducing from truths (from ultimate causes – which have been accepted as such) or by inferring from generally accepted opinions (which is knowing dialectically).<sup>116</sup> The latter inferences can be said to employ principles which are understood as being common, but only, as Aristotle writes “in an analogical way”; because, in scientific demonstration, the principles are ultimately used as belonging to the genus of the science in which the demonstration is undertaken. An example of such a common principle is: “when equals are taken from equals the remainders are equal”. Each demonstrative science is thus concerned with its proper subject, its own principles from which the demonstration starts, and the essential attributes which are disclosed in the process of

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114 Ibid.: 76a28–32.

115 Ibid.: 76a17–20.

116 Ibid.: 76a20–24: “For a man knows a fact in a truer sense if he knows it from more ultimate causes, since he knows it from prior premisses when he knows it from causes which are themselves uncaused. Thus if he knows in a truer or the truest sense, his knowledge will be science in a truer or the truest sense”.

demonstration. Reasoning proceeds differently in the case of scientific demonstration and dialectical debate, although both types of reasoning/argumentation start from what is posited. The one posits truths, which (ideally) lead to further truths; the other questions what is brought forth as a generally accepted opinion in order to question or secure it (the latter may be compared to a critical inquiry). In the eleventh chapter of the first book of *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle writes:

All sciences share with one another in the use of the common principles. By 'common principles' I mean what they use for the purpose of demonstration, not the subjects about which they conduct their proofs, nor the connexions which they prove. Dialectic shares the principles of all the other sciences; and so too would any science that might attempt to prove universally the common principles e. g., that either the assertion or the negation of every predicate is true, or that equals subtracted from equals leave equal remainders, or any other axioms of this kind. But dialectic has no sphere thus defined, nor is it concerned with any one class of objects. If it were, it would not proceed by interrogation; for interrogation is impossible in demonstration, since the opposite facts do not allow proof of the same result.<sup>117</sup>

So, although there is no superior science which proves the truth of the first principles of the particular sciences (the problem of subordinate sciences is dealt with by Aristotle in 78b35 ff), this does not preclude the possibility of questioning them or treating them as opinions/generally excepted statements. From the passage above it is clear that dialectic is no science, if the criteria of scientific knowledge are the ones summarized above. But while not focusing on a specific subject or on scientific proof, dialectic discloses the framework of inquiry, the "what" that is used in this inquiry, "for the purpose of demonstration." While falling short of being a science, dialectic gains the status of a general method of argumentation, taking all problematic statements and putting them to the test of discursive plausibility.

### 2.3.3 Persuasive speech

While dialectic is a very useful instrument especially for arguing on every possible side and thus, leading towards certainty or towards the invalidation of some posited assumption, Aristotle believes it has a counterpart in the art of rhetoric:

Rhetoric is a counterpart of Dialectic; for both have to do with matters that are in a manner within the cognizance of all men and not confined to any special science. Hence all men in a manner have a share of both; for all, to a certain point, endeavor to criticize or uphold an argument, to defend themselves or to accuse.<sup>118</sup>

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117 *Ibid.*: 77a27–35.

118 *Rhet.*:1354a1–7.

The systematization of the “natural” means of argumentation produces an art, and the art of rhetoric thus conceived is, according to Aristotle, useful for finding the existing means of persuasion. Whereas both rhetoric and dialectic, in contrast to the other arts, are equally concerned with opposites, and both have broad application, rhetoric discovers “the real and apparent means of persuasion just as it belongs to dialectic to discover the real and the apparent syllogism”.<sup>119</sup> If rhetoric is to be an art (“a system arranged according to the rules of art”), it must deal with proof, and “proof is a sort of demonstration, since we are most strongly convinced when we suppose anything to have been demonstrated”.<sup>120</sup> Rhetorical demonstration is called enthymeme, and enthymemes are, according to Aristotle, a kind of syllogism. Of course, rhetoric makes use of other kind of proofs as well, which do not belong to the art itself, but come as it were from ‘without’: witnesses, tortures, contracts and so on. The art of rhetoric, focuses however, on the artificial proofs (the rhetorical arguments or enthymemes) since these are the ones one must “invent”.<sup>121</sup> The proofs which are furnished by speech are of three kinds: the ones that depend on the moral character of the speaker, those which put the hearer into a certain frame of mind, and those which depend on the speech itself, insofar as it proves something or seems to do so. Rhetoric is an art which presupposes, for its successful employment, knowledge which pertains to other sciences and arts. While it works with probable argumentation, just like dialectic, and employs argumentative schemes, some taken from dialectic, some similar to those of dialectic as we will see below; it presupposes some preliminary knowledge of ethics and politics:

[...] a man must be capable of logical reasoning, of studying characters and the virtues, and thirdly the emotions – the nature and character of each, its origin and the manner in which it is produced. Thus it appears that Rhetoric is as it were an offshoot of Dialectic and of the science of Ethics, which may be reasonably be called Politics.<sup>122</sup>

Rhetoric is an “offshoot” of dialectic, because it employs argumentative schemes which are similar to those elaborated in the *Topics*. And it also employs particular forms of inductive and deductive argumentation. Examples are described as rhetorical inductive arguments, and enthymemes are defines as rhetorical syllogisms. Enthymemes are made of fewer premises than the regular syllogism<sup>123</sup>, and their premises are drawn from probabilities and signs.<sup>124</sup> While we have seen

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119 Ibid.: 1344b18–19.

120 Ibid.: 1355a5–7.

121 Ibid.: 1355b36–39.

122 Ibid.: 1356a26–31.

123 Ibid.: 1357a16–17.

124 Ibid.: 1357a23ff: The basis of enthymemes are predications which state relations between terms which, while they can be necessary, they more often hold only for the most part. Signs

that dialectic starts from propositions or problems which are matters of controversy, rhetoric deals with things which are put under deliberation, mostly general opinions of the hearers, who "are unable to take a general view of many stages, or to follow a lengthy chain of argument".<sup>125</sup> The situation of debate has changed, we are no longer facing an argumentation between two trained dialecticians but a discourse of a speaker confronted with a dialectically and rhetorically untrained audience. (The judges themselves were singled out from the Athenian citizens). In front of these people the speaker would have to bring forth his forensic, epideictic or deliberative speech, and thus, has to mold his discourse on the audience, their inclinations, the client's character, the image of himself he wants to convey to his public, the judge's disposition and of course on the exact purpose of his speech. Aristotle is very exhaustive in his depiction of materials that belong to each of these dimensions and which are to be taken into account by the speaker. Detailed circumstantial knowledge which includes historical and political information as well as an appropriate profile of the client, the accuser, the judges and the public is to be gathered beforehand by the skilled speaker. I will not go into the expositions of each of these aspects; they are systematically treated in the first and the second book of the *Rhetoric*. What I want to refer to are the components of rhetorical argumentation, which, although they are said to be similar to the dialectical schemes of predication or even identical to them<sup>126</sup>, are singled out by Aristotle as containing particular characteristics. Whereas the function of the example is linked to that of induction, with the difference that the relation established is not of part to whole or whole to part, but of part to part (inferring something from a well known case to another which is similar to it)<sup>127</sup>, the rhetorical syllogisms are based on 'common' topics:

[...] which may be applied alike to law, physics, politics, and many other sciences that differ in kind, such as the topic of the more or less, which will furnish syllogisms and enthymemes equally well for Law, Physics or any other science whatever, although these subjects differ in kind. Specific topics on the other hand are derived from propositions which are peculiar to each species or genus of things; there are for example propositions about Physics which can furnish neither enthymemes nor syllogisms about Ethics, and there are propositions concerned with ethics which will be useless for furnishing conclusions about physics [...] Most enthymemes are constructed from these specific

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are said defined as being either necessary or probable, and of those which are non-necessary some relate as the particular to the universal and some as the universal to the particular.

125 Ibid.:1357a4-5.

126 Some of the topics are shared by both dialectic and rhetoric, in Aristotle's view. In the fourth part of this chapter, we will see that the fusion between dialectical and rhetorical argumentation rested on the view that they share the same topics.

127 *Rhet*, 1357a31-34: "For example, to prove that Dionysius is aiming at a tyranny, because he asks for a bodyguard, one might say that Pisistratus before him and Theagenes of Megara did the same, and when they obtained what they asked for, made themselves tyrants".

topics, which are called particular and special fewer from those that are common and universal.<sup>128</sup>

The common topics which have also been mentioned in the *Posterior Analytics* are treated here as overarching principles which, actually belong to the form of reasoning inherent in dialectical disputation. The status of these topics remains problematic, insofar as they belong to all arts and sciences in different ways. In the Aristotelian tradition their interpretation will be the key to the various authors' understanding of dialectical art, as will become clear from the further exposition of the history of the dialectical art. However, rhetoric deals mainly with special topics such as the topic of the possible or impossible or the topic of the magnitude (extenuation, amplification):

If of two contrary things it is possible that one should exist or come into existence, then it would seem that the other is equally possible; for instance, if a man can be cured, he can also be ill; for the potentiality of contraries qua contraries is the same.<sup>129</sup>

From the example given, it becomes clear that rhetoric rests on generally accepted opinions which may but do not necessarily need to keep to dialectical predication. Since the speaker always deals with the particular case, he argues by means of examples and enthymemes. Just like dialectical syllogisms rests on generally accepted premises which function as assumed, and may be questioned from the standpoint of the plausibility (i. e. the plausibility of the predication), rhetorical syllogisms/enthymemes rest on maxims which are statements dealing with the object of human actions, "and with what should be chosen and avoided with reference to them" (e. g. "No man who is sensible ought to have his children taught to be excessively clever" or "There is no man who is happy in everything").<sup>130</sup> Aristotle insists that maxims do not deal with all general things: common principles, thus, fall short of being used often by the speaker. Also, rhetorical maxims focus on the subjects which concern human lives and their circumstances. Most of them are established as commonly known phrases which are widely accepted and, thus, seem true, like "The best of omen's is to defeat one's country".<sup>131</sup> Proverbs are often used as maxims and examples from fables, stories or the sayings of wise men. These are often used as an introduction or epilogue to enthymemes, either to support the enthymemes or as alternative proofs if enthymemes are not be easily found. The maxims are often used by speakers because they give the impression of certain validation of common opinion, which thus, strengthens the public in its own belief. Also, it makes

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128 Ibid.: 1358a10ff.

129 Ibid.:1392a10–12.

130 Ibid.: 1394a20–30, 1394b2.

131 Ibid.: 1395a13.

speeches “ethical”, in the sense that it discloses the course of action to which the orator is urging and displays at least his assumed stance towards it. Thus, enthymemes are schemes of argumentation arguing from definite and admitted opinion (not, as in dialectic, dialectical problems and theses tackled by means of *topoi*) which are approved by the public and the judges. They lead to conclusions which do not rest on necessary premises, and will not be absolutely true but only true as a rule (*epi to polu*).<sup>132</sup> Thus, a vast knowledge of the subject is needed, because the arguments put forth will only concern general maxims insofar as they fit the subject at hand, and fit “as a rule”, not as necessity. As in the *Topics*, Aristotle admonishes the speaker to have in stall already invented premises on subjects which are most likely to be of assistance in speech,<sup>133</sup> and use them appropriately. The third book of rhetoric is dedicated to the style of the speech, which constitutes its successful delivery and contributes to the general persuasiveness and appearance of the oration. This part has been especially elaborated by the Roman orators. One of them, maybe the most renowned as both orator and philosopher, will be dealt with in the following part.

### 2.3.4 Conclusion: Assessments of Aristotle's logic of argumentation

Before considering the way Aristotle was read and interpreted by the Roman rhetoricians, it is worth stressing the point that the above exposition aimed at contouring the different forms and procedures of reasoning (and arguing) that Aristotle depicts in his *Topics*, *Rhetorics* and *Posterior Analytics*. The predominant focus on textual material, albeit in the mediated form of English translations, is grounded on the belief that often, the text speaks much better for itself than any interpretation. In the process of my own reading I have stressed that the different forms of reasoning and arguing which Aristotle displays in the works discussed above are taken as complementary: the difference between them mainly constitutes in the social dimension of argumentation, as contrasted with reasoning performed in soliloquy, for the sake of *scientific* delimitation of bodies of knowledge. The discursive character of all three enterprises (dialectical, scientific and rhetorical) remains identical. I believe that speech is indeed the raw material from which Aristotle extracted different uses and functions, and of

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.: 1396a1–4.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.: 1396a 34–1396b5: “Therefore since it is evident that all men follow this procedure in demonstration, whether they reason strictly or loosely – since they do not derive their arguments from all things indiscriminately. But from what is inherent in each particular subject, and reason makes it clear that it is impossible to prove anything in any other way – it is evidently necessary, as has been stated in the *Topics*, to have first on each subject a selection of premises about probabilities and what is most suitable.”

which Aristotle attempts a careful analysis. He is, thus, a very astute observer of human language and its various uses. And neither of the above analysed manners of employment obscures or obliterates the others. Aristotle delineates the different operations of speech in the works which are afterwards included in the collection of writings with instrumental character for philosophy: the *Organon*.<sup>134</sup> If the different projects behind his works are taken into account, one can achieve a better understanding of Aristotle's notion of dialectical and rhetorical art, practice and function (even outside the context of argumentative "exercise"). One can also gather, thereby, a deeper insight into the relevance and function of deduction for the dialectical debate as well for the construction of a body of science and its transmission.

An insightful assessment of Aristotelian dialectic, its function and its relationship to Aristotle's formal logic (manifest in *Prior Analytics*, and to a certain extent in his *Posterior Analytics*) has been rendered by Robin Smith in his work dedicated to Aristotle's understanding and use of dialectic and the latter's relation to the projects of *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*. In my brief analysis of the Aristotelian forms of argumentation above, I have not insisted upon the content of the *Prior Analytics*, since, I believe, with Smith<sup>135</sup>, that *Prior Analytics* sets the task of language analysis: of extracting the forms to which arguments can be reduced logically, in order to serve the purposes of demonstrative argumentation. Thus, I have focused on the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Topics*, which are concerned with the employment of arguments. While the *Topics* offer a set of procedures that bring about success in dialectical argumentation, the *Posterior Analytics* offer the method of rigorous (i.e. formally valid) deduction from (ideally) true and primary principles and disclose the conditions of a scientific (unambiguous, universal, essential) rendering of the subject treated. Aristotle, Smith suggests, does however, not exclude the possibility that topical arguments can be formalized according to the rules of the *Prior Analytics*.<sup>136</sup> His suggestions depends on his argument that the *Prior Analytics* have been written as a proof-theoretical tool for the questions Aristotle is putting forth in his *Posterior Analytics*. But in his *Topics*, questions of formal validity are of no avail to his partner in debate or to the public which he is addressing. In Smith's words:

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134 Andronicus of Rhodos is known to have arranged the works of Aristotle in the order logic-ethic-physics and metaphysics and to have systematized his logical treatise in the order known as *Organon* (*Categories*, *On Interpretation*, *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*). Merlan, 2007, 114–155.

In the Middle Ages, after the Aristotelization of the university Curricula, in the aftermath of the transmission of Aristotle's works, however, Rhetoric was treated together with moral philosophy rather than with the language arts. See Kristeller, as cited in note 345.

135 Smith, 1994, 142–144.

136 Ibid., 148–149.

The dialectician *qua* dialectician need have no interest in the theoretical question whether such general premises [which the *topoi* facilitate] *explain* the validity of the arguments classified under them: all that the dialectician must be able to do is *come up with* them when they are needed.

As Smith correctly emphasizes, the enterprise of the *Topics* is indeed mainly classificatory, rather than explanatory. Aristotle may very well expect the dialectician to use valid arguments, but this does not require him to elaborate a *theory* of validity, but mainly, a “stock of valid ways to argue”.<sup>137</sup> This focus does not invalidate Aristotle's assumption that every argument of the *Topics* “could be put into the figured form”<sup>138</sup>. Christoph Rapp, does not go so far as to suggest that Aristotle might have believed the arguments listed in the *Topics* could be reduced to what Smith has called “figured form”. To Rapp, *deduction* is a valid argument, in which (1) the conclusion necessary follows from the premises and (2) is true when the premises are also true.<sup>139</sup> The formal calculus of the *Prior Analytics*, is, in Rapp's view, a sub-category of deduction thus understood. This understanding of deduction is employed and presupposed, according to Rapp, in Aristotle's *Topics*. The work itself, is a formal, non-syllogistic treatment of argumentation schemes, dependent on a classification of propositions, according to the predicables, as highest categories, and various underclasses determined by the used concepts. Rapp writes:

In der Topik wird gerade nicht davon abstrahiert, welcher Term in den Sätzen eines Arguments vorkommt, sondern es wird ein Klassifikationssystem errichtet, in dem die vier Prädikabilien die Rolle der obersten Gattungen spielen, während durch die genannten Begriffe und Relationen Subklassen definiert werden können.<sup>140</sup>

Rapp insists on the formal character of the topics, assuming that the work represents the early stage of Aristotle's endeavours of developing his formal logic. Interestingly, Rapp contrasts the rather formal theory of Aristotle's *Topics* with Toulmin's argument analysis, which has been developed precisely to counter the predominant formal (deductive) understanding of inference. An analogy is set up by Rapp between Toulmin's ‘warrant’, i. e. that assertion which is general and certifies the soundness of all arguments of the appropriate type (authorizing the inference), and Aristotle's *topos*. Toulmin's warrants are references to facts, data, phenomena of immediate (empirical) or scientific bearing, because Toulmin is interested in illustrating the inferences by means of examples. The claim “Petersen is not a Roman Catholic” is being supported by the premise that “Petersen is a Swede”. The warrant guaranteeing the inference is the assertion: “A Swede

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137 Ibid.149.

138 Ibid., 150

139 Rapp, 2000, 16.

140 Ibid., 30.

can be taken to be almost certain not a Roman Catholic". (The backing of the warrant is the statistical information that the proportion of Roman Catholic Swedes is less than 2 %). However, Toulmin does indeed seek to grasp the invariant aspects behind the warrant. This becomes clear when he differentiates between his warrant as "inference-licence", which can be formulated as "An A can certainly be taken to be a B" and the factual information which justifies this inference step, and which Toulmin calls "backing". This backing is essentially what Aristotle would call "common-sensical language use", or "endoxa" and this can definitely be ascribed to various fields of knowledge, as in both Toulmin's and Aristotle's view, it is field dependent (The Stagirite, employs the distinction between logical, ethical and physical knowledge).<sup>141</sup> One could easily find the *topos* behind the warrant if one was eager to, yet, Toulmin's argument analysis is not intended as a reconstruction or a reappropriation of Aristotelian *topoi*. He has insisted upon this fact in his introduction to the updated edition. Toulmin does not follow Aristotle's plan of providing a list of schemes of argumentation dependent on predication schemes and other significant terms of classifications. His intent is to offer a practical manner of handling arguments: assessing their construction, soundness, plausibility and, eventually, also criticizing them. Toulmin is focused on showing why the employment of formal instruments is essentially an impediment to a reflection on a practical assessment of arguments.<sup>142</sup> Independent of this, in my opinion, rather unfitting comparison, I believe that Rapp is correct by remarking the interest of Aristotle in particular forms of argumentation:

Insofern beinhaltet das Projekt der *Topik* nicht einfach einen bunten Katalog an Argumentationsmustern, sondern stellt selbst ein deduktives System dar, welches auf relativ wenige logische Verhältnisse zurückgeführt werden kann.<sup>143</sup>

Toulmin's critique against formal deduction and his argument analysis which leans on rhetorical types of argumentation can be compared, in different re-

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141 For an elaborate model of non-formal argument reconstruction see Toulmin, 2003. For the example cited see 103.

142 The perspective from which Toulmin looks at argumentation is different from that of the modern logicians. It is not from the standpoint of a computational standard, guaranteeing the inference of an "argumentative step", as it were, but from the retrospective, justificatory relevance of the argument, that Toulmin is developing his model of argument analysis. From this point of view, indeed, Toulmin's comparison between arguments and lawsuits makes perfect sense. He writes: "A main task of jurisprudence is to characterize the essentials of the legal process: the procedures by which claims-at-law are put forward, disputed and determined, and the categories in terms of which this is done. Our own inquiry is a parallel one: we shall aim, in a similar way, to characterize what may be called 'the rational processes and the procedures by which claims-in-general can be argued for and settled.'" See Toulmin, 2003, 7.

143 Rapp, 2000, 34.

spects, to the attitude towards formal logic and textual interpretation of the Humanist philosophers of the Renaissance. I will elaborate on the terms of this comparison later, in my next chapter.

By tackling the “examinative” role of dialectic, i.e. stressing the employment of dialectic by means of questions-and-answer and its general applicability, Smith points out to the essential difference between *Posterior Analytics* and the art of dialectic: the latter's inquisitive and subject-independent nature. Moreover, dialectic is rooted in the manner in which people *usually* think and speak. Here, the kinship of dialectic and rhetoric becomes apparent. Smith gives a very appropriate assessment of the art of dialectic, expressed by Aristotle in his *Sophistical Refutations*. There, the Stagirite writes:

everyone, even ordinary people, make use of dialectic; or the art of testing, in a way; for everyone tries, up to a point, to judge's people's claims.<sup>144</sup>

Thus, the art of dialectic does not “discover” endoxal knowledge, it discloses the manner in which people appeal to different kinds of material and organize it in such a way that they manage to provide backing for the claim they support. Thus, to Smith, the concept of *endoxa*, does not amount to a specific content, but rather, to a criteria of dialectical argumentation: the partners of debate must assure themselves, that the premise they find is one that is prone to be accepted by the opponent. It is for a connoisseur of the wordly and human affairs to decide best what his partner will tend to accept or refute. The *Topics* thus provide mechanisms of selecting and employing exactly these kinds of premises (acceptable to one's opponent).<sup>145</sup> As Brunschwig has written: “The locus is then a machine for making premises, beginning from any given conclusion.”<sup>146</sup> While the three forms of reasoning have been argued to belong to different projects and employ different argumentative schemes, one can observe, even after such a brief exposition as the one given above, that a tension remains which concerns the status of the common principles. Is there a superordinated science, encompassing the principles common to all other arts and sciences? Aristotle does not answer this question and does not seem to be disturbed by the fact that some principles are common (analogically or not), and at the same time belong to the genus, which they are predicated of. If one however understands the common principles as the “framework” of argumentation in general, one can agree with Smith on the essentially “examinative”, and critical role of dialectic. Aristotle not only reflects on the plurality of reasoning forms but also inquires into the operations and rules which govern them. It is of course unavoidable that some

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144 *SE*, 171b30–32.

145 Smith, 1993, 343–349.

146 Brunschwig, 1967, xxxix.

operations are related, especially when they are performed for similar purposes. Reflection on purpose and context however can easily disclose the rules of the “language-game”. The rules however, must be taken heed of if the differentiations are to be productive. These different approaches which reveal different forms of reasoning do not constitute a problem for Aristotle. They will, however, amount to various discussions in later interpretations. Later interpreters, as we will see, transgress the limits of the inquiry into forms or argumentation and immerse in metaphysical and psychological discussions. Even authors which rigorously keep to the Aristotelian classification seem to attribute a special role to the common principles. This is not surprising, since, as we have seen, they appear in all of the three works examined above and can be both universally and specifically employed. In what follows, I will show that the interpretation of dialectic and rhetoric which Cicero spreads into the Latin West is one which has high regard for first principles of knowledge in the sense of a natural disposition of man towards knowing and, especially, doing. His interpretation of Aristotle’s *Topics* grounds on his anthropological assumption that man is a social being and that knowledge is relevant only if applied socially and politically. His own work on the dialectical *topoi* is a reinterpretation of Aristotle on the ground of a philosophical rhetoric.

## 2.4 Cicero: on words and things

### 2.4.1 Oratory and philosophy

Marcus Tullius Cicero’s views on rhetoric and style are highly relevant for the present study, because his interpretation of Aristotelian rhetoric and dialectic can be regarded as a turmoil in the transmission of Aristotelian thought. Because he was one of the main preservers and deliverers of Greek philosophy in the Roman world, his writings served as valuable sources for the continuity of a specific intellectual tradition coined in the schools of ancient philosophical practice. The fundamental difference between the Aristotelian dialectic and rhetoric and the Ciceronian program are to be displayed briefly on the grounds of two works which, I believe, should be read together, if one is to understand the Ciceronian concept of dialectic, its origin and usefulness, and its place within a broader view on knowledge and philosophy. These works are Cicero’s *Topica* and *De Oratore*. Cicero’s reflection on the relevance and proliferation of Greek and Roman philosophical views and the integration of these views into own works of methodical, political, ethical and natural-philosophical writings does not only represent a fundamental philosophical contribution, but at the same time, a valuable historical account of philosophy in the late Roman Republic. My further

exposition will focus on Cicero's understanding of the topics and its kinship and cogenesis with what Aristotle had already called its counterpart: rhetoric. It will become clear from the following what forms of reasoning and arguing Cicero discusses and what the fundamental differences are between his account and the Aristotelian one. At the end of this summary, I will briefly tackle a notion of topics which has been upheld by Greek commentators of Aristotle – as far as their views have been transmitted to us – and point to the transformations that the concept of dialectic/topics underwent until it reached its Ciceronian form.

Reasoning and argumentation are tackled by Marcus Tullius Cicero in a context of rhetorical theory and oratorical training. In his works on the method and instruments of argumentation he focuses on the use of the latter for public speech in general and for the trained orator in particular. While reasoning is natural, its employment must contribute both to useful knowledge and action. This can be better understood against the background of the Ciceronian understanding of what useful knowledge is. Cicero's concept of learning, knowledge and philosophy emerges from his concept of wisdom which is equated with "knowledge of things human and divine, which is concerned also with the bonds of union between gods and men and the relation of man to man".<sup>147</sup> To Cicero, public service (*officium a communitate ducatur*) is superordinated to theoretical knowledge, "for the study of knowledge of the universe would somehow be lame and defective, were no practical results to follow".<sup>148</sup> Thus, the knowledge which concerns and aids in preserving the welfare of fellow-men is regarded superior to speculative knowledge, and to all the branches of knowledge that pertain to it. Cicero understands wisdom as being first and foremost prudence, implying the high appreciation of the arts which provide prudence (rhetoric, politics, ethics). This understanding informs his treatment of argumentation, its method and its application. According to the Roman orator, reasoning should not take place secluded in the philosopher's chamber, although the philosophers who are not fit for public office should not be judged too harshly.<sup>149</sup> But Cicero at the same time believes that speculative knowledge, which he thinks the Greek had called "wisdom", should not be depreciated, but put to use for the welfare of the republic and its citizens: "So, for example, the Pythagorean Lysis taught Epaminodas of Thebes; Plato, Dion of Syracuse".<sup>150</sup> As far as his own duties are concerned, Cicero claims to be indebted to his teachers who, by means of their

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147 *De Off.*: I, 153.

148 *Ibid.*

149 *Ibid.*, 71: "So perhaps those men of extraordinary genius who have devoted themselves to learning must be excused for not taking part in public affairs; likewise those who from ill-health or for some still more valid reason have retired from the service of the state and left to others the opportunity and the glory of its administration."

150 *Ibid.*, 155.

writings, apply their own insights to the service of humanity. Writing and speaking are the two ways in which these insights can be transmitted and that is why Cicero argues that

for that reason speaking (if only it contained wisdom) is better than speculation never so profound without speech; for mere speculation is self-centered, while speech extends its benefits to those with whom we are united by the bonds of society<sup>151</sup>.

In the transmission of Aristotelian thought, both man's social nature and his endeavor to acquire knowledge have been emphasized at different times, by different thinkers, to a different extent, and a tension between these two tendencies has been maintained.<sup>152</sup> The Roman interpretation leaves no room for debate: in Cicero's view, human beings are naturally "gregarious" (*cum congregabilia natura sint*).<sup>153</sup> Knowledge is futile without virtue (which is defined as concerned with the safeguarding of human interests – in other words, knowing and doing what suits men best), because without action accompanying theory, knowledge would be left isolated and devoid of results.<sup>154</sup> In the following I will first offer an insight into the way Cicero believes that speculative knowledge, prudence and method of argumentation come together in an art/person which/ who enjoys highest reputation among the Romans: the art of rhetoric/the rhetorician. This art also represents the context in which a treatment of the topics is undertaken by Cicero. This will become clear from the second part of the exposition.

#### 2.4.2 Topica: Memoria repetita conscripta<sup>155</sup>

Memory is a faculty which Aristotle doesn't explicitly tackle in his dialectical and topical works but implicitly deems necessary for reasoning broadly understood, since, he says in his *Rhetoric*,

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151 Ibid., 156.

152 This tension becomes especially apparent when the Renaissance Humanists start criticizing the speculative commentaries and treatises of the medieval thinkers. It is not surprising that the first works of Aristotle to be retranslated and published are his ethical and political writings. See Kraye, 1995, 19–195.

153 Ibid., 157.

154 Ibid.

155 Cicero introduces us into his work in the topics by dedicating it to his friend Trebatius, who had asked him for help in understanding the Aristotelian dialectic. Cicero claims that, while finding himself on the way from Velia to Regium by boat, in 44. B.C., he did not have access to any written work and has conceived the writing, from memory. See *Top.* I,5.

it is evidently necessary, as has been stated in the *Topics*, to have first on each subject a selection of premises about probabilities and what is most suitable.<sup>156</sup>

For the dialectician, it goes without saying, that he must keep in mind and remember appropriate premises and use them at the appropriate time. The orator must provide examples, fables, comparisons, analogies and so forth as proofs when he does not argue from enthymemes. To Aristotle memory is also central for scientific reasoning, which he deems unfit for dialectical and rhetorical argumentation, especially because of its dependency on acuteness of thought and the remembrance of lengthy and complex chains of deduction. For the Roman orator, memory is fundamental. While Aristotle insisted less on mnemotechnique and more on the materials and techniques of argumentation, Ciceronian rhetoric and topics reemphasize the role played by memory for skilled argumentation. In the depiction of the ideal orator, Cicero lets Licinius Crassus (born 140 B.C), a well-known optimate and one of the most illustrious Roman orators (later Cicero's tutor in rhetoric) stress the importance of mnemonics:

The memory too must be trained by carefully learning by heart as many pieces as possible both from our Latin writers and the foreigners. Moreover in this work I do not altogether dislike the use as well, if you are accustomed to it, of that system of associating commonplaces with symbols which is taught in the profession [...].<sup>157</sup>

But memory is not only concerned with the learning by heart of symbols for specific topics or certain examples and precepts that are given by the teacher of rhetoric to facilitate the memorizing of arguments. Memory is central for the acquisition of knowledge which, together with the practice of imitation and translation, especially by means of written word, constitute the best training for the orator:

We must also read the poets, acquaint ourselves with histories, study and peruse the masters and authors in every excellent art, and, by way of practice praise, expound, emend, criticize and confute them; we must argue every question on both sides, and bring out on every topic whatever points that can be deemed plausible; besides this we must become learned in the common law and familiar with the statutes, and must contemplate all the olden time and investigate the ways of the senate, political philosophy, the rights of allies, the treatises and conventions, and the policy of empire.<sup>158</sup>

A vast and all-encompassing knowledge of politics, morals, the past and the present, psychology and literature represents the requisite of the skilled orator. Wisdom, rather than scientific reasoning is called for. That is, the skill of pru-

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156 *Rhet.*: 1396b6–8.

157 *De Or.*: I, 157–158.

158 *De Or.*: I, 158.

dential judgment, of relating general considerations and plans to individual cases and states of affairs. Crassus does not ignore the part played by what Aristotle had called “art” for the formation of the skilled orator. He admits to having had to learn the rules and commonplaces of his teachers and does not deem this kind of learning useless. However, he insists, “Eloquence is not the offspring of the art, but the art of eloquence”<sup>159</sup>, and believes that above all practical training (in writing and speaking) and learning, together with the control and the training of voice, are the elements which most of all contribute to the competent orator. Crassus reflects Cicero’s standpoint regarding the primacy of talent and learning over learning of rules. Cicero does not however shun the task of offering a textbook-like exposition of the rules of argumentation, emulating Greek dialectic, and turning it into a useful instrument for rhetorical argumentation. In his introduction to his *Topica* he reiterates the important part played by memory for argumentative speech, by turning it into the leitmotiv of the frame narrative for his work: “Since I had no books with me, I wrote up what I could remember on the voyage and sent it to you [...]”. This is Cicero’s answer to his friend Trebatius, who had asked the orator’s help concerning Aristotle’s topical books. What Cicero actually writes is no commentary but a thorough reinterpretation of the Aristotelian dialectical doctrine and its topical core.<sup>160</sup> He starts the treatment of dialectic by writing:

Every systematic treatment of argumentation has two branches, one concerned with invention of arguments and the other with judgment of their validity; Aristotle was the founder of both in my opinion. The Stoics have worked in only one of the two fields. That is to say, they have followed diligently the ways of judgment by means of the science which they call *dialektike*, but they have totally neglected the art which is called *topike*, an art which is both more useful and certainly prior in the order of nature. For my part I shall begin with the earlier, since both are useful in the highest degree and I intend to follow up both, if I have the leisure.<sup>161</sup>

Aristotle had developed an art of dialectic from the practice of Academical debate. His intention was to draw attention to the fact that apart from ingenuity coupled with observation and a vast knowledge of things (which bestows on the dialectician the ability to grasp similarities, differences, ambiguities, equivocations), a number of techniques can be listed regarding various ways in which one can tackle specific types of arguments. They go from specific strategies like:

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159 *Ibid.*: I 146.

160 This model set up by Cicero will have faithful followers in the Renaissance, as I show in the next chapter.

161 *Top.*: I. 5–11.

“if an accident which has a contrary is asserted, you must look whether what admits of the accident admits also of its contrary,”<sup>162</sup> to more general ones like:

if you have not a supply of material for arguing against the thesis, you should look for arguments taken from the real or the generally accepted definitions of the subject under discussion.<sup>163</sup>

As I have shown above, the strategies are then accompanied by principles (general propositions) which reveal the more formal (general) structure which underlies the argument. However, I have insisted on the fact that these two parts of a topic belong together, since the strategy arises from a dialogical context in which acquaintance with modes of predication and ingenuity facilitate prompt and appropriate responses to a dialectical problem. This context is broken up by Cicero, who, as we can conclude from the paragraph above, offers the method of finding arguments logical priority and, thus, splits it from its actual performative origins. Thus, judgment, which is implicit in looking for, finding and using the appropriate arguments or premises, is artificially severed from the actual catalogue of premises, as if the latter would stand on their own, notwithstanding the practice and purpose of the dialectician. Every art, is, as Aristotle had put it, a reflection on, and a systematization of rules sprung from the actual practice, with the aim of facilitating its further and better implementation. However, the topics listed by Aristotle in books on the topical strategies are “staged”, as it were, in a narrative of question and response. Cicero clearly departs from this framework by dedicating his *Topica* to the “places” of arguments, which should already be known and remembered if any arguments have to be tracked down, and they should be known independently of the propositions or cases that might arise in debates (especially in the court-room debate, which Cicero has in mind here). So while Aristotle strives to depict the dynamics of dialectical debate, Cicero's exposition is static and visual, like a collection of symbols whose semiotic relevance had already been crystallized from the practice and is given as an index:

A comparison may help: It is easy to find things if the hiding place is pointed out and marked; similarly if we wish to track down some argument we ought to know the places or topics: for that is the name given by Aristotle to the ‘regions’ (*sedes*) as it were, from which arguments are drawn. Accordingly we may define a topic as the region of an argument and an argument as a course of reasoning (*rationem*) which firmly establishes a matter about which there is some doubt.<sup>164</sup>

Cicero separates invention (method of finding appropriate arguments) from judgment (method of testing the validity of arguments), missing the point of the

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162 *Top.*: 113a35–36.

163 *Top.*: 111b13–15.

164 *Top.*: I, 7–8.

Aristotelian topics and thus, making clear that the concept of dialectic has fundamentally changed up to his time. Dialectic – the method of reasoning from generally accepted opinion about any problem set before us without self-contradiction<sup>165</sup> – is now identified with the entire range of methods of argumentation (Cicero does not distinguish in his *Topica* between dialectical, scientific and eristical argumentation, nor does he restrict the inventive part to dialectic as an art concerned with non-scientific reasoning) and the topics are seen as their “material”. Starting from this holistic understanding of dialectic, Cicero then distinguishes the topical part from the (formal) rules of syllogistic inferences. He attributes the development of the latter to the Stoics. The Stoa had developed in addition to the Aristotelian catalog of syllogistic rules another type of syllogisms which we today consider to be valid forms of inference and propositional logic.<sup>166</sup> Cicero claims to deal only with the former part on the topics which, according to him, had suffered undeserved neglect. Cicero does not waste any words on the explanation of what a topic is from a logical standpoint, and turns directly to the enumeration of the topics which he renders in Latin as *loci*. He divides them into places (under which arguments are included) inherent in the very nature of the subject which is under discussion, and others brought from without. *Loci* which inhere in the subject he further subdivides into those derived from the whole, from parts, from meaning and from the things which are in some way closely connected with the subject which is being investigated. Concerning the latter, Cicero differentiates between arguments that derive from the topics of conjugates, others from genus, species, similarity, difference, contraries, antecedents, consequents, contradictions, cause, effect and comparison with events of greater, less or equal importance. Cicero believes that these are all the topics which are to be known if one is to provide appropriate arguments for any subject occurring in debate. He gives one example for every topic he enumerates and afterwards, goes into more detail, as he says the topics have certain subdivisions of their own.<sup>167</sup> Why he believes that his list of topics is exhaustive he, however, does not say. Neither does he say what his other sources for his *Topica* are. Obviously, the list of terms which he gives and which represent *loci* as “seats of arguments” is, at the most, a highly abbreviated form of rendering the Aristotelian schemes of arguments. Moreover, Cicero seems to pick up the *loci* where Aristotle had concluded: at the establishment of a general rule (principle). While Aristotle gives indication of where to look for possible counter arguments and how to achieve thereby a general principle that might make the line of argumentation clearer, Cicero picks up from this principle one concept which he

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165 *Top.*: 100a18ff.

166 Bobzien, 2003, 85–123.

167 *Top.*: IV, 24.

deems representative and turns it into a topic. So, while Aristotle would say, "see if the opposite of x also falls under the same genus as x, if it does not, they are not opposites" Cicero would give a particular example which follows this rule and subordinate it to the topic "from genus". It becomes clear that Cicero tries to offer a list of topics as single concepts, like an index to be kept in mind and activated every time one is confronted with an issue. This index has to be run over quickly and checked for productive topics to the problem at hand. And there is no doubt that, from a pure mnemonical point of view, a list of the mentioned topics/*loci* is much easier to handle than Aristotle's over three hundred schemes of argumentation logic. In the following, a few examples are meant to illustrate Cicero's account of topics. Cicero's first explained topic is that from definition:

Sometimes a definition is applied to the whole subject which is under consideration: this definition unfolds what is wrapped up, as it were, in the subject which is being examined. The following is the pattern of such an argument: The civil law is a system of equity established between members of the same state for the purpose of securing to each his property rights; the knowledge of this system of equity is useful; therefore the science of civil law is useful.<sup>168</sup>

The topic from conjugate renders faithfully what Aristotle described as useful examination of the inflected forms of words<sup>169</sup>:

'Conjugate' is the term applied to arguments based on words of the same family. Words of the same family are those which are formed from one root but have different grammatical forms, as *wise*, *wisely*, *wisdom*. Such a 'conjugation' of words is called *syzygy*, and yields an argument of this sort: If a field is common pasture (*compascuus*), it is legal to use it as a common pasture (*compascere*).<sup>170</sup>

Aristotle's emphasis on the recognition of likeness and similarity in his first book of the *Topics* has been turned here into a topic of its own. While Aristotle believes that a sense for likeness comes from knowledge of different genera of things and things which belong to different genera, Cicero prefers to explain this capacity-turned-into-topic by means of example:

An argument is based on similarity or analogy in the following matter: If one has received by will the usufruct of a house, and the house has collapsed or is in disrepair, the heir (i. e. the remainder-man) is not bound to restore or repair it, any more that he would have been bound to replace a slave of which the usufruct had been bequeathed, if the slave had died.<sup>171</sup>

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168 *Top.*: II, 9–10.

169 *Top.*: 106b30.

170 *Top.*: III, 12.

171 *Top.*: III, 15.

About the topics from antecedents, consequents and contraries Cicero claims that they are mainly used by the philosophers. To his exposition he adds the five axiomatic forms of argumentation (syllogisms) developed by the Stoics and identifies the third form of inference with what rhetoricians call enthymeme.<sup>172</sup> Cicero however adds that

every expression of thought may be called *enthymema*, that one which is based on contraries has, because it seems the most pointed form of argument, appropriated the common name for its possession.<sup>173</sup>

An example for the topic from consequents is:

[...] if a woman married to a man with whom she does not have a *conubium* (right of marriage) has divorced him, inasmuch as the children who have been born do not follow the father, no part of the dowry should be left for the children.<sup>174</sup>

Introducing the extrinsic topics, Cicero discusses arguments from authority. In the courtroom these belong to the group of inartificial proofs enumerated by Aristotle in his first book on rhetoric. Cicero's example can be seen as referring to an approved proposition, which is accepted as true because it had been stated by an authority. His invocation of Scaevola's authority as "proof", though, positions it rather in the group of rhetorical proofs rather than in the category of dialectical propositions. While the latter can be a starting point, but are doubted in the process of argumentation, the former are obviously used as arguments themselves and are not really meant to be questioned. When he discusses further extrinsic topics, in his detailed account of the loci, Cicero explicitly tackles testimony, authority (of character), circumstances, fortuitous events, oracles etc.

Extrinsic arguments depend principally on authority. Therefore the Greeks call such means of argumentation *atechnoi*, that is, not invented by art of the orator; such would be the case if you answered your opponent as follows: Since Publius Scaevola [jurisconsult] has said that *ambitus* of a house is only that space which is covered by a roof put up to protect a party wall, from which roofwater flows into the home of the man who has put up the roof, this seems to be the meaning of *ambitus*.<sup>175</sup>

It also becomes clear from this paragraph that even though Cicero has given a list of topics up to this point, which function as "seats" of arguments in the way his

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172 Cicero is concluding from the negation of a conjunction and the statement of one of the conjuncts the contradictory of the other conjunct. *Topica*: XIII, 54–55: "When you deny that certain things are associated and assume the truth of one or more, so that the remaining statement must be excluded, this is called the third form. To this belong those forms of conclusion from contraries adopted by teachers of rhetoric, to which they themselves have given the name *enthymemata*."

173 *Top.*: XIII 55.

174 *Top.*: IV, 20.

175 *Top.*: IV, 24.

examples has shown, he obviously addresses his fellow orator and the student of oratory, not the dialectician or the philosopher. After giving detailed attention to each topic, Cicero tries to offer a sketchy framework for the usage of the enumerated places. Here also, the examples given for the actual inquiries in which topics are applied to are excerpted from the practice at the rostra. Cicero equates particular inquiries with the Greek *hypothesis*, calls them causes (cases) in rhetorical fashion, and identifies the general inquiry with the thesis. Theoretical inquiries are meant to increase knowledge and fall into three groups of questions: the questions asked are either: Does it exist? What is it? or What is its character? The first of these questions is answered by means of conjecture or inference, (by inquiring into the existence, truthfulness, the origins, and the possibility of transformation of the subject under debate), the second by definition, and the third by distinguishing between right and wrong.<sup>176</sup> Practical questions concern either the subject of duty or focus on the methods of arousing emotion. Cicero afterwards explains what topics are best fitted to every kind of the enumerated questions. All this can be said of general theoretical and practical questions. Regarding special questions or cases, Cicero provides a rhetorical account of causes:

There are three kinds of speeches on special subjects: the judicial, the deliberative and the encomiastic; and the ends of these three show what topics are to be used. [...] the proper arguments for these cases selected from the topics which we have enumerated have been developed in the rules for oratory. The reply for the accusation which constitutes the denial of the charge, may be called in Latin *status* since the Greek call it *stasis*: for this is the place where the defense takes its stand [...] the debate which arises from the issue (*status*) is called by the Greek *krinomenon* (the thing being decided), but I prefer to call it *qua de re agitur* (the question at stake). The arguments by which this question at stake is supported are called *continentia* (supports); they are as it were, the foundation of the defense, for if these are removed, there is no defense.<sup>177</sup>

Cicero concludes by remarking that the parts of the speech themselves receive help from the topics which are either generally used or which fit each part best. He admits that he has included in his work on topics more than was requested from him by Trebatius, because he did not want to let anything out: "So in addition to what we were bound to sell you, as it were, we wished to give you some ornaments, not called for in the contract."<sup>178</sup> Cicero had thus begun with the emphasis on memory and ended with the use of ornaments. Not only does he thereby prove to be a skilled rhetorician, but he manages to display a work on topics moulded on the needs and practice of the orator. Cicero has undertaken an

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176 *Top.*: XXI, 82.

177 *Top.*: XXIII, 91.

178 *Top.*: XXVI, 100.

interesting conflation of argumentation theory and rhetorical disposition in which the actual origin of premises and underlying assumptions is not addressed. The topics which function as sources for argument material are used to fit special cases of incentive, praise/blame or judicial inquiry which are treated by the rhetoricians and represent special problems (cases). As for the theses, these are analyzed with the aid of special questions which are very similar to the ones posited by Aristotle in his assessment of a subject's existence, definition and essential property in his *Posterior Analytics*. Thus, it does not seem very far fetched to recognize in Cicero's treatment of general questions a blend of scientific reasoning and topical and rhetorical analysis, since the careful differentiation between these types of reasoning has been completely obliterated. While Aristotle's distinctions seem to be made from the standpoint of the philosopher, which differentiates rhetorical and dialectical argumentation from scientific argumentation by taking the latter as more or less the standard of certain knowledge, Cicero treats argumentation from the standpoint of the rhetorician and orator. The standard is rhetorical, i. e. persuasive speech and all other forms – if they restrict themselves to particular subjects or formal rules – are only treated in comparison and by integration and adaptation to the material and variety of forms of rhetorical reasoning.

## 2.5 Theophrastus, Themistius, Alexander of Aphrodisias: From arguments to principles

As I have shown above, Aristotle's dialectical and rhetorical works were both highly attractive for the Roman rhetoricians and teachers of oratory. Even more so for the polymath orator who was pictured as the persona of the learned, brave and prudent man of action who had managed to gather both the wisdom of the Greek and the prudence of the Romans and put them to the use of the interest of the citizen (*pro res Romana agere*). This is however only one of the stories than can be told, and it concerns the way dialectical argumentation became an instrument of the orator. The development depicted in it reaches to the Early Middle Ages. There is a parallel development, however, internal to the art of dialectic itself: the one promoted by the Greek commentators of Aristotle belonging to the Peripatetic School. As far as the following exposition is concerned, the sources taken into account are secondary. I rely on the modern editions of Manlius Boethius<sup>179</sup> and of Alexander of Aphrodisias's Commentary on the first

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179 The extant works on Boethius on the topics which I have consulted are the work on the differences: *De Topicis Differentiis* and the Commentary on Cicero's *Topica: In Ciceronis Topica*. Thanks to the assiduous work of Eleonore Stump, they are available in English

book of Aristotle's *Topics*<sup>180</sup> and on the Latin translations of Averroes for the sketchy account of Theophrast<sup>181</sup> and Themistius. As Eleonore Stump has argued<sup>182</sup>, the main transformation concerning the concept of dialectical argumentation that has taken place in the commentaries of the ancient Peripatos concerns the notion of the topic. And this transformation is already visible in Cicero's understanding of the *locus*<sup>183</sup>, irrespective of its rhetorical use. Since Alexander (second century A.D.) is the main source for Theophrast's (Aristotle's pupil, fourth century B.C.) account, I will look into his comments on the material of the first books of the *Topics* in what follows. I rely on Eleonore's Stump translations of Themistius concerning the nature of a topic. These have been taken from the middle commentary of Averroes's *Primi Voluminis Pars III Aristotelis Stagiritae Topicorum* (1574).

At the beginning of his commentary on the *Topics* of Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias offers a useful introduction into the various uses of the concept of dialectic by different philosophical schools:

It is well for us to know beforehand that the name of dialectic is not by all philosophers brought to bear on the same thing meant. The Stoics, who define dialectic as the knowledge of speaking well, and posit that speaking well consists in saying the things that are true and fitting which they take to be a distinctive property of the philosopher. [...] Plato, who extols the method of division and declares it the coping-stone of philosophy also calls it the name of dialectic. [...] Aristotle and his school do not offer the same view of dialectic. They posit that it is a method of syllogizing, holding that one syllogism does not differ from another as a syllogism, but only in the form of its premises, in its modes and figures and in the subject matter it deals with.<sup>184</sup>

While to the Stoics and to Plato dialectic is the art of reasoning from truths, to Aristotle, dialectic is the art of syllogizing through what is approved and persuasive. Alexander believes that the former uses the name of dialectic inappropriately. He first delineates dialectical reasoning from scientific reasoning by distinguishing between categorical and hypothetical syllogisms, perfect and imperfect syllogisms and apodictic, dialectical and eristic syllogisms. While the first two aspects concerning the form of the premises and the formalistic modes of syllogisms are not *essential characteristics* of the *demonstration*, the third – the

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translation and are accompanied by valuable commentaries on Aristotelian, Boethian and Ciceronian dialectical theory. Stump mainly focuses on the changes which take place in the dialectical tradition and I am heavily relying on her studies in this part of the study.

180 I have used the only available English translation that I am aware of, by Van Ophuijsen, 2014.

181 On a detailed exposition on Aristotle's topics interpreted as premises and on the relevance of Theophrast for this interpretation see Slomkowski, 1997, 61–68. See also Green-Pedersen, 1984, 37–38.

182 Stump, 2004, 205–214.

183 See part 4.1 above.

184 *Arist. Top. I*: 1.9ff.

truthfulness of the premise – is. Here, Alexander is faithful to Aristotle’s distinction between demonstrative, dialectical and eristic reasoning, and insists on dialectic being the art of arguing from what is approved, which does not necessarily need to be true (“in the strict sense”). Second, he elucidates Aristotle’s claim (in his rhetoric) that dialectic is the counterpart of rhetoric. Rhetoric like dialectic syllogizes about everything that is put forward through what is approved; it does not concern itself with a particular genus, but turns the whole province of knowledge into its storage room. The rhetorician does not deal with this knowledge, which is taken from various fields of inquiry, in a scientific way. He does not prove scientific theses through scientific principles, but deals with theses and principles as with statements that have been approved (by being set forth by experts) and are capable of being persuasive. The rhetorician enjoys the capacity of discussing theses by sustaining or contradicting them: he can look for and find arguments to enforce a statement and others to destruct it, just like the dialectician. This path is closed for the scientist and philosopher: “Practitioners of science have a discernment of opposites, but their scientific aim is determinately one of the two opposites: the better part”.<sup>185</sup> Rhetoric and dialectic share their bearing on all subjects, irrespective of genus and kind, their starting points (the approved and persuasive) and their application to opposites. In contrast to rhetoric, dialectic deals with every subject matter, while rhetoric more often than not restricts its focus to subjects of politics. Dialectic operates in the context of debate and mostly deals with general questions and problems while rhetoric is applied in continuous speech and tackles specific cases which imply “circumstances, chance events, junctures, persons, places and the like which are all individual”.<sup>186</sup> These arts – also called capacities, since they go both ways – are believed to put their users “in a position of capability and superiority” not only because such men are regarded as more capable than others, but also because “their possessors are capable of using them both for good and for evil.”<sup>187</sup> What Alexander tells us is that, while the philosopher can of course recognize truth and falsity, he cannot, as philosopher, reason from falsehood. If he does, he is no philosopher or scientist anymore, but a sophist. The orator and dialectician however, can and do employ arguments and their opposites, since they argue from what is approved and that does not necessarily entail what is true.<sup>188</sup>

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185 Ibid.: 4.21–23.

186 Ibid.: 5.14–15.

187 Ibid.: 6.14–15.

188 See Aristotle, *Rhet.*, 1355b21–24: “In Rhetoric, one who acts in accordance with sound argument and one who acts in accordance with moral purpose are both called rhetoricians; but in Dialectic it is the moral purpose that makes the sophist, the dialectician being one whose arguments rest, non on moral purpose, but on the faculty”. Here Aristotle differentiates between orator and dialectician by saying that the employment of arguments both

Under the paragraph entitled "What is a topic?" Alexander paraphrases Theophrast by saying:

For the topic, as Theophrastus says, is a starting point (*arche*) or element from which we take the starting-points concerning each matter by focusing our thought upon it. It is delimited in compass – for either it includes those common and universal things which are the principal ingredients of syllogisms, or these are at least capable of being proved and obtained from them – but unlimited as to the number of individual instances which come under it.<sup>189</sup>

Alexander says later that one must understand that Theophrast does not equate a precept with a topic. While the precept is the source of a topic, the topic is the source of the dialectical syllogism. Alexander explains this as follows:

For example, a precept is something expressed in this way: One must make a dialectical syllogism from contraries, from coordinates. But an example of a topic: If one of a pair of contraries has many meanings, then so does the other. [...] For a topic is a premise arising from a precept.<sup>190</sup>

From the fragments cited above, Theophrast held the topic to be a general proposition (principle) justifying particular inferences which could be, as it were, listed under this general rule. So, while the precept or instruction (*parangelma*) is said to show us the way towards finding an appropriate premise, and is shortened here to a label, e.g. "from contraries", "from opposites", the topic is the source of this premise. It is a sort of general maxim, as Boethius would later call it, from which variations of particular premises (fitted to the questions and problems at hand) can be derived. That is why, it is thought to be delimited in its compass – concerning its general *form* and unlimited in its provision of particular premises. Theophrast is obviously concerned with the analysis of the concept of the topic

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true and deliberately false belong to the practice of the orator (although one endowed with acuteness of spirit can easily distinguish between the orator's persuasive arguments and those that only seem persuasive). The dialectician is depicted as one who, while being a very skilled dialectician, turns into a sophist if he uses false arguments. So while both arts are dealing with opposites, the rhetorician often deals with only seemingly persuasive arguments to achieve a purpose and this belongs to his skill as a rhetorician. The dialectician however, should stick to what is approved and the approved form of arguments, and not turn to what is only seemingly approved. Alexander might have this in mind when he differentiates between the philosopher the orator and dialectician. He attributes to both dialectician and orator the "freedom" to go both ways, and suggests that, in their capacity to use their skills for good and evil they can easily turn into sophists. The philosopher or scientist can avoid this dangerous path by means of his allegiance to "the better part" or the truthful side of the argument. So, while in the Ciceronian tradition, dialectic and rhetoric are fused with the purpose of highlighting the methodical and unequivocal practice of rhetoric, Alexander takes the part of the philosopher or "scientist" in the interpretation of Aristotle, as the one with preeminent focus on the truth of things.

189 Ibid., 5.21–26.

190 Alexander of Aphrodisias, acc .to Stump, 2004, 210.

and with putting his finger on its nature and function. This process of careful differentiation between the part of instruction (seen as preparatory for) and the actual discovered principle (as a formal connection between categories of terms) is developing inside of the tradition of the topics and has been explained as the outcome of a shift of interest from oral disputation towards written arguments and prepared speeches.<sup>191</sup>

Yet Alexander is anxious to preserve both understandings of the topic. On the one hand he agrees with Theophrast and gives an example of the topic as follows: “if a case form of a thing is somehow said in more than one way then so is the thing, and if the thing is then so is the case form.”<sup>192</sup> He however also calls starting-points (the concept Theophrast had used for topics) the instructions Aristotle gives, e.g. for the equivocal use of contraries:

In offering starting-points based on opposed terms for the finding and judging of things said in many ways, Aristotle first shows how we can recognize things said in many ways on the basis of contraries.<sup>193</sup>

Thereafter, the instructions enumerated follow in their “we should see whether”-form. All in all, Alexander is a diligent commentator of Aristotle’s *Topics*. He offers a lot of attention to the nature and function of dialectical arguments and to the relation between dialectical and philosophical/demonstrative reasoning. Since Aristotle had differentiated between logical, ethical and natural-philosophical problems, broadly committing dialectical inquiries to their particular genus, Alexander explains this classification by claiming that the only things which deserve investigation are those contributing to choice and avoidance or discernment and truth. Dialectical problems are defined by the tension which emerges between opinions (of the many, of the experts, of the wise) or by being yet unresolved. Alexander comments on this with examples which demonstrate that he is preoccupied with the status of dialectical problems for specific scientific branches (like astronomy, medicine or ethic). For many investigations in science, he says, the grounds for belief

are taken from probabilities, for it is the dialectician’s part in such questions to impart through what is approved a momentum and inclination towards one of the opposed positions, e.g. that the world is eternal, or that it is spherical [...] but about whether the stars are even- or odd-numbered too all people are undecided, and regarding this too the dialectician can produce attack argument from what is approved by obtaining that what is best in the field of number is appropriate to the stars.<sup>194</sup>

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191 Stump, 2004, 210.

192 *Arist. Top. I*: 104.16–18.

193 *Ibid.*: 98,6–8.

194 *Ibid.*: 76,6–19.

The recurrent preoccupation with the relation between dialectical problems and scientific demonstration and the determination with which Alexander insists on the fundamentally separate nature of scientific and approved principles (which can often overlap in their substance) testifies to the problematic enterprise of clear-cut differentiation between forms of reasoning, also mirrored in the various understanding of dialectic among Greek philosophers.

Theophrast's and Alexander's views are also later commented on by Averroes (1126–1198) who adds Themistius's understanding of a topic

Themistius however says that a topic is a general proposition which is truer than other propositions of a syllogism; and he says that sometimes such a proposition itself, sometimes its meaning and force, is placed within a syllogism.<sup>195</sup>

The similar way in which both Theophrast and Themistius understand the topic as a general proposition (maxim) differs from the way in which Alexander emphasizes the part played by the rule (*regula*) for the notion of the topic. Averroes tends to take sides with Alexander.<sup>196</sup> Theophrast's and Themistius's understanding of the topics outlasted what I believe to be the more inclusive interpretation of Alexander in the long run and influenced the tradition of the topics in the Middle Ages by being absorbed in the translations and commentaries of the Roman philosopher Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius. This will become clear from the following exposition.

## 2.6 Boethius: *De topicis differentiis*: The logic of producing belief

While Cicero's rhetoric exerts a significant influence on the rhetorical and hermeneutic tradition of the Middle Ages<sup>197</sup>, his understanding of dialectic and topics reaches the early Middle Ages through the works of Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, "the last of the Romans", "tutor of the Middle Ages", consul and philosopher under Theodoric the Ostrogoth<sup>198</sup>. It was Boethius who, besides influencing the philosophical agenda in the period before the appearance of the first universities (during the Renaissance of the twelfth century), maintained a

195 *Arist. Stag. Top.*, 28 A1–7: "Themistius vero dixit quod locus sit universalis praemissa, quae est in syllogismo, quae verisima est praemissarum syllogismi et dicit quod tali praemissa aliquando utimur secundum se in syllogismo et aliquando utimur sua sententia et potestate." The edition that I follow consists of parallel translations, of Abram and Mantinus, structured in columns presented next to each other. I am following Abram's translation in my Latin citation.

196 *Ibid*, 28 G: "Et io, id quo dicit Alexander et qui ut ipse assererat, est propior veritati, quam Themistius."

197 Copeland, 1991, 9–37.

198 Stump, 2004, 13.

hold on the way Aristotle's *Topics* was interpreted until the end of the Middle Ages and throughout various works on this subject in the Renaissance.<sup>199</sup> I will return to this aspect in the parts of this chapter which are dedicated to the tradition of the topics in the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. Boethius's works that are relevant for understanding his acquaintance with the ancient tradition of the topical method are his commentary on Cicero's *Topica* and his own treatise on the nature and use of a locus: *De differentiis topicis*. In *Ciceronis Topica* (ICT) gives us a valuable view of Roman rhetoric and philosophy, as well as of Boethius' impressive knowledge of Ciceronian, Aristotelian, Platonic and Stoic thought and knowledge of jurisprudence. It summarizes and comments on Cicero's work using all the above mentioned sources, permitting a valuable insight to the culture of his period, in which, texts no longer extant, were available to him and his peers (like Victorinus's commentary on the topics).<sup>200</sup> *De Topicis Diferentiis* (DTD) represents Boethius's own stance on the topics, which draws on the works of the Greek Peripatetics and the above mentioned philosophical schools. It shapes the way logic and the doctrine on the topics is to be interpreted and made use of in the early monastic schools, and later in the artistic faculties of the newly founded universities. In the following brief exposition of Boethius's concept of dialectic and topics I rely on the valuable studies of Jan Pinborg, Eleonore Stump and Niels J. Green-Pedersen.<sup>201</sup>

### 2.6.1 Discovery (inventio) and judgment (iudicatio)

At the beginning of his commentary on Cicero's *Topica*, Boethius enumerates the various understandings of dialectic among philosophers and explains how he believes that these views can be reconciled. His own interpretation of what the nature and use of dialectic are will be taken over and presented as paradigmatic for the entire period up to the Renaissance.<sup>202</sup> A constant preoccupation with logic/dialectic and its nature will lead to the proliferation of sophisticated treatises and textbooks on logic, especially in the late medieval period in which the topics will be differently interpreted to fit into the general scheme. That this will not always turn out to the satisfaction of the medieval authors will be shown in the sixth part of this chapter. Because the extensive logical works of Aristotle are

199 Schulthess und Imbach, 1996, 79. Kaylor and Philipps, 2012.

200 Stump, 2004, 11–12.

201 While I will be citing Stump's translation, I will give the bracketed Latin expression where I think it would favor the understanding of a particular term or phrase. To this end I have consulted the Boethian works rendered in the *Patrologia Latina*.

202 This will become clear from the part dedicated to the medieval tradition of the topics.

not known to Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages<sup>203</sup>, Boethius's commentaries provide a lot of useful material on what dialectic is, how it can be subdivided and why its divisions are highly relevant for different forms of argumentation.

Philosophy expends its work and study on great subjects. It employs investigation into and contemplation of things in nature as well as actions in matters of morals, and it desires to shape morals in such a way that reason persuades a man of those things that make a life right. Therefore, philosophy must establish our judgment concerning the governing of life and exercise our faculties in accordance with what reason has determined we should adhere to or reject, do or leave undone. So both in contemplation of nature and in deliberation about moral actions, sure reason will necessarily discover the correct contemplation of things and will plan how life should be led. But unless reason proceeds along a certain path, it must often fall into many errors. To prevent reason from being exercised haphazardly and to ensure that it be practiced according to certain rules, the foremost of ancient philosophers thought it good first to discuss thoroughly the nature of reasoning itself by means of which anything must be investigated, in order that we might use such reasoning purified and well ordered for the contemplation of truth or the exercise of virtues.<sup>204</sup>

Boethius places the investigation of forms of reasoning in a context of philosophical reflection. Philosophy is being equated with scientific speculation and action corresponding to moral precepts, which, in their turn, depend on the correct judgment of what is right and what is wrong. Thus, philosophy is seen to concern contemplation of truths regarding nature and ethical truths. In order to grasp these truths, reason is supposed to be habituated to an ordered and appropriate exercise. This guarantees the contemplation of truth, and, as an effect thereof, the exercise of virtues. Reason is, and I do not believe this aspect to be trivial, in charge with both science and ethics: it contemplates (*in naturali speculatione*) and ponders (*in actu vivendi duci oporteat ante perpendat*).<sup>205</sup> The ancient philosophers Boethius has in mind, when he talks about the thinkers who have extensively discussed the forms of reasoning, are the Peripatetics. According to Boethius, they have called the discipline which deals with these appropriate forms of reasoning "logic" (*logicen appelaverunt*), which contains both the part of discovery and the part on judgment. The Stoics had only considered the latter, developing many rules and calling the discipline "dialectic". Plato called dialectic the method of dividing the genus into its species and collecting the many into one genus.<sup>206</sup> Boethius writes that there is, on the one hand, a threefold partition of logic – into definition, division and deduction – and, on the other hand, a partition subordinated to deduction and consisting of necessary, readily be-

203 Gombocz, 1997, 339–340.

204 *ICP*, 25.

205 *PL*:1044D12–13.

206 *ICP*, 25.

lievable and false deductions (argumentation). According to this classification, Boethius claims, Aristotle defines dialectic “the skill of deduction which uses what is readily believable” (*facultatem per probabilia colligendi*).<sup>207</sup> Boethius, as it becomes clear from the definition of logic as the art of invention and judgment, takes over the Ciceronian division of logic. The Ciceronian term of “dialectic” is used, in the aftermath of the Boethian commentaries, interchangeably with the Boethian rendering of “logic”. This means that the concept of Boethian dialectic is inclusive: it integrates both the dimension of definition and division and the Aristotelian doctrine of the various forms of deduction. This way it mirrors the Stoic-Ciceronian view on the art of dialectic.<sup>208</sup> This use will persist even after the operations which fall under the arts itself – according to the Boethian-Ciceronian view – will receive different appraisal.<sup>209</sup> Boethius introduces an elaboration on the relationship between discovery (invention) and forms of judgment which, I believe, is worth quoting extensively:

Discovery is the basis for all the others [parts of logic], holding the place as it were of their matter in the following way. For without discovery, there cannot be definition or partition, since we divide or even define a thing by the discovery of genera or *differentiae*. Moreover, without discovery there cannot be deduction, and so there will not be the necessary, the verisimilar, or the sophistical, for these three are added to discovery so that an argument becomes necessary, readily believable or sophistical. Necessity, ready believability and sophistry are forms of some sort; when they come to discoveries they make arguments necessary, readily believable or sophistical. The same point applies to partitions and definitions for the undifferentiated power of discovery can be called definitive or divisive when it is used to define or to partition things. In this way, composed of the discovery as a matter and of the superimposed *differentiae* as forms, they become in turn matter for judgment. For the previous division of logic into three parts sets forth the parts in such a way that discovery is the matter for each of them, but the whole division itself furnishes the matter for judgment.<sup>210</sup>

Boethius believes that discovery is a part of every element of logic or dialectic which can be divisive, definitive or deductive. Division and definition consists in discovering from a matter at hand its constitutive or its essential parts. The discovery of an argument is a necessary step in the process of deduction which is

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207 Ibid., 26.; *PL*:1045C9–10.

208 On the extant fragments pertaining to various ancient works concerning the Stoic concepts of dialectic and rhetoric see Long and Sedley, 1987, 183–203.

209 The shift from an all-encompassing understanding of dialectic – of the Ciceronian-Stoical and Boethian kind- to an understanding of dialectic as focused on inferences – of Aristotelian type – occurs with the assimilation of the Aristotelian works of the *Organon* by the universities of the Latin West. The art of topical argumentation is stripped of its inventive dimension and integrated into logic/dialectic manuals and textbooks meant to inculcate a theory of deduction, as will become clear in the following part of the chapter.

210 Ibid.

afterwards used in a deductive chain and tested on its appropriateness for the syllogism at hand (whether it suffices the conditions for a necessary, probable or sophistical argument). It is interesting that Boethius believes that the discovery of an argument can be further analyzed into elements analogical to that of the matter and form of a thing, i. e. discovery being the matter and the *differentiae* being the forms of the things which taken together become the matter of an argument (which is being judged for its soundness). Put differently, form and matter which represent the discovery of a part as a part are constitutive of discovery and seem to entail the step of recognition of a thing and its recognition of its attributes (as part/essential part). Discovery thus qualifies a thing as one or the other, according to its specific attributes. It always entails an active principle, some form of judging/recognizing something as it is, its material being however inextricably bound to the recognition/judgment itself. Boethius does not go into any theory of cognition here but connects the process of discovery to a basic process of cognition when he says that “we divide a thing by the discovery of genera or differentiae”.

Boethius does not say what the criteria are for recognizing whether one's findings are verisimilar, true or false, but he tells us this much: the first judgment we undertake in setting forth a deduction is the one concerning the arguments (related concepts) themselves, which afterwards, will again be judged by their forms in groups of propositions and the way they formally fit or do not fit together. So while matter is supposed to be, on the one hand “naked” and on the other hand “matter of propositions”, form is also first of all the form of the discovered thing, and second, the form of the whole proposition. And while discovery seems to consist in the two steps: discovery of argument/discovery of the argument for a specific deduction – judgment too can be understood to take two steps: first inquiring into the veridicity of the argument itself and then into the consistency of the deduction taken as a whole:

Furthermore, judgment too has parts appropriate to it with regard to the nature of deduction. For every argumentation and every syllogisms are constructed of propositions, but everything that is a composite has two things of some sort in it, and these things, it seems, ought to be examined. One thing to examine is the nature of those things of which the composite is understood to be made up, and another is the conjunction of the parts by means of which the whole is composed.<sup>211</sup>

Logic, or what is called by Boethius, in Ciceronian fashion “the art of discoursing carefully” (*ratio diligens differendi*) is thus divided into two parts: an inventive and a judging part – “sometimes judgment of the discovery itself, sometimes of the deduction of the discovery”.<sup>212</sup> Boethius draws on Aristotle for attributing to

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211 Ibid., 27.

212 Ibid., 28. Today we ascribe to logic the judgment of valid deductions. Boethius seems to

each part of logic its special subject. So he says that the part of logic teaching an abundance of tools for discovery is called *Topics*, the part dealing with the judgment of junctures of propositions (*de propositionum junctura*) is called *Prior Analytics*, and the part tackling the discoveries themselves and discussing the determining of necessary arguments of deductions is called *Posterior Analytics*. Finally, the part discussing false arguments is called *Refutations*. Boethius believes Aristotle had not given any extended explanation of how to inquire into verisimilar arguments – he is pointing out that there is no work on the forms of probable arguments (*de verisimilum vero argumentationum iudicio nihil videtur esse tractatum*) – because “the nature of judgment concerning the middle is clear and uncomplicated when one is acquainted with the extremes.”<sup>213</sup> By that he means, that if one can determine necessary and false arguments, one can easily inquire into that what is in the middle: the verisimilar ones. This will determine medieval authors to search for the logical rules behind the topics<sup>214</sup>. I believe that Boethius’s view on Aristotle’s partition of forms of reasoning, which is identified one the one side with logic on the other with the art of careful discourse and with dialectic, has exerted a tremendous influence on the way particular functions have been attributed to these parts by later scholars. From what he writes in the ICT, Boethius believes that, there is an art which supplies techniques of discovery which is the *Topics* and an art which deals with discoveries and determines which of them are necessary arguments – *The Posterior Analytics*. Boethius does not say the *Posterior Analytics* is an art of discovery of necessary arguments but does say it itself deals with discoveries. Whether these discoveries are those handled in the *Topics* or these discoveries concern other non-discursive elements (such as sense-impressions and intuitions) will preoccupy later philosophers, who will try to separate logic from the processes of cognition and the realm of things. Renaissance authors will, as we will see in the last part of this chapter, bring these parts together and, like some of medieval thinkers, will ground both necessary and probable argumentation on the topics. The Boethian claim that the function of a topic is to aid the finding of an intermediate/argument for the two terms of a question<sup>215</sup> can go both ways: either one needs topics to validate every kind of argument (even the demonstrative one) or one tends to formalize the topics are subordinated to the forms set out in the formal logic of the *Prior Analytics*.

Boethius sets the course for the above mentioned interpretations. He coins a notion of the topic which will become a commonplace interpretation in the textbooks from the Renaissance and the Middle Ages. His concept of locus

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believe that the capacity to judge discoveries is a pre-condition for argumentation in general (be it scientific or only dialectical).

213 *PL.*: 1047B11–13.

214 Pinborg, 1969, 157–178.

215 *Ibid.*, 1051 A2–3: “nihil est aliud argumentum quam meditates inventio[...].”

advances the revival of ancient topical and rhetorical traditions: the topos as a *maxima propositio* and as a *differentia*. The topos is dealt with by Boethius both in the first book of his ICT and, even more extensively, in his DTD. I will first refer to fragments of the first work and afterwards cite the relevant paragraphs from the second. I will limit my inquiry to the elements which have enjoyed explicit attention by Boethius' medieval and early modern successors, although, admittedly, each of the following aspects deserves a study of its own.

### 2.6.2 Ratio quae rei dubiat faciat fidem

From the passages cited above it has become clear that, when commenting on Cicero's *Topica*, and explaining what he means by topic, Boethius refers to strategies of finding arguments for probable reasoning, as distinct from those fit for demonstrative deduction. The key to this interpretation of Boethius is, as Eleonore Stump has pointed out, Boethius's notion of "belief" (*fidem*).<sup>216</sup> Boethius believes that Cicero is concerned with revealing an art which facilitates finding arguments in the sense of reasons that produce belief regarding something which is in doubt. I believe it is important to bear this context in mind, since Boethius is not always very clear in explaining whether he discusses certain, necessary knowledge, or knowledge which rests on general or expert opinion. This was made explicit by Aristotle when he differentiated between demonstrative and dialectical syllogisms. Boethius' interpretation, just like the differentiation made above between topical and necessary discoveries, is not always as clear-cut:

In Aristotle's *Topics*, as we have observed, maximal propositions, that is, universal and most known propositions from which the conclusion of syllogisms is derived [*maximas, id est universales ac notissimas propositiones*], are called topics. Because they are maximal (that is, universal), they embrace other propositions within themselves as place embraces bodies; because, however, they are most known and manifest, they furnish belief for questions and in this way contain proofs for things that are uncertain. Sometimes, we observe, maximal propositions inhere in syllogisms and argumentations themselves; other times however, they are not contained in argumentations themselves but nonetheless supply force to them.<sup>217</sup>

216 Stump, 189–190, 2004: "[...] it is important to notice that Boethius defines an argument in psychological rather than logical terms: an argument, he says, is what produces belief regarding what was in doubt. The word to emphasize here, I think, is "belief": the dialectician's purpose is to produce belief. The aim of the questioner in a dialectical disputation is to get the answerer to agree to the questioner's thesis; both the questioner and the answerer work at producing conviction for their positions."

217 *Ibid.*, 33.

While Eleonore Stump emphasizes the psychological aspect of the function of dialectical argument, Niels Green-Pedersen claims that the self-evidence of the maxims does not rest on psychological elements, since the maxims are treated with respect to other sentences and contain them as physical places contain bodies. According to Pedersen, maxims turn out to be principles by which other sentences can be proven which function as conclusions in arguments with comparison to the maxims. And from the passage quoted above, Pederson argues that Boethius confuses the prerequisites of two different types of reasoning: demonstrative and dialectical, and turns the starting points of dialectical reasoning into axioms or *per se notae*. Pederson claims that the sentences which Boethius talks about here can be also found in his *De Hebdomanibus* where Boethius, talking about common conceptions of the mind (*communes animi conceptiones*), identifies them with statements which anyone approves or accepts, and he gives the same example as for one of his topics: “If you take equals from two equals, the remainders are equal.”<sup>218</sup> I have shown above that Aristotle is himself avoiding a decisive stance on these principles and they seem to belong to dialectic first and foremost, and deemed as common, but only analogically so, as they are employed in various sciences and take over the specific nature of the scientific form of reasoning thereafter.<sup>219</sup> Pederson suggests Boethius may have layered the Aristotelian source with the Stoic understanding of the *koinai ennoiai* (*common conceptions*).<sup>220</sup> Whatever his actual source, Boethius’s examples of maximal propositions are varied and do not reduce themselves to Aristotelian “axioms”. Here is such an example taken from Boethius DDT:

Suppose there is a question whether rule by a king is better than rule by a consul. We will say this: a rule by a king lasts longer than a rule by a consul, when both are good; but a good that lasts longer is better than one which lasts a short time; therefore rule by a king is better than rule by a consul. This argumentation contains its maximal proposition that is, its topic, which is: *Goods that last a longer time are of more worth than those which last a short time*. This is so known that it needs no proof without and can itself be a proof for other things.<sup>221</sup>

This proposition, from which, according to Boethius, the argument arises to settle the question at hand, bears no similarity to the nature of an Aristotelian axiom. It is very similar to the Aristotelian strategy-and-principle examples and

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218 Green-Pedersen, 1984, 61.

219 See 3.2 above.

220 The common notions are conceived as principles of ordering the universe which are generated in the human mind by sense-perception. Boethius probably follows the Ciceronian reinterpretation of the common notion as independent of cataleptic perceptions (sense-perceptions which are caused by an external object). For a detailed examination of Stoic-Ciceronian epistemology see Hankinson, 2002, 59–84.

221 *DTP*, 2004, 46–47.

thus, Green-Pedersen admits, very few of the actual examples of the DDT qualify as axioms. Boethius even distinguishes between necessary and probable axioms in the ICT.<sup>222</sup> I don't find it surprising that Boethius is not settled on the definite nature of the topics-as-principles. Aristotle himself was, as far as we know, and as has been suggested above, rather vague regarding the nature of the principles, especially the common ones. If there are some things which are themselves readily believable and do not need further proof they are just these kinds of maximal proposition which are drawn on in argumentation for producing belief. How exactly they have been acknowledged and taken as certain Boethius does not say. But we may assume, that he knew Aristotle's *Organon* well enough and the Aristotelian distinction between demonstrative and dialectical reasoning to keep to it, even when he does not explicate it, in his paraphrases or citations of the Greek philosopher. Moreover, the passages cited above from his ICT testify to the fact that he distinguishes, along Aristotelian lines, between necessary, readily believable and sophistical arguments. Some maxims might just be as problematic for Boethius as they have been for Aristotle and he found it difficult to attribute them to one specific category. As such, they are both primary and persuasive at the same time. Furthermore, Boethius adds to this notion of the topic as principle his understanding of the topic as a *differentia* in what can be understood as an endeavor to sort out, order and simplify under specific headings the vast number of maximal propositions which are found in arguing for or against a problem.

In one way a topic, that is, the foundation of an argument, is said to be a maximal and principal proposition furnishing belief for other propositions. But in another way the *differentiae* of maximal propositions are called topics and they are drawn from the terms that make up the questions. These must be discussed next. There are many propositions which are called maximal, and these differ among themselves; and all the *differentiae* by which they differ among themselves we call topics. [...] The topics which are the *differentiae* of maximal propositions are found to be fewer [...], and those things whose number are not so great that they can rapidly escape the memory of the student can easily come within the scope of the science.<sup>223</sup>

When Boethius says that the *differentiae* are drawn from the terms of the questions he means that one needs to be acquainted with the structure of predicative questions: which are concerned with whether particular predicates inhere in particular subjects and with their various inherence modes (i.e. the predicables). *Differentiae* are topics either taken from the subject and predicate (regarding its substance, the signification, the whole, the parts, the causes) or

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222 ICT, 34: "Whoever reads through Aristotle's *Topics* in Greek or in our translation will find that those propositions which are maximal, universal, known and either necessary per se or readily believable per se are there called by the name 'topics'".

223 DTP, 2004, 48.

taken from without (from judgment<sup>224</sup>, from similars, from what is greater, from what is less, from proportion, from contraries, from transumption) or situated as intermediates between the previous two (from conjugates, from division). The following example will illustrate that Boethius believes that the *differentiae* can be drawn from dialectical questions:

Suppose there is a question whether trees are animals and suppose there is a syllogism of this sort: an animal is an animate substance capable of perceiving; a tree is not an animate substance capable of perceiving; therefore a tree is not an animal. The question has to do with genus, for the question is whether trees should be put under the genus of animals. The topic which consists in a universal proposition is this: that to which the definition of the genus does not belong is not a species of the genus defined. The higher differentia of the topic, which is nevertheless called a topic: *from definition*.<sup>225</sup>

The second book of the DTD displays the topics by means of *differentia* and *maxima propositio* along Themistian lines (*Sed quoniam divisio Themistii patefacta est*). The third book is concerned with presenting the Ciceronian list of the topics and with demonstrating the actual agreement between the two divisions.<sup>226</sup> Surprisingly, following the structure of Cicero's *Topica*, Boethius dedicates the fourth book of the DTD to rhetorical invention, making a cut between dialectic and rhetoric and reversing, as it were, the assimilation of dialectic into an encompassing art of rhetoric. The fundamental difference between the topics of dialectic and that of rhetoric displays the difference in subject of the arts. In Boethius's words, "the dialectical discipline examines the thesis only [...] the rhetorical on the other hand investigates and discusses hypotheses".<sup>227</sup> Thus, dialectical theses are both suited for theses and hypotheses, whereas the rhetorical topics are only suited for hypotheses and come from the attributes of persons and actions, respectively circumstances of persons and actions.<sup>228</sup> Interestingly enough, Boethius grounds this classification on Cicero's early work, *De Inventione*, from which Cicero explicitly distance himself in the *De Oratore*.<sup>229</sup> Irrespective of Boethius's own purpose in carefully distinguishing dialectic and rhetoric – which we can only speculate about, this move is consistent with his convergence of demonstrative and dialectical reasoning and their separation

224 *DTP*, 1199C12–14: "Restat is locus cum extrinsecus dixi assumi, hic iudicio nititur et auctoritate, et totus probabilis est, nihil continens meccesarium".

225 *DTP*, 2004, 49.

226 Helpful visualisations of the two lists are given in *DTP*, 2004, 74 and Green-Pedersen, 1984, 55–57.

227 *DTP*, 2004, 79.

228 *Ibid.*, 89: Boethius enumerates, following Cicero, the following circumstances of action: name, nature, mode of life, fortune, studies, luck, feelings, disposition, purpose, deeds and words. Also, "What, why, how, where, when, with what means" are included by Boethius under the category of actions.

229 *De Orat.*: I.5.

from reasoning based on circumstantial knowledge, like it is the case with rhetoric.

It has become clear by now that a paradigmatic change has taken place somewhere between Aristotle and Cicero, and that Cicero inherits the concept of locus as index which later becomes a "differentia" in Boethius's interpretation, no longer corresponding to the instruction-general proposition(principle)-scheme. This change had already been endorsed by Theophrast. Boethius is thus integrating into his commentary a whole area of traditions. First of all he appeals to the Theophrastian-Themistian-locus-as-principle-and-differentia tradition which had clearly influenced the Ciceronian interpretation of dialectic. Moreover, Boethius is further emphasizing aspects which will live a life of their own in the medieval and early modern reflections on logic, theory of cognition, epistemology of the sciences and argumentation theory. These aspects refer to the formal dimension of topical argumentation, the sources of dialectical knowledge (opinion, sense-perception, and authority), the nature of dialectical principles, and the relationship between words, concepts and things. The latter will weigh heavily on the revival of topical argumentation in the Renaissance.

## 2.7 Developments of the Topics in the Middle Ages

All the aspects implied and touched upon by the doctrine of the topics and mentioned above have fallen under the focus of medieval philosophers. It goes far beyond the purpose of this study and knowledge of its author to handle each of the enumerated subjects. Thus, I will only give a general and short overview on the understanding of dialectic and the topics/loci in the Middle Ages while referring in the footnotes to separate valuable studies that have singled out the specific medieval views on the topics. Briefly, I will also provide an insight into what becomes the traditional account of topics, imparted in the art faculties of universities starting with the thirteenth century. This account is rendered in the *Summulae Logicales* by Petrus Hispanus. The *Summulae* remains a known and valuable reference for the later Renaissance works on dialectic, which draw on and react against it to various extents.

2.7.1 Omnis bona consequentia tenet per aliquem locum<sup>230</sup>

Boethius has been understood by Marc Cogan to have effected the second “semantical revolution” in the transmission of the *locus* (the first one was achieved by Cicero), the Latin rendering and the meaning of which was rapidly assimilated, and dominated the entire period of medieval scholasticism up to the works of Lorenzo Valla, Rudolph Agricola and beyond.<sup>231</sup> Cogan believes, and I think he is right in pointing out, that the Peripatetic tradition of dialectical reasoning and topical techniques that was bound to a context of problem-based discourse and probable argumentation, has been fundamentally shaped first by Cicero and thereafter by Boethius in what can be regarded to be two distinct and perhaps opposite ways. The expositions above offer an overview of the change the Aristotelian dialectic and its topical content has undergone in the hands of the Romans. The specific understanding of the *locus* which Boethius transmits to the Middle Ages is that of the *place* as guarantee for the *force* of an argument<sup>232</sup>. By force I mean both validity and soundness of an argument.<sup>233</sup> If what Boethius called *differentia* is an instrument for the systematization of the loci, his *maxima propositio* is what legitimizes the inference. Ideally, it is a general proposition which refers to the relationship between the terms of the propositions taken as predicables. This proposition is not directly bound to the dynamics of discourse and its relationship to specific examples, as we have seen was the case in Cicero’s *Topica*, is that of general law to the particular instances falling under it. While Cicero’s *sedes argumenti* might legitimately be compared to the *differentiae*, the medieval philosophers are much more interested in the logical form of a dialectical argument and in the nature of the inference. Thus, they are much more concerned with judgment – with dialectical reasoning as a syllogistic construction – than with the inventive aspects of the topics, especially after the

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230 *De Log.*, 75.

231 Cogan, 1984, 163–194. For the Boethian reinterpretation of the Ciceronian topics and the tension between form and matter of topical invention see Leff, 1983, 23–44.

232 Boethius’s textual influence extends to the middle of the twelfth century, when Aristotle’s works gradually become available in Latin to the scholars of European universities. These works determine the Aristotelisation of the curriculum. According to Green-Pedersen, there are still 12 extant commentaries of the DTD in the twelfth century, which do not include the fourth book of the work. In the thirteenth century, however, only five commentaries on the DDT are extant, and they are replaced in time by the *Tractatus* of Peter of Spain, which was introduced as the basic manual of dialectic/logic in the arts faculties. See Green-Pedersen, 1984, 125.

233 By force of a statement, Stephen Toulmin, whose understanding I am following here, defines the practical implications of its invariants (like modal terms or all-terms), and thus, refers to what can be called its “general” or “formal” description (in Rapp’s understanding). See Toulmin, 22003, 28–33 and 104–105.

advent of the Aristotelian *logica nova*.<sup>234</sup> That is why, the *locus* as a guarantor of inference is what concerns them most.

The questions that preoccupy them the most are: What is the nature of the locus? (material or logical), what is the relationship of the locus to the things it is referring to? (the problem of first and second intentions) and is there a way to formalize the relationship between the things/concepts that the locus is representing without having to take semantics into account? In the early and high Middle Ages, loci are treated in relation to hypothetical and categorical syllogisms (e.g. in Garlandus *Compotista's Dialectica*). Also, their nature and their relation to things is inquired into and understood in the context of a general reflection on common signs and concepts. According to Green-Pedersen, dialectic – as the art of topical inference – is both regarded as distinct from demonstrative sciences, in that it operates with second intentions which accidentally belong to things, and seen as a part of logic, to the extent that it becomes identified with logic as a whole. Thirteenth century logicians do not think that the axioms of the demonstrative sciences and the maxims of the topics are sentences of different nature. On the contrary, it happens rather often that our authors use the two terms “axiom” (*dignitas*) and “common conception of the mind” (*communis animi conceptio*) synonymously with maxim.”<sup>235</sup> This testifies to the Boethian heritage of the understanding of the *topos*. Also, the endeavor to inquire into the nature of the common conceptions taught by the art of dialectic, and to explain its relationship to metaphysics and the demonstrative sciences, is a mark of the progressive integration of the Aristotelian works into an already existing Boethian and Ciceronian tradition. But the theory of the places presents itself as especially problematic because its two dimensions: the nature/force of the locus and the inference established thereby: in Green-Pedersen's words: “The premises of the arguments of the topics are plausible [...] Qua inferences, however, the arguments are necessary.”<sup>236</sup> This ambivalence of the locus placed in the context of a specific development of medieval logic, which Alan Perreiah has called a

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234 While the *logica vetus* consists mainly of the works of Boethius, Porphyry, Martianus Capella, Isidor, Augustine and Pseudo-Augustine, and to other commentaries on Stoic logic, the *logica nova* is the name given to the collection of the Aristotelian treatises on logic (*Prior ad Posterior Analytics, Topics and Sophistical Refutations*). These two collections of logical writings were known and taken heed of by Renaissance Humanists. What the Humanists did not discuss but relentlessly dismissed and criticized was the *logica moderna*, consisting in medieval accounts of logic such as theories of supposition and appellations, and treatises on consequences and obligations. While these new writings are inspired by the older works of the Aristotelian and Stoic tradition, they are considered original developments of medieval logic. For a thorough exposition of the works included under the classification listed above and a detailed inquiry into the development of logic and semantics in the Middle Ages see Pinborg, 1972. See also Gombocz, 1997, 332–333.

235 Green-Pedersen, 1984, 240.

236 *Ibid.*, 338.

“theory of logical form”<sup>237</sup>, determines the shift of focus on the latter, inferential aspect of the locus. In contrast, a rhetorical tradition, as that revived in the Renaissance commonplace books by the reassessment of Ciceronian rhetoric, will lay special emphasis on the locus understood as common maxim or even as a common precept in the form of a sentence, a proverb, a memorable assertion. Representative of the medieval teaching of the topics in the context of logic is, among other works, Peter of Spain’s *Summulae Logicales* (1246), which has enjoyed great success and was the subject of several commentaries after its publication. It was widely used as the dialectic textbook in the universities until the first half of the sixteenth century and, in some places, even as late as the seventeenth century<sup>238</sup>.

Treatises like the *Summulae*, which I will take a closer look at below, tend to follow the order of the *Organon* and include a book on the topics which resemble the Boethian classification of topics. Later endeavors to further formalize the topical inference rules lead to the integration of the loci in what is called the doctrine of consequences presented in works such as the treatise on Arguments included in William of Ockham’s *Summa Logicae* and Walter Burleigh’s *Tractatus longior*.<sup>239</sup> Here the topics are treated as formalized rules guaranteeing the passage from antecedent to consequent, e.g. in William Ockham:

Negatively from a distributed superior to a distributed inferior there is a simple consequence. No man is running, therefore no white man is running. No animal is running, therefore no ass is running.<sup>240</sup>

At this level of formalization the actual origin and function of the topic is lost together with its material basis. Ockham is anxious to crystallize a purely logical law of *modus ponens* out of the genus-species relationship that holds on a semantical level. This is also due to the fact that Ockham tries to keep evidence and plausibility separated from inferential validity.<sup>241</sup>

Thus, what the tradition of the topics in the high and late Middle Ages amounted to was the consideration of the topic as rule of inference. This is due, as I have remarked above, to the interest of medieval logicians, later harshly criticized by Humanists, in the logical rules which govern natural language. But how exactly the doctrine of the topics could fit the doctrine of the *Organon*, and how it differed from the formal criteria of inference which was granted to syllogism

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237 Perreiah, 1982, 14.

238 Jardine, 2009, 19.

239 Stump, 2008, 294–299.

240 William Ockham in Bird, 1962, 318.

241 According to Green-Pederson, Ockham ascribes plausibility not to the sentences belonging to a dialectical argument but to our approach towards them: sometimes we accept plausible arguments in the same manner as we accept demonstrative ones. This implies that truth or falsity are, to some extent, solely in the eyes of the beholder. See Green-Pederson, 1984, 304.

(understood as “figured form”) were questions which remained a problem with no definitive solution until the end of the Middle Ages. Afterwards, this problem dissolved or was rather invalidated by the rhetorical reappropriation of the topics, as will become clear in the last part of this chapter. Debates concerning the nature of the locus (as a sign of contingent characteristics of the thing signified), and its status as general concept (as belonging to the realm of universals and second intentions rather than to that of things) remain tentative and unresolved. For those thinkers who at least partially draw on Aristotle, and are committed to the concept of demonstrative knowledge when dealing with logic as a ‘science’, dialectical reasoning represents rather a marginal component of a general theory of knowledge and cognition.<sup>242</sup>

### 2.7.2 Summulae Logicales

As Lisa Jardine has pointed out, the *Tractatus* of Peter of Spain, later known as the *Summulae Logicales* is a course of technical training concerning the analysis of terms, propositions and argumentation forms with the purpose of bestowing on the student of the arts faculty the capacity for scholarly and public disputation.<sup>243</sup> It mirrors the structure of the Aristotelian *Organon*, to the extent that it considers types of propositions (treated in *On interpretation*), terms (predicables, predicaments (categories) and postpredicaments – discussed by Aristotle in *Categories* and *Topics*) the doctrine of the forms of syllogisms (as presented in the *Prior Analytics*), topics and sophisms (*Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*) and lastly, to the *parva logicalia*, a set of techniques developed by medieval philosophers dealing with problems such as the denotation and connotation of terms.<sup>244</sup> Peter's approach offers a valuable insight into an attempt to deal with language and its components (terms) as the main vehicle of signification, understood separately from an analysis of scientific demonstration, prerequisite metaphysical assumptions, and cognition theories. It rests, nevertheless, on an assumed relation between language and the world which, in the context of the treatise, does not require questioning. This might be a reason why Peter of Spain claims to deal with “dialectic” and not “logic” in his treatise. He is only interested in the linguistic and logical components and techniques of argumentation and might explicitly use dialectic as a notion to make this clear. Thus I regard Jardine's depiction of the pedagogical function and purpose of the

242 Passnau, 2009, 357–368.

243 Jardine, 2009, 20.

244 A late medieval work dedicated to the *parva logicalia* and representing the leading textbook of its day in the fifteenth and sixteenth century was Paul of Venice's *Logica Parva*. For background on Paul of Venice see Perreiah, 1967, 450–461.

treatise as a more plausible explanation for Peter of Spain's employment of the notion of "dialectic" than Walter Ong's claim that Peter of Spain offers a confused jumble of dialectic and logic<sup>245</sup>. However, I do agree with Ong on the fact that Peter of Spain was writing for young boys in need of elementary knowledge of logic and that is why his actual examples narrow down to perfect deductions, which Ong calls "scientific certainties".<sup>246</sup> As will become clear, Peter does focus, in his treatise on the topics, on the logical rules which justify the inference, trying to reduce imperfect syllogisms, which might be based on topics, to a perfect categorical form.

Some centuries in advance, Peter of Spain can be seen to do the Renaissance Humanists a big favor in his introduction to his *Summulae* where he writes: "Dialectic is the art facilitating an approach to principles of all methods. So in acquisition of sciences, dialectic should be first."<sup>247</sup> This will be a known paraphrase in Philipp Melancthon's dialectic and he too will have succeeded a "semantical revolution" by referring exactly to the definition of Peter of Spain and trying to express thereby a completely different meaning of the notion of "dialectic". This is not a novel assessment, Aristotle had expressed it in the *Topics*<sup>248</sup> as one of the most puzzling statements regarding the function of dialectic and its relationship to the sciences and their principles. I have tried to suggest above that dialectic has a specific approach to the principles and can question them while at the same time denying them the status of first principles. This way, however, dialectic is a method of exploratory discourse. What Peter of Spain, however, has in mind when he insists on the importance of dialectic is first and foremost the central role played by the *ars semocinalis* (an art of discourse), which is taken up by the students of the arts faculty in their first three years of studying the trivium (grammar, dialectic and rhetoric):

This art is called dialectic from 'dia' which means two and 'logos' which means discourse (*sermo*), or from 'lexis' which means reasoning (*ratio*), suggesting the discoursing or reasoning of a pair, an opponent and a respondent in disputing. But since disputation cannot be held without discourse, nor discourse without vocal expressions, since every expression (*vox*) is a sound, we must therefore start with sound as from what is prior.<sup>249</sup>

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245 Ong, 2004, 60–61.

246 Ibid., 62.

247 *Sum. Log.*, 1.

248 *Top.*: 101a35ff.

249 *Sum. Log.*, 1: Intentional or not, Peter of Spain mistranslates the Greek *dialogos* as a speech in which two partners engage. The Greek "dia" is misunderstood as "dio" and brings forth the misconception that dialectic supposes only two partners of discourse. "Dia" actually means "through" and in connection with "logos" amounts to the action of an exchange through reasoned speech.

In the introductory chapter the logician enumerates – starting with voice, continuing with word and speech – all the parts of discourse and their forms which he intends to analyze in the further chapters. Peter of Spain is what Ong calls a manualist<sup>250</sup>, his *Tractatus* is a textbook, and he lists in a systematic and diagrammatic fashion all the instruments and techniques the student is suppose to master if he is to successfully work through his disputational practice.<sup>251</sup> This is also the case with the treatise on topics, which is meant to teach the method of confirming arguments by manifesting their validity by means of maxims and differences. Interestingly enough, the chapter preceding the part on the topics is one dedicated to formal deductive inferences (where the conclusion *necessarily* follows from the premises) and explains the figures and modes of the perfect syllogisms. The chapter on the topics starts with a general assessment of the meaning of “argument” and forms of argumentation. The medieval philosopher understands a topic to be the “basis of an argument, or that from which a suitable argument is derived for a proposed question.”<sup>252</sup> Following Boethius, Peter of Spain differentiates between the topic as maximal proposition and the topic as *differentia*: “a maximal topic is the same as the maxim itself”, his examples are: “every whole is greater than its part”, “whatever a definition is predicated of, the things defined is as well”, “whatever a species is predicated of, its genus is as well”. The *differentia* is “that by which one maxim differs from another”.<sup>253</sup> The classification of the *loci* is also following the Boethian-Themistian partition into intrinsic, extrinsic and middle topics. In order to better understand how Peter of Spain believes that the topics are functioning in argumentation I will give two different examples taken from some of the first topics he lists: from the topic of definition, and from an integral whole. The topic from definition is a topic of the substance of a thing:

The topic from definition is the relation between a definition and the thing defined. It contains four arguments and four maxims. First making the definition subject of an

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250 Ong, 2004, 62.

251 On the origin and nature of disputations as a current practice in the medieval faculties of arts, see Kenny and Pinborg, 1997, 23–26. I agree with the assumption of the authors that the *disputatio* might probably have arisen from the practice of the lecture, and the reoccurring difficulties in the exposition and commentary of the text required clarification and invited to extensive debate. The complicated chains of argument which a *quaestio* commentary provides, parts of which mirror the *disputatio* only indirectly and vaguely, draw on the practice of argumentation described in Aristotle's topics. Also, the *disputatio* is shown to have been already current practice by the time Aristotle's works reached a wide community of Latin scholars.

252 *Sum. Log.*, 51.

253 *Ibid.*

affirmation; second, predicating the definition affirmatively; third making it subject of a negation; and fourth, predicating it negatively.<sup>254</sup>

Peter of Spain restricts the possible arguments which can be validated by means of a topic from definition to four, each of them being based on a maxim of a different form. In the first argument he suggests we must find an affirmative maxim that states the definition as its subject: “A rational, mortal, animal runs, so man runs”. What is the topic from which we can guarantee the inference from the first premise to the conclusion? The topic from definition, together with the following maxim: “Anything predicated of a definition is predicated of the thing defined as well.”<sup>255</sup> The example of argument given is what Peter of Spain defined a couple of pages earlier to be an enthymeme:

An enthymeme is an imperfect syllogism, i.e. a word-group in which, without positing all its propositions, a precipitate conclusion is inferred. For example: ‘every animal runs, therefore this man runs.’ In the argumentation cited, the proposition ‘every man is an animal’ is understood and not put in there, for if it were, it would be a perfect syllogism. Notice that every enthymeme should be reduced to a syllogism.

Peter of Spain explains that, provided one finds the universal proposition, in the required mood, (connecting two terms of the enthymeme: the extreme with the middle), a syllogism would result. His example of the topic from definition, together with various other topics seem to display exactly this way of finding a maximal proposition to sustain the argument and, as it were, complete it as a universal middle. For some arguments however, it is difficult to find middles and maxims that can be brought together with the extremes - into the appropriate syllogistic mood. On the topic from integral whole, he says:

The topic from integral whole is a relation between a thing itself and its part. It is always constructive, for example: ‘there is a house; therefore there is a wall’. The topic here? From an integral whole. The maxim: given an integral whole, any part of it is given as well.<sup>256</sup>

Trying to find the relationship between the extremes (wall and house), suggested by the topic we find the proposition “a wall is a part of a house” which, however, cannot function as a middle because it contains a fourth part, i.e. “a part of” which intervenes as a mediating term between “house”, “is”, and “wall” (“Is” is taken here to be an extreme). The actual middle fitting the transformation into a syllogism is “Every house is a wall”. This premise clearly cannot confirm the enthymematic inference. So, as Eleonore Stump has pointed out, besides ignoring the function of the topic as *differentia* (which seems to be superfluous if

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254 Ibid., 52.

255 Ibid., 53.

256 Ibid., 56.

topics are just instruments for finding middle terms) the topical function of reducing enthymemes to syllogisms does not always apply in the examples given by the thirteenth century logician.<sup>257</sup> The examples picked push the boundaries of Aristotelian syllogism.

So while the maxims are used as general principles and validate enthymematic inferences, the differences are used as indexes which provide the knowledge to use them. Although it might have driven Peter of Spain's project, the reduction of topical inferences to perfect syllogisms did not succeed. What he most certainly intended was to explain topical inferences as instruments for confirming arguments – especially in cases in which the formal constraints of the recognized syllogistic moods did not work. The “power” of the topic as differences is to “disclose” the relationship between things referred to by the middle term and the extreme in the conclusion of an argument. Once this relationship is known, a maxim can be applied either to function as premise or to validate the inference through an appropriate premise. This validation of the inference is treated extensively and without reference to the topics in the later treatises on consequences. The Boethian question that generates the argumentation and its relationship to an argument is lost, particularly because Peter's exposition is a list of already given arguments with a settled number of answers and possibilities of formulating them. His purpose is to teach instruments of analysis and validation of arguments. What Boethius had conceived of as discovery is entirely absent here. Needless to say, any rhetorical flavor of the topics is intentionally avoided. Probable argumentation is not discussed as such, the implication being that arguments from topics are, in a way, as necessary as the formal deductions. In another way, however, they are not, since they rest on actual, but non-essential relations between things. If these relations are taken to be necessary, even in the absence of a direct debate on demonstrative syllogisms, the line between dialectical and scientific arguments is blurred. Why Peter of Spain chose not to discuss problems of scientific truth in a treatise on dialectic as a language-art remains a matter of speculation. He seemed, however, convinced that topical inferences were to be judged according to the standard of the “perfect syllogism”. From the standpoint of the professor teaching a viable and useful logic for disputations and rigorously structured treatises, he was right. What he did not give any attention to, would become the central subject of Renaissance dialectic.

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257 Stump, 2004, 233.

## 2.8 Rudolph Agricola and the all encompassing forms of probable reasoning

### 2.8.1 Melanchthon's encounter with Agricola's dialectic

To understand why and how it came about that in the sixteenth century, Humanist writers have taken the lead in reconceptualizing and rewriting dialectical textbooks, I will offer a short description of how Philipp Melanchthon, whose concept of philosophy I will be focusing on in the next chapters, tells us that he became acquainted with and drew on a specific understanding of dialectic.

In a letter to his readers, which was published as a preface to the collection of Melanchthonian works in Basel, in 1541<sup>258</sup>, Melanchthon narrates in retrospective how his first edition of rhetoric and dialectic came about. It is a story about dissatisfaction with the way he himself had to conduct his studies, and afterwards teach, and about his rather strained than anxious endeavors to improve this pedagogic fault. After visiting the Grammar School in Pforzheim Melanchthon writes that he had been sent to university (*Academia*) where, however, he was only taught garrulous dialectic and very little physics. Thus, he began to leisurely study the poets, historians and fable-writers and gradually became acquainted with the old authors, while doubting the usefulness of the doctrines which he was actually being taught.<sup>259</sup> Melanchthon narrates that during his studies, Agricola's work on dialectic had been edited (around 1515–1516) which the Dutch Humanist had already completed in 1479. Melanchthon receives the work of Agricola as a present from his friend Oecolampadius and feels impelled by the doctrine thus learned, to look further into the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes. He discovers thereby that he understands the orations much better and finally grasps their usefulness. Because he had been drawn to the practice of teaching, by nature or by chance (*seu natura, seu fato*), he starts teaching, even before he is himself fully equipped with the appropriate knowledge to do so. Eventually, he says, he is convinced by his friends to publish that what they had debated on merely on the occasions of familiar gatherings. Although Melanch-

258 CR 4: 715–722: *Epistola Philippi Melanchthonis de seipso et de editione prima suorum scriptum.*

259 CR 4: 715–716: “Haec me consuetudo paulatim deduxit ad autores veteres. Ab his cum sumerem verba, et tamen de stylo nemo quicquam moneret, et nos adollescentuli sine delectu omnia evolveremus, imo magis recentia, ut Politiani et similia quaedam, amaremus, oratio mea quasi colorem inde ducens, magis hos refert duriores et horridiores scriptores, quam veterum venustatem et nitorem. Ideo etiam fiebat, quia non intermisi illa quaecunque *philosophumenos*, quae cum celeriter percepissem, vel exhaussissem potius, videremque ab iis qui tradebant non intelligi, propterea quod otiosi in scholis et in umbra, non Republicam, non forum, non Ecclesiasticas pugnas ullas viderant nec legerant oratorum praelia, coepi ipse mecum animo quaerere de usu praeceptionum.”

thon writes that his first textbooks had been hardly based on a thorough and careful examination of the treated subjects, he nevertheless believes that a change was necessary. He had felt that not only the trivial arts had been befallen with labyrinths and nonsense but that ignorance inhered in the sciences whose teachers were distinguished by honorary titles. Thus, the works on dialectic and rhetoric emerge.<sup>260</sup> From Melanchthon's letter we learn that Agricola's work was known by the time the young student started to practice his own writing skills. He either explicitly mentions Agricola in his textbooks on dialectic and rhetoric or adopts the Dutch philosopher's views, while integrating them into a melange of various other ancient, medieval and Humanist conceptions, which he skilfully arranges to fit his project of reforming the language arts. This will become clear from the next chapter which is dedicated to Melanchthon's concept of dialectic and rhetoric.

## 2.8.2 Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica*

Rudolph Agricola's view on dialectic spread among Northern European Humanists in the first decades of the sixteenth century. The author of *De Inventione Dialectica* did not live to see it flourish as one of the most popular textbooks of dialectic both on the Continent and on the British isles.<sup>261</sup> But the influence his views exerted is tremendous. In the following I can only summarize the aspects which have made his work interesting for the young Melanchthon, who was struggling with the teaching practice of his time. Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* appears in the editio princeps in Löwen in 1515, thirty years after Agricola's death. His work is what Risse calls the foundation of the rhetorical dialectic (*Rhetorikdialektik*) in the sixteenth century<sup>262</sup>. A closer look at the structure of the work, summarized in Peter Mack's thorough study on Lorenzo Valla's and Rudolph Agricola's understanding of dialectic<sup>263</sup> and Lothar Mund's analysis of

260 CR 4, 716: "Cumque seu natura seu fato aliquo ad hanc scholasticam, militiam traheret, et docere prius alios coepissem, quam ipse didicissem, impulsus sum a commilitonibus, ut ea, quae in familiaribus colloquiis disserentem audierant, ederem. Ita nati sunt libelli Dialectici et Rhetorici, casu magis et quonam iuvenili studio, quam re satis cogitata. Si quis autem meminit, quales labyrinthi ac tricae fuerint in Dialecticis, qui tunc soli legebantur, quanta incitua non solum linguarum et historiarum, sed etiam erarum artium, quarum titulis erant ornati Praeceptores, is, si de studiis recte iudicate, fatebitur tunc quidem emendationem scholarum fuisse necessariam, quam utinam illi ipsi censores nostri, qui nunc nos accusant aut instituissent ipsi, aut melius gubernassent."

261 Risse, 1964, 15–25; Jardine, 1974, 31–62. Ibid. as cited in 2. On the English reception of Agricola's theory of invention see McNally, 1968, 166–177; Mundt, 1994, 108–117.

262 Risse, 1964, 14ff.

263 Mack, 1993.

the work<sup>264</sup>, provides a better understanding of why Renaissance scholars unanimously agree on the so-called *rhetorical turn* in Agricola's work.<sup>265</sup>

*De inventione dialectica* (DID) is divided into three parts (books), dedicated to (1) the matter of dialectic: the *quaestio* and its subordinated possible *quaestiones*, (2) the instrument of dialectic: speech, in its continuous and contiguous form, as well as in its fragmented appearance, focused on argumentative exchange. Lastly, Agricola dedicates the last book of his work (3) to discussions on moving, pleasing and copiousness (*copia*) of speech. Agricola brings together subject matter which was attributed to dialectic (the topics and argumentation forms) and explicitly rhetorical elements, like the theory of the *status causae*, the subject of the disposition of a speech, the theory of affects, and the rules of stylistic disposition. Peter Mack has shown that Agricola draws on various sources like Aristotle's *Organon* (mainly his *Topics*, *Rhetoric*, *Posterior Analytics* and *Categories*), Cicero's *Partitiones Oratoriae*, Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria*, the Pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and the Boethian commentaries on the topics.<sup>266</sup> Mack has also displayed a comparative list<sup>267</sup> of subjects and their sequence in the textbook of Peter of Spain and Agricola's *DID* which shows that

Agricola's structure is quite unlike the traditional organization of either subject. It was not a question of altering or adding to an existing structure (as it was with [Lorenzo] Valla); Agricola's plan is entirely new.<sup>268</sup>

Thus, before taking a closer look at Agricola's text itself, I would like to give an outline of this new understanding of dialectic. I take this approach to reflect changes which have taken place in the transmission and interpretation of dialectical reasoning in the Renaissance, changes which become manifest in the lengthy and complex treatise of Agricola.

First of all, Agricola's dialectical work is meant as an instrument of pedagogy, as it had been for the medieval logician, Peter of Spain, and for many of his contemporaries. Yet, medieval logic textbook writers like Peter of Spain or Paul of Venice have given a lot of attention to the inculcation of a collection of valid forms of argumentation, pressing on the formal level of the subject they were teaching. They were very concerned with the practice of university disputation and wanted to secure, no doubt, a rigorous and clear method of arguing. Since this method relied on a collection of complex logical and metaphysical assumptions, it could serve as an appropriate and scientific instrument for erudite

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264 Mundt, 1994, 83–146.

265 Schmidt-Biggemann, 1983, 3–15; Cogan, 1984; Mundt 1994, 83–146; Wels, 2000, 187–188; Ashworth, 2008, 637–638; Steiner 2008, 56–61.

266 Mack, 1993, 122.

267 Ibid.

268 Ibid., 124.

debate. Agricola and many of his humanistically oriented peers did not share the fancy for valid, clear-cut and abstract argumentation, and for the preciseness with which language was broken down into its inherent logical rules. Rather, Agricola focuses on the persuasiveness, the credibility and force, as it were, of an argument brought forth in argumentation. Thus, he breathes new life into the pedagogical practice, which, had probably become very weary and difficult, judging by the content of the complex late medieval logical manuals. Phrissisemius, who edited Agricola's work in 1523 had gone so far as to claim that those who expect something useful from Peter of Spain's work are like people striving to extract water from a stone or to get wool from an ass.<sup>269</sup> Wilhelm Risse, who evaluates Agricola's dialectic from the standpoint of the historian of logic writes:

Der Rhetorismus hat wohl den Sprachstil, nicht aber das System der Logik gefördert. In seiner übertriebenen, auf praktische Verwertbarkeit eingestellten Vereinfachung hat er gegenüber der Exegese konkreter Problemlösungen die Untersuchung des logischen Formalismus zu Unrecht vernachlässigt. Auch hat er sich vielfach mit Wohlredenheit stat mit sachlicher Begründung begnügt.<sup>270</sup>

Risse insists on an aspect which has become commonplace in the works of Renaissance history: that Humanist rhetoric obscured and ignored the teaching of formal logic and its purpose. Risse's claim that Agricola favoured elocution in detriment of actual "substance" does not do justice to Agricola's understanding of the relevance of "backing" and "warranting", to put it in Toulmin's terms, for the theory of argumentation he puts forth. Only by looking at Agricola's own rendering of the topics, and by taking into account his views on their nature and function, a deeper understanding can be reached concerning the extent and relevance of rhetorical *wellfittedness* confined within the project of the *DID*.

By uniting persuasiveness and pedagogy, Agricola's dialectic becomes an instrument of teaching the art of argumentation along rhetorical lines. The main instruments of this art become the loci, as a list of indexes, in Ciceronian fashion, and the employment of maximal proposition is relinquished. Thus, the rules of inference are reformulated as the discovery of relations between terms (concepts). These terms are located in a semantical context in which everything which can be predicated of them is listed. The logical step justifying the inference is replaced with an intuitive grasp of relations between terms referring to things and their features.<sup>271</sup>

269 *De Inv.*, 1528, a4v.

270 Risse, 1964, 58.

271 Schmidt-Biggemann (1983, 11) remarks about Agricola's mechanism of "invention": "Dieses Modell arbeitete mit Bündeln möglicher Prädikationen, mit Gruppen, die als Nester von Prädikationen, als Sedes argumentorum aufgefaßt wurden. Und die Gruppenkriterien geben den Namen dieser Nester her: Genus, Species, proprium, Totum, Partes. Alle 24 Topoi von der Kontingenz bis zur Differenz, vom Nomen bis zum Pronunciatum."

While giving up the formalistic endeavours of the medieval logicians and putting the loci to work in constructing and analyzing arguments which refer to rhetorical, historical, poetical, ethical and political subject matter, Agricola reinterprets dialectical argumentation in a rhetorical fashion providing the non-speculative<sup>272</sup> arts with a unitary method of inquiry. What is more, Agricola claims that this rhetorically infused dialectic is to be employed in argumentation, irrespective of the subject matter, i. e. not only in political or ethical debate but also when it comes to questions of natural philosophy and medicine. Agricola announces a unitary manner of knowledge organization, later developed by Philipp Melanchthon and Peter Ramus.<sup>273</sup> While not employing the concept of “method”, Agricola, as Gilbert has pointed out, uses the Stoical notion of “art” to describe dialectic. As Gilbert has convincingly argued, these terms (together with other such as *via* or *ratio*) have been used interchangeably in the Renaissance.<sup>274</sup>

In his *rhetoricization* of dialectic, Agricola, as Lothar Mundt has shown, reduces rhetoric, as an autonomous art, to elocution and action, while invention and disposition are completely taken over by dialectic.<sup>275</sup> In a pragmatic manner of elaboration – that of employment of numerous examples – Agricola discloses one of the uses of dialectic which enjoys a fulminant career in the sixteenth century: that of textual interpretation. Lutz Claren and Jochim Huber have offered a detailed analysis of Agricola’s textual commentary and interpretation of Cicero’s *De lege Manilia*.<sup>276</sup> Logic, reinterpreted as a rhetorically infused dialectic is becoming hermeneutics, because it relaxes its sharpened view, focused on the minute parts of speech and looks at it, as from afar. It becomes aware of the whole body of the speech, its parts, its flow and its persuasive character, its material basis, the auctorial intent, the historical circumstances of the body of argumentation rather than sticking to single parts and minute logical forms. This does not mean that it ignores the physiology of the argument. Agricola was often very anxious to reveal the syllogistic structure behind an argument. But he was not interested in rendering the logical invariables hiding behind the matter argued for or against. He rather strove to show how a methodical sortation of appropriate information can clarify the actual strength of the arguments adduced.

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272 An overview of various classifications of arts and sciences in the Renaissance in contrast to the traditional medieval classification into speculative and practical branches of knowledge is given by Ann Blair, 2007, 287–303.

273 While Blair only refers to the dichotomous method of Ramus (of definitions and divisions), Meerhoff points out that the French logician had taken over much of the conceptual heritage from his German contemporary, Philipp Melanchthon. See Blair, 2007, 291–292 and Meerhoff, 1991, 357–374.

274 Gilbert, 1960, 3–71.

275 Mundt, 1994, 88–89.

276 Claren and Huber, 1994, 147–180.

Finally, after revolutionizing the understanding of dialectic as an art, Agricola also renders an unexpected account of the loci. In particular, what strikes the reader of the DID as exotic for a rhetorical account of dialectic is the explanation Agricola gives for the nature and their origin of the loci, and their relation to the science of metaphysics. I will go into more detail concerning this account of dialectical topics below, and refer to some of the helpful observations of Lodi Nauta, who has studied an earlier work of Agricola on universals and has evaluated the extent to which this work influenced the later account of Agricola's view on the topics.

### 2.8.3 Argumentatio fidem facere conatur

The primary subject of the DID is speech (*oratio*)<sup>277</sup> in the sense of the fulfilled capacity of the reasonable being to inform and teach. There is no speech that does not effect a didactic function in Agricola's view, and even though speech can move and amuse, it does so only secondarily, while it primarily teaches: *posse docere orationem, ut non moveat, non delectet: movere aut delectare, ut non doceat, non posse.*<sup>278</sup> Speech, i.e. language, has also been the matter of the medieval textbook of Peter of Spain, which carefully analyzed the techniques and instruments with which arguments can be built up and broken down into their components, as well as the various ways in which the terms function in propositions and the relations between them. I have insisted on the fact that Peter of Spain was intentionally putting together matter from the *Organon* to improve the disputation skills of the students. Disputations had to follow rules which guaranteed the validity of their arguments. In a way, Hispanus thought, they would also guarantee truth, as long as semantics was fitted to the syntactical level. Agricola brings back an aspect completely absent from Hispanus' work: persuasiveness. In a way, some of the arguments constructed by the rules of the *Summulae* could be persuasive, but they didn't have to, they only had to respect the rules of inference validity. Persuasiveness, however, is understood by Agricola to essentially belong to argumentation: *Argumentationem vero oratione, qua quis rei, de qua re dicit, fidem facere conatur.*<sup>279</sup> Against this understanding of argumentation, persuasive arguments, provided by the loci, are brought forth, for teaching purposes. Agricola believes that the "inventors" of the places have achieved something very useful by bringing about seats of arguments which

277 Agricola uses the rhetorically laden term *oratio* while Hispanus, as we have seen above employed the concept of *sermo* while referring to speech.

278 DID, 10.

279 Ibid.

function like signs which determine our mind to cross over the things themselves (*res ipsas*). These signs offer us insight into what is probable and appropriate to be used in various situations of reasoning and debate.<sup>280</sup> Moreover, the doctrine of the places is not only conducive to a great part of the human studies, but especially to those on which no arts have been transmitted (*quorum nullae traditae sunt artes*), like politics (the examples of Agricola are the questions of right government, war and peace, justice, religion and so on). Agricola invests his work on dialectic with the general assumption that most things are in doubt and there are very few them which stand certain and on their own (*quandoquidem pleraque in ambiguo haerent et dissentientium certaminibus sunt exposita.*)<sup>281</sup> He refers to the scepticism of the Academy, but he might also have been influenced by Cicero in this respect, and his position on the possibility of certain knowledge is one of mitigated skepticism.<sup>282</sup> Whatever his stance on the fundamental capacity of man to acquire secure knowledge, Agricola believes that the doctrine of invention extends to all arts. Dialectical invention provides the arts with their general principles of argumentation and organization: “by teaching the other arts what questions to ask, but leaving it to them to discover the answers.”<sup>283</sup>

We should therefore understand that the subject matter of dialectic is everything concerning which one speaks convincingly, that is, as we have suggested, every question, whatever it may finally be. We must, however, remember that the things concerning which and by means of which we speak, are taken from the individual arts, while the order and method of speaking belongs to dialectic.<sup>284</sup>

Thus, as Mack has pointed out, Agricola believes that both the debater and the textbook writer use the same topics and the same techniques of argument. Agricola assigns to Aristotle a limited view on dialectic, which concerns the practice of debate on issues not yet determined by particular sciences. Aristotle, however, attributes the development of the sciences to demonstration, thus determining the way in which they should be organized and thought, separating the method of demonstration from that of dialectical reasoning. Agricola’s view reflects an important shift in the reinterpretation of the Aristotelian works on reasoning

280 Ibid.: “[...] utilissimum videntur fecisse, qui sedes quasdam argumentorum (qus locos dixerunt) excogitavere: quorum admonitu, velut signis quibusdam, circumferremus per ipsas res animum, et quid esset in unaquaque probabile aptumque instituto orationis nostrae, perspiceremus.”

281 Ibid.

282 On Agricola’s scepticism see Mack, 1993, 177–181. Cf. Jardine, 1977.

283 Mack, 1993, 177.

284 Ibid, 177, Cf. *DID*, 242: “Materiam igitur dialectices sciamus omne id esse, de quo probabiliter est disserere, hoc est, quod proposuimus quaestio omnis, quaecunque demum ea sit, dum tamen meminerimus res, et de quibus et per quas disserimus, ex singulis cuiusque artibus sumi, disserendi autem ordinem rationemque ad dialecticem pertinere.”

forms. In his understanding of Aristotelian apodictical and dialectical argumentation, Agricola correctly renders Aristotle's own program, the way I have understood and reconstructed it at the beginning of the first chapter. But after understanding Aristotle's point of view, and repeatedly taking it into consideration, Agricola intentionally blurs the distinction between apodictical and dialectical reasoning and ascribes to dialectic the task of providing the means of acquiring certainty about any matter whatsoever.

#### 2.8.4 Dialectical instruments of *proof*

There is, no doubt, a shift from absolute certainty and from the focus on speculative knowledge to the appropriateness and persuasiveness of reasoning in Agricola's account. However, in his work, the Dutch philosopher does not focus on rhetorical artifices, but suggests that, to the limited extent that man can acquire knowledge, he is also able to reason accordingly and appropriately in any given situation. This way, the problem of certainty is relegated to the quest for practical knowledge and persuasiveness, and grounded on a moderated kind of skepticism. Also, the formal requirements of *apodeixis* take a back seat. This pragmatic stance is, surprisingly enough, complemented by Agricola's view that dialectic rests on metaphysics, to the extent that definition and division belong to the metaphysical science, which are, afterwards, taken for granted by dialectic in its operations of distinguishing the true arguments from the false: (*Metaphysicen dicunt, a qua dialectice mutuatur ista, quia ad inveniendi rationem sunt accommodata. Utque diccat quid sunt ista, aliena tamen id facit fide: ratio rerum iudiciumque penes illam est*).<sup>285</sup> Agricola, however, does not give any details about how we are to understand the functions, nature and structure of this metaphysical science and how it is related to the art of argumentation. It seems, still, that the truthfulness of the premises is resolved by metaphysics, dialectic only being concerned with establishing a persuasive connection between these premises. A fundamental basis of definitions and divisions is assumed, with which the theory of invention and argumentation works. It is noteworthy that, to Agricola, no particular formal requirements are necessary, and thus, dialectic takes over the functions of the *Analytics*, relocating the commonplace of proof on dialectical ground. As Mack has pointed out, Agricola is more concerned with the uses or argumentation, i.e.

the information which would help one decide what type of form to use according to the material one has invented, and the circumstances of the argument.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> *DID*, 236.

<sup>286</sup> Mack, 1993, 201.

As Stephen Toulmin has shown, the procedures of argumentation need not be arbitrary, only because they are defying the forms of deductive axiomatic reasoning. On the contrary, Agricola is much more concerned with the level of actual persuasiveness and the manner in which argumentative structures can be identified which provide the necessary warrants for determining belief. In this respect, Agricola and his followers are much closer to the “jurisprudential” manner of argumentation, which Toulmin tries to establish.<sup>287</sup> We are, yet, provided with a glimpse into some of Agricola’s metaphysical assumptions, thanks to some of his observations concerning the nature and origin of the loci of argumentation.

Agricola explicitly announces his intent to deal only with the subject of discovery (*inventio*) in his ample work, although he briefly explains that judgment is an important part of dialectic, employed after discovering the *medium argumentationis* for the recognition of its appropriateness for the argumentation at hand (*ea si proba debeat esse*). Also he refers, in the course of his treatise, to several forms of argumentation and prefers especially, the “non-figured” ones, like enthymemes, induction and *exempla*. Even when disclosing a syllogistic structure behind arguments he is analyzing, his focus rests on the material force of the locus-as-middle-term, not on formal validity. Agricola’s interest in the discovery of appropriate inferences is manifest. He believes in the fitness of arguments, and thinks that even though it may be only probable, topical inference must be illuminating for the problem under debate. He refers to Aristotle’s Lesbian rule<sup>288</sup> to indicate that if the found argument is not appropriate, it will only contribute to a sophistical argumentation.<sup>289</sup> In contrast to the authors we have encountered up to this point, Agricola starts the explanation of what he believes a locus to be with a consideration about the way the loci relate to the things they signify. He argues that, given the overwhelming variety and number of things (also their properties and differences), knowing and articulating all of them is impossible (*nulla oratio, nulla vis mentis humanae possit complecti*). However, one can recognize things through the common similarities of their natures (*naturae similitudem*). All of them have a substance, originate from a cause, all of them effect something. These similarities themselves are the loci, which, as soon as we want to consider a thing, are inspected one after the other and provide us with all the information needed to supply our arguments about the thing at hand.<sup>290</sup> This, as I have claimed above, amounts to the construction of

287 See chapter 2.3.4. See Toulmin, 2002.

288 *E.N.*: 1144b26–27.

289 *DID*, 16.

290 *DID*, 18–20: “Velut cum ad considerandam rem quampiam animum advertissemus, sequentes ista: statim per omnem rei naturam et partes perque omnia consentanea et dissidentia iremus et duceremus inde argumentum propositis rebus accomodatam.”

a semantical field which facilitates the rapid discovery of relations between terms. This is the definition of the locus which Agricola gives next:

These similarities have been called loci because they contain everything what can be said about a thing, as well as all arguments, because all instruments of producing belief are stored in them like in a sort of hideaway and vault. A locus is thus, nothing else than a particular sign which a thing has in common with others and by the recommendation of which, whatever is probable regarding a thing can be found.<sup>291</sup>

To Agricola, and this was the subject of intense debate among scholars<sup>292</sup>, the loci seem to be common characteristics which belong to the things themselves, i.e. ontological features. Whether they enjoy an autonomous existence or not is not further explained. By relegating the nature and definition of the locus to metaphysics, Agricola at least hints at a commitment to realism. Lodi Nauta has studied an earlier text of Agricola, probably written during the philosopher's studies at Erfurt and Louvain, before the 1460s. The work is entitled *Singulares aliquot de universalibus* and was incorporated in the edition of the *De Inventione Dialectica* by its sixteenth century editor and commentator, Alardus of Amsterdam. From him we know that Agricola had intended to write a book on universals.<sup>293</sup> In reconstructing Agricola's affirmative answers to the questions, "whether universals are something existing outside the soul" and "whether they are to be distinguished by singulars", Nauta comes to the conclusion that Agricola's realism was probably indebted to the Scotist school (which the Dutch holds in high regards), but that his positions often seems more radical than those of Scotus himself. Also, after comparing Agricola's definition of universals with the topics described in his late and influential treatise on dialectics, Nauta writes:

It may well go too far to say that the universals were transformed into the topics. Rather, the universals became part of the topics – as they had already been in the systems of the topics of his predecessors – just as other general features of things were upgraded to

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291 Ibid., 20: "Haec igitur communia, quia perinde ut quicquid dicit ulla de re potest, ita argumenta omnia intra se continent, idcirco locos vocaverunt, quod in eis velut receptu et thesaurum quodam, omnia faciendae fidei instrumenta sint reposita. Non ergo aliud est locus, quam communis quaedam rei nota, cuius admonitu, quid in quaque rei probabile sit, potest inveniri."

292 Braakhuis, 1988, 239–247; Kessler, 1990, 147–164; Meerhoff, 2001, 351–372; Friedrich, 2002, 369–388.

293 Nauta, 2012, 192. Universals refer mainly to the essential natures of things which are rendered in the Aristotelian tradition of the Middle Ages in essential definitions. It concerns notions of the generic status like genera and species of things. See Gyula, Klima, 2006, 196–207. On page 196, Klima writes: "A philosophically inevitable question thus arises for Aristotelians: what is nature? Is it a reality over and above (or perhaps 'in') the things whose nature it is? Is it a mental construction, existing only in our understanding of things; if so, on what basis is it constructed? This is the medieval problem of universals, or at least one of thinking about the problem."

become a common label to be used by the speaker searching for material to construct convincing arguments.<sup>294</sup>

It is not clear whether Agricola presupposed that a knowledge of the universals is necessary for the understanding of the nature and origin of the topics. Yet, his dialectic insists on the fundamental relationship between topics and things and indeed, seems to integrate for its use, rather than differentiate, between such concepts as can be seen as universals (like genus, species, but also horse and man – as examples of genera and species) and concepts like the topics, which play the parts of general headings under a which a thing or case can be reviewed. Schmidt-Biggemann sees in Agricola's treatment of the topics a dissolution of the ontological structure of the categories and a rhetoricisation of ontological and epistemological aspects. The price, one has to pay, however, for the destruction of a natural and metaphysical order of rigorous categories is, according to Biggemann, the loss of the logical and metaphysical toolkit that not only made sense of the natural world, but guaranteed a regulated access to certain knowledge:

Durch die Erweiterung der Kategorien um weitere Topoi und die Nivellierung des Unterschiedes von Kategorien und Topoi entstand die Uneinheitlichkeit der Topik Agricolas. Seine Topoi vereinigten Konstitutions- und Dispositionsbegriffe in einem Feld ohne ihre scholastische Differenz ernsthaft zu berücksichtigen. Damit wurde auch der Unterschied zwischen einem wahrscheinlichen und einem gewissen Urteil, zwischen sachbezogenem Wissen und psychologischer Überzeugung verwischt.<sup>295</sup>

Since topics represent common patterns and structures, and are applicable to all kinds of subjects, they are able to provide, besides the categorization of semantical relations between terms, an interesting classification-scheme for knowledge in general. This implication is only surfaced by Agricola, in his urge to follow both the conceptual apparatus and the richness of empirical evidence in bringing things together and setting them apart. Thus, Agricola replaces the focus on metaphysics and logic with the less speculative and abstract practice of observation and classification. Marc Cogan, Lodi Nauta and Schmidt-Biggemann have suggested that Agricola's ideas have found a fertile ground in the field-work of the empirically oriented natural philosophers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>296</sup> The far-reaching implications of a topical system of knowledge-organization has been taken up and developed by later Humanists like Philipp Melancthon and Petrus Ramus.

Agricola is acquainted with the concept of the locus in Aristotle, Cicero, Boethius and Quintilian and gives an overview of each. Agricola's own loci are

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294 Ibid., 216.

295 Schmidt-Biggemann, 1983, 8.

296 Schmidt-Biggemann, 1983, 11–15; Cogan, 1984, 193–194; Nauta, 2012, 217.

rendered in accordance with the Ciceronian and Boethian partition into internal and external loci. His external loci are those within the substance (*definitio, genus, species, proprium, totum, partes, coniugata*) and around the substance (*adiacentia, actus, subiectum*). He divides external loci into the cognates (*efficiens, finis, effecta, destinata*), the applicita (*locus, tempus, connexa*), the accidents (*contingentia, pronunciata, nomen, comparata, similia*) and the repugnants (*opposita, distantia*).<sup>297</sup> He is aware of other classifications of the loci and justifies his own by saying that he is, ultimately, only following the natural order of things (*mihi naturam ordinemque rerum sequenti visum est*).<sup>298</sup> Agricola explains what the prerequisites are for the appropriate use of the loci. First of all he insists on the acquaintance with all of the enumerated places, their nature and force (and Agricola does not deem it necessary that the loci should be learned exclusively from his own work). Second he explains the range of their use: the reduction of the argumentations of various authors to the places they had employed. As Peter Mack has summed up,

the student will analyze the arguments found in the best authors reconstructing the argumentative structures implied and labeling the topical relationships underlying them.<sup>299</sup>

Agricola's example is the following:

A philosopher doesn't act right when he sends his wife away. Thus, Cato doesn't act right when he sends his wife away. The middle term here is 'philosopher'. The middle term should be compared with what is applied in the conclusion, not in the proposition. But this is 'Cato'. Thereafter he should verify, if the middle term signifies something that is also contained in the term of comparison or if it lies around it. There is no doubt that 'philosopher' signifies something that lies outside the substance of 'Cato' [...]. 'Philosopher' is not the subject (*subiectum*) of 'Cato', it is also not an act (*actio*), thus it will be an adjacent, since it is around its substance.<sup>300</sup>

Although he relegates solely the *elocutio* (style, ornamentation), delivery, and memory to rhetoric, Agricola, like Cicero, believes that rhetoric does not have its

297 A comparative list with the Ciceronian and Boethian places is given in Mack, 1993, 147.

298 *DID*, 36.

299 Mack, 1993, 138.

300 *DID*, 390: "Philosophus non recte dimittet uxorem, non ergo Cato recte dimittet uxorem: medium argumentationis est ›philosophus‹. Deinde conferatur medium cum eo, quod sumitur in conclusion et in propositione non est sumptum: id est autem ›Cato‹. Tum videatur, significeturne medio aliquid, quod sit in extreme, cum quo confertur, aut extra. Ut ›philosophus‹ significat aliquid, quod est in Catone. Deinde, sitne substantia eius aut circa substantiam. Certum est, nomine philosophi significatur esse circa substantiam Catonis. Sic per reliquos eamus locos, donec ad eum, qui proprius est noster, veniamus. Non enim ›philosophus‹ subiectum est Catonis, non acutus, ergo cum sit circa substantiam eius, adiacens erit."

own loci. Even if the most skilled rhetoricians have also written in their textbooks about places from persons and things (as Cicero in his early *De Inventione*, Boethius in the fourth book of his *DTD* and Quintilian in the fifth book of *De Institutione oratoria*), Agricola believes the orator draws on the same system of invention as the dialectician:

But, because the questions which came about on the forum were such that nothing general can be taught about them, but were driven in every possible direction by passion and rhetorical force, one had to teach a generally applicable method of invention which would fit all the questions.<sup>301</sup>

Agricola, like Cicero, believes rhetorical practice and theory had sprung from natural talent long before dialectic was taught (by Aristotle) as an aid for probable (*probabiliter dicere*)<sup>302</sup> and appropriate argumentation. Thus, Crassus's view is endorsed that natural talent/disposition to elegant speech and practice had engendered the dialectical art and not the other way around.<sup>303</sup> Although Agricola believes that ornament essentially belongs to the art of rhetoric, besides the transparency of the speech and the appropriate disposition, he insists that "all arts use *elocutio* and *inventio*, and thus, things which are common to all can not be attributed to rhetoric alone."<sup>304</sup> Almost all of the subjects previously tackled in rhetoric (invention, disposition, persuasiveness, appropriateness of speech) are now discussed by dialectic. Rhetoric is left with the task of polishing an already well composed speech, so it can appeal to the affects of a partner of debate or to the emotions of a public.

### 2.8.5 Concluding remarks

Rudolph Agricola revives the Ciceronian-Boethian tradition when it comes to the structure of his work: essentially, even if they are formally separated, dialectic and rhetoric are tackled in the same treatise and the examples of Agricola (whether concerning e.g. the illustration of the topics, the part on argumentative techniques, or parts of a speech) are taken from the works of Aristotle, Boethius, Cicero and Quintilian. His interest is focused on invention and his loci are signs of things which provide middle terms for probable (in the sense of appropriate

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301 Ibid., 382: "Cum veniant autem tales plerunque quaestiones in forum, de quibus nihil perpetuum praecipii possit, sed contentione dicendique vi trahantur in quamvis partem, fuit idcirco tradenda communis quaedam inveniendi ratio, conveniens omnibus quaestionibus."

302 On the meaning of the term *probabiliter* see Mack, 1993, 173. I agree with Mack that Agricola understands dialectic as the art of discoursing *probabiliter* which concerns suitable and fitting arguments and also extends to certain arguments.

303 On Crassus's emphasis on eloquence having sprung from natural talent see 2.4.2.

304 Ibid., 380.

and persuasive) arguments. From the example above, which is representative for the ones given throughout his work, we can conclude that Agricola is not concerned with the formal aspects of argument. While he does tackle the main types of argumentation (syllogism, induction, enthymeme and example) he does not discuss the syllogistic modes and the forms of premises. Rather, he emphasizes that most orations are constituted of imperfect arguments and his own examples underscore this view. Moreover, Agricola is concerned with the techniques of deconstructing and constructing arguments, considering their weaknesses and strength. He keeps to his general plan of not dealing with judgment in the traditional way. Agricola's exposition of his own precepts is effectuated on the basis of a vast collection of classical literature. He is very precise in his analysis of ancient examples, fragments of rhetorical and dialectical treatises, parts of historical and poetical works. The assumption underlying his entire work is that argumentation is actual and persuasive speech, mediated by real language, put to the use of transmission of knowledge, i.e. teaching. This language cannot only fail to become reduced to the formal instruments which medieval logic had limited it, it is also tightly bound to the premise of intelligibility of the external world. Its capacity of rendering the unlimited number of things is modest, but ultimately it represents the only way man can achieve acquaintance with the things and communicate this knowledge accordingly.

## 2.9 Conclusion

In the present chapter I have looked at some of the most important authors which have systematized their reflections on various forms of reasoning: scientific, endoxal and rhetorical, in works of various genres: commentaries, treatises, textbooks. I deemed it particularly important to dwell on Aristotle, Cicero, Boethius, Peter of Spain and Rudolph Agricola because of the influence they have exerted on Philipp Melanchthon's own dialectical, rhetorical and philosophical writings in general. While the ancient sources represent the point of departure for his philosophical reinterpretation, Agricola's and Peter of Spain's works are crucial for the development of Melanchthon's concept of method. The *Summulae Logicales* represent the general background of logic education which Melanchthon rejects, but which nevertheless does not cease to exert important influence on his understanding of dialectic. Agricola's *De Inventione Dialecticae* represents the starting point for Melanchthon's own reform project. Some of Agricola's views on the function and uses of dialectic are recurrent in Melanchthon's own works on rhetoric and dialectic, and allow a better understanding of the Humanist program that Philipp Melanchthon stays committed to throughout his career. Others are taken over and given a fully fledged development, like the

didactic, interpretatory and organizational use of the loci. I have given my own detailed interpretation of the parts which I believe have received particular problematization in the Renaissance and which played a key role for the Melanchthonian interpretation. I have thus focused on the discipline of dialectic which, as we have seen, is understood as an art which deals with dialectical reasoning and topical argumentation for Aristotle and his Greek commentators. Aristotle, however, is anxious to show various ways in which forms of reasoning may be differentiated, and why these differentiations make sense. These perspectives are being taken over and transformed, unsurprisingly, into presumptions suiting different projects of dialectic. While Cicero adopts the name of the *regulae* for dialectical argumentation and entitles his work *Topica*, his focus rests on rhetorical argumentative techniques and on subordinating all forms of reasoning to these techniques. This step is tightly bound to his ‘universal’ conception of philosophy. While returning to a more orthodox interpretation of Aristotle, Boethius, drawing on Aristotle’s Greek commentators, puts great emphasis on dialectic as a discipline which teaches forms of probable reasoning, i.e. capable of producing belief. However, this element of persuasiveness is bound to the interpretation of topics as axioms (*maximae propositiones*), which, at least partially, can be understood as evident principles<sup>305</sup>. During the High and Late Middle Ages, dialectic becomes a general name for a theory of argument validity which ultimately rests on the *Prior Analytics* of Aristotle.<sup>306</sup> The debate concerning forms of reasoning, their grounding in different theories of cognition, and their employment in different contexts is sometimes accompanying the treatises on loci. This interest however, gradually disappears in the manuals of the late medieval authors. The approach is different between sophisticated works such as Aquinas’s or Scotus’s Commentaries on various works of the *Organon*<sup>307</sup> and the manuals which represented the student’s standard lectures.<sup>308</sup> The latter emphasize the heuristic role played by logic and not its scientific status. I have

305 On the medieval tradition of understanding topics as axioms or *per se notae* see Frank, 2017.

306 Schüling, 1969.

307 Aquinas and Scotus also treat logic as a science, not merely as an instrument. In the *Prooemium* of the commentary on the Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*, Thomas defines logic as the “ars artium, quia in actu rationis nos dirigit, a quo omnes artes procedunt”. In *Aristotelis Libros Peri Hermeneias et Posteriorum Analyticorum*, 147, Scotus singles out the two ways in which logic can be considered. In *Quaestiones super universalia Porphyrii*, q.I, fol. 87, 2 he writes: “Dicendum quod logica est scientia, quae enim in ea docentur, demonstrative concluduntur sicut in aliis scientiis; [...] Intelligendum est tamen, quod logica dupliciter consideratur. Unomodo in quantum est docens et sic ex necessariis et propriis principiis procedit ad necessarias conclusiones et sic est scientia. Alio modo in quantum utitur ea applicando eam ad illa in quibus est usus et sic non est ex propriis, sed ex communibus, nec sic est scientia.”

308 On the difference in the spread and notoriety of the works see Kenny and Pinborg, 1988, 11–42.

given attention to Peter of Spain's work since his approach was more or less customary in the Renaissance teaching of logic within the faculty of arts. With the *semantical revolution* of Agricola (who was followed by Humanists as Nizolius, Erasmus, Vives and Melanchthon), the important element of speech, of persuasiveness and of informal<sup>309</sup> argumentation become the focus of what is considered by indulgent scholars like Wilhelm Risse, Lisa Jardine, Peter Mack and others as "Humanist Logic".<sup>310</sup> Historians of logic, like Jennifer Ashworth and Wilhelm Risse, however, not only dismiss any positive contribution made by Humanist logic to probabilistic and informal logic, but reject the notion of logic of a Humanist type altogether. In the beginning of her analysis, Ashworth writes: "[...] what emerged at the end of the sixteenth century was not so much a humanist logic as a simplified Aristotelian logic."<sup>311</sup> Her inquiry into texts and commentaries written in the fifteenth and sixteenth century focuses on the extent to which the approach towards logic manifested any continuity with the medieval tradition. Also, her inquiry is driven by the intent to bring forth improvements and developments of the medieval logical theories. Lastly, she wants to discover whether Humanist logic offered any interesting alternative to medieval logic. These questions, which she states at the beginning of her analysis are determined by her definition of logic and the standard of logical techniques with which she confronts the texts she inquires into. This definition reflects the medieval understanding of logic as a highly formalized tool of testing the validity of arguments. Thus, it comes as no surprise, that, at the end of her study, the developments of the fifteenth and especially of the sixteenth century (preeminently in France, Germany and England) seem to be rather signs of "regress" than of any fruitful extension of medieval logic. Even reflections on informal techniques of argumentation, i.e. those defying complete formalization, and thus, eluding the strictures of the syllogism are, according to Ashworth, most often encountered in the works which are

more heavily scholastic and Aristotelian" and which refer, for example, to conditional statements and other types of consequences, and are absent from most of the Humanists' manuals.<sup>312</sup>

Ashworth is right in claiming that the Humanist works did not meet the standard of logic depicted by the medieval textbooks. Her criticism acknowledges the fact that the Humanists didn't share the projects of elaborating a new refined set of argumentation techniques. Thus, they did not write new, separate manuals,

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309 By informal I mean not subordinated to the rules and forms of Aristotelian and medieval syllogistic logic.

310 Risse, 1964; Jardine, 2008; Mack, 1993.

311 Ashworth, 2008, 610.

312 *Ibid.*, 639.

where they presented their new theory of logic, aided by a new terminology, and in distinction from the vast literary and philosophical material they had inherited. They did certainly not inquire into an alternative formalized manner of analyzing arguments and establishing classifications of inferences. They did not write manuals in which they separately deconstructed single arguments and presented thereby the inference rules of a theory of informal argumentation. What they did was to develop a prolific instrument of textual interpretation and practical reasoning moulded on the tradition of the topics: in its Aristotelian-Boethian-Ciceronian form, occasionally hinting on the law-like mechanisms which justify the employment of such topical techniques. So, because the tradition of the topics was already available and had been used so productively in the rhetorical tradition for argument analysis and reconstruction, the Humanists focused on offering a more or less coherent list of topics together with a canon of classical texts. Both topics and literature were deemed sufficient to provide the pupil with the examples and techniques needed for imitating the authors he read. The attention of the Humanists rested on the plausibility and persuasiveness of the arguments and on their pedagogical feasibility. However, as with the different perspectives one can shed on logic and its mechanisms, dialectical doctrine also enjoyed various interpretations. The function of the topics was, to an extent, interpreted and put to work differently by every author that had tackled it. I will return to Ashworth's assessment on Melanchthon in the next chapter, when I will examine his own manner of dealing with the relationship between forms and material of arguments.

In retrospect, we can conclude that the problematic relationship between forms of reasoning is brushed aside by Agricola's view that dialectic deals with both certain and probable matters, even though he is not upholding the same position throughout his work. Agricola turns dialectical/topical reasoning into reasoning *par excellance* and offers a vast amount of techniques with which students, readers, and especially actors entangled in public affairs can develop certain skills of persuasive writing and speaking. His emphasis on natural language, on the clarity achieved by means of eloquence, and on the appropriateness acquired by means of familiarity with the signs of things marks an approach to dialectic different from the one of the medieval "manualist". On the one hand, this approach, shared by Humanists like Lorenzo Valla, Juan Luis Vives and Erasmus of Rotterdam appears as muddling the different levels of philosophical problematization. It questions formal stricture, epistemological and metaphysical order, the operationability of metaphysical categories, and the entire understanding of knowledge-gathering as a specific speculative endeavor. On the other hand, precisely by being so all-encompassing, the critique brings forth shortcomings of the pedagogy of medieval philosophy. Nevertheless, it blurs distinctions and boundaries which were genuinely useful for that particular

paradigm of teaching. Alan Perreiah has shown, by reference to selected pieces of Humanist polemical works, that their critique was mostly disparate and fragmentary and that often, by taking into derision one piece of scholastic dialectical doctrine, like the emphasis on syllogistic forms, the Humanists extrapolated their mocks to the entire practice of scholastic logic. The following excerpt is cited by Perreiah from Juan Luis Vives's work entitled *Against the Pseudodialecticians*:

[Scholastic dialecticians] have invented for themselves certain meanings of words contrary to all civilized custom and usage, so that they may seem to have won their argument when they are not understood.<sup>313</sup>

This emphasis on the artificiality of language and its remoteness from "res ipsas"<sup>314</sup> is a fundamental feature of the Humanist criticism of scholastic philosophy, and will be reiterated and further elaborated by Philipp Melanchthon. The following chapter will offer a detailed exposition of Melanchthon's contribution to the tradition of dialectic and rhetoric in the Renaissance and of his thorough examination of the problematic aspects of these disciplines, encountered in the authors which I have dealt with above.

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313 Juan Luis Vives cited acc. to Perreiah, 1982, 4.

314 On Petrarca's claim that philosophy must return to the things themselves, see Fubini, 2006, 130.

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### 3. Philipp Melanchthon's Dialectic and Rhetoric: his reform of the language arts

#### 3.1 Melanchthon as representative of Northern Humanism: His immediate predecessors

The first half of the sixteenth century was the *heroic* period of northern humanism, both for innovation and for growing influence over the universities. Erasmus was publishing and revising his rhetorical works; Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica* appeared in 1515; Melanchthon began his series of textbooks on rhetoric and dialectic, based on his teaching in Wittenberg in 1519; Sturm, Latomus and others brought the new logical approach to commenting on Cicero from Louvain to Paris, where it completed the eclipse of scholastic logic. Melanchthon was the dominant figure of this period. Unlike Agricola and Erasmus he took a *personal* role in the reform of universities and attracted many direct followers.<sup>1</sup>

As I have suggested in the previous chapter, Philipp Melanchthon inherits the tradition of the various forms of reasonings and their systematic development from the manuals of high and late Middle Ages. We have seen from his dissatisfaction with his studies at Tübingen that he is also a staunch defender of the Humanist program which had spread in the meantime from its Italian cradle and crystallized into what historians usually call "Northern Humanism". In the cited paragraph, Peter Mack identifies the age of the Northern Humanism, as the age of the creation and spread of Humanist Logic and of its *heroes*. The most important German Humanist of the sixteenth century was, according to him, Philipp Melanchthon. In comparison to most of the well-known Humanists enumerated above, Mack is right in observing that Melanchthon goes to great lengths in reforming, not only the language arts teaching method, but the arts curriculum as a whole. He had chosen this path as early as 1517, as I have shown at the beginning of the previous chapter. Both his letters from that period and his inaugural speech from 1518 testify to his plan of recovering the usefulness of the language arts and with their help, reforming the whole structure and content of the other liberal

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<sup>1</sup> Mack, 2011, 104.

arts.<sup>2</sup> His own way of building on and re-thinking the commentary tradition – which he is eager to criticize right at the beginning of his career is indebted to other Humanist projects, like Rudolph Agricola's *De inventione Dialectica* or Lorenzo Valla's *Repastinatio Dialecticae* conceived and subsequently corrected by Valla in the 1540s.<sup>3</sup> These works criticize especially the complex linguistic and formalistic elements of the scholastic-traditional didactic practice. They belong to the genre of complex treatises, not school manuals. Neither Valla nor Agricola are vocational teachers, their works however are ground-breaking to the extent that they provide later Humanists with the appropriate critical tools to transform the teaching and application of traditional logic. I have given a more detailed summary of Agricola's program above because his critique is particularly targeted at traditional logic courses, and thus at the modes in which the dialectical doctrine up to that point had been transmitted. Lorenzo Valla's attack on the practice of school logic is integrated into a broader and more radical critique of school philosophy as a whole, and a detailed analysis of his works would exceed the limits of this study. However, I will refer to him in what follows, because Melanchthon takes over some of the criticism that Valla had expressed against the traditional dialectic tradition. Lorenzo Valla also appears as a controversial figure in the accounts given by historians and philosophers of the Renaissance, because he is taken by some to base his "rhetorized dialectic" on an original concept of semantics. Some of Valla's assertions in his *Repastinatio* have been interpreted this way. Also, the apparent rejection of metaphysical categories and the stress on experiential knowledge (in the sense of common sense practice) and the colloquial manner of expressing it (if one can ascribe the adjective "colloquial" to an artificial language as Latin was to the inhabitants of Europe in the Renaissance) are interpreted, by scholars as not only indicators of critical thinking but also as early occurrences of reflections belonging to ordinary language philosophy. Whether and how Agricola's commitment to an underlying metaphysics for his dialectic and Valla's employment of rhetorical categories in his semantical considerations fit these scholarly assessments will be tackled briefly in what follows. I argue that the following short analysis is important for three different reasons in the context of my study. First of all, it gives a brief exposition of the so-called "rhetorical" turn and its bearing on the dialectic tradition in the Renaissance, to which Philipp Melanchthon is also committed. Second, it discloses the difficulties and obstacles encountered during textual interpretation. Often, merely parts of the works of the Humanists are taken into consideration and their varied and differently assessed allegiance as well as their purpose of writing is ignored. Third, my analysis reveals the intellectual tradition

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2 See chapter 2.2.

3 Nauta, 2012, x–xi.

on which Melanchthon draws and which he himself integrates and reinterprets in his own works. Thus, it sheds light on the extent to which the above assessments can be transferred to Humanist endeavours generally, and thus, to Melanchthon's works.

### 3.1.1 The "Rhetorical Turn": The Procrustean Bed of Renaissance Philosophy

As mentioned above, in the analysis of Rudolph Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica*, historians of logic like Wilhelm Risse, William and Martha Kneale or Jennifer Ashworth<sup>4</sup> have not attributed much relevance to the Humanist conception of the trivium in the Renaissance for the development of logic proper. Also, as Lisa Jardine points out, Humanist dialectics, besides rejecting a formalist approach on the mechanisms of language, also develops a particular concept of "method", which, while it draws on ancient and medieval inheritance and essentially concerns the organization of knowledge, also seems to integrate, albeit not always consistently, the concept of scientific demonstration.<sup>5</sup> While not being a subject of Peter of Spain's manual of dialectic, it is integrated, as shown above, by Agricola in his discussion about forms of reasoning. This is a step which ignores the commentaries of the Greek and Latin authors on Aristotle's *Organon* and which mingles scientific and dialectical forms of reasoning on the grounds of a Ciceronian understanding of philosophy and a concept of truth based on a particular anthropology<sup>6</sup>. A theory of argumentation focused on the persuasiveness of the argument, on the affects of the hearer and on the eloquence of the speaker is one moulded on the functions and techniques of rhetorical argumentation. This approach is welcomed by most of the Humanists, who focus on the functionality and usefulness of language and give less attention to its immutable mechanisms. The Humanists want to draw prudential knowledge closer to logic and link particular judgment to universal precepts, want to teach about the active life and to inculcate moral precepts. To be able to pursue these goals even more appropriately, Humanists, as Oskar Kristeller has shown, extract rhetoric from its medieval moral philosophical context and attribute to it an important position among the trivial arts. Even more so, rhetoric as an autonomous art exerts its influence especially on various genres of literary prose: the

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4 Kneale, 1962; Risse, 1964; Ashworth, 2008.

5 Jardine, 1988, 191–197. For the ancient and medieval sources for the Humanist understanding of method see Gilbert, 1960, 39–66.

6 For the anthropological basis of a "Humanist concept of truth" see Trinkaus, 1983, 207–220. For the influence of an Augustinian anthropology on the Renaissance concept of truth and certain knowledge see also Harrison, 2007, 52–89.

letters, speeches, sermons<sup>7</sup>, history and moral philosophy, where Humanists, strive to fulfill the Ciceronian compilation of eloquence and wisdom.<sup>8</sup> Kristeller believes the impact of rhetoric on various other branches of civilization in Renaissance Europe is in further need of investigation. I not only agree with his conclusion, but indeed, I believe with Keßler, that the enduring turn of rhetoric was that which effects the reconceptualization of dialectic. Keßler writes:

the rhetorical paradigm had redefined the field of dialectics to include excerpting of texts and becoming familiar with the issues the texts were treating, and thus, dialectics was no longer an instrument of contemplative science that had trusted in the possibility of acquiring truth through interpretation of classical texts and reconstruction of their non-contradictory and consistent argumentation. The dialecticians had learned to excerpt the texts, that is, to destroy their texture, select the fragments and create a new order for the pieces selected according to the objectives they wanted to serve and the ideas they wanted to convey.<sup>9</sup>

Agricola's extensive treatise is one example of such a productive manner of applying rhetoric to dialectical argumentation and taking from the ancient authors the fragments which suited his theory of argumentation best. Another original manner of combining rhetoric and dialectic and elaborating the pedagogical and systematic features of the "Rhetorikdialektik" is Philipp Melanchthon's method of teaching, learning and composing scientific treatises in any field whatsoever. This will be elaborated on in the following. That rhetoric had not just disappeared from the landscape of early modern intellectual history in the aftermath of late Humanism, at the end of the sixteenth century, is testified by the ambitious projects of early encyclopedist like Heinrich Alsted, Bartholomäus Keckermann and Johann Amos Comenius. These authors draw on the concept of method which Melanchthon develops from the rhetorical and dialectical heritage of his Humanist precursors.<sup>10</sup>

Before turning to the Melanchthonian project it is, of course, relevant to emphasize, that while bringing together dialectic and rhetoric, argumentation theory and persuasive techniques, and obscuring or even ignoring metaphysics, the Humanists either ignore or tend to mingle subjects which had previously been sorted out into different areas of discussion. These areas concern cognition

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7 Kristeller, 1983, 7–14.

8 *Ibid.*, 18. Kristeller however doubts whether the claim for the union of wisdom and eloquence is often ignored and "wisdom is sacrificed to eloquence and understood in a rather trivial sense."

9 Keßler, 2006, 195.

10 Ann Blair only mentions Ramus as a precursor of the German encyclopedist Heinrich Alsted. It is unfortunately not yet common opinion that Melanchthon had exerted a significant influence on the Ramist reflection of knowledge organization and concept of philosophy. See Blair, 2007; Schmidt-Biggemann; 1983. Howard Hotson, 2007; Steiner, 2008.

theories, logical theories, metaphysical assumptions, anthropological assumptions and other modern regiments of philosophical reflection. Of course, it would be erroneous to assume that epistemology, linguistics, logic, rhetoric and metaphysics had been differentiated in the Middle Ages so neatly as we distinguish them today, and there might be good reasons not to sort them out in this manner. However, a great range of discussions which had been elaborated on subjects of metaphysics, semantics and logic are overlooked by Humanists or intentionally left out of their manuals. Even in the works of the authors like Agricola, Valla and Melanchthon, who attempted a complete renewal of the manner in which philosophy was taught and learned, metaphysical, anthropological and theological assumptions mingle. The views of these Humanists resemble some of the positions held by their peers, their ancient authorities, or their medieval forerunners. Also, these views and considerations are not as clearly and systematically presented as we would wish them to be. Given the great emphasis on the social function of language, inherited from Cicero and Quintilian, and the rejection of metaphysics and theories of cognition, some of the Humanists, in particular Lorenzo Valla, have been interpreted to propound an original view on language. It has been claimed that Valla's view amounts to a sort of relational semantics, in the sense that the meaning of the words employed arises from the dynamics of language use, and any reference to an external world is obscured.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, because of their focus on eloquent language for the appropriate depiction of a "thing" or "matter" (*res*), Valla, Agricola and Melanchthon have been understood to employ a constructivist stance regarding the role played by language in providing meaning.<sup>12</sup> While all three Humanists develop a staunch criticism against the consequences of a metaphysically laden terminology, it is rather the lack of referentiality of scholastic language that they attack, and the absence of common sense and intuitive intelligibility of their lectures. Because they believe that language, the way the scholastic philosophers use it, has lost its function of teaching and its objects of reference, they develop, from rhetoric and dialectic, a method of common-sensical argumentation and pedagogical training. This method takes heed of the classic, i.e. original employment of the terms, and underscores a non-speculative, descriptive and experiential approach to problems. The "*res et verba*" method, i.e. the accumulation of things from classical works of history, poetry, rhetoric and moral philosophy, and their formulation in eloquent Latin and categorization under different headings and in different

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11 Waswo, 1987; The main theses set forth by Waswo are argued against in what I believe to be a very insightful article written by Brian Vickers. His paper offers an inquiry into the semantic theory prevailing in the Renaissance and an exposition of the rhetorical categories employed in the textbooks of the Renaissance dialecticians and rhetoricians, inherited from the ancient Roman Orators. See Vickers, 2002, 287–336.

12 Otto, 2000, 107–115.

rhetorical styles, must not be confounded with the Humanists' theory of language and meaning. Some of the authors do not explicitate any semantics, but use the rhetorical categories as an instrument of teaching and organizing textbooks. Others mingle, like in *Agricola*, the rhetorical categories with the epistemological and logical assumptions. But, as Brian Vickers has pointed out and Lodi Nauta has reiterated, Humanists like *Agricola*, *Valla*, and *Melanchthon* employ a traditional referential semantics inherited from Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*. This theory of meaning assumes that language is a conventional system of signification for the likenesses or images of things which we grasp with our mind.<sup>13</sup> Rather than claiming an indeterminacy of reference, by pointing out the importance of language, the Humanists also point out the importance of the understood matter, the thing/topic/subject cognized. Accordingly, only those who have a thorough understanding of things, will be able to present them fittingly. Words always reflect the order and the appropriateness of understanding, i. e. cognition. In contrast to some of medieval philosophers, the Humanists become acutely aware that whatever we think, it can only exert an effect in the world by being expressed and transmitted. Truth must be sought in the manner of speaking. So, there is indeed a shift of focus in the Humanist's theory of cognition. Instead of suggesting an *adequatio intellectus cum rei*, an adaptation of the mind to the thing itself, thinkers like *Lorenzo Valla*, *Agricola* and *Melanchthon* suggest that thoughts arise as similitudes, "likenesses" of things. These images do not have to pass on any formal identity to the human mind, they only have to present the thing grasped before the mind, which will be afterwards expressed by means of speech. Although language is a powerful instrument which can express this cognition as a likeness, it is a conventional set of signs. The Humanists focus on the correct use of language, in given social, cultural and linguistic environment. Thus, while the Humanists assume the triadic relationship between thing, thought, and concept, and do not doubt the necessity of this relationship, they focus primarily on the important social and pedagogical function of language. After all, it is the only medium of transmitting information and encoding and decoding meaning. Cicero did indeed write that without words the matter cannot have any clarity, but he also believed that the words needed the matter, or they would make no sense.<sup>14</sup> The Humanists emphasized the Ciceronian pragmatism, i. e. the essential use of language for the community. Thus, I endorse Vickers's view that "speech-act theory was prefigured in the Renaissance, but neither was Foucauldian constructivism nor Derridean indeterminacy."<sup>15</sup> From this position the Humanist dialecticians also reflected on

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13 *De Int.*, 16a1–29; Vickers, 2002, 305–320; Nauta, 2009, 54–55.

14 *De Or.*, III 19–21.

15 Vickers, 2002, 325.

the function of rhetoric and dialectic in reading texts, identifying the “things” or matters “at hand”, and presenting them with what Vickers calls “economical relationship between words and things”.<sup>16</sup> That is why, the basic function of Humanist criticism against scholastic language is expressed from a position of textual exegesis. The claim that the understanding of “things” must be complemented with appropriate words is the demand for a contextual, holistic reading of the text. It is a claim for the understanding of function of the language employed, i.e. the intention of the author and its social, cultural and linguistic circumstances. Extrapolated to the domain of three-dimensional things this may mean, as, e.g. in Valla’s case<sup>17</sup>, a close empirical examination and an increased attention given to the manner in which the empirical features relate to each other. Also, it is of great relevance for this approach, to employ a language which does not speculate about hidden, non-intuitive theories of things. This approach seems to be an invitation to return to the “things themselves”, “res ipsas”, as Petrarch had demanded, and seems to imply a re-orientation to empirical investigation. However, this stance is, nevertheless, thoroughly unscientific, in our current understanding of the word. By looking at the manner in which Melanchthon conceptualized and extended his textbooks on rhetoric and dialectic I will attend to these different levels of reflection which have been given particular attention by Melanchthon in his philosophical works. I will deal with Melanchthon’s view on the function of language, and the language arts, his concept of certain knowledge and demonstration, the semantic and rhetorical categories he employs, the metaphysical, epistemological and anthropological assumptions he takes for granted. I will inquire into whether and how they contribute to his plan of reforming the liberal arts, and of developing for this purpose a new method of teaching, and a new concept of philosophy.

### 3.2 The Melanchthonian Project: *Dialectica et Rethorica copulatae sunt*

In the second part of the previous chapter I referred to Melanchthon’s inaugural speech, held at Wittenberg in the autumn of 1518. Melanchthon emphasizes the kinship between dialectic and rhetoric by claiming that their functions overlap:

Dialectic teaches the meaning and the division of speech and represents the basic step in the education of the young. Grammar teaches the letters, the meaning of words, she composes rules for them or shows by means of example what is to be followed. Afterwards she endows the mind with the judging capacity, so it can recognize the be-

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>17</sup> On Valla’s critique of Aristotelian natural philosophy see Nauta, 2002, 129–151.

ginning, the end and the connections between things, in order than it can keep all the lessons stored for every possible question of debate. Rhetoric provides the means of taking hold of the hearer and persuading him beyond doubt. These functions all belong to the field which some call dialectic and others call rhetoric. The only differences are to be found in the author's choices of terminology, the method they reveal is the same.<sup>18</sup>

In the same speech, Melanchthon refers, as I have observed above, to the rhetorical interpretation which his friend Stadianus has given to the *Posterior Analytics*. Melanchthon seems, at least what his understanding of dialectic in his inaugural speech testifies to, to endorse this opinion. It seems that Melanchthon suggests a Humanistic reading of Aristotle, based on an interpretation which is completely opposed to the standard view which, most probably, Melanchthon was given at school. The view expressed in the citation given above is also departing from an Agricolan assessment of dialectic and its relationship to rhetoric. Also, while Agricola had indeed merged scientific and dialectical reasoning, he had done so, while being aware that Aristotle had thought differently, if only because the Stagirite was, like very other human being, prone to error. Melanchthon's interpretation from 1518, depicts Aristotle as a rhetorician.

### 3.2.1 Melanchthon's integrative approach: the leitmotif of his pedagogical work

Kees Meerhoff has dedicated much attention both to the interpretatory function of Melanchthon's rhetoric manuals<sup>19</sup> and to Melanchthon's analysis of different orations and biblical texts. He pointed out that Philipp Melanchthon's first work on rhetoric owed a great deal to the method of textual analysis and composition elaborated by Rudolph Agricola.<sup>20</sup> As already stated above, Melanchthon claims in retrospect that Agricola's work had helped him to both better understand the works of the ancients, as well as enabled him to reconstruct the manner in which these authors made use of the dialectical and rhetorical precepts, in constructing their own writings.<sup>21</sup> This first step in comprehension and analysis of texts,

18 CR 11, 18–19. “Logicum vim omnem ac discrimina sermonis tractat, et cum per ipsum in illa superiora sit iter, primum formandae pueritiae rudimentum est, literas docet, proprietatem sermonis aut regulis adstringit, aut collatis autorum figuris, indicat quid observes, id quod fere Grammatica praestat. Deinde cum paulo progressus fueris, iudicium animis comparat, quo metas rerum, ortus, fines, ductum, sic agnoscas, ut sicubi quid incidit exacte tractandum, omnia quae ad institutum pertinent, quasi in numerato habeas, et artis adminiculis ita sensus auditorum capias, ut dissentire temere non queant. Hae partes illius sunt, quam nos Dialecticam, alii Rhetoricam vocant: Nominibus enim variant authores, quum ars eadem sit.”

19 Meerhoff, 1991, 357–374; Ibid., 1994, 4–62.

20 Meerhoff, 1990, 5–22.

21 See 2.8.1. above. See also Meerhoff, *ibid.*, 11.

represents, according to Meerhoff, only the preparatory stage of textual production. The essential perspective which this preparation assumes and transmits is,

qu'elle considère chaque texte comme une totalité organique, comme une chaîne argumentative où chaque argument, tiré de tel ou tel 'lieu' dialectique, n'a de sens que par rapport à l'ensemble.<sup>22</sup>

This is the fundamental shift in perspective which is brought about by Humanist dialecticians and which confronts the artificial, complex, and at times, terminologically very specialized approach of scholastic commentaries. If Agricola strives to provide a set of techniques of textual analysis, persuasive argumentation, textual composition, and scientific inquiry, his approach is a bookish one, oriented at clarification and analysis of discourse with the scope of comprehension and production. Philipp Melancthon is a direct inheritor of this perspective and a skilled elaborator of the "interprétation méthodique des textes". Like Agricola, Melancthon concentrates on the main "quaestio" of a text and on its subordinated questions, and gives much attention to the rhetorician's *status quaestionis*. Also, Melancthon believes with Agricola, a text can be reduced to its essential argument or syllogism and the main commonplaces can be easily found as the rules guaranteeing the inference. In historical narratives, this amounts to disclosing the purpose of the author, and the commonplaces he uses in his argumentation and narration. I believe it is correct to observe that the manner of analyzing narratives of authors like Cicero, Pliny, Plutarch, Augustine and others, influences the manner in which philosophical works which were traditionally meant for teaching (of Aristotle, Galen, Euclid) are interpreted. Melancthon's intention is to provide the techniques of reading and understanding the ancient works. Additionally, he aims, just like Agricola, to teach dialectic and rhetoric both as a set of rules and as a set of examples. The latter are exemplary or paradigmatic illustrations of the rules employed.

In his analysis of the *Epistle to the Romans*, Melancthon adopts the dialectical and rhetorical interpretation of historical narratives. He sorts out the *status causae*, by settling the purpose of the author, the historical and intertextual circumstances of his narrative and the commonplaces he employs (that of faith and redemption). This method will be explained in the following exposition. Meerhoff has also shown that by attributing to the apostle the capacity of a thorough and appropriate methodical reading, Melancthon attributes to the *Epistle to the Romans* complete methodical character.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 12.

What remains is the idea of *Romans* as a *method*, a *compendiaria via* to the Scriptures, and the urgent need to analyse *Romans* in an adequate way, that is, a methodical way.<sup>23</sup>

I will come back to the understanding of method-as-principle-of-interpretation and to its complementary function of knowledge-organization, in the course of my subsequent analysis of Melanchthon's works.

What Keees Meerhoff, Joachim Knape and Peter Mack see as representative for the first edition of Melanchthon's rhetoric is the tight connection between rhetoric and dialectic. As Peter Mack writes,

Melanchthon insists on the two subject's mutual need and assistance. Dialectic is an essential foundation for rhetoric, and shows rhetoric how to investigate a subject and inform an audience. Rhetoric teaches the technique of persuading and moving the audience.<sup>24</sup>

Also, Mack points to the fact that the *De Rhetorica* is concentrated on the subject of invention. Knape supports this view by emphasizing the "Dialektikorientiertheit" of the Tübingen rhetoric and adding the exegetical and theological focus of the work. Knape underscores the almost unilateral treatment of non-traditional subjects and the absence of an elaborate chapter on elocution.<sup>25</sup> This explicit union between dialectic and rhetoric, which goes against the Agricolan structure of the trivial arts, is characterized by Nicole Kuroпка as "angewandte Dialektik", an applied form of dialectic.<sup>26</sup>

My intent is to elaborate on the manner in which Melanchthon integrates and reinterprets Agricolan tenets, by providing a hermeneutic tool for all genres of literature and a set of techniques of inquiry for every matter under debate. However, I insist on the fact that Melanchthon is very anxious to retrieve the Aristotelian heritage of scientific and dialectical reasoning. Melanchthon's integrative approach towards the theoretical and practical interdependency between the language arts, which also extends to the liberal arts, presupposes a broad and inclusive canon of authors which Melanchthon is trying to establish. It is his pedagogical persona that determines him to introduce the Humanist ideal of erudition in the university and, at the same time, to turn it into a feasible instrument of pedagogical use. It is his sensibility and awareness for the needs of the students and his concern with the most useful techniques of learning and teaching that provides him with the original integrative approach towards scientific, dialectical and rhetorical reasoning. While Agricola could elaborate on a complex and rich theory of argumentation, interpretation and inquiry, without

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23 Meerhoff, 1994, 52.

24 Mack, 2001, 108.

25 Knape, 1993, 25.

26 Kuroпка, 2002, 15.

having to address in detail the question of proof, certainty, and appropriateness, Melanchthon, who is trying to replace an entire pedagogical tradition with another, has to tackle all these issues, which most of the Humanists avoided. This means, he has to critically inquire into the presuppositions of an appropriate manner of textual interpretation, of an appropriate method of teaching, learning, and debating. This requires the grounding of his new pedagogical model on a broad canon of authors. To Melanchthon, who is determined to recuperate, as he declares, the “cleansed” Aristotle, this means that the Stagirite is one of the most important authors he can rely on in his manual. Melanchthon’s genuine involvement with the problem of clarity, appropriateness and interpretation determines an idiosyncratic and brief reconceptualization of the Aristotelian notion of demonstration and certainty. Set in the context of textual interpretation, in which dialectical approaches to argumentation are mingled with rhetorical techniques, demonstration, in its Aristotelian meaning, loses its original purpose. It is employed, not as a means of acquiring scientific knowledge in a context of rigorous formal and material constraints. Rather, it is transferred to the process of acquiring a collection of distinct and multifarious predications which are prone to provide an exhaustive description of the matter inquired into. Demonstration had mainly been used for the sake of providing knowledge of the essential attributes of a thing. Once it is transferred to the domain of textual exegesis, demonstration represents the exhaustive analysis of a concept or a connection of concepts (arguments), with the purpose of working out the structure and overall purpose of a text, as well as the structure of the various arguments which it contains. It is, of course, highly unexpected that all these topics should be treated in a manual written by a young graduate student who merely intends to write a short introductory rhetoric manual. It is, however, noteworthy, that the editions following this first textbook on rhetoric, although tackling dialectical and rhetorical topics in separation, only reinforce and expand the project of the *De Rhetorica*. Thus, they all focus on providing rules of reading, analyzing and composing texts for a public confronted with textual material constructed exactly around these rules. These rules should be neither arbitrary nor built on shaky ground. Thus, the authority of the Stagirite is crucial. As I will show below, Melanchthon’s focus on Aristotle’s legacy discloses an anxious and genuine search for a standard of clear and appropriate theory or argumentation.<sup>27</sup>

*De Rhetorica Libri Tres, Compendiaria Dialectices, and Institutiones Rhetoricae* are relatively short textbooks which tackle all the problems of historical, rhetorical, philosophical and theological reading. Their purpose is to facilitate an

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27 Wels has written a convincing article on Melanchthon’s rhetoric and dialectic textbooks as complementary parts of a theory of argumentation. See Wels, 2008, 139–158.

instrument for extracting, in a structured and coherent manner, all the essential topics lying hidden in these texts. It is not surprising that conceived as such, Melanchthon's textbooks could gradually evolve into manuals on methods of knowledge acquisition and organization and could be used by his followers as universal methodical principles. The following detailed analysis of the three "early" textbooks of rhetoric and dialectic explains how this evolution was prompted and what reconceptualizations have been necessary to this end. It is important to press the point in this context, that Melanchthon ascribes a methodical relevance to his books, from the very very beginning. In what follows, I will give an overview of Melanchthon's introduction to his *De Rhetorica*, which offers both an essential insight into the pedagogical setting in which Melanchthon is operating, as well as an understanding of his motivation for writing the text. Afterwards, detailed attention will be given to Melanchthon's three textbooks enumerated above.

### 3.2.2 Restoring rhetoric for the sake of dialectic

*De Rhetorica Libri Tres* (1519) is a work on the essential parts of rhetorical doctrine in which an important amount of pages is dedicated to instruments of invention, analysis and argumentation taken from dialectic. Melanchthon's *De Rhetorica* is thus, as already remarked by the scholars cited above, no traditional rhetoric manual. Melanchthon explains what he understands rhetoric and dialectic to amount to in his prefatory epistle to the *Rhetorica*. The introduction is, as I see it, a programmatic exposition of what the functions of the language arts are and why they should be taught together. The textbook itself is a detailed exposition of this program and as I will show, gives a Humanist and also original interpretation of the concepts of dialectic and rhetoric. The epistle is written to Melanchthon's pupil, Bernardus Maurus<sup>28</sup> and follows a line of composition that is often encountered in his letters and orations and in the introductory passages of his works. While taking an overdue answer to a pupil and friend as a pretext for writing, Melanchthon introduces the main narrative by deploring the state of philosophy and the method of learning taught in the schools. Philosophy, as the school doctors name it, is, according to him, nothing more than a collection of muddled and unlearned disciplines (*impuras et indoctas literas*) and the trivial arts are taught as a sort of blurred and inferior study. This state of affairs had settled in, according to Melanchthon, as soon as the habit of rhetorical instruction has ceased and dialectic took over the task of rhetoric (of judgment and debate) and concealed its actual usefulness. Melanchthon assures his friend that

28 CR I, 62–66, MBW, T1, 40, 100–103; *De Rhet.*, 1–10.

he truly values dialectic (*Nam Dialectica amo, et sic mihi de illis videtur, neminem recte erudiri posse, qui non illa discat*) but rejects the contemporary vanities, in which the Apostolic Studies have been replaced with sophistries. The greatest scholars are being despised and find themselves in danger because of the philosophical sect that still rules the schools. Erasmus, Reuchlin, and Luther are all victims of the professors' defying ignorance.<sup>29</sup> However, Melancthon believes that the arts have indeed begun to "bloom again" (*reflorescunt*), despite the great resistance which they have met in the schools. Melancthon is convinced that a thorough "cleansing" and a very strict correction is needed in order to disclose the clarity, simplicity and usefulness of the arts. He writes:

If I am not mistaken, all the beginnings of the arts depend on dialectic, which organize everything that follows in their own particular way. The arts were powerful once, when this was well cared for, that is, when dialectic and rhetoric educated the youth with equal commitment. Once rhetoric had been banned from the schools, look how weak, how deprived, how futile dialectic became!<sup>30</sup>

Melancthon admonishes his pupil to take as example the erroneous interpretations of Aristotle which some of the learned professors put forth, like the view that one could find geometric demonstrations in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* or that rhetoric was confined to mere letter writing. The fewest know the manner in which to use the muses, he claims. In the last part of his epistle, thus, Melancthon explains what he believes to be the right method of study:

So that you know what the method (*ratio*) is, of which I speak, common matter belongs both to dialectician and to the rhetorician (*commune argumentum est et Rhetori et Dialectico*). The one travels within the limits of the proposed task with tightened sails, the other spreads itself more freely, the one is suited for teaching, the other for moving.<sup>31</sup>

Melancthon claims that dialectic and rhetoric deal with the same subject matter, they differ only in the manner in which this matter is presented: on the one side dialectic teaches according to specific rules, while rhetoric is employed to move the listener according to the same rules. This understanding of the functions of the disciplines is dissonant with the traditional view. As we have seen above, dialectic was subordinated to the commentaries on the *Organon* and rhetoric relegated partly to moral philosophy, partly to the *ars dictaminis*.<sup>32</sup> Of course,

29 CR I, 63: "Ex quo grege sunt, quibus nondum satis Erasmus probatur, qui primus, etiam doctorum iudicio, Theologiam ad fontes revocavit. *Capnionem* factio ista non est passa, a flammis, ab incendio pulcherrimas bibliothecas asserentem. *Martinum Lutherum* ferre non potest, quod recta moneat. Adeo ex vere doctis nemo est, cui non fuerit hactenus ab audaci imperitia, periculum."

30 *Ibid.*, 64. See Mack, 2011, 108.

31 *Ibid.* "Hic intra fines propositi negotii velis paulum contractioribus navigat; ille evagatur liberius: huius ad docendum, illius ad movendum est accomodata oratio."

32 Skinner, 2007, 28–35. See also Kristeller, 1983, 1–19.

Cicero was known to every person who was literate in the Renaissance and so were his orations. Also, hermeneutic doctrine in the Middle Ages always had included topical and rhetorical precepts. Still, dialectic and rhetoric differed both in matter and in function. Humanists like Lorenzo Valla and Rudolph Agricola promote their own assessments of the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric, as shown above. But Melanchthon has to come up with a solution which would replace the traditional pedagogical practice with one that suits his own Humanist program. Melanchthon does not believe that acquiring the right method is being well-versed in chain-reasoning of a syllogistic type, nor does he think that it is useful to reduce speech to certain formal laws that govern it. He does not believe that it is sufficient to employ eloquent speech by means of a solely stylistic exercise. Dialectic, in its original form, is to be understood through its functions of defining, dividing, and inventing:

They say that Zeno, whoever he was, was the first to bring dialectic and rhetoric together. According to him, dialectic has to be taught first, which distinguishes more facile between the judgment of the art and the domain of method, the places of invention, the forms of argument, the method of exposition. Dialectic is thus, the precise (*exacta*) and elaborate (*artificiosa*) inquiry of every matter at hand. So, if you would have to talk about duty, the art demands that you explain duty through differentiation (*finitione*), afterwards by showing the subordinated parts, which, if compared with each other, will prove to be either adjacent or contrary to duty. [...] If the use will disclose the main precepts of the lectures (*dialexeon*), I believe that the young student is to be brought to the common material (*ad communes causas*). Here he should practice the common places (*locos communis*) of vice virtue, fortune, death, wealth, arts and others. Thereby it will come to pass, that he will have his mind equipped for all disciplines, he will not judge wrongly about the works of others and become himself able to conceive new ones.<sup>33</sup>

Tracing back the art of dialectic to Zeno (probably referring to Zeno from Elea)<sup>34</sup>, Melanchthon relies on the authority of the Greek philosopher to underscore his

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33 CR I, 65: "Quem in modum fertur *Zeno*, quicumque is fuit, cum Dialectica Rhetoricam contulisse. Proinde Dialectica primum tradenda sunt, in quibus iudicium artis et *tes metodon* fines, inventionis loci, argumentorum figurae, collocandi ratio facilius cernitur. Est enim Dialectica cuiusque thematis propositi exacta et artificiosa pervestigatio, ut si de officio dicendum sit, exigit ars, ut primum finitione declares officium; deinde subiicias partes; quas si inter se compares, erunt quaedam officio affinia, quaedam contraria. [...] Tum si iecerit fundamenta *dialexeon* usus, omnino ad communes causas perducendum adolescentem censeo. In his locos communes vitiorum, virtutum, fortunae, mortis, divitiarum, literarum, et similes exerceat."

34 The piece of evidence that Zeno was the "first inventor of dialectic" is attributed by Diogenes Laertius to Aristotle. It is only a presupposition that Melanchthon was aware of Laertius's collection. This also concerns Melanchthon's remarks on the philosophical doctrines of the Stoa and the Epicureans, since it is very difficult to identify their certain origin. While Cicero

own view on the functions of dialectic. The above paragraph mirrors Melanchthon's understanding of the functions of dialectic in a nutshell. First of all, dialectic is an art of inquiry (*pervestigatio*) which can be applied to any subject of discussion whatsoever. It soon becomes very clear that, at least for the intended readers, these subjects are taken from the textual material they are reading and trying to understand. Second, this type of inquiry stands out as being exact and elaborate, thus claiming both the function of securing the correctness of inference and the disposition of arguments into chains of reasoning. This is achieved by means of definition and division. Melanchthon's example suggests that in the processes of defining and dividing an entire semantical field becomes available which sheds light on the matter inquired into. Through repeated practice and through familiarization with many topics and matters, the student becomes capable to extract and work with commonplaces on which entire works of literature are built. This will enable him to understand much better what the authors he is consulting have written, with what intentions and under which historical and linguistic circumstances. Also, to be able to produce his own textual compositions.

It is, of course interesting that dialectic is given so much attention in an epistle to an exposition on rhetorical doctrine. This is a Ciceronian perspective on dialectic and Melanchthon follows Cicero's authority and always treats dialectic in connection to its rhetorical counterpart. Even in the late textbook on dialectic, Melanchthon will feel compelled to explain the manner in which dialectic relates to rhetoric.<sup>35</sup> Also, Melanchthon's view that definition and division are ascribed to dialectic derives from the Stoic concept of dialectic, rendered by Cicero in *De Officiis*, where Epicurean dialectic is attacked because it is "destitute" of logic, i.e. does away with definition, lacks a theory of division or partition, gives no rules of deduction or syllogistic inference and ignores the rules of dealing with fallacies.<sup>36</sup> Cicero endorses this view on dialectic in his *Topica*, by dealing with the various types of definition and division as primary elements/topics of his theory of invention.<sup>37</sup> This implies that by integrating definition and division into the list of topics, which belongs to invention, Cicero reinforces his own definition of dialectic as consisting of invention and judgment, to which all other parts are subordinated. This overarching division is one that, although it might appear otherwise, dominates the Melanchthonian textbooks.

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may be the usual suspect, I agree with Bauer that, besides the works he explicitly refers to, Melanchthon might have known other available texts. See Bauer, 1997, 162–163.

35 This is also in line with the Aristotelian view. Generally, Melanchthon is very anxious to follow his ancient authorities whenever possible.

36 *De Off.*, I, 22, 25.

37 *Top.*, 26–34.

As we have seen above, this Stoic concept of dialectic was rendered by Alexander of Aphodisias and by Boethius in his ICP and influenced the understanding of dialectic in the early Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Jennifer Ashworth has shown that sixteenth century commentaries on the *Topics*, which were not following the rhetorical interpretation of dialectic, engaged with the division invention-judgment as opposed to or at least different from the standard ordering of the books of the *Organon*. The Coimbra Commentary on the *Topics* acknowledges the “Stoic definition” of dialectic and objects to the inversed order of invention and judgment, and to the subordination of the *Topics*, as a form of probable reasoning, to the formal requirements of the *Prior Analytics*. It observes, as Boethius had, that judgment and invention, as reasoning operations, cannot be separated in finding appropriate definitions, disposing them correctly and then finding arguments. All these parts rely on both judgment and invention.<sup>38</sup> Agricola, on the other hand, believed the functions of defining and dividing belong to metaphysics.<sup>39</sup> Melanchthon thus brings together the Stoic and the Ciceronian views on dialectic and insists, as we will see below, on their congruence with the Aristotelian concept of demonstration. He repeatedly refers in his work to the *Topics* and *The Posterior Analytics* and argues in favor of the union between dialectic and rhetoric by offering an interpretation of Aristotle's method or argumentation displayed in the *Topics*:

Dialectic facilitates an instrument (*Organon*), presiding over both a great deal of orations and skill (*artificium*), with which it puts all arguments into a correct order. The splendor is increased by rhetoric, which lays claim to the ornament of all arts. This is shown by Aristotle in his dialectic, i.e. the clear (*evidens*) and ordered (*ordinata*) exposition of any thing whatsoever, from where the rivers of all arguments are being led, as from a spring– [representing] the extensive matter of speech.<sup>40</sup>

Dialectic is thus in charge with both abundance of speech – *copia* – and craft – *artificium*. It provides both the abundance and the disposition of arguments, leaving to rhetoric the ornament of arts. This may seem rather surprising, since Melanchthon actually subordinates dialectic to a rhetorical genre and not the other way around. Here he states exactly the opposite, i.e. that dialectic precedes both wealth of speech and artistic rules. Also, he endorses here the Agricolan distinction between the functions of dialectic (of ordering and disposing arguments) and that of rhetoric (of providing splendor). Also taken from Agricola is

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38 Ashworth, 2008, 636.

39 See chapter 2.8.4.

40 Ibid., 66: “Organon Dialectica ministrabit, ut, si qua inciderint forte, habeat ceu silvam orationis et artificium, quo argumenta recte dispenset. Augebit splendore Rhetorica, quae omnium sibi artium ornamenta asserit. Atque ex his est demonstratio, quam in Dialecticis docet Aristoteles, id est evidens et ordinata rei cuiusque expositio, unde omnium argumentorum rivi, ut e fonte, ducuntur, amplissima disserendi materia.”

the conviction that clarity and order arise from a particular disposition of arguments. His perspective is focused on an integral body of text.

Melanchthon advises Bernardus to read Aristotle's dialectic, which I take here to refer to his *Topics*, Cicero's and Quintilian's (*Fabius*) works and of course Erasmus' *De Copia Verborum* (the most spread textbook on rhetorical production in the sixteenth century) and his *Adagia*. In the last fragment of his epistle he explains why he had dedicated so much time and work to dialectic, both in his epistle and in the textbook itself. "I have said little about rhetoric, not because I did not have the time, but particularly because I wanted to teach the use of dialectic". Also, Melanchthon assures,

I did not want to suggest that I agree with the commentaries of our time, but those who want to choose the right path of our arts, have to go back to the precepts of rhetoric, or they will not be able to move forward in these studies unless they had dwelled upon the former.<sup>41</sup>

Although Melanchthon ascribes above different purposes to dialectic and rhetoric, following Agricola, he stresses the need to teach them together, and uses them interchangeably at times. This view is consistent with the one expressed some months earlier in his inaugural speech and, as I will show, is argued for in detail in Melanchthon's textbook. What is apparent from Melanchthon's brief exposition here is that he regards dialectic and rhetoric as instruments, something one must acquire in order to properly (1) understand ancient works, i.e. the other sciences – essentially transmitted by way of *bookish knowledge*.<sup>42</sup> Also they are skills which enable the student (2) to develop own compositions, equipping him with the know-how of appropriate argumentation and amplification. Melanchthon aims to introduce a method of teaching and learning – by means of textual analysis and generation – and extend the project sketched in the *De Inventione Dialectica*. In contrast to Agricola, Melanchthon attempts to provide proof for the the unity between dialectic and rhetoric and suggests that clarity and exactness can be attained by means of a method which belongs to both disciplines. Also, as I have already suggested, to Agricola, dialectic was an art relying on metaphysical truths. Definition and division of things and the nature of the loci themselves could not be accounted for by the dialectical art. Melanchthon does not mention any science or art which dialectic relies on. He merely insists on the kinship between dialectic and rhetoric. Melanchthon does

41 Ibid. "Ego vero de Rhetoricis pauca, neque per otium, ob hoc posittimum scribo, ut doceam qui sit Dialecticae usus, neque probari mihi ulla ex parte nostri seculi commentarios: tum si qui recta via literas aggredi volent, ad Rhetorum praecepta statim se conferant, nihil in ullo genere studiorum promoturi, nisi haec meditata teneant."

42 For an insight into the concern of Humanist dialecticians on the logical tools of textual criticism see Jardine, 1990, 173–198.

not question here the status of dialectic. She, like rhetoric, belongs to the original sciences.

In the following examination of his first textbook of rhetoric I will show that Melanchthon writes a “unified” textbook. This textbook proves that dialectical method and rhetorical disposition and amplification (structure and ornament) are to be led back to the same method: that of semantical analysis, amplification and composition. This enables him to provide his reader with a method of reading, interpreting and creating texts. Strikingly, his view differs from all previous Humanist endeavors in so far as he claims precision and exactness for his method, which he identifies with the Aristotelian method of demonstration. Thereby, he reinterprets Aristotle’s perspective on scientific and probable knowledge in a Ciceronian manner, claiming at the same time to have recovered the understanding of the ancients. Actually, Melanchthon is attempting to develop an original method of textual interpretation which he connects in his later textbooks on the trivial arts to a more thorough reflection on the operations of reasoning. The latter will be shown in the second part of the chapter.

### 3.3 Melanchthon’s *De Rhetorica libri tres*

The Tübingen rhetoric manual is written to facilitate an understanding of the common and distinctive aspects of dialectic and rhetoric and their use in reading ancient literature and coming up with different arguments and texts. Introducing his works, Melanchthon writes:

I know of no reader who thinks that there is any usefulness in the dialectical commentaries which until now are held obstinately in the schools of our men.<sup>43</sup>

He makes it very clear that his rhetoric is meant to reinforce the practice of dialectical teaching. In his textbook, Melanchthon focuses almost entirely on the subject of (topical) invention, which covers the lengthy first chapter of the book. Disposition and elocution are only given a few pages, on which Melanchthon briefly tackles their main function and their dependency on invention. His first chapter consists in a traditional differentiation of the rhetorical *genera causarum*: the kinds of causes/issues that determine the nature of a speech, its structure, its matter and the forms of argumentation employed by the orator. There are in rhetoric three different causes, which are generally listed: the deliberative (*quod, ad consilia pertinet*), judicial (*litium est*) and demonstrative (*accommodatum docenti, narranti res gestas, laudandi, vituperandi*). Melanchthon ded-

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<sup>43</sup> *De Rhet.*, 10: “Lectorem nolo, qui putat aliquid omnino frugis esse in commentariis dialecticis, quae adhuc scholae nostrorum hominum mordicus tenent.”

icates a subordinated chapter to each. For each rhetorical genre Melanchthon offers a detailed explanation of the *causae*, the status (issues – *principale ac summum thema in quo consistit controversia et ad quod referri debent argumenta orationis omnia*<sup>44</sup>) which are being treated under the *causae*, and gives various examples to illustrate how this is to be achieved by means of the *partes orationis: exordio, narratio, expositio, contentio, preroratio*.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.3.1 The genus demonstrativum as a genus metodikon

Melanchthon starts by determining the features of the first branch of rhetoric: the *genus demonstrativum*. He mentions that it is the kind of speech to which he dedicates special attention, since he considers it to represent the origin of all the places of invention and of the method of judgment, laying out the path for the other genera (*ex ipso loci omnes inventionis, iudicandi ratio tota nascitur et ad reliqua genera viam munit*).<sup>46</sup> The *genus demonstrativum*, thus, is being divided into two subgenera: one which deals with teaching and the other with praise and blame. While the latter had been repeatedly dealt with by the rhetoricians (*rhetores*), the former was confined to the school dialectician's material. In Ciceronian fashion, Melanchthon not only integrates dialectic in a work of rhetoric. He subordinates, again, the dialectical doctrine to a branch of rhetoric, to the *genus demonstrativum*. At the same time he stresses the necessity of the study of this genus and describes it as the source of invention and argumentation for all other branches of rhetoric. Under the heading *De prima parte generis demonstrativi*, Melanchthon then, enumerates and explains the *officia* of demonstrative branch:

The tasks of this genus are: on the one hand, to have, by means of the loci, right at hand whatever one can say about a thing; on the other hand, to dispose the loci, by means of an order that can insinuate itself best into the mind (*animo*) of the listener. This is called by some the methodical (*metodikon*), by some the apodictical (*apodektikon*), by others didactic (*didaktikon*) and others call it epistemic (*epistemonikon*) order. This is the same as that which Aristotle develops as the heads (*koryphaion*) of his dialectic. And just like the parts of the rhetoricians are in the pragmatics (*pragmatikois*), the whole study of dialectic includes proof or *apodeixin*. This means that this study includes a particular, evident method of teaching, which is useful to acquire before laying claim to civil matters. And just like the arts have to be taught before the study of civil matters, they cannot be taught before the demonstrative genus, since all disciplines are judged by it.

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44 *De Rhet.*, 75.

45 *Ibid.*, 12.

46 *Ibid.*

Moreover, this whole art belongs to dialectic, the method of proof, which means, the order of speech.<sup>47</sup>

Melanchthon again tries to define the ways in which rhetoric and dialectic share the same method and principles of composition/order of speech, but differ in the manner in which they present the matters at hand. Also, he seems to suggest here that rhetoric preeminently focuses on the exposition of civil matters, while dialectic is concerned with proof belonging to the arts. While dialectic includes the instruments of the loci and the method of disposing them correctly so that they are easily grasped by the pupil/public (*audientis*), in dealing with civil matters, rhetoric is dependent on dialectical proof. Interestingly, Melanchthon uses the word *listener* when he refers to the one on which the disposition of the loci should make an impression. What he implies here, as I see it, is that the *genus metodikon* both teaches (a facile method with mnemotechnical and persuasive valor) and moves (the same method of loci and their disposition, is employed in order to move to action). Thus, it integrates a focus set on argument soundness with the attention given to textual coherence. At the same time Melanchthon tries to bring dialectical invention closer to scientific proof when he claims that Aristotle himself has developed the inventive loci as headings, which, he implies here, constitute an evident method of proof (*apodeixis*). This claim is much bolder than Agricola's interpretation who had taken Aristotle's word in attributing dialectic to mental practice, disputation and provision of first principles.<sup>48</sup> Melanchthon does not offer a commentary on the margins of Aristotelian text. He does not even refer directly to any particular part the *Topics*. This would go against his manifest dismay of the commentary tradition. He claims that Aristotle must have had the same intention while writing the treatise on the *headings*, i.e. that of developing a method of proof and ordered exposition. I will show how Melanchthon justifies this claim in later dialectical textbooks, a claim which seems an outrageous misinterpretation of Aristotelian thought, coming from a famous Humanist and one of the best Greek teachers of the sixteenth century. It becomes clear even from the beginning of the Melanchthonian textbook tradi-

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47 *Ibid.*, 13–14: “Duo huius generis officia sunt, alterum ut per locos suos in promptu habeat statim quicquid de unaquaque re dici potest: alterum ut ordine qui maxime insinuet causam audientis animo, locos dispenset, Hoc alii *metodikon*, alii *apodeiktikon* alii *didaktikon*, *epistemonikon* alii vocat. Atque illud ipsum est, quod Aristoteles dialecticae veluti *κορυφαίου* & caput fecit, ut sicut rhetorum partes in *pragmatikois* sunt: ita universum dialectici studium demonstrationem seu *apodeixin*, hoc est, evidentem quamdam docendi rationem complectitur, quam oportet ante didicisse quam causae civiles affectantur. Atque ut citra studium civilium causarum literas etiam recte tractare licet, ita citra genus demonstrativum tractari rite non possunt: omnes enim disciplinae ad demonstrativum ceu amussim exiguntur. Porro haec est dialecticae tota fabrica, ratio *apodeixeos*, hoc est ordo dicendi.”

48 *DID*, 232; Cf. *Top.*:101a25ff.

tion, that the German Humanist was not focused on the literal rendering of ancient thought but on a work of synthesis and reinterpretation.

### 3.3.2 The method of the genus metodikon.

#### 3.3.2.1 The first part of method: the questions

Melancthon claims that the *genus demonstrativum* can also be described as the one containing a method which can tackle any proposed matter and circumscribe its most important parts and features. Without the application of this method Melancthon claims that teaching and attracting the minds of the student towards the presented subject would hardly be possible.<sup>49</sup> Most of the discourses falling under the *genus didaktikon* or *metodikon* do not need the part of exordium, as the narrative is taken as a continuous discourse which focuses on the refutations or confirmations of the things brought forth. Here, loci are used, of which Melancthon promises to talk later. First, the whole discourse is to be broken into parts (*absolvetur*) by means of questions which are the instruments of invention (*organa inveniendi*) and concern the status of the speech. These are the following: *An sit, Quid sit, Quibus causis partibusque constet, Unum an multa, Quae partes, Quae comparatio partium, Quae officia, Quae affinia, Quae contraria*. Whoever wants to derive a thing from its origins, Melancthon continues, can use the thread of the questions (*filum questionis veluti hodopoion*). Melancthon writes:

If one were to deduce some things from the sources themselves, one would only have to follow the thread of these questions, [...] which Aristotle treats in his *Posterior Analytics* where he displays the instruments of invention, disposition and instruction very vividly. But there he merely teaches four questions, he obviously looks only for those that belong to the substance of the thing proper and does not wander out to reach for the ones pertaining to the exterior disposition of the thing, to its accidents, to its functions, similarities and contraries. But in the *Topics*, he treats many more questions. To those which belong to the genus and species of the nature of the thing he adds those who diverge from it, like those that correspond to degrees of less and more and others. It seems more appropriate to me to bring all the questions together and thereby supply the young students with the form of the demonstrative method so that they may understand that nothing else is being treated in the volumes on dialectic, than the places of invention, or judgment.<sup>50</sup>

49 *De Rhet.*, 14: "Ommino genus rerum demonstrativum est, circa quod versatur methodos, quae hoc potest, ut quocunq[ue] propositio themate natura eius universa, artificiosa et compendiarie ratione exigatur, quam nisi teneas nihil est quod rite docere queas, nihil quo sequacem audientis animum illectes."

50 *De Rhet.*, 15–16.

In what he calls his (question-) method, I believe that Melanchthon draws on various Aristotelian, Ciceronian and Stoic tenets. First, he might have in mind the Aristotelian discussion on the *organa* of invention in the first book of the *Topics*<sup>51</sup>, although, admittedly, he does not refer to this particular discussion in Aristotle's work. Second, his interpretation directly mentions the questions of scientific inquiry and the differences between definition, division and demonstration from the beginning of the second book of *Posterior Analytics*.<sup>52</sup> To the interpretation of the former he adds the rhetorical theory of status and its primary questions, as presented in Cicero's *Topica*<sup>53</sup> and Quintilian's enumeration of "the basic elements of issues" from his *Institutio Oratoria*.<sup>54</sup> The broad framework against which this merge is undertaken is the Stoic interpretation of dialectic, which, as suggested above, Melanchthon had acquired through Cicero's *De Finibus*<sup>55</sup> and *Academica*<sup>56</sup>, Alexander's commentary on Aristotle's *Topics*<sup>57</sup>, and, possibly, Diogenes Laertius's account of Stoic philosophy.<sup>58</sup>

### 3.3.2.2 The organa of invention

On the one hand, these questions which seem to define the semantical context of a concept or word share the same purpose with what I have called above the useful means of topical invention (of predicates and arguments/premises). Aristotle enumerated them at the end of book one as: (i) the provision of propositions, (ii) the ability to distinguish in how many senses a particular expression is used, (iii) the discovery of differences and (iv) the investigation of similarities. These imply various processes of acknowledging similarities between concepts, differences, definitions that prevent ambiguities, the relations of genera to species and so on. The questions above may be seen to follow the same line by trying to grasp connections between concepts and clear up misunderstandings like equivocity and muddled descriptions or definitions. Thus, propositions are provided which can be used thereafter in arguments. Aristotle emphasizes that these are only to be dealt with from the standpoint of opinions, not with the purpose of demonstration.<sup>59</sup> Although, Melanchthon does not refer to this passage of Aristotle's *Topics* right here, I agree with Marc Cogan<sup>60</sup> that this is the spot where

51 *Top.*: 105 A20–105a33.

52 *An. Post.*, 89b23ff.

53 *Top.*, 82.

54 *Instit. Orat.*, 3.6. 23ff.

55 *De Fin.*, I.47.

56 *Acad.*, I. 31–33.

57 See 2.5. above.

58 *Lives*, VII. 41–48.

59 *Top.*: 105b30–32.

60 Cogan, 1984, 166–167.

actual *invention* is carried out. Melanchthon was most probably familiar with this part of Aristotle's *Topics*. However, since Melanchthon does not directly refer to this part, the fact that he has this in mind remains only a speculative assumption.

### 3.3.2.3 The questions of scientific inquiry

Since the processes of definition and division are central to Melanchthon's understanding of dialectic, he draws, in the elaboration on the first methodical questions (*An sit; Quid sit*), on the second book of *Posterior Analytics*. There, Aristotle inquires into the various kinds of knowledge which definition, division and demonstration impart. Melanchthon claims that these questions are taken from Aristotle's discussion on four kinds of scientific knowledge: the knowledge of fact, the knowledge of reason or cause, the knowledge of existence and the knowledge of essence. These knowledge perspectives are reducible to two: to the knowledge of fact (existence) and of cause (essence). These are then explicated by the manner in which they are expressed with the help on definitions, divisions and demonstrations. Definitions and divisions represent the prerequisites for demonstrations. Demonstrations represent the scientific arguments (demonstrative syllogisms) which are part of a scientific exposition, as shown in the beginning of his *Posterior Analytics*. Aristotle strictly refers here to scientific reasoning and his focus rests on the process of deduction from non-demonstrable principles (like definitions) which state the essence of a thing. Aristotle clarifies in his *Posterior Analytics* that his understanding of definition is not merely verbal (nominal), but that it is tied to existing things.<sup>61</sup> In the *Topics*, "definition" is numbered under the predicables and treated from the perspective of predication. In this sense, accounts of definition extend to that of difference and similarity, for in the context of debate, these lead to the invalidation or underpinning of a definition.<sup>62</sup> As shown in the previous chapter, the purpose of scientific argumentation and that of dialectical reasoning differ. Thus, the attention given to the knowledge transmitted through definitions and the manner in which definitions are formulated is also proportional to the importance of definitional accounts for the actual reasoning form. While both dialectical and apodictic (demonstrative) argumentation require clear definitions, successful scientific argumentation is dependent on essential definitions. Dialectical reasoning employs definitions among various other types of non-essential predication. The fact that Melanchthon insists on drawing on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and the beginning of the second book in which the differences between

61 *Post. Anal.*: 92b19–35; *Ibid.*, 93b29–19. See also *Met.*: 1028b6–1031a14 on Aristotle's account of *essence* in relation to his understanding of *definition*.

62 *Top.*: 102a36–102a16.

different expressions of scientific knowledge is tackled, shows that he wants to ground his method on a presupposition of unequivocity and evidence. He thus seeks to demonstrate that his question-method is an instrument for tackling the essential attributes of the available subject matters. Essential can, in this case, be identified with relevant, important, or appropriate.

#### 3.3.2.4 The dialectical perspectives

The fact that Melanchthon thinks it is necessary to add to the four Aristotelian perspectives of knowing others which concern the external features of things (*external affectiones rerum*) shows that he does not reduce (scientific) knowledge to the knowledge of essences. He believes knowledge of accidental features prove as important in the context of inquiry into a matter at hand, as the inquiry into the substance itself. He claims he takes the supplementary questions from the Stagirite's *Topics* (specifically what Eleonore Stump had called "strategies") which rely on the capacity of insightful inquiries, as described by the *organa* above. Thus, Melanchthon merges the scientific and dialectical accounts, in order to offer a comprehensive doctrine of inquiry. To this end he finally adds the Ciceronian manner of circumscribing a subject matter. He turns the Aristotelian "see whether the predicate belongs to the same genus of the subject" into something similar to "What is the genus of?" These questions mirror the Ciceronian places and provide preliminary information about concepts which are afterwards to be connected to others in fully-fledged arguments. The speech, thus constructed, may afterwards be dissolved by means of the questions, according to the specific *status* (issue). The Aristotelian reflection on possible modes of scientific knowledge is integrated into a rhetorical theory of conceptual analysis and argument amplification.

#### 3.3.2.5 The status-theory

Another source of Melanchthon's interpretation is the rhetorical tradition, since he explicitly states above that these questions replace the status, i.e. the settling of the issue. In Cicero's view that is exactly what this sort of questions are supposed to do. In his *Topica* Cicero discusses theoretical and practical questions as "inquiries about any possible subject", thereafter subordinating them to each specific genus of oration. Theoretical questions generate knowledge:

Theoretical inquiries are those of which the purpose is knowledge [...] Theoretical questions fall into three groups; the question asked is either: Does it exist? Or what is it? Or what is its character? The first of these is treated and answered by inference and

conjecture, the second by definition and the third by distinguishing between right and wrong.<sup>63</sup>

Cicero distinguishes between the ways in which the answers are to be given and connects them with the specific types of rhetorical speech. Cicero's account, which is rendered by Quintilian in the fifth book of his *Institutio Oratoria*<sup>64</sup>, does indeed concern the *status causae* and pertains to the doctrine of rhetoric which Cicero adds as a bonus for his friend Trebatius at the end of his *Topics*. Melanchthon's methodical questions are the ones pertaining to the status and at the same time offering an instrument of dialectical inquiry. This way, Melanchthon connects the general questions which concern the main topic and the primary parts of a unitary piece of literature with the questions which focus on the investigations of words and their meaning. In a trivial way, these questions are after all effecting the same analytical operations on different levels. In searching for the main parts of a work or in investigating a term, it is often the case that we come up with similar questions. These questions reveal a more complex or more straight-forward semantical network. By means of employing instruments which are common to philosophical and literary analysis, Melanchthon reinterprets the Aristotelian account of scientific inquiry and transforms it into a method of textual interpretation and construction. He moves away from the essential definition of a thing or phenomenon and focuses on the meaning of terms extracted from topical invention and rhetorical amplification.

### 3.3.2.6 Stoic dialectic

Melanchthon is mingling epistemological reflections with logical and rhetorical considerations: the various manners of knowing taken from Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle's view on the *organa* of invention, the dialectical argumentative perspectives offered in the *Topics*, and the rhetorical status theory. The philosophical considerations which seem to be bound to the question method and also to a particular framework of perception and cognition, can be attributed to a tradition that is explicitly integrated in the later Melanchthonian dialectic textbooks: the Stoic philosophy. Melanchthon might have become acquainted with Stoic dialectic, through Cicero, Diogenes Laertius<sup>65</sup>, Alexander of Aphro-

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63 *Top.*: 82.

64 *Instit. Orat.*: 5.10, 53.

65 *Lives*, 151–153: "Some divide the logical part of the system into the two sciences of rhetoric and dialectic, while some would add that which deals with definitions and another parts concerning canons or criteria: some however, dispense with the part about definitions. [...] Dialectic (they hold) falls under two headings: subjects of discourse and language. And the subjects fall under the following headings: presentations and the various products to which they give rise, propositions enunciated ad their constituent subjects and predicates, and

disias and Plutarch.<sup>66</sup> In Alexander's commentary on the *Topics* we read that the Stoa defined dialectic as "the knowledge of speaking well", which amounts to "saying things that are true and fitting" and that this habit belongs truly to the philosopher.<sup>67</sup> Melanchthon's endeavour to unify the rhetorical and logical traditions, his stress on clarity, certainty and distinctness, as well as his treatment of epistemological questions in a manual on dialectic testifies to a mediated Stoicism. In the discussion on the principles of certainty in Melanchthon's later textbook on dialectic, *Erotemata Dialectices*, the influence of Stoic epistemology on the Melanchthonian view becomes clear, as I will show in detail in the final part of this chapter. In his early works he does not directly refer to the Stoa, except by the collective term *Greeks* which concerns all the Ancient traditions. The Melanchthonian melange of philosophical views is highly original. Melanchthon's interpretation of dialectic amounts to the treatment of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and his *Topics* as complementary works which aim at providing the instruments of invention, disposition and instruction. Since, as I have insisted upon, Melanchthon does not give a detailed commentary on the Aristotelian works, it is difficult to infer which concrete parts of Aristotle's *Analytics* and *Topics* he has in mind. It is, however, clear that Melanchthon, in contrast to the Aristotelian tradition of the Middle Ages, understands the *Posterior Analytics* to consist of a method of disposition and instruction. This aspect had been obscured by the medieval scholarly focus on Aristotle's theory of scientific demonstration which the Stagirite allegedly develops in his *Posterior Analytics*, especially in the aftermath of the spread of Averroistic commentaries.<sup>68</sup> Only recently has this interpretation gained attention, since Jonathan Barnes formulates the Aristotelian theory of demonstrative science as a "formal model of how teachers should impart knowledge", not as guidance for scientific research.<sup>69</sup> In his discussion on early modern natural philosophical concepts of method Stephen Gaukroger endorses this view by claiming that the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* are works of pedagogical instruction and scientific disposition. They present a method of displaying the results achieved by means of dialectical method, as pursued in the *Topics*. Gaukroger believes that an intellectual confrontation emerges in the sixteenth century between the supporters of Aristo-

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similar terms whether direct or reversed, genera and species too, moods, syllogisms and fallacies whether due to the subject matter or to the language [...] The second main head mentioned above as belonging to Dialectic is that of language, wherein are included written language and the parts of speech, with a discussion of errors in syntax and in single words, poetical diction, verbal ambiguities, euphony and music, and according to some writers chapters on terms, divisions and style."

66 Barbara Bauer, 1997, 162–163.

67 See chapter 2.5.

68 On Averroes's influence on Renaissance concepts of method see Kessler, 1997, 117–119.

69 Barnes, 1969, 138.

telian demonstration as method of both discovery and presentation, and the supporters of a new method of discovery developed from rhetoric, where the actual method of invention had been relegated.<sup>70</sup> Melancthon does more than reinterpret the *Posterior Analytics* as a work on pedagogy. He mixes together Aristotle's views on scientific knowledge – and the Stagirite's reflections on essential definitions, appropriate divisions and valid argumentations – with the pluriperspectivism of analysis and reasoning, facilitated by the topical and rhetorical account of argumentation. What is more, by adding the rhetorical doctrine of the status, he extends what he conceives as an appropriate method of reasoning and interpreting arguments to a general method of textual interpretation in an Agricolan fashion. To him Aristotle's engagement with the substance of a thing in the *Posterior Analytics* represents only one part of an integrative theory of interpretation and inquiry. Although the particular significance of scientific knowledge is lost, a more solid foundation and a general applicability is given to his method of teaching and textual understanding and interpretation.

### 3.3.2.7 Melancthon's hermeneutics: the theory of commonplaces

Melancthon considers every methodical question by referring to the works of Cicero, Quintilian, Boethius, Aristotle and Plato. He emphasizes the important role of examples for the better understanding of the questions, and gives numerous examples of the way the ancient rhetoricians have defined, differentiated and described as subject matter (*res*). At the end of this enumeration, Melancthon introduces a chapter on the interpretatory genus (*de genus enarratione*) under the same heading of the *genus demonstrativum*. To this theory of interpretation he attributes the method of commentary. These are the fundamental elements of Melancthon's hermeneutics. Melancthon explains that interpretation is essentially focused on the exposition or paraphrase of another work. The method of commentary, which is the kernel of the theory of interpretation, is applicable to all types of discourses (didactic, historical, persuasive, and allegorical). The didactic (philosophical) speech must follow the exact method of simple themes (of questions) described above, so that the reader might understand complex strands of argumentation by breaking them up into single pieces of proof and exposition. And even though most philosophers had written their works according to the demonstrative genus, Melancthon insists that there are only very few interpreters that expound the works by means of the underlying rules of composition, faithfully revealing the intention of the authors. Melancthon repeatedly criticizes the inutile work of the commentators who do not

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70 Gaukroger, 2006, 33–66.

respect the method of analysis and composition. He admonishes the reader to consult the works themselves, some of which, like Cicero's *De Officiis*, for example, display the method of composition very clearly. Thus, the reader can be inspired by the works themselves if he can read them with the hermeneut's eye.

The historical speech entails two necessary elements: the circumstances (*circumstantiae*) and the *loci communes*. Various figures of speech taken from the elocutionary art are also added to the latter. The methodical work exemplified here is Paul's epistle to the Hebrews. Paul is understood to survey various histories for faith as a *locus communis*, while illustrating elegantly other historical and social circumstances. An example of the extraction of a commonplace is provided by Melanchthon from the "story of Abraham". This has been also commented on by Joachim Knape, who, elaborates in my opinion, the most accurate interpretation of Melanchthon's understanding of "commonplace". The *locus communis* is not a *locus* or *topos* in the sense in which the authors who have been presented in the previous chapter have understood it. A commonplace is neither a strategy of attacking a premise, nor a field of "conceptual coherences", the way Rita Copeland defines the topical and rhetorical places.<sup>71</sup> It is rather a precept, like a maxim or a proposition, which displays the moral or the scope of a text or of an entire collection of texts. In the Renaissance, commonplace books continued the tradition of ancient florilegia by representing collections of *realia* or bits of general information (mainly from ancient literature, but also collected from travels and natural inquiries) sorted under appropriate subject headings according to the topics and themes addressed.<sup>72</sup>

Melanchthon, however, employs the commonplace as an essential constituent of his hermeneutics. This is how Melanchthon interprets the story of Abraham, who was requested by God to sacrifice his own son:

What the history clearly indicates is that it is required from the man who will follow God to free himself from the passions of the flesh, and he who wants to put himself into the hands of God, will be freed from the law of the flesh (*ius carnis*): And there is no doubt that, if any passion would have been able to defeat the old man's soul, here, the certain love of his son has had the greatest significance: the commonplace [is that] of the destruction of flesh, of the purification of the passions of the flesh. This is how the elders used to approach the sacred histories, having the Holy Spirit as their teacher [...].<sup>73</sup>

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71 Copeland, 1991, 156.

72 For the method of the commonplace books, especially concerning its use by natural philosophers see Blair, 1992, 541–551; For a detailed inquiry into the genre of the commonplace book in the Renaissance see Moss, 1996.

73 Ibid., 34: "Quae historia nimirum indicat, oportere hominem, qui deum secuturus est, ab omni carnis affectu liberum esse, universum ius carnis abdicandum ei, qui sui copiam deo velit factam: nam dubio procul, si quis affectus evincere animum senis potuit, hic ille certe,

Joachim Knape has defined the *locus communis* as an element of semantic substructure (semantisches Substrat): the method of theological common topics consists in the abstraction of a dogmatic kernel from a narrative:

Die Methode der Gewinnung theologischer loci communes besteht darin, etwa aus einem narrativen Text (irgendeiner biblischen Historia) einen dogmatischen Kern auf der Wege der Abstraktion zu kondensieren. Es geht also um ein semantikanalytisches Verfahren, bei dem Propositionen aus Texten gewonnen und kategorial verdichtet werden.<sup>74</sup>

This applies to theological loci communes, and as we will see, to relevant maxims or concepts of the other fields of knowledge as well.

Melancthon afterwards tackles the persuasive and allegorical speech in the last part of this exposition of narrative types. For the persuasive force of argument the identification and composition of the status, the search for appropriate arguments and the consideration of the passions to be kindled are essential. The allegorical narrative rests on the principle of comparison. Analogies are widely used in all kinds of text genres but Melancthon calls for caution in the analysis of analogies used in the biblical works. I will not go further into the details of this two genres but pass on to the chapter which follows thereafter in Melancthon's *Rhetorica*.

### 3.3.2.8 The second part of method: the loci

After having emphasized what the interpretor must take into consideration when reading the above enumerated kinds of narratives, and after having equipped the pupil with the method of simple themes, Melancthon introduces the method of demonstration concerning complex themes and dialectical proofs. After all, what has been prescribed above must be repeated and further elaborated if complex arguments are to be analyzed and rearranged. This determines Melancthon to insist that there is no big difference between rhetoric and dialectic. While the one "spreads freely" in speech, the other remains more constrained between the limits of art. The one rather tackles the matters of the forum, the other often focuses on theoretical (*spectativa*) matters, as Quintilian calls them.<sup>75</sup> This reference concerns Quintilian's view on the questions asked by the orator and his distinction between theses, or "Questions suitable for a philosopher" and definite questions, or hypotheses, which arise from combinations of facts, persons, times and so on. Quintilian endorses the Ciceronian view that hypotheses are said to

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gnati amor, plurimum valebat: locus communis, carnis interitus, affecturum carnis purgatio. In hunc solebant veteres modum santas historias tractare: spiritu magistro [...]."

<sup>74</sup> Knape, 1999, 130.

<sup>75</sup> *Instit. Orat.*, 3.5.11, 43.

derive from theses. The hypothesis of the rhetorician is called "cause". That is why the rhetoricians had called the genus which deals with these kind of causes or matters (which rather belong to philosophy), the genus *causarum dialecticarum*. Thus, a direct subordination of rhetorical arguments under dialectical principles is put forth. By referring to Quintilian's subordination of rhetoric under dialectic, which apparently goes against his own view, Melanchthon insists on the interdependency of the two arts that can not be really treated separately. At least in practice, a faithful interpretation requires both dialectical and rhetorical precepts.

The dialectical matters or causes are either simple (like justice, prudence, friendship) or complex (justice is virtue, felicity is the goal of man, the human soul is immortal). The simple method has been described above and teaches the questions of definition, division and so on. Definitions also rely on categories which one should have at hand whenever one inquires into some matter. Quintilian lists the questions with which issues/causes are sufficiently defined, relying on Aristotle's categories. In Quintilian's account the categories do not belong to an ontological structure but to a list of operational principles.<sup>76</sup> The Roman rhetorician clearly refers here to the analysis of a subject of speech. Melanchthon uses this view as a starting point for his own method of interpretation and composition. After having talked about the simple themes he restates the connection with the part to be presented. Since, according to Melanchthon, in all things, the investigation of simple themes must be performed first, it is necessary to first talk about the simple parts (*primum de simplicibus disserere*). After the nature thereof has become clear, one has to determine the truthfulness or falsity of the presented argument. This art of refuting and confirming belongs to the topical discipline. The topics or *loci*, Melanchthon writes, are:

the seats of arguments and their method closely follows the first composition of axioms (sentences<sup>77</sup>), admittedly, by means of hypothetical propositions. Thus, we prove everything, whether by means of arguments taken from the things itself, about which the nature of the things is stated, called essence, or from the accidents. The loci of arguments which are to be taken from essence are: the locus from definition, the locus from description, the locus from etymology. I add to this division the concomitants, the way the loci from substance and cause are called. The loci of arguments which are drawn from accidents are: the locus of oppositions, the locus of similarity, the locus of proportion. To these one can add and the loci of conjugates and of contingents. On the loci Cicero has written in an elegant matter, Rodolphus Agricola has written plentiful. Their

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 3.6.23, 56.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 43: "Sic in omnium rerum prevestigatione simplicia themata ante omnia debent excuti: ex quibus componuntur: deinde quae vel pronunciata, vel proloquia, vel axiomata, vel propositiones dicunt."

utility consists in that, by bringing forth any sentence whatsoever, the young student can appropriately consider if it should be refuted or confirmed.<sup>78</sup>

Melanchthon's understanding of places is Ciceronian. The concept of place as seat of arguments is taken from Cicero's *Topica*. However, his division of topics is peculiar: he differentiates between topics taken from the substance of a thing and topics taken from its accidents. It is similar to the Boethian distinction, except for the intermediate topics. It is not Ciceronian, since the Roman had distinguished between inherent topics and those removed from the nature of it—like testimonies and authorities. In a way, Melanchthon's classification of topics mirrors Aristotle's classification of his so-called categories. Perhaps, Melanchthon tries to make his topics mirror the way in which things in general – not only *causae* of speech – can be divided. He thus cuts across the distinction conceptual-rhetorical category.

How a topic is understood to function is illustrated by Melanchthon in a concrete example. If the pupil has to demonstrate the proposition that the soul is immortal, she can draw arguments from the concept of the soul (*ab animae notionibus*). The argument from the concept of the soul, or, perhaps, from the locus from contraries, is taken from Plato's Phaidos<sup>79</sup> and runs as follows:

The soul is life, thus it is not mortal. That which is constituted of two parts is even, it cannot be uneven. Even and uneven contradict themselves just like the meaning of life and the meaning of death contradict themselves. But of death: death is the resolution of the contraries, the soul does not yield to death because the soul is simple and remains short of the moderation of the contraries.<sup>80</sup>

The other example is taken from theology: the proposition to be confirmed is: "Law does not justify". Since the law is the power of sin, it does not justify. It is thus necessary in Melanchthon's view that this part of dialectic is applied when comparing the interpretations which have been written of the writings of the

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78 Ibid., 45: "Illi enim sunt argumetorum sedes, et horum ratio proxime sequitur primam axiomatis compositionem nempe per Hypotheticam propositionem. Itaque quicquid probamus aut argumentis ab ipsius rei de qua dicitur natura ipsaque ut vocant essentia, aut ex accidente ductis agimus. Loci argumentorum ab essentia ducendorum sunt: Locus a definitione. Locus a descriptione. Locus ab *etymologia*. Adde his divisionem, item concomitantes, ut vocant, substantiam et causarum locos. Loci argumentorum quae ab accidente ducuntur, sunt: Locus oppositorum. Locus similium. Locus proportionum. Possunt his accenseri et coniugatorum et casuum loci. De locis elegantissime Cicero, copiosissime Rodolphus Agricola scripserunt. Eorum hic est usus, cum proponitur adolescenti propositio aliqua vel confirmanda vel confutanda, commodum cogitet."

79 *Phaed.*: 70c–72e

80 Ibid., 46: "Anima est vita, non est igitur mortalis, ut si dicas, dualitas par est, impar igitur esse non potest. Pugnans enim ut par ac imparis, ita mortis atque vitae rationes inter se. A morete vero: mors est solutio contrariorum, anima igitur morti non est obnoxia, cum simplex fit, ac citra contrariorum temperamentum consistens."

Ancients. Also, he believes it is relevant to mention that the order of the proof is here reversed, and one has to find out the prior from the posterior, as in the case of defining man as rational after it has been stated that he invents, speaks and judges. But this should pose no difficulty for the reader who can easily reverse the order, if he had been attentive to the previous presentations. Melanchthon employs topical argumentation for the analysis and comparison of assertions and arguments found in ancient literature. That the procedure is reversed, i. e. that the definition is to be acquired after the reading and identification of the problematic judgments themselves should not be a problem for the trained reader. In textual exegesis the reader is always confronted with already formulated opinions which he has to scrutinize.

Melanchthon ends the chapter admonishing his readers to practice textual analysis and generation assiduously and to cultivate both the art and the splendor of speech. The interpretation and creation of speeches are complementary operations which employ the same techniques: definitions, divisions, arguments, connection of arguments into entire discourses and their resolution into single parts. To put it in Gilbert Ryle's terms, to Melanchthon, "execution and understanding are merely different exercises of knowledge of the tricks of the same trade."<sup>81</sup> Critical reading and critical writing go hand in hand. That is why Melanchthon develops here a method of teaching and learning which rests both on dialectical and rhetorical analysis and composition. The pupils learn how to write by reading the texts of others who knew how to write. They understand the aims and the circumstances of the ancient authors and can acquire an insight into the manner in which these presuppositions influenced the selection of material. In the principles underlying the practice of the ancient authors, the pupils recognize the rules guiding her own literary practice. Under Melanchthon's quill pen, dialectic and rhetoric become the components of a method of textual exegesis.

### 3.3.2.9 The actual genus demonstrativum and the loci personarum

Melanchthon continues with the second part of the genus *demonstrativum*: that of praise and blame (*laudis et vituperii*). As Melanchthon had mentioned above, while referring to Quintilian, rhetorical questions and problems preside over their own rhetorical places, which can be brought in direct connection to dialectical loci and questions. The genus *demonstrativum* presides over specific loci that aid the argumentation: the *loci personarum*. These are *natales, educatio, adolescentia, iuventus, senectus, mors*. Here, circumstances and commonplaces

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81 Ryle, 1949, 54.

play an important role.<sup>82</sup> Examples of commonplaces are taken from the various fields of knowledge which the philosophers had divided. Theological loci communes are faith, ceremony, sin and so on. Those belonging to the law punishment, lawyer, judge and various others. Commonplaces belonging to the human things are faith, works, honor, life, death and so on. We will see in the second part of this chapter that these are treated separately in the last and widely read textbook of Melanchthonian rhetoric. The reader is reminded that these are rules and forms which aid the memory. He is further referred to the works of Rudolph Agricola, *De ratione studii epistola* and the *Copia verborum* of Erasmus<sup>83</sup>.

### 3.3.2.10 Disposition and Elocution

Affects and the specific status are treated briefly, before Melanchthon concludes his book on invention by tackling the other two rhetorical branches: the genus of deliberative and judicial speech. The last two books, which are kept very brief, deal with disposition and elocution. Disposition represents the order of the speech, of its parts, and of its arguments. The last dispositional element in a process of analysis of discourse is the argument.<sup>84</sup> Thus a brief and famous method of disposition is Aristotle's syllogism, which can be amplified afterwards in a process of generation, by means of other types of arguments and figures of speech which aid in adorning the discourse. Obviously, Melanchthon identifies here judgment with disposition, consistent with his interpretation of the *Posterior Analytics* as a work of pedagogical method. Melanchthon shows how a speech such as Cicero's *Pro Milone* can be structured by the division and differentiation of its parts, sub-parts and arguments. He ends his fragment on disposition by urging his students to acquire the skill of breaking down complex discourses into their syllogistic parts and, integrating the bare arguments into ample speeches. In this chapter Melanchthon refers to the *Prior Analytics* as the source of precepts on disposition and connection of parts.<sup>85</sup> He recommends it as a work that can be consulted in parallel to his own. Melanchthon is anxious to show that disposition and invention are complementary for teaching and learning and that they should not be separated. This represents an additional

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82 Ibid., 69: Melanchthon observes a collection of commonplaces. useful to have at hand, which represent the forms or headings of things belonging to different fields of knowledge: "sic et in singulis studiorum generibus sunt quaedam capita, in quae referri solent, quae tractantur illic [...] qui volet igitur de rebus humanibus recte iudicare, illum oportet, quidquid inciderit forte fortuna, ad has ceu formas rerum exigere[...]"

83 Ibid., 70: "De usu locorum communium optime scripserunt Rodolphus Agricola in epistola de ratione studii et Erasmus in Copia, in hanc fere sententiam."

84 Ibid., 110: "[...] dialectica nihil esse nisi acre et subtile rhetoricorum iudicium, et veluti censuram."

85 Ibid., 115.

argument in favor of the dialectical and rhetorical union. It also singles out Melanchthon's integrative approach towards the Aristotelian tradition. While Humanists tended to overlook parts of the *Organon* which had been over-emphasized by scholastic philosophers, Melanchthon prefers to integrate Aristotelian doctrines by interpreting them as rhetorical-interpretative tools. This provides Melanchthon the advantage of using the reinterpreted doctrines without having to further justify their employment in his later works.

Melanchthon defines elocution as the method of decorating speeches by means of propositions, words and compositions. Here Melanchthon elaborates on the three styles of oration which are dependent on the elocutionary style (the sublime, the middle and the lower style), on amplificatory instruments, tropes and schemes. Melanchthon believes that the figures of speech are the light of the discourse. Some of them increase the power of the arguments while others arise from and reinforce their structure. Thus, the origins of the figures are to be sought in invention and disposition. Just as the argument must be found, the method of elaboration has to be drawn from it. The elaborate information one receives through topical invention is used in finding out the appropriate method of amplification: *Prope omnia sententiarum schemata ex locis dialecticis emanare.*<sup>86</sup>

### 3.3.2.11 Conclusion

Melanchthon writes *De Rhetorica* with the intent of reviving the rhetorical doctrine and proving its usefulness and its dependency on dialectic. Since dialectic had been a fundamental part of the traditional school system, the best way to succeed in reforming the curricula in favor of rhetoric is to prove that dialectic and rhetoric belong together. Additionally Melanchthon goes at great lengths to prove that both are *sine quibus non* conditions of understanding the works which cover all branches of scholarly knowledge. By subordinating dialectic to the rhetorical demonstrative genre, Melanchthon suggests that the form of dialectical reasoning belongs to a broader collection of techniques of argumentation. By defining the *genus didaktikon* as the standard of correct argumentation in general, he turns dialectical method into the kernel of the rhetorical discipline. The interpretation of dialectic as the method of demonstration, by means of questions and loci, and the reading of the syllogisms as a method of disposition, transgresses the boundaries of Humanist interpretations of dialectic. Rudolph Agricola employs an understanding of dialectic as the art of probable speech (*dialectices officium est, probabiliter dicere*) that teaches the method of discerning truth from falsehood by means of invention and judgment. He strictly

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 124.

distances himself from what he believes Aristotle is doing in his *Posterior Analytics*, i. e. ruling out dialectical questions (which are only posed as matters of dispute) from the form of epistemic reasoning which is confined to the limits of special sciences. Agricola got many things right regarding Aristotle's plan in the *Topics* and the *Analytics*. Philipp Melanchthon's *Rhetorica* completely reinterprets the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, by turning them into a counterpart of dialectic. Thus, he identifies what was called probable reasoning by Agricola with demonstration. Melanchthon takes from the *Posterior Analytics* the general methodical principle of inference and attributes it to the question and loci method. This method is employed to disclose the natures and characteristics of concepts from which related concepts can easily be inferred. That the concepts analyzed are not mere *verba*, but disclose the nature of the *res*, is not further questioned. Since Melanchthon's textbook is not thematizing epistemic or metaphysical aspects, formal validity and truth-conditions of the argument are not discussed. The better understanding of texts is legitimized through a detailed analysis of concepts and their semantical connections and a contextual, thus critical, reading. The focus is set on semantical *copia* and the method is both of analysis and of generation. The lecture of Melanchthon's first rhetoric is, in my opinion, fundamental for the understanding of his later separate projects of dialectic and rhetoric. I will turn to these in the following.

### 3.4 Melanchthon's *Compendiaria Dialectices*

At the insistence of his students<sup>87</sup> Melanchthon writes a short introduction into dialectic, the *Compendiaria dialectices ratio*<sup>88</sup>, one year after the publication of *De Rhetorica*. Dialectic is treated separately, not as a subgenus of rhetoric. However, its importance for rhetorical speech is emphasized: dialectic represents the criterion of the rhetorical orations (*indicem orationis Rhetoricae, seu amussim*). Melanchthon's first dialectic manual extract the parts on dialectical method from the *De Rhetorica* and presents them anew in a differentiated and organized manner. A significant amount of attention is given to the knowledge of the predicables and categories which are deemed necessary for the elaboration of the method of simple questions. Also, a chapter on propositions and on forms of arguments is added, in order to cover parts of traditional logic and to demonstrate their interrelatedness to the theory of interpretation presented in the *De Rhetorica*. The chapter on the loci provides the doctrine of invention belonging to both dialectic and rhetoric.

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<sup>87</sup> CR 1, 153.

<sup>88</sup> CR 20, 711–764.

Wilhelm Risse characterizes Melanchthon's early period of dialectical and rhetorical composition as marked by the conviction on the kinship between rhetoric and dialectic.<sup>89</sup> He also believes that psychology is seen by Melanchthon as belonging to the field of logic, since she deals, just like dialectic, with the processes of the human mind. While the former is, however, bound to the organic functions of the body, dialectic is to be treated from the perspective of cognition, which is inorganic and separable from the bodily functions. Risse refers to Melanchthon's first commentary on the soul, firstly published in 1540.<sup>90</sup> The explicit connection between the observations from the first textbook on dialectic and the matters treated in the textbook on psychology, published 20 years later, does, above all, suggest one thing: that Melanchthon had kept to his early views on the function of dialectic and psychology and their relationship. In the *Compendiaria*, as we will see below, Melanchthon hints at pieces of his philosophy of mind. He does not talk much about the level of perception and psychological processes. Rather, he talks about a natural light or a method of reasoning and judging which does not implicate any straight-forward psychological level. The domain of the rational soul is, as Risse remarks, differentiated from the processes of the body. While Risse gives a helpful overview of the *Compendiaria*, his analysis is not detailed and Melanchthon's rhetoric is not in his range of interest. His claim that Melanchthon treats logic "im Sinne des ciceronisch-agricolaschen Rhetorismus"<sup>91</sup> is certainly correct. However, Risse does neither elaborate nor inquire into why Melanchthon chooses to write his textbook on logic in this manner and what essential reconceptualizations he undertakes to achieve his end.

It is useful, at this point, to return to Ashworth's analysis of Humanist logic and her claim that, in the case of Melanchthon's *Compendiaria*, an attempt is made to "treat probability operators as part of a deductive system, rather than using them to construct a non-deductive probabilistic logic."<sup>92</sup> Ashworth refers to Melanchthon's demand, in the *Compendiaria*, that arguments need to be put into syllogistic, enthymematic and inductive forms, irrespective of whether they are constructed from necessary or from probable loci. The purpose of this formal constraint is to disclose the underlying inference. The focus on syllogism, on which I will dwell below, is of course problematic in the case of most of the arguments put forth as examples by Melanchthon. Few if any rhetorical proofs and arguments could be put into such a form. But it would be misleading to understand that Melanchthon employs here "deduction" as both formally valid

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89 Risse, 1964, 86–87.

90 Ibid., 86, n45.

91 Ibid., 83.

92 Ashworth, 2008, 641.

and sound argument, according to the standards of the *Prior Analytics*. To him, the forms, which are no doubt important to list and enumerate are seen as regulative ideals of argumentation. In his examples, Melanchthon uses “syllogism” in a weaker sense. “Syllogism” is used, most of the time, as a form of inference one is qualified to make from two stated propositions to a plausible and different conclusion, guaranteeing production of new information. Most of the times, the inference is not guaranteed by the form of the argument but by the locus itself, which Melanchthon does not try to reduce to any figured form. Also, generally, the parts on syllogism in Melanchthon’s manuals on dialectic, include explications that disclose Melanchthon’s interest in the steps of argumentation, rather than in the formal rules behind the premises employed. However, the fascination for formally valid inferences is explicit, at least in the late edition of Melanchthon’s dialectic. The tension between the ideal form of argument and the actual use of argument is often reduced by Melanchthon’s employment of the “weak” sense of “syllogism”.

At the end of this chapter, I compare Melanchthon’s endeavour with that of Stephen Toulmin, who focuses on both the invariant and the field dependent parts of an argument. Toulmin is concerned with a manner of analyzing reasoned speech according to the procedure followed and intended therein and not according to the mathematical standard coerced unto the parts of common discourse. Similarly, although Melanchthon believes a certain order guarantees the clarity of the inference employed, he explains by means of his theory of invention that the specific locus determines the manner in which arguments are to be arranged and formed, as well as amplified and ornated. The chapter on the method of the topics (and its complementary method of simple themes) represent the core of Melanchthon’s dialectic and rhetoric.

The project of writing a new informal logic as an alternative to scholastic Aristotelian logic was not a priority for the Humanists, especially because they already had a suitable and productive theory of dialectical and rhetorical argumentation. This theory was not focused on the analysis of language but on the employment of techniques for the sake of argumentative (interpretative) success.

I deliberately offer two English translations for *res* in my reconstruction of the Melanchthonian texts since I believe that, although dialectic and rhetorical manuals render *res* mainly as “matter of debate”, “concept under debate” or “subject of text”, some of the Humanists occasionally refer to three-dimensional things. They mingle rhetorical categories with claims of language-referentiality, but often, this does not really constitute any problem for the understanding of the text. After all, a basic understanding of three-dimensional things is necessary for the understanding of textual claims and matters of discourse (notwithstanding its nature). Most of the times, this does not have any bearing on their semantics or theory of cognition. It does become a matter of debate in Mel-

anchthon's late textbook on dialectic, where the method of topics seems to be intrinsic to the process of scientific inquiry as such. I will discuss this aspect later in this chapter.

### 3.4.1 The Aristotelian structure and the Ciceronian definition

The *Compendiaria* consists of four books: (1) on predicables and predicaments (categories), definition and division; (2) on propositions and their forms; (3) on syllogisms, their forms, and alternative forms of argumentation (enthymemes, induction and examples and chains of syllogisms) and (4) on the topics and hypothetical propositions. The structure seems to follow a structure similar to that of the terministic manuals and mirrors to a certain extent the sequence of the books of the *Organon*, since it deals with simple terms, propositions and arguments. The terminology is, for the most part, taken from the early medieval tradition, i. e. from Boethius and Porphyrius and from the rhetoric tradition. The introduction is entitled *On the art of speaking (De ratione disserendi)* and explains the function and usefulness of dialectic:

Dialectic is the art of debating (*disserendi*) appropriately on any matter whatsoever. It discloses in a simple manner the nature and parts of any matter, and orders, whatever is brought forth, by means of certain speech, to the extent that one cannot but grasp everything which is (*quicquid inest*), whether it is true or false. Dialectic differs from rhetoric, which teaches a more splendid persuasive speech, adding it to what has already been understood, and prepares the certain and exact [matter] and [is] the clear criterion of the rhetorical discourse.[...] Dialectic is not thought to be anything other than a sort of thread of human reason, with the help of which we investigate the nature and the parts of every knowable thing according to a particular order, and by which we seek to discover what is true and what is false. That is why, there is no particular labor in acquiring dialectic, if you refer it back to the judgment of the mind; nature has ingrafted us this order of the things to be known, which is thus expressed. Both illiterate and learned men can distinguish some sort of deduction of things through the universal comprehension of nature and can see the subsequent and the preceding parts, and draw the former from the latter. Dialectic is the sense of this nature, the path of this reason.<sup>93</sup>

93 CR 20, 712: "Dialectica est artificium apposite ac proprie de quocunque themate disserendi. Simpliciter enim cuiusque thematis naturam et partes ostendit, et quod proponitur, adeo certis verbis praescribit, ut non possit non deprehendi, quicquid inest, sive veri, sive falsi. A Rhetoricis discrepat, quod haec speldidam magis, et ad captum popularem orationem instruunt, dialectica certam et exactam adornant, et plane indicem orationis Rhetoricae seu amussim. [...] Neque quisquam Dialectica putet aliud esse, quam rationis humanae ceu filum quoddam, quo cuiusque rei cognoscendam naturam partesque ordine quodam vestigamus, quo in quavis re quid veri, quid falsi sit, perquirimus. Quare neque labor ullus fuerit adsequi Dialectica, si ad animi iudicium revoces; quem enim natura nobis ordinem cognoscendarum rerum insequit, haec expriment. Vulgo idiotae et literarum expertes quamdam rerum con-

This definition of dialectic as the instrument of exact and appropriate inquiry is identical with the one given under the heading of *De prima parte generis demonstrativi* in *De Rhetorica*. So is the view that dialectic is the standard against which rhetorical speech is to be examined. What Melanchthon elaborates here is his claim from the previous textbook that the method of dialectic had been called *apodictic* or *epistemic*.<sup>94</sup> He is anxious to show why he believes this is the case and traces the particular operations of inquiry and argumentation which dialectic teaches to ingrafted capacities: to the actual operations of the human mind, ingrafted by nature (*Natura nobis ordinem cognoscendarum rerum iniecit*). Melanchthon couples his definition on dialectic as an art with the explanation of its simplicity and genuineness. This reference to nature, which has equipped man with the manner of perceiving order in exactly the way prescribed by dialectic is, and I agree with Dilthey here<sup>95</sup>, most probably a reference to Cicero's *De Officiis*, a work which Melanchthon had held in very high regard. Cicero explains that man had been endowed by nature with reason

by which he comprehends the chain of consequences, perceives the causes of things, understands the relation of cause to effect and of effect to cause, draws analogies and connects and associates the present and the future[...].<sup>96</sup>

This Ciceronian stance is consistent with the Stoic view defended by Lucullus in Cicero's *Academica*:

For the mind itself which is the source of the sensations and even is itself sensation, has a natural force which it directs to the things by which it is moved[...].<sup>97</sup>

Melanchthon brackets out the part on sensation, a subject to which I will return later, and insists on the natural *force* of the mind. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Melanchthon writes in a marginal note: *Dialectic is not so much an art, as it is a certain natural flow of tackling all matters*.<sup>98</sup>

Aristotle is not mentioned in this edition, except indirectly by means of reference to the view of the "Aristotelians". Melanchthon refers thereby to Aristotelian logicians and criticizes their methods and terminology. This has been deemed by the scholarship as an attitude of hostility towards Aristotle, against the background of the Lutheran condemnation of Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>99</sup> Frank has shown that Melanchthon's criticism is to be interpreted with caution

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sequentiam communi natrae captu cernunt, videntque progressus et antecessiones, et ex aliis alia colligunt, hic ipse naturae sensus, haec rationis semita Dialectica est."

94 See chapter 3.3.2.

95 Dilthey, 1986, 242.

96 *De Off.* I, 11.

97 *Acad.* II. 30.

98 CR 20, 711.

99 Kuroпка, 2002, 18. Kusukawa, 1995, 29–49.

and concerns mainly the logical-metaphysical claims of scholastic philosophy, which often permeated theological views.<sup>100</sup> This criticism has been clearly stated by Melanchthon in his inaugural speech and remains a distinct feature of his understanding of philosophy. Moreover, even in the absence of direct references to Aristotle in the *Compendiaria*, the claim for exactness and appropriateness on the side of dialectic remains. Also, this claim is reinforced in the chapter on syllogisms where Melanchthon merges Aristotelian and rhetorical accounts on formal argumentation. This way, Melanchthon distances himself from some of his fellow Humanists, who mainly view dialectic or logic as an instrument of guaranteeing high probability to arguments. Even if Agricola claims dialectic would embrace probable and certain argumentation, he does not explain how this is to be understood in the context of a rhetorical reinterpretation of dialectic. Melanchthon decidedly endorses his claim to certainty and clarity in his late textbook, the *Erotermata Dialectices*, as I will show later. Thus, even while not explicitly mentioning Aristotle, the emphasis on the syllogistic inference rules and their inherent principle of order is an element which testifies to the influence of Aristotle's *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* on Melanchthon's dialectic.

### 3.4.2 The dialectical method of the simple parts

Dialectic presides in the *Compendiaria Dialectices Ratio* over two parts: the part on simple speech and the part on complex speech.

The nature of the complex is to be extracted by referring it to the method of the simple parts and there is no other way of grasping what belongs to truth and to falseness, except if the natures of the simple terms are carefully inquired into.<sup>101</sup>

Dialectic has three major functions (*tria capita*): definition and division which concern simple speech or words (*simplices voces pertinent*), and argumentation which concerns discourse (*ad orationem*). Because natural dialectic is so trivial and simple, Melanchthon believes students do not even have to consult his precepts, but only use their own their own reasoning faculty. In investigating any thing whatsoever, he believes that one naturally seeks to understand the meaning of the word put forward, the nature and the properties of the thing signified. To Melanchthon, these different ways of knowing something, the understanding of the meaning and the grasp of the actual thing, are taken together. This means that both the general definition and the features of this particular thing must be

100 Frank, 1995, 57.

101 CR 20, 713: "[...] iam coniunctarum natura exigit, ut solutae revocentur ad methodos et amusim simplicium, nec in orationibus, quid veri, quid falsi insit, deprehendes, nisi, simplicium vocum naturas proprie excusseris."

known for the understanding to be complete. The parts of definition and division, the predicables, and predicaments are tackled in detail because they constitute, in Melanchthon's view, the starting points of learning, i.e. knowledge acquisition. Melanchthon describes the relation between things and words without appealing to a theory of cognition or referring as Agricola had done, to an overarching science (metaphysics). He explains that the words are the signs of things:

After the word signifies, does not the soul grasp the nature of the signified things? Does he not seek out its properties? Like when we have learned what it is signified by the word 'soul', don't we strive to differentiate the nature and the absolute property of the soul? Equally, don't we, after we had heard what peculiar pictures and forms had been described by word, seek to contemplate them with our own eyes, face to face?<sup>102</sup>

To this Melanchthon notes in the margins: "All intuitive cognition is definitive, against the common (conception)." Melanchthon seems to emphasize here the simultaneity of intuitive and abstractive processes of cognition, as it were. The common opinion which this view contradicts is that upheld by Duns Scotus and William of Ockham who endorse a clear divide between intuitive (cognition of the essence and existence of a thing) and abstract cognition (which abstracts from the actual existence).<sup>103</sup> However, Melanchthon claims that by actually grasping a matter (and by that he probably refers to the sense of imagination) one recognizes its definitory parts and nature. He thereby insists on the referentiality of language, to which, as I claimed in the introductory passage of this chapter, most Humanists were committed.<sup>104</sup> After all, if one understands the meaning of a thing, one should be able to bring to mind its different parts and properties. This can hardly be done when various words are used that refer to artificial and speculative terms. At the same time, this observation refers to the usefulness of the predicates and the predicables. These concern either the nature and properties of things or their definition (in terms of genus and species).

This view on definitions also belongs to the Stoics, who see definitions as reflecting the primary "grasp" of things.<sup>105</sup> Melanchthon differentiates between predicables and predicates in a fashion similar to that of Petrus Hispanus, but by omitting one relevant observation. Melanchthon says:

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102 CR 20, 714: "Postquam, quid nomen significet, comprehenderit animus, nonne, quae significatae rei natura, quae conditio sit, exquirat? Ut cum didicimus, quid voce animae significetur, nonne gestimus naturam ac conditionem absolutam animae cernere?"

103 Wengert, 1981; Cross, 2014; Karger, 1999, 206–228.

104 On the manner in which this can be inferred from Valla's work on dialectic see Nauta, 2009, 63.

105 *Acad.*, II.31.; Long and Sedley, 1987, 194.

In the craft of defining, the first to be observed (since words (*voces*) are explained by means of words and the nature of the things is signified by means of names) is that some words are more common than others, some cohere with and some diverge from other words.

After enumerating the predicables: *individuum*, *species*, *genus*, *differentia*, *proprium*, *accidens*, Melanchthon makes it clear that he believes common concepts like genus and species to be an image of a particular nature (*unam quamdam imaginem significat naturae*) attributed to many individuals and conceived by the mind. In the *Erotemata Dialectices* he will insist on the fact that he does not consider them to have separate existence. Here, he only remarks it in a marginal note: *Nihil reale est in universalibus*. This differentiates Melanchthon from Hispanus who, at the beginning of the chapter on predicables, distinguishes between the *modi* of understanding the predicable, as *being said* and as *being*, as predicable proper and as universal. Hispanus is admittedly only interested in the predicable, but endorses the view of the real existence of universals.<sup>106</sup> Concerning the categories or predicaments Melanchthon remarks in a marginal note: *Sequimur in ratione praedicamentorum Graecos*.<sup>107</sup> Melanchthon's rejection of medieval logical terminology is obvious. While he takes over a broad framework in which different parts of logical theory are structured, he remains committed to his program, following, as close as possible, the "uncorrupted" manner of the Ancients. His hostility is directed not against Aristotle but against the Stagirite's interpreters. And his choice to avoid the direct reference to Aristotle does not represent a rejection of the philosopher's doctrines, since he had tried, in his *De Rhetorica*, to offer an appropriate Humanist interpretation of the Stagirite's views. The structuring of the parts of dialectic can be also seen as a choice which fits a general pedagogical principle. It includes, at the same time, both the ancient Aristotelian presentation of the *Organon* as well as Cicero's and Quintilian's rhetorical display of the loci.

Predicaments are the ordering categories of things. This order has been sorted out by prudent men as a list of common places (*prudentes sane homines, voluerunt in locos quosdam communes omnes res totius universitas colligere, ut si quid occurreret explicandum, declarandum, ac definiendum [...]*<sup>108</sup>). Rhetoricians and dialecticians alike use the predicaments when they prepare their civil causes and matters, and they supply their argumentation with exact definitions. However, Melanchthon remarks, there is less exactness in the representation of a thing in rhetorical speech, and more appropriateness and certainty in the dialectician's method. Nevertheless, keeping a fitting overview of the or-

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106 *Sum.Log.*, 17.

107 CR 20, 717.

108 CR 20, 717.

ders of things is always useful. This order will facilitate the required definitions. Here, Melanchthon lists four predicaments: substance, quality, quantity and relation. This view is closer to the theory of status illustrated in the *De Rhetorica* than to any of the scholastic prevalent understanding of categories.<sup>109</sup> My view is supported by Melanchthon's reference to the use the various categories acquire in rhetorical speech. Indeed, even Melanchthon's understanding of definition – as one of the essential guarantors of clarity and exactness – is departing from the Aristotelian tradition and develops against the background of rhetorical practice. The first definitory mode is that of the essential definition. Melanchthon does not reject the method of defining by means of genus and difference, just as Boethius had defined “human” by going through all the levels of *differentiae* belonging to the Porphyrian tree (*homo est substantia, corporea, animata, sentiens, intellectualis*). He rather suggests a definition in “closer accordance with the thing defined”. Instead of following the order of words (*ratio sermonis*), Melanchthon chooses to define man as consisting of body and rational soul and thus claims to follow the order of nature. He is clearly influenced here by the developing Lutheran theology in Wittenberg, and even more so by his own important part in the promotion of the theological and educational reform. Apart from his theological convictions, Melanchthon believes that one may define a thing in various ways. Clarity however, is brought about by putting forth the actual, essential parts of the things themselves. This is achieved by employment of ordinary notions of things (or first intentions) rather than through the use of predicables. “There is no difference between the essential definition and its conflated form, except only for the manner of speech”.<sup>110</sup> He is also convinced that a definition, which is close to the thing inquired into, is possible, and mainly determined by the clear understanding of the matter (*res*) itself. When confronted with several ways of rendering a definition, Melanchthon suggests that it is always better to pick the most clear and illuminating one. Sometimes, it might not be the one formulated along the lines of genus and species.

Melanchthon sees the causal definition to be the one preferred by the rhetoricians, since they need to lay out the principal causes of a matter. Explaining the Aristotelian four-causes-doctrine, Melanchthon does not go into any speculations on efficient, material, formal and final causes. The examples he gives are taken from ordinary language, and so is the meaning of concepts like form and

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109 Categories were discussed by medieval philosophers both in the context of logic and metaphysics, although there is no unitary view on the Categories, they are considered to reflect the basic logico-metaphysical structure of reality. See the detailed and insightful papers on various interpretations of the categories, ancient and modern, in Haaparanta and Koskinen, 2012.

110 CR 20, 721–722: “Caeterum, inter essentialem et eam, quae ex materia et forma conflata est, nihil interest, praeter figuram sermonis.”

matter. The former is here taken to be the manner of sewing together a piece of clothing, the latter represents the piece of cloth itself. Form and matter are no metaphysical principles, and the emphasis is laid on the way they are employed in common or ordinary speech.<sup>111</sup> Division is also highly relevant for the creation of an ordered discourse, since, on the one hand, it clears the speech from ambiguities (subdividing the meanings of a word), and, on the other, provides the instrument for the rhetorical disposition of arguments and amplification. A detailed and conflated division provides the character of ample and persuasive speech.

And these ornaments or schemes of speech are derived from the dialectical division as from a spring, so that almost each of the figures of the rhetorician originate from each of the dialectical places, which we will show in the method of arguing.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, the Humanist stresses the cogeneration of dialectical and rhetorical discourse. Melanchthon insists on the usefulness of the material he presents, since, he believes, it can guide us in the inquiry of simple matters. Categories are facilitating a better categorization of the existing things, and predicables are used to talk generally about these categories and about the names of things. They help us in defining and dividing, and they give us a hand in revealing the nature of a debated matter. At the same time, this step of preliminary clarification is not entirely artificial. It is rather the usual way of employing words as signs for things and as signs for other words or names. Out of this both natural and methodical way of dealing with things, Melanchthon draws a series of questions which help the understanding of a subject matter and represent the prerequisites of well-ordered speech. These questions are listed under the method of simple themes or subject matters in *De Rhetorica*. They summarize all of the above by condensing all the relevant aspects that can be revealed about a thing (matter): *Quid nomen significet; Quid res sit; Quae causae; Quae partes; Quod officium*. They provide a clear and thorough explanation of a subject matter, permitting the connections of thus gathered characteristics in propositions and arguments.

### 3.4.3 The simple speech: propositio

The second book is dedicated to the nature and form of proposition. Propositions are identified by Melanchthon, in Aristotelian fashion, with the most simple speech (*oratio simplicissima*), and are considered the building blocks of literary

111 This view is reinforced in his textbook on Physics; see CR 13, 296–298.

112 CR 20, 724: “Atque haec orationis ornamenta seu schemata ex divisone dialectica, ceu ex fonte derivantur, ut e singulis dialecticis locis, singulae ferme rgetorum figurae, id quod in ratione argumentandi ostendemus nascantur.”

production. In the interpretation of narratives, and in the generation of speech, the understanding and provision of the simple parts of discourse is crucial for the comprehension of the whole. Depending on the task, it is necessary either to break down the whole narrative into its simple parts or to construe a speech on simple propositions. The example of Melanchthon is Cicero's oration *Pro Milone*, which, he says, can be reduced to simple sentences that permit the understanding of the debated issue. Afterwards, the ornaments and the figures can be contemplated in the separate parts of the arguments. It is very useful for the students to dissolve complicated discourses, disputations, and controversies into simple sentences. Especially a clearly formulated status offers insight into the whole purpose of the narrative. Melanchthon thus admonishes the students to follow the order and dialectic, both in reading the narrations of the authors, and in writing their own. All arguments need to be broken down into the simple and clear sentences which summarize the main claim of the text. Afterwards, all the ornaments of speech are to be traced back to them.<sup>113</sup> Melanchthon's claim from *De Rhetorica* is reiterated: the ornaments follow from the use of the simple dialectical method. In the remainder of the book, the forms of the sentences are listed in a rather traditional manner, together with the square of contraries.

#### 3.4.4 The *forms* of arguments

The third book of the *Compendiaria* concerns the rules according to which the simple sentences are connected. Here Melanchthon insists on the usefulness of dialectic for rhetorical discourse. "No rhetorical proofs are certain and solid if they are not circumscribed with the forms (*iis formulis*) which we will give below".<sup>114</sup> The youth is admonished to exercise the issues of the rhetoricians – sacred or profane – so that they learn to include among brief sentences integral syllogisms, and limit and constrain lengthy disputes by means of narrow and certain bonds of syllogisms. This training enables the students to follow the "sinews" of the speech, and to attend to the order and disposition of the argument. The method of syllogism is put to the use of speech, and drawn, just as the method of simple questions, from the natural judgment of the mind. While the questions guarantee appropriate predication, the form of the syllogisms secures a necessary inference from the premises to the conclusion, following the *natural* order:

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113 CR 20, 727–728.

114 CR 20, 731: "Nullae Rhetorum probationes certae solidaeque sunt, nisi iis formulis, quas subiiciemus, circumscribi queant."

Not only the learned bind things together like that, not only they reason this way. Even the young boys and the unlearned are taught by nature to reason in the same way. You have to take the judgment of syllogism from them, not from the commentaries of the dialecticians.<sup>115</sup>

However, what is natural about syllogism are not so much its different modes and figures, but rather a specific order in which we move from something to be proven to inquiring into the causes, search for argument, and combine them in such a way that they follow naturally one from the other. Melanchthon is eager to insist that “generally, those who teach the construction of syllogisms do not remind the pupils that that which has the greatest importance is the matter itself”.<sup>116</sup> Clearly, Melanchthon transgresses here the boundaries of a discussion of formal requirements of arguments and tries to provide a description of how middle terms are to be sought. The search for middle terms belongs, however, to the inventive part of dialectic, which he treats in the last chapter. Melanchthon believes that the formal requirements must be taught together with the actual matter of the argument. Although the modes and figures seem to represent a natural and topic-neutral manner of dealing with a subject matter, if the forms are taught completely independently, they remain obscure for the pupil. The specific order is bound to the subject matter. This way, the part on judgment is merged to that on invention, although, for the sake of clarity in teaching, Melanchthon tries to handle them separately.

Before listing the traditional exposition of syllogistic forms, Melanchthon gives an account of the syllogisms taken from Cicero's *De inventione*. The reason why Melanchthon presents the Ciceronian account is, because he believes that dialectic and rhetoric both have to integrate the forms of arguments among their technique. Melanchthon claims that his aim is to compare the two arts and that he believes that much of what Cicero and Quintilian had written about syllogisms fits to the doctrine transmitted by the Aristotelians. Melanchthon identifies the Ciceronian concept of syllogism with Quintilian's understanding of *epicheireme*.<sup>117</sup> Although Cicero and Quintilian both talk about probable argu-

115 CR 20, 733: “Neque modo sic eruditi colligunt, aut ratiocinantur. Sed et pueros et idiotas ipsa docet natura ratiocinari. E quorum ore iudicium syllogismi pete, non e rancidis dialecticorum comentariis.”

116 Ibid.: “Vulgo qui syloogismos conficere docent, non admonent e thematibus ducendos, id quod maxime referebat, sint ergo themata.”

117 *Instit. Orat.*, 5.14: “The Epicheireme is in no way different from Syllogisms, except that they have more species and infer truth from truth, whereas the Epicheireme is more often used with propositions which are merely probable. If doubtful Propositions could always be proved by means of admitted ones, there would hardly be any use for an orator in this type of Argument.” Here Quintilian links epicheireme both with a syllogistic inference and with probable matter. What he also says is that rhetoricians need indeed syllogistic inferences in their speech, but more often than not, the inference is made with doubtful matters. Ibid.:

mentation, their account of reasoning<sup>118</sup> is identified to the here expounded syllogism. This indicates that Melanchthon believes that the formal requirements of syllogistic argumentation can be made to fit any subject matter whatsoever. This also implies a weakening of the concept of figured form, broadened to include not only perfect syllogisms, but imperfect forms like enthymemes and even non-syllogistic forms of argument like induction and example. Most of Melanchthon's own illustrations are "imperfect" argumentation forms. I turn to these in the following.

In the depiction of the figures of syllogisms, Melanchthon rejects, as has been emphasized, the third figure as lacking any utility and being incomprehensible (*a communi sensu aliena*).<sup>119</sup> He understands enthymeme as an imperfect syllogism, which, however, is not only imperfect in structure, but often deals with matter which is not certain. It is, like the *exemplum*, used very often by poets. Induction is reasoning from singulars and, as Melanchthon insists, should never be constrained to fit into a syllogism as it infers from singular antecedents to universal consequents. This form of reasoning is said to fit the natural senses. Induction is not able to give the same amount of certainty as the syllogism, but it enjoys great esteem especially among physicians, who preponderantly make inferences from singular effects.<sup>120</sup> Melanchthon refers to the warming power of the wine, which has been established as a fact by the physicians, who tested the effects of various kinds of wines and found no invalidating instance. Examples are the reasoning forms most often employed, especially in consultations on events, "which we lead with reference to others which have been resolved by means of almost the same manner of judgment."<sup>121</sup> The method of example includes the use of fables, apologies, proverbs, parables, and so on. The examples are again taken from Cicero and Quintilian. At the end of the chapter Melanchthon briefly tackles the chain of syllogisms: *coacervatio* or *sorites*. Melanchthon observes that the so-called "heap" can be usefully employed when it consists of necessary axioms or sentences, but it should not be employed if the sentences treat "contingent" matter, i.e. which is expressed in sentences in which the predication is not universal or when the terms used are simply ambiguous.

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"But when the Reason itself comes into question, we have to establish the certainty of the proposition we are going to use to prove what is uncertain [...] we have to establish the *fact* which makes it right for the property to be adjudged to us."

118 *De Inv.*, I.57: "Ratiocinatio est oratio ex ipsa re probabile aliquid eliciens quod expositum et per se cognitum sua se vi et ratione confirmet."

119 Risse, 1964, 85. Wels, 2008, 145. Kuropka, 2002, 18, n36.

120 CR 20, 745.

121 *Ibid.*, 746: "Et exemplorum quidam praecipuus est in consultationibus usus, ubi eventum nostrae causae praesumimus ex iis, quae ab aliis eodem ferme consilia gesta sunt [...]."

### 3.4.5 The method of invention

Melanchthon begins fourth book, *De locis*, by writing:

So far we have provided the forms of arguments, and we have traced lines which circumscribe the argument, the order and manner in which nature constrains the sentence or the speech so that it can prove any matter (*thema*) whatsoever. Here we will teach about the matter of argument. This part invents the matter by means of which you can consider what has been put forth. What has been taught in the previous book does not belong to invention proper, but teach how the already invented matter can be put together. This, however, indicates where you should search for what needs to be said. Just like the builders first collect the stone as matter and afterwards build from some of it other parts, so the ones who dispute seek for what it is that they want to say and arrange afterwards the found argument. They circumscribe it with the form of syllogism, bind it with the form of enthymeme, illustrate it with the form of induction and secure it with the form of sorites. [...] Loci are like signs which indicate the things that you have to speak about and treat. [...] All the power of invention is in the loci, from which the speech is to be drawn like from a spring.<sup>122</sup>

The loci are not merely the matter for the argumentation. As Melanchthon had pointed out in *De Rhetorica*, they also provide the wealth of speech (*copia orationis*). The loci belong, to a certain extent, to the nature of the human talent (*ingenium*), as the Ancients had already claimed: *Adiuvat enim ars naturae*.<sup>123</sup> This way, if one can trace back the origin of the loci to man's ingenuity, so can one trace back the origins of eloquence (*Iam copiae rationem quam facillime adsequetur, qui ad naturae fontes revocarit*). Melanchthon additionally holds the view that dialectic and rhetoric invent, so to say, from the same collection of loci. However, dialectical loci represent the sources for copious speech, and thus the fountains of rhetorical loci. While dialectic draws necessary proofs from them, the rhetoricians use the loci or places of probabilities. Thus, while the dialectician and the rhetorician essentially use the same indicators for speech material, there is an important difference between the dialectical and the rhetorical places. Di-

122 Ibid., 748–749: “Hactenus argumentorum formulae praescripsimus, et lineas duximus, quibus circumscribi argumentum debet, quo ordine, quibus modis velit sermonis natura compingi sententiam seu orationem ad probandum thema quodcunque accommodatam. Iam de argumentorum materiae praecipiemus, quae pars invenit materiem, qua probes quod propositum est. Quae superiore libro tradita sunt, ad inventionem proprie non pertinent, sed quae iam inventa sunt quomodo connectas docent. Haec vero unde petas, quod dicendum est, indicant. Ut aedificaturi saxa materiem primum comparant, deinde construunt ex aliis alias aedificii partes: ita disputaturi, primum, quod dicant, quaerunt; deinde repertum argumentum disponunt, syllogismorum formulis circumscribunt, enthymematis vinciunt, epagogis ornant, exemplis illustrent, sorite muniunt.[...] Loci enim sunt velut signa quaedam, quibus rerum, quae dici tractarique debent, capita indicantur. [...] Tota enim vis inventionis in loci posita est, ex quibus ceu fontibus oratio deduci solet.”

123 *De Orat.*, II.84.

alectic uses less places than rhetoric. These are the places from definition, from genus, from species, from parts from causes, from events. Rhetoric operates with signs which are linked to the personal and causal circumstances: *genus, natio, patria, sexus, aetas, educatio et disciplina, fortuna, animi conditio*. In *De Rhetorica* these loci were listed as belonging to the *genus demonstrativum* and were employed for the extraction of common-places (from narratives). An example given for the dialectical locus from the genus is the following:

The arguments are being led from genus to species by means of negation, like when you say that fearfulness is not a virtue, thus it is neither courage.<sup>124</sup>

It is clear that the relationship between virtue and fear is being sought and applied as argument to the question whether courage is a virtue. This corresponds to the Aristotelian manner of inquiry into the relation between employed terms and amounts to a rule of the form: if a thing does not fall under a genus, neither does its contrary. The personal and circumstantial topics differ thus, from the dialectical topics, in that they represent signs and arguments drawn from persons, which are merely probable proofs (*verisimiles probationes*). They are contrasted with the themes of the dialectician which support necessary and evident arguments.<sup>125</sup> However, they are being taught together with the dialectical places, for the sake of completion and because of their dependency in discourse, on a specific *order* of constructing arguments. The arguments are to be introduced in speeches when they have been constrained by the forms enumerated in the preceding book. Only by using rules of argumentation (i. e. providing the appropriate premises, putting them in the specific order, recognizing the relationship between terms, and attributing the appropriate form of argument) can the relationship between theme and proof become clear. Thus, notwithstanding their necessary or probable nature, both rhetorical and dialectical arguments need to be well-dispositioned and displayed in order that they can be clearly understood.

At the end of the textbook, Melancthon introduces a short passage on hypothetical syllogism, which he treats as a form of compound sentences. He enumerates three modes of connecting axioms: copulative, disjunctive and conditional, from which various arguments have been put together. Here Mel-

124 CR 20, 757: "A genere ad species ducuntur argumenta per negationem, ut, Temeritas non est virtus, igitur nec fortitudo est."

125 CR 20, 751: "Petuntur argumenta alias a personis, alias a rebus [...] Argumenta a personis ducta cognata sunt signis, quod et non sint, nisi verosimiles probationes, et a personis ad oratorem afferantur. Atque hae duae probationum partes, signa et argumenta a personis ducta, parum dialecticis thematibus conferunt, quae necessariis et evidentibus argumentis muniri debent."

anchthon refers his readers to George of Trebizond's dialectic.<sup>126</sup> According to the German Humanist, one must judge these syllogisms by their matter, not by their form. Thus the rules of the places are to be scrutinized. Melanchthon's emphasis on the relation between the meanings of the terms themselves points to his understanding of the propositional logic of hypothetical syllogisms as a material logic. Any other remarks on Stoic logic are absent, and his suggestion that the complex connections of hypothetical syllogisms should be resolved into their single parts testifies that he does not give any further attention to non-Aristotelian syllogisms.

### 3.4.6 Conclusion

Judging by the structure and the material presented in the *Compendiaria Dialectices Ratio* it seems that Melanchthon reflects upon the main subjects taught in a traditional logic course. However, his approach rests not on the Aristotelianism of the Schools, but on a direct engagement with ancient authors like Aristotle, Boethius, Cicero and Quintilian. In his explanations and examples, Melanchthon relies on a background of Humanist understandings of rhetoric and dialectic from books such as Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica*, Erasmus's *De Copia Verborum et Rerum* and George of Trebizond's *Dialectica*. But Melanchthon does not wander away from his initial project presented in the *De Rhetorica*. Melanchthon is anxious to provide a criterion for the interpretation and generation of discourse. He relies on the ancient, early medieval, and Humanist understanding of dialectic in the following manner:

- (1) Melanchthon repeatedly stresses the need to use dialectical method and argumentation in rhetoric. He believes that rhetorical discourse would otherwise be sophistical. This is a view that Cicero shares with Aristotle. However, by constantly stressing the co-genesis of rhetorical and dialectical techniques (rhetorical disposition, amplification and stylistic are developed from dialectical division disposition and invention), he eventually takes Cicero's side.
- (2) He treats speech as a direct manifestation of human thought, and thus attributes the character of discursiveness to human thinking. His claim is that the order of thoughts is somehow reflected in the order of discourse and that the latter originates in the former. He identifies intuitive knowledge with definitive knowledge, enforcing the power of language referentiality.

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<sup>126</sup> George of Trebizond was Lorenzo Valla's contemporary and had written his work on dialectic, *Dialectica* probably in the same period as Valla had. The work was first printed in 1470. See Ashworth, 1974, 10.

The example of the definition of man is illuminating: body and rational soul make up the human being. Of course, using the predicables of genus and differentia is the way of the dialecticians, but using words fit to describe the nature itself is more appropriate in Melanchthon's view. He believes not only that the language can do justice to the cognition of things, but also that a clear understanding of the actual parts and of the properties of things amounts to a better definition of the things themselves. Language and cognition are inseparable. Precision in understanding the signs testifies to the precision of grasping the signified.

- (3) Melanchthon's criterion for collecting a number of relevant categories is common-sense. Renaissance Humanists have insisted on common sense and common (ordinary) language in their criticism against the differentiated terminology of the schools. The employment of dialectic by children and uneducated individuals testifies to its simplicity and reasonableness. Melanchthon argues that by reflecting on the use of language the pupil can understand whether it has been employed properly or improperly. The categories, predicables, and the method of questions are understood as instruments of guiding the employment of ordinary language. Melanchthon not only endorses a Humanistic commonplace by relying on ancient Roman rhetorical, didactic and philosophical writings. He also suggests that the manner of the rhetoricians in distinguishing, inquiring into, and presenting things is closest to a commonsensical and natural way of speaking.

What Melanchthon adds to the criterion of *referentiality* is the criterion of *order*. His fondness for the syllogism, which will become even clearer in the following part of this chapter, reveals his fascination with a method of deduction (*ratiocinatio*) and analysis which can provide clarity and distinctness to matters presented in discourses. Categories, predicables, definitions and divisions are methods of ordering things, words, and simple connections of words (and things). The configurations are manifold but the collection of various perspectives offers, by means of ordering, a broader view of the matter at hand and a useful prerequisite of material inference: of identifying semantical relations. Syllogisms are dependent on these semantical relations but offer a more rigorous constraint to discourse. The fragment about the manner in which premises are to be found and afterwards ordered one after another in a process of reasoning belongs neither exclusively to the doctrine of the modes and figures of syllogisms nor entirely to invention. It merges both parts by elaborating an order of operation in which an argument is to be found and properly disposed. It describes reasoned speech and how its processes follow an ordered pattern of acquiring and disposing *causas*:

First you have to find the cause (*causa quaeres*) or some judgment, that Clodium was justly murdered, that pleasure is good. This cause you have to put together first, with the subsequent part of the matter, or the predicate [...] (all what is strove after is good; one is to be justly killed if one violently attacks another); [...] afterwards you have to connect the cause with the previous part of the matter: the subject. Thus, the conclusion follows appropriately [...]. This is the nature of the syllogism and one can only acquire it by means of reflection (*sola animi cogitatione deprehendi*) potest. [...] Yet this true order, the way it is prescribed by nature, is so necessary and immutable. Each syllogism is a sequence (*consequentia*) that they call necessary.<sup>127</sup>

The key statement of this passage is that the order of syllogism in the sense of reasoning according to the above enumerated consecutive steps is natural. Syllogism is clearly understood here as discourse in general and is divorced from an exclusive identification with *episteme*. But if syllogism is understood broadly here, the formal requirements are to be understood as regulative. Well-ordered reasoning is to be achieved even outside of specific formal constraints, and, what is more important, it can function perfectly without any help from syllogistic doctrine. A description of this functioning has been given above. Thus, Melanchthon is not interested in drawing out the formal rules according to which our language functions and tackling them in isolation from actual discourses. He does not care to map out a language of thought consisting in abstract laws which govern the employment of concepts. On the contrary, he is concerned, like his peers, with actual discourses and ordinary language. That is why I believe, Toulmin's analysis of argument use can help to better understand Melanchthon's treatment of dialectical argumentation.

Although meaning is not to be seen separate from words and Melanchthon is highly interested in both the elocutionary and the illocutionary function of phrases, neither he nor his fellow Humanists are adepts of the view that meaning is a linguistic construct. We have seen from the above that Melanchthon has no problem in accepting the categories as orders of things, and at least most of the words as signs for things (while others remain signs for words that have no real-world reference but only practical relevance). I believe that the study of Lodi Nauta on Valla's *Repastinatio Dialecticae* and his discussion on the possible elements of ordinary language in Valla's work is of great relevance for the present analysis. I think that Melanchthon shares with Valla two important perspectives

127 CR 20, 733–734: “Singula singulis syllogismis probaturus, causam quaeres, aut iudicium quodcunque, quare voluptas bona sit, quare Clodius iure caesus sit, eamque causam cum thematis posteriore parte seu praedicato, primum producas [...] quidquid appetitur bonum est [...] deinde causam hoc axioma expressam compone cum subiecto seu priore parte thematis, ita apte sequetur conclusionis [...] Haec quidem syllogismi natura est, et sola animi cogitatione deprehendi potest. [...] Hic vero ordo, ut a natura praescriptus est, ita necessarius est, et immutari nequit, estque omnis syllogismus consequentia, ut vocant, necessaria.”

on dialectic. First, that dialectic inquires into ordinary speech and the employment of natural language and is, thus, a fundamental instrument for reflecting on how language is actually used. This critical stance on the employment of language is also shared by the philosophers who have given much attention to the uses and scope of ordinary language for philosophical reflection.<sup>128</sup> Second, however, Valla and Melanchthon are to a significant extent realists. They do not doubt that one can trust common-sense and that words can often perfectly signify things the way they exist in the world. I am indebted to Brian Vickers for illustrating what I believe to be a fitting summary of Melanchthon's view on language, but also a wide-spread perspective among the Renaissance thinkers:

[...] in Renaissance theories of language, meaning is nowhere seen to be separable from words, rather it is conceived as a process, by which a speaker communicates his signifying intention to other human beings, meaning being encoded and decoded through language, but with certain inefficiencies.<sup>129</sup>

Renaissance Humanists are not preoccupied with the question why man and his language is able to reflect the order of things, but how and what sort of language is most appropriate for achieving this end. It is clear for all medieval and early modern thinkers indebted to the creed of literary Humanism and historical criticism that the only languages that come closest to things were the Ancient ones: Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The only appropriate manner of employing them is that of the Ancient authors. However, while this remains a constraint of proper language use, there is also a wide-spread belief among the Humanists that man had been given the capacity of naturally grasping the order of things by means of speech, and that this nature had only to be recovered. Since it had only been ruined by the schools, it could be revived by means of proper study.

### 3.4.7 Stephen Toulmin's assessment of argumentation: A comparison

In the conclusion of the second part of the second chapter, where I have given some possible perspectives on how to better understand Aristotle's project of the *Topics*, I have contrasted two modes of interpretation of the Aristotelian *topos*. On the one side, I have rendered Christoph Rapp's suggestion that the topics were meant to represent a collection of few and classified inference rules, which offered them a "formal" touch; and also referred to Stephen Toulmin's alternative manner of argument analysis, not as a direct interpretation of the Aristotelian *topos*, but as a possible one. I also claimed, at the end of my brief summary of

128 Nauta, 2009, 288–289.

129 Vickers, 2002, 324–325.

Toulmin's views on logic, that these are to be encountered, to a certain extent, in the manner in which Humanist dialecticians and rhetoricians looked upon (medieval) formal logic and what they provided as an alternative mode of constructing and deconstructing reasoned speech. I will give here a short comparison between Toulmin's self-professed function of his essays on the uses of argument and the manner in which he reconstructed the process of argumentation, and Philipp Melanchthon's view on the function and structure of dialectical argumentation. I will have to reiterate here some of the features which I have already touched upon in the previous chapters. I will be brief but clear about the essential differences between the two approaches, which I will integrate into my comparison.

Stephen Toulmin's intention, declared in his insightful introduction to his *Uses of Arguments* is to start, as it were, from scratch, and to look at the processes of argumentation by taking them for what they are, practices of reasoned speech. He intends to look into the manner in which we provide and criticize arguments in different fields. This intention implies, of course, a discontent with the current state of the "logical" art, which, because it had claimed for such a long time and so arduously to be a science, has gradually begun to live a life of its own. It has functioned at the most as an ideal, as a set of rules governed by a system of truths, separated from the psychology and sociology of reasoning habits, and searching its model in pure mathematics. While Toulmin does not reject the various perspectives from which logic can be viewed (psychological, social, and mathematical) he shows that each of these perspectives are just that: lights which can be shed on the matter. They each have to cope with the limitation of the darkness around them, and thus meet their paradoxes in a unilateral overstatement of their claims. Thus, while Toulmin is concentrating on logical practice, the question of the nature of logical theory falls short of a productive and relevant answer. To this end, Toulmin believes, the terminology of what formal logic has amounted to up to the present, mostly borrowed from the mathematical science, is not only not helpful, but pretty confusing. He also believes that this terminology must, to the extent that it is possible, be ignored. He summarizes his perspective on logic and his manner of procedure in argument analysis as following:

Logic is concerned with the soundness of the claim we make – with the solidity of the grounds we produce to support them, the firmness of the backing we provide for them – or, to change the metaphor, with the sort of *case* we present in defence of our claims. [...] Logic is generalized jurisprudence. Arguments can be compared to law-suits, and the claims we make and argue in extra-legal contexts with claims made in the courts. [...] A main task of jurisprudence is to characterize the essentials of the legal process: the procedures by which claims-at-law are put forward, disputed and determined, and the categories in terms of which this is done. Our own inquiry is a parallel one: we shall

aim, in a similar way to characterize what may be called “the rational process”, the procedures and categories by using which claims-in-general can be argued for and settled.<sup>130</sup>

Toulmin claims that this approach does justice to the critical function of human reason. A well-grounded argument stands up to criticism and is “one for which a case can be presented” in the view of the arguer’s standard of achievement, i. e. of receiving a favourable verdict. The subject of Toulmin’s essay, he claims, is *prudential*, not of *ius*, but that of *ratio*. His collection of essays provide the reader with an original way of setting out and analyse arguments, which I have already hinted on in the previous chapter. He focuses on clarifying the functions of each of the different contentions brought forth in the course of an argument and their relevance for different sorts of criticism (one can direct against it). The form of analysis, is indeed, as Toulmin reveals in his introduction, more complex than that of traditionally employed logical formulas and determines a number of distinctions which would actually go beyond the scope of the traditionally devised forms. That is why Toulmin’s analysis is not an argument against formal logic as such, but against the normative claims of formal logic on the processes of argumentation.

In the second chapter I have already laid out the essential components of an argument, as Toulmin renders them in the third essay of his book. A helpful summary of these is given in the last chapter of the book where Toulmin inquires into the relation between logical and epistemological categories:

[...] Our claim to knowledge has involved putting forward some proposition as a confident and authoritative assertion: this corresponds, in our analysis to the conclusion C. When we are asked to supply the rest of the arguments of which this is the conclusion, we first produce the data D of a different logical type, from the conclusion C and a warrant W authorizing us to pass from D to C; but under pressure, are forced to concede that the warrant itself rests upon backing B which is also of a different logical type from C.<sup>131</sup>

As I have suggested above, one can compare these constituents of argument and their different functions with the ones that are employed in Renaissance dialectical argumentation. While faithful Aristotelian interpretations, which entail the plan to reduce the loci to formal laws, would finalize the reconstruction with the presentation of the warrant (deduced, ideally from first principles), Renaissance interpreters, who are sensible to the *endoxic* ground for the extraction of topoi, will be more inclined to follow Toulmin’s analysis. Thus, while the con-

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130 Toulmin, 2003, 7.

131 Ibid., 207.

clusion can be identified with the claim under debate, or can be seen as the dialectical question (problem) to be settled, the data is the argument which one can bring forth in order to support this claim. The warrant with which one can buttress the claim is the *locus* from which the data is extracted, and, especially in the case of rhetorical argumentation, a backing must be given for the warrant, be it as a dialectical thesis, a *locus communis*, or an appeal to authority. The focus on the warrant on Agricola's and Melanchthon's side is no doubt indebted to the topical tradition which they reinterpret rhetorically. When Melanchthon admonishes his students to acquire as much knowledge of literature as possible, and when later, in his textbooks, he urges them to gather knowledge of civil law, of theology and philosophy, he does nothing less than to encourage his pupils to equip themselves with "backing knowledge". This knowledge eventually backs the inference, since, most of the theological, natural-philosophical and moral debates will require argumentation. The arguments will not merely rest on the semantics of the terms implied in an argument but on strong backings of the warrants adduced. These will include important documents and findings, like the Code of Justinian, the Scriptures, or the calculations of the Copernican system. The inference will be based on the classification of things (done with the help of the topics). However, the ultimate ground for this classification, which is everything else but exhaustive and universal, is the whole panoply of specialized knowledge.

Toulmin's model closely captures Melanchthon's engagement with the practice of argumentation. The terms in which Toulmin describes the warranting and backing of a data or claim is very similar to the disposition and explanation employed by Melanchthon in his textbooks on rhetoric. In the dialectical textbooks, the German Humanist tries to provide explanations for his argumentative steps, closely moulded on the form of the syllogism, irrespective of the different functions and other presuppositions which are implied in the process of warranting. This procedure, which I have exemplified above, testifies to the intellectual framework and the conceptual heritage against which Melanchthon is elaborating his views. While he believes that the loci are the perfect instruments to do justice to the substantial relevance of the argument, he does not dare to break the constraints of the traditional argument forms. Arguably, Melanchthon is indeed impressed by the formal rules governing valid deductions and even likens them to mathematical rules in his later textbook on dialectic. Notwithstanding this fascination with the technology of formal inference, Melanchthon is convinced that arguments are not to be reduced to forms, but that their relevant part is the matter displayed and the manner of making a *case* to support it. Additionally, he also views ar-

guments as pieces of entire narratives, which as Toulmin himself recognizes, can only make sense if read against the textual background.<sup>132</sup>

Notwithstanding the obvious anachronism of this comparison, it might be helpful, at least for clarity's sake, to point out to the different goals behind the projects followed by Toulmin and Melancthon. Toulmin has the advantage of hindsight and a less metaphysically constrained horizon against which he can elaborate on a peculiar manner of argument analysis. Melancthon's endeavor is conditioned by the different *officia* and *personas* of the German Humanist, teacher and reformer. Thus, he has to provide a solid ground for his theory of argumentation, strong enough to hold water against both academic and theological criticism. Also, while Toulmin builds on the tradition of a philosophy marked by ordinary language and criticism towards philosophical radicalism of all kinds, Melancthon's intellectual heritage is different. While freeing the language arts from the constraints of specialized terminology and metaphysics, he has to prove they are fit for Scriptural and textual interpretation in general, and for knowledge systematization. Irrespective of the historical distance, both Toulmin and Melancthon point to an essential function of human thought engaged in argumentation: critical reasoning.

### 3.5 Melancthon's *Institutiones Rhetoricae*

One year after the publication of the *Compendiaria*, Philipp Melancthon's *Institutiones Rhetoricae* are published in Wittenberg, by Melchior Lotter.<sup>133</sup> Together with the *Compendiaria*, the *Institutiones* have been classified as the short textbooks of Melancthon, belonging to the first Wittenberg years of his career.<sup>134</sup> They reflect both his commitment to the Humanist program and his allegiance to Lutheran theology (manifested in his pursuit of Biblical interpretation) which determined him to acquire the Baccalaureus Biblicus in 1519<sup>135</sup> and underpinned his earnest concern with reforming the teaching and learning method in the artistic faculty. I will not present a detailed analysis of the *Institutiones Rhetoricae* here, especially because Melancthon's short overview on rhetorical doctrine follows closely the first edition of *De Rhetorica*.

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132 Ibid., 87.

133 For an overview of the structure and the publication history of this edition see Knappe, 1993, 29–36 Berwald, 1997, 115–118.

134 Kuroopka, 2002, 16–20.

135 Scheible, 1997, 22.

### 3.5.1 Dialectical invention

It is however, noteworthy, and not surprising, that the collection of dictated precepts<sup>136</sup> begins with a chapter on invention and a new division of *genera causarum*. The dialectical genre is not subordinated to the demonstrative genre as in the *De Rhetorica*, but treated separately at the beginning of the book. Melanchthon reformulates the content of the *De Rhetorica* and presents it in a summarized form in the sequence of the priority given to the parts displayed. This shows, that, just as in the previous edition, Melanchthon considers that the dialectical method of the simple and complex parts must precede the other subjects of the book. Completely consistent with the previous treatment is the elaboration on the organa or loci of simple questions. Although, on this occasion, they are not formulated in terms of questions, they reflect exactly the structure and content of the question method. Also, the method is considered to reflect a natural orientation (of the human mind) on any matter which is spoken (*disserentium*) about.<sup>137</sup> This method is common, just like the method of complex themes (arguments) to both the dialectician and the rhetorician. Additionally the function of the rhetorical method extends to the embellishment of speech. Here again, the example of *Pro Milone* is representative of the manner in which rhetorical ornamentation is dependent on dialectical and rhetorical argumentation.<sup>138</sup> Melanchthon refers his readers to the dialectical doctrine which teaches the various forms of arguments. Thus, I believe, Melanchthon wanted his students to consult his *Compendiaria* and his *Institutiones* complementarily. He had taught them both in Wittenberg, in the early twenties, while he was also holding classes on Cicero's speeches.<sup>139</sup> The other three kinds of oration are enumerated together with a corresponding disposition of their parts.

### 3.5.2 Loci personarum and loci communes

Following the introductory expositions, a list of commonplaces is given (*loci communes*) to which Melanchthon adds the following definition of the commonplaces:

136 In the introductory note of the *Institutiones* (A1b) Melanchthon writes: "Qualescunqve sunt hae preaeptulac rhetoricae, quas dictavimus, non scripsimus, opto ut lectori prosint."

137 *Instit. Rhet.*, A2a: "Est enim observatio quaedam naturae, qua in quamvis ipsa hominum ratio considerat, quid prius, quid posterius, quid proprium, quid improprium fit."

138 *Ibid.*, A2b: "De argumentorum locis infra agemus, omnino enim rhetori et dialectico de locis convenit. Nam qui modi sunt et quae formulae argumentorum nectendorum dialecticus docet, ubi *sylogismen*, enthymematum & *epagogen* formas tradit."

139 Scheible, 1997, 33; Cf Hartfelder, 1889, 580–584;

They call thus, *loci communes* the common formulas of virtue and vice and of other common themes, that arise from common things and can be understood by means of the *loci* of arguments belonging to deliberative speech.<sup>140</sup>

As he had done in *De Rhetorica*, Melanchthon links the commonplaces to the rhetorical *loci* listed under the demonstrative genre. The *genus demonstrativum* (of praise and blame) is treated separately from the *genus dialecticum*. This means that it concerns the traditional account of laudatory or accusatory speech where the *loci* of persons are employed: birth, childhood, education, adolescence, youth, old age etc. Circumstances, virtues and vices are added and other information that can best achieve the depiction of the person one intends to praise or blame. I take this connection between argumentative *loci* and commonplaces to highlight the fundamental difference between *locus/topos* understood as “seat of an argument” and *locus communis* understood as “formula” of common things. While the first functions as a concept providing arguments and further information for the matter at hand, the latter synthesizes the main subject of the narrative or argument. Commonplaces also provide the most general categories under which a variety of textual material can be collected. Melanchthon lists 68 commonplaces, the first of which are: God, nature, faith or providence, fortunes, man, life, death, vice, dishonor, passion (affect), anger, love, hate, delight and suggests the collection of sentences and examples under these places, which can be employed in arguments.<sup>141</sup> He also dedicates half a page to *dispositio* and refers his reader to Cicero’s *De Oratore*. Since the nature of the *causa* dictates the order of discourse, it also influences both the parts of the oration and the way in which arguments are to be presented, starting with the common matters and proceeding with the special parts (*in argumentis communia praecedant, peculiaris sequantur*). In contrast to dialectical places, rhetorical *loci* and *loci communes* are not topic-neutral. They are always dependent on a particular subject under debate, to such an extent that an appeal to particularities and circumstances is needed to present the case. This is why there is an infinity of situations and an infinite number of manners of disposition for each particular case. Melanchthon recognizes that these are impossible to collect systematically, and urges his reader to turn to the numerous orations of Cicero for particular formulations and examples. I will go into more detail regarding the interpretations given to Melanchthon’s concept of commonplaces, when tackling his late edition on rhetoric, which elaborates on the manner of excerpting and collecting *loci*

140 Ibid., B4b: “Dicuntur itaque loci communes, communes formulae vitutum, viciorum et aliorum communium thematum, quae in res communes incidunt, possuntque comprehendi locis argumentorum generis deliberativi.”

141 Ibid., C1a: “In his locos digere sententias et exempla, quae occurrent [...]quo exemplo licebit uti [...].”

*communes*. It is crucial, however, to differentiate at this point between conceptual categories, which are listed as topics (however rhetoricized they appear) and the commonplaces which are listed almost like general headings and are extracted as general maxims from narratives after the texts have been analyzed and understood. In the *De Rhetorica* and *Institutiones* commonplaces are linked to the *loci personarum*.

### 3.5.3 Eloquence

More than half of the *Institutiones* is dedicated to eloquence, and this differentiates his later edition from the *De Rhetorica*. It is, however, understandable that after having written a common textbook and a separate one on dialectic, Melanchthon does not want to neglect the traditional matter of rhetoric. It is important, he writes, that the students should distinguish between the substance and the ornament of a thing.<sup>142</sup> However, he writes, there is a proper way of applying ornaments, and this is dependent on the way the nature of a thing has been presented.<sup>143</sup> Thus, the student of rhetoric must understand that while he can distinguish between the argument and the ornament of the thing presented, he has to acknowledge the interrelatedness of the two. Melanchthon is a staunch critic of the “anything goes”-slogan. Precisely because rhetoric is an intrinsic part of speech that originates in the matter of argument itself, only what the matter requires really goes. The *Institutiones* end with Melanchthon's advice that the students should, now, employ the forms of amplification in speaking and writing, and make use, in their daily lectures, pre-eminently, of the rules which are taken from Quintilian (*Fabius*) and the examples of Erasmus's *Copia*.<sup>144</sup> The *Institutiones* are, in my opinion, the complementary collection of rhetorical expositions to the *Compediaria dialectices*. All that is omitted in the *Institutiones* can be found in the dialectic textbook and all that cannot be properly summarized in both must be sought in the work of the Ancients or of some of the leading Humanists.

142 Ibid., C2a: “Meminerint adulescentes aliud in oratione esse rei substantiam, aliud ornamentum.”

143 Ibid., C1b: “Quare in iudicandis orationibus semper est observandum ut primum summam et substantiam rei complectaris brevi sententia: Deinde videas quae ad substantiam accedant ornamentorum vice.”

144 Ibid., E3b.

### 3.5.4 Conclusion: The early textbooks as a *mélange* of Aristotelian and rhetorical views

The above presented texts, which were meant to function as an appropriate guidance in the great quest of rediscovery and reinterpretation of ancient philosophy, are written by the young Humanist, Philipp Melancthon. Due to his didactic calling and his sharpness of mind, he searches for a method to disentangle the thread of the commentary tradition, and, instead, to provide a reading of texts that is closer to ordinary language, and classic Latin. He also seeks to find a language which appears more reasonable and commonsensical. His focus lies on critical reading and thinking rather than on refined logical doctrines and systems. He is very aware of the importance of discourse and its role as the sole medium of knowledge-transmission. In his view, dialectic inspects the way discourse and its main constituents are used. To this end, dialectic and rhetoric (together with grammar) are treated as two parts of the same doctrine of textual interpretation and generation. Dialectical and rhetorical loci are seen as sources of speech material while the forms or argumentation and the parts on eloquence are treated as elements of appropriate disposition. Rhetoric and dialectic cannot be separated as, they provide the complementary set of rules for analyzing and composing arguments and speeches. The underlying assumption is that speech is naturally argumentative, in its informal and colloquial manifestation. This means that one should neither strip the argumentative structure from the tissue of narrative in which it is embedded, nor should one extract the figures of style and amplification from their origins in the arguments themselves. This is argued for again in *The Praise of Eloquence* which I will inquire into later in this chapter. At the same time, this does not imply an arbitrariness of speaking. Standards like clarity, appropriateness and order are subsequently reiterated and elaborated on in all of Melancthon's dialectic and rhetoric textbooks. This general perspective on the teaching of texts and acquisition of knowledge persists even in the most troubled time in Melancthon's career: the early 1520s. Luther's vehement condemnation of Aristotelian philosophy, his exile, the Wittenberg movement, the arrival of the Zwickau Prophets, all these events have been shown to have had a great influence on Melancthon's vehemency of doubting not only the foundations of the Catholic Faith, but also of the entire realm of human reason and its role for the development of the liberal arts. From the detailed studies of Sachiko Kusukawa and Günter Frank, the episode of what Kusukawa called Melancthon's "identity crisis" implies, in allegiance to the Lutheran condemnations, a fundamental critique of traditional Aristotelian school philosophy and determines an even greater focus on the reform of the arts faculty.<sup>145</sup>

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145 Kusukawa, 1995: 53: "For Luther, whose theology was the fruit of precisely such a struggle

Whatever was seen by Melanchthon scholars as “philosophiekritisch”<sup>146</sup> about Melanchthon's conception of philosophy from the early 1520s, it certainly did not characterize his view on the liberal arts and on the importance of order and style of speech for their elaboration.

Melanchthon adopts the Lutheran faith and the element which was essential for his anthropology: the essential separation between the realm of the law – over which human reason presided – and the realm of gospel subordinated only to God's will. Especially in later textbooks, in which, as Frank has shown, Melanchthon praises the usefulness and divine origin of philosophy<sup>147</sup>, the German Humanist draws attention to the necessity of acknowledging the limits of human reason. His critique addressed against the school Aristotelians is one pointed at a metaphysically infused theology, and especially at the claim that theology is a science or art just like all of the other artistic branches.

Melanchthon kritisiert insgesamt eine Philosophie, die in einem illegitimen Zugriff auf die Theologie ihre Grenzen überschreitet oder kurz: eine unkritische Vermischung aus Theologie und Philosophie.<sup>148</sup>

But Melanchthon does not abandon his initial plan. From the manner in which he teaches dialectic and rhetoric in the early twenties we can infer no anti-philosophical stance whatsoever. His project is presented clearly and in a straightforward manner: he is providing the students with the best instruments of critical reading he can come up with, by extracting the most useful precepts from ancient literature and philosophy. He argues that they can be deduced from the nature of human reason itself. What we do observe is the lack of direct references to Aristotle, which have indeed disappeared from the 1520 and 1521 editions in comparison to his first integrative textbook. More surprising than the missing citations from the *Analytics* or the *Topics* should be, however, the fact, that Melanchthon does not write the *Compendiaria Dialectices* as an Agricolaan dialectic. He does not focus solely on what Agricola, following Cicero and Quintilian, had called invention. He offers sufficient attention to what, Valla had questioned – the Porphyrian tree – and reflects on the various forms of argumentation in a reconciling manner. Melanchthon brings together the view of the *Aristotelians* with the view of Cicero and Quintilian. The criticism he puts forward against some

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[with the meaning of justification], there was no problem of judging the spirit. In contrast, Melanchthon had come to distrust human reason through the influence of Luther, but he had not reached an understanding of Luther's theology through a similar spiritual struggle”.

146 For an insightful summary of the German Melanchthon scholarship of the twentieth century see Frank, 1995, 55–58

147 Frank, 1995, 65–67, where Frank elaborates on Melanchthon's understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology in the Humanist's commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians. See MWA, 209–303.

148 Ibid., 58.

of the aspects of traditional dialectic is scarce (e. g. the preference for a particular manner of defining). His direct polemic is much more moderated than in the *De Rhetorica Libri Tres* and it lacks altogether in the *Institutiones Rhetoricae*. At the most he is concerned with the unsettledness of the student's mind and the obscurity which can easily sneak into the thought and understanding of the young students. This muddling of clear thinking is especially due to the complexities of the texts the pupils are facing, and which Melanchthon traces back to inappropriate ways of teaching. This view mirrors the Stoic understanding of the usefulness of dialectic in implementing "non-precipitancy", "uncarelessness", "irrefutability" and "scientific knowledge". In Diogenes's words, which can be read into Melanchthon's own definition of dialectic:

Without the study of dialectic, the wise man will not be infallible in argument, since dialectic distinguishes the true from the false, and clarifies plausibilities and ambiguous statements.<sup>149</sup>

Melanchthon does not restrict the usefulness of dialectic to its employment by wise men. He believes his readers and students can and must also reap significant benefits from this art. He thus focuses on bringing about a particular training, through which the student can philosophize, the preacher preach, and the politician speak clearly, unambiguously and convincingly.

Thus, while Aristotle is not mentioned by name, all earlier tenets which had been elaborated through reference to the Aristotelian corpus are being maintained and reiterated. Continuing where he had finished his dialectic, Melanchthon starts his rhetoric with a short introduction into the method of invention and a recapitulation of the main themes treated in his dialectic. He is careful to insist on the fundamental importance of the dialectical method for rhetorical techniques. With his short textbooks on dialectic and rhetoric, Melanchthon expresses his interest for a method of reading and composing texts and suggests that this method is the product of the reflection on the process of reasoning itself: from its minute parts to its creative elaboration. This implies a union of dialectic and rhetoric which rests on the belief that actual discourse can not be reduced to one collection of techniques or the other without the impairment of its appropriate understanding. This is the program which Melanchthon pursues even more determinately on, as soon as Luther returns to Wittenberg and the turmoils of religious reform seize the attention and energy of professors and students alike.

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149 Lives, VII.47.

### 3.6 Melanchthon's laudatory speech on eloquence: Necessarias esse ad omne studiorum genus artes dicendi<sup>150</sup>

Before considering the last editions of Melanchthonian dialectic and rhetoric, I will show that Melanchthon's reform project, expressed in his inaugural speech and elaborated in the subsequent introductions into dialectical and rhetorical doctrine, is once again explicitly reinforced in an encomium written in 1523, dedicated to his friend Symon Grynaeus, who he had known since his school years in Pforzheim and who would remain a dearest friend for the rest of his life.<sup>151</sup> According to Maurer, even after Grynaeus had turned towards Zwinglian theology, the friendship remained intact. As Heinz Scheible writes in his biography of Philipp Melanchthon, the criticism addressed against traditional Aristotelian philosophy and Luther's emphasis on the lecture of the Bible determined a great number of students to skip the introductory courses of grammar, logic and rhetoric. They were keen on studying directly the matters belonging to salvation.<sup>152</sup> This state of affairs was not confined to the Wittenberg University. When the Humanist poet Helius Eobanus expresses his fears that the new theology would lead to the downfall of the arts, Melanchthon and Luther respond (march 1523) by reassuring him of their commitment to the arts, which they consider are as essential and necessary for the education of future theologians.<sup>153</sup> The letter to Grynaeus, written a little earlier explains the importance of the language arts for the acquisition of both philosophical and theological knowledge. There is what seems to be a social urgency in demonstrating that the arts are essential for the understanding of the divine message, which is conferred by the Bible. Scheible claims this context brings about a shift in Melanchthon's appraisal of the (language) arts from a merely Humanist stance regarding their importance to their usefulness for theological purposes: "Renaissancehumanismus als Mittel zur Reformation!"<sup>154</sup>

#### 3.6.1 Clear and distinct language

It is reasonable to consider that Melanchthon is determined to emphasize even more decidedly the fundamental role the language arts play, insisting not only on their service brought to literature philosophy, but also on their usefulness for

150 The encomium is edited in the CR 11, 50–66, the dedicatory letter is to be found in CR 1, 644–645. The fragments of the oration are taken from Rebhorn, 2000, 97–127.

151 Maurer, 1967, 22.

152 Scheible, 1997, 35.

153 MBW, T2, 273; CR 1, 612–613.

154 Scheible, 1997, 37.

theology. That is why, in his encomium, Melanchthon restates a message which he had already conveyed in his inaugural speech: that corrupted speech leads to corrupted knowledge: of both philosophical and theological nature. And the only manner to prevent this corruption is to train a clear and appropriate speech, by reading and imitating the "prudent" men:

Prudent men have discovered through experience that nothing is more difficult than to speak clearly and distinctly about a given subject. For first of all, unless you observe the force and weight of words in speaking, what auditor will be able to follow your oration? Since, words, like money, are approved by custom, one should make use of those that have been accepted and that, because eloquent men have handed them down to posterity as though from father to son, are free of obscurity. In the preceding century, when each person forged his own words for himself and foreign ones were mixed with Latin ones, speeches were composed in such a way, that they could not be understood even by the men of that age. It is really unsuitable for us to follow our predecessors, for nowadays, who understands Scotus or other writers of his ilk? Moreover, the best trained people can scarcely restrain themselves from violating somewhere the structure and diction of their speech – and if those things are corrupted, the speech is necessarily rendered obscure.<sup>155</sup>

Melanchthon draws attention, as he had done in his earlier works, to the consequences of the improper use of language and to the necessity of employing appropriate words and an elegant style of discourse. The standard for the nature of expression, the structure, and the style of discourse is to be taken, as stated before, from the works of the rhetoricians, historians and poets who, have handed down the proper use of words. These authors are thought to have employed "a correct method of speaking" without which, Melanchthon writes, "we cannot explain what we ourselves want, or understand correctly in the extant writings of our ancestors."<sup>156</sup> Several tasks are attributed to this method, the first of which is to train the mind in understanding clearly, or having a distinct comprehension of things.<sup>157</sup> Since the arrangement of words and the flow of discourse reflects the manner in which the thoughts are ordered, the purpose of method is to provide clarity of thoughts by inculcating the appropriate manner of speaking. Again, we encounter the Melanchthonian insistence on *ordo* as that which conveys clarity and provides distinctiveness to a discourse and its elements. The art of speech bestows upon its employer the capacity to bring obscure things into the light. Clarity, distinctness of speech, and illuminating words (*illustribus verbis*) are the consequences of employment of order. This employment amounts not only to a

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155 *Enc. Eloq.*, 99.

156 *Ibid.*, 101.

157 CR 11, 52: "Nam perinde atque corpora coloribus, animi sententiam oratione repraesentamus. Quare necesse est discendo certam aliquam imaginem artem concipi, quae discernat inter se vultus sententiarum".

clear and easily intelligible speech but also to elegance of discourse. Moreover, elegance seems to be a corollary of appropriate arrangement.

Elegance resides in the very purity and natural appearance of language, and unless you take care of these, not only will you speak without charm and in a filthy manner, but inappropriately, obscurely and foolishly.<sup>158</sup>

Elegance and order should not be separated, Melanchthon claims, since, they resemble a unity like that of a beautiful painting or well-proportioned body:

For just as in fashioning bodies one finally obtains elegance when all the members harmonize with one another in just proportion, and if you do anything differently, the body becomes monstrous, so, when you deform the true shape of speech through some unusual arrangement, you make it completely monstrous and absurd.<sup>159</sup>

With the concepts like “order”, “congruence” (*consentiunt*) and “proportion” (*proportio*), Melanchthon compares speech to a well-ordered organism, a body. Its fine structure, its physiology, to put it in Toulminian terms<sup>160</sup>, and especially its anatomical structure must be taken care of. I believe Melanchthon refers here to discourse taken broadly as an extended exposition, written or spoken. The finer parts of the narrative, as we have seen in the analysis of the three textbooks presented above, are to be studied and become well acquainted with, with the purpose of facilitating the comprehension of the entire organism of the narrative. Here Melanchthon suggests that elegance comes about from an appropriate arrangement. The emphasis on the unity of usefulness and beauty – taken from Quintilian – is meant to underscore the conviction that figures of speech are employed necessarily to present a matter. The speech which does not take heed of elegance can only be “barbarous” and thus, obscure. Further in his oration, Melanchthon explains what he means by “barbarous”. In restating his emphasis on elegant speech, Melanchthon urges his students:

[...] you must take pains and study in order to obtain the skill by means of which you can place your thoughts clearly before the eyes of others and say everything in appropriate manner that your subjects requires. For that is what speaking elegantly means.<sup>161</sup>

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158 *Enc.Eloq.*, 100.

159 *Ibid.*

160 I believe Melanchthon would endorse Toulmin's understanding of argument as that which “when [it is] set out explicitly, in all its detail, may occupy a number of printed pages or take perhaps a quarter of an hour to deliver; and within this time or space one can distinguish the main phases marking the progress of the argument from the initial statement of an unsettled problem to the final presentation of a conclusion”. For what I believe to be a very insightful reconstruction of argument and very similar to the ones the Humanists had in mind see Toulmin, 2003, 87.

161 *Enc.Eloq.*, 101.

Melanchthon ascribes to eloquence the task of providing speech with the “appearance of purity”. This implies that speech, in its uncorrupted form, is always eloquent. Eloquence is implicitly associated with clarity and simplicity since Melanchthon, as has been shown above, thinks that the proper use of the words is the one approved by common-sense and custom, and had been transmitted by means of literary works (*litterae*): history, oratory, poetry. The language employed in these literary genres is, according to him, clear, appropriate and elegant. This view corroborates his own extensive employment of poetical, historical and rhetorical material in the composition of his rhetoric and dialectical textbooks, and, as we will see, in his philosophical writings. Melanchthon claims he tries to stay faithful to this eloquent (i. e. clear) manner of speaking. This is demonstrated, for example, in his *Compendiaria*, where he prefers the definition of man as made of body and rational soul because he believes it to depict the actual essence of man and illustrate it clearly and in a straight-forward manner.<sup>162</sup> What is more, he believes that speaking eloquently is a sign of common sense<sup>163</sup>.

### 3.6.2 The usefulness of literature

First of all, the method of speaking elegantly bestows clarity on thoughts and words, and improves the natural ability, “so that one comes to consider all natural affairs with greater prudence”.<sup>164</sup> Just like the Ancients thought speech and judgment cohere, so had Homer, Melanchthon emphasizes, attributed prudence and eloquence to the same people. The Latins had called the arts of speech humanities because it was the task of these arts to educate men and correct the barbarism of their disposition. In Melanchthon's view, judgment (which he seems to identify here with prudential judgment), is sharpened by the study of correct speech. The examples of the authors who were involved with the handling the most important affairs and reached, through their experience, “the heights of prudence” are very illustrative.<sup>165</sup> Second, the works of these authors determine the reader to consider what “is especially fitting to admire, praise and imitate in any of them”.<sup>166</sup> Lastly, the method of correct speech provides the

162 CR 20, 717.

163 CR 11, 53: “Quin igitur helleborum propinamus iis, qui venustatem orationis fastidiunt, adeo a communi hominum sensu alienis, ut ne quidem, quid loqui sit, intelligant.”

164 *Enc. Eloq.*, 102; CR XI, 55: “Accedit huc non contemnendus studiorum eloquentiae fructus, quod earum artium usu, quibus eloquentia continetur, excitantur, erudiunturque ingenia, ut res humanas omne prudentius discipiant [...]”

165 *Enc. Eloq.*, 103.

166 CR 11, 56: “Proinde, qui disertos scriptores in manibus habeant, secum expendant, quid in quovis potissimum mirari, laudare, imitarique deceat.”

capacity of recognizing what it is that one must bring forth, concerning the matter at hand:

[...] a concern to speak well in and of itself makes one's mind livelier and capable of ascertaining more accurately what is most fitting or useful in every case. For just as we see that bodily strength is enforced by exercise, so one cannot prevent the minds of those who are not stimulated by mental labor from growing dull. No one doubts that the reading of good writers is of great value, but unless the habit of writing and speaking is joined to that of reading, you will not be able to determine with sufficient acuity just what their ideas and virtues are, or formulate intellectually a sure rule for judging and imitating them [...] Accordingly, those who want to occupy their best hours in learning, should imitate the example of the ancients and, as Quintilian says, using a faithful pen, they should acquire eloquence and sharpen their judgment.<sup>167</sup>

The proper method of speaking sharpens the mind's ability to find the appropriate things to say. Order and eloquence cannot "invent" the matter one needs to find for the "backing" of the thesis at stake. For that, ingenuity, insightfulness, and natural talent is needed. But since Melanchthon thinks these elements cannot be separated in actual speech, the training in eloquence – by means of reading the texts of the authors and following their examples in practice (speaking and writing) – transmits both the "power" as it were, of the expressions (order, clarity, persuasiveness), and cultivates the ingenuity of the authors employing them. Thereby, the students learn to express whatever fits the matter at hand. This is why Melanchthon repeatedly admonishes his students to read, discourse and write in order to become not only skilled in textual apprehension and interpretation, but also in textual production: two operations which share the same method. By acquiring skills in composing of texts, the student learns to apply the method of thinking and speaking in a right and ordered manner. Melanchthon argues that by recognizing the rules of method in the texts of the eloquent and prudent authors, and imitating them, the mind of the students is sharpened, their thoughts ordered and their speech is well-arranged, becoming clear and appropriate. Thus, the natural abilities become more refined, by constant engagement with the language arts. The students extract the rules of composition from the literature they are reading, and apply them in interpreting other works and in creating their own. Moreover, they become insightful and prudent, learning from the examples encountered what can be regarded as fittingly brought forth in a certain situation of debate. They also learn what can appropriately be considered in a political debate, given the particular state of affairs. No improvement of skills can be achieved by means of speculative soliloquies; neither is there any usefulness in theoretical considerations which are not accompanied by practice. Not surprisingly, the suggested authors are poets,

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<sup>167</sup> *Enc. Eloq.*, 106; Melanchthon refers here to the *Institutio Oratoria*, X.7.

historians, and orators. This indicates that Melanchthon, believes, with Cicero and Agricola, that eloquence is first of all due to talent and to an inborn disposition. Also, he suggests that the order and eloquence of poetical or oratorical speech does not differ essentially from that of "philosophical" speech, i.e. that which employed in systematic inquiries into ethical or natural-philosophical problems. This way, Melanchthon differentiates himself from the Aristotelian view expressed in the *Topics* that poetical speech is primarily metaphorical, thus, ambiguous. In a late commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from 1554, Melanchthon claims that the poets follow a (dialectical) method of composition and that this method can be traced beyond their use of metaphors.<sup>168</sup>

### 3.6.3 Erudite theology

In the final part of his oration, Melanchthon insists upon the essential relevance of the trivial arts for the study of theology. As in his inaugural speech, Melanchthon blames the *neglect* of the language arts and literature for the "corruption of the word of God" (*impudentius componatur verbum Dei*<sup>169</sup>) and praises the revival of the biblical studies in the context of a renewed interest for literature. He nevertheless feels the need to explain what he believes to be a crucial distinction for the understanding of the role of method in theological matters:

Note, however that I have not fallen into the error of thinking that the sacred can be penetrated by the industrious efforts of human intelligence; there are aspects of the sacred that no one may ever understand unless shown them by God, nor can Christ be known by us except through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. [...] But leaving aside such matter of prophecy, one should certainly seek to know the meaning of the words in which the divine mysteries have been hidden as in a shrine [...] No one can judge linguistic matters unless he has mastered the correct method of speaking. For what is easier than to be deceived by a particular word or figure?<sup>170</sup>

Melanchthon continues by telling the story of one of the "Masters" who had mistakenly taken "salet" in the Genesis to mean "salt" instead of recognizing it was the name of the place, and discoursed about the nature and virtue of a condiment for some time. Melanchthon does not believe that the Scriptures, or any other piece of writing, can be "chopped up" into argumentative pieces and separated from the underlying historical context, and auctorial intent. Neither must the rules of textual interpretation be ignored, which he had delivered in the *De Rhetorica Libri Tres* and the *Institutiones*. Moreover, as he wanted to em-

168 CR 19, 502. See Wels, 1993.

169 CR 11, 63.

170 *Enc. Eloq.*, 108–109.

phaise by his contemptuous remark, those unversed in the liberal arts can rarely understand the language of the Scriptures, even if they pay careful attention to the arguments and their arrangement. He believes logicians fail to understand the meaning and the right method and he writes:

If ecclesiastical doctrine is ever to be protected, how, I ask you, will a person be able on this task who cannot explain what he is thinking? Or will he produce a kind of confused and Stoical oration in which he squabbles about the punctuation of words? The auditor expects a clear interpretation from him but will go away disappointed, like a hungry raven, finally exhausted by labored distinctions. Thus, those who are possessed by a love of piety should take upon themselves the duty of learning to speak correctly for the sake of Christ and the general need of the Church. Even Paul calls for this when in Corinthians he approves of the study of languages – and his authority should rightly carry great weight with you since his name is so often on your lips.<sup>171</sup>

Lack of study of literature and a useless method – of “word punctuation and labored distinctions” obscure the clear meaning of the Scriptures. I take it that Melanchthon uses the concept of “Stoic oration” to refer not only to the Stoic conception of rhetoric as restricted to argumentation and proof<sup>172</sup>, but, in general, to a discourse stripped of rhetorical ornaments and focused on purely logical connections and rules. This manner of discoursing may be seen as representative for the entire dialectical practice of the medieval schools. In underscoring literary richness, Melanchthon criticizes, following Cicero's *De Oratore*, the Stoic's style of discourse, which Cicero, with Crassus' voice, calls

bald, unfamiliar, jarring on the ear of the public, devoid of clarity, fulness and spirit, while at the same time of a character that makes it quite impossible to employ it in public speaking.<sup>173</sup>

I have shown above that Melanchthon draws on the Stoic understanding of dialectic, which will become even more apparent in his late dialectic textbooks. Nevertheless, this does not keep Melanchthon from criticizing the manner in which the Stoa conceived of rhetoric.<sup>174</sup> This is in no way inconsistent with Melanchthon's general method of interpreting and integrating diverse pieces of philosophical doctrine into his own writings. On the contrary, Melanchthon does not follow any particular authority. His aim is to provide a method which can do justice to both clarity and elegance of discourse. Therefore he not only reinterprets Ancient rhetorical and dialectical doctrines, but reinforces his project by identifying the necessity of speaking well with the duty one owes to the Church

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171 *Ibid.*, 109.

172 Atherton, 1998, 400.

173 *De Orat.*, III.66.

174 On Stoic rhetoric, and Cicero's criticism it see Inabinet, 2011, 14–32. See also Atherton, 1998, 392–427.

and to Christ himself. The Latin rhetorician's emphasis on erudition is congruent with the Apostle Paul's praise of the arts and Aristotle's method of teaching.

### 3.6.4 Conclusion

I have analyzed the encomium in a certain amount of detail here because I believe it summarizes all the Melanchthonian convictions, which he had previously held and which will be treated in more detail in the later editions of his dialectic textbooks: (1) Melanchthon connects the conceptual with the discursive realm and believes that a method of speaking well can improve the operations of the intellect. Its purpose is to order thought, i. e. speech, and (2) speech is understood in its natural and ample form of manifestation. Melanchthon is primarily interested in the anatomical level of discourse: where arguments, disposition and style are encountered as a whole. From this perspective, the method of arrangement of parts and the practice in eloquence are to be achieved by the same operations of reading, writing and speaking. (3) Thus, the training of the mind, i. e. the training of clear and elegant discourse, is to be achieved by means of extensive reading and acquaintance with the proper uses of words, and by means of learning to use appropriate words on different topics. (4) A direct consequence of this training is the sharpening of the mind and the development of prudence. (5) The skills obtained through reading and writing are afterwards applied to the interpretation of texts, including the Scriptures. Thus, in 1523, Melanchthon reinforces his plan of reforming the curricula and insists on the relevance of a method of appropriate reading (understanding) and writing (speaking). This method is meant to secure the correct interpretation of rhetorical, natural-philosophical, ethical, historical, poetical, and theological writings, and provide the human mind with a proper instrument of grasping the matters dealt within these works.

## 3.7 Melanchthon's *Dialectica Libri Quatuor*: *Ars ac via docendi*

In 1528 the most extensive edition of Melanchthonian dialectic is published: the *De Dialectica Libri Quatuor*<sup>175</sup>, which, as already mentioned by the scholarship, repeatedly refers to the Aristotelian works<sup>176</sup>, not only to the *Organon*, but also to

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175 First published in Hagenau, 1528: *Dialectices Philippi Melanchthonis libri quatuor ab auctore ipso de integro in lucem conscripti ac editi. Item Rhetoricae praeceptiunculae doctissimae.*

176 Kuroпка, 2002, 31–34; Ong, 2004, 236; Risse, 1964, 87–88;

his ethical and natural-philosophical writings. My intention is to put forth the most important additions that Melanchthon makes to his previous textbook on dialectic. As will become clear from the following, his work is to be localized in a context of assiduous engagement with various subjects belonging to the liberal arts. The references from his *Dialectica* can only make sense if this is borne in mind. Even without going into the various philosophical branches which stood in the focus of Melanchthon's work in mid twenties of the sixteenth century, it will become clear from the fragments summarized below that he was striving towards the fulfillment of his initial reform project. The passages in which he refers to the employment of dialectic for the presentation of topics belonging to different fields of knowledge convey an insight into the additional functions of dialectical rules. The focus shifts from an exegetical towards a pedagogical function of dialectic. Hence, the detailed consideration of argumentative-dispositional elements.<sup>177</sup>

### 3.7.1 Is Melanchthon's dialectic a Lutheran dialectic?

Without intending to separate these *officia* – teaching by way of examples taken from classical literature – Melanchthon insists on the role of dialectic for the systematization of philosophical knowledge. Rhetorical elements, however, are still part of the core of dialectic, as I will show below, although the introduced concept of demonstration appears to follow the Aristotelian view. I intend to show that one can indeed trace a development from the claim of inseparability of dialectic and rhetoric, manifest in the first Tübingen rhetoric, to a dialectic understood as a method taught by means of demonstrations. The thesis that there has been an essential shift from a rhetorical to a logic-oriented understanding of dialectic is underscored both by Sachiko Kusukawa in her analysis of the Melanchthonian concept of method, as well by Günter Frank. Frank argues that while Melanchthon had taken the Agricola step of rhetoricisation of logic (*Rhetorisierung der Logik*) in his first publication, already the following writings testify to a logicisation of rhetoric (*Logisierung der Rhetorik*).<sup>178</sup> I believe that this a valid conclusion drawn from the texts, if one looks at the structure of the textbooks and the attention given to particular subjects in each of the textbooks, and if they are read independently. This view is also sustained by a focus on the

177 In the organizational function of dialectic, however, the exegetical function is implicit. The method of disposition of subjects belonging to different disciplines reflect the method of inquiry into different disciplines (i. e. texts concerning the treatment of these subjects). For the shift in emphasis and an insightful overview of the literature see Hanns-Peter Neumann, 2017, forthcoming.

178 Frank, 1996, 132.

differences between the subsequent editions, a focus which tends to obscure the similarities and the underlying common approach. Kusakawa, moreover, claims that immediate historical events determined Melanchthon to develop a method of teaching that would safeguard the expositions of matters and arguments in such a way that they would support Lutheranism. She writes:

Melanchthon was not aiming to provide a philological exposition of classical theories of method. Nor was he promoting dialectics as an instrument for probable arguments. On the contrary, as a skill of teaching, he believed dialectics could provide the absolute certainty he needed in countering a problem which he believed was jeopardizing Luther's cause. Moreover, it was the means with which Lutherans could teach their views as orthodox. Melanchthon's method was in a sense a Lutheran one.<sup>179</sup>

Endorsing Gilbert's claim that Melanchthon did not deserve the honorific title of "artifex methodi"<sup>180</sup>, Kusakawa commiserates the fact that Melanchthon's dialectic is considered by the scholarship to be a "hybrid of Aristotelian demonstration and Ciceronian dialectics."<sup>181</sup> While Kusakawa tries to find out why Melanchthon produced such a hybrid, and searches for historical explanations, I question this concept of hybrid and, instead, argue that, Melanchthon's project of reforming the pedagogy of philosophy and theology determines the elaboration of a very original and highly productive method which manages to serve multiple tasks and offer a different perspective on the nature and function of discourse.

In his later textbooks, Melanchthon provides a more detailed explanation and justification for the claims he had already presented in his *De Rhetorica* and *Compendiaria Dialectices*. He is more attentive to detail and more straightforward concerning the authorities he relies on. All in all, I believe one can say he is much more meticulous in his differentiations. But his stance towards the unity of discourse, i. e. the inseparability of the levels of argumentation, disposition, and amplification does not change. Also, and this seems to be the most important element in this assessment of Melanchthonian dialectic, his notion of demonstration, is only a more specified and systematic version of the one put forth in the *De Rhetorica*, as is his notion of method and of the relation between dialectic and rhetoric. With regards to the "Lutheran" character of his method, there is no doubt that Melanchthon believes that a clear speech and a principle of order, uncorrupted by futile differentiation and by artificial additions would provide a solution for the most problematic issues of philosophy or theology. But the origin of his conviction rests with his commitment to the tradition of dialectical and rhetorical theory of argumentation and disposition. Although Melanchthon reinterprets the key concepts of this tradition and thus distances himself from a

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179 Kusakawa, 1997, 352.

180 Gilbert, 1960, 127.

181 Kusakawa, 1997, 338.

doctrine of mere probable argumentation, his attempt to show that dialectic can secure clarity and evidence incites him to develop a method of teaching and arguing. This method is developed, ever since his publication of *De Rhetorica* from a reinterpretation of rhetorical status-theory, topical inference and a reconceptualization of scientific demonstration and grounded on a set of epistemological presuppositions.<sup>182</sup> There is nothing Lutheran to it. As Kusakawa points out in the last passages of her article, Calvinists like Kekermann and Timpler will draw on Melancthonian method without any confessional remorse<sup>183</sup>. While it might have been put to use by Lutheran theologians and may have served Luther's cause, Melancthon's method is a product of an original reinterpretation of Humanist dialectic and Cicero's and Quintilian's rhetoric. *De Dialectica* continues the project started in the *De Rhetorica*, and the transformations of central rhetorical, logical and epistemological categories.

### 3.7.2 On simple speech: some epistemological considerations

The *Dialectica Libri Quatuor* keeps the structure of its forerunner: it consists of four books: on simple questions and terms, on propositions, on forms of arguments and on topics. Since dialectic teaches the method of disclosing the causes of different matters, one needs to consider both the manner of inquiring into simple words (*simplices voces*) as well as into entire speeches (*integra oration*). The first book deals with the method of answering simple questions: it admonishes students to learn the formulas of defining and dividing which provide the method of sorting out the appropriate expressions (*vocabuli*). The predicables and the predicaments are listed here just as in the *Compendiaria*, however, a lot of attention is given to the various interpretations of categories. Under the category of quality, Melancthon discusses art and prudence as qualities or habits of the rational soul acquired through practice and on the ground of natural preconditions (like talent, divine impetus etc). Virtues are seen as qualities of the volitive soul. While Aristotle had differentiated between the mechanical, speculative and practical arts, Melancthon explicitly ignores this differentiation. He claims to use science (*scientia*) and art (*ars*) interchangeably and follow the Greek precept which he claims to have found in Quintilian and Lucian<sup>184</sup>: the art is the order of certain tenets, comprehended by use, with a useful purpose of

182 See chapter 3.3.2 above

183 Kusakawa, 1997, 353.

184 Neal Gilbert argues that the favorite Renaissance source for this Stoic doctrine was Lucian's dialogue on the Parasite, Gilbert, 1960, 11n. Cf *Par.*, 4, 246.

life.<sup>185</sup> The Melanchthonian translation from the Greek is: *ars est ordo certarum propositionum, exercitatione cognitarum ad finem utilem in vita*. It is noteworthy to observe that Melanchthon uses *praeceptionibus* here, following rather the Aristotelian understanding of art as consisting of proofs<sup>186</sup> instead of quoting Quintilian's rendering of the Stoic definition of art as constitutive of perceptions (*perceptiones*).<sup>187</sup> Melanchthon is keen on bracketing out the sensory origins of artistic knowledge. He insists on the rationalistic, inborn nature of the precepts or principles of the arts. He offers a more elaborate explanation of his views in his commentary on the soul, which I will turn to in the last chapter of this study. The three elements enumerated in the definition of an art are essential to Melanchthon's understanding of it: order, certainty and usefulness. Since Melanchthon calls all domains of knowledge acquisition arts he distinguishes between them not primarily according to the degree of certainty they can convey but by their office (*officium*):

The task of rhetoric is elocution, the task of dialectic is the right connection of arguments, arithmetic deals with counting, and geometry with measuring magnitudes.<sup>188</sup>

Prudence is defined as the habit of deliberating and judging according to right reason (*recta ratione*). Right reason is identified by Melanchthon with the knowledge of those tenets (*cognitionum earum sententiarum*) which are engraved in the hearts of all men such as: no one must be hurt; grace is given to the righteous; one must listen to the laws and to the parents; just like the eyes see naturally, thus the mind knows the nature like this; knowledge is of different divine and human things.

Under the name of prudence one can write the name of law: but not, if we are to talk appropriately, in an absolute unqualified way, but relatively, because it signifies some particular precept, yet in the way in which it is stated by a legislator or proven by habit.<sup>189</sup>

Virtues, Melanchthon writes, are habits which incite to actions in conformity with right reasons: "Justice is the virtue of giving to each his own".<sup>190</sup> Thereby, Melanchthon seems to suggest that both moral-philosophical as well as scientific principles are to be traced back to a common origin: the intellect of man. After all,

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185 *Instit. Orat.* 2.17: "If we maintain the almost universally approved definition that an art 'consists of cognitions agreeing and trained to cooperate towards an end useful in life [...]'".

186 *Rhet.*, 1354a15–19.

187 Gilbert, 1960, 12: "The substitution of *praeceptio* for *perceptio* neutralized the materialistic epistemology of the original doctrine and made it acceptable to all schools of thought."

188 *De Dial.*, 26.

189 *De Dial.*, 29: "Sub prudentiae nomine poni potest vocabuli legis, sed quatenus significat sententiam quandam. Nam cum propriissime loquimur, non est simpliciter nomen absolutum, sed relativum, quia significat sententiam aliquam, sed ita, ut sit posita a legislatore, aut comprobata consuetudine."

190 *Ibid.*: "Iusticia est virtus, quae suum cuique reddit".

prudential judgment is only validated through its conformity with “right reason”, and can thus be traced to its rational principle. In a Ciceronian fashion, he brings together the Aristotelian principles of sciences and the “consensus omnium” on rationalistic grounds.

Melanchthon continues with a detailed inspection of the categories and their subordinate cases (e. g. the species of qualities being habits, virtues, inclinations, sense-perceptions, and figures). When tackling the use of predicaments and predicables in the second part of his first book, he emphasizes the use of the classes of things and words for defining and dividing. But there is also, the German Humanist writes, a great usefulness for them in the invention of arguments, in treating theses and hypotheses, and in searching for the causes of things – with which the fourth book on the topics deals extensively. Here Melanchthon explicitly connects the first part of his dialectic to the last. The discussion of predicables and categories, although occasionally put in scholastic terminology, mirrors the first book of Aristotelian *Topics* to which additional elements like the Porphyrian tree and short explanations on the nature of predicables and categories (taken from the Aristotelian *Categories*) are subjoined. The extensive passages on the categories are relying on both Aristotelian thought as well as rhetorical, historical and poetical sources. Ovid and Vergil are quoted repeatedly for illustration, Cicero and Quintilian are the complementary authorities to Aristotle. Here Melanchthon also remarks that, although he does not reject the discussion on transcendentals – *ens, bonum, verum, unum*, – he believes that one can e. g. put *bonum* and *verum* under the category of relation, amongst other categories like cause and effect. After all, he argues, the same (cause and effect) are no less wide spread (*late patet*) than *bonum* and *verum*. Melanchthon foregoes any metaphysical inquiry into transcendentals: *ens* is explained as a common name for all predicaments, while *unum* is taken to signify simplicity. Melanchthon's interest lies on the employment of these “names” (*nomina*) and the manner in which they are interrelated:

From substance and quality, the relatives are drawn: cause and effect. From quality emerge the equal, the unequal, the more, the less, the holder, the held, the place. Place is nothing other than the space surrendered to another body.<sup>191</sup>

While explaining the meaning of the so called “post-predicaments”<sup>192</sup> Melanchthon comments:

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191 *Ibid.*, 49: “Ex substantia et qualitate trahuntur, relativa nomina, causa et effectus. Ex qualitatibus fiunt, aequale, inaequale, maius, minus, contentum, continens, locus. Nihil enim alius significat locus, quam alteri corpori cessione spacium.”

192 *De Dial.*, 57.

The children must know that that which is called postpredicament is nothing else than an interpretation of certain ambiguous names.<sup>193</sup>

Melanchthon is clearly not interested in an ontological hierarchy of predicaments, post-predicaments and in the metaphysical relevance of universals. He flattens the hierarchy of these concepts, so that they can fit his list of dialectical and rhetorical invention. The analysis of these terms must only be effected to the extent to which they can provide useful means of classifications and argumentative relevance.

A very elaborate part on definition and division follows. At the end of the exposition of the definition from cause, Melanchthon writes:

Philosophy teaches us of things, which reason grasps, of Arithmetic, of Geometry, of Architecture, of the movement of bodies, of civil custom. And the divine will be only to be judged from the word of God, not from human reason.<sup>194</sup>

The usefulness of dialectic becomes apparent in that it admonishes the search for the definition of faith and discloses its power and beauty. Dialectic, to the extent that it constitutes an instrument of defining and dividing, can provide a clear understanding of both philosophical and religious concepts, because it indicates the places to look for them and the method of analyzing them. The concept of philosophy expounded here is very broad. In contrast to medieval classifications of philosophical knowledge, Melanchthon's enumeration of exemplary arts falling under philosophy is typical of Renaissance conceptions of knowledge organization. Speculative (mathematics, physics), practical (ethics, politics) and productive (architecture) arts are considered together as philosophical disciplines. This is an encyclopedic understanding of philosophy which is, of course grounded on Melanchthon's conviction of a method which can do justice to all of them: the method of dialectic. An obvious tension field is being opened between philosophy and theology. Dialectic seems to cut across this field, although its limits become much more apparent when it is applied to the divine knowledge. This will become clear in the next chapter, in which I explain the extent Melanchthon to which believes reason can provide insight into theological precepts.

193 Ibid.: "Sciant igitur pueri ea quae vocant post praedicaenta, nihil aliud esse, nisi interpretationem quorundam nominum ambiguum".

194 Ibid., 66: "Philosophia docet nos de rebus, quas ratio pespicit, de Arithmetica, de Geometria, de Archhitectonica, de motibus corporum, de civilius moribus. At de voluntate Dei tantum ex verbo Dei iudicandum est, non ex humana ratione."

### 3.7.3 On the method of explaining simple themes

At the end of his first book Melancthon resumes his initial discussion of simple questions with which he had started and in which all the previously discussed elements play an important part: *De Modo explicandi simplicia themata*:

We have shown thus far the variety of names and have described the classes appropriately in which each of them should be driven back, and we have taught the forms of defining and dividing. Now we will show how these precepts are to be brought forth from within the schools and from the shadow into the light, as it were, into the battlefield; and how these precepts are to be used; which, if anyone had not learned to use, will know this much, that he had wasted his time learning them, like one purchasing a weapon and not knowing how to use it. [...] Whether we want to teach something to others, or learn something ourselves, or reason about a certain thing, we look for particular questions which show us what is required in the explanation of each name [...].<sup>195</sup>

The knowledge of categories and predicables is useless unless it is applied in academic, homiletic, civil and cotidian speech (and textual production). From these general concepts and classificatory terms, the questions are developed which are used to reveal the most important features of a matter.

Melancthon refers to the Aristotelian question of the *Posterior Analytics* (*An sit, Quid sit, Quod sit, Quare sit*) and explicitly admits to take from Aristotle *the things* and put them into *the words* most appropriate to the human understanding. This way, by claiming to have comprehended Aristotle's exact intention (that of dialectical inquiry), and to present it in a more comprehensible manner, Melancthon justifies his own elaborations of inquisitive questions: *quid res sit, quae causae sint, quae partes, quae officia, seu qui effectus*.<sup>196</sup> Here, as in *De Rhetorica*, Melancthon rhetoricises the questions. That means that the context in which Melancthon posits these questions is a context of speech analysis and generation. This does not exclude the fact that, ultimately, as the German Humanist has stated earlier, these questions guide us in our judgment of any thing whatsoever. They are, however, not isolated in a context of scientific inquiry of the sort Aristotle presents in the *Posterior Analytics*. The approach he adopts

195 Ibid., 75: "Hactenus vocum varietatem ostendimus, et propemmodum classes descripsimus, in quas singulae referri debeat, et formas definiendi ac dividendi tradidimus. Nunc monstrabimus quomodo haec praecepta ex schola, et ex umbra in lucem, ac velut in aciem proferenda sint et quomodo his praeceptis utendum sit, quibus si quis non didicerit uti, is sciat, se in eis cognoscendis inanem operam sumpsisse, non aliter atque frustra sibi miles arma comparaverit, quibus uti nequit."

196 Ibid., 76: "Nos Aristotelis propemmodum vestigiis insistentes, res ab eo mutuabimur, tantum verbis utemur ad nostrorum hominum captum magis accomodatis. Sunt itaque quaestiones quatuor."

here, as in all his works is productive and integrative. To formulate it in Keßler's words, whom I have cited above, Melanchthon

had learned to excerpt the texts, that is, to destroy their texture, select the fragments and create a new order for the pieces selected according to the objectives [he] wanted to serve and the ideas [he] wanted to convey.<sup>197</sup>

This becomes even clearer when Melanchthon uses the examples from Cicero's employment of some of these question-steps (*quid res sit, quae partes*) in the elaboration of his *De Officiis*.

[One] first defines duty and explains its name. A duty is, namely, a virtuous action. Afterwards its species are subordinated: the duties from prudence, from fortitude, from modesty are treated and from these books all the kinds of virtues can be known, if anyone strives for longer explanations.<sup>198</sup>

From Melanchthon's examples and explanations, we can infer that his focus does not lie essentially on a faithful interpretation of Aristotelian, Ciceronian or Stoic dialectic or rhetoric. Although he is anxious to work with the primary sources and stick to their general narrative, he clearly follows his own project in which these elements are integrated. This project is focused on the appropriate use of the theoretical framework he had extracted from the authors mentioned and had elaborated for the sake of textual interpretation, academic argumentation and more generally, for conducting a debate. The method of questions – which remains faithful to its archetype – is the central and operational part of the story. Knowing that, is, in Melanchthon's view, useless in the absence of knowing how. The predicables and categories are enumerated and explained not for the sake of refined ontologies and abstraction, but for the sake of making sense of argumentative structures and understanding discourses that rely on concepts which must be thus defined and classified. Melanchthon concludes the first book of the *De Dialectica* with the observation that rhetoricians and dialecticians both add a method of amplification to the precepts formulated above which they infer from the method of questions or simple explanation and definition of things.<sup>199</sup> Thus, they are able to provide great light to the matter at hand and, present it, as if with vivid colors, “more appropriate than the shadows kept within extreme

197 See chapter 3.1.1.

198 *Ibid.*, 81: “Primum enim officium definitur et nomen explicatur. Est enim action virtutis. Subiiciuntur deinde species, official ex prudential, iusticia, fortitudine, modestia tracta et ex eo lebellio emnes virtutis species, si quis explicationem longiorem desiderat, cognosci possunt.”

199 Melanchthon had shown previously how the explanation of effects can lead to enumeration and amplification (with the purpose of vivid illustration). This emulates his first edition of *De Rhetorica*.

boundaries".<sup>200</sup> Melanchthon is keen to re-emphasize that rhetorical techniques are dependent and committed to dialectical procedures. They are neither arbitrary, nor mere ornamentation, but intrinsically connected to the matters put forth.

### 3.7.4 On propositions

Melanchthon's second book, on propositions, broadly keeps to the structure and content of the previous edition. The book on propositions is the shortest of all four books of the *De Dialectica* and deals with the types of propositions (categorical and hypothetical), and with their essential features (universal, true, necessary). The squares of contraries is displayed and conversion is briefly explained. The relevance of the proposition as the medium of speech compression is stressed: it is crucial, Melanchthon writes, that students are able to summarize in one sentence the matter displayed in every written or spoken discourse they are confronted with. As in the *De Rhetorica* and the *Compendiaria* the part on proposition is thought to be more diligently treated by rhetoricians, who provide the method of referring back an entire speech to one single proposition (the *status*), whether in understanding an already given text or in writing one's own. Both this and the resolution of lengthy arguments into simple propositions provides a clear understanding of the text or speech the student deals with. Here, again, as insisted upon in his previous textbooks on rhetoric and dialectic, Melanchthon evaluates the role of the simple sentence for the rhetorical procedure of formulating the *status*. Thus, propositions are crucial primarily for the compression of the main subject of a text or debate. Melanchthon also remarks that it is useful for the student to know that, besides the categorical speech there are other propositions used by rhetoricians such as exclamations, which can be turned from indirect speech into indicative sentences. The book ends with the suggestion that Aristotle should be consulted on the matter of modalities, since Melanchthon claims, his own dialectic is only meant to give the most clear and useful instruments for reading, writing and teaching to the students, without burdening them.<sup>201</sup>

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200 Ibid. 82–83: "Sed hanc amplificandi rationem, tum in Topicis Dialectici, tum Rhetores prolixè tradunt, quae cum accesserit ad definitionem, et illam brevem explicationem virtutis, magnam haud dubie lucem ei adfert. Neque enim iste rhetoricus apparatus inanis quidam fucus est, sed utilitatis causa repertus est, ut propius ostendat oculis nostris causam, de qua disserimus, non aliter atque vivi colores in pictura rem verius representat, quam umbra extremis lineis circumducta."

201 Ibid., 97.

### 3.7.5 On arguments

The books on arguments focuses on the rules of inferences: it briefly deals with the definition of argumentation and syllogism, with the syllogistic forms, and with other types of argumentation: enthymeme, induction, examples, sorites. Finally, other rules of inference are enumerated. In the introductory passage Melanchthon emphasizes the usefulness of argumentation:

What do they understand, who cannot connect arguments in appropriate order, or see how the single parts connect? To me, at least, they seem to sail into blind night, and they, who do not take up these instruments in the lecture of any writing whatsoever, do not seem as if they can acquire any certain precepts.<sup>202</sup>

The wealth of speech (*copia orationis*) can, however, distract from the naked part of the arguments (*membra tanquam nuda*) and fool the eyes of the readers, determining them to embrace uncertain matters as certain ones. Melanchthon warns against the dangers of ample ornamentations in the context of the search for argumentative structures. However, he adds an extensive quote of Quintilian's final passage of his fifth book of the *Institutio Oratoria* to underscore his view, that although dialectical forms are to be fitted to the argumentative parts of the oration, no such diligence is required when it comes to explanation and ornamentation of speech. Not all parts of a speech are to be constrained within the boundaries of dialectical precepts. Depending on the context of the discourse (topic, audience, purpose) one must avoid strenuous argumentation (as Aristotle admonishes in his last book on the *Topics*) and fit the expression to the matter it is meant to illustrate.

The following citation is directly taken from Quintilian:

I do indeed think that it is sometimes not a crime to use a Syllogism in a speech: but I certainly do not want a speech entirely consisting of or stuffed full with Epicheiremes and Enthymemes. It would be more like a dialogue or a dialectical debate than a pleading belonging to our art; and these are very different things. In debates of this kind, scholars seeking the truth among fellow scholars go into everything with meticulous minuteness, and come to clear and agreed conclusions; they claim the task both of invention and of judgment [...] We, on the other hand, have to compose speeches for others to judge, often before people who are quite untrained and certainly ignorant of that sort of scholarship. [...] Eloquence seeks to be rich, beautiful and commanding, it will be none of those things if it is fragmented by definite, frequent and monotonously structured formal arguments and thus arouses contempt for its meanness, distaste for

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202 Ibid., 98: "Quid intelligent hi, qui non norunt argumenta iusto ordine connectere, aut videre, quomodo singula membra cohaerent? Mihi quidem tanquam caeca nocte navigantes, nullam certam sententiam isti tenere posse videntur, qui ad lectionem cuiusque scripti, hoc instrumentum non asserunt."

its hidebound restrictions, satiety because there is so much of it, and boredom because it is all the same.<sup>203</sup>

Melanchthon concludes this extended citation by saying that Quintilian invited to free disputations and speech. However, when one is to seek for the cause one has to look beyond the ornaments and employ the forms of the syllogism. Argumentation is defined by Melanchthon as the connection of one sentence to another. However, the connections or the rules of inferences are to be judged twofold: regarding their form and regarding their matter. That is why Melanchthon insists here upon the fact that students must care to handle both. He refers them to the Ciceronian definition of dialectic into invention and judgment. The types of arguments used depend on the matter invented.

Thus, the dialectician has to think through and invent the matter and then seek the form of the argument, according to which he will judge the matter, in order to determine whether all the parts of the argument harmonize.<sup>204</sup>

Melanchthon explains that the habit of the schools has it that the pupils are confronted with already made up arguments and have to judge the validity of the consequence. A good consequence is one according to the rules (*cum rite cohaerent*), i. e. according to the figures and modes of syllogisms. But to these, Melanchthon believes, other forms of argumentation should be added:

But a good consequence is one employed in various species of arguments: by syllogism, enthymeme, induction and example, without fault and according to the precepts given in the following.

He defines syllogisms as the kind of speech in which a conclusion necessarily follows from two previously presented propositions. In his examples, the disposition of the syllogism, in which the maior comes first and expresses a universal statement (according to the regulative principles of the syllogism), is treated as a natural order:

The regulative principles (*dici de omni et dici de nullo*) are rightly called thus, since they show in what manner the syllogisms are to be disposed, indebted to the judgment of common sense. It is not necessary to further search for the interpretation of these rules; if anyone turns to his common sense he will understand them immediately. For, just like arithmetic and other arts take their origin from common sense, so are the principles of dialectic inborn.<sup>205</sup>

203 *Inst. Orat.*, 5.14, 29–31.

204 *De Dial.*, 103: “Ita Dialectico cum materia excogitanda et invenianda est, tum etiam forma argumentandi quaerenda, ad quam exigat materiam, ut videant, an recte cohaereant omnes argumenti partes.”

205 *Ibid.*, 109: “Proinde recte vocantur illa praecepta regulativa principia, ostendunt, enim, quomodo disponi syllogismi, iudicio communis sensus debeant. Nec opus est quaerere harum regularum interpretationem, si quis sensum communem consuluerit, statim in-

Melanchthon explains here why syllogisms are so built that first of all the cause of the conclusion is to be posited (the actual rule guaranteeing the inference), and afterwards the subject must become accommodated to the cause, from which a necessary conclusion follows. The maior is meant to give the cause, the minor is to be subsumed unto the maior. Therefore, Melanchthon says, the maior needs to be universal. And this insight is, according to him, obvious and commonsensical. Indeed, if one is to teach the manner in which arguments are to be brought forth, the arrangement of a syllogism is the most appropriate one. It brings forth, in a sequence, the warrant, the statement it is backing, and the conclusion one draws when the statement is connected to the warrant. After all, and Melanchthon is correct in recognizing, this is what Aristotle is doing in his *Posterior Analytics*. This is, if not the natural way to debate, certainly the natural way to teach. To be able to make a conclusion believable one must start from further back, and this is what Melanchthon argues for here.

After listing the different figures of syllogisms, and the three other forms of argumentation, Melanchthon dedicates the end of the third book to a separate discussion on consequences. This is a subject tackled by late medieval logic textbooks that treated inference rules not covered by the syllogistic schemes.<sup>206</sup> What seems to distinguish this part from the part on syllogistic figures and modes is that a *bona consequentia* is understood here as meeting the requirements of both syllogistic rules and topical rules (*Bona est, quae convenit cum regulis, quae traduntur de syllogismis et locis*). Although he believes that these rules are spread all over dialectic, Melanchthon nevertheless thinks it is useful to constitute a separate title for the rules of consequences, which provide the pupils with an aid in observing similar inferences.<sup>207</sup> In his book on the forms of arguments Melanchthon tries to bring together all that he considers useful to be said about the manner of connecting propositions into argumentative discourses. However, he also constantly reminds his pupils about the matter of arguments. He believes the order of syllogism to be most helpful in circumscribing inferences, but adds other types of arguments of equal usefulness, which are more often employed in actual speech. Moreover, he feels the need to add a chapter on a late-medieval logical subject in which he treats inferences in general, since he feels that some of them do not belong to the forms of arguments he brings forth in the chapter on syllogism. Melanchthon claims that it is important to acknowledge them and pays attention to explaining the rules of consequences

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telliget eas. Nam ut Arithmetica et aliae artes initia sumunt a sensu communi, ita Dialecticae principia nobiscum nascuntur.”

206 Stump, 1982, Boh, 1982; Pinborg, 1972 168–180.

207 Ibid., 148: “Etsi autem passim hae regulae in tota Dialectica sparsae sunt tamen prodest certum titulum constituere de regulis consequentiae, ubi recitentur aliquae insignes, ut admoniti scholastici, similes alias diligentius observent.”

for each example he brings forth. He is concerned with the “inference-ticket”, and this differentiates his perspective on dialectic from that of the Humanists’, who offer a mainly rhetorical interpretation of topical argumentation. His view on the parts of dialectic is more differentiated, hence the addition of the Ciceronian definition of dialectic into matter and form and his insistence on the clear and “naked” connections which need to be revealed in lengthy arguments. However, he does not want to reduce a discourse to a chain of syllogism, and refers to Quintilian’s assessment of rhetorical discourse as an appropriate description of discourse in general. Melanchthon is much more thorough here than in his *Compendiaria* when it comes to the detailed rendering of logical rules. But he keeps the holistic view on discourse and his conviction that argumentation forms are to be seen as instruments of revealing the modes of connecting various parts of discourse, with the aim of clear and differentiated disposition.

### 3.7.6 The method of complex questions: dialectical and rhetorical *loci*

The last book on the topics does not only take over the material of the previous edition, but it displays a significant addition which deals with Melanchthon’s understanding of demonstration. It also includes a discussion on method, and dedicates a detailed exposition to each of the topics: of persons and of things. The relationship between rhetoric and dialectic is repeatedly referred to. In the concluding part a chapter on fallacies is added.

In the introductory passage of the last book, Melanchthon refers his reader back to Agricola’s *DID* with the observation that he tries to keep his exposition as short as possible, thus preventing weak minds from being deterred from its study. In comparison to the Agricolan weighty tome, Melanchthon’s *De Dialectica* strictly keeps to its plan. The *loci*, as the most important part of dialectic, have been said to pertain to rhetoric, leaving it to dialectic to be the science of judging (*iudicandi scientia*). “We believe”, Melanchthon writes,

whether they belong to Rhetoric proper, or they are common to all other arts, they must not be surveyed merely by dialectic, but be written and carved on all walls so that they will always be before everyone’s eyes. Nothing can be said about anything, nothing can be rightly judged about any written text, if the mind is not lead to these places and follows them as if they are his leaders.<sup>208</sup>

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208 Ibid., 157: “Nos sive ad Rhetoricam proprie pertinent, sive communes utriusque arti sunt, existimamus non tantum in Dialecticis libellis recensendos esse, sed etiam in omnibus parietibus scribendos atque sculpendos esse, ut semper ob oculos versentur. Nulla enim de re dicit, de nullo scripto recte iudicari potest, nisi referat se animus ad hos locos, eosque tanquam duces sequatur.”

Next, Melanchthon admonishes his students not to seek for the method of invention in any specific art, since invention is indeed, as we would call it, topic-neutral. Following the habit of the schools, the student's first encounter with invention concerns letter writing. But the search for the topic on which one is supposed to write a letter is similar to the search for arguments in more important contexts, such as theological disputes and civil deliberations. The contexts and the states of affairs themselves (*tempora*) offer the cause on which the debate must be lead. Thus, it is important to consult the places from which the material is to be extracted and which show how the matter is to be disposed.<sup>209</sup> Although this is the first step in arguing, understanding and writing, Melanchthon believes the forms of argumentation are given before the material for pedagogical reasons. This way, the students may, as soon as they are provided with the material, constrain it with the correct forms. Dialectic teaches the places (*loci*) which represent the sources for the rhetorical topics and which are dependent on the matter at hand. Depending on the cause (*causa*) of the speech, rhetorical places have been then ascribed to different categories: demonstrative, deliberative, iudicial. Dialectic presides foremost over the causes which are meant to teach the listener: what the thing is, what it is not, what is true and what is false. This is borrowed by rhetoric, which nevertheless extends its province to admonition, incitement, vituperation and the like.

The next chapter refers the reader back to the question method presented in the first book. It reminds of the twofold manner of posing questions and lists a couple of examples illustrating the manner of answering simple questions, which serve the circumscription of the matter under debate. Almost the same places (*similes locos*), Melanchthon claims, are used by the compound questions like "Whether it is permitted for Christians to start a war". It is useful to have them in stall for further argumentation and they are thus held ready by the means of constant use. Here Melanchthon paraphrases Antonius' emphasis on the commonplaces<sup>210</sup>, in the second book of *De Oratore*. An interesting part on method follows:

The Elder called method the *right way*, and the order of teaching by means of dialectical precepts: and they often remind us that in all kind of activities, controversies, arts, we have to endeavour to have a method, otherwise the mind will wander without certainty [...] Aristotle's moral and natural philosophy is more useful for the students than Plato, because Plato had not observed the useful method [...]. In medicine Avicenna, of all others has been valued for the right method; in civil law, the *Institutions* [of Justinian]. Concerning the Sacred Letters the method is Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*. No matter can

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209 Ibid., 158–159.

210 *De Or.* II, 121.

be thoroughly inquired into unless our mind is informed by a certain method which it follows in its cognition, inquiry, and explanation.<sup>211</sup>

Melanchthon is aware of the absence of the concept of *methodus* among the Latin philosophers, since, as Gilbert has shown, the Ciceronian translation of the Greek was “recta ratio” or “via”.<sup>212</sup> He himself more often than not employs the Ciceronian rendering in the early editions or quotes the Greek word (as in the *De Rhetorica*). He latinizes the concept as he will also do in his last book on dialectic, the *Erotemata*. Melanchthon is here shifting the perspective from the method of understanding, analyzing and generating discourse to the method ancient authors used to structure their own works. What he suggests is that the steps of circumscribing the matter (like natural body, virtue, elements) by means of definition, division, the method of questions, and the topics were used by these famous authors when they needed to circumscribe the subject they were dealing with (be it natural-philosophical, ethical or theological). After inquiring into their subject, the authors were able to crystallize the most important themes of the field and present them appropriately. This way they used the method of dialectic to extract the most important concepts of their field of inquiry and then elaborate on them in such a way that it would become possible for the readers to follow and understand the principles of presentations. Analysis mirrors composition, to the extent that, confronted with ancient literature, the students will be able to recognize the structure underneath the narrative, summarize the main commonplaces, extract the main arguments and be able to learn to imitate these procedures in their own works. Melanchthon is convinced that this is precisely what he is doing in extracting and presenting the main topics of a field of knowledge. His dialectic is, in his understanding, a collection of useful precepts which he was able to work out from the literature and philosophy he had read. He is also convinced, in a manner which testifies to his commitment to the tradition of the *philosophia perennis*<sup>213</sup>, that the views of all of the ancient schools can be brought, to a certain extent, to harmonize on the most important topics. Thus, it is unsurprising that he believes works like the *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics* and

211 Ibid., 162: “Veteres Methodum vocant rationem recte atque ordine docendi, iuxta praecepta Dialectices: ac saepe monent ut in omnibus negociis. Controversiis, artibus, demus operam, ut Methodum teneamus, quia necesse sit anumum vagari incertum, nisi hac ratione regatur. [...] Utilior est Aristoteles dicentibus moralem aut naturalem Philosophiam, quam Plato, quia Plato non observant iusta Methodum [...] In medicina amator ab omnibus Avicenna propter Methodum: In iure civili prope modum Methodus est liber institutionum. In sacris litteris Methodus est Epistola Pauli ad Romanos. Nulla res est enim, quae penitus perspicit possit, nisi animus noster Methodum sibi quandam informet, quam in eius cognitione, inquisitione et explicatione sequatur.”

212 Gilbert, 1960. 48–66.

213 See my remarks on Melanchthon's commitment to the *philosophia perennis* in chapter 2.1.1 above.

*Institutiones Rhetoricae* to be essentially congruent in their presentation of method.

We find here, again, the interdependency between locus – as a theoretical principle of inference –, and argumentation and commonplaces – as the *caput praecipuum* of an art. Dialectic extends its functions from those of analysis and generation to knowledge-organization.

### 3.7.7 On demonstration: Demonstrative and probable *loci*

With the claim that most arts contain valuable demonstrations, Melanchthon paves the way for his next and newly added chapter on demonstrative arguments. Melanchthon renders the Aristotelian differentiation between necessary and probable arguments, the latter also being called dialectical. These are singled out by the fact that they originate in nature itself while the others are constructed with the means of art and celerity of the mind, which is able to grasp verisimilitudes and use them for probable argumentation. So, while some things are clearer in themselves, other need the human wit to become plausible. Arts generally are constituted of both kinds of inferences. Geometry is an art which contains necessary propositions since its proofs are rarely doubted. However, Melanchthon does not restrict necessary arguments to arts like geometry and arithmetic; he believes there are many demonstrations in all kinds of human activities (*in omnibus negociis*). Science is nothing other than an art in which the things are disclosed by means of demonstration. Its method is that which teaches the use of demonstrations, the employment of definition and the inquiry into causes, and effects and the search for the appropriate ends or purposes. Thereby the origins of every art is disclosed (*ostendimus initia et fontes artium*). These origins, Melanchthon writes, are principles engraved in the human mind, like rules of judging natural and human affairs: “Every thing is greater than each of its parts”, “human society must be preserved” etc. These are, as it were, the beginnings and causes of all arts, and are naturally understood by the human mind. Arguments drawn by means of valid inferences from these principles and from experience constitute the demonstrations of the various arts. Melanchthon uses the term “demonstrative syllogism” and we have seen above that he had attached to the term “syllogism” a broad meaning of validity. Nevertheless, Melanchthon claims here that dialectic and rhetoric deal with probable argumentations, which, as noted above, are the products of human ingenuity and not the results of natural necessity. This is confusing insofar as, when passing to the next chapter about the *loci*, Melanchthon claims that the *loci* which emerge from the question method of simple terms, are, at least partially, containers of demonstrations: those who refer to causes, definitions and effects. *Loci* from similarities or from

signs are not firm but rather employed in the illustration and amplification of matters. It becomes clear that Melanchthon connects the Ciceronian theory of the intrinsic loci with Aristotle's demonstrative inferences. But this cuts across the Aristotelian epistemic-dialectical division, especially because Melanchthon connects evidence, clarity and persuasiveness, and thus relocates the division between certain and verisimile on dialectical grounds. The character of evidence seems to emerge through a process of topical inquiry into the nature and the features of a thing, rather than being grounded on metaphysical truth. Evidence and plausibility, while being features of the matter inquired into, are more easily grasped by the appropriate method. This method is one which applies rhetorical questions and draws definitions, divisions from the concepts debated. It afterwards connects the preliminary results into reasoning chains and draws conclusions. While some loci are more appropriate for finding necessary features and parts of a matter, others only reveal probable connections and characteristics. Deductions are drawn by means of topical inferences. This way the traditions of the *Posterior Analytics* and that of the *Topics* overlap again. The essential framework in which this occurs is that of textual interpretation along rhetorical lines. Melanchthon does not need to appeal to any metaphysical elaborations on which his theory of reasoning and debating forms is grounded. The common insighfulness of the human mind and its reliability in extracting the main characteristics of a matter with the help of a method, suffices as a general explanation. Nevertheless, the tension between Melanchthon's claim that he had developed a dialectical method of demonstration (in his *De Rhetorica*), his claim that intrinsic loci provide certain knowledge, rendered above, and the attribution of probable argumentation to dialectic is both real and confusing. Since dialectical method is all-encompassing, a possible solution to this tension would be to attribute to Melanchthon the belief that only intuitive grasp of first principles (identified with evident knowledge) is knowledge which is both certain and does not depend on human artifice.

Melanchthon's list of the loci is twofold. Since matters often deal with persons, and various predicates are assigned to subjects referring to persons, special loci for persons have been listed which are mainly employed in civil controversies.<sup>214</sup> These have been added to the loci of things, which I will discuss in detail. In the subordinate part on *loci rerum*, Melanchthon insists on the importance of definition for argumentation, since, it discloses the most important parts of a thing (genus, species, causa, effectus).

The Elder did not fear God, did not believe that they would receive any grace, but thought they were born and died by chance. Thus, the Elder did not have any religion.

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214 Ibid., 169–170. The loci personarum are: patria, sexus, parentes, educatio, mores, res gestae, vitae genus, aetas, mors.

The definition of the true religion is to fear God and believe in the Scriptures and in the divine promises.<sup>215</sup>

It is clear from Melanchthon's arguments that he does not focus on the formal or metaphysical aspects of argumentation here, but tries to indicate how the provision of definition can function as a premise for his arguments. He also adds an account of the Boethian loci, understood as rules or maxims, i. e. "certain sentences, that remind us of the use of each single locus." Occasionally, Melanchthon lists the maxim in addition to the explanation of the locus:

Of species, we argue only affirmatively, like when man is, also animal is: the Gospel approves of judgment, thus it approves of revenge. Maxim: To that which the genus is attributed to, also the species is attributed.<sup>216</sup>

Melanchthon lists the loci from definition, from species from difference and proprium, from etymology, from conjugates, from causes and effect, from antecedents and consequents, from similitudes, from opposites, from separates, from whole and parts, from examples, from authorities, from signs. To the loci from cause, an exhaustive enumeration of all different types of cause which Melanchthon acknowledges is given under the heading *Regulae de causis*: accidental, natural, voluntary, partial, divine, efficient, and so on. These are accompanied by particular inference rules. At the end of the chapter, a brief explanation on hypothetical inferences is rendered together with the method of dissolving fallacious arguments. The examples given are mainly taken from the Scriptures, Latin orations and verses, ancient histories and only rarely from those who today are taken to be ancient philosophers.

### 3.7.8 Conclusion

In *De Dialectica Libri Quatuor* Melanchthon:

- (1) continues his projects of the *De Rhetorica Libri Tres* and the *Compendiaria Dialectices* in writing a detailed textbook on the method which roots appropriate discourse on firm ground.
- (2) by stepping into the footsteps of his Humanist predecessors, he replaces the focus of dialectic as an art of discourse teaching the method of reduction of arguments to syllogisms (taken narrowly as arguments displaying a specific

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215 *Ibid.*, 173.

216 *Ibid.*, 175: "A specie ad genus tantum affirmative argumentamur, ut homo est, Igitur animal est: Evangelium approbat iudicia, Ergo, approbat quandam vindictam, Maxima: Cui tribuitur species, eidem tribuitur et genus."

- formal validity), with an art which extends to different kinds of argumentative structures, molded on everyday discourse and ordinary speech.
- (3) provides a rhetorically-grounded dialectic: grounded on the question method extracted from the circumscription of the status causae, and on the topical inferences derived thereof.
  - (4) exceeding the projects of his peers, Melanchthon fuses rhetorical and dialectical categories, and reinterprets the notion of demonstration, extending it to all inferences from generally known truths, or statements secured by means of a topical and rhetorical inquiry into definition, cause and purpose (intrinsic topics).
  - (5) although he struggles with a clear definition of the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic, he believes that, from the viewpoint of discourse taken as a whole, they cannot be separated. He distinguishes them, nevertheless, according to their different *officia*.
  - (6) insists on inference as a given order of understanding, endemic to human reason. His regulative model of ordering of discourse being thereby the syllogism, the other forms of argumentation, which are more commonly and more often employed, enjoying equal relevance and wider employment.
  - (7) emphasizes the practical dimension as a sine qua non condition for the acquisition of knowledge: the “knowing how” is the only appropriate manner of “knowing”.

### 3.8 Melanchthon's *Elementorum Rhetorices Libri Duo*: *Eloquentia facultas est sapienter et ornate dicendi*

The last edition of Melanchthon's rhetoric is one of the most successful works of its kind in sixteenth-century Europe and is only surpassed by the number of printed editions of Erasmus's *De Copia rerum ac verborum*.<sup>217</sup> Melanchthon's *Elementa* is the most extensive exposition on rhetorical invention and elocution. It mirrors Agricola's *DID* rather than a traditional rhetoric manual, yet it differentiates the *genera causarum* in a way that clarifies which of its parts belong to the Melanchthonian reinterpretation of rhetoric and which mirror the traditional content of the Ciceronian rhetoric and of the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*.<sup>218</sup> Since the *Elementa* brings together and reinforces the subjects which Melanchthon had treated in the *De Rhetorica* and *Institutiones*, I will focus here on the aspects which, I believe, are essential for understanding the purpose of the Melanchthonian rhetoric and its relation to dialectic. The views expressed here are re-

217 Wels, 2001, 443.

218 Knape, 1993, 39–40.

inforced by Melanchthon (in 1558) in what might be the last elaborate praise of rhetoric as an all-encompassing art before Giambattista Vico's *New Science*. This is written by Melanchthon in epistolary form, as a response to a letter written by Pico della Mirandola to Ermolao Barbaro at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>219</sup> Since Melanchthon writes this defence of rhetoric in the late 1550s and repeats some of his views expressed in his *Elementa*, I take Melanchthon's *Elementa* to represent his last word on the nature and relevance of rhetoric. There are three aspects that deserve special attention and which I am going to turn to: (1) Melanchthon's assessment of the function of rhetoric; (2) the relation between dialectic and rhetoric, and (3) his account of the *loci communes*.

### 3.8.1 Eloquence as a guarantor of clear speech

Melanchthon believes, as he had made clear in his previous works, that the art of rhetoric had emerged from the reflection on the natural discursiveness of human thought. It is, Melanchthon believes, nature that secures a grasp of things at the same time as providing appropriate speech for giving an account of the things understood, and that it does so through the instrument of human talent aided by practice.<sup>220</sup> However natural the manifestation of rhetoric, the extraction of rules is highly useful in that it teaches less talented and less experienced pupils to read complex orations and understand and judge lengthy controversies (*longis controversiis iudicandis*). It is also important to Melanchthon to insist on the fact that, although the pupils are required to learn the system of rhetorical rules in order to be able to understand the writings of rhetoricians and orators, these rules are to be employed regularly, whenever there is a weighty matter into which one must inquire:

No one can comprehend complicated discussions and muddled disputations, without being aided by an art, which indicates the way in which the parts are arranged, the pauses in the flow of speech, and the intent of the speakers; and which disposes a way of explaining and disentangling obscure matters. [...] Eloquence is the ability of speaking sensibly and elegantly. Appropriate speech depends on a perfect knowledge of the things disputed about.<sup>221</sup>

219 On the letter exchange between Pico and Barbaro, but also on Melanchthon's own position towards this dispute and an English translation of Melanchthon's epistle see Breen, 1968, 1–68.

220 *Elem. Rhet*, 20: “Docet enim natura homines viam quondam atque ratione magnas et obscuras causas explicandi, quam homines magna quadam vi ingenii preediti, partim beneficio naturae animadvertere, partim usu deprehendere solent.”

221 *Ibid*, 22: “Nemo enim potest longas contentiones et perplexas disputationes animo complecti, nisi arte aliqua adiuventur, quae ostendat seriem partium, et intervalla, et dicentium consilia, et viam tradat, res obscuras explicandi ac patefaciendi.[...]Eloquentia facultas est

Clearly, Melanchthon does not discuss the art of rhetoric here, solely from the perspective of its interpretatory usefulness, but, especially, as a method of "training" in eloquent, i. e. clear, and comprehensible discourse.

Appropriate speech is always matter-dependent, to Melanchthon, i. e. only the person who has sufficient knowledge about what he wants to talk or dispute about can speak "sensibly" (*sapienter*) and "elegantly" (*ornate*). The rules are necessary to make this assumption clear and to facilitate the appropriation of the habit of "bene disserendi". Melanchthon, like Agricola before him, and following Cicero and Aristotle<sup>222</sup>, believes that, since speech is naturally matter-dependent, the rules of the art of rhetoric only improve a natural disposition. They do so by teaching the manner to judge more easily when confronted with a lengthy speech, to observe its parts more rapidly, and to ascertain those that are the most important. They also help in distinguishing the ornaments of speech and in deciding which are most appropriately used in which situation, and what kind of speech the matter inquired into requires.<sup>223</sup> Plainly put, the expression given to any matter whatsoever is dependent on judgments and considerations which are reflected upon in the art of rhetoric. In other words, rhetoric is the art of reasoning and speaking appropriately in general. But, in his book on elocution, Melanchthon goes further than this. He claims that rhetoric is not only a critical description of the way in which we discourse, but that it is constitutive of the manner in which we acknowledge something and are able to express the things understood. After all, the decay of the liberal arts had set in after the simple and clear rules of rhetoric had been lost, and after the transmission of knowledge had been obscured.<sup>224</sup> We have seen that Melanchthon's inaugural speech, the introductory passages to his dialectic and rhetoric books, and his orations on eloquence and the liberal arts all tell a story of decay caused by the loss of the right pedagogical method. His conviction that a corrupted language employed in teaching is able to confuse entire generations of pupils is reinforced and explained here as determined by the loss of the right rhetorical method. It is a great misunderstanding, he writes, "to believe that the method of eloquent speech was elaborated not because of necessity, but for vain display."<sup>225</sup> Elocution is that which presents the matters in clear and distinct language (*dilucida et perspicua oratione*). Melanchthon thus reiterates his views presented eight years earlier in

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spainter et ornate dicendi. Nam ad bene dicendum imprimis requiritur perfecta earum rerum cognition, de quibus oratio instituitur."

222 Rhet., 1354a1 ff.

223 Elem. Rhet., 24.

224 Ibid., 167–168.

225 Ibid., 166: "[...] error illorum reprehendus est, qui contemnunt elocutionis praecepta, et falso arbitrantur eloquendi rationem non necessitatis causa, sed ad inanem ostentationem excogitatam esse."

his praise of eloquence. What he adds in his *Elementa* is an elaborate account of how this necessary function of rhetoric relates to the task of dialectical method.

Just like it is the aim of dialectic, on the one hand to judge, whether, in the process of teaching, all parts agree unto themselves, and on the other hand, that a certain method is being followed, thus, we define the aim of rhetoric to be the judgment of a long oration, of the manner in which its parts are arranged, of its most important elements, of its ornaments are; and also, in the speech of those gifted by nature, to make sure that it consists of particular parts, and that the important things are not explained too briefly, as in dialectic, but accompanied by the light of the words.<sup>226</sup>

While dialectic guarantees that the concepts are used appropriately and connected in the right manner, rhetoric sees to their arrangement in lengthy narratives and expositions, as well as to their appropriate ornaments. Kees Meerhoff summarises this perspective fittingly when he writes that:

Disposition is the uncovering of logical invention as a chain of arguments supporting one basic contention; it is, in fact, invention and disposition intertwined, and considered from the point of view of textual coherence.<sup>227</sup>

Even though Melanchthon admits that in contrast to dialectic – which shares with rhetoric the techniques of invention and disposition – rhetoric also consist of elocution in part, it is not be applied separately in teaching or in debates and theoretical expositions on weighty matters. The example Melanchthon gives is the manner of exposition in Cicero's *De Finibus*. While he is aware of the (ancient) traditional attribution of functions to dialectic and rhetoric and the matters they were thought to treat, Melanchthon cuts across this separation by assessing the necessity of rhetorical speech for dialectical argumentation and vice versa.

### 3.8.2 The Dialectical origin of rhetoric: the *genus didaskalion*

Just as he had done in his *Institutiones*, Melanchthon introduces a rhetorical genre especially conceived for teaching and theoretical debate which he calls “genus didaskalion” and which he refers back to the rules of dialectic. This is in accordance with the considerations of Quintilian, concerning theoretical ques-

226 Ibid., 24: “Ut autem Dialecticae finis est, iudicare, utrum in docendo consentiant omnia, item in docendo sequi certam viam ita Rhetoricae fines constituamus, iudicare de longa oratione qualis sit partium series, quae sint praecipua membra, quae sint ornamenta, item in dicendo etiam, in his, qui non destituuntur a natura, efficere, ut oratio certas partes habeat, et res magnas non exponat breviter, ut Dialectica, sed addat verborum lumen.”

227 Meerhoff, 1994, 55.

tions treated by rhetoricians.<sup>228</sup> The chapter on the *genus didaskalion* mirrors, in the form of a summary, the structure of dialectical method (as divided in the question method and the topical method). Melanchthon elaborates on the two types of questions which come up when dealing with a subject matter: simple and complex questions. Here he attributes to both types of questions specific loci: to the first, the four loci of substance, parts, causes and effects, and to the second, the loci of definition, causes, effects, parts and contraries. Melanchthon justifies his short list of loci by claiming that he only selects those loci taken from the topics which are the most significant ones, since all others are taken from without the matter itself, and are more fit for amplification than for teaching.<sup>229</sup> His examples are taken from theological controversies and intent to display an appropriate dealing with concepts such as righteousness, faith, Christian justice etc. Clearly, Melanchthon argues here that the *genus didaskalion* is used as a rhetorical genre mostly by teachers and preachers. They are the ones that have to keep to the dialectical loci in order to be able to present the different precepts that they are teaching in a perfectly clear and distinct manner. The loci "taken from without" of the subject are mainly used for amplifications, since they are signs and affects of things rather than intrinsic features. In a straight-forward manner, Melanchthon explains in the chapter on the *genus didaskalion* how dialectical *topoi* are able to provide certainty by their direct treatment of the nature and properties of things, in contrast to the rhetorical *topoi*. The latter are used for moving and pleasing since amplifications are employed when the affects and imagination of the public is to be steered.

Chapters on the other three *genera causarum* follow, and paragraphs in which Melanchthon explains how specific orations belonging to these rhetorical types of speeches are to be organized. After the explanations concerning the deliberative and demonstrative speech, Melanchthon introduces a chapter on the *loci communes*. In the *De Rhetorica* these had been introduced as the underlying meanings of historical narratives which provide the access to the understanding of an entire work. Here, the chapter on the *loci communes* starts with Melanchthon's intent of showing how a hypothesis (whether one should start a war against the Ottomans) can be transferred to a thesis (a general question, like whether Christians are permitted to start wars). A debate on both general and particular views on war, of Christian duty and so on, can provide a broader understanding of the context and more arguments for or against the actual case under debate. Antonius and Crassus, Melanchthon writes referring to Cicero's *Orator*, advise that an inquiry should be undertaken into the commonplaces which are contained in a case. Some *loci communes*, he continues, contain the

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228 *Instit. Orat.*, 5.14.

229 *Ibid.*, 57.

entire case, i. e. one can bring the subject of the narrative or argumentation under one concept that defines its nature and circumstances. Others are touched upon in passing when the thesis is being elaborated on. Melanchthon's example is taken from Cicero's *Pro Milone* where Cicero claims that Milo had been punished by God due to his crime against religion. By touching upon the divine punishment, Cicero draws on a locus communis and demonstrates that there is a God and that the world is divinely ruled.<sup>230</sup> Thus, the locus communis of divine punishment contains the locus communis of divine existence and divine rule. Now, since Melanchthon believes one can break a case down into a simple argument, he thinks that the main locus communis is that from which the maior (premise) of this argument is taken, which is therefore semantically related to the maior of the argument and has the status of general concept. While the conclusion is represented by the matter or by the *causa* itself, the justification is taken from the loci, which are concepts directly related to the thesis to which the case is subordinated. The loci are the collection of virtues and vices, the most important precepts of the arts and of theology, but also well known and weighty maxims and proverbs. However, Melanchthon rejects the understanding of the selection of loci communes as a mere accumulation of sentences picked out from various poetical and oratorical books (*sententias ex Poetis et Oratoribus excerptae*):

Therefore, one must know that the commonplaces are correctly understood only when the arts to which they belong are perfectly familiar. [...] Thus, it is necessary, to add to appropriate speech the study of all the important arts – philosophy, the religious doctrine, jurisprudence and history.<sup>231</sup>

In order to gather a list of the relevant loci, one must be acquainted with all the topics of the liberal arts and, in general, with all branches of knowledge accessible to men.

One can take the philosophical loci from the parts of men: reason, arts, prudence, virtues, affect, custom, body, appearance, age, luck, wealth, household, marriage, education of children, civil institutions, civil authority, law, war, peace.

Maxims, examples, and analogies are to be subordinated to the different categories of commonplaces. Here Melanchthon refers his reader to Agricola's *Epistola ad Iacobum Barbarianum ad formando studio*.

The loci communes are not an arbitrary collection of maxims, they are key and general concepts belonging to different branches of knowledge. They serve the

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230 Ibid., 141.

231 Ibid., 144: "Sciendum est igitur, ita locos communes recte cognosci, si artes illae in quibus versantur, perfecte cognitae fuerint[...] Quare necesse est ad bene dicendum addere stadium omnium maximarum atrium, philosophiae, doctrinae religionis, iuris et historiarum."

purpose of argumentation and amplification. They are also concepts which provide argumentative force by means of their dependency on thorough familiarity with a field of knowledge. Melanchthon insists that picking out loci from a diversity of writings like picking flowers does not amount to an appropriate understanding of commonplaces and their functions. It is also apparent why Melanchthon treats them in his rhetoric textbook: they represent the central themes of human knowledge and the main sources of argumentation and eloquent speech. If we were to compare the loci communes to the material presented in the *Topics* of Aristotle, these would reflect the Aristotelian endoxa, and not the common topics of “more or less” or “from the whole and part”. In other words, the loci communes are rather specific topics, which are, in contrast to the dialectical loci, matter-dependent and applicable only to particular cases. As Aristotle writes in his *Rhetoric*:

Specific topics, on the other hand are derived from propositions which are peculiar to each species of genus of things; there are, for example propositions about physics, and the same holds good in all cases.<sup>232</sup>

In her detailed study on the rise and fall of printed commonplace books in the Renaissance, Ann Moss writes about Melanchthon's understanding of “commonplaces”:

For Melanchthon, commonplaces, now indistinguishable from general heads, ‘capita’ or ‘tituli’, are much more tightly related to the world of things, to systematic division, latent in the universe of the knowable. This claim to referentiality makes the commonplace book a serious undertaking, invests its compiler with moral responsibility, and makes of it, potentially, an organ of knowledge, as well as a stimulus to production.<sup>233</sup>

Melanchthon believes the loci communes are the concepts in which the essential topics of a discipline is condensed. That is why, he does indeed think that, while the arts depict, in a structured way the knowledge of the world, the loci communes do so, in a more compressed and systematic manner. However, I do not see how a direct structural referentiality to the natural world can be inferred from this view. In contrast, the common *loci*, which Aristotle treats even in his *Posterior Analytics*, as shown in the second chapter of this study, are those which Melanchthon turns into principles of the arts. Melanchthon is, as already pointed out, following the Boethian tradition, in which the maximae propositiones have been treated as “per se notae”. I will treat these “principles” or common topics in the next part of this chapter, since Melanchthon discusses them in the last edition of his dialectic: *Erotemata Dialectices*.

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232 *Rhet.*,1358a17–19.

233 Moss, 1996, 120–121.

Melanchthon's appraisal of rhetoric is a detailed and very specific one. He highlights that the systematic importance of rhetoric is inherent in the production of meaning and discursive representation of things. Rhetoric is crucial for the transmission of knowledge and it represents dialectic's counterpart in that it deals with the macro elements of speech: the arrangement of parts, the connections between them, the structure of broad argumentations, the stylistic exposition and the dependency on erudition. The interdependency of dialectic and rhetoric for appropriate speech is shown through the teaching of the *genus didaskalion* as the one underlying all other *genera causarum*. Thus, dialectic is part of rhetoric and at the same time underlying presuppositions for all other types of speech.

Dies ist die Lösung Melanchthons, die die enge Verwandtschaft zwischen Rhetorik und Dialektik auf solche Weise theoretisch in Betracht zieht, daß sie die Dialektik als ein rhetorisches *genus causarum*, d. h. als einen ‚Redeanlaß‘, als eine Art zu sprechen (die aber gleichzeitig für alle anderen Arten die Voraussetzung und Grundlage ist) in die Rhetorik holt. So ist die Dialektik ein Teil der Rhetorik, gleichzeitig ist aber die Dialektik die Voraussetzung und Grundlage der Rhetorik.<sup>234</sup>

### 3.8.3 Conclusion

Because of the great emphasis laid on the theory of invention, the *genus didaskalion*, the *loci communes*, and eloquence as necessary for appropriate speech, Melanchthon's late textbook on rhetoric can be seen as providing a set of techniques for the interpretation of text and for knowledge-transmission and organization, rather than a collection of techniques focused on textual production. The productive dimension of rhetoric is clearly put forth, but, in contrast to traditional rhetorical textbooks, it emphasises the theoretical implications of these rules and their universal application. Even in a highly detailed and differentiated manual like *Erotemata Dialectices*, which focuses on the theoretical dimension of argumentation, the rhetorical framework of the "method" is still apparent.

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234 Wels, 2001, 449.

### 3.9 Melanchthon's *Erotemata Dialectices*: Dialectica est ars artium, scientia scientiarum

Unless these various aspects of the Melanchthonian project of dialectic and rhetoric are taken into consideration, only a one-sided account can be given of his latest and most influential textbook on dialectic: the *Erotemata Dialectices*. Since a lot has been already written in detail about this particular edition<sup>235</sup>, I will insist on the parts that Melanchthon deems necessary to add to the already published editions and on the significant reinterpretations of traditional views that he undertakes.

The *Erotemata* reiterates all the already highlighted aspects of the dialectical art emphasized and scattered by Melanchthon throughout his previous textbooks: (1) clarity and proof, order and topic-neutrality, i. e. its general application throughout all fields of knowledge. (2) Method is, like it had been in all the previous editions of dialectic and rhetoric, a prominent concept of the Melanchthonian late textbook and (3) epistemological considerations, which had been more or less implicit in the previous editions are explicated here in an independent chapter. (4) The relationship to rhetoric, however, in what concerns the unity of their application on the level of discourse, appears to have taken an Agricolan turn, i. e. rhetoric seems to be reduced to the ornaments of speech and to the moving of an audience. These elements however need further consideration if my claim, that they can only be understood against the reconceptualizations undertook by Melanchthon in the previous books is to hold water.

*Quid est dialectica?* Melanchthon asks in the introduction of the work and gives a definition of dialectic congruent to what he had taught in his previous textbooks:

Dialectic is the art or way (*via*) of teaching in a right and ordered manner, what is accomplished by means of correct defining and dividing, by means of putting together true arguments and dissolving and refuting fallacious or false consequences.<sup>236</sup>

Melanchthon believes that man has been created for the sake of acknowledging God, for the sake of comprehending and exercising the virtues, for natural contemplation and for transmitting the teachings of all various things. Therefore, dialectic is essential. What is added to the teaching task of dialectic is the operation of reflecting, by means of dialectical procedure, on the primary "norms of certainty (*normas certitudinis*), called "*kriteria*". In the *De Dialectica* Melanchthon had written that all certainty in art derives by means of valid consequences

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235 Risse, 1964, 89–104; Frank, 1995 162–182; Frank, 1997; Kusakawa, 1995, 72–74; Kusakawa 1997; Kuropka, 2002, 31–39. Ong, 2004, 236–239; Ashworth, 2008, 641.

236 *Erotemata Dialectices* in CR 13, 513–752.

from certain principles (of the sort: the whole is greater than its parts) or from experience.<sup>237</sup> This view is elaborated in the *Erotemata*, in the chapter on the causes on certainty, localized at the beginning of the book on the topics. One could divide Melanchthon's definition of dialectic into three parts which are treated in the four books that constitute the: (1) *definire, dividere*; (2) *argumenta vere connectere seu falsa dissolvere* (3) *errantem deducere ad normas certitudinis*. The task of defining and dividing, and contributing to the method of inquiry into simple matters is treated in book one. Book two deals with propositions. Here a chapter on the levels of necessity of propositions is added. Book three deals with argument forms. Both the second and the third book can be seen as belonging to the dialectical operations of connecting and dissolving arguments. The last book is dedicated to the topics and treats of the method of complex matters; here demonstration is treated, as in the previous edition and a chapter is added on the causes or norms of certainty.

### 3.9.1 Dialectic and Arithmetic

Unlike the different editions, where dialectic was bound to rhetoric as the art of analyzing and generating discourse, in the first book Melanchthon likens dialectic with arithmetic: *Magna cognatio est dialectices and arithmetices*:

God has given to the intelligent nature the knowledge (*noticia*) of numbers so it can discern the things. [...] It is necessary to know that God is something different from the created substances themselves, that they are different from accidents and that God is different from the devil. After arithmetic had the things numbered, dialectic attributed to the different things different names and definitions, it searched for their parts, definitions, causes, effects, and others that came up. Afterwards, in reasoning, [dialectic] composed the harmonizing, and split up the divergent [parts].<sup>238</sup>

As in the previous editions, Melanchthon stresses the natural character of dialectic, grounding it in the natural light of reason. Arithmetic and dialectic are similar, because they share an operation of ordering: while arithmetic works with quantitative standards, dialectic works with conceptual and argumentative analysis and synthesis: defining, dividing, connecting and refuting. The concept

<sup>237</sup> *De Dial.*, 166–167.

<sup>238</sup> CR 13, 514: “Deus indidit naturae intelligenti noticias numerorum ut res discernat. Necesse est enim discrimina rerum aliqua agnosci nec omnia confundenda, et in unum chaos miscenda sunt. Necesse est scire, aliud esse Deum, aliud creaturas. Aliud substantias, aliud accidentia, aliud esse Deum, aliud hostem Dei diabolum. Postquam autem arithmetica numeravit res, accredit dialectica, et distinctis rebus nomina diversa et definitiones attribuit, quaerit membra, partes, causas, effectus et alia quae accedunt. Deinde in ratiocinanda componit cohaerentia, et distrahit diversa.”

of “boundary” or “delimitation” – *metas* – is frequently employed by Melanchthon in connection with the functions of dialectic. Dialectic delineates and orders matter, it does not invent it. He refers to Alexander of Aphrodisias in supporting this view.<sup>239</sup> Melanchthon also renders Petrus Hispanus's definition of dialectic as an art of all arts and science of all sciences, remarking immediately afterwards that he does not intend to distinguish science and art, but understands both to be body of doctrines made of useful precepts. Here, Melanchthon reiterates his belief that dialectic has a way to the principles of all methods, i. e. is able to provide the instruments for the inquiry into matters, notwithstanding their kind. His example is taken from the medical arts: the physician wants to say something about some affection or disease, and he will look for signs, causes, and effects, will define the symptoms and appearance of the disease, will divide its subordinated features and species and so on. And when the preacher has to speak about penitence, he will display its definitions, parts, causes and effects. This way, Melanchthon extends what in the *De Rhetorica* and *Compendiaria* was already defined as an appropriate method not only of reading and writing, but of reasoning in general, to a mechanism employed by anyone inquiring into some matter or event – be it mathematical, physical or theological. Thus, Melanchthon attributes to dialectic the function of leading inquiries, debating, preaching, teaching and interpreting. To a certain extent, some of these functions often overlap. Dialectic is at the same time a critical art, revealing the processes of reasoning generally employed in every human activity. It crosses the boundaries of artificial construct and extends into the epistemic realm, by determining its pupils to reflect on the origins of human knowledge. The disclosure of causes, parts, effects, attributes and so on leads to knowledge of the matter circumscribed, irrespective of its kind. Dialectic is depicted here as an art of reasoning analytically: starting with a matter and decomposing it into to all its at first not intuitive components. In discoursing about a matter at hand, be it a disease or a theological concept, the mind makes sense of it and searches for the manner in which it can be circumscribed and explained. Aristotle had endorsed this view but, by insisting, on the generalist feature of dialectic: dialectical problems were not tackled with the aim of acquiring truth and were focused mainly on what could be said about an issue, judging from both broadly accepted opinions and expertise, and following the habitual use of language. Melanchthon collapses dialectical and demonstrative reasoning in his *Erotemata* just as he had done in his previous editions, and stresses that the rules of dialectic are general and necessary reasoning norms. He thus presents the dialectical manner of knowing as the only possible way of knowing through art; the acquisition of knowledge has

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239 For a discussion on the influence of the Melanchthonian connection between mathematics and logic on Petrus Ramus's conception of dialectic see, Reiss, 2000, 54.

to be guaranteed by its techniques and be grounded on certainty. This certainty is inborn, and the language is referential. No metaphysical discovery of forms will guarantee the preservation of the former and the functionality of the latter. Only the topical-rhetorical techniques are securing the proper inquiry and disposition of knowledge. Melanchthon is no metaphysician, and, as Ricardo Pozzo has written:

method is not a theory of demonstration [which effects, by abstraction, a metaphysical *adaequatio entis*] but rather a part of rhetoric [...] it is rather the *ordo* following *inventio* and preceding *elocutio*.<sup>240</sup>

I will elaborate on his general assumption on the acquisition of true knowledge and their origins later in the present and in the following chapter. The originality of Melanchthonian thought lies within his reinterpretation of demonstration and deduction, to fit his plan of providing a rigorous yet flexible method with interpretatory, pedagogical and organizational function.

After having attributed to dialectic the function of describing cognitive processes, Melanchthon explains the difference between dialectic and rhetoric: while dialectic brings forth the entirety of things by means of appropriate and “naked” words, rhetoric adds splendor and the light of figures, especially when it comes to debates on moral affairs. Rhetoric exercises a mnemonic function and also influences the affections of the hearers. His example, again, is Cicero’s *Pro Milone*. A geometer, however, does not need the ornamentation of speech. The splendor of rhetoric is mixed with the rigor of dialectic in preaching because it can shed more light on the matter put forth. By means of the images created by rhetoric, the mind of the hearer is more inclined to grasp the words.

Melanchthon cites Plato’s view on dialectic as an art which makes the eyes of men see again: see the things by means of order, infer from signs to causes and discern that which is offered as a confused whole to the senses, connect arguments in an appropriate way and dissolve them if they are fallacious. The art is meant to habituate young students to the simple explanations of truth, not to the study of cavillations and trickeries. Dialectic acquires, through the Melanchthonian reinterpretation, an array of functions and a universal application: it is identified with the light of reason, it is employed in textual and non-textual inquiry as a means of making sense of the meaning beforehand and discovering the truth. Its general applicability reveals it as the art of thinking itself, with which light can be brought into any matter whatsoever. The pedagogical constraints determine the structuring of the dialectical parts and functions which is in accordance with the tasks of philosophical reading and writing at the University of Wittenberg. The introductory paragraphs indicate with a sufficient amount of

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240 Pozzo, 2002, 57.

certainty that Melanchthon's dialectic depicted not only the natural flow of discourse and its rules, but also, as he had claimed in the *Compendiaria*, on the natural "light" of the human intellect.

Melanchthon divides the parts of dialectic into the one dealing with simple questions – dedicated to definition and division – and the one tackling complex questions – dedicated to argumentation forms and inference rules. Predicables and predicates are listed: (1) predicables defined as general or common concepts which define the relations between other concepts; (2) predicates or categories described as the most universal classes of things, i.e. substance and accident. Summing it up, Melanchthon defines the predicables as names which discern the level of generality in categories: while predicaments are closer to the names of things, predicables are the distinctions between those names. Melanchthon refers to the rhetorical integration of the categories in the status, as displayed by Quintilian at the beginning of his third book of *De Institutio Oratoria*. The German humanist, however, chooses not to break up one thing in various categories (*non spargamus una rem in omnia praedicamentorum*), but attribute to one species a secure place in one of the predicaments, so that a definition can be drawn from it more easily. The usefulness of the categories is shown in the capacity to distinguish between things and construct appropriate definitions. All ten categories are given and shortly described. Melanchthon's focused thus changes in his *Erotemata* from a wealthy predication by means of the categories – understood as various perspectives – to a clear, differentiated and unambiguous definition of a thing. Predicables and categories are understood here to provide just the conceptual hierarchy that permits a rapid classification of things, according to their nature (substance and quality), and their position within the Porphyrian tree. That is why Melanchthon adds the Porphyrian tree and emphasizes its usefulness, especially for the differentiation between God and his creation. The latter is afterwards displayed in such a way that we can acknowledge the general distribution of substance. The definition of God given next is emphasized as one drawn with the power of human reason and which is to be completed by the teachings of Scripture:

God is incorporeal essence, intelligent, of immense power, wisdom and goodness, truthfulness, benevolent, righteous, pure, free, cause of the entire nature and order, cause of goodness in nature, claiming from the human kind harmonizing order of action and intellect and punishing the straying away from this order.<sup>241</sup>

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241 CR 13, 530: "Deus est essentia incorporea, intelligens, immesae potentiae, sapientiae et bonitatis, verax, bebefica, iusta, casta, liberiima, causa universae naturae et ordinis, ac boni in natura, requirens in genere humano ordinem actionum congruentem ad ordinem sua mente, et puniens huius ordinis violationem."

Clearly, Melanchthon is anxious to provide the boundaries for a human discourse on divine matters. At the same time, he wants to enforce the function of dialectic as a standard for clear and well-arranged discourse.

In the enumeration of categories, Melanchthon again situates habit under the category of quality and knowledge is again defined as a habit of the intellect. Melanchthon distinguishes knowledge of simple objects (as the remembrance of the emperor Carl the Great) from the knowledge of complex sentences to which we give or deny our assent. Afterwards he differentiates between certain and uncertain knowledge, the latter being called *opinio*. Certain knowledge (*certa noticia*) is identified with the knowledge of principles, inborn in the natural light and embraced by absolute assent, by means of natural judgment, without confirmation. Melanchthon's example is:  $4 \times 2 = 8$ . He adds: "The whole is greater than the parts", "every thing is and is not". Science (*scientia*) is constituted of true conclusions which, we assent to by means of demonstration like the conclusion: The sky is finite. Art is the knowledge of true actions/constructions, like architecture. Whereas Melanchthon differentiates here between art and science, following Aristotle, he refers afterwards to the passage quoted above from Quintilian and the Stoic definition of art given by Lucian. Melanchthon chooses to cite the Greek phrase, since, he believes, Quintilian fails to emphasise the most important aspect of an art: its usefulness. Thus, Melanchthon writes:

It means that the arts have been shown to man in a divine manner, because of the great usefulness that can be seen in arithmetic, architecture and many others. And in teaching we always choose the doctrine which proves useful to life and always reflect on the purpose to which the things we teach refer to.<sup>242</sup>

### 3.9.2 On method

At the end of book one, after having listed the predicables, categories, and after having distinguished between various manners of defining and dividing, Melanchthon adds a chapter entitled *De Methodo*. This explicit title of the chapter had determined Walter Ong to conclude that the *Erotemata* is the only work which explicitly tackled the notion of method.<sup>243</sup> But, as I have shown above (page

242 Ibid., 537: "Significat artes divinitus hominibus monstratas esse propter multas utilitates, quod in Arithmetica, Architectonica et multis aliis manifeste conspici potest. Et in discendo eligamus doctrinam vitae utilem, et saepe nobiscum cogitemus, ad quem finem ea quae discimus, referenda sunt."

243 Ong, 2004, 236; Kusakawa traces Melanchthon's interest in method back to the 1528 edition. See Kusakawa, 1997, 348. I have tried to show as clearly and coherently as possible that dialectical method had been the core subject of his language arts manuals ever since 1519.

190ff), his method was an already essential concept of the *De Rhetorica* and it is the same concept Melanchthon reinforces here. Here he writes:

Just as *methodos* once signified a right and expedient path, the Dialecticians have taken over that name in for the right order of their explanations: and here *methodos* signifies a right path or order of investigation or explanation, of simple questions or of propositions. The Greeks have defined method [...] as habit or a science, or art, making a way by means of certain reasoning, that means, as if finding and opening a way through almost impassible paths and covered in briars, through the confusion of things, and digging out the things which are appropriate to what has been put forth and bring them out in right order.

Melanchthon's focus rests on *order*: this is a leitmotif of his dialectic and it reinforces his view that ultimately, this is the purpose of dialectic: of arrangement and proper ordering (of concepts, sentences and arguments, as well as entire parts of discourses). He believes a certain disposition for order to be endemic to human reason. He attributes to dialectic, which has been identified above with the natural light and said to have sprung from common sense (in the *De Dialectica*), the task of following and developing this disposition. Thus, his method comprises the order of single assertions into arguments on the one side, and the structure of arguments within an extended discourse or specific field of knowledge on the other. Melanchthonian method is, as I have shown above, concerned with textual analysis, textual production and pedagogical disposition. It also extends to the structure of key concepts or themes to be handled under a specific art. In describing the Renaissance concept of method Gilbert had already remarked:

Thus, method is almost synonymous with art (as with the Greeks), but is distinguished from it by the fact that it facilitates or speeds up the mastery of the art.<sup>244</sup>

While this is a view inherited from the ancient schools of philosophy, Gilbert thinks that what differentiates the Renaissance interpretations from the ancient views is the Humanist emphasis on "speed and efficiency" concerning the application of the art. There is no doubt that Melanchthon's pedagogical project implicated the elaboration of an appropriate instrument of learning and teaching. And this aspect is especially emphasized in his late textbook. Indeed, what differentiates him from other interpretations of method, for example from such interpretations developed by Italian Philosophers like Jacopo Zabarella, is the function he attributes to method. Zabarella is looking for an instrument of knowledge production, and believes logic provides us with the principles needed to arrive at what is still unknown and thus, provide new knowledge.<sup>245</sup> Mel-

244 Gilbert, 1960, 66.

245 Ibid., 169–170; On a detailed presentation of Zabarella's understanding of "method" see also

anchthonian method is fundamentally topical, and effects, as such, a proliferation of arguments, or aspects of a thing, which transgress an inquiry into “essential attributes” and thus, also cuts across the difference between scientific and dialectic argumentation and disposition. It does not produce or reveal new knowledge, in the sense of “scientific discovery”, but, in a sense, neither did Zabarella’s logic or any other devised instrument which rested on the Aristotelian *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*. Neither did Aristotle devise them for that purpose.<sup>246</sup> Melanchthon merges the Aristotelian account of essential definition and rigorous disposition with his account on the topics, where numerous semantic connections and thus various features of subject matters are sought. To Melanchthon, the completion of the four questions of fact and cause is necessary and useful. (*Aristoteles in libro 2. Resolutionum posteriorum questiones recenset quatuor: An sit, Quid sit, Quod sit, Quare sit. Nos paucas addidimus: Quae sint rei partes, Quae sit rei species, Quae causae, Qui effectus, Quae diacentia, Quae cognata, Quae pugnantia*).<sup>247</sup> The examples given as answers for each of these questions are not taken only from classical works anymore. They mainly concern theological, natural philosophical or ethical problems. While in the previous edition the “*An sit*” question is mentioned in passing – as one whose answer is implicit, since debates start from an existing problem, even more so rhetorical discourses<sup>248</sup> – here Melanchthon treats it as an independent question:

*An sit* deals with those that are not perceived: whether God is, whether there are living spirits without the mass of the body. To this question we answer from experience, from affects or from signs[...].<sup>249</sup>

Two conclusions can be drawn from the manner in which Melanchthon structures and presents his first book on simple questions.

- (1) While treating the same subjects enumerated in his *Compendiaria dialectices* and the *De Dialectica Libri Quatuor*, Melanchthon defines dialectic as an art of teaching but also of thinking. He emphasizes the endemic discursiveness of thought and compares it to computation, rather than insisting on its rhetorical character. Also, while listing the categories and their usefulness, the rhetorical manner of employing them is taken heed of only to be compared with a more appropriate employment of the categories as instruments for finding the right definition. His focus lies much more on examples and

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Mikkeli, 1992, 85–92; and Schmidt-Biggemann, 1983, 68–80; For a comparison between Melanchthon’s and Zabarella’s understanding of *methodus* see Pozzo, 2002, 62–63.

246 Barnes, 1969; Gaukroger, 2007, 40–41; Gilbert, 1960, 170.

247 CR 13, 573–574.

248 As stated by Melanchthon in his *De Rhet.*, 16.

249 CR 13, 574: “*An sit quærit de iis, quæ non sunt in conspectu, ut: An sit Deus, an sint spiritus vivi sine mole corporum. Ad hanc questionem sumitur responsio ab experientia et ab affectibus seu signis [...]*”.

illustrations from philosophical works and from Scriptures, and his account of method is focused on an ordered investigation and the provision of clear explanations. Melanchthon seems to focus more on clarity and differentiation, rather than on disposition and style. However, I do not believe Melanchthon thinks that there is any discrepancy between these literary aspects.

- (2) Melanchthon's method of questions does not obscure its actual origin: while the questions do not concern solely textual material, and matters treated in ancient works, they are drawn from the theory of status and from the tradition of topical invention. While one can argue that at least some of the inquisitive questions correspond with the various types of definitions which Aristotle inquires into in his *Posterior Analytics*, I believe a more convincing interpretation would be that they are, as in the previous editions, counterparts of topical invention. This view is reinforced by Melanchthon in the fourth book on the topics. What is more, the claim made by Melanchthon in the *De Rhetorica*<sup>250</sup> that the method of questions is to be seen as pertaining to the method of Aristotelian demonstration, is restated here. While the theory of demonstration is discussed in the last books on the topics, the claim that the method developed by Melanchthon is supported by Aristotelian tenets is underscored by explicit reference to the beginning of the second book of *Posterior Analytics*. Thus demonstration is separated from method, but the emphasis on clarity and order remain attached to the concept of method. To its Aristotelian grounding, Melanchthon adds the Stoic definition of method or art as a "useful set or rules".<sup>251</sup> Melanchthon interprets the *Posterior Analytics* as a treatise first and foremost dealing with pedagogical exposition. As Lisa Jardine remarks: "Humanist dialecticians may have been more astute readers of the ancient logical text than their detractors are prepared to admit."<sup>252</sup>

### 3.9.3 On propositions

The book on propositions starts with the pedagogical principle that, having learned the simple parts, one must acquire the knowledge of composites: "Even though the doctrine of propositions is thin and childish, it is necessary for the

250 *De Rhet.*, 15–16.

251 On the Stoic concept of method and its influence as a philosophical term in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance see Gilbert, 1960.

252 Jardine, 1988, 182 n38.

development of the judgment of the children.”<sup>253</sup> Besides treating the types of propositions and the square of contraries, a chapter is dedicated on modalities, in which, in contrast to his previous editions, Melanchthon offers a lengthy explanation on degrees of necessities. Absolute necessity is attributed to the propositions concerning the essence and virtues of God. The second, weaker degree of necessity belongs to the definitions and demonstrations, because they are closest to the rules arisen out of divine mind. The third degree concerns the necessity of physical propositions, which, although they reflect the order of nature, can be changed by God. Lastly, the causal connections or consequences between mutable things is described as the weakest form of necessity.<sup>254</sup> After briefly defining possibility and impossibility, contingency is explained as an unnecessary event with possible effects. The sources of contingency and mutability, Melanchthon writes, are to be traced back to the freedom of divine will, freedom of will in the created rational beings, and the motion of the unsteady rush of the wandering matter of elements. (*vagabundi motus materiae elementaris varie ruentis*). Given these discussions on necessity, it comes as no surprise that Melanchthon feels the need to attach to the discussion of contingents the question of the divine foreknowledge. The latter is discussed in relation to the necessity of certain events and answered with a definite dismissal of the assumption that God would approve, much less cause the occurrences determined by human free will.<sup>255</sup> As for the problem of future contingents, Melanchthon is convinced that the truth of propositions on future contingents, which depend on the human will or on the elementary matter, agitated by indeterminate movements, is not settled by the human mind. Melanchthon is tackling, in his book on propositions, subjects which do not properly belong to the art of dialectic, and which are absent from Petrus Hispanus's logic textbook. Melanchthon's engagement with problems of divine, physical and logical necessity and his preoccupation with settling the question of God's foreknowledge is symptomatic of his holistic concept of philosophy, in which the boundaries between particular arts are fluid and their interrelatedness testifies to their relevance and usefulness. Also, this may indicate that Melanchthon attempts to clarify his stance on the *universal* nature of dialectic: that it should be considered

253 CR 13, 577: “Ac doctrina de propositionibus admodum tenuis et puerilis est, sed tamen ad formanda iudicia iuniorum necessaria.”

254 CR 13, 589–590: “Quartus gradus est mutabilium, quae tamen vocantur necessaria necessitate consequentiae, id est, quae sunt quidem re ipsa mutabilia, sed non mutantur, vel quia sic a Deo decreta sunt, vel quia sequuntur ex causis, quae non mutantur, cum tamen mutari potuissent, vel quia cum fiunt, contradictoriae simul verae esse non possunt. ut: Necessaria est resuscitatio est mortuorum, quia Deus edidit de ea decretum.”

255 CR 13, 592: “Quod vero Deus determinare contingentia dicitur [...]: Praevidet mala et metas constituit, ne ulterius ruant aut grassentur mali.”

as the extension of a natural ability which embraces, in a systematic fashion, all that comes up as matter of thought and speech.<sup>256</sup>

### 3.9.4 On Argument Forms

In the book on arguments, Melanchthon is anxious to provide the student with the instruments of connecting good consequences:

This part, which teaches the manner of connecting syllogisms and judging the connections, belongs to many arts and is to a greater extent *techologike* than the matter treated above and the one that is to follow. And it belongs to a diligence worthy of a skilled mind to consider why something coheres, that is, what the reason for the consequence is; therefore it is necessary to acquiesce the figures and modes of the connexions.<sup>257</sup>

Although the form of an argument is meant to be treated as a mechanism, the purpose of dialectic is not to teach modes and figures of syllogisms, so they can be received and exercised like magical incantations (*tamquam magicis incantationibus*), but to sharpen awareness for the principles of the connections and secure a more careful scrutiny of the things themselves. (*Hanc curam qui adhibebunt in ratiocinando, res ipsas etiam altius introspicient*). Argumentation, Melanchthon writes, is the speech, in which the conclusion receives confirmation or refutation from other, more known propositions, which contain the cause of the conclusion and are correctly adjusted to it. The argumentation consists of matter and form, similar to the materials of the artisan.

Matter is the collection of the things or of the propositions, which are the cause of the conclusion, of which you dispute, but the form, the order or the disposition and connection belongs to the single parts. And it is called a good consequence. We speak here not of the things but of the forms. The things are gathered in the various arts from their fountains. The preacher collects his matter from the Sacred Scriptures. The physician gathers it from the variety of temperaments, from changes, from remedies. And the dialectical places show the manner in which the matter is to be singled out, as we will say below. But this part puts forth and judges the disputation or connection of syllogisms, which is called form.<sup>258</sup>

256 In his introductory passage, (CR 13, 514) Melanchthon asks: "Circa quas res versatur Dialectica?" And answers: "Circa omnes materias, de quibus docendi sunt homines [...]".

257 CR 13, "Haec pars, quae syllogismos contexere et iudicare connexiones docet, plurimum artes habet, et magis est *technologike* quam pleraque superiora aut sequentia. Estque diligentia digna bonis ingeniis, considerare, cur quid cohaereat, id est, que sit ratio consequentiae, cur necesse sit assentiri harum figurarum et modorum connexionibus."

258 CR 13, 595 : "Materia est rerum seu propositionum cumulus, quae sunt causa eius conclusionis, de qua disputas; sed forma, ordo seu dispositio, et connexio est singularum partium. Et vocatur bona consequentia. Hic autem non de rebus seu de materia, sed de

A good consequence, Melanchthon continues, is that which does not breach any dialectical precept. In the light of the fragment cited above, a good consequence takes heed of both material and formal principles of inference, and thus, does not limit itself to being faithful to the rules of syllogistic validity. This is corroborated by Melanchthon's claim that a good consequence is to be achieved in all the four species or types of arguments: syllogisms, enthymemes, induction and examples. To which Sorites is added. (*Harum quinque specierum argumenta omnia cum ad regulas dialecticas congruunt, sunt bonae consequentiae*). The layout of an argument is thus, always dependent on the matter discussed.

The remainder of the chapter reflects a summary of a more or less traditional illustration of the figures and modes of the syllogism. A discussion on the usefulness of this doctrine is again added at the end of the treatment of syllogism and before the tackling of the other types of argument forms:

These who have learned correctly, see the boundaries, inside of which they can move while defining or arguing. Others stray away as it pleases them, and always say things that do not belong to the matters put forth and by no means do they bring together what belongs that way.<sup>259</sup>

As in the previous edition, Melanchthon concludes his third book with a chapter on consequences.

Melanchthon is convinced that a clearly taught and learned method of formal inference (syllogistic, enthymematic or inductive) can sharpen the mind to grasp the manners in which the things can be put in relations to one another and better understand their connection. He thinks that dialectic, just like all other arts, has been elaborated for the sake of certainty (*Dialectica certitudinis causa inquisita et constituta est*) and that, by uncovering its rules, one may uncover the "boundaries" (*metas*) of human understanding. The usefulness of dialectic is identified here with its officium of securing certainty and determining assent to certain propositions. The form or argument is identified with order or disposition. Melanchthon's implicit belief is that, once we order things, we can make out their connections, the ways they hang together and see them clearly and distinctly. This would determine the understanding of the origin of this order and of the primary truths. A properly disposed mind reflects clear and reasonable argumentation and can arrange all matters, which are under debate, ac-

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forma dicemus. Res sumuntur in singulis artibus ex suis fontibus. Concionatur sumit materiam ex libri divinitus traditis. Medicus sumit ex temperamentorum varietate, mutationibus, remediis. Et loci dialectici utcunque viam in electione rerum monstrant ut infra dicemus. Sed haec pars de syllogismis disputationem seu connexionem, quae vocatur forma, et efficit et iudicat."

259 CR 13, 616 : "Hi qui recte didicerunt, vident metas, intra quas tum in definiendo tum in argumentando versari oportet. Alii vagantur ut libet, et saepe aliena a proposito dicunt, et nequaquam cohaerentia contextunt."

cordingly. This is the use of the chapter on forms. As in his previous textbooks, Melanchthon is more interested in the arrangement and disposition of arguments (on a macroscopical level) than in the type of formal inference. His purpose is to provide the rules that would give the appropriate insight into the layout and presentation of the matter.

### 3.9.5 The seats of arguments: the loci

The last book on the *loci* contains not only the *loci rerum* and *personarum*, as the *Dialectica Libri Quatuor* does. Melanchthon adds a couple of short chapters, with the exposition of which I will conclude the lengthy analysis of Melanchthonian dialectic. First of all, he reemphasizes the fact that the *loci* are indicators for the inquiry and selection of matters; they do not invent, but rather aid in the extraction and selection of appropriate arguments.<sup>260</sup> This view is congruent with Melanchthon's general position towards the methodical function of the *loci*. He did indeed write that the *loci* "invent" the matter in the *Compendiaria*, but only to explain afterwards that they are signs which indicate the source from which the matter searched for is to be taken. They thereby implicitly perform a guiding function to aid the extraction of the right *thing* to say or write. The matter itself is not taught by means of dialectic, but, as Agricola has taught before, is taken from the other arts. Even if the *De Rhetorica* does not give an elaborate account of the *loci*, Melanchthon never argues that they are instruments of *invention* in the sense of *discovery*. He sees them as instruments of refuting and confirming arguments and refers his reader to the Aristotelian *Topics*.<sup>261</sup> Indeed, in the *Erotemata*, he is committed to a Ciceronian variant of topic-as-index in which the context of lively debate has been overshadowed. His adoption of Boethian maxims in his examples of the various topics also testifies to the fact that he does seek for general maxims which buttress the material inferences. Every locus comes with a rule, an example and a maxim: (*Regula, A specie ad genus tantum affirmative ducuntur argumenta, ut: Homo est, Igitur animal est. Valet consequentia, quia posita specie, nesesse est posi genus [...]*)<sup>262</sup>. If we look at the locus from example, we have a definition of the locus (*Exempla sunt facta similia, quae in aliqua specie congruunt, de quibus propter similitudem idem iudicatur*), the inference (*Theodosium recta fecit claudens templa idolorum, Ergo pii principes, qui idolorum cultus prohibent, recte faciunt*) and the maxim. (*Vale consequentia qui ratio similis est, nam utrunque factum congruit ad legem: Debent obedi-*

260 CR 13, 641.

261 *De Rhet.*, 45.

262 CR 13, 666.

*entiam primo praecepto omnes homines suo quisque loco*).<sup>263</sup> Melanchthon not only adduces rules of inference proper to topical argumentation, i. e. similitude, which, as I see it, is already a highly problematic concept, since it pertains rather to the organa of invention (as listed by Aristotle in the eight Book of his *Topica*), but also a rule that resembles common knowledge or *noticia*. His locus from etymology is set in a context of speech clarification: “so that you don’t stray a way from the thing you actually want to talk about.”<sup>264</sup> His locus from cognates is defined as that which facilitates the path from the better known concrete terms to the abstract ones and from the abstract to the concrete (*iustus/iusticia; calida/calor*). Melanchthon’s definition of *locus* is faithful too all of his previous accounts:

The dialectical place is the seat of an argument or an index, which shows from which fountain the argument is to be collected, through which the proposition is to be confirmed, which is in doubt.<sup>265</sup>

It becomes clear that Melanchthon turns all relevant perspectives on knowledge into loci, and thus transforms them into taxonomic devices. They represent concepts of categorization and organization of subject matters, irrespective of the field these matters belong to. The places of persons are listed here for their utility and for the sake of completion. As Melanchthon had stated before, they belong more to the rhetorician’s *genus demonstrativum*, and are mainly applied to works which deal with the lives of famous thinkers. Also, the doctrine of the *loci* of things, is, as in previous editions connected to the method of simple questions, with which it shares the main subjects of inquiry. The method of the *loci* is building on the method of questions and providing the means of confirming and confuting arguments (or the composite parts of the speech). The two methods are presented in their most systematic and coherent fashion in the *Erotemata* and unfold their potential for knowledge-disposition and systematization.

### 3.9.6 The sources of human certainty

The most interesting and intriguing part of Melanchthon’s textbooks is, as I see it, the chapter on syllogism and on demonstration which include the discussion on the causes of certainty and the question whether there are any demonstration in the arts. I have suggested that, apart from the discussion of syllogism as

263 CR 13, 706.

264 CR 13, 668: “Vicini loci sunt definitioni nomen rei Tymologia, et periphrasis non aberrans a re, de qua proprie dicitur.”

265 CR 13: “Locus dialecticus est sedes argumenti, seu index, monstrans ex quo fonte sumendum sit argumentum, quo confirmanda est propositio, de qua dubitas [...]”.

calculus, Melanchthon talks about syllogism using the broad Aristotelian meaning of the term which the Stagirite employs in the first book of the *Topica*. In the *Erotemata*, Melanchthon explains that he differentiates between syllogisms regarding their matter, not their form. This means that he distinguishes deductions which, regardless of their form, consist of “certain, probable or false matter”.<sup>266</sup> Demonstrative syllogisms are those arguments consisting of true and unchangeable matter like: “It is impossible that the infinite body has a circular motion, but the sky moves in a circular motion, thus, it is not infinite.”<sup>267</sup> A dialectical syllogism is constituted of probable matter. Many dialectical syllogisms are to be found, for example, in medical treatises. Melanchthon marks his examples with certain indicators of probability like “it is probable that”, “it is thought that”, “it is believed that”. However, this does not make the medical art less important or less relevant for the preservation of human life. The majority of the pieces of knowledge that man can gather in the field of the arts are dialectical. In his examples, Melanchthon reveals the medical knowledge he shares with the scholars of his day. A great part of it stems from the works on medical astrology:

It is believed that, when the moon comes into a sign of contrary nature, new humors become excited in the human body, which are different from the beginning of the disease; on the seventh day, the moon comes into the sign contrary to its nature, the movement of the humours is different, thus, this day is most critical.<sup>268</sup>

A sophistical argument is false but has the appearance of a true argument:

Nature strives, by means of the most appropriate and last appetite to its conservation, pleasure conserves the human nature and destroys virtue, thus pleasure is the purpose of man.<sup>269</sup>

Melanchthon believes that there are propositions which cannot be denied by the human mind (*certo verae* [propositiones] *sunt quibus cognitio mens assentiri cogitur*): which are either evidences, or determined through demonstrations, or caused by universal experience, or correct testimony. He thinks that although the human mind cannot hope to acknowledge and see through all things, and there are a lot of opinions which it collects which are ambiguous, God has invested man with evident knowledge: “Deus vult aliquas esse certas, et firmas et imotas notitias, vitae rectrices”.<sup>270</sup> God wanted man to acknowledge Him, to have the knowledge of figures and numbers as evident and illustre notions, and he wanted man to know the unchangeable laws of human conduct. These ways in which

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266 CR 13, 643.

267 Ibid.

268 Ibid., 644.

269 Ibid.

270 Ibid., 645.

certain knowledge is guaranteed, represent what Melanchthon calls the criteria of certainty throughout his oeuvre (*causae certitudinis in doctrinis*). I will summarize what Melanchthon has to say about the norms of certainty and show in a brief reference to Cicero's *Academica* and Diogenes *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* that Melanchthon's epistemology derives from the Stoical traditions.

In philosophy, and in the other arts, which man can judge about thanks to the light of his mind, there are three norms of certainty: universal experience, principles, that is, the notions which we are born with and the comprehension of the order in judging the consequences. These were called by the Stoics the *kriteria* of the teachings (*doctrinarum*).<sup>271</sup>

Experience, is, as has become clear, an important concept for Melanchthonian dialectic: it signifies common sense, which provides prudent judgment and useful knowledge. This concept is used frequently throughout his textbooks examined above. Here the example he gives is trivial but clarifying:

Universal experience is called that judgment which all men employ in the same manner when they deal with sense-perceptions: fire is warm.<sup>272</sup>

Principles are the common notions engraved in the human mind and disclosed by means of the natural light:

these are the notions by which we understand numbers, order, proportions, figures, and can argue from first propositions like: the whole is greater than its parts, the cause can not be posterior to its effect, God is the eternal mind, wise, just, pure wise, beneficial, the creator of the world, the preserver of the order of things and the punisher of crimes.<sup>273</sup>

To these, propositions on the rules of human conduct are added and called evident *sententiae* or *per se notae*.<sup>274</sup> The third criterion is the capacity of inference endemic to the human understanding:

God has given us this light, so that the mind can compose and connect those parts that fit together and divide those parts that do not belong together. And in this compositions and connections, a lot is found, which had not been observed before.<sup>275</sup>

271 CR 13, 647: "In philosophia et omnibus artibus, de quibus lux humani ingenii per sese iudicat, tres sunt normae certitudinis: Experientia universalis, Principia, id est, notitiae nobiscum nascentes, et ordinis intellectus in iudicanda consequential. Haec tria Stoici erudite contexuerunt, et nominarunt *kriteria* doctrinarum."

272 CR 13, 647: "Experientia universalis dicitur, cum de iis quae sensu percipiuntur, sani omnes eodem modo iudicant, ut ignem calidum esse[...]."

273 CR 13, 647: "[...] sunt hae notitiae, quibus intelligimus numeros, ordinem, proportiones, figuras, et conteximus ac iudicamus has primas propositiones: Totum est maius qualibet sua parte. Causa non est posterior effectu suo: Deus est mens eternal, sapiens, vera, iusta, casta, benefica, conditrix mundi, servans rerum ordinem et puniens scelera."

274 CR 13, 648.

275 Ibid.: "Ideo Deus addidit hanc lucem, ut mens componat, iungat convenientia, et distrahat

Here the syllogism is given as regulative instrument (*Deus monstravit ordinem et metas, quas in tali compositione servari necesse est. Hae metae vocantur syllogismi recte facti*<sup>276</sup>) and arithmetical syllogism is described as representative (*Una libra cerae valet drachm una, Hic sunt librae decem, Ergo decem drachmae erunt precium*).<sup>277</sup> In the case of the arithmetical syllogism, Melanchthon believes the proportions to be evident to the human mind, which validates the inference, and where the demonstration is also evident. Proportion is also enumerated under the dialectical places. It is, together with substance, cause, and number one of the most important loci. However, its importance stems not primarily from its evidence, but from its use (*in quotidiana vita sumtuum mentio et usitata et necessaria est*<sup>278</sup>) In other, non-arithmetical syllogisms,

Thus, the consequence is regarded as valid and unchanged in other syllogisms, from demonstrations which are not far fetched, but obvious and evident, which I have examined above, and of which we know that and whose certainty is strengthened in reasoning. Because, thus, the demonstrations of the figures are obvious and clear, it is commonly said that the order of the syllogism is also known by nature.<sup>279</sup>

Melanchthon's understanding of demonstration is one which emphasizes the characteristic of certainty and necessity independent of formal validity. Reasoning or syllogism is meant to strengthen the evidence. Of the above mentioned arithmetical syllogism, Melanchthon says it can be reformulated as a syllogism of the first figure. Since the order of the syllogism is intuitive, it depicts, in Melanchthon's view, a natural reasoning order. It is relevant to add here Melanchthon's understanding of demonstration, from his last book:

Demonstration is a syllogism, in which we extract, by means of a good inference, a necessary and immutable consequence; whether from inborn principles, or universal experience, or from a subsumed definition; whether we follow to show the appropriate effect from the proximate cause or we reason the other way around.<sup>280</sup>

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ea, quae non conveniunt. Et in ea collatione et compositione plura inveniat, antea nondum animadversa.”

276 CR 13, 649.

277 Ibid.

278 CR 13, 696.

279 CR 13, 649: “[...] ita, in caeteris syllogismis valere consequentiam, et immotam esse conspicitur ex demonstrationibus non procul accersitis, sed obviis et evidentibus, quas supra recensui, quarum evidentia sciamus munitam esse certitudinem in ratiocinando. Cum igitur demonstrationes figurarum sint obviae et illustres, usitate et ordinem in syllogismis natura notum esse.”

280 CR 13, 652: “Demonstratio est syllogismus, in quo aut ex principiis natura notis, aut universali experientia, aut ex definitione de subsumpto, bona consequentia, necessariam et immotam conclusionem extruimus, aut ex causis proximis effectus proprios sequi ostendimus, aut e contra procedimus.”

Here Melanchthon mentions the composition of geometrical arguments, which proceeds from known prior principles and the analytical regress, which starts with the posterior facts and goes back to the principles. I believe that this is given for completion sake, and Melanchthon is convinced that this is what Galen meant by resolution and composition. Their method he mentions – the Platonic method of definitions – is reduced by Melanchthon to a collection of rules and aphorisms strengthening the processes of argumentation. The Aristotelian account of demonstrative syllogism is given with the remark that it is to be understood both for the syllogisms following the synthetical method and the one following the analytical method. These two types of syllogisms had been distinguished in the Middle Ages as the “propter quid”- syllogism, which unveils the cause and the “quia”-syllogism”, which discloses the fact.<sup>281</sup> Without taking over the medieval terminology, Melanchthon believes both of these types of inference to be proper demonstrations. But whereas Aristotle defines the first principles of a scientific field those from which he believes the first demonstrative syllogisms to proceed, Melanchthon explains the first principles are common notions like: *The whole is bigger than its part*,  $2 \times 2 = 4$ . Melanchthon's principles are not the scientific principles depicted by Aristotle as belonging to a specific science, taken in separation from the other fields, extracted after a preliminary dialectical investigation. They are rather presented as “common notions”, which have been rendered by Boethius (as shown in the second chapter of this study) as “maximae propositiones” or even evident principles which acquire immediate assent from those whom they are presented to. To Melanchthon who is deeply influenced by the Boethian, Ciceronian and Stoical accounts, the common or natural notions or principles are propositions evident in themselves, pertaining to various fields and applied throughout the spectrum of the arts. Thus, while mathematical laws, essentially pertain to the field of mathematics, it is their evidence that makes them acquire the status of principle and not their field-dependency. Their law-like nature makes them essential components of human cognition which determine the manner in which knowledge is acquired. Thus, unlike Aristotle, Melanchthon firmly believes that the arts are to be studied interdisciplinarily, since most are only to be entirely understood if learned together, and that the first principles, though ascribable to different arts, are evident and “inborn”.

Melanchthon indeed distinguishes between speculative and practical principles: the speculative principles refer to logical, physical, and mathematical propositions which are evident in themselves (*natura notae*), and the practical refer to propositions which preside over human conduct, like the capacity of human nature to distinguish the good from the bad, which is given by God. From

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281 On the elaboration of the medieval Aristotelian notion of demonstration in the Renaissance see Keßler, 1997, 13–142.

these principles one can necessarily deduce what Melanchthon calls the natural laws: "leges naturae". The Melanchthonian account is, as it has probably become apparent, indebted to Stoic epistemology. It is also no accident that he chooses to deal with these epistemological issues in his dialectics, if he intends to take over the broad structure of the Stoic understanding of dialectic. In the following I will cite two passages which summarize the epistemological project of the Stoics and which Melanchthon had integrated in his own approach. At least the Ciceronian transmission was most certainly available to him.<sup>282</sup>

Stoic epistemology is believed to have risen in the context of a philosophical search for true knowledge which had constantly been taken into derision by another philosophical tradition: that of Academic Scepticism.<sup>283</sup> The Stoa had, of course, witnessed many transformations of philosophical doctrine and I have no intent at going into the (due to the scarce historical evidence) poorly documented developments of ancient Stoic philosophy. According to the fragments that have reached us today, the Stoics were preoccupied with the provision of standards or criteria of truth, which could once and for all refute the sceptical criticism. Diogenes Laertius writes in his seventh book on the *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*:

The standard of truth they declare to be the apprehending presentation i. e. that which comes from a real object – according to Chryssipus in the twelfth book of his *Physics* and to Antipater and Apollodorus. Boëthus, on the other hand, admits a plurality of standards, namely intelligence, sense-perception, appetency, and knowledge; while Chryssipus in the first book of his *Exposition of Doctrine* contradicts himself and declares that sensation and preconception are the only standards, preconception being a general notion which comes by the gift of nature (an innate conception of universals or general concepts). Again certain others of the older Stoics make Right Reason the standard; so also does Posidonius in his treatise *On the Standard*.<sup>284</sup>

Gideon Stienig has shown how the rather (sense-) perception-based epistemological account of the early Stoa, which has been similar to that of the Epicureans, has been reinterpreted by Cicero.<sup>285</sup> The Roman philosopher not only translated the *koinai ennoiai*, or preconceptions, as *notiones communes*, but also grounds them in a philosophical innatism. However, although Stienig is perfectly correct in underlying the influence of Cicero's reinterpretation, it is perhaps noteworthy to remark that the Stoics themselves already had invited to such an understanding of their doctrine. Cicero writes in his *Academica*:

282 Grafton writes that although Diogenes's doxographical and biographical collections were printed in their Greek form only in 1533, the Latin text was widely known, and went through seventeen editions between 1547 and 1500. See Grafton, 1990, 781.

283 Frede, 1999, 295.

284 *Lives*, VII, 54.

285 Stienig, 1999, 771–773.

The criterion of truth arose indeed from the senses, yet was not in the senses. The judge of things was, they held, the mind – they thought that it alone deserves credence, because it alone perceives that which is eternally simple and uniform and true to its own quality [...] Knowledge on the other hand they deemed to exist nowhere except in the notions and reasonings of the mind [...].<sup>286</sup>

At least in the case of justice and goodness, the Stoa seems to have admitted some naturally “infused” impressions.<sup>287</sup> Also, they admit right reason as a criterion for truth. So, while Melanchthon is definitely indebted to the Ciceronian interpretation in his understanding of the common notions, he was, as Dilthey had already pointed out<sup>288</sup>, familiar with the Stoic doctrine through Cicero and, as Eusterschulte suggested, Clement of Alexandria.<sup>289</sup> These notions, whatever their nature, provide the basis from which further truths are to be derived. Some of the Stoic views had been transmitted by Galen, and, as I have suggested above, Plutarch. I believe that a parallel can be drawn between the strictly epistemological elements of the Stoa – the cognitive impressions (*catalepsis*) and the *pracognita* (*prolepsis*) – to the universal experience and the inborn notions of Melanchthon. To these he adds the reasoning as mechanism (which, could have also been accepted by some of the Stoics as criteria<sup>290</sup>); Melanchthon's broad understanding of the main functions of dialectic is Stoical. This is illustrated by Diogenes as follows:

Dialectic, they said, is indispensable and is itself a virtue, embracing other particular virtues under it. Freedom from precipitancy is a knowledge when to give or withhold the mind's assent to impressions. By wariness they mean a strong presumption against what at the moment seems probable so as not to be taken in by it. Irrefutability is a strength in argument so as not to be brought over by it to the opposite side. Earnestness (or absence of frivolity) is a habit of referring presentations to right reason. Knowledge itself they define either as unerring apprehension or as a habit or state which in reception of presentation cannot be shaken by argument. Without the study of dialectic, they say, the wise man cannot guard himself in argument so as never to fall; for it enables him to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and to discriminate what is merely plausible and what is ambiguously expressed, and without it he cannot methodically put questions and give answers.<sup>291</sup>

286 *Acad.*, I, 30–31.

287 Frede makes a convincing point that the Stoics were actually regarded the rationalists of Antiquity in Frede, 2008, 321;

288 *Tusc.* III.1: “Sunt enim ingenii nostris semina innata virtutum.” Dilthey, 1986, 244.

289 Eusterschulte, 2012, 24–25.

290 *Acad.*, II.30: “For the mind itself, which is the source of the sensations and even is itself sensation, has a natural force which it directs to the things by which it is moved. [...] Hence the mind creates the senses and also creates the sciences as the second set of senses and strengthens the structure of philosophy itself to the point where it may produce virtue, the sole source of ordering the whole of life.” See Hankinson, 2002, 77.

291 *Lives*, VII.47.

Melanchthon's views are congruent with the ones cited above in at least three different respects: (1) his *Erotermata* understands dialectic as an art of teaching which provides the instruments of defining, dividing and arguing by means of true and valid arguments, thus providing the skill of distinguishing truth from falsehood. Also, against the conception of the Aristotelians (not against that of Aristotle himself), dialectic operates by question and answer. Therefore, the method of question and the *topoi* can be understood as belonging to a broadly understood art of dialectical reasoning. (2) His conception of knowledge as an evident notion, or as a natural notion is identical to that given by Cicero and Diogenes above. Melanchthon calls it a knowledge of principles, since he admits of probable knowledge, which in the Stoic view is not knowledge *per se* (*Noticia principiorum est, agnoscere principia, luce mentis nobiscum nata, et firmo assensu ea amplecti, sine confirmatione [...]*<sup>292</sup>). (3) Dialectic as an instrument of training the mind and of inculcating specific features of character (like prudence) is shared by Melanchthon in all of his dialectical and rhetorical works. We have seen in the encomium on eloquence above that dialectic was meant to install not only method but also train prudential judgment. But if Melanchthon did endorse Stoic philosophy, why does he write, in an interesting chapter on the most important philosophical sects (*Quae fuerunt praecipuae sectae Philosophorum?*):

The Stoics have a thorny and inextricable dialectic that connects a lot of things that are not really coherent, in a most inerudite way, and draw from false connections false opinions?<sup>293</sup>

I will give a short but clarifying answer to this question in the following conclusion.

### 3.10 Conclusion

Having now looked at all of the editions of Melanchthonian dialectic and rhetoric, it is time to draw some conclusions regarding the development of Melanchthon's understanding of dialectic. Dialectic is presented by Melanchthon in his rhetorico-dialectical manual from his Tübingen years as a sub-genre of rhetoric, in the sense that all other genres and all (reasoned) speech ultimately depend on a particular manner of laying out the things one has grasped. All other disciplines, and Melanchthon is probably referring to the liberal arts, depend on dialectic as their criterion: *omnes enim disciplinae ad demonstrativum ceu*

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292 CR 13, 536.

293 CR 13, 657.

*amussim exiguuntur*.<sup>294</sup> Here, dialectical method and demonstration fall under the *genus demonstrativum* taken from traditional rhetoric. The concept of demonstration, as given by Aristotle in his *Posterior Analytics*, is reinterpreted as the operation of reasoning back to the origins of a thing (*derivare fontibus rem aliquam*). The concept of method is explicitly employed here, notwithstanding the widespread view of the Melanchthon scholarship reviewed above. The method taught by means of the *genus demonstrativum* enables the methodical inquiry of the nature of a matter with the result of clarity (*thematē naturā eius universā, artificiosa et compediaria exigatur*) and copiousness of speech. This is the function of the method of questions. The method of the loci is developed in the context of textual interpretation where the way of extracting loci communes is also explained. Together, these methods represent the means of providing clarity and perspicuity in teaching, learning and debating. In the preface to his *De Rhetorica*, Melanchthon explains that he had written much of dialectic in a rhetoric textbook, because he wanted his readers to understand the necessity of a criterion for judging speeches (chains of argumentation, complex texts). This criterion is given by the argumentative coherence taught by means of the dialectic textbook. The *Compendiaria dialectices* treats dialectic as a subject separated from rhetoric and defines it as a natural reasoning capacity. It lists the dialectical *officia* as debating appropriately on any matter whatsoever, revealing the nature of a matter (*thematīs naturā*), and effecting clarity and certainty by means of its method of inquiry and order or argumentation. Most of the parts of dialectic are treated with a focus on their rhetorical applications. Also most of the concepts are reinterpreted in light of their rhetorical counterparts (the predicaments are compared with Quintilian's account of categories, Aristotle's questions of epistemic knowledge is reinterpreted against the background of the status theory, and syllogism as an argumentation form is subsumed under the techniques of argument invention: the representative example being the argument of Cicero's *Pro Milone*). The concepts of evidence, clarity, and distinctness are repeatedly used as describing the results of dialectical operations. Order is identified with syllogism, but the meaning of syllogism here, at least from the examples given, indicates nothing more than the ordinary steps of reasoning operations: in Toulminian terms: "the procedures and categories by using which claims-in-general can be argued for and settled."<sup>295</sup> I have, on occasion, used Stephen Toulmin's approach on argument-logic to describe Melanchthon's understanding of argument and discourse; since I believe that the criticism of the Humanists directed towards the complete reduction of arguments expressed in ordinary language to logical invariables, mirrors Toulmin's belief that

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294 *De Rhet.*, 14.

295 Toulmin, 2003, 7;

micro-arguments need to be looked at from time to time with one eye on the macro-arguments in which they figure: since the precise manner in which we phrase them and set them out, to mention only the least important thing, may be affected by the role they have to play in the larger context.<sup>296</sup>

This reflects the general attention given by Humanists to textual coherence in contrast to the scholastic's focus on argument validity and formal correctness.<sup>297</sup> I believe the Melanchthonian view on dialectic, which he shared with his fellow Humanists, was a view focused on the macro-arguments. But in contrast to his peers, Melanchthon wanted exhaustively to treat and explain in detail the patterns of both macro- and micro-argumentation, and, moreover, provide irrefutable validity for both operations. That this goes against the essential meaning of dialectic as topic-neutral argumentation on both sides is evident. But Melanchthon's focus is set on that project: of providing a secure method of teaching, reading, speaking and thinking, for university learning, applicable to all the fields of knowledge. This is why he sees the methodical questions, the loci or argumentation and their Boethian maxims, as well as the forms of arguments as constraints which guarantee that both the reading and the writings and teaching of a text is done "systematically" and appropriately. He insists on all dimensions of well-ordered speech, but instead of delimitating logical rules from rhetorical and literary precepts, he merges them, and grounds them on the inherent discursivity of human knowledge. It comes as no surprise that his short introduction into the book on rhetoric from 1521 starts with a chapter on invention and the two major dialectical parts or subjects: simple themes and complex themes and their strategies of analysis and composition. Attention to the argumentative structure of the discourse can provide a clear grasp of the cogency of reasoning. This is an important element notwithstanding the subject treated and the nature of the argument. However, a constant attention to the whole text is needed for the judgment of arguments to be of any use. To put it in Meerhoff's terms,

*disposition* is the uncovering of logical invention as a chain of arguments supporting one basic contention; it is, in fact, *invention* and *disposition* intertwined and considered from the point of view of textual coherence.<sup>298</sup>

Dialectic and rhetoric are treated complementarily, especially because the constituents of rhetorical method are the same ones as those for dialectical method: the *loci* of invention. Also, invention may provide a list of dialectical loci, but may also provide a list of rhetorical loci, the means of amplification, and even a skill for speaking eloquently. Melanchthon does not believe these aspects are actually

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296 *Ibid.*, 87.

297 Meerhoff, 1994, 50.

298 *Ibid.*, 55.

differently pursued and perceived, i. e. in every day speech. They are ordered and disposed by the same reasoning operations. This is what his encomium on eloquence argues for: the union of clarity, distinctness, evidence and eloquence, and, the ultimate goal of Humanism: the union of philosophy and eloquence. While strengthening the tie between clarity and eloquence, Melanchthon also needs to strengthen the tie between clarity and truth. This is, of course, the place where Melanchthon's view and the argument logic of the twentieth century go separate ways. Melanchthon had a regulative concept of truth, since he believed in a progressive approximation of the nature and order of things, inside of the boundaries of human reasoning capacities. His later editions of dialectic, the *De Dialectica Libri Quatuor* and the *Erotemata Dialectices* testify to Melanchthon's intensive engagement with a standard according to which he could establish a certain method of textual interpretation and argumentation. The influence of the Aristotelian debate on principles and demonstration, Galenic medical method, Stoic epistemology and Ciceronian pragmatism determined a philosophical melange from which Melanchthon's own *criteria of truth* developed. The usefulness of the dialectical art is married to immutable evidence in the *Erotemata* and provides the solid ground Melanchthon needs to guarantee both the rationality, reasonableness and the utility of his art. Since he writes nothing on metaphysics, Melanchthon has to disclose some assumptions which would play the part of the criteria of the processes he displayed as natural, simple and necessary. Melanchthon adopts essential insights, conceptual frameworks and habits from his authorities but is determined to mould them for his own purposes. He does not have any problems of dismissing Plato with regard to method, because he thinks Aristotle to be more straight-forward, or rejecting the stoical dialectic, primarily because he believes that it consists of sophistical arguments. Indeed, his late dialectic focuses on the components which make dialectic an appropriate criterion for all other arts: this is why the degree of strict order or arrangement, and the dependency of dialectic on other presuppositions is highlighted. In this respect, Melanchthon must be acknowledged as a staunch defender of a particular, very clearly organized educational policy. This policy relates directly to the theological framework, especially since theological erudition remains the peak of the university career in mid-sixteenth century Wittenberg. As a Reformer, Melanchthon is concerned with the provision of a solid ground for Scriptural interpretation. Günter Frank had shown in detail what the theologico-philosophical elements of Melanchthonian epistemology and anthropology are. To this I add the present analysis of the Melanchthonian view on dialectic and dialectical method. It discloses the conceptual heritage, the construction, development and purpose of Melanchthonian dialectic. Thus, while Melanchthon was a Humanist and a leading pedagogue of the Lutheran Reform, and while the assumptions and tenets, displayed in his philosophical textbooks

are influenced by his Humanist and Lutheran views, the conceptualization of his dialectical method emerges from a reinterpretation of material taken from ancient, early medieval and Humanist material belonging to the traditions of dialectic and rhetoric.

In his last work on dialectic, Melanchthon distinguishes rhetoric from dialectic, because the latter concerns the plain, "naked" disposition of the things by means of appropriate words, while the former adds to them ornamentation and paints the things with a copia of words and illuminates them with various figures of speech. Rhetoric is thought necessary for debates and discourses on civil and moral affairs, while the Geometer would seem ridiculous if he employed the splendor of stylistic figures. The advantage of dialectic is the clear method of proof, while rhetoric works with illuminating paintings (*illustres picturae*). In preaching, these created images shed light on the simple and bare precepts taught by Scriptures. Thus, while dialectic provides evidence, rhetoric provides a clear (illuminated) discourse. Melanchthon adds an epistemic ground for evidence in the *Erotemata*, which is missing in the first editions. Thereby, he does not abandon his conviction that rhetoric and dialectic are to be considered together, as complementary arts of discourse generation. His epistemological criteria are inserted in order to clarify and elaborate on the concepts of common sense and experience which he had used in previous editions to emphasise man's inborn capacity for knowledge. I argued that Melanchthon does not doubt the endemic discursiveness of human knowledge. His last textbook on Rhetoric, the *De Rhetorica Libri Duo*, written in 1531, which had not been revised by Melanchthon, even after his *Erotemata* was published (1547), testifies to the fact that he believed rhetoric to be necessary for the judgment, analysis and generation of discourse (in general).

Melanchthon did not change his view on the complementarity of dialectic and rhetoric. This is demonstrated by the treatment of these arts in his dialectic and rhetoric textbooks. Moreover, this can also be inferred from his definition of philosophy, his belief that the language arts (understood as complementary) provided the sole method for all branches of knowledge, and from his own method of structuring his textbooks on anthropology, natural philosophy and ethics. This structure will be the subject of the following chapter.

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#### 4. On method and discourse as the criteria of Melanchthonian humanist philosophy

At the beginning of the second chapter, I have introduced Melanchthon's early reform project, expressed in his inaugural speech in Wittenberg. I have shown that Melanchthon identifies philosophy with the liberal arts, to which he adds not only history and poetry, but also natural knowledge (which, in Melanchthon's view, as we will see, includes physics, medicine, botany, meteorology and astronomy) and moral philosophy (which includes ethics, law, politics and theological matters, insofar as they belonged to the natural laws impressed in the human mind). Because the trivium is seen as an instrument for interpreting both the human as well as the divine word and order and it constitutes the only ground of the proper understanding of all other fields, philosophy can be equated with an appropriate manner of reflecting on and dealing with various matters: either physical, psychological, moral or theological. To theology, philosophical method is only relevant to the extent that it helps to make sense of the message of the Gospel. Faith and its soteriological promise are out of the reach of philosophical interpretation and human action. However, there remains, as Frank has shown, an inherent tension between the optimistic Melanchthonian view on the possibility of knowledge-acquisition and truth-recognition and the Lutheran theological conviction, that human knowledge is immaterial for salvation. While philosophy cannot provide the insight into the divine plan of redemption, it strives to offer a meagre consolation of virtuous and ordered life on earth. Indeed, this view represents a departure from the claim that man's own actions are the product of sin.<sup>1</sup> I believe, Melanchthon was aware of this tension, which had determined, in his later theological writings, a weakening of this strong Lutheran tenet.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Batka, 2014.

2 Eusterschulte, 2012, 11–45; Bihlmaier, 2014, 114: "In his late works, the Lutheran Reformer is ready to acknowledge the individual's power of consent (*assensio*) in accepting or denying the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Philosophy, in her moral relevance, functions as a discipline and consolidation of the powers of the soul. These, in turn, may support the assent that man gives to the reception of the Holy Ghost. In principle at least, Melanchthon admits the

In the previous chapter, I argued that Melanchthon's project of the reform of the language arts consists in working out a dialectic and a rhetoric which focus on the usefulness and practice of ordinary speech and rely on rational procedures described as endemic to the human mind. It is a project that does not change throughout Melanchthon's career, except by extension of its parts and additions (epistemological considerations) to the operational parts of rhetoric and dialectic. We have also seen that the examples tend to become more diverse in the later editions of dialectic, including both literary (rhetorical, historical, poetical excerpts), theological and philosophical examples (citations and examples attributed to Aristotelian, Platonic, Stoic, Academic, Epicurean works), indicating dialectic's universal application. This chapter will show that the employment of the language arts spreads to all of the knowledge branches and grounds what Günter Frank has called the "universalwissenschaftliches" concept of philosophy.<sup>3</sup> As already mentioned in the final remarks of the previous chapter, I will explain how this concept is dependent on the reform of dialectic and rhetoric. Additionally, I will disclose the encyclopedic notion of philosophy of Philipp Melanchthon by also providing an interpretation of how all the parts of this philosophy hang together. This exposition reveals the Ciceronian ideal of the polymath which Melanchthon is reinforcing by attributing to him universal knowledge and the employment of this knowledge in the sphere of common affairs. It also reveals Melanchthon's conviction that the various fields of knowledge are connected on the one hand by a single method or order which extends to all of them and on the other hand by their usefulness for human life, which they can only exert if they are interpreted as interrelated. While the first is grounded on the fundamental rationality of the human mind and on man's capacity for elaborating their theoretical implications, the latter is attributed to man's prudential judgment and his artistic or scientific practice understood as a responsibility to be exerted in the public sphere. I believe that Melanchthon's reform of the language arts has a pragmatic and practical, yet rigorous approach to philosophy (one grounded on certain knowledge), for the sake of the improvement and spread of human knowledge and life. This view is consistent with a theological framework, in which this progress of knowledge and virtue is secured by God's providential care.

Thus, (1) I will look at Melanchthon's oration on philosophy, held in 1536 and present the Melanchthonian understanding of philosophy as an encyclopedic system of knowledge held together by method and practice (useful for civil life

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compatibility between a theology of justification and the free will of the human being. Eusterschulte's analysis represents a very strong objection to the views that depict Melanchthon as a stiff Lutheran and refuse his work any philosophical relevance on this ground."

3 Frank, 1995, 2012, 8.

and for the *Church*). Afterwards (2) I will consider the epistemological and cosmological assumptions included in Melanchthon's philosophical textbooks – *Liber de Anima*, *Initia Doctrinae Physicae*, *Ethicae Doctrinae Elementa* – and highlight the emphasis on the interrelatedness of knowledge fields and hence the relevance of the appropriate method of teaching.

## 4.1 De Philosophia

Between the publication of the last textbook on rhetoric, and the last edition of dialectic, Melanchthon writes an oration on philosophy which he presents while presiding, as Dean, over the promotion of Masters. This oration is written, similar to the encomium on eloquence, with the purpose of emphasizing the importance of philosophical learning for theology, or in Melanchthon's words, "for the Church" and for the state (*ad Rempublicam utilitas*). Thus, the oration begins with Melanchthon's explicit intention to show that: "[...] the Church has need of liberal education" and to "profess something about the merit and usefulness of the arts which philosophy professes".<sup>4</sup> The necessity of repeated emphasis of this usefulness arises, Melanchthon writes, due to the poor state (of obscurity and darkness) in which theology still dwells, which causes confusion, savageness and, worst of all, lack of faith among those who are confronted with "unlearned theology" (*inerudita theologia*).

Altogether the most prevalent in an Iliad of ills is ignorant theology. For it is a miscellaneous teaching, in which the great things are not explained clearly, things that should be separated are mingled together, and on the other hand, those that nature claims should be joined are pulled apart; often contradictory things are said, and things that are merely similar are seized in preference to those that are true and proper.<sup>5</sup>

By 1536 Melanchthon had not changed his mind on what the causes for the downfall of the understanding of theological doctrine had been. He had blamed the corruption of philosophy on the philosophers of the Middle Ages (Thomas, Scotus, Durandus), as shown at the beginning of the second chapter. Melanchthon believes them to have replaced the study of the ancients with an impudent method of commenting and philosophizing (*audax ista commentandi et philosophandi ratio*<sup>6</sup>). And this method had turned into the actual school philosophy,

<sup>4</sup> *De Phil.*, 126. CR 11, 279.

<sup>5</sup> CR 11, 280: "Primum enim omnino ilias malorum est inerudita Theologia. Est enim confusanea doctrina, in qua mangnae res non explucantur diserte, miscentur ea quae oportebat seiungi, rursus illa quae natura coniungi postulat, distrahuntur: saepe pugnantia dicuntur, vicina arripiuntur pro veriis ac propriis."

<sup>6</sup> CR 11, 17.

which Melanchthon traced back to the misinterpretation of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* as a metaphysical doctrine.<sup>7</sup> So, what Melanchthon is criticizing above is a lack of appropriate method or order of reasoning, which, he believes, had emerged from the misunderstanding of ancient works and the replacement of their study with systems which focused on metaphysical problems. These systems confuse, according to Melanchthon, the manner in which one reads and interprets philosophical works and afterwards speaks and teaches them. Also, they confuse thought in general so that the "sophistries" (*res argutiarum*) extend to the general understanding of things, and thus, to the manner in which the Scriptures are interpreted. However, Melanchthon claims, an appropriate dialectical method and a correct understanding of the laws of grammar (the reproach of Melanchthon towards the school theologians and metaphysicians goes so far as to imply a misuse of basic grammar tenets) is not sufficient for a clear and distinct understanding of obscure things (*ad recte et dilucide explicandas res intricatas*)<sup>8</sup>. What must be added is, as Melanchthon had already explained in his praise of eloquence, a vast and varied knowledge of things<sup>9</sup>. But method and knowledge acquisition cannot be separated in the process of learning and knowledge-transmission:

Furthermore, there are two things for the acquiring of which great and varied knowledge and long practice in many arts are necessary, namely method and style of discourse. For no one can become a master of method, unless he is well and rightly versed in philosophy – indeed in that one kind of philosophy which is alien to sophistry, searches for and discloses truth properly and by the right path. Those who are well versed in these studies and have obtained for themselves the habit of relating to method everything that they want to understand or teach to others, also know how to represent methods in religious discussions, how to clear up what is complicated, pull together what is scattered and shed light on what is obscure and ambiguous. Great and abundant knowledge is also needed for another purpose, namely for the shaping of discourse, as all know who have occupied themselves even slightly with literature. No less study is required to acquire this habit of shaping of method. It cannot be achieved by those who are not versed in most parts of philosophy. Those who have no practice in these, would obtain only the shadow of method even if they acquired dialectic.<sup>10</sup>

7 CR 11, 19: "Analytica posteriora, cum sint disponendi series, ac ut Simplicius Peritpateticus ait, canon ac amusus artificiosae disputationes inter Metaphysica nostri retulerunt, nempe quo rem per se non admodum difficilem ac mire utilem studiis honeste tractandiis, et difficilem et inutilem redderent."

8 CR 11, 280.

9 Ibid., "[...]opus est multiplici doctrina; multa enim assumenda sunt ex Physicis, multa ex Philosophia morali conferenda sunt ad doctrinam Christianam."

10 Ibid., 280–281: "Deinde dua res sunt, ad quas comparanda opus est magna et varia doctrina, et longa exercitacione in multis artibus, videlicet, methodus et forma orationis. Nemo enim fieri artifex methodi potest, nisi bene et rite assuefactus in Philosophia, et quidem in hoc uno genere Philosophiae, quod alienum est Sophistica, quod veritatem ordine et recta via inquirat

#### 4.1.1 Method and philosophy

I have cited this part of the oration extensively, since I believe it is important to clarify what Melanchthon takes the necessary conditions of philosophical knowledge to be: method and “form of the oration” (*forma orationis*), and how they are interrelated. I have said above that Melanchthon believes the knowledge of method is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for philosophical and theological understanding and interpretation. He adds the knowledge of things which is taken from philosophy and claims that a varied and great knowledge of philosophy provides a correct knowledge of method and, that this method is employed afterwards in interpreting further pieces of knowledge and, especially, parts of Christian doctrine. So, Melanchthon distinguished three main components of erudition (or what he believes to be *true philosophy*) above: (1) acquisition of method, (2) acquisition of the capacity to form an oration, (3) acquisition of a vast and varied philosophical knowledge. (3) represents the basis for (1) and (2). (1) is used in acquiring and clarifying more of (3), and (2) is used in presenting (3) after it has been structured by (1). Thus, Melanchthon reiterates the necessity of acquiring (dialectical) method, rhetorical method of disposition of discourses and ancient and contemporary knowledge. Method is here explained as a general instrument which can be applied to everything that is to be understood (i), to clarify (simplify, break down or analyze) what is complicated (ii), connect that what is scattered (gather into argumentations by means of inferences warranted by *loci*), and (iii) shed light on what is obscure and ambiguous (by means of definition, division, the question method and the method of disposition- when it comes to whole texts). I believe that Melanchthon formulates the description of method in such a way that this is facile to determine. The “form of method” is relevant for the shaping of discourse and this is in no way a mere detail for the understanding and speaking about different subjects. Those who are aware of the rules of method, as taught by dialectic, are nevertheless not yet on the right track, if they are not able to engage in lengthy discourse and appropriate presentation of subject matter. Melanchthon compares them with blind watchmen (*alaoskopoï*)<sup>11</sup>, which suggests their short-

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et patefacit. Qui in eo studio bene assuefacti, *hexin* sibi paraverunt, revocandi omnia ad methodum, quae intelligere aut tradere aliis cupiunt, hi norunt etiam in disputationibus religionis informare methodos, evolvere intricata, dissipata contrahere, obscuris et ambiguis addere lumen. Magna et copiosa doctrina ad alteram rem, scilicet, ad formandam oratione opus est, ut norunt omnes vel medicoritare versati in literis. Sed ut hanc *hexin* methodi informandae nobis comparemus, non minore studio opus est. Nec potest haec contingere iis, qui non assuefiunt in pluribus Philosophiae partibus, in quibus non exercentur, etiamsi attingerunt Dialecticam, tamen tantum umbram quandam methodi consequuntur.”

11 *De Phil.*, 129; CR 11, 281.

sightedness and their failure to talk eloquently. Rhetorical rules of composition and disposition, of style and ornament, are by no means mere decoration. Knowledge of method and knowledge of discourse generation are not provided by distinct approaches. The engagement with philosophy, and I take Melanchthon to mean the entire panoply of ancient and Humanist works, engender these habits. The distinction between dialectic and rhetoric is one which considers their purposes: the former seems to concern the dimension of evidence and proof on what I have called the “physiological” level of arguments and include epistemological presuppositions. The latter concerns discourse taken as a whole, which by considering the anatomical parts, also deals, albeit implicitly, with the minute parts dealt with by dialectical method. Because he is focused on the whole spectrum of ancient works and explicitly rejects manuals which consider technicalities or which comment on philosophical texts by tearing them into pieces, Melanchthon can easily refer to the method of ancient philosophers and orators and praise it as the true method of philosophy. This means that he attributes to these authors a similar care for argument and style, as he is anxious to endorse in his textbooks. As Vickers puts it, Melanchthon opposes the Scholastic “fragmentation” with Humanist “reintegration”.<sup>12</sup> In comparison to his oration on the usefulness of eloquence, Melanchthon insists here that philosophical knowledge integrates the literary knowledge which he sees as a presupposition for constructing a discourse in general.

#### 4.1.2 The cycle of arts

The boundaries between “literature” as identified with rhetorical, poetical and historical knowledge in Melanchthon’s oration on eloquence and the philosophical knowledge mentioned in his oration on philosophy are blurred: a variety of branches of knowledge are to be included under “philosophy”:

I do not believe that anyone is so foolish as not to notice that those who are versed in moral philosophy can practice more easily many parts of Christian doctrine. For if many things are similar concerning laws, political morals, contracts and many of life’s affairs, we are helped, not only by the order and method in philosophy, but also by understanding the things themselves carefully. If some things are dissimilar then comparison brings much light. Moreover, one who lacks knowledge of natural philosophy practices moral philosophy like a lame man holding a ball. Again, history and exact computation of time periods require mathematics, but that part also needs to be joined to natural philosophy, for from the former as from a source many things in natural philosophy take their origins. And it is a form of barbarity, to say nothing else, to

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<sup>12</sup> Vickers, 1988, 189.

spurn the most beautiful arts concerned with the motions of the constellations that bring about for us the distinctions between years and seasons, announce many great things that are to come and warn us in a useful way.<sup>13</sup>

From the enumeration of the mentioned arts, it becomes clear that Melanchthon's ideal theologian is not a metaphysician. He is theoretically and practically versed in the branches of knowledge which have concrete and direct bearing on the life of man: their usefulness seems to single them out as important. Besides being skilled in ordered reasoning and eloquent discoursing, the erudite philosopher has knowledge of all different fields, of which Melanchthon only enumerated a few in the fragment cited above. From his different textbooks on philosophical disciplines, it will become apparent that Melanchthon conceives many fields and subfields of natural knowledge as interdependent and pertaining to physics. Thus, in addition to natural and mathematical knowledge, both moral and civil matters which are taught by moral philosophy, and also "literature" in the sense enunciated above, must be known by those who want to acquire a better understanding of theology. Melanchthon believes there is what he calls a "cycle of arts" (*orbis quidam artium*) by which they are bound together and interconnected so that in order to grasp individual ones, many of the others have to be taken on.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the theologian and the philosopher both need to master the entire cycle of arts. Still, Melanchthon is anxious to reject the implication that theological and philosophical knowledge depict similar teachings, and warns his hearers about the inappropriateness of mixing them. I understand this to be a warning against the assumption that theological knowledge can be acquired by means of those rational operations enumerated above and employed in the interpretation and disposition of philosophical knowledge. However, since the purpose of the oration is to demonstrate the usefulness of philosophy, Melanchthon has to explain the relation between philosophical and theological knowledge. "I want to help the theologian in the management of method" (*adiuvare Theologo volo in oaecononima methodi*), Melanchthon writes: "For he

13 CR 11, 281: "Non opinor quenquam adeo insulsum esse, ut non animadvertat, eos qui instructi sunt Philosophia morali, multas partes doctrinae Christianae foelicius tractare posse. Nam cum multa sint similia, de legibus, deque politicis moribus, contractibus, et multis vitae officii, adiuvamur, non solum ordine ac methodo in Philosophia, sed etiam rebus ipsis diligenter perceptis; et si qua sunt dissimilia, multum lucis adfert collatio. Porro ut claudus pilam tenet, ita Philosophiam moralem tractat is, quem Physicam destituunt. Iam historiae, temporum exacta supputatio, requirunt Mathematicen. Sed et haec pars cum Physicis coniungenda est. Inde enim velut ex fonte pleraque in Physicis oriuntur. Es barbaries quaedam est, ut nihil aliud dicam, contemnere illas pulcherrimas artes, de motibus syderum, quae nobis annos et temporum discrimina conficiunt, et multas res maximas venturas denunciant, nosque utiliter monent."

14 "[...] est orbis quidam artium, quod inter se devinctae copulataque sunt omnes, ut ad singulas percipiendas, multa ex aliis assumi oporteat[...]."

will need to borrow many things from philosophy” (*Multa etiam mutuari eum ex Philosophia necesse erit*<sup>15</sup>). On the one side, Melanchthon is trying to hold philosophy and theology apart, in the sense that he sees necessary limits to philosophy’s capacity to permeate theological tenets. On the other side, Melanchthon is aware that the only instruments capable of dealing with the word of God in its transmitted form are those endemic to human reasoning: dialectic and rhetoric. Since, however, dialectic and rhetoric are always seizable in the actual process of arguing and discoursing, there is no use for them as mere collection of rules, nor do they teach anything in this form: they are dependent on philosophy (understood as the sum of knowledge objects and branches) just as meaningful language is dependent on the reality to which it refers. That is why, although philosophy cannot grasp God’s will in its entirety without the help of the Holy Ghost, it helps to interpret that which is in the reach of human reason. Albeit, in such a manner that the usefulness of all arts is valued in the light of an order which is imposed on them by the human mind. This order, if practiced correctly, claims to be appropriate in that it neither falls short of philosophical erudition, nor strays beyond the boundaries of ordered speech. Melanchthon obviously rejects any limitation of metabasis, which has been attributed to the Aristotelian understanding of sciences and arts. Aristotle had postulated that each science has its own principles, genus and object of study and thus, did not allow cross-disciplinary proof (*Post. An. 75a38*). Melanchthon endorses an integrating concept of philosophy which connects theoretical and prudential knowledge with a pragmatic view on logic. Nevertheless, in the remainder of his oration, Aristotle is singled out from the ancient philosophical tradition as being closest to developing a philosophy “devoid of sophistries and preserving true method.” A “simple philosophy” which has the “inclination not to assert anything without demonstration.”<sup>16</sup> Melanchthon does not present Aristotle as an authority here. As I have shown in the previous chapter, Melanchthon’s preference of Aristotle rests on a reinterpretation of Aristotelian dialectic and concept of “demonstration” and disposition which is mingled with other philosophical traditions. Melanchthon is not claiming to be a careful exeget of Aristotle. Rather, he reinterprets the Aristotelian notion of dialectic and apodictic reasoning. However intensively it has preoccupied Aristotle commentators<sup>17</sup>, the notion validates, in

15 *De Phil.*, 130; CR 11, 282.

16 CR 11, 282: “Ideo dixi unum quoddam Philosophiae genus eligendum esse, quod quam nimum habeat Sophisticas, et iustam methodum retineat.[...] At haec simplex Philosophia, de qua dico, primum hoc studium habet, ne quid affirmet sine demonstratione[...].”

17 Jonathan Barnes sums it up in the abstract of his paper on Aristotelian demonstrations: “The method which Aristotle follows in his scientific and philosophical treatises and the method which he prescribes for scientific and philosophical activity in the *Posterior Analytics* seem

its Humanist reinterpretation, Melanchthon's own method of structuring his philosophical textbooks. The diligence with which Aristotle had reflected on different forms of reasoning, had developed a collection of formal instruments for inference and had tackled various subjects of philosophical relevance had prompted an entire Aristotelian tradition starting with the twelfth century Renaissance. It is not surprising that for Melanchthon, who is looking for a way to provide his method of teaching, debating and interpreting (which was essentially a reinterpretation of rhetorico-dialectical doctrine) and his method of knowledge-organization with evidence and rigor, resorts to Aristotelian tenets. However, as I have shown in the previous chapter, this means that by claiming to achieve a philosophical (certain and appropriate) elaboration of method and of different subject matters, Melanchthon only takes from Aristotle the aspects which fit his program: on the one hand the claim of developing a rigorous method of argumentation, and on the other hand the appropriate application of this method in structuring his own philosophical textbooks. Thus, all the other philosophical schools which support these views, are freely integrated in the Melanchthonian argumentation. Moreover, Melanchthon himself, although criticizing the exaggerations of the other sects, writes that one can now and then add something from other authors as well (*interdum ab aliis autoribus sumere aliquid potest*<sup>18</sup>). Melanchthon is convinced that caution and care in the acquisition of philosophy have a direct impact on the character of the philosopher and induce the character trait of modesty.

#### 4.1.3 For the sake of the Church and of civil order

At the end of his oration he insists again on the great importance of studies which are acquired for the sake of the state and the Church and ends by reiterating his belief in divine providence. He endorses the Stoical assumption that everything belongs to God and that the philosophers are God's friends, and as such, they are cared for and bear a direct and essential duty towards God.<sup>19</sup> The utility of the arts for the two fundamental institutions of human cohabitation – the state and the Church – is emphasized by Melanchthon and resembles the Ciceronian understanding of philosophy as the knowledge of things human and divine. In Mel-

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not to coincide. The task of explaining this apparent inconsistency is recognized as a classical problem of Aristotelian exegesis." Barnes, 1969, 123.

18 CR 11, 283.

19 CR 11, 284: "Recte hoc Stoici, Omnia esse Dei; quare omnia etiam sunt Philosophorum. Itaque ingenti animo haec studia literarum et defendamus, et in hac statione divinitus collocatos nos esse iudicemus, eamque ob causam et maiore cura facimus officium, et nostri laboris praemia a Deo expectemus."

anchthon's view, philosophy extends only to the first, while the latter, having borrowed the knowledge and method of philosophy cannot be entirely understood thereby. The emphasis on usefulness of erudition and its important role in training the character has been endorsed to different extents by all the philosophical schools. Learning and transmitting knowledge engender both knowledge and prudence. This Melanchthonian conviction discloses what Günter Frank has called a sapiential view on philosophy.<sup>20</sup>

Melanchthon provides a theological framework for his philosophical works. In an attempt to prove the usefulness of philosophy he defines theology as the ultimate goal of philosophy. The practice of the arts, their order, their usefulness, demonstrate a degree of intelligibility which, while it emerges from the human mind, is guaranteed by a transcendent principle, the divine mind. This mind, which is most worthy of being contemplated, is the source and guarantor of both human knowledge and salvation. However, the human mind left to itself can only aspire to reflect on the divine by means of the former (rational knowledge). The knowledge which concerns salvation is reserved for those whom God has elected. This view is elaborated by Melanchthon in his other philosophical textbooks on psychology, ethics and natural philosophy. All of these works include a part in which Melanchthon highlights the epistemological origins of the human arts and their theological foundation. A brief look into these works can provide a better understanding of the role of this epistemology for Melanchthon's understanding of philosophy. It reveals the importance of the interrelatedness of the various philosophical branches and of the epistemological and logical ties that hold them together.

## 4.2 Liber de Anima: The book on body and mind

Melanchthon's encyclopedic or universal understanding of philosophy is prominently demonstrated by his *Liber de anima*, a textbook which aims at reinterpreting the Aristotelian commentaries on the soul both on theological and on philosophical grounds. *Liber de Anima* is the final version of an endeavour to clarify both the natural-philosophical amplitude of a science of the human soul and its epistemological kernel, which had materialized as early as 1540 with the *Commentarius de Anima*. It emerges, just like his natural-philosophical textbook, *Initia Doctrinae Physicae* from Melanchthon's engagement with various philosophical topics and his lectures held on these topics in the 1530s and 1540s at the Leucorea in Wittenberg. In comparison to other medieval and Renaissance commentaries or interpretations of Aristotle's *De Anima*, Melanchthon presents

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20 Frank, 2012, 59.

his own collection of precepts and theories on the human body and soul. As he had done in his language arts program, he integrates in his *Liber de Anima* various philosophical doctrines and theological presuppositions. The most striking feature of Melanchthon's textbook is, probably, the first part of the work, which is dedicated to the anatomy of the body, the functions of the bodily organs and their relevance in disclosing the operation of the human soul. Here Melanchthon combines Galenic medical doctrines with Hippocratic precepts, Aristotelian philosophy and the newly published anatomical discoveries of Andreas Vesalius. After the part on morphology and physiology, Melanchthon introduces a chapter on the Galenic theory of humors and the doctrine of the spirits, which, by the time Melanchthon was publishing his *De Anima*, represented commonplace knowledge among Renaissance philosophers and physicians.<sup>21</sup> What is interesting about Melanchthon's own interpretation of the spiritus-theory is the manner in which the spirits (a vapor emerging from the blood, inflamed by the heart, which provides motion to the bodily parts<sup>22</sup>, mediator between the outer and inner senses) become the principal vehicle of the reception of the Holy Ghost.<sup>23</sup> The second part is dedicated to the faculties of the soul. In contrast to Aristotle, Melanchthon redefines the nature of the rational soul as immortal and uses Platonic, NeoPlatonic, Stoic and Ciceronian terminology to do so. He dedicates a separate chapter to the rational and the volitive parts of the soul. In his discussion on the rational soul, which I will consider more closely, Melanchthon inserts the epistemological considerations given above in the *Erotemata*. He gives a more extensive discussion of the origin of natural light and the natural notions and their status as primary signs of the existence and wisdom of God. Also, he explains to what extent they represent the seeds of human knowledge and the medium of cognition itself. This part of Melanchthonian philosophy has been reconstructed in great detail by Günter Frank and its philosophical inheritance has been traced back to a Platonic-Neoplatonic interpretation of the soul, mediated by Ciceronian views<sup>24</sup>. I will thus only focus on explaining how the Melanchthonian view of the rational soul delineates and explains the operations of the intellect and, among them, the development of dialectical reasoning. The last chapters of *Liber de Anima* concern the freedom of the will, the human being as made in the image and likeness of God and the immortality of the soul.

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21 For theories of anatomy in the Renaissance and their dependency on the humoral and spiritus interpretation of physiology, see Cunningham, 1997.

22 CR 13, 88: "Spiritus est subtilis vapor ex sanguine coctus, virtute cordis, ac incensus, ut si velut flammula, quae in diversis membris disimiles habet actiones."

23 Helm, 1998, 234–237.

24 Frank, 1995, 117.

## 4.2.1 The treatise on the soul: an anthropology

I believe it is important to emphasize the diversity of the integrated philosophical traditions and the diversity of the topics treated in a book which is allegedly dealing with the faculties and functions of the human soul. This comprehensive approach has determined Günter Frank to consider Melanchthon's textbook an anthropological inquiry.<sup>25</sup> Melanchthon deems it necessary to gather ancient as well as contemporary knowledge on the anatomical structure of the human body and the functions of the bodily organs and parts. He also thinks it is relevant to offer both a coherent explanation of the interaction of the soul and body (by means of the theory of spirits and inner senses) and, at the same time, reserve a separate realm of functions to the intellectual operations, which, exist independently of the human body. This endeavor attests to his intent of giving a thorough and coherent account of the human being, especially since, Melanchthon adds theological tenets concerning the rehabilitation of the human being to his exposition. By giving a quasi-naturalistic explanation of the effect of the Holy Ghost on the human spirits and heart<sup>26</sup>, Melanchthon connects theological views with natural philosophical explanations, demonstrating what he had claimed in his oration on philosophy: that theology borrows a lot from the arts, besides the method of dialectic. By explaining the effect of the Holy Ghost in physical and medical terms he puts forth his conviction that understanding of things is achieved by learning and practicing the arts in a correct and orderly fashion. The origins of order and artistic practice is to be traced down to the rational intellect. In the chapter entitled *De potentia rationali seu Mente* Melanchthon distinguishes between the two parts of the mind: intellect and will, or the powers of cognition and desire, which are connected to the body by means of the inner senses and the heart respectively (*Noticia igitur Iulii est in cerebro. Sed benevolentia et odium sunt in corde*<sup>27</sup>). The cognitive power possesses the true notions of God and the law, Melanchthon writes. What strays away from God's will is, however the heart of man.<sup>28</sup> Melanchthon deplors this incongruity between the two parts of the rational soul, insisting that, in the face of this "infirmity" (*humanae infirmitatis*), man can still, by means of reflecting on the notion of law he ascertains as evident, turn towards the divine Creator. He can come up with a means of disciplining his emotions and fight against his weakness:

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25 Frank, 1996, 313.

26 Pickering 1985, 289–90.

27 CR 13, 139.

28 CR 13, 142: "In potentia cognoscente noticia legis nobiscum nascitur, sicut numerorum intellectus. At in voluntate et corde contumacia est."

But let us recognize and deplore our weakness, because the will and the heart rush into foul sins, even against the better judgment of the cognitive power, as Medea says: 'I see the better things and I approve, but I follow the worse.'<sup>29</sup>

Melanchthon thus believes that the postlapsarian state of man had committed him to unfortunate disobedience of the will against God and that the fault is attributed to the weakness of the human will. However, as the German Humanist and Reformer writes in his oration on philosophy, he has hope that the acquisition of ordered knowledge can influence and form the character, i. e. settle the passions and affects, maybe also altering the human will. As I have mentioned<sup>30</sup>, Anne Eusterschulte has shown that in his later theological writings, Melanchthon indeed imagines the possibility that man could train his will in order to prepare himself for the reception of grace.

#### 4.2.2 On the intellectual capacity, or mind

In the following, I will concentrate on Melanchthon's definition of the intellect, its powers, actions, objects and its inborn notions.

Intellect is the power that recognizes, records, judges and makes rational arguments about individual and universal things according to innate notions born in us, or about the principles of the great arts, having self-reflection by which it discerns and judges its own actions and is able to correct errors.<sup>31</sup>

The difference between man and beast consists in the capacity to apprehend *universals*, the presence of inborn notions in the intellect (from this Melanchthon concludes cattle would be incapable of counting) and the capacity to reflect on thoughts and actions. Melanchthon's description of the powers of intellect is limited to the assessment of the operations which he believes are accessible to everyone, at any time. He does not inquire into the nature of the processes of intellect and their relation to the sensorial data, nor does he discuss more than the most evident and trivial presuppositions of these operations or of their results. Among the actions of the intellect Melanchthon counts apprehension of simple things, connecting and dividing and discoursing. He then further differentiates these operations (into: recognition of simple things, counting, con-

29 CR 13: "Sed hic agnoscamus et deploremus infirmitatem nostram, quod etiam contra iudicium in potentia cognoscente, ruunt voluntas et cor in tetra seclera, ut inquit Medea. Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor."

30 See chapter 4, note 2.

31 CR 13, 142: "Est potentia cognoscens, recordans, iudicans et racionans singularia et universalia, habens insitas quasdam noticias nobiscum nascentes, seu principia magnarum artium, habens et actum reflexu, quo suas actiones cernit et iudicat, et errata emendare potest."

necting and dividing, reasoning, memory, and judgment which recognizes true propositions and coherent consequences thanks to the norms of certainty, or the criteria.<sup>32</sup>). To this Melanchthon adds his view that the intellect can apprehend both universal as well as individual things and rejects the assumption that intellectual cognition extends only to universals. Melanchthon believes that the capacity to count is indicative of the fact that man can apprehend and judge individuals, since, in counting, he can progress from individuals to the many (*propriissima est huius summae potentiae intelligentis, non sensus, progreditur autem numeratio ab unitate et singulari et multa*<sup>33</sup>). Melanchthon endorses the view that the operation of counting (to which the dialectical operations of defining, ordering and judging are added) is independent from sense-perception. He takes this operation to be a demonstration of the fact that the intellect, and not the senses, can apprehend individuals. It is necessary for the mind to be able to discern individual things. It is not clear what kind of an ontology and semiotic Melanchthon tries to argue for in this passage. His example: “the human mind is designed to recognize one God, as the divine law says: ‘Love the Lord your God. Likewise love your neighbor’” is highly problematic, since it implies a knowledge of an individual being with attributes which are not in the reach of philosophy to define. Also, Melanchthon’s conviction that counting is an operation that belongs exclusively to the intellect stems from his theory of natural or inborn notions:

It is an old dispute between the Aristotelians and the Platonists whether certain notions are inborn in our minds. But it is simpler and more correct to maintain the view that some notions in the human mind are innate with us – such as numbers, recognition of order and proportion, and the understanding of the logical conclusion of a syllogism. Other examples are the principles of geometry, physics and ethics. I also embrace this view because when Paul discusses notions, he expressly says that the law is written in human hearts [Rom. 2:15]. Thus, just as there is light in the eyes by which vision takes places, so in the mind there is a certain light by which we count, recognize the principles of the arts and discern integrity from depravity. It is rightly said that this light is the notions sprinkled in our minds by divine influence, and we realize what kind of light it is when we grasp God as its archetype.<sup>34</sup>

32 Ibid., “His verbis usitate numerantur tres actiones: simplicium apprehensio, compositio et divisio, ac discursus. Si cui hae adpellationes videntur obscurae, numeret hoc modo: Simplicium cognitio. Numeratio. Compositio et divisio. Ratiocinatio. Memoria et Iudicium, quo et iuxta communes normas, quae adpellantur *κρίτηρια*, agnoscuntur verae propositiones, et consequentiae recte cohaerentes, et falsae propositiones et non cohaerentia membra reiciuntur.”

33 CR 13, 142–143.

34 CR 13, 143: “Vetus contentio est inter Aristotelicos et Platonicos, an sit aliqua in mentibus notitiae nobiscum natae? Se simplicius et rectius est retinere hanc sententiam, esse aliquas notitias in mente humana, quae nobiscum natae sunt, ut sunt numeros, ordinis et proportionem agnitionem, intellectum consequentiae in syllogismo. Item principia geometrica,

In the light of the above explanation of the origin of the capacity of counting (the inborn notion of number) and apprehending proportions, as well as inculcating order, it would be misleading to try to give an interpretation of the Melanchthonian account of intellectual processes, based on possible ontological assumptions or a purely speculative theory of signs. The explanation given above by Melanchthon might appear to present an uncritical stance, in the sense that it does not sort out the connections between various levels of reflection on the operations enumerated above. But such suppositions tend to miss the point of the Melanchthonian project, which is not one of mathematical philosophy nor of transcendental metaphysics. However, it is noteworthy that Melanchthon presupposes common origins and, to a certain extent, common operation for logical and mathematical reasoning. This definitely breaks with the rather poor appraisal of mathematics characteristic to medieval Aristotelianism<sup>35</sup>, but the influences thereof should be sought rather in the fascination of Melanchthon with Platonic, Neoplatonic and Pythagorean thought<sup>36</sup>, rather than in an implicit awareness with the philosophy and logic of arithmetic. This is not to say that his considerations did not determine a paradigm shift for considering the place of mathematical sciences in the encyclopedia of all arts, but that his interest in mathematics was, in the contexts I have given – the introduction of *Erotemata* and the fragment on epistemology above – a reaction to Platonic, Euclidian and Pythagorean ideas. Mathematics is the best example of an art uniting certainty, evidence and order, a regulative ideal from which Melanchthon borrows the vocabulary of his description of dialectic. It is significant that his description of the operations of the intellect exactly fits the description of dialectic's and rhetoric's *officia*: defining and dividing, judgment and discourse. Thus, Melanchthon restates his conviction that dialectic is natural and only needs reinforcement so that it can function in young and inerudite minds.

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physica et moralia. Hanc sententiam etiam propter Paulum amplector, qui expresse inquit, legem scriptam esse in cordibus hominum, ubi de noticia loquitur. Ut igitur lumen est in oculis, ita in mentibus lux quaedam est, qua numeramus, agnoscimus principia artium discernimus honesta et turpia. Hanc lucem esse noticias divinitus sparsas in menibus nostris, recte dicitur, quae qualis lux sit, tunc cernemus, cum archetypum Deum intuebimur.”

35 For an inquiry into the role played by mathematics in the philosophy of the Late Middle Ages see Dudley Sylla, 1982 and Murdoch 1982; See also Grant, 2004, 165–224;

36 On the philosophical doctrines influencing Melanchthon's understanding of the importance and function of mathematic see Methuen, 1998, 85–104; Reich, 1998, 105–122.

## 4.2.3 What is a notion?

It may be interesting to add here the following definition of a notion, which Melanchthon deems relevant for his chapter on the intellect: *Quid est noticia?*

A notion signifies at one time an action, and at another time a habit, that is, a certain lasting light, I might say, in the mind, which we use whenever we wish, just as an art is a lasting light. [...] A notion is a mental action through which one looks at a thing, as if forming an image of the thing contemplated. Nor are these images or ideas anything other than *actus intelligendi*. Nor can any clear description be given of this extraordinary action that is the formation of an image. [...] Now I will recite the most commonly used appellations. A notion is called intuitive when cognition of a present object is received by the mind at the same time [...] And since this level of notion is the clearest, antiquity said that intuitive notions were like definitions. For example a clearer definition of absinthe cannot be given than to perceive the color and shape with the eyes and taste the flavor with the tongue. A notion is called abstractive when we think of absence, as when we think of absent friends. For memory is like a storeroom in the brain in which figures of image, formed by thought, are imprinted, and the mind can see them whenever it wants. [...] But there are abstractive notions of universals and of thoughts and of other things which are not immediately grasped by sense. Now this consideration pertains to dialecticians, where thought proceeds from the prior, the posterior, the causes and from the effects or signs.<sup>37</sup>

This is the most extensive epistemological explanation that Melanchthon gives on the formation of images or thoughts in the human mind. We have seen from the previous chapters that the concept *noticia* is used in different ways by Melanchthon. Here we encounter a description of thought formation. In the *De Dialectica* and *Erotemata* the *noticia* were prominently figuring as starting principles for the deduction of artistic knowledge. In the *Compendiaria* and in the first Book of the *Erotemata Dialectices* the *noticia* was also used as a general

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37 CR 13, 145: "Noticia alias significat actionem, alias habitum, hoc est, durable quoddam lumen, ut sic dicam, in mente, quo utimur cum volumus, ut ars est lumen durable [...] Noticia est mentis actio, quam rem adspicit, quasi formans imaginem rei, quam cogitat. Nec aliud sunt imagines illae seu ideae, nisi actus intelligendi. Nec huius admirandae actionis aliae potest tradi illustrior descriptio, quam quod sit formatio imaginis.[...]Nunc usitatas adpellationes recitabo. Noticia intuitiva dicitur, cum cognitio rei praesentis simul per sensum et mentem accipitur, quare tantum est singularium, ut cum oculi et mens simul aspiciunt picturam in pariete. Et quia hic gradus noticiarum maxime illustris est, vetustas dixit noticias intuitivas similes esse definitionum. Ut definitio magis perspicua absynthii dari non potest, quam cum oculis cernis colorem et figuram, et gustas lingua saporem. Abstractiva noticia nominatur, qua absentia cogitamus, ut cogitamus absentes amicos. Nam memoria in cerebro est tamquam cella, in quam velut sigilia imaginum, quas formavit cogitatio, impressa sunt, quas aspicit mens quoties vult. [...]Sunt autem abstractivae noticiae universalium, et ratiocinationum, et aliorum quae non immediate sensu accipiuntur. Iam haec consideratio ad dialecticos pertinet, ubi a priori, ubi a posteriori, ubi a causis, ubi ab effectibus aut signis ratiocinatio progrediatur.

term for cognition – be it sensory, rational, true or only seemingly true. I believe Melanchthon always employs this concept in its most general sense. Cognition, in the broad sense I am using it here, refers to either a mechanism or operation of intellect, a quality or feature of intellect or a particular content which has been grasped according to this feature or by means of the mechanism. Different contexts or functions of a cognition offer different perspectives on the manner in which it can be understood. Above, Melanchthon enumerates all of them: cognition as action (*actio*), habit (*habitus*) and image (*imago*). The use of *noticia* as cognition in a general sense is attested by Melanchthon's intent to add the common uses of the term (*usitatas adpellationes*). He enumerates the known division between intuitive and abstractive *noticia*. In his *Compendiaria*, his marginal note still employed the word *cognitio*. Here, in his *Liber de Anima*, Melanchthon defines intuitive *noticia* as that belonging to an apprehension by the senses and the intellect of a present object. Melanchthon is familiar with the Stoical definition, found also in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives* 7.60–62:

definition is, Antipater says in *On definitions book I*, 'a statement of analysis matchingly expressed' (2) or, as Chryssipus says in *On definitions*, a representation of a peculiar characteristic.

This view was widely known and might have reached the Renaissance through Galen, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Cicero and of course, Augustine.<sup>38</sup> By contrast, abstractive *noticia* is defined as knowledge of something which is absent, like the remembrance of friends. This is a description of a commonplace understanding of the division between intuitive vs. abstractive cognition like e. g. that of William Ockham.<sup>39</sup> Melanchthon renders the common theory of cognition next to his own view that intuitive cognitions are ultimately the ones closest to the nature of the thing, and thus to its most appropriate definition. While in the *Compendiaria*, Melanchthon had added this observation to his first book on terms and definitions, highlighting, as it were, the conceptual or discursive aspect of the primary elements of dialectic, here, this discursive aspect is secondary to the epistemic aspect, which is rendered in visual terms. If *noticia* is an image provided of the things to be "grasped" by the mechanisms and disposition of the intellect, its counterpart in dialectic is the definition: the element from which judgment progresses towards arguments and fully-fledged orations. Rather than the analysis of cognition as such, I believe that the reliability of intuitive cognition for giving an appropriate account of the things (phenomena, events, objects) is what Melanchthon deems essential. Thus, as I have argued in the previous chapter,

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38 For the exact references to the Stoical understanding of definition among the enumerated authors see Long, 1987, 190–195.

39 See chapter 3.4.2.

there is no short-cut between *res* and *verba* that would obscure, or even bracket out, the triadic theory of meaning, which Melanchthon and all of the Renaissance authors had inherited from Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*.

A detailed account of the *noticiae naturales* has been given by Günter Frank in his detailed study on Melanchthon's theological philosophy. There, he distinguishes between the three dimensions of the theory of the *notitiae naturales* in Melanchthon's oeuvre: "die geistphilosophische Dimension" – in which the nature of the human mind is defined as an image of the divine mind, as an exemplary of the divine<sup>40</sup> – "der erkenntnispsychologisch-noetische Aspekt" – which discloses the origins of human knowledge and "der erkenntnistheoretische Aspekt" – which explains the part played by inborn notions and the natural principle of reasoning for the development of artistic theories and practices.<sup>41</sup> *De Anima* makes the first two dimensions explicit, leaving it to *Erotemata* to elaborate on the scientific relevance of the *noticiae naturales* as principles of all systems of knowledge. To debate on the abstractive notions of "universals, thoughts" and the order in which thought or judgment proceeds is the task of the dialecticians.

#### 4.2.4 The passive and the inventor intellect

Another noteworthy distinction is that which Melanchthon takes from the Aristotelian tradition between the active and the passive intellect which he reinterprets as the passive and the inventor intellect:

Aristotle saw, in all life, in the arts, in public and private counsels, in strategies, in poetry and in eloquence, that some people are more insightful than others. These are the more effective at discovery, while others understand their findings and think about them. Thus Themistocles persuaded the citizens of the abandoned city to board ships, and did better than others with his productive intellect, though they understood and approved the plan.<sup>42</sup>

40 Frank, 1995, 114: "Aufgrund des Exemplarismus von menschlichem und göttlichem Geist partizipiert der Mensch in den natürlichen Kenntnissen and der göttlichen Weisheit, oder um es deutlicher zu formulieren: die "natürlichen Kenntnisse" sind die *Präsenz dieser göttlichen Weisheit im Menschen* die als Inhalte des Geistes insofern auch Aussagen über Gottes Existenz und Wesen beinhalten."

41 Frank, 1995, 112–126.

42 CR 13, 148: "Aristoteles in omni vita, in artibus, in consiliis publicis et privatis, in strategematibus, in poetica, in eloquentia, alios aliis persicaciores esse et inventionem plus valere: Alios inventa intelligere, et suis cogitationibus anteferre, ut Themistocles suadens, ut cives relictae urbes naves ingrediantur, plus valet intellectu faciente, quam alii, sed coeteri intelligunt consilium et adprobant."

This way Melanchthon attributes to the passive intellect the process of assimilation, to the inventor or productive intellect, the operation of discovery of precepts. Thus, the Averroistic theory of the active intellect is reformulated by Melanchthon

for when he says that the productive intellect is God himself causing excellent motions in people, he is really saying that excellent and beautiful thoughts are revealed and guided by God himself.<sup>43</sup>

There is a fundamental difference here between the Melanchthonian and the Averroistic understanding of the intellect. Averroes, in interpreting the Aristotelian differentiation between the passive and productive faculties of the intellect<sup>44</sup>, explains rational cognition (existence of intelligibles) as a product of the receptivity of the material intellect and the illumination effected by the active or productive intellect. That intellect, thus generated, he calls the acquired intellect. The passive intellect is in a particular relation with the material phantasm which is thus received and made intelligible by the active intellect. All material intellects are part of a single transcendent material intellect common to all human beings.<sup>45</sup> Melanchthon's view on the intellect does not actually differentiate between a passive and an active faculty. It is even further away from postulating a universal intellect. This can be argued both on the grounds of Melanchthonian anthropology and on the grounds of his epistemic considerations which are part of his dialectic. If the human mind is an exemplar of God's mind, in which the divine light shines and in which specific laws have been engraved together with evident notions guiding scientific knowledge, the capacity of cognition (of universal and individual things) is a sign of the active divine principle guiding every and each individual intellect. At the level of cognition understood broadly – and I believe this is what Melanchthon argues for – one cannot distinguish between active and passive cognition. *Noticia* as a light (medium), activity and image implies that passive and active elements belonging to the same intellectual operation are presupposed for a cognition to take place. As such, it is anything but universal, since it accounts for the cognitions of each individual. At the most, as I understand Melanchthon's argumentation, we can differentiate between men who are insightful and ingenuous and those who are rather focused on receiving information rather than coming up themselves with great ideas. This doesn't exclude the latter from correct and wise judgment, but it singles out the former as gifted with more natural talent when it comes to

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43 CR 13, 149: "Cum eim ait, facientem intellectum esse ipsum Deum cientem excellenciores motus in hominibus, vere dicit, excellentes et salutare cogitationes a Deo ipso monstrari et regi [...]"

44 Aristotle, *De An.*, 430a10–26.

45 Davidson, 1992, 282–295.

breakthroughs. Looked at from the view of the dialectician concerned with the operation of the intellect enumerated above: apprehension/cognition, (definition/division), judgment (connection) and speech (discourse), the human mind performs all of these operations. Able to know both universals and individuals, the need for further differentiations in the ontology of the soul is obsolete. Thus, one might trace back different activities to different operations of thought, which thereby become manifest. There is no use for further metaphysical differentiations. Melanchthon endorses this view by writing: "I have seen the explanations of others who think they are more subtle, but they are empty dreams and cannot be understood."<sup>46</sup> The Averroistic view is thus, understood to indicate that, eventually, the source of all knowledge is, revealed by the mediating function of the *noticia*: the divine Creator.

#### 4.2.5 The human and the divine mind

The chapter on the rational soul with its subordinate part on the intellect discloses the Melanchthonian understanding of the relation between man and God and man's capacity and limits of knowing. It enables the human mind to reflect and understand its own operations. It completes the epistemological consideration present in Melanchthon dialectic editions since the *De Dialectica Libri Quatuor*, adding to it the complementary anthropological or, as we would call them today, *metaphysical* assumptions. Melanchthon's considerations are however, brief, and highlight the important aspects of his philosophical program: (1) the theological presuppositions and (2) their philosophical counterparts in the form of the interpretative melange of various ancient traditions. The *Liber de Anima* grounds both the doctrine of the human soul as well as the considerations on body, spirits and inner senses on the commitment to a divine design. The chapter on the intellect is the answer to the question of basic assumptions upon which Melanchthon builds his reform of the philosophical arts. It provides the framework against which his epistemological allegations can be understood and his dialectic can be interpreted as a description of the operations of the human mind. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Melanchthon adds to his re-interpretation of the passive and active intellect a chapter on the norms of certainty, which guide human actions, judgments and beliefs. Here also, the certainty of the scientific principles is guaranteed by the likeness between divine and human mind. Melanchthon also refers his readers to his dialectic, where this topic is treated in a more ample manner. He concludes his anthropological

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46 CR 13, 149: "Vidi aliorum enarrationes, quae existimantur esse subtiliores, sed somnia sunt inania, nec intellegi possunt."

inquiry with the chapters on the human will, a discussion on the divine image in the human mind (by means of the *noticia*) and the immortality of the soul.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, viewed from the perspective of knowledge-organisation, Melanchthon places his epistemological chapter in the context of natural-philosophical elaborations on the human body and its spirits. The naturalistic descriptions of the bodily mechanisms reflect, in Melanchthon's view, a comprehensive physical doctrine.<sup>48</sup> This doctrine is completed with the additional inquiries into the rational soul. The way they hang together is explained, as already noted. By the theory of the spirits. However, Melanchthon attributes to the rational soul and its function a separate, inorganic and bodily-independent existence.

### 4.3 Initia doctrinae physicae: The book on man and nature

The Melanchthonian concept of physics, is at least as comprehensive and overarching as his understanding of psychology and the various branches of science pertaining to it. In a faithful description of the various topics which Melanchthon discusses under the heading of "introduction into the teaching of physics" Daniel Gross lists the following:

God, providence, contingency, the world, simple bodies, the sky, the stars (their motion and influence on inferior bodies), the elements, the principles of the interior of natural bodies, material, form, privation, causes, whole, parts, proximity, remoteness, universals, particulars, the questions 'What is nature?' and 'What is art?', fortune and accident, fate, motion, time, place and vacuums, mixed bodies, qualities, the three regions of air, vapors, the causes of lightning and thunder, comets, wind, rain, metals, the parts of the human body, the grades and forms of the soul (vegetative, sensible, appetitive, locomotive, intellectual), passions, free will, the causes of virtues and vice, and the ends of man.<sup>49</sup>

This list includes both the topics dealt with in the *Initia* as well as those treated in his *De Anima*. Melanchthon's *Initia* is as much a commentary on Aristotelian physics, as his *Erotemata* and his *De Anima* are commentaries on Aristotelian logic and psychology. It represents, rather, Melanchthon's own teaching of physics the way he sorts it out from the various ancient doctrines he consults. However, Aristotle does figure here as one of the preferred philosophers, when it

47 CR 13, 153–178.

48 CR 13, 5: "Et pars illa quae reicitat organa et qualitates, alterationes, effectiones et lesiones organorum, minue est obscura, et amplissimam doctrinam physicam continet."

49 This enumeration is given in Gross, 2000, 10. Gross lists this entries, keeping with Melanchthon's list of the most important topics, or as he calls them: the *loci praecipui* of natural philosophy. CR 13, 195.

comes to the precepts which are borrowed for the illustration, explanation and disposition of the handled topics. In the following I will give a brief summary of the treated subjects and highlight the relevance of natural philosophy for the “cycle” of arts and the importance dialectic and epistemological considerations play for the Melanchthonian natural-philosophical program.

Just as Melanchthon adds to the traditional rendering of the faculties of the human soul an entire book on the body, complete with medical considerations and naturalistic explanations, he places the discussion on the physical commonplaces (dealt with in the Aristotelian commentaries – form, matter, privation, causes, contingency, time, space etc) in a cosmological and theological context. Unlike Aristotle, Melanchthon proceeds from the most general principle of the universe: God, and ends with the most minute parts: the elements and the elemental processes of generation, augmentation, mixture and corruption. The first book of Melanchthon’s *Initia* is dedicated to the *cosmos* and its parts: the heavenly bodies, their movements and the usefulness of the Ptolemaic doctrine which describes the exact movements of spheres and planets. Again, the usefulness of the celestial doctrine is brought forth and connected both to the mathematics of the time-measuring and to the influences of the heavenly bodies on the sublunary world. The second book exhibits some similarities with the structure of the Aristotelian books of the *Physics*. His brief explanations of the principles (matter, form, privation) and his integration of Platonic and Stoic precepts attest to the originality of the Melanchthonian project. I will elaborate on this assumption later in this chapter. The detailed analysis of causes<sup>50</sup> shows Melanchthon’s intense engagement with the diverse causal connections holding the things together and the plurality of ways in which effects can be traced back to their causal principles. To this he adds the discussion on chance and a consideration of the freedom of the will. Also, he supplements these discussions with his views on final causes and a theory of motion. The last chapters of the second book tackle the traditional topics of rest, of the infinite, of the continuum, of place, of the void, of time and of eternity. The last book is dedicated to the elements, understood as constituents of composite bodies. Here he deals with elemental processes and their causes. He ends his last book with a chapter on putrefaction (*De putrefactione*). The rest of the above enumerated topics, which

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50 In the second book of *Initia* Melanchthon distinguishes no less than 14 different types of causes (*divisio causarum*): causes *per se* and *per accidens*; the true cause (*vere causa*) and the cause *sine qua non*; the efficient, material, formal and final cause; the interior (formal and material) and the exterior (efficient and final) cause; the efficient cause can be voluntary of natural; the efficient cause can also be principal (*aition*), less principal (*aunaition*) or instrumental (*organon*); it can also be remote or proximate, total or partial, antecedent and first (*primitiva*), moved by other things, principal, distributing (*disponens seu preparans*) or aiding, or subservient (*uperetikon*), or advisory (*consulens*).

Melanchthon believes to belong to natural knowledge are treated in his *De Anima*.

#### 4.3.1 The multivarious topics of natural knowledge treated in the *Initia*

The Melanchthonian textbook has been “disassembled” in various fruitful attempts to provide a close-up image of each of the knowledge branches Melanchthon deemed as inherent to natural knowledge: Astronomy, Astrology and Medicine, to name only the most prominent have been seen as essential for the Melanchthonian understanding of the cosmos and his conviction of the interdependency between the sublunary and supralunary sphere<sup>51</sup>. Melanchthon’s criticism against the Copernican *hypotheses* as well as the absence of this attack in his revised edition of his natural philosophy has been widely discussed by the scholarship. Robert Westman has shown that the Wittenberg circle, lead by Melanchthon, included astronomers like Erasmus Rheinhold, who have generated the so-called “Wittenberg interpretation” of the heliocentric theory and have facilitated the positive reception of the Copernican theories, from the perspective of their mathematical utility.<sup>52</sup> Barbara Bauer correctly concludes her detailed description of the topics and structure of *Initia* by writing that although Melanchthon had attacked the heliocentric hypotheses from a theological standpoint, his convictions were compatible with a pragmatic view on the usefulness of the mathematical innovations. These are taken over and integrated in various astronomic calculations while the cosmological thesis is thrown over board<sup>53</sup>. Against this theological framework which Melanchthon provides for his natural philosophy, Sachiko Kusukawa and Günter Frank have tackled different dimensions of the Melanchthonian project. Sachiko Kusukawa gives a contextual explanation of why Melanchthon had written his textbooks the way he did: in a systematic fashion, covering all the parts of human knowledge as pieces of a whole which ultimately reveals a providential design. She argues for a focused engagement of Melanchthon and Luther with the ethics and politics of Reformed theology and their realization that the confessional tenets of the Reformation are to be transmitted in different ways. Melanchthon’s works reflect just one way of transmitting Lutheranism, reinforcing ethical behavior and civil peace. Luther’s

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51 Astronomy and Astrology have been thought to belong together throughout the Middle Ages and undergo an important revival due to the impact of a plurality of ancient works, among which the so-called Hermetic Corpus and the increasing appeal to stoic and Neo-Platonic cosmologies. For a very insightful and detailed study of Melanchthon’s appraisal of astronomy and astrologies as the doctrines of natural interpretation see Brosseder, 2004.

52 Westman, 2011.

53 Bauer, 1997, 171–172.

mainly theological and political involvement represents another.<sup>54</sup> Kusakawa thus pleads for a historically contextualized understanding of Melanchthon's natural philosophy, and sees the transformation he bestows on natural philosophy as one effected along Lutheran lines. Günter Frank's systematic analysis of the Melanchthonian reinterpretation on Platonic and Neo-Platonic as well as Stoical doctrine reveals a natural philosophical project stripped of metaphysical considerations in the sense of the complementary explanations of physical principles provided by traditional school philosophy in the Commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. By replacing the metaphysical presuppositions with an anthropology and a cosmology grounded in the theology of creation (*Schöpfungstheologie*), Melanchthon provides a description of the world as a machine, functioning according to the plan of its divine architect. Thus, the metaphysical moment of the final cause is extracted and relocated in the divine mind and represents God's thus conceived plan. Since Melanchthon grounds his philosophical project on theological presuppositions made manifest throughout his works, it is this theological assumption that determines the specific understanding of nature as the place of the revelation of the divine plan: natural teleology, endemic to the Aristotelian understanding of nature becomes natural theology.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the cosmos and the human mind both seen as different from, as well as part of nature, are the places of divine revelation: the divine design manifests itself in both of those realms, which are strongly interconnected through the middle position of the human being, as it were. Although Melanchthon does not use the terminology of emanation and does not explicitly employ any Neoplatonic tenets, he does ascribe exactly this mediating place to the human being.<sup>56</sup> The various levels of natural "revelation" are made intelligible and spelled out as different fields in which the human being can acquire knowledge about himself. And each piece of information on his own nature is a piece of knowledge about the framework in which he operates and about the manner in which he orders the world: hence, the Melanchthonian concept of the cycle of arts and the importance of order. In the introductory epistle to his *Initia* Melanchthon writes:

Even if there is no way in which the nature of the things can be thoroughly understood and even if the causes of such great works cannot be comprehended before we hear the considerations of the eternal Architect himself, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; Yet, even in this darkness of ours, the view and perspective of the order of the most beautiful things in the world is an approach to both the knowledge of God, as well

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54 Kusakawa, 1995. 124–173;

55 Frank, 2012, 22.

56 On Melanchthon's integration of Neoplatonic views in his natural-philosophical textbook see Frank, 2001.

as to virtue, i. e. to the love and preservation of order and measure in all of our actions. Finally, the doctrine which comprises the medical science represents a great protection of our entire life. Since it is thus clear that man has been created by God in order to contemplate nature, the doctrine of the elements, and the order of the movements and the types of powers in the bodies are to be cherished and praised.<sup>57</sup>

There are three aspects which Melanchthon discusses and which, in the light of the cited paragraph, can be further elaborated. The first is the usefulness of the physical science, the second is the manner in which Melanchthon believes that one is to do natural philosophy, i. e. the appropriate *method*. The third and last aspect is his brief but essential remark on the manner in which he sees his project as differing from the commentaries and treatises with which he disagrees. These aspects, which I will further inquire into, and underscore my claim of the encyclopedic understanding of philosophy which Melanchthon secures with the criteria of common sense, ordinary language and ordered reasoning and a theologically and philosophically infused epistemology.

#### 4.3.2 What is the purpose of natural philosophy?

*Quis est finis et usus physices?* First of all, Melanchthon writes, man has been made for contemplation of nature, which provides him with particular pleasure. (*consideratio per sese adfert dulcissimas voluptates, etiamsi aliae utilitates non sequerentur*<sup>58</sup>). Second, since the medical arts arises from physics, natural knowledge can be deemed as essentially useful both for the organic as well as for the temperamental dimension of the human being. Since medicine deals with the grossest body parts, but also with the most subtle spirits, with humors and also with the human temperaments which have a direct effect on the immaterial, volitive and cognitive faculties of the human soul, medicine does not only treat the body, but also affects the harmony of the humors and spirits.<sup>59</sup> Third, the

57 CR 11, 473: “Etsi autem natura rerum non potest penitus perspicui, nec causae tam mirabilium operum prius intelligi poterunt, quam ipsius architecti aeterni partis, filii et spiritus sancti deliberationem coram audiemus, tamen nunc quoque in hac caligine nostra qualiscunque aspectio et consideratio ordinis pulcherrimorum in mundo corporum aditus est et ad agnitionem dei et ad virtutem, hoc est, ad amandum et conservandum ordinem et modum in omnibus actionibus. Deinde magnorum vitae praesidium est illa tota doctrina, quam ars medica complectitur. Cum igitur manifestum sit, a deo ita conditos esse homines ut naturam aspiciant, doctrina de elementis et corporum ordine, motibus et qualitibus seu viribus amanda et colenda est.”

58 CR 13, 189.

59 CR, 13, 190: “Ex hac doctrina extruitur ars medica, quia hic discernuntur elementa, qualitates, qualitatum actiones, cognatio, dissidia, causae alterationum in elementis et mixtis, naturae dissimiles humorum in corpore humano, temperamenta seu crases, et his congruentes spiritus, inclinationes et adfectus in hominibus.”

knowledge of nature provides a thorough knowledge of causes and of the extent of liberty that man enjoys over and above the natural causal connections which determine the functioning of the cosmos. This teaching is insofar essential, in Melanchthon's view, as it warns about radical teachings like that of the Stoics and Epicureans which either bound God and man to a determinate succession of events or claim that everything, including man and his ability of knowledge-acquisition emerged by chance. Melanchthon choses the middle way, as he constantly emphasizes. While ascribing an absolute and unknown power to the divine Creator, Melanchthon admits a sphere of liberty for man and his capacity of knowledge. This is one of the reasons, why he claims to follow Aristotle rather than other philosophers<sup>60</sup>. His self-presentation as a *homo peripateticus*<sup>61</sup>, made in 1537 in a letter to a friend, does not represent an allegiance to Aristotle, but to a specific feature which he borrows from the Stagirite and turns it into a leitmotif of his philosophy: the right measure: the middle way. This is the revealing aspect of the manner in which Melanchthon appeals to Aristotle: not as an authority but because the Aristotelian appraisal for temperance – as a central guideline of his *Ethics* – is what Melanchthon himself endorses and extends to an appropriate manner of thinking and acting. Fourth, physics provides the knowledge with which much can be cleared up in the doctrine of the Church. Fifth, physics is the art which strengthens the faith in God and His providence, by means of the contemplation of his design.

#### 4.3.3 What is the method of natural philosophy?

*Quae est methodus in hac doctrina?* Interestingly, as much as Melanchthon emphasizes the importance and the dignity of the knowledge of mathematics and astronomy, and lists two manners of operations endemic to physics: that of the geometer and that of the astrologer or physician, Melanchthon attributes most of the knowledge gathered in physics to the search for causes by interpretations of signs and effects, thus, knowledge taken from experience. (*Ita doctrina physica*

60 The true physical doctrine is the Aristotelian one, gathered from Hippocrates. CR 13, "Loquor autem non de Democriti atomis, sed de vera doctrina, qualis est Aristotelica sumpta ex Hippocratis fontibus."

61 In a letter to Vitus Theodorus, preacher in Nürnberg, former pupil of Melanchthon in Wittenberg, Melanchthon assures his correspondent of the unanimity on theological matters which he shares with Luther and that the latter supports the Melanchthonian manner of presenting them. This manner, Melanchthon writes, is less gauntly (*minus horride*) in dealing with topics like predestination, the assent of the will, of the necessity of submission and of the deadly sin. He reserves for himself the manner of the peripatetic and the lover of the middle way, and less the Stoical custom. CR 7, 383: "Mihi tamen concedant homini Peripatetico and amanti mediocritatem, minus Stoice alicubi loqui."

*magna ex parte extracta est ex experientia, in qua plerunque ducimur an effectibus et signis ad causas*<sup>62</sup>). The fact that the representative of natural-philosophical knowledge is the physician sheds some light on the importance Melanchthon attributed to the usefulness of the *human-science*(!). If we consider his holistic approach of *De Anima* and the therapeutic effect that not only medicine but also philosophy as a whole, by means of erudition, has on the character of man, then Melanchthon's insistence on philosophy as comprising of a cycle of arts, for the sake of man's civility and the Church, makes even ore sense. Gross has described Melanchthon's project as one that

encourages us to relax our fixation upon natural scientific initiatives of the seventeenth century that obscure what was, and still is broadly humanistic in the human sciences [...] Melanchthon's rhetorically structured practical arts offer us a position from which to critique the division between human and natural sciences, [...] it helps us to see anew human scientific initiatives of any age that defy the same division.<sup>63</sup>

Gross comes at this conclusion after analyzing the therapeutic function and purpose of Melanchthonian rhetoric. This, however, can also become clear from the manner in which Melanchthon connects fundamental rational operations of the human mind to a set of common features of everyday learning (by means common notions and common sense) and doing (experiential and practical engagement) and turns them into the basis of his concept of philosophy. Every piece of knowledge is thus interconnected with the others, even if they may belong to traditionally separated fields. Melanchthon introduces in his *Initia* chapter on the norms of certainty, which are the ones listed in the *Erotemata*: the principles, the universal experience and the logical consequence, from which certain and true conclusions can be drawn (*Sunt igitur et conclusiones certae et firmae, quae bona consequuntur ex principiis et experientia extruuntur*<sup>64</sup>).

Melanchthon's chapter on the norms of certainty and his considerations on method are not written to establish a theory of science. They list and describe the most useful doctrines on natural philosophy which focus on the purposiveness of the natural arts and their intelligibility. Thus, I agree with Kusukawa's conclusion that Melanchthon's textbook has an agenda. The agenda is to make the point that there is a reasonably apprehensible order in the world that facilitates us with the privileged status of using it for our own well being and that it is the sign of divine providence which had provided the presuppositions which make the order intelligible in the first place. Even within the framework constituted of the efficient and final cause which keeps the world turning, however, there are more and less appropriate ways of knowing and doing. By his emphasis on the purposiveness of

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62 CR 13, 194.

63 Gross, 2000, 16.

64 CR 13, 186.

knowledge, of its practical use and its ordered sequence, I believe Melanchthon suggests just what he believes true philosophy to represent: the well-reasoned acquisition of every field of knowledge and its practical employment for human life. The method which he elaborates is exactly the technique he imagines as appropriate for the acquisition of this multifaceted knowledge. Thus, as I have shown above, I do not agree with Kusakawa's claim that his textbook is a dogmatic collection of topics, the selection of which Melanchthon fails to legitimate.<sup>65</sup> The topics of Melanchthon's natural philosophy or ethics are not merely randomly picked to be inculcated into the youngster's minds for the sake of endorsing *Lutheran philosophy*.<sup>66</sup> They are brought forth with the tools developed from the reinterpretation of the Aristotelian notion of demonstration and dialectical reasoning on the one side, and the rhetorical theory of status and disposition on the other. They pertain, as shown, to a complementary doctrine of analysis and organization of (textual) knowledge and amount to a successful listing of key concepts pertaining to a specific branch of knowledge after the appropriate analysis and interpretation of the underlying texts and their arguments. "Nowhere however, does Melanchthon ever explain *how* to select the *loci* and why a particular selection of topics is justified."<sup>67</sup> Kusakawa thereby misses the essential point of the doctrines presented in the books on dialectic and rhetoric. These offer an exact explanation of how essential texts are to be analysed and interpreted and how their key concepts and arguments to be put forth and arranged. Melanchthon's explanation of how to select the *loci* is given repeatedly in his rhetoric and dialectic does Melanchthon explain *how* to select the *loci*. His project of extraction of key concepts by means of his rhetorical-dialectic method is exactly the instrument which provides and justifies the Melanchthonian selection of the *loci*. Also, his selection is influenced by the sharp distinction between philosophical and theological *loci communes* discussed in the *Elementa Rhetorices*.

#### 4.3.4 The language of natural philosophy

In a very interesting and illuminating passage of his introductory epistle Melanchthon explains what his manner of presentation will be in his *Initia*, after having presented the comprehensiveness of natural knowledge and its influence on the various fields of inquiry which he subordinates to the Physics. Here the "beginnings" which he intends to present shortly and in clear fashion are likened

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65 Kusakawa, 1997, 351;

66 *Ibid.*, 352.

67 *Ibid.*, 351.

to the Adamic natural knowledge which embraces the entire spectrum of effects of the element, composite bodies and their qualities, as well as their wondrous harmony in generating the most appropriate functions for life and well-being of man. What Melanchthon intends to do is to raise the student's awareness for the natural knowledge in its entirety and for the authors which have, according to the Humanist, *appropriately* put forth pieces of it. Democrit, Epicur and others which corrupt the natural arts are to be shunned.

The doctrine of things must be selected and empty cavillations must be left out, which even in our times are mixed with the general teaching of nature. We will have to be diligent and strive to use the appropriate speech and none other which is alien to the Latin language. Because he who strives to speak correctly, looks upon the things, to which the names are given. If, in contrast, a new language is invented, the things themselves will often be changed, just as in the writings of Scotus and similar authors, who have corrupted not only the speech, but have also fancied shadows of things to which they have given new names.<sup>68</sup>

In congruence with his requirements for a true philosophy is his view that the correct interpretation of things, just like the interpretation of words, develops along the lines of a true method and understanding of the various levels of explanation. Also, the knowledge on which a proper understanding of physical facts, phenomena, events, and connections rests is highly diversified. By employing an attentive and more or less fair-minded approach to the signs, effects, qualities and changes which all take place in the natural realm, and making them intelligible for oneself and others by means of a complementary straight-forward manner of conceptualization and explanation, one can promote the development of natural knowledge which stays closest to the things. This nearness to things is facilitated by basic knowledge of grammar, dialectic and rhetoric which are necessary for a clear and distinct understanding of the matters under inquiry. In the absence of a clear language, molded on the example set by classical Latin, completely invented and foreign theories can arise which, in the end, fail to render the specific definitions of things and the relations among them. These also fail to infer from the knowledge they provide conclusions which reveal the connections between the elements inquired into. This emphasis reiterates the Melanchthonian belief in the essential role of the language arts for philosophy and it should not be understated. Unfamiliar words and conceptual sets determine the confusion in the understanding of the most commonsensical and

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68 CR 13, 475: "Eligatur et rerum doctrina, omissis inanibus cavillationibus, quales etiam haec recentior aetas miscuit communi doctrinae non paucas. Studeamus et genere sermonis proprio uti, et non alieno a linguae latinae consuetudine. Nam qui recte loqui student, res intuentur, quibus nomina attributa sunt; e contra, cum sermo novus fingitur, plerunque et res mutantur, ut in Scoti et similium scriptis non sermo tantum corruptus est, sed umbrae rerum seu somnia excogitata sunt, quibus novae appellationes attributae sunt."

straight-forward matters. Thus, in keeping with elegant Latin, with the clarity and order taught by dialectic and with the rules of discourse and connection of parts taught by rhetoric, as well as relying on the fundamental capacities of cognition and practice, a framework for reliable judgment and understanding, is provided, especially when it comes to singling out the doctrines which are most fitted to present a subject matter. Melanchthon is convinced that an unprejudiced approach to things is to be facilitated by an unbiased employment of language.

Also, only by being aware of the variety of different fields of knowledge one has to draw on for various explanations and by realizing the manner in which they are all interconnected, the (natural-)philosopher can provide explanations and interpretations which meet the requirements of a knowledge useful for the contemplation of the divine design and for the teachings of the Church. The reflections on the operations of cognition, thought, and speech, the observations on the parts of the human body and soul and the thereby stimulated reflexive inquiries into the presuppositions of knowledge enable the realization that natural knowledge is available to the human being because of its capacity of sensorial, intelligible and discursive, i. e. practical immersion in the most wonderful theater of nature.<sup>69</sup> Although Melanchthon always converses from the standpoint of the teacher, the one transmitting already available knowledge, his claims and urges extend to the pupil confronted with both books and phenomena. What Claudia Brosseder has called “universalhermeneutischer Anspruch” in relation to Melanchthon’s understanding and appraisal of astrology (a domain of knowledge claiming to integrate both theological and scientific knowledge)<sup>70</sup> can be transferred to Melanchthon’s *methodical philosophy* in general. His concept of philosophy as one based on a correct method of reading texts extends to the reading of the cosmos. Signs, effects, qualities, and their causal connections are to be *read* in a dialectical-rhetorical fashion. Melanchthon himself was not what we would today call a natural philosopher.<sup>71</sup> Although he supported and promoted the accumulation of knowledge, his work was limited to providing a new set of perspectives for looking at and ordering knowledge. However, his views that the arts and sciences are interconnected, that the presupposition of knowledge is ultimately to be traced back in an inborn in-

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69 CR 11, 472: “Totum hoc pulcherrimum theatrum, coelum, lumina, stellae, aer, aqua, terra, planatae, animantia et caetera mundi corpora, indeo tanta arte conditum es, ornatum specie, figura, harmonia motuum, efficacia virium, *συμπαθεια*, et ordine distributum, ut illustre testimonium sit de deo opifice. Et collocatus est in hoc splendidum domicilium homo, et insita ei de deo et de virtute notitia, ut et sese aspiciens et oculos circumferens ad contuendum rerum ordinem [...]”

70 Brosseder, 2004, 320.

71 On the *persona* of the natural philosopher in the early modern period see Condre, Gaukroger and Hunter 2006, 1–16.

telligibility, that order is a distinct feature of the human mind and that discursing is eminently a part of an active life, have reflected themselves in the way erudite men reflected on the organization of knowledge, on the nature of the human being, of the purposes of knowledge and of the relevance of practice in the Renaissance.<sup>72</sup> By providing an institutionalized way of interpreting and dealing with natural knowledge, Melanchthon represented a *persona* of the (natural) philosopher reflecting the image of the ancient polymath. He added to this philosophical erudition a particular view on the virtues and the habits of this *persona*.

#### 4.4 Ethicae doctrinae elementa: On natural and divine law

In the *Erotemata*, Melanchthon differentiates between two different types of natural notions or principles: speculative and practical. Practical principles are, according to Melanchthon, notions or propositions known by nature (*natura notae*) which govern the *mores* of men, so that human nature may distinguish between good and evil. These principles are identified with the *natural law* which, imprinted in the mind of all men, represent the norms of virtue: “Thus, the precepts of the Decalogue are the conclusions that originate from these principles, as I have written extensively in another place.”<sup>73</sup> Heinz Scheible has shown that Melanchthon’s concept of natural law, which grounds his moral philosophy, has been developed in a multitude of his writings.<sup>74</sup> We find an identification of the Decalogue with the inborn notions in the chapter on the norms of certainty in *Liber de Anima*, where the natural law is compared and complemented with the knowledge of the Gospel. In his textbook on the physical doctrine, *Initia doctrinae Physicae*, where he inquires into the degree of certainty one can achieve in natural philosophy, Melanchthon attributes to the human mind the capacity to distinguish good from evil, which he, again, ascribes to the image of God in man<sup>75</sup>. But Melanchthon most probably refers here to his theological and ethical works. Strohm mentions Melanchthon’s subsequent editions of *Loci theologici* (published in 1521, 1535 and 1543), his *Philosophiae moralis epitome* (published in 1538) and the *Ethicae doctrinae Elementa* (1550) as containing an elaborated

72 Harrison, 2008, 97–103.

73 CR 13: “Leges naturae esse principia practica et conclusiones necessaria consequentia ex his principiis extructas, quae quidem in menta divina sunt aeternae et immotae notitiae, ac norma virtutum. Quare et praecepta Decalogi sunt conclusiones, ex talibus principiis natae, ut alibi copiosius dicitur.”

74 Strohm, 2000, 340.

75 CR 13, 189: “Vult Deus [...] manere immotum discrimen honestorum et turpium quo est imago divinae mentis.”

and theologically grounded theory of natural law. Melanchthon's engagement with Aristotelian ethics is traced back to his lectures beginning with 1527 which materialized in a commentary on the first two books of Aristotelian ethics, *Enarrationes aliquot librorum Ethicorum Aristotelis*, published 1529 in Wittenberg and later completed by the commentaries on the third and fifth books.<sup>76</sup>

#### 4.4.1 Natural and civil law

Strohm distinguishes three different functions which this theologically underpinned natural law doctrine performs. The first function is the transformation of the Stoic natural law conception, as taken from Cicero, into a constitutive element of the human mind and grounded on the reflection of the divine image therein. This theological presupposition is an essential constituent of Melanchthon's understanding of philosophy. This way, Melanchthon grounds his philosophical assumptions on the theological principle of man as created in God's image:

Die Gottesebenbildlichkeit besteht somit in der Fähigkeit, Gott zu erkennen sowie Gut und Böse zu unterscheiden, und dem Sachverhalt, dass die menschlichen (Willens-)kräfte dem entsprechen.<sup>77</sup>

Second, Strohm argues that the natural law is the ground on which Melanchthon elaborated his ethics, and his view on civil law. In his oration on the dignity of the law (*Oratio de dignitate legum*), Melanchthon claims that the Roman law has been extracted, partly by means of demonstration, partly through probable reasoning (*probabilium rationibus*) from the divine notions. Just as arithmetic is drawn from the knowledge of proportions, thus have the Roman laws been drawn from natural notions, which are the rays of divine wisdom, briefly summarized in the Decalogue and arrived at through correct inferences.<sup>78</sup> Also, the concept of *aequitas* is reinterpreted and one could say "weakened" in such a way, that it reinforces its meaning as mitigation and not corrective of the written law.<sup>79</sup> Strohm, like Kisch and Kusukawa, sees this Melanchthonian insistence on the constraints of civil law as derived from natural order as consequences of the

76 According to Jill Krayer, this commentary appeared in Strasbourg together with Melanchthon's commentary on Aristotle's *Politics*. See Krayer, 1997, 104.

77 Strohm, 2000, 344.

78 CR 12, 22: "Ut caeterae artes partes demonstrationibus, partim probabilium rationibus ex divini noticiis extractae sunt, ut Arithmeticae ex cognitione proportionum sumpta est: ita Romanae leges ex noticiis naturalibus, qua sunt radii sapientiae divinae, in Decalogo breviter comprehensi, bona consequentia ductae sunt."

79 Strohm, 2000, 351; MWA III, 217: "Aristoteles generaliter aequitatem vocat mitigationem legis, sive scriptam, sive non scriptam".

unrest and political upheaval which emerged in the aftermath of the Reformation across Germany<sup>80</sup>. Third, the natural law doctrine represents, besides the Gospel, the basic principle of what Strohm calls the Melanchthonian system, since it permits the elaboration of the fields of knowledge and actions grounded in human reason as separated from and irrelevant to the soteriological promise of the Gospel. However, while the theology of grace is completely inaccessible to human reason, the presuppositions for cognition, ordered reasoning, the improvement of character and the maintenance of civil order depend on the inborn notions, or as Frank has put it, the metaphysical idea of man's participation in the divine plan.

Aufgrund dieser exemplaristischen 'analogia mentis', die in den 'notitiae naturales' und nun insbesondere im 'discrimen honestorum et turpium' konkret realisiert wird, kann der Geist des Menschen nicht nur Gottes Existenz und Wesen erkennen, sondern er gewinnt in dieser Erkenntnis auch die Kriterien der eigenen Handlungsfähigkeit.<sup>81</sup>

As in his works on dialectic, anthropology, and physics, Melanchthon turns this metaphysical dimension into the basic assumption of his ethics. Although Melanchthon has subsequently overworked his ethics manuals<sup>82</sup>, just as he had done with all his other systematic works, I will refer in the following only to his late work on ethics, *Ethicae doctrinae elementa et enarratio libri quinti Ethicorum*.

#### 4.4.2 On natural law as divine law

Although it seems to follow the content of the first three and the fifth books of Aristotelian *Ethics*, Melanchthon's *Ethicae*, as Frank has shown, is no commentary of Aristotelian *Ethics*. As is the case with his other displayed textbooks, Melanchthon structures his *Ethica* along central topics or loci: the first book concerns the definition of moral philosophy, its differences to the doctrine of the Church, the purpose of man, the doctrine of the virtues, the freedom of will and the theory of affects. The second book tackles the concept of justice, the natural law and the concept of *aequitas*. In this context, Melanchthon discusses various topics belonging to civil law. Melanchthon's ethics is, like his natural philosophy and his dialectic, deeply dependent on theological presuppositions. However, this dependency becomes even more acute in the context of ethical considerations, since it discloses a deep tension between the Reformed doctrine of justification and the concept of virtue as a *habitus*, as Henning Ziebritzki has

80 Kisch, 1967, 92–101; Kusukawa, 1995, 49–74; Strohm, 2000, 347.

81 Frank, 1995, 320.

82 The various editions are listed in Frank, 2012, 50–53.

emphasized.<sup>83</sup> Melanchthon's definition of ethics limits its scope to outward actions<sup>84</sup> and to the knowledge of the existence and attributes of the divine Creator. Only with divine support can man achieve a state of true bliss – an eudaemonic state. Besides the theological orientation of ethics, Melanchthon admits the usefulness of ethics for the development of temperance and virtues. Melanchthon differentiates in his *Ethics* between law and gospel and defines law as the “eternal and unchangeable wisdom and law in God which distinguishes between right and wrong” which is given to man at his creation and dictates absolute obedience. The gospel, however, preaches of repentance and of the remission of sins. The knowledge of this remission is, however, given by God himself, and does not originate in the human being. Ethics, thus, as a part of philosophy, does not have any soteriological relevance. Its most eminent function is to reveal, by means of the imprint moral laws the existence and attributes of God. Also, it seeks to discipline man and to provide philosophical knowledge of the law, which complements the teachings of the Church. It provides the accurate understanding of the law by means of its helpful structure and ordering of the ethical precepts. Here, again, dialectic plays an important part.

#### 4.4.3 Dialectical method in ethics

The unadulterated moral law (*incorrupte traditur*) is the wisdom which coheres with the divine mind and thus, strengthens the belief in the divine plan. This law however, as part of the philosophical teaching, must, like the other philosophical subjects, be taught and transmitted in an appropriate manner. Moreover, this law can only be true (*veram esse*) if it transmits proofs which are being sought through an ordered investigation and seeks for the reasons of certainty. Also, one should compare the teachings with the ultimate *criteria*<sup>85</sup> of truth. Finally, one may ask, with Melanchthon: *Quis est finis hominis?* The answer of Melanchthon is clear: the ultimate purpose of man is not virtue (which comes second), but the knowledge and praise of the divine. Virtue itself is a habit in congruence with the divine practical principles, or with the rule which shines in the mind of man and represents the wisdom of God.<sup>86</sup> Thus, we may say, it is a manifestation of the

83 Ziebritzki, 2000, 357–374.

84 CR 16, 165 “Qui communem doctrinam de virtutibus, quae in philosophia traditur, laudant, plerumque hac causa contenti sunt, quod sit norma vitae hominum a Deo tradita, ad regendas actiones externas, quam qui atrociter violant, multas tristes poenas sibi et aliis accersunt”.

85 CR 16, 170: “Sec recte instituti in Philosophia, sciunt eam doctrinam veram esse, (ubicunque traditur) quae demonstrationes tradit, et ordine in earum investigatione procedit, et causas certitudinis quaerit, conferens doctrinam ad *criteria*.”

86 Ibid., 184: “Hoc modo, quoties de definitione virtutis dicitur, eundem est ad causas et primas

divine *norm* itself. Moral philosophy, like natural philosophy and the critical evaluation of discourse, is referred back to the inborn principles of human speculative and practical knowledge. By reflecting the divine image in the human being, these principles amount to what Frank has called Melanchthon's "theorationalistische Geistesphilosophie"<sup>87</sup>.

#### 4.4.4 Conclusion

After having reviewed some of the philosophical branches to which Melanchthon dedicates his attention, I believe that I have come closer to both Melanchthon's understanding of philosophy and its underlying method. It has become clearer now that the reform of the language arts and of the other liberal arts amounted to a reform of philosophy and of the philosopher himself. In other words, borrowed from Ian Hunter, we can understand now the *persona* of the philosopher which Melanchthon is constructing by means of his textbooks, and the actual strategies and exercises he deems necessary for a successful achievement of this status.<sup>88</sup> In a straight-forward and uncontroversial manner, the Melanchthonian *sage* is a natural theologian: the purpose of encyclopedic knowledge, and, implicitly, of self-knowledge, is the search for the knowledge of the transcendent, divine cause and purpose of the intelligibility of the world. On the other hand, Melanchthon's *sage* is bound to the limits of his own cognition, since the knowledge of the divine, however desirable, is only available within the limits of his own understanding. This understanding is bound to the evidence of principles, to common sense and the rules of discourse, which permeate every process of human cognition. However trivial and unreflected upon these presuppositions of knowledge-acquisition may seem, they represent a secure basis for Melanchthon's development of a method of uncovering "true meaning" in the discursive and natural realm. They replace any exercise of logical-metaphysical abstraction leading to a realm of separated intelligibles and they provide the starting points for an entire encyclopedia of knowledge. Thus, they are used as the grounds for a method that secures the integration into this encyclopedia of formerly strictly regimented categories of knowledge – speculative, practical, productive – and thus, obliterate any strict (essential or methodical) delineations between them. This project of reforming and constructing a universal "cycle of arts" encouraged Melanchthon to look for and elaborate the most appropriate method of inter-

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normas. Rectissime igitur additur huic definitioni usitatae: Virtus est habitus, inclinans voluntatem, ut constanter obediat recto iudicio propter Deum, ut et gratitudinem ei declaret, et Dei voluntatem aliis ostendat [...]"

87 Frank, 2008, 573.

88 Hunter, 2006, 42.

preting and structuring all fields of human knowledge and anchor it in the criteria of certainty or the ultimate grounds of knowledge enumerated above. While the subsequent dialectic and rhetoric textbooks display the gradual elaboration and extension of this method, the philosophical textbooks display the material structured according to the method taught and provide also, by means of inserted chapters on the theological and philosophical presuppositions of knowledge, the foundations from which they are deduced as artistic wholes. This encyclopedic project of Melanchthon, devoid of metaphysics and structured by key-topics and along rhetorical-dialectical lines, will come to a full recognition at the beginning of the seventeenth century in the hands of Calvinist polymaths as Johann Heinrich Alsted(1588–1638) and Bartholomew Keckermann(1572–1609).<sup>89</sup> In his *Praecognitum Philosophicorum Libri Duo*, Keckermann refers to Melanchthon's *method* as the appropriate way of teaching, since it does not comment and annotate the text to be taught, in the traditional fashion, by extending it even further and explaining it in detail, but it orders the parts of the discipline according to its nature and scope. This method is to be preferred since it reflects the guiding light of systematic teaching.<sup>90</sup> It has to be the subject of further research how the Melanchthonian encyclopedic concept of philosophy and of method – as consisting in a productive and creative approach to discourse and reality, was to be taken over and integrated in the works of the seventeenth century pansophists.

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89 Schmitt-Bigemann, 81–154, 1983; Hotson, 2007, 127–254; Hunter, 2008, 50–56.

90 *Praecogn. Phil.*, 134 : “[...] Prior est, quando disciplinae alicuius systema sive methodus eiusmodi formatur, qualis ex ipsa disciplinae natura et scopo formari velut in Idea debet. Altera ratio est, quando disciplinae textualiter tractantur, id est, quando textus alicuius veteris aut recentis autoris annotationibus vel Commentariis vel dilatatur vel explanatur. Prior docendi ratio posteriori longissime praeferenda est; quia in explicando aliorum textun plerumque non potest Auditoribus ea lux et fax Methodi, quam lucet in dextre conformatis Systematibus. Id quod et Phil. Melanchthon, Sturmius et alii praestantes Doctores animadverterunt, ut suo loco citabimus.” Cf. Keßler, 2006, 197.

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## 5. General Conclusion: *Quae ratione philosophia tractanda sit*<sup>1</sup>

I have introduced this study with a broad discussion concerning the problems of the appropriate interpretation of Renaissance texts. Now that I have arrived at the end, I have to confess that the only manner in which it seemed plausible to me to approach the Melanchthonian oeuvre was, by following to a certain extent, Melanchthon's own dialectical and rhetorical method. Thus, I found myself in the position to read his books on dialectic and rhetoric and ask: What is the subject matter of Melanchthon's texts? What does Melanchthon intend to provide by writing these texts? How are the arguments disposed? To what end? What transformations does Melanchthon bring forth by the adoption of concepts deeply entrenched in a millennial tradition of dialectic and rhetoric, and why does he undertake these transformations? The answers to all of these questions have been given above, subsequently and repeatedly, by a thorough, at times, tiring analysis of his most well-known and widespread works on dialectic and rhetoric. The answers are anything but neatly deduced from the texts themselves. A historical and conceptual framework which I have tried to map out in the second chapter of my study facilitated a closer understanding of the Melanchthonian concepts of dialectic, rhetoric and method. This is indeed a procedure which Melanchthon would have underscored. In reading historical texts, he would have urged an attentive inquiry into the circumstances and purpose of the work in question. While my focus rested rather on the conceptual transformations than on the historical contextualization, I have nevertheless tried to refer repeatedly to the historical and institutional context of the emergence and development of Melanchthonian method and philosophy. This context has shaped the way Melanchthon saw himself, the way he appreciated his position and role as a teacher, and the way he believed philosophy should be conceived and philosophers should be educated in the German universities of the sixteenth

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<sup>1</sup> CR 16, 283 ff. Melanchthon again indicates here, as Frank has shown, that his own method of interpreting (Aristotelian) philosophical precepts is by means of selecting key concepts – *loci* – and elaborating on their importance and usefulness. See Frank, 2012, 60, note 66.

century. Melanchthon's project was determined by an endeavor to educate erudite teachers, theologians, jurists, clerks and preachers who are clearheaded and down to earth, and fully comprehend their duty towards their community, the state and the Church. This is why, his reform is one that permeates all levels of education. It starts with the dull practice of learning to read and write, continues with a critical interpretation of texts and leads to the exercise of clear speech and critical thinking put to use in intricate theological and political debates. From Heinz Scheible's biography of Melanchthon one gets the feeling that the Humanist and Reformer had never actually belonged to himself. All his works and endeavours, which were exhausting and, in the end proved to be health - wrecking, were dedicated to the reform of education, to the appeasement of theological conflicts and to the inculcation of a spirit of civil duty and active life. It is the historical context of the German territories in the upheaval of Reformation, of institutional change determined by the spread of Humanism throughout Northern Europe, and of social disruption caused by religious conflict from which an original concept of philosophy emerges. This concept unites all knowledge branches and provides them with a method of textual interpretation, ordered argumentation and a structuring principle which would allow, a systematic teaching and learning practice and a direct access to all philosophical matters. Moreover, it would disclose the variety and multitude of philosophical subjects, their interrelatedness and the necessity to learn and teach them together with the help of the wisest ancient authors and their most diverse doctrines. Also, after having read, analysed and learned to argue and write independently, the philosophical apprentice would have to bring his knowledge into the world and make use of it as much as possible. This methodically constructed, all-encompassing and practice-oriented system of knowledge is what I have tried to describe as carefully as possible as "Philipp Melanchthon's humanist concept of philosophy". I have offered a radiography of the conceptual armature of his dialectical and rhetorical method of interpretation by focusing on his original reinterpretation of the theory of the status, the logic of argumentation, and the theory of demonstration. I have paid attention to the implicit theological and epistemological presuppositions and revealed his integrative conversation with ancient, medieval and contemporary authorities. By putting flesh on the bones of the system of rules, I have looked into the relevance of this method for the "cycle of arts" and into the importance of this art of human reasoning for philosophical knowledge. The result was the display of a fully fledged organism whose sinews (compared by Melanchthon with the rules of syllogistic inference) arborized through a wealthy tissue of erudition covering mathematical, astronomical, astrological, historical, poetical, rhetorical, medical, biological, physical, ethical, political and theological subjects disposed in a harmonious morphology of discourse. This is the living body of philosophy

which the Melanchthonian understanding puts forth, and this is the entire field of erudition into which the philosopher – as theologian and interpreter of nature – has to emerge in. Here one puts it all to use in civil and theological affairs. To state it in Hunter's terms, Melanchthon devises a concept of philosophy in which dialectical-rhetorical exercises of method determine an appropriate understanding and interpretation of texts and the natural world. These exercises qualify him to acquire the necessary knowledge for becoming a righteous interpreter of philosophy, of the divine creation; and an active member of the political community. Thereby, this method engenders the virtue of temperance and modesty by means of integrating literary and philosophical knowledge and bringing forth the illustrious achievements and examples of the wisest men. It sharpens the mind and implicitly raises awareness of the power of man's inherent capacity for structuring and understanding logical, natural and historical connections. This study has shown how this method arose, what its historical and conceptual presuppositions were, and on what epistemological and metaphysical grounds it rests.

Two other aspects have been touched by the reflection on a "Humanistic" understanding of philosophy. One is the manner in which Humanism and philosophy are connected. This study has only tackled the case of Melanchthon's approach to philosophy from his self-understanding as Humanist. Although I have repeatedly observed that his focus differed from that of his peers (like Vives, Agricola or Valla), this does not turn him into less of a Humanist or of a philosopher. I believe that there is no such thing as an opposition between philosophy and humanism. There is of course, as there always has been, a plurality of perspectives on what philosophy is and what its functions and features are. It remains the scope of further studies to show how various Humanists developed and applied their concepts of philosophical knowledge and how they differentiated them from other concepts, upheld by their peers. What becomes clear from the Melanchthonian concept of philosophy is that it is equally entrenched in ethical habits, logical techniques, argumentative exercises, practices of self-emendation, and in the dialogue with other philosophical traditions, as any other philosophy we accept without questioning its philosophical *nature*.

Another aspect is the historical thesis of Aristotelianism of the sixteenth century, and, in particular, the thesis that Melanchthon's textbooks on dialectics were, like most of the Humanist dialectics, versions of simplified Aristotelian logic.<sup>2</sup> From what I have shown above in a detailed exposition of his textbooks, Melanchthon's logic can as well be classified as Ciceronian or Stoic. Since I have shown that his book on categories and predicables represents an integrative part of rhetorical invention, one could also conclude that his dialectic is deeply

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2 Ashworth, 2008, 610.

rhetorical; Agricola, Erasmus, Cicero and Quintilian may count as its main contributors. The *Erroremata* integrates Aristotelian, Ciceronian, Stoic, Platonic and medieval thought. Yet, singling out a unique philosophical allegiance to Melanchthonian thought would miss the point of the Melanchthonian project. So would the emphasis on eclecticism. This is because, I believe, there is no such thing as a non-eclectic philosophy in the sense that the framework in which we conceptualize is deeply influenced by a variety of traditions in an unheroic contingent manner. Thus, I have taken the notion of Humanism to come closest to Melanchthon's self-understanding of philosophy and the notion of "universal" or "encyclopedic" to come closest to what his philosophy amounts to: the methodical interpretations and disposition of all branches of human knowledge. Melanchthon's works on logic and dialectic are original Humanist re-interpretations of the *trivium*, developing and growing in detail and differentiation from the first edition of 1519 to his last in 1547. While, in contrast to other philosophical "heroes" he pays tribute to his intellectual fathers and grandfathers, Melanchthon develops a method of analysis (interpretation), generation (production) of discourse, and organization (argumentation and structuring) of knowledge which outpaces its competitors in its theoretical extension and practical application.

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