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Accommodation, *Decorum*, and *Disputatio*: Matteo Ricci's
The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven as a
Renaissance Humanist Disputation

Roberto Sebastian Leon

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Accommodation, *Decorum*, and *Disputatio*: Matteo Ricci's
The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven as a
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Matteo Ricci's *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (1603) has been studied extensively by scholars of the Jesuit China Mission, especially in terms of accommodation through means of Scholastic and Humanist arguments and translation choices. Few of these studies, however, discuss the genre of this work (disputation), nor consider this genre in relation to Renaissance rhetorical teachings and how this relationship informs Ricci's accommodative strategies. The purpose of this paper is to remedy this gap in early modern Jesuit scholarship. Through a review of the history of accommodations in disputations in the Aristotelian-Scholastic and Ciceronian-Humanist traditions, this paper claims that *True Meaning* is a Humanist disputation, not only because Ricci translated Christian terms into Chinese and draws references from classical sources, but also because this text follows strategies taught in the Humanist, but not the Scholastic curriculum. If *True Meaning* is a Humanist disputation, then Ricci's teachings should be reconsidered from the perspective of Renaissance rhetoric, which sheds further light on how Ricci's work fits into Renaissance culture and the transformation of the early modern disputation genre, as well as provides further explanation of the Western accommodation paradigm Ricci brought to China, which is prior to understanding how Ricci was transformed by China.

Keywords: Matteo Ricci, disputation, accommodation, Jesuit China Mission, rhetoric, decorum, Humanism, Renaissance

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Introduction

Scholars agree that Matteo Ricci's 天主實義 (*Tiānzhǔ Shíyì*) or *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (1603) is a major text in the early modern Jesuit encounter with Late Ming China.¹ Based on material from Ricci's fellow missionaries and real discussions and debates between Ricci and Chinese intellectuals, *True Meaning* outlines arguments designed to convert Chinese Confucians to Christianity. These arguments show how Confucianism represents a natural step towards Christianity by discussing subjects such as the nature of God, the nature of the soul, the cultivation of virtue, and the customs of Catholic Europe. What is exceptionally unique about this text is that Ricci makes his argument by referencing the Confucian canon rather than referencing Christian scripture, citing Confucian texts about 86 times and the Bible only about 7 times.²

Scholarship into why Ricci used Confucian texts to support Christian doctrine has focused on the issue of whether Ricci was influenced by an official Jesuit accommodation strategy or by his experiences of trial and error. As outlined by Nicolas Standaert, a historian of cultural contact between early modern China and Europe, the often discussed "Jesuit accommodation strategy" that may have influenced Ricci consists of four strategies: 1) adaptation to Chinese lifestyle and manners, such as Ricci's adoption of Confucian robes and a Chinese name; 2) "evangelization 'from the top down,'" that is, seeking to convert government officials before seeking to convert the lower classes, such as Ricci's efforts to meet with the Ming Emperor, Wanli; 3) indirect evangelizing by sharing European science and technology,

¹ C.f. Hsia 239; Meynard, "Overlooked" 320; Schloesser 370.

² See Meynard's footnotes and index to the 2016 edition of *True Meaning*. The Confucian canon consists of the Five Classics (*Book of Songs*, *Book of Documents*, *Book of Rites*, *Book of Changes*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals*), supposedly collected by Confucius, and the Four Books (*Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Analects*, and *Mencius*), all of which, with the exception of *Mencius*, containing a record of the words of Confucius.

such as Ricci's Chinese translation, with his friend Xu Guangqi, of Euclid's *Elements*; and 4) "Openness to and tolerance of Chinese values," such as Ricci's apparently tolerant attitude toward ancestor worship ("Corporate" 352-353).³ Standaert points out that these strategies have generally been traced to "official Jesuit documents" (353). These documents include the *Spiritual Exercises* (1548), a meditation manual; the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (1553), a collection of instructions and procedures for the governance of the Jesuit order; and various letters from the early Jesuit fathers, all of which do not discuss accommodation in the context of rhetoric. Similarly, these scholars who believe that Ricci came to China with a formal accommodation method do not connect this method to rhetoric.

Of these scholars who discuss the origins of the accommodation strategy that Ricci brought to China, only two have connected the strategy to rhetoric, and only one has discerned this rhetorical accommodation strategy in Ricci's *True Meaning* specifically. John O'Malley, a historian of early modern religious culture and rhetoric, rather than naming strategies, suggests that Jesuit accommodation practices are based on rhetoric. By rhetoric, O'Malley refers to the ability to connect with an audience and mold self and message to the audience's expectations: "Essential to [successful oratory] was the orator's ability to be in touch with the feelings and needs of his audience and to adapt himself and his speech accordingly" (255). From the *Spiritual Exercises* and other teachings influenced by Renaissance Humanism, O'Malley suggests that "the Jesuits were constantly advised in all their ministries to adapt what they said and did to times, circumstances, and persons" (255). He concludes that rhetoric, therefore, "was a basic principle in all their ministries, even if they did not explicitly identify it as rhetorical" (255). Of Ricci, O'Malley says that it was more than wearing Chinese robes that revealed

³ See also Von Collani, "Missionizing" 49; Harris 158-159; Muller 461; Sebes 42. For general mentions of accommodation in Ricci that do not follow this partition, see Cevera 220, Mungello 15, and Prieto 396-7.

accommodative practices. Rather, Ricci and the Chinese Jesuits “carried their pastoral principle of accommodation to times, places, and circumstances to its utmost expression” (342). While O’Malley recognizes aspects of rhetoric at play in Jesuit practices, he does not study accommodation in *True Meaning* specifically.

Stephen Schloesser, a historian of Jesuit history, does connect rhetoric to *True Meaning*, but does so using O’Malley’s definitions of rhetoric and adaptation. Schloesser calls the Jesuit accommodation practice the Jesuit “rhetorical principle,” which, “Opposing. . . essentialist and universalist values prized by certain strands of medieval scholasticism descended from Aristotle, . . . privileged the thoroughly contingent here-and-now” (348). Hence he calls *True Meaning* a “radically ‘rhetorical’ piece. . . because [Ricci] adapted to his audience in a shrewdly accommodating way” (370). Schloesser’s “shrewd accommodation” refers to Ricci’s “attitude toward his translation” of the Four Books of Confucianism from Classical Chinese to Latin and back to Classical Chinese in an effort to identify references to a monotheism and rebuttals to Buddhist anti-Christian arguments; Schloesser says nothing, however, about other adaptations to times, circumstances, and persons (367). Both O’Malley and Schloesser treat of rhetoric only in the general sense of communication that is tailored to an audience.

Other scholars reject that the Jesuits brought an accommodation strategy to China and instead suggest that the Jesuits and Ricci invented accommodation strategies in response to cultural exigencies of Chinese political culture. Eric Zürcher, a historian of Chinese Buddhism, explains that other minority, non-native religions in China, such as Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, had to conform to a “‘cultural imperative’” that religious teachings should accord with the orthodoxy of Confucianism or be dismissed as dangerously heterodox: “no marginal religion penetrating from the outside could expect to take root in China (at least at that social

level) unless it conformed to that pattern” (“Accommodation” 40-41). Zürcher then concludes that Ricci learned about this “cultural imperative” gradually, rather than from the beginning: “he must only gradually have realized, with a rare combination of intelligence, intuition, and a growing knowledge of the Chinese situation, that this was the only viable way” (41). Standaert and others are of the same opinion (“Corporate” 356-357).⁴ Scholars who emphasize the trial-and-error approach also do not discuss their claim in the context of rhetoric.

Another issue in Ricci scholarship has been the identification of Ricci’s source material. Some scholars consider *True Meaning* a Scholastic text because Ricci uses Aristotelian-Scholastic terminology and because he draws arguments from the Scholastic theologian St. Thomas Aquinas. These scholars consider the presence of Aristotelian terms translated into Chinese and argumentation strategies to be indicative of Scholastic thought. Joachim Kurtz, a professor of intellectual history, in the process of tracing the introduction of Western logic to China, points out that Ricci was trained using logical textbooks from Francisco de Toledo and Pedro Da Fonseca, which are commonly considered Scholastic textbooks (25).⁵ Because of this training in logic, Ricci includes terms such as Substance and Accident (32), the Four Causes, and the Universal and Particular in *True Meaning* (30-31).⁶ The sinologist Jacques Gernet believes that Ricci is essentially teaching the Chinese scholastic philosophy through these terms: “Ricci does in effect attempt to teach the Chinese to reason in accordance with the rules of scholastic philosophy. . . . Ricci makes use of the entire logical apparatus inherited from classical Antiquity and medieval scholasticism” (243).

⁴ See Harris 156; Rule 11; Sebes 38.

⁵ For references to Toledo and Fonseca as Scholastic philosophers, see Knuuttila 249; Nuchelmans 8, 34; Brady and Gurr 765-766.

⁶ See also Bettray 193; Hsia 226, 228; Rule 33; Shen 64; Wiest 40.

Scholars who identify Scholastic material in *True Meaning* also concentrate on Ricci's use of arguments from Thomistic theology. Standaert simply states that Ricci frequently cites material from Thomistic theology: "These writings were primarily based on the works of Thomistic theology as the missionaries had been taught these in their formation" ("Jesuits" 181). Mary Laven, another historian of early modern Europe, is similarly brief, referring to Thomistic analogies rather than theology: "Drawing on the traditional arguments of Catholic theology-- especially the thirteenth-century writings of Thomas Aquinas-- Ricci made extensive use of vivid analogies in order to persuade his readers of the truth of these Christian persuasions" (201). The philosopher Thierry Meynard, in his footnotes to the 2016 edition of *True Meaning*, suggests that Ricci cites Aquinas 52 times for theological arguments and analogies. An example of a Thomistic theological argument can be found, as Meynard suggests, when Ricci says that "phenomena cannot come into being of themselves" (1.34), echoing the *Summa Theologica*: "There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself" (Ia, q.2, a. 3). The philosopher Vincent Shen also recognizes the Thomist arguments in this section: "A great part of his proofs came from St. Thomas' *quinque viae*, the five ways" of proving the existence of God (61). Ricci is also considered Thomistic in regards to his choice to argue from natural reason. The historian Joan-Pau Rubiés refers to Aquinas' approach to Christianity in *Summa contra Gentiles*, in which Aquinas claims that Christianity is more rational than Judaism and Islam, as precedent for Ricci's choices to argue from natural reason (259-260). The early Jesuits in China, Rubiés concludes, based their rational approach to faith on "the Thomistic assumption that rationality, the pre-requisite for an orderly, sophisticated, and prosperous social life in Renaissance thinking . . . was the best basis upon which Christianity could rest" (263).⁷

⁷ See also Lancashire, Kuo-Chen, and Meynard 6; Meynard, "Overlooked" 304 (and footnote 1);

Other scholars consider *True Meaning* a Humanistic text because of either Ricci's method of translating Christian terms into Chinese, or of Ricci's method of referencing Western classical literature. Some note the references without classifying the work as Humanist. Scholars, however, do identify similarities between Ricci's Christianization of Confucian terms and the Humanists' Christianization of Roman and Greek concepts. By way of example, the historians Howard Goodman and Anthony Grafton find the Christianization of texts to be a prevalent practice among Humanists, citing Justus Lipsius' *De Constantia* (1583), which showed how Stoic teachings complemented Christian teachings, and they suggest that Ricci was trained in such practices (103-106).⁸ Goodman and Grafton then continue this focus on translation by showing how this practice applies to Ricci's well-documented choice to use the Confucian terms *Shangdi* ("Sovereign on High") and *Tianzhu* ("Lord of Heaven") to translate *Deus* or God (108-114).⁹ By selecting these terms for translation, Ricci draws obvious connections between these two schools of thought.

Scholars also consider Ricci's references to Western classical literature an indication of Humanist thought. In his footnotes to *True Meaning*, Meynard notes that Ricci cites about 12 classical authors, including Aesop, Cicero, Diogenes the Cynic, Diogenes Laertius, Empedocles, Epicurus, Marcus Aurelius, Pliny the Elder, Plutarch, Seneca, and Plato. A comparative literature scholar, Sher-Shiueh Li, and Meynard, have investigated Ricci's use of these authors as the rhetorical strategy of arguing from example (Li and Meynard 13).¹⁰ Only one scholar, however, has suggested that *True Meaning* is a Humanist text because of these references. Patrick Provost-Smith, a professor of intellectual history and critical theory, considers *True*

and Rule, "Chinese" 109.

⁸ See also Meynard, "Overlooked" 311, 319; Poli 181; Schloesser 367; Spalatin 71.

⁹ See also Cassady 9; Cawley 299-301; Kim 1; Lancashire, Kuo-Chen, and Meynard 18-22; Wu 128-162.

¹⁰ See also Li 40-44.

Meaning Humanistic rather than Scholastic because he believes that Scholastics would not cite or consider translating from classical literature (49). In the context of Ricci's other works, scholars, such as Goodman and Grafton, also seem to be of the opinion that the Humanists are marked for their use of classical literature (102).¹¹ While scholars consider Ricci's Humanist and Scholastic source material, and in the case of Li and Meynard, consider how these sources might be used rhetorically, they do not consider other ways in which Ricci's work has been shaped by rhetoric.

A sub-issue in determining whether *True Meaning* is a Scholastic or a Humanist text is the genre. Scholars who believe the genre is Scholastic focus on Ricci's argumentation, while at the same time scholars note incompatibilities between Scholastic argumentation and the apparent Humanist dialogue genre of *True Meaning*.¹² The historian Jean-Paul Wiest recognizes both Ricci's "western logic, codified in the rigid laws of scholastic argumentation" in *True Meaning* and Ricci's usually non-confrontational mien, since he "placed great emphasis on harmonious relationships" (40). David Mungello, another historian, also recognizes Ricci's "Scholastic deductive logic" on the one hand and Ricci's "Humanist emphasis on compositional structure and rhetorical persuasion" on the other (28). Because of Ricci's structure, Mungello concludes that *True Meaning* is a Humanist Platonic dialogue comparable to Galileo's *Dialogo sopra i due massimi del mondo* (1632) (28). Mungello probably believes that *True Meaning* is a Humanist Platonic dialogue because in his estimation any dialogue must be a Platonic dialogue, since, as he understands history, such dialogues are "a favored literary form for argumentative presentations" for Renaissance Humanists (28). Schloesser similarly compares *True Meaning* to

¹¹ Maryks, "Principle" 87, 91, 97; Modras 109; Spalatin 71; Standaert "Renaissance" 370, 377; Zürcher, "Rhetoric" 334.

¹² It is also assumed that missionaries before Ricci relied more on Scholastic argumentation than Chinese texts as Ricci did. See Von Collani "Accommodation" 25.

Humanist dialogues, saying that *True Meaning* is written in the “Platonic dialogue form reminiscent of Erasmus’s *The Godly Feast (Convivium religiosum, 1522)*” (368). Schloesser likely classifies *True Meaning* in this way because *The Godly Feast* contains multiple interlocutors and a discussion between adherents of different religions, some of whom praise non-Christians, such as Cicero, for teaching truth, similar to how Ricci praises non-Christians, such as Confucius. Provost-Smith similarly assumes that the dialogue genre is typical of Humanists, and says that *True Meaning* is Humanistic because it is written in the dialogue genre instead of the Scholastic *quaestio* genre that is composed of a series of questions and answers (49).

Wiest, Mungello, Schloesser, and Provost-Smith, however, overlook the genre Ricci had in mind. As mentioned earlier, Ricci gives two subtitles in his Latin summary of *True Meaning* which define the intended genre. When *True Meaning* was published in Beijing, Ricci sent a Latin summary of the Mandarin text to the Father General of the Jesuit order in Rome, in which he gave *True Meaning* two titles: *Catechismus Sinicus* and *De Deo verax Disputatio*. *True Meaning* was originally intended to be a *Catechismus*-- a catechism, as Ricci was tasked to revise the catechism of his predecessor, Michele Ruggieri.¹³ Laven believes that this title means that Ricci’s work is comparable to other catechisms, such as that of Peter Canisius, which were used for polemical purposes (203-204). While Ricci did in fact set out to write a catechism of that sort, Ricci’s final work is a richer *disputatio*, which includes not only exposition but also extended exchanges between interlocutors. As Ricci’s translators, Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen note in their introduction to *True Meaning*, Ricci’s final work is much more

¹³ 天主聖教實錄 (*Tiānzhǔ Shèngjiào Shílù*) or *Vera et brevis divinarum rerum expositio* (1584). See Gernet 17; Rule 11.

“philosophical-theological” than a catechism (30). Ricci’s second title, therefore, is more significant: *True Meaning* is a *disputatio*, a disputation.

Only Paul Rule, an Australian sinologist, has recognized that *True Meaning* is a disputation. Unfortunately, Rule only considers a disputation “an argument about matters of religion” (33). Disputation, however, is more than a religious argument. Rather, disputation is a specific genre of Scholastic debate. As Paul Grendler, a historian of the Italian Renaissance, defines it, a disputation is “a formal debate” in which “Two or more disputants argue[] according to Aristotelian principles of argumentation for and against various propositions in order to arrive at the truth” (152-153).¹⁴ Jonathan Spence, a professor of Chinese history, in his oft-cited *Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, explains that Ricci was trained in this type of debate. Spence even connects this training in disputation to preparation for missionary service: “The Jesuits were probably trained as well as anyone in the world at the time for mission service overseas” due to their training in Scholastic disputations, which “gave extraordinary training. . . in structuring argument, [and in] analyzing their own faith” (100). While *True Meaning* is a disputation, Ricci scholars have yet to explain why *True Meaning* contains both Scholastic and Humanist elements.

Although scholars have identified both Scholastic and Humanist sources for Ricci’s arguments and translation choices, their concentration on arguments has led to the neglect of the question of the genre of *True Meaning*, which would serve to further classify this text. These oversights are due to an inadequate understanding of the distinctions between the Scholastic and Humanist curricula. Because of this deficient understanding, Ricci scholars have not been able to see that the accommodation strategy Ricci uses descends from the teachings of the Christian Humanists, not the Scholastics, making *True Meaning* a Humanist disputation and not a

¹⁴ See also Murphy 102.

Scholastic disputation. In this paper, I claim that Ricci's *True Meaning* is a Humanist disputation, not only because Ricci translated Christian terms into Chinese and draws references from classical sources, but also because this text follows strategies taught in the Humanist, but not the Scholastic curriculum. If *True Meaning* is a Humanist disputation, then Ricci's teachings should be reconsidered from the perspective of Renaissance rhetoric, which sheds further light on how Ricci's work fits into Renaissance culture and the transformation of the disputation genre, as well as provides further explanation of the Western accommodation paradigm Ricci brought to China. An understanding of this paradigm is prior to understanding how Ricci was transformed by China.

In order to show that Ricci's understanding of disputation in *True Meaning* is Humanist rather than Scholastic, I will first outline a history of the theory of respectful discourse in Scholastic disputation from its roots in Aristotle to its development by the Scholastics. Second, I will outline a history of the theory of respectful discourse or *decorum* in Christian Humanist rhetoric from its roots in Cicero to its development by the Humanists and the Jesuits. Third, I will analyze Ricci's own theory of respectful discourse in relation to these two traditions.

Aristotle and the Scholastics

The Scholastics derive their understanding of disputation from Aristotle's teachings on logic and dialectic, wherein is found a limited theory of respectful discourse. As is well understood, Aristotle teaches that logic and dialectic are distinct forms of argumentation. He defines logic ("*apódeixis*") as argumentation ("*sylogismós*" or "*logós*") which proceeds from "primary and true" premises, and dialectic ("*dialektikòs*") as argumentation which proceeds from

“generally accepted opinions” (*Topica* I.1.100b17-18).¹⁵ Because these disciplines are distinct in Aristotle’s mind, he provides different guidelines of courtesy for each. In a logical discussion or demonstration, the way to appropriate discourse for the philosopher should not be concerned with how an interlocutor responds, but rather with being as clear and truthful as possible: “the philosopher and individual seeker does not care if. . . the answerer refuses to admit” the premises and “indeed the philosopher may perhaps even be eager that his axioms should be as familiar and as near the starting-point as possible” (*Topica* VIII.1.155b10-16). Because demonstration proceeds from “primary and true” premises (*Topica* I.1.100a25-30) and is “didactic” (“*didaskalikoî*” [*On Sophistical Refutations* 2.165b2]), it is by nature appropriate and, as Aristotle says in *On Rhetoric*, “persuasive” (I.1.1355a12).¹⁶ Dialectic, however, does concern itself with how an interlocutor responds or does not respond appropriately to organized argumentation: the “arrangement of material and the framing of questions are the peculiar province of the dialectician; for such a proceeding always involves a relation with another party” (VIII.1.155b8-10).

Aristotle gives one general guideline for dialectic: disputants should have a common purpose. Marta Spranzi, a scholar of the history and philosophy of science, emphasizes Aristotle’s rule for governing dialectic: disputants should have a “‘common task (‘*koinon ergon*’ (161a22))” or “‘a common purpose (‘*koinon prokeimenon*’ (161a38-39))” (Spranzi 29). Spranzi paraphrases Aristotle’s three purposes of dialectic outlined in *Topica* I.101a25-101b4—“mental training (‘*gymnasia*’), conversation (*enteuxis*’), and the ‘philosophical sciences (‘*kata philosophian epistemeis*’)” – and highlights this third “epistemic function of dialectic” (19). Olga Weijers, an expert on the history of disputation, also understands the common purpose of

¹⁵ See also *Sophistical Refutations* II.165b2-3, *Topica* I.14.105b30-34.

¹⁶ Weijers is also of the opinion that demonstration in *Topica* and didactic arguments in *On Sophistical Refutations* are synonymous concepts (*Disputation Techniques* 77).

dialectical disputation to essentially be “the genuine, shared effort to reach the truth” (*Teaching and Debating* 125). With this tacit agreement to put truth first, the interlocutors dispute according to procedures which focus on misleading the answerer in the disputation. The questioner’s purpose, Aristotle explains, is to lead the answerer into “giv[ing] the most paradoxical replies that necessarily result because of the thesis,” whereas the answerer’s purpose is to avoid falling into this trap by “mak[ing] it seem that the impossible or paradoxical is not his fault but is due to the thesis” (*Topica* VIII.4.159a19-23).¹⁷ Various strategies to accomplish this misdirection include “conceal[ing] the conclusion” (VIII.1.155b21-28), “leav[ing the argument] obscure” (VIII.1.156b6-9), “prolong[ing] the argument and . . . introduc[ing] into it points which are of no worth” (VIII.1.157a2-4).¹⁸ The disputant who answers questions will ideally “concede all points which are generally accepted and all those not generally accepted which are less generally rejected than the conclusion aimed at” (VIII.5.159b16-17). Also, the disputant who asks questions will not become upset with the process of disputation and thereby transform the disputation from a dialectical disputation to a contentious disputation (VIII.11.161a23-25).¹⁹ The audience in a disputation will be two dialecticians, with perhaps a difference in authority because one dialectician will teach the other: “It is clear, then, that a mere questioner and a man who is imparting knowledge have not the same right to claim an admission” (VIII.4.159a13-14). According to Aristotle, by concentrating on purpose and method, one will participate in a good disputation.

The Scholastic dialecticians continue to follow Aristotle’s division of logic and dialectic, but see logical demonstration as a kind of disputation rather than just a different form of

¹⁷ See also VIII.1.155b21-28; Kneale and Kneale 300; Stump, “*Dialectic*” 161; Novikoff, *Medieval Culture* 117.

¹⁸ See also VIII.1.156b4-5; VIII.1.156b19; VIII.1.156b23-24; VIII.1.157a7-8.

¹⁹ See also *On Sophistical Refutations* 11.171b21-30.

argumentation. Early Scholastics in the Middle Ages, such as John of Salisbury and Peter of Spain, follow Aristotle's division of logic and dialectic. In *Metalogicon* (1159), a defense of the liberal arts, John explains that demonstration functions regardless of an audience because it teaches truth. Therefore, John implicitly agrees with Aristotle's rules for demonstration:

It rejoices in necessity. It does not pay much attention to what various people think about a given proposition. Its sole concern is that a thing must be so. It thus befits the philosophical majesty of those who teach the truth, a majesty which is a result of its own conviction. . . , and independent of the assent of listeners. (79)

Dialectical disputation, however, proceeds from generally accepted opinions and seeks rather than teaches truth; it is "concerned with propositions which, to all or to many men, or at least to the wise, seem to be valid. . . it makes inquiry into the truth" (79). Peter of Spain, in his *Summulae Logicales* (c.1230), keeps logic and dialectic separate as well, but also makes logical demonstration a kind of disputation: "There are four kinds of disputation: didactic, dialectical, tentative (examination-arguments) and sophistical (contentious)" (77).²⁰ This list, Weijers explains, is "derived from" Aristotle's teachings in *On Sophistical Refutations* (77). Aristotle writes that logical demonstration and dialectical disputation are both kinds of "arguments used in discussion" ("*dialégesthai lógōn*" [2.165b2]) (77). The philosopher Boethius (c. 480–524) also writes that demonstration and dialectic are kinds of disputations: "disputation progresses by means of true and necessary arguments (this is called a discipline and demonstration)" (*In Ciceronis Topica*, 2.6-2.7).²¹

²⁰ "*Disputationis autem quatuor sunt species. Alia namque est doctrinalis, alia dialetica, alia temptativa, alia sophistica*" (De Rijk 90, VII.4)

²¹ ". . . aut enim ueris ac necessariis argumentationibus disputatio decurrit & disciplina, uel demonstratio nuncupatur" ("Topica" 760)

Regarding dialectic, the early Scholastics accept Aristotle's common purpose rule for dialectical disputation, add more rules, and transform some of Aristotle's disputation methods. Peter Abelard, in *Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew, and a Christian* (c.1136-1139), asserts that if there is an "agreement and mutual consent" and all interlocutors involved will work together to pursue truth, then "there is no disputation so frivolous that it does not contain some instructive lesson" (23).²² John of Salisbury writes that one should check improper disputation by going back to Aristotle's teachings on how to conduct an appropriate disputation: "The excess of those who think dialectical discussion consists in unbridled loquacity should have been restrained by Aristotle" (92). John also adds the following rules for dialectical disputation:

1) Disputation should be kept within the proper limits so as to preserve the teaching aspect of the practice ("once we go beyond the proper limits, everything works in reverse, and excessive subtlety devours utility" [90]).

2) Disputation should not become an end unto itself ("Nothing is more disgusting than subtlety by [itself] and for itself" [90]).

3) Disputation should be moderate ("checked by the reins of moderation"

[92]).²³ Similarly, the theologian Robert Goulet, in his *Compendium* (1517) or introduction to the University of Paris, recommends Peter of Spain's *Summulae Logicales*, the commentaries of the medieval logician George of Brussels, the Renaissance Aristotelian Jacques Lefèvre d'Étapes, and the Renaissance logician John Mair (110). According to Ricardo García Villoslada, Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, would have been trained using these texts (307). Goulet adds five rules which for the most part implicitly reaffirm Aristotle's common search for truth and contradict Aristotle's rules for trickery:

²² "*Quia tamen hoc ex conducto, et pari statuistis consensu. . . et nullam adeo frivolum disputationem arbitror, ut non aliquod habeat documentum*" ("Dialogus" 1614).

²³ See also Novikoff *Medieval Culture* 110.

- 1) one should not use dialectic “as an end in itself” (96)
- 2) one should not seek to “vanquish [one’s] opponent in an argument” (96)
- 3) one should not use “the audacity of clamorous words” (96)
- 4) one should not be given to “excessive argumentation” (96), and
- 5) one should not “employ in obscuring and hiding the truth the very instrument formed to aid it” (96).

Other Scholastics also add rules for a new role, that of the *praeses* or professor tasked with regulating disputations. Eleonore Stump, a historian of medieval philosophy, suggests that there may be some indication of the presence of others besides the questioner and answerer in Aristotle’s *Topica*. In her notes to Boethius’ *De Topicis Differentiis*, Stump lists *Topica* 158a8-11, 161b16-18, 162a8-9, and 162b16-18 as indications of her belief that others are represented in Aristotle’s conception of the roles in a disputation (164). However, only 161b16-18 clearly suggests that there may be multiple questioners: “the questioners and the arguments are not open to the same kind of criticism.” While the inclusion of *praeses* has some precedent in Aristotle, later dialecticians develop the role further. In his influential doctoral dissertation on disputations from the 1550s to the 1750s, Donald Felipe explains that some Renaissance dialecticians, including Johannes Felwinger, Rudolphus Goclenius, Joachim Langius, Robert Sanderson, Johannes Schneider, Bartholomaeus Keckermann, and Clement Timpler, also add rules for *praeses* or heads. Many of these dialecticians write specifically about the obligational disputation. As Weijers notes, the obligational disputation, in which disputants tested the validity of a statement, followed the same procedure as Aristotle’s dialectical disputation: “each participant tried to induce the other to contradict himself” (*Disputation Techniques* 77). Weijers also explains that these kinds of disputation are derivatives of Aristotle’s dialectical disputations

(77-78). The duties of the *praeses* are to ensure that the disputation remains a learning tool by teaching, moderating, commenting on, and concluding the disputed argument:

- (1) pedagogical duties, i.e. duties to inform and teach the participants and auditors of the disputation.
- (2) duties of “moderating”: these duties are of two kinds, to keep “order” in the disputation, i.e., to prevent the disputation into extraneous matters, and to prevent provocation of anger and ill-will.
- (3) duties of responding and opposing, i.e. duties to help the Respondent and Opponent with arguments and responses.
- (4) duties to conclude, i.e. duties to bring the disputation to some kind of conclusion (Felipe 185)

Though not always uniform from one dialectician to the next, Renaissance dialecticians continue to develop rules to provide more direction on how a disputation should ideally be conducted.

These rules for appropriate disputation may come in response to abuses that the Scholastics see in disputation techniques. Abelard, for example, is well-known for taking dialectic to extremes. Alex Novikoff, an expert on Renaissance of the 12th Century and disputation culture, point out that Abelard is known for using public disputation as a means of humiliating those who distrusted him, rather than of leading others to see eye to eye with him (“Abelard” 324-325, 328). The medievalist Andrew Taylor also notes that “Abelard and his contemporaries repeatedly describe their debates in military terms, as clashes of arms, conflicts, or battles, often developing the metaphor at length” (16).²⁴ Taylor goes on to cite as evidences for the violent nature of dialectic St. Bernard’s description of Abelard as a Goliath (16) and Abelard’s description of his own encounter with William of Champeaux as a “siege” (17).

²⁴ See also Novikoff *Medieval Culture* 112.

Weijers remarks that this “degree of verbal violence” and also “vehement criticism,” in which, for example, “the adversary is explicitly mentioned and treated with a lack of respect,” was common (*Teaching and Debating* 124).²⁵ As is well known, John of Salisbury departed from Abelard on this matter, as the medieval historian Sir Richard W. Southern explains: he “fled from the contentious logic-chopping of Abelard’s pupils” (19).²⁶ John singles out a tendency in Scholastic dialectic to turn to unimportant matters as consequence of the temptation to focus on winning. John speaks against those who “are haranguing at the crossroads, and are teaching in public places [sic], and who have worn away, not merely ten or twenty years, but their whole life with logic as their sole concern.” These are people who “meticulously sift every syllable, yea every letter, of what has been said and written, doubting everything, ‘forever studying, but never acquiring knowledge.’ At length ‘they turn to babbling utter nonsense,’ and, at a loss as to what to say, or out of lack of a thesis, relieve their embarrassment by proposing new errors” (*Metalogicon* 88-89). To prevent these issues of haranguing, scrutinizing, and babbling, John and other Scholastics reiterate Aristotle’s common purpose rule by emphasizing the ends of disputation, add other rules for the regulation of disputation— such as avoiding loud speaking and obfuscation— and create new disputation methods— such as the development of the role of the *praeses*— to develop a theory of how respectful disputation ought to proceed.

Cicero and the Humanists

The Humanists, as opposed to the Scholastics, derive their understanding of the philosophical dialogue genre from Cicero’s teachings on philosophy and rhetoric-- teachings which specify a theory of respectful discourse that is much more developed than that of the

²⁵ See also *Disputation Techniques* 146-147.

²⁶ See also Taylor 22; Kneale and Kneale 225-226.

Scholastics because it accounts for more aspects of the speech situation in which a disputation occurs. Scholars widely recognize, as historian of Renaissance rhetoric Nancy Christiansen explains, that in Cicero's teachings "the arts of logic and dialectic have been conflated and subordinated to rhetoric" (93).²⁷ For example, in *Orator*, Cicero cites Aristotle's note that rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic (*On Rhetoric* I.1.1354a1), but adds that this means that rhetoric encompasses dialectic: "the difference obviously being that rhetoric was broader and logic narrower" (32.114). In *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero explains that he considers an art which adds rhetoric to philosophy to be most complete: "it has ever been my conviction that philosophy in its finished form [(*perfectam philosophiam*)] enjoys the power of treating the greatest problems with adequate fullness and in an attractive style [(*copiose posset ornateque dicere*)]" (1.4.7). Furthermore, Cicero writes in *On Ends* that there is indeed a rhetoric for philosophical discussions. Cicero's friend Torquatus, defending Epicureanism, claims to prefer rhetorical "continuous discourse [(*perpetua oratio*)]," and dismisses dialectic as "logic-chopping and quibbling [(*dialecticas captiones*)]" (2.6.17). Cicero responds that he will speak in a rhetorical manner, but specifically using the "rhetoric of the philosophers [(*rhetorica philosophorum*)], not the sort which we use in the law-courts" (2.6.17). In defining this kind of rhetoric, Cicero blurs the division between philosophy and rhetoric. This "union of philosophy and rhetoric," as Walter Nicgorski, an expert in Cicero and political philosophy, puts it, is what scholars refer to as Cicero's *perfecta philosophia* (73).²⁸ This *perfecta philosophia* is discussed in relation to Cicero's *sermo*, a conversation that combines both philosophical and rhetorical genres into a form Nicgorski calls a "philosophical rhetoric" that replaces *disputatio* with *sermo*

²⁷ See also Novikoff, *Medieval Culture* 14; Weijers, *Disputation Techniques* 27.

²⁸ See also 74-82; Schofield 70-72.

(90 note 47).²⁹ Gallus Zoll, for example, points to instances where Cicero uses *sermo* and *disputatio* together in his *Letters to Atticus* (“a frank talk [(*sermone ac disputatione*)]” [1.17]) and in *De Oratore* (“conversations and discussions” [2.19]) as synonyms for the Greek *diálogos*, blurring the distinctions between these genres: “he soon translates [*diálogos*] to *sermo*, sometimes to *disputatio*” (49).³⁰

Because Cicero sees philosophy and rhetoric as united and as the same genre (*sermo*), he lays out a theory of respectful discourse that applies to both disciplines. Cicero makes his claim that the rules that govern rhetoric should also govern philosophical discussions: “the same rules that we have for words and sentences in rhetoric will apply also to conversation” (*On Duties* 1.37.132). The main guiding principle for the rules of rhetoric is *decorum* or propriety-- “what is fitting and agreeable to an occasion or person” which is important “in actions as well as in words” for poets, painters, actors, and orators (*Orator* 22.74). Cicero provides an explicit theory of respectful discourse in the concept of *decorum*.³¹ Cicero sees *decorum* as positioning oneself in accordance with the natural order of the universe. In *On the Ideal Orator*, Cicero expresses his belief that “all the universe above and below us is a unity and is bound together by a single, natural force and harmony. . . . there is nothing in the world, of whatever sort, that can exist on its own severed from all other things” (3.20). In *On Duties*, he explains that the perception and pursuit of this unity are inherent in man: “it is no mean manifestation of Nature and Reason that man is the only animal that has a feeling for order, for propriety, for moderation. . . . beauty, loveliness, harmony. . . [and] consistency” (1.4.14). Indeed, in Cicero’s myth of the dawn of

²⁹ See Remer 28 (especially notes 96-98) and Fantham 50 (note 2) for further discussion regarding the relationship of the Latin *sermo* and *disputatio* to the Greek *dialogo*. Remer also cites *On Ends* 2.6.17 and *Tusculan Disputations* 1.47.112 as evidence that Cicero describes a “rhetoric of the philosophers” (27).

³⁰ “sondern er übersetzt [διάλογος] bald mit sermo, bald mit disputatio”

³¹ See Hariman 204; Christiansen 94.

civilization, men become civilized as they move toward an “ordered system of religious worship. . . [or] of social duties” (*On Invention* 1.2.2).³² Also, this truth is recognized by all people because it is pleasing (“that very quality we term moral goodness and propriety is pleasing to us by and of itself and touches all our hearts” [*On Duties* 2.9.32]) and will be recognized by both the layman and the expert (“the orator who is approved by the multitude must inevitably be approved by the expert. . . . there can never be disagreement between experts and the common people” [*Brutus* 49.184-185]).³³ Also, persuasion is preferable to force: “there are two ways of settling a dispute: first, by discussion; second, by physical force; and since the former is characteristic of man, the latter of the brute, we must resort to force only in case we may not avail ourselves of discussion” (*On Duties* 1.11.34).³⁴

Because this pursuit of propriety and harmony are inherent in Nature and human nature, attention to circumstances become essential to understanding what is appropriate. Indeed, “someone who does not understand what the occasion demands” is not exercising *decorum* (*On the Ideal Orator* 2.17). This occasion includes cultural circumstances: “we must be familiar with [the country’s] spirit, its customs, [and] its traditional order and morals” (1.196). One should also consider the status and desires of an audience: “take[. . .] account of the standing or the interests of those whose company he is in” (2.17).³⁵ This consideration will ensure that courtesies are applied “with due consideration to the company present” (*On Duties* 1.37.135) and will make the conversation proceed smoothly: “It should be easy and not in the least dogmatic. . . . should not debar others from participating in it, as if he were entering upon a private monopoly” (1.37.134); the conversation should proceed with “the greatest care to show

³² See also *On Duties* 1.28.100, 1.40.144, 3.5.25.

³³ See also Christiansen 95; Kapust 99-100.

³⁴ See also Remer 46.

³⁵ See also *On the Ideal Orator* 3.211.

courtesy and consideration toward those with whom we converse” (1.38.136). The circumstances suggest what is best to say in a given situation in order to achieve social harmony.

Attention to these aspects of one’s environment also acts as a guide to determining the best way to adapt one’s behavior to new social situations. For example, since “no single style is fitting for every case or every audience or every person involved or every occasion” because each case, audience, person, and occasion is unique (*On the Ideal Orator* 3.210), one should look to these aspects of a situation to know what is appropriate for that situation.³⁶ In other words, the speaker must seek in all ways possible to accommodate both truth and the situation: “adapt [(*accomodanda*)] one’s discourse to conform not only with the truth but also with the opinions of one’s hearers” (*Divisions of Oratory* 25.90).³⁷ By adapting one’s discourse in this way, Cicero asserts that the speaker “show[s] what I may almost call reverence toward all men-- not only toward the men who are the best, but toward others as well” (*On Duties* 1.28.99).

Like Cicero, the Humanist rhetoricians dissolve the distinctions between logic, dialectic, and rhetoric. The philosopher Gabriel Nuchelmans, among others, notes that the Humanists see logic and dialectic as essentially the same discipline (182-183).³⁸ For example, in his logic textbook *The Rule of Reason* (1551), the English Protestant Thomas Wilson, says logic and dialectic “are bothe one” (10). Also, the Humanists see logic as being closely tied to rhetoric because they follow Cicero’s teachings (143).³⁹ For example, in *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1560), Wilson cites Cicero to explain that the rhetorician, who focuses on the particular, must know logic, which teaches the universal: “And yet, notwithstanding *Tullie* doth say, that whosoever

³⁶ See also *Orator* 35.123- 36.123; *Divisions of Oratory* 5.15; *On Duties* 1.28.98; Christiansen 178; Baumlin 142. See Eden 17 (especially note 19) for further history of these circumstances (occasion, places, persons) in the history of rhetoric in general.

³⁷ See also *Orator* 8.4; *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 9.17.

³⁸ See also Ashworth 22; Green 72-73; Guerlac 20, 31.

³⁹ See also Christiansen 107-108.

will talke of particuler matter must remember, that within the same also is comprehended a generall” (2). Christiansen explains at length that many Humanist rhetoricians, such as Valla, Trebizond, Vives, Erasmus, Day, Melanchthon, Rainolds, Wilson, Soarez, Fenner, Puttenham, Scaliger, Lamy, Robertellus, Peacham, Hoskins, Granada, Sturm, and Elyot, apply rhetoric across all genres of discourse (101-104). For example, Heinrich Plett cites Melanchthon’s addition of a fourth genre to the traditional trio of epideictic, deliberative, and judicial: didactic, usually considered a part of logic: ““The *didactic or instructive genre* shows the method of handling all topics other people have to be taught”” (22).⁴⁰ The blurring of the distinctions between logic, dialectic, and rhetoric lead the Humanist rhetoricians to consider disputation through the lens of *decorum*.

The Humanists ascribe to Cicero’s theory of respectful discourse or *decorum* and add a Christian element to Cicero’s teachings. Wilson explains that Nature is congruous with God’s order. In providing his version of Cicero’s myth of the beginning of civilization, Wilson says that God persuades “all men to societie” and “to all good order” (*Arte of Rhetorique* xliv). Desiderius Erasmus, a Catholic, connects this order to Christ in his *Ciceronianus, or Dialogue on the Best Style of Speaking* (1528): “Are not all our actions gauged by the rules of Christ from which if our speech departs we shall neither be good orators nor good men?” (66). He also names the circumstances of the speech situation. A decorous approach, Erasmus says, takes into account all the circumstances: “True propriety” is based “partly from the subject, partly from the character of the speaker and the listener, partly from place, time, and other circumstances” (58).⁴¹ Likewise, Juan Luis Vives, another Catholic, delineates in great detail the various

⁴⁰ “*Διδασκαλικόν [(Didaskalikón)] seu doctrinale [genus] monstrat rationem tractandi omnes res, de quibus alii docendi sunt.*”

⁴¹ For similar lists, see Wilson (2, 10, 20-22, 114, 121,, 122) and Erasmus, Day, and Puttenham (as qtd. in Christiansen 124-125).

circumstances of a speech situation and aspects of audience in his chapter on *decorum* in his rhetoric textbook *De ratione dicendi* (1532).⁴² Vives lists subject matter, persons, place, and time as the major aspects of the communicative situation (755).⁴³ He then lists other considerations that fall under these headings; for example, under the heading of speaker, he lists “age, profession or livelihood, dignity,” and then subdivides these as well (755).⁴⁴ Vives includes similar subdivisions for subject matter (755), speaker (755-758), audience (758-761), place (761-762), and time (762). Also, the concern for audience is expanded upon with attention to the various ways in which an audience can be understood. As Erasmus explains in *Ecclesiastes* (1525), his preaching manual, one should “reflect [on] how much variety of sex, age, condition, intelligence, opinion, lifestyle, [and] custom exists within the same population” to truly understand the people one preaches to (280).

Because Humanists emphasize performance in accordance with God’s order, with circumstances, and with audience, they establish these aspects of communication as a basis for determining respectful discourse and conduct.⁴⁵ Wilson says that the present occasion teaches us to compose in some ways even better than training in the art of rhetoric (*Arte of Rhetorique* 124). This attention to circumstances enables critical reading of the situation-- to what the time and place dictate should be included in and excluded from a speech (22). When one reads the situation in this way and gains experience in responding to the situation, one develops good judgment. One is

⁴² As Mack reminds us, Vives’ longest chapter in *De ratione dicendi* is on *decorum* (“*Ratione*” 84).

⁴³ “...a la materia, a las personas, al lugar y al tiempo.” See also Mack, “Contributions,” 238-246, 263, for a discussion of such lists in *De ratione dicendi*, *De conscribendis epistolis*, and *De consultatione*.

⁴⁴ “*En el dicente consideremos la edad, la profesión o manera de vida, la dignidad.*”

⁴⁵ See Christiansen 104.

able to make himself a *Rhetorique* for euery matter, will not be bound to any precise rules, nor keepe any one order, but such onely as by reason he shall thinke best to vse, being master ouer arte, rather then arte should be maister ouer him, rather making arte by wit, then confounding wit by arte. (181)

Similarly, Erasmus also adds that this propriety is a matter of “judgment,” and that one should consider “with what discrimination” an interlocutor speaks, using St. Paul, a Christian orator, as an example of someone who “adapts himself to every circumstance” (*Ecclesiastes* 278). Vives calls *decorum* “the principal part of [rhetoric]” which is to be found “in the experience of life, sifted by keen judgment and prudence” (*De ratione dicendi* 690).⁴⁶ By using these rhetorical heuristics, one is able to determine how to both speak and behave well. As Wilson puts it, “the wicked can not speake euill” (*Arte of Rhetorique* 256). In *Ciceronianus*, Erasmus says, that eloquence “[has] the end in view not only to speak with greater polish but to live better” (116). Vives, too, asserts that *decorum* applies both to rhetoric and to life (*De ratione dicendi* 755).⁴⁷ Erasmus also goes beyond Cicero and adds the Christian concept of charity to *decorum*, noting that “Christian charity considers everywhere what is appropriate to each” (*Ecclesiastes* 629). Also, when a preacher must chastise his people, he should be temperate and sincere: he should “temper his censure in such a way that he shows that he resorts to it against his will and is not pursuing his own interest but is moved by the danger of those whom he sincerely wishes well out of his charity” (1014).⁴⁸

With *decorum* on their minds, the Humanists criticize the violent tendencies of Scholastic dialectic. A classicist who focuses on Renaissance Humanism, Erika Rummel, in her often-cited

⁴⁶ “. . . Y el decoro-- del cual se dice constituye el primer capítulo del arte-- ¿adónde se irá buscar sino en la experiencia de la vida, cribada por un juicio agudo y prudente?”

⁴⁷ “. . . no tanto es propio de esa disciplina como de la vida toda”

⁴⁸ See also Remer 76-79 for a discussion of Erasmus’ Christianization of *decorum*.

The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation, describes the Humanists' distaste for the Scholastics'

excessive reliance on Aristotle; the separation of rhetoric from dialectic and the exaggerated attention given to formal proof at the expense of other modes of inference; and the use of technical jargon accessible only to a narrow clique of professionals. (153)

She reviews how Valla, Agricola, Vives, Melanchthon, Ramus, and Nizolius seek to remedy each of these weaknesses of Scholastic dialectic (153-192). In relation to the Humanists' rhetoricization of dialectic (156-183), Rummel discusses how each of these Humanists believes that dialectic and rhetoric use the same "methods of argumentation" (168) and perform different "tasks of the orator," rather than divide these tasks between philosophers and orators (169).

Rummel also outlines how each of these Humanists criticizes the "low potential for application to life" of Scholastic dialectic on three fronts: "the role of dialectic in moral decision-making; the related question of its role in the curriculum for theology students; and the propaedeutic nature of dialectics, which suggest that the time allotted to it should be curtailed" (183). Rummel explains that these concerns were driven by the Humanists' belief that the educational value of dialectic should displace any combative value thereof: "If the purpose [of dialectic] was moral education and edification, there was no room for a spirit of contentiousness" (183). Rummel also explains that Agricola, Vives, and Melanchthon all emphasize the educational value of dialectic. Rummel notes that Agricola "wanted the disputant to be a concerned teacher rather than a competitive wrangler" (183). Vives believed that "The specious reasoning taught at Paris had no practical use and could not be employed in everyday conversation" (184). Melanchthon, too, "enriches his textbook on dialectic with examples that will edify as well as instruct the student" (185) and

implores students to recall the proper function of dialectic, to find truth (187). Rummel, however, does not connect these educational concerns to *decorum*.

Although Rummel does not connect these educational concerns to *decorum*, the discussions of Vives, Erasmus, and Guazzo on the violence of Scholastic dialectic and their proposed solutions to this violence emphasize the importance of *decorum* in disputation. Vives is concerned that dialectical disputations become a matter of display and sophistry rather than pursuit of truth. In *Against the Pseudodialecticans* (1520), Vives expresses his distaste with the “shallow word-play” of logicians at the University of Paris (49). He calls for the necessity to check one’s passions so as to rather “rely on your reason, hear all these opinions with unbiased ears and mind, and refrain from judgment or decision, whether spoken or silent, until the very end” of a disputation (51). He also is concerned that disputants turn to shouting and become “the most clamorous, the most loquacious in the fever-pitch of the schools, whose life would fail them sooner than their voice” (93). In *On the Causes of the Corruption of the Arts* (1531), he adds that such disputants “look for certain thorny questions suited for debate, which will supply abundant material for contention, and they spin out their wrangling endlessly even in teaching precepts of the art” (trans. Guerlac 145). In order to win the favor of onlookers, disputants even conjure “up ludicrous things as if in a play, and with the same lofty and empty style” (147). The resultant “Display” begins to look less like the mutual search for truth a disputation should be and more like mere crowd pleasing for one’s own personal benefit (147). “And so these things,” Vives warns, “do not sharpen the wit, but encourage it to run wild, and the thorns make it contentious and captious instead of animated and active in pursuit of worthy things” (151).

Erasmus criticizes Scholastic disputations because they lack *decorum*. In *Praise of Folly* (1511), Erasmus writes against current social practices and comments on education and the

Church. He satirically suggests that logic would have no use if there were no contention, if “there was no bickering about the double-meaning of words” (26). He uses the battle metaphor for disputation, suggesting that some teach grammar “as if it were a matter to be decided by the sword if a man made an adverb of a conjunction” (41). What is more, the “most subtle subtleties are rendered yet more subtle by the several methods of so many Schoolmen” (45). All of these subtleties are merely “noise” (51) and “ridiculous trifles” (53). Erasmus also suggests that a dialectical approach may lead to anger, which leads to the reasoning that heretics ought “to be convinced by fire rather than reclaimed by argument” (64). Reformation scholar Gary Remer explains that Erasmus sees such violence as an issue of *decorum*: “From Erasmus’s perspective, the scholastics’ neglect of *decorum* increased the likelihood of verbal intolerance. . . . the scholastics viewed heretics as either malicious or insane” (99). In *Ecclesiastes*, Erasmus more directly critiques dialectic for its lack of *decorum*, particularly when dialectic is used in preaching. In giving his recommendations for the best art of preaching, Erasmus suggests that dialectic “seems even to compel and to drag a man by force, as though bound in chains, to its own point of view. But who would trust a schemer, and how few would not rather be led than dragged?” (468).⁴⁹ In this passage, Erasmus shows his concern over the coercive potential of treating preaching like a disputation, which disregards the listeners’ ability to reason for themselves. Dialectic should not be simply “devised for displaying [one’s] own learning” (469). The preacher has to be careful to have a better goal in mind, lest dialectic turn into “useless complications and riddles” (469).

Likewise, Stefano Guazzo disagrees with philosophers who are overly contentious. In *The Civil Conversation* (1574), Book 1, Guazzo writes against the sophistry of philosophers who

⁴⁹ See also Remer 48 for other instances where Erasmus expresses preference for persuasion over force.

focus on being contradictory at the expense of truth: “And I see you Philosophers dispute and argue one against another, and holde singular opinions farre from the trueth” (40). He compares these philosophers to unconscionable heretics:

the vice of contradiction is proper to men of small discretion: who oppugne the trueth, either of ignorance, or of obstinacie: and they are like to Heretikes, who being conuicted by inuincible reasons, yet will yeelde nothing at all, but reply still to the contrarie. (40)

He also adds that such sophisters will, when their opponent refuses to follow their argument, resort to verbal attacks: “when they are able to mainteine Argument no longer by any reason, they enter into a chafe, and seeke to get the vpper hande by outcries, swearing, threatning, and arrogant demeanor” (40).

Humanists, therefore, suggest methods for bringing respectful discourse to the dialectical disputation. Vives’ solution for display dialectic is to limit the actual use of disputation by making most disputation internal--with oneself-- and by emphasizing and adding to Aristotle’s rules. To remedy the violent situation dialectic falls into, Vives, in his treatise *De Disputatione* (1523) first distinguishes “the quiet and authentic disputation of each inside himself,” or internal disputation, from “the tight, comparative disputation,” or external disputation.⁵⁰ The internal disputation is where violence can be minimal, because what one says to oneself will be more readily accepted: “what teaches shows, rather than obligates” (832).⁵¹ As Renaissance rhetoric scholar Peter Mack points out, Vives shows preference for the internal disputation (“Contributions” 235). This preference shows when Vives laments that he must also discuss

⁵⁰ “*la callada y auténtica diputación de cada uno consigo mismo*” . . . “*la diputación trabada y comparada*” . . .

⁵¹ “*Por esto, para persuadir quien no resiste, sino que sigue dócilmente, el mejor procedimiento es éste, porque a la vez que enseña demuestra, más que no obliga*”

external disputation: “it seems to me that I am obligated to say a few words on this thing we call *dispute or altercation*” (837).⁵² By making this distinction, Vives makes an effort to distance his dialectic from possible contention by limiting the preferred dialectic to a mental practice rather than a school or a public practice. Accepting Aristotle’s first rule for disputation, Vives also reminds those who would hold an external disputation that they should keep their object in mind rather than descend to “shots and volleys” (837).⁵³ In disputation, one should focus on the acquisition of truth, as Aristotle recommended, rather than the pursuit of honor. If such is the case, defeat will mean freedom from ignorance rather than continued “*decepción*” (838). Vives also adds a rule: one should advocate cool heads over raised voices to the exclusion of contentious individuals from participation in disputation. Because those who get heated “impede all sight” of the truth, they should not participate in disputation at all: “This is why the bilious, the passionate, the irritable, the seekers of vainglory are no good for disputation, especially against a sly sophist, for easily they become inflamed and blind” (837-838).⁵⁴ It is Vives’ hope that by limiting external disputations and making suggestions for how to perform them with the correct end in mind and in a dispassionate manner, disputations will proceed in a more decorous fashion. Also, in *De ratione dicendi*, Vives mentions another rule for this “familiar and private discussion”: a disputation should be “simple, direct, natural, without packing or emphasis, but rather naked, always without being ordinary or low” (762).⁵⁵ Through these recommendations-- limit external disputations in favor of internal disputations, keep the goal of truth in sight, and use clear, non-convoluted language— Vives encourages decorous disputation.

⁵² “*paréceme que estoy obligado a decir unas palabras de esta llamémosla disputa o altercado*”

⁵³ “*tiros a voleo*”

⁵⁴ “*impiden toda videncia. . . . Por eso es que los biliosos, los apasionados, los irritables, los captadores de gloria vana, no sirven para la disputa, singularmente contra un sofista ladino, pues con facilidad se encienden y se ciegan.*” See also Mack, “Contributions” 236.

⁵⁵ “*La pláctica familiar y privada debe ser sencilla, directa, natural, sin empaque ni énfasis, más bien desnuda, siempre que fuere ordinaria o raez.*”

Erasmus takes a different approach, emphasizing various rules that call for a friendlier disputation. One of Erasmus' rules is that a disputation should be conversational. As Remer observes, Erasmus "recognizes the distinctive characteristics of *sermo*" and "distinguishes *sermo*. . . in his essay on letter writing" as a genre which "'should resemble a conversation between friends'" rather than opponents (87). In giving examples of the "'*disputatoriae genus*'" of letters, Remer points out that Erasmus uses examples from Cicero and the humanist Angelo Poliziano, examples that employ appropriate, decorous language even in discussion of philosophical matters (88-89). Remer also draws attention to the ways in which Erasmus's *Diatribes sive collatio de libero arbitrio* (1524), a letter framed as a turn taken in a disputation, skirts "passions and contention" (95). Remer notes that Erasmus is not completely opposed to Scholastic disputations, "so long as they [are] conducted with *decorum*" (98). Also commenting on *De libero arbitrio*, Weijers points to four other rules Erasmus uses as he makes an effort to write with *decorum*. Erasmus

- 1) reasserts the Scholastic rule that the disputation should be moderate: "'by too much altercation often the truth is lost'"
- 2) says he has no desire to be confrontational
- 3) does not reference his opponent, the reformer Martin Luther, directly
- 4) does not end with a Scholastic conclusion or direct refutation of the arguments he is writing against (*Disputation Techniques* 192-193)

Guazzo makes dialectical disputation courteous by recasting disputation as a friendly discussion. Guazzo explains some of the "boundes and limites prescribed" for disputation (40) and "how wee should behaue ourselues with these ouerthwart persons" (41). He specifically concentrates on how to conduct oneself when a friend will not listen to reason, saying that one

should then step back from the matter and appeal to the better part of the friend: “When you perceiue your selfe to preuaile nothing by reasoning with your friende, & that there is doubt of some disorder, you ought rather to bowe then to breake, feeding his humor. . . beare with his imperfection” (41). He notes that one should proceed “in gentle maner, without scoffing” (41). Guazzo leaves *disputatio* for *sermo*, emphasizing numerous aspects of the eponymous civil conversation. In Book 2, he includes other rules, such as pay attention to the natures and behaviors of others (“the natures, manners, and dooings of others”), avoid extremes (“wee offende eyther by arrogancie, or by distrust, you may consequentlie perceiue, that the remedie which you seeke to flye those extreemes, and to follow the meane, is ciuile conuersation”), and respect the social status and identities of others (“ciuile conuersation ought to varie according to the varietie of the persons. . . differing in sexe, in age, in degree, in conditions, in country, and in nation” (4)). Vives, Erasmus, and Guazzo, as well as the Humanists cited by Rummel, reflect a movement to bring aspects of *decorum* from rhetoric to dialectic.

As consequence of these various teachings and recommendations, the Humanists apply *decorum* to disputation. While Erika Rummel and other Renaissance scholars do not tie these developments in the Renaissance disputation to *decorum*, clearly all of these matters reflect concerns for appropriate conduct in disputations. One way in which the Humanists apply *decorum* to disputation is by using looser structures and by including courtesies in their writings. Rummel says that rather than perpetuate “the scholastic method of inquiry,” the Humanists instead “employ[] a less structured approach, with a rhetorical thrust” and follow the recommendations of their rhetorical handbooks “to refrain from unduly long, technical, and complex argumentation” (2-3). As a result, Humanist dialogues, for example, tend “to terminate the argument with civilities: the polite and perfunctory agreement of the participants in a

dialogue or, in the case of an epistle, polite deference to the opinion of the author's addressee" (3). *Decorum* is also applied by mimicking aspects of real conversation and showing character through other discourse features. The linguist Irma Taavitsainen contrasts what she calls the "mimetic dialogues" of the Early Modern period with "scholastic dialogues" (243). Taavitsainen compares these forms of dialogue without tracing the mimetic dialogue to the Humanists, but since the Humanists stress *decorum* more than the Scholastics do, it is safe to assume that the mimetic dialogue is the more Humanistic dialogue. Taavitsainen points out that Scholastic dialogues contain "features typical of questions-literature and the scholastic thought-style" (247). Early Modern scholastic dialogues, including didactic forms such as the catechism, as linguists Jonathan Culpeper and Merja Kytö explain, are

dominated by answers. . . . Instructional Handbooks or Treatises present arguments or information in answers to questions posed by some ignorant or misguided person. Answers have the linguistic trappings of authority. . . . The depersonalization of scholastic dialogues. . . obviously inhibits characterization. (44)

The mimetic dialogue, however, irrespective of subject matter (Taavitsainen, for example, discusses medical writing), "achieve[s] a conversational tone with features of spoken language such as responses to previous turns, follow-up questions, pragmatic particles, etc. . . . or [questions] may be posed more indirectly with various degrees of politeness" (Taavitsainen 260). She concludes that the mimetic dialogue

assume[s] an entertaining function. . . . Features of natural conversation are present in some dialogues that incorporate speech acts of normal everyday

conversation, like apologies, insults, greetings and leave-takings, and other exchanges that belong to personal communication. (262-263)

Culpeper and Kytö also add that the mimetic dialogue will contain other “interpersonal linguistic items,” such as “politeness formulae, terms of address, repetitions, exclamations, [and] rhetorical questions” (44). In other words, the Humanists emphasize that dialogues ought to apply *decorum*. Other Humanist transformations of the disputation genre include, as Mack explains, the development of opening statements that resemble rhetorical declamations (58-61), and, as Weijers explains, the use of less “unorthodox doubt, sophisms, and personal attacks on the adversary” than Scholastic disputations (*Disputation Techniques* 191).⁵⁶ A specialist in Renaissance rhetoric in Galileo’s work, Jean Dietz Moss explains that “The medieval disputation”-- or Scholastic disputation-- “was transformed into a humanized version in which rigorous arguments were interwoven with oratorical appeals and presented-- often as dialogue-- to general as well as academic readers and hearers” (686).

The Jesuits, like their fellow Humanists, rely on Cicero’s understanding of the union of dialectic and rhetoric and, because rhetoric provides a broader theory of respectful discourse than dialectic, revise dialectical disputation by inserting rhetorical concepts stemming from *decorum*. The Jesuits accept Cicero’s explanation of the union of dialectic and rhetoric. Cyprian Soarez, in *De Arte Rhetorica Libri III* (1568), sees the inseparability and relationship between dialectic and rhetoric, between reason and speech.⁵⁷ For example, he shares a metaphor in which reason is a “light which gives brightness and life” and speech is the “glory and ornament of reason”-- that is to say, one leads into the other (110).⁵⁸ He also says that rhetoric covers all subjects: “speaking

⁵⁶ See also 189-191, 200-203.

⁵⁷ See also Flynn, “Sources” 258; Christiansen 72, 110; Farrell, *Code* 356-359; Conley 153-154. ⁵⁸ “*ratio est sicuti lux quaedam, lumenque vite: oratio est rationis decus, & ornamentum: ratio regit, ac moderatur proprium animum: oratio flectit etiam alienos: rationis est species*

well. . . has no distinct field within the boundaries of which it is confined. Any subject men are able to discuss must be spoken well by the man who claims to be able to do it” (120-121).⁵⁹

The Jesuits use Cicero’s theory of *decorum*, and also an additional Christian emphasis on charity. Soarez, like his Humanist contemporaries and echoing Cicero (*Orator* 21.7122.72), explains that one should speak in the context of all the circumstances:

It also makes a great difference what the personality is of the one who speaks and the personalities of those who listen. Not every fate, not every dignity, not all authority; nor every age, place, time, or hearer is to be treated with the same kind of words and thoughts. In each instance, we must determine to what extent.

Although each person has his own peculiar style, nevertheless, too much is more displeasing than too little; so, as wisdom is the foundation of eloquence even as it is of the remaining matters, it is the foundation of style. (416)⁶⁰

Audience is also considered from the perspective of the circumstances, especially with regard for the truthfulness of an approach that respects the reasoning capacity of an audience. In the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Ignatius seeks to differentiate the Jesuits from the Scholastics by explicitly calling for a method of preaching that is “different from the scholastic manner,” that takes into consideration the circumstances (402). In order to depart from the

admirabilis, eam tamen intus latentem orationis pulchritudo declarat. Ita quod lumen est soli principi, ac moderatori luminum reliquorum, id est, oratio rationi domine, ac reginae rerum omnium” (Libri A4). English translations are based on Flynn (*De Arte*) and on recommendations from Grant Boswell.

⁵⁹ “ornate dicere, non habet definitam aliquam regionem, cuius terminis septa teneatur. Omnia quaecumque in hominum disceptationem cadere possunt, bene sunt. . . dicenda, qui hoc se posse profiteretur” (Libri 2). See also Christiansen 102, 104.

⁶⁰ “Multum etiam refert, quae sit persona eius, qui dicit; & eorum, qui audiunt. Non.n [sic] omnis fortuna, non omnis honos, non omnis auctoritas, non omnis aetas: nec vero locus, aut tempus aut auditor omnis eodem aut verborum genere tractandus est, aut sententiarum. In omnibus etiam rebus videndum est quatenus. . . vnde sit ut eloquentiae, sicut reliquarum rerum, fundamentum sit sapientia” (Libri 82). See also Christiansen 129.

“scholastic manner,” priests must learn the language of the people, considering places and times, and seek to “avail themselves of all appropriate means to perform [their ministry] better”

(402).⁶¹ One circumstance of import is that of audience. Ignatius writes that priests should learn how to teach Christian doctrine in such a way that all people will be capable of understanding it.

Priests should “adapt[] themselves to the capacities of children or simple persons” (203).⁶²

Similarly, in the *Spiritual Exercises* he encourages a Christian effort to lovingly reason with others. In the preface of this manual, Ignatius writes that

it must be presupposed that every good Christian should be readier to excuse than to condemn a proposition advanced by his neighbor; and if he cannot justify it; let him enquire into the meaning of the author: if the latter be in error, correct him lovingly; should that not suffice, then let him employ every suitable means, so that his neighbor, rightly understanding it, may be saved from error. (1)⁶³

Soarez also comments on *decorum* when he calls for a truthful Christian approach to discourse.

This approach should, for example, eschew lying, and should “check all boldness and disgraceful fault of tearing others to pieces by infamous, insulting, and abusive language” (*Rhetorica* 113).⁶⁴

Furthermore, pride and crowd-pleasing have no place in Christian discourse:

⁶¹ See also Schloesser 360.

⁶² See also O’Malley 38; Muller 466; Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* 11, 96, 216.

⁶³ “*se ha de presuponer, que todo buen Cristiano ha de ser mas pronto a salvar la proposicion del proximo, que a condenarla: y si no la puede salvar, inquiera como la entiende; y si mal la entiende, corrijale con amor; y si no basta, busque todos los medios convenientes para que bien entendiendola se salve*” (15). See also Maryks 81; Fumaroli 95; Modras 115. Lancashire and Kuo-chen specifically refer to this passage in their discussion of *True Meaning* as a “preparation for the Gospel” which discusses Christianity from the standpoint of reason rather than revelation, considering that “Ricci found himself writing for Confucian scholars who were totally lacking in any knowledge of the tenets of Christianity, and who therefore could not easily discuss anything like God’s revelation of himself in history” (12).

⁶⁴ “*amputetur procacitas, & vitium illud teterrimum lacerandi alios probris, contumelus maledictis*” (*Libri A5*).

Let arrogance and an appetite for vain praise be cut back, for him who dazzles the keenness of mind. Let it be understood that it is wicked to envelop an audience in darkness so that they do not perceive the truth by speaking, an occurrence done to corrupt their decisions and their thinking, time and again by Greek and Roman orators. (113-114)⁶⁵

In each case, the Jesuits are teaching the need to contextualize one's argument through attention to the circumstances— in particular the reasoning capacity of the audience— and through being truthful rather than misleading.

While it is generally understood that Jesuit rhetoric is Ciceronian and Humanist, some scholars believe that Jesuit Humanist rhetoric is at odds with their training in Scholastic dialectical disputation. Upon closer analysis, however, it becomes apparent that the Humanist concern for *decorum* influences how the Jesuits think of disputation. Rhetoric and composition scholars Kristine Johnson and Paul Lynch suggest that Jesuit rhetoric is more significantly influenced by Scholastic dialectic than Humanist rhetoric. Johnson and Lynch draw attention to the fact that Jesuit pedagogy was influenced “by the curricular framework of the medieval universities the Jesuits themselves attended” (100), where Ciceronian curriculum “vied with Aquinas-inspired Parisian scholasticism” (101). They stress that the use of dialectical disputations led to agonism in the classroom: “In Jesuit pedagogy Ciceronian humanism competed with the *modus parisiensis*-- the scholastic style of learning prevalent in Paris” (a major center of Scholasticism during the Renaissance) “since the thirteenth century” (106). They also cite historian of education Allan Farrell’s history of the Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum* (1599) or

⁶⁵ “*resecetur arrogantia, & inanis laudis appetitus, qui aciem animi perstringit, intelligatur iniquum esse tenebras auditoribus offundere, ne verum perspiciant, et suffragium, atque sententiam dicendo corrumpere, quod a Graecis, & Romanis Oratoribus est factitatum*” (*Libri A5*). See also Christiansen 113-114.

plan of studies and the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* as evidence of how disputations were to be found at all levels of Jesuit education (106). From “The Rules for the Professor of Rhetoric” in the *Ratio Studiorum*, Johnson and Lynch also consider rhetorical declamations or speeches as evidence that dialectical disputation had worked its way into the curriculum (107-108). While they recognize that such competitions also have antecedents in Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, where Quintilian encourages emulation and competitions to enliven students, Johnson and Lynch still believe that it was rather the presence of disputation which led to residual “medieval agonism” in Jesuit rhetoric (109). However, Johnson and Lynch do not pursue further ways in which Jesuit disputations were distinct from and/or influenced by their interaction with Renaissance Humanist rhetoric, nor do they seek to account for how these distinctions and interactions would play out in the mission field. Instead, Johnson and Lynch merely rely on Farrell’s research as the crux of their argument. Farrell, however, merely states that the *modo et ordo Parisiensis* for the Jesuits meant that Jesuit schools were strictly regimented and involved many exercises (Farrell, *Code* 30-35).⁶⁶ He says nothing about requiring disputations to proceed in a Scholastic manner, as Lynch and Johnson claim, but only that Ignatius was inspired by the curriculum at the Sainte-Barbe College of the University of Paris, a curriculum that balanced dialectic and rhetoric, instead of neglecting of rhetoric as the other colleges did (31).

Contrary to Johnson and Lynch, the Jesuits actually take up many of the concerns of the Humanists and adapt their pedagogy of dialectical disputation accordingly by applying rhetorical principles of *decorum* to dialectic. For example, the *Ratio Studiorum* suggests that the defendant

⁶⁶ See also O’Malley 215-227. Rummel, in a discussion of Humanists versus Scholastics, notes that there was indeed a *modus Parisiensis* in regards to dialectic in Scholastic theology (60).

Farrell, however, does not discuss dialectic as being the particular aspect of the Parisian curriculum that attracted the early Jesuits.

in the disputation should explain the thesis in a “theological form but with a certain elegance of style,” where style is typically the domain of rhetoric, not dialectic (22). Elsewhere, there is a note that the disputants should involve “scholastic formalities” in the process (38), but students should also engage in “honorable rivalry” rather than contentious argument (68). Formal disputations are to have a “certain degree of ceremony,” and classroom disputations can proceed in “an oratorical rather than a dialectical style” (108, 110). The insistence on rhetorical *decorum* in the form of respect and oratorical style remains significant in the Jesuit curriculum. Even in the “Rules for the Professor of Higher Faculties,” the professor is counseled to respectfully engage opponents. He should

defend his view with such modesty and courtesy as to show respect for the contrary view, the more so if it was held by his predecessor. When it is possible to reconcile diverse views, an attempt should be made to do so. He should express himself temperately in naming or refuting authors (26).

Additionally, while the *Ratio* recommends that professors “enliven the discussions” of students by inviting objecting propositions, it also recommends that they should not cut off another speaker: professors “should not urge an objection while the appointed objector is still arguing his point with vigor and effect” (28). In other words, the *Ratio* presents a unique adaptation of the Scholastic *disputatio* that takes into account the circumstances in which the disputation takes place, and recommends strategies to promote goodwill among disputants. In all of these instructions for disputations, there is an emphasis on the proper time, place, and persons involved in dialectical disputations. Ricci, having been taught with this curriculum, would have been trained in respectful debate and informed not only in dialectic and rhetoric, but also by a concern

for a *decorum* which is more in line with the rhetorical tradition of the Humanist rhetoricians than the dialectical tradition of the Scholastics.

Matteo Ricci

In *True Meaning*, Matteo Ricci follows the Ciceronian and Humanist understanding of the connection between the disciplines of philosophy and rhetoric—that philosophy and rhetoric both meet in *sermo*, and that rules of rhetoric can be applied to dialectic—, and this understanding leads Ricci to outline and exemplify a theory of respectful discourse. Ricci believes that philosophy goes hand in hand with rhetoric. Ricci illustrates this relationship by hearkening back to Soarez’ light metaphor that places reason in the position of the main light:

Reason stands in relation to man as the sun to the world, shedding its light everywhere. To abandon principles affirmed by the intellect and to comply with the opinions of others is like shutting out the light of the sun and searching for an object with a lantern. (1.25)⁶⁷

Also, Ricci believes that reason ought to be man’s guiding principle because it can reveal truth by combating falsehood: “it is better still to use clear reasoning than to refute them merely with many words” (2.69). Furthermore, good speech depends on good reasoning: “Words and facts must accord with each other before they can be believed” (4.218). Virtues will likewise be perfected in righteous action (“Virtuous conduct added to goodness is the expression [of that goodness]” [7.432]), a sentiment also found in Cicero (“the whole glory of virtue is in activity” [*On Duties* 1.6.19]).

⁶⁷ In the footnote to this section, Meynard notes that Ricci bases this statement on his predecessor’s catechism, which states “*Ratio est veluti lux, qua very notiam percipimus, quamquam dignoscimus, sitne verum, an falsum [. . .], ut quod ratio falsum esse demonstrate, intellectus ut verum iudicare non possit*”.

Consequently, Ricci has a theory of respectful discourse that includes Aristotle's emphasis on common purpose, but also considers the aforementioned aspects of *decorum* described by Cicero and the Humanists. Ricci uses Aristotle's common purpose rule to show that the purpose of a discussion ought to be the mutual search for truth, but not by just any means. Through the mouth of the Chinese Scholar, Ricci notes that the search for truth should be foremost in the minds of interlocutors: "in any discussion it is essential to put truth above all else.... The superior man makes truth his standard. Where truth is to be found, he will comply with it, but where there is no truth, he will oppose it" (1.27). However, Ricci departs from Aristotle by insisting that one should respect an opponent's ability to reason by using clarity rather than misdirection and trickery. He believes that reason is more persuasive than force, like Cicero and the Humanists assert: "The truth can subdue men's minds more readily than a sharpened sword" (8.551). Also, at the beginning of their encounter, Ricci invites the Chinese Scholar to challenge his reasoning as the Chinese Scholar sees fit:

Should you find any proposition unacceptable, I hope you will dispute it and not deceive me in any way. Because we are discussing the universal principles of the Lord of Heaven, I cannot permit personal modesty to stand in the way of the truth.
(1.26; see also 7.446)

Later, Ricci shows trust in the reasoning abilities of his interlocutor by stating that the Chinese Scholar will be able to intuit the truth from what little has been taught: "Without any effort on my part you are able to infer much from the little you have heard" (1.64). Ricci even invites others to study on their own after a disputation rather than just stop learning after the disputation is over: "After one has studied and learned by mutual discussion, one must go on to refine one's knowledge through the hard grind of further study" (6.365); "I hope that those who practice the

Way will go home and savor the teachings I have propounded in the several foregoing chapters” (8.594).

This trust in the ability of the Chinese Scholar to reason is also reflected in Ricci’s inclusion of the kinds of questions that the Chinese Scholar asks. For example, when Ricci explains that all things have an origin and God is that origin, the Chinese Scholar asks, "Since you, Sir, say that the Lord of Heaven is the beginning of all things, may I ask by whom the Lord of Heaven was produced?" (1.41). This question logically follows from what Ricci has been setting forth, and the very fact that Ricci includes such a question hints at his desire to portray the Chinese Scholar in a realistic rather than idealized manner. Ricci also includes the Chinese Scholar’s protest against Ricci’s attack on Buddha, showing how not everything that Ricci teaches is immediately taken as truth: “The Buddha is not inferior to the Sovereign on High. . . . There is much that one can learn from him” (4.210). Another question, “Are you trying to say that the sages were ignorant of this teaching? Why is it concealed and not mentioned?” (6.389), expresses concern about Ricci’s estimation of the wisdom of some of the ancients. The Chinese Scholar even brings up a question about celibacy, asking “in our canonical writings there is the statement: ‘There are three things which mark a man as being unfilial, and the greatest of these is to have no progeny.’ What have you to say about that?” (8.551). Through these and other inquiries, Ricci shows an opponent who is not a complete yes-man, one who simply accepts every argument put to him. Ricci does not shun from reflecting questions that may arise from the uniqueness of his message. This move shows a concern for his audience as real people with real questions that do not need to be ignored in the process of writing a persuasive argument--and Ricci makes no pretense to trick his opponent; rather, he is open and sensitive to the potential concerns his opponent may have.

Ricci especially goes further than Aristotle by emphasizing the Christian concept of charity based on recognition of difference. Traditionally, love for others or friendship depends on similarity and proximity. For example, in *On Friendship*, Ricci repeats a popular maxim on similarity from Aristotle, Cicero, and Augustine: “My friend is not an other, but half of myself, and thus a second me-- I must therefore regard my friend as myself” (91). Cicero also says that one should principally befriend those who are similar to oneself (“What is sweeter than to have someone with whom you may dare discuss anything as if you were communing with yourself?” [*On Friendship* 6.22]; “For everyone loves himself. . . the real friend. . . as it were, [is] another self” [21.80]; “Nothing. . . is more conducive to love and intimacy than compatibility of character in good men” [*On Duties* 1.17.56]), and those who are more closely related to oneself (“between us all there exists a certain tie which strengthens with our proximity to each other” [*On Friendship* 5.19]; “The interests of society. . . and its common bonds will be best conserved, if kindness be shown to each individual in proportion to the closeness of his relationship” [*On Duties* 1.16.50]). In *True Meaning*, however, Ricci departs from both Aristotle and Cicero by suggesting that respectful behavior is based more on recognition of differences between people. While refuting the notion that we should love others because they are made of the same spiritual substance as ourselves, Ricci says that “there must be at least two persons for humanity and righteousness to operate” (4.245). Building on this distinction, Ricci asserts that true humanity depends on a recognition of how others differ from oneself:

Humanity is the extension of one’s own feelings toward others; righteousness is the treatment of the old with respect and honor; but in both cases there must be a distinction between oneself and others. If there is no distinction between oneself and others, there can be no principles of humanity and righteousness. If you say

that all things are you, then humanity and righteousness will be equivalent to self-love and self-service; you will become an inferior man who is only aware of himself and knows nothing of anyone else, and who is aware of humanity and righteousness only as names. (4.246)

In other words, a recognition of the unique qualities of one's fellow men is essential to developing respect for others. Moreover, it is only through this recognition of difference that one can live up to the Christian call to do more than "love them which love you" (Matthew 5:46): the superior man "therefore has a duty to love and display compassion to all men. How can he be like the inferior man who merely loves his own kindred?" (*True Meaning* 4.248).

This love and compassion are Christian elements of respectful conduct and discourse which lead one to speak with and behave appropriately toward others. Ricci, therefore, believes that there is indeed a right way to behave (and, by extension, speak) with others, based on attending to, rather than ignoring, differences. For example, Ricci portrays himself as a humble teacher who may not know everything: At the very beginning, Ricci portrays the Chinese Scholar coming to him to ask more about the Christian God. Ricci responds, "I am grateful for your patronage, but I do not know what you wish to ask concerning the Lord of Heaven" (1.19). Later, after citing Confucian literature, he expresses the possibility that he does not know everything: "however, although I have not heard a complete explanation of the meaning of these words, they would seem to be close to the truth" (2.67). He also says that a certain precept is "by no means easy to explain," again downgrading himself (2.102). Ricci also sees the Chinese Scholar not as an enemy but as a friend, calling the Chinese Scholar by the epithet "my good friend," further identifying himself with him (3.127, 3.169). He also shows that he is working to familiarize himself with the different philosophical arguments present in Chinese society ("There

are those who say” [3.149]) and that he is attentive to the words of the Chinese Scholar (“You say that” [5.298]). Through these linguistic behaviors, Ricci concentrates his efforts to move his audience through loving persuasion, rather than through the mere exposition of doctrine.

One other explanation for Ricci’s theory of respectful discourse in *True Meaning* is that perhaps Ricci was influenced by Confucian teachings. What is more likely, however, is that Ricci saw familiar Western concepts in the Confucian canon. As the sinologist Artur Wardega explains, Ricci’s education colored what he saw when he came to China: “because of his humanistic education, [Ricci] found himself much at home” in China (14) and “When, in the mid 1590s, he decided to dress like a Confucian scholar, Ricci not only followed the advice of his friends but acted in harmony with his own philosophical and humanistic background” (15).⁶⁸ Also, in discussing Confucius, Ricci mostly compares the sage with Western analogues rather than with Confucius. For example, as Rule notes, Ricci considers Confucius ““un altro Seneca”” and the Confucian canon to include ““many passages. . . which favour the teachings of our faith”” (29). The closest Ricci comes to considering Confucius somehow a step above Greco-Roman philosophers is in regard to Confucianism’s possible congruencies with Christianity. For example, Ricci calls Confucius “the equal of the pagan philosophers and superior to most of them” (*Journals* 30). He likely makes this connection because Confucian ethical teachings are “far from being contrary to Christian principles” (98).

Seeing Confucianism through the lens of Western traditions, Ricci likely saw similarities in relation to teachings on Nature and circumstances, respect for an audience’s ability to reason, and the use of courtesies. For example, Confucius teaches that attention to Nature will guide the organization of appropriate relationships. In the *Great Learning*, Confucius asserts that the “investigation of things” will lead to complete knowledge, sincere thought, appropriate behavior,

⁶⁸ See also Wardega 16; Mungello 62.

and social harmony (1.3-6). In the *Book of Rites*, Confucius also emphasizes attention to circumstances, such as

the timeliness of instruction just when it was required; the suitability of the lessons in adaptation to circumstances; and the good influence of example to parties observing one another. The communication of lessons in an indiscriminating manner and without suitability produces injury and disorder, and fails in its object. (18.11)

Also, in discussions, contention is to be avoided: one should “not seek for victory in small contentions” (1.3). At the same time, there is value in having discussions, as discussions help one review and add to knowledge: “If a man keeps cherishing his old knowledge, so as continually to be acquiring new, he may be a teacher of others” (*Analects* 2.11, also cited by Ricci [*True Meaning* 7.459]). Respect for another’s ability to reason can be found in *Mencius*, in which Confucius’ disciple Mencius emphasizes willing submission: “When one by force subdues men, they do not submit to him in heart. *They submit, because* their strength is not adequate *to resist*. When one subdues men by virtue, in their hearts’ core they are pleased, and sincerely submit” (2.3.2). Confucius is of the same opinion: “Leading and not dragging produces harmony” (*Book of Rites* 18.9).⁶⁹ There are also mentions of the need to show courtesy, sincerity, and friendship. In order to be respectful, one might accentuate his or her lowliness: “When the elder asks a question, to reply without acknowledging one’s incompetency and (trying to) decline answering, is contrary to propriety” (*Book of Rites* 1.14). Also, inasmuch as this discourse is sincere and not given to hyperbole, the discourse will be reverent: “Acts of the greatest reverence admit of no ornament” (10.12). All of these teachings are based on sincerity, because “Sincerity is the way of Heaven” (31.22). Likewise, as Confucius asserts in the

⁶⁹ See also *Analects* 12.23.

Analects, one should be careful not to offend, especially when in discussion with one's friend: "In serving a prince, frequent remonstrances lead to disgrace. Between friends, frequent reproofs make the friendship distant" (4.26). While these and other parts of Confucian teachings may have had an impact on Ricci, there is no indication that he accepts teachings that are distinct from Humanism and Christianity. Indeed, citing Ricci's censure of syncretism, Rule concludes that Ricci never fully accepts Confucianism as having equal weight with Christianity (54).⁷⁰ Because Ricci saw these teachings in the same light he saw pagan philosophers, Ricci only takes from what is similar to Western traditions, not different. Ricci believes that there is a "natural law" that inspired Confucius, and that Christianity is more complete than Confucianism in its teachings of that natural law (Lancashire, Kuo-chen, and Meynard 4). Ricci, in fact, departs from Confucian doctrine where it does not fit with his understanding of Christian doctrine. For example, Gernet points out that Ricci contradicts Mencius when he teaches that one should love others not because they are similar to oneself but because of one's choice to love: "True goodness is dictated by reason. . . . Ricci was thus brought to contradict the theses of Mencius" (155).⁷¹ Ricci sees similarities between Western and Confucian teachings, but does not entirely adopt the Confucian paradigm.

As is evident from this comparison between the theory of respectful discourse found in the Scholastic and Humanist curricula, Matteo Ricci's *True Meaning* should more accurately be viewed as a Humanist disputation rather than a Scholastic disputation. While the Scholastics have a theory of respectful discourse by which to manage their disputations, the Humanists have a much more substantial theory based in *decorum* that stresses attention to Nature and

⁷⁰ See also Gernet 67.

⁷¹ See also 160-161.

circumstances. When Ricci's teachings and practice are considered from the perspective of Renaissance rhetoric, the position of *True Meaning* in the history of the transformation of the disputation genre becomes clear: in addition to translating Christian terms into Chinese and referencing classical sources, Ricci explicitly teaches and practices *decorum* when writing his disputation. This emphasis on *decorum* in disputation is evidence that the accommodation strategy Ricci uses descends from the teachings of the Christian Humanists, not the Scholastics. Further studies of Ricci should look to other ways in which he shows *decorum* in his writings, and studies of how Ricci learned about Chinese culture through trial-and-error should look to ways in which this process was affected by his understanding of *decorum*. Research into Chinese influences on Ricci and the development of early modern disputations by the Jesuits and others will also do well to consider the role of *decorum* in those influences and transformations.

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